

Preface

Overview: This book's central thesis is presented, that groups really do have collective minds – with beliefs, desires and intentions which both belong to and 'possess' the group as a whole. But a central point is that mind is not a substance that a system can be said to have or not have. Rather, 'minding' (or 'mentation'), is a process that we ascribe to ourselves and to other systems to render them intelligible – to make sense of their actions and their communications. In systems language, then, groups engage in processes of collective minding, guided by a self-organized, collective mind-set. The book's structure is outlined and a few caveats are given.

"For the Zeitgeist of every age is like a sharp east wind which blows through everything. You can find traces of it in all that is done, thought and written, in music and painting, in the flourishing of this or that art: it leaves its mark on everything and everyone."

- Arthur Schopenhauer

The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own. It can be termed the collective or creative consciousness.

- Emile Durkheim

This book recaps what is known and believed about human sociality by social scientists today; and advances a view that human groups have minds of their own kind, in much the same sense that individuals do. If we accept (as I do) that the human mind is an emergent product of the collective functioning of the billions of cells in our bodies, then there is nothing strange about the notion that certain groups – e.g. a family, a tribe, a business firm or a nation – possess and are driven by collective minds, with their own collective beliefs, collective desires and values, and hence collective goals and plans and intentions. That view, however, requires much further specification: Thus, for the election year of 2016, if we want to ask what the United States was thinking when it nominated [Donald Trump](#) as a presidential candidate, and took him seriously as such, then we will need to detail how the collective mind comprised by about 325 million individual human beings would function, and of what components (with which properties, organized by what architecture) it would consist. In this book, we'll take a stab at thinking along those lines.

The idea that some groups¹ have minds of their own is a very old one, implicit in any grammar that can accept the pronoun 'we' as the subject of an active sentence: “we want . . . ;” “we believe . . . ;” “we intend . . . ;” and so forth. We speak habitually of nations and business firms, for example, as wanting, believing and doing things to achieve collective goals. In this way, metaphorically at least, we attribute minds to them, just as do for one another. Beyond such metaphorical usage, however, I want to argue that the idea of collective mind is worth taking literally – and that it can be rendered serviceable for the social sciences once its mystical overtones, along with Marxist fantasies of ‘historical inevitability,’ are stripped away. That is the central thesis of this book; and one could say that its only real novelty is in its use of modern ideas – those of evolution, ecology, self-organization and the theory of open systems – to flesh out and justify the ancient usage of collective minds analogous to our own.

Basically, we find it convenient and useful to attribute minds to some human groups for the same reason that we do this for individual persons. There is really no such thing as 'a mind,' because a mind is not a thing. But the attribution of mind helps us make sense of a system's choices and behaviours. It opens the [intentional stance](#)² as a mode of explanation. It allows a mentalistic language of beliefs, desires and reasoned purposes to explain what a minding system has done, and to anticipate what it might do in the future. It helps us to make useful judgments of each other's competence and ethics. It provides a language of interpersonal relationship. In short, the concept of 'mind' affords a mode of understanding that is not otherwise available. The attribution of mind to certain groups works just as well as for human individuals – is just as natural and convenient.

As we'll see, group minds conform loosely to a kind of logic – though they leave room for alternate possibilities and for sheer happenstance. They work through a political thought process – through an interplay between responsible pragmatism for the group as a whole as against the private interests of key power holders – what C. Wright Mills called its [power elite](#). When responsible pragmatism prevails, the group's governance can do a lot of good. But groups often discriminate shamelessly, treating some people much better than others. They use people for their own purposes, and often use them up, without giving them much along the way. On the other hand, there are times (our own among them) when they hold forth dazzling prospects to those persons who “have what it takes” – put in the effort, accept the risks, and play their games boldly and without too many scruples.

1 Throughout this book, ‘*group*’ is reserved as a special term for sets of human persons to which collective mind is attributed. A set of persons without collective mind – e.g. the persons riding on a bus, or persons with naturally red hair – is called a ‘*bevy*.’ Chapter 3 considers the process by which mere bevies can acquire collective minds, and so become groups, in our sense.

2 An approach to social psychology that might be called ‘*group intentionalism*.’ See Section 1.6

Until the mid-19th century it was almost necessary to think of [mind](#) as a separate metaphysical category, and as a faculty that only humans had. There was no conceivable alternative and no real motive to think otherwise. A Creator God was in His 'Heaven,' his realm of the spirit; matter was what he had created and given form to; human mind was the image of His Own Divine Spirit; and that was that. After Darwin, it became necessary to explain 'mind' as an evolved capability – selected for its [inclusive reproductive advantage](#), like any other faculty or trait.

Today we think of animals as having minds of a sort – enjoying some of our human capabilities, but lacking others. We study the behavioural and cognitive capabilities of various species, and have learned a good deal by now, about their mental faculties. At the same time, we build [machines with mind-like capabilities](#), increasing in sophistication with no limit in sight. We have [SETI programs](#) that search for signs of intelligent mind on distant planets. We have [corporations](#) which are recognized as 'legal persons' – and must, therefore, be thought to possess at least some of the cognitive attributes and responsibilities of persons. For all these reasons, it is scarcely possible any more to think of 'mind' as an exclusively human attribute. Among such different kinds of minds, there is no good reason why groups should not be considered to engage in minding, and thus have minds of their own.

It should be noted up front that who or what is considered to have a mind is not a normal empirical question for experiment and observation but more a semantic or [philosophical question](#). The only mind that an individual can actually observe is their own. The minds of other persons we attribute or infer largely by analogy and convenience. Or we withhold that attribution through 'discrimination,' refusing to treat this other person on the same level of cognition and dignity that we award ourselves. Or, that we award to others whom we consider 'of our kind' – because of skin colour, religion, nationality or whatever else. With animals, 'intelligent' machines and certain social groupings, there's an identical question of attribution. Thus, I have no way to argue that families, business firms and nations (for example) really do have collective minds in the same sense I experience my own. I cannot even prove that my friends and loved ones are not a lot of [zombies](#), and that I am not the only mind among them.³ I can only argue that it is plausible and useful to attribute minds to certain human groups, just as we attribute them to other individuals.

0.1 Group Minds

To repeat then: The central point I want to make is that it's more than just a handy metaphor to speak of certain groups as having (or being) minds. When we drop the idea of minds as entities – when instead, we define minding⁴ as a process that some systems collectively engage in – we find that some human groups can pass our definition with flying colours. Further, we'll see that there

3 Also see John Cornwell's article [The Reel of Consciousness](#) for a compact summary of the arguments around the nature of mind and consciousness.

4 See Section 1.1.

are real advantages to think of groups in this way – not just as lots of people doing stuff, but as minds of a sort, analogous to our individual ones, that can feel desires, hold opinions, make and implement choices, and engage in organized collective activities.

Group minds can be said to [emerge](#) from the activities of their member individuals and, at the same time, to set a [context](#) (with causal implications) for the thoughts and actions of those individuals. It will be seen that this emergentist approach helps us think about groups and about the human relationships which form and organize them. As social animals, we are shaped by various groups (beginning with our natal families), and much of our lives are spent in group participation. With regard to these groups, we have decisions to make: To honour the claims they make upon us, or to reject and deny such claims? To give our love and loyalty to a group, or to escape from it if possible? Our groups give us much, but also demand much – and not always in a fair or ethical way. It's only fair to warn the reader at this point that I am basically an [individualist](#), and that my interest in group minds and minding is defensive in spirit. The groups that claim us, I believe, have no *a priori* right to our love or loyalty. They may work to earn and deserve such feelings, or may prefer to manipulate and threaten us instead.

For the social sciences, (including history and much of psychology), there are clear benefits from this perspective of cognitive ecology and [emergence](#) :

- To see the group as a functioning mind (functioning well or poorly in its current situation, and with the knowledge and skills that it has available) gives us a psychological perspective on group development, affording an approach to sociology superior both to that of [role theory](#) and to '[methodological individualism](#).' Groups exert [downward causation](#) on their members; but they are not well understood as functional machines in which the members play their assigned parts, more or less reliably. Neither are they well understood as outcomes of a game in which self-interested individuals compete against each other for a maximum return. Objections to both these paradigms will be discussed below, in Section 0.2 of this preface. The claim will be that groups are dynamic cognizing entities in their own right, which ([pace Margaret Thatcher](#)) set the terms and horizons of their members' lives and mindsets.
- On a deeper level, the notion of collective mind, or group mind, gives us a better understanding of 'culture' and of human evolution. Culture is dynamic – a kind of [ecology](#), as Gregory Bateson pointed out. Illuminating as it can be, the [synchronic](#), structural approach to the study of culture misses what is most essential about this cognitive system: its developmental, evolutionary aspect. It is at least as likely that the advance of culture (group mind) drove our biological evolution⁵ as the other way round. Most likely, these processes happened in tandem, and

5 For this thesis, see Donald Merlin's book, *Origins of the Modern Mind* (??)

reciprocally drove each other. Advancing culture placed a premium on larger, more sophisticated brains, which then enabled and set a premium on more complex group minds and cultures.

Another gain from this 'group mind' approach comes in our relationship with history and tradition. Man is a [time-binding](#) animal, as Alfred Korzybski pointed out. We can scarcely live without 'a usable past' and 'usable future' – the former to tell us who we are and what we value, the latter to tell us where we are going, what to work toward, and what to expect. To view society as a developing mind is to gain a solid handle on our proper relation to it. It speaks to us (if we are willing to listen), and we speak back. We do not choose the world we were born into, nor can we change it as a whole. All we can do is engage the found world as an interlocutor, and make what we can of that relationship.

To some useful extent, we read and dimly comprehend where our groups are going, and what they want of us. We anticipate plausible futures and try to prepare against their possibilities, but when we claim to predict what will happen, history laughs at us.⁶ In this way, the world and its history can be seen as a composite, ambient mind with collective intentions and a derisive sense of humour.

For many people, the mentalistic language offers a paradigm for cosmology, biology and social living which physicalists like myself regard as mythical, but which for them is completely literal and real. Thus, when previous generations sought to act according to 'God's will,' or when they spoke about 'the mandate of Heaven,' what they often had in mind was an existential context that a modern mind would understand as the collective minding of a human society – the intentions of a ruler or government working on and against the desires and feelings of its subjects. Powerful rulers could thus be seen as gods; and rulers, for their part, did all they could to be seen as servants or deputies of a god, or as gods themselves. When people sacrificed and prayed, they were really doing so (as a modern mind might say) to the overarching context of their lives, dimly comprehended by them as a volatile, capricious Being (or beings) very like themselves. They imagined a human-type relationship and dialogue with these imagined beings – a relationship which could be steered to their advantage with gifts and flattery, just like an ordinary relationship. And, of course, they thought of tribes, cities, kingdoms and empires as collective entities just as we do.

With this much granted, the question of a person's relationship with ambient mind is back on the table. It is no longer a question of asking favours, offering gifts and flattery, or seeking release from sin. But it is very much a question of how one listens and responds to a collective mind which shaped us as the individuals that we are, but which killed many millions of people in the last century, and shows no sign of being at peace today. Though we often ex-

⁶ In a manner of speaking, of course.

perience it as mocking – making sport (like the old [trickster gods](#)) of our human wishes and values – this ambient mind is not inherently benevolent or punitive. But it does have intentions of its own, which sometimes shower us with gifts, but sometimes with afflictions.

0.2 Social Identities

As I read it, present-day social theory suffers from two main defects. First, it provides no adequate account of human identity, of the individual human as a social being. Methodological individualism and resulting rational agent theories (e.g. the science of economics) see the individual as a locus of autonomous actions based on self-interested choice, contending against other individuals of this kind. In doing so, however, such theories fail to explain the sources of human identities, and the idiosyncrasies of individual self-interest (e.g. from an [Alexander the Great](#) at one end of its spectrum to a [Diogenes](#) at the other, with the great majority of men and women living in-between – mostly getting by as best they can, but often living in eccentric, or even self-destructive ways. Social psychology needs a theory of how people come to want the things they do, and to be conflicted in their desires. It breaks down when subjects fail to behave like 'rational' agents.

Functionalist, role-driven sociologies have an opposite defect. Taking the pre-established cultural roles as their starting point, they have no way to explain how those roles evolved or were negotiated in the first place, still less the underlying conflicts that they reflect.

Between them, what agent-based and functionalist sociologies give are two lop-sided, partial accounts of the human-in-society which do not add up to a coherent whole. Neither approach affords much handle on our social identities – the loop of emergence and contextual support between groups and their member individuals, between a society and its people. The best that contemporary sociology can do is to acknowledge that neither of these stories is adequate. It can affirm that humans are simultaneously creators and creatures of culture and social order, thus participating interlocutors in society, and neither its puppets nor its uncreated creators. But it offers no [ontology](#) (as we might call it) of the human Self: no comprehensive account of individual development and socialization – of the emergence of human identities (with all their idiosyncrasies) from social backgrounds which are themselves the outcome of choices by socialized individuals.

Hence a second defect, closely related to the first: that present-day social theory provides no adequate theory of cultural change, only part of which is driven by external change in the environment. Plainly, much of the cultural change we observe is not adaptive; some of it is maladaptive. In any case, it is partly autochthonous, arising and driven from within by its own necessities and logic. Even clearly adaptive change is based upon and shaped in detail by pre-existing cultural structures and forces.

A theory of composite mind – of the collective minding, mindset and identity of our social groups – addresses both these defects. Seeing the individual

mind as a product, extrusion or instantiation of the collective social one, it accounts for the evolution of the individual's values and priorities (yours or mine) as derived from and loosely patterned by the ambient, group-mind(s) in which that individual was formed. It sees his or her individual mind as mirroring, adapting to and reacting against the whole mindscape (cognitive context) as manifested and presented to the individual by significant others, and also through that society's infra-structure and its artifacts. From the feedback loop of mutual influence between individual agents and their jointly woven context, it then accounts for autochthonous cultural change as the development and self-expression – self-actualization – of the whole society, now seen as one vast, composite mind.

A central point, to which we shall revert again and again, is that 'mind' is not an entity – a material substance that some person or other system can have or not have. There is no such thing as 'a mind,' and it is a confusion of language to speak of such entities and to puzzle how they could inhabit and drive a group or human individual. Rather, minding is a process that we ascribe to ourselves and other systems to render them intelligible – to make sense of their actions and communications. Along with minding, there are also [mindset](#) and [identity](#), two cognitive structures that we attribute to minding systems for the same purpose: to explain why they act and communicate as they do.

0.3 Overview of Chapters

The project that I set myself in writing this book was to make the strongest case I could for the notion of 'group mind – the collective mind of a group of human individuals who deal with each other on a regular basis, facing some common problems and taking some joint decisions. Such groups might be as small as a married couple, or as large as a multinational corporation, a modern state, or the global system of states. They are formed, of course, by the intercommunicating minds of their members – at least, by a ruling subset of their members – but they evolve customs, pass laws, establish policies and undertake joint projects. They act as whole and functioning systems, not just as assemblies of component parts, each merely doing its own thing.

This book, accordingly, propounds and argues for an intentionalist stance that takes the notion of 'group mind' literally:

Chapter 1 (*Generic Mind*) reviews the notion of [mind](#) as a basis for all that follows. How shall we define the concept of 'mind'? How do we recognize another mind when we meet one? It begins by introducing a concept of suggestion (attempted influence) as a basis for communication that's more fundamental for our purpose than the engineer's concept of information. It then considers generic minding as the reception and processing of suggestions that a system receives, and as the generation of responses to these suggestions. It defines mindset as a pre-acquired system of internalized suggestion-structures ('memes,' as such structures are now called) that guide the minding process. As driven by their mindsets, minding systems construct identities for them-

selves – through which they understand and present themselves, and deal with the world around them.⁷

It is seen that the concepts of generic minding and mindset apply very naturally to certain human populations of individuals, which maintain themselves and respond collectively to the world around them. (Only populations of this kind will be called groups, in our technical sense. The passengers on a bus, for example, comprise a population or a set – what we will call a bevy – but are not normally a group, unless something happens to make them collaborate in some way.) Such collective minds emerge not just in the direct participation of their human members, but in the [transactive memory](#), [stigmergic infrastructure](#), and network of relationships that they maintain. They are of varying size and structure, from close friendships, couples and nuclear families to business firms, social and religious communities, NGOs and nation-states. We thus consider human society as a nested [heterarchy](#) of collective and personal minds: its groups and its human persons.

Chapter 2 (*Unsocial Sociability*) is a review of the human condition. Our species evolved a range of adaptations for ultra-social living – highly successful, but with conspicuous limitations. The central fact, of course, is that unlike the bees or ants, our human sociality allows for and is combined with a high degree of autonomy and individual mindset and self-interest.

Chapter 3 (*Knitting Together*) describes how group minds come together and emerge in a population of individuals who interact and relate to one another. When people work together, or just spend a lot of time with each other, they create a pool of knowledge (called '[transactive knowledge](#)') which no one holds on their own, which may not be written down anywhere, but which they contrive to share between them. The application of transactive knowledge in thought and practice is called [distributed cognition](#).

Chapter 4 (*Politics as a Thought Process*) considers 'politics' as a minding process – in every human group, and in society as a whole. Individuals, and organized subgroups of various kinds bring their suggestions to the society's political forums where they compete for 'air time,' for scarce material resources, for allegiance by individuals and subgroups, and for collective acceptance by the group as a minding system. If we understand 'minding' as the reception and weighing of competing suggestions, then 'politics' is precisely the arena in which suggestions received by a system are collated and weighed, and where collective responses are generated. Violent conflict is the default weighing process – the method of last resort when less destructive processes (e.g. dialogue, debate, negotiation or trial-at-law) do not avail.

Chapter 5 (*Collective Learning*) describes how groups can learn, (but often fail to learn), from their collective experiences. In fact, one of the best reasons

⁷ I have discussed these ideas more fully in some previous writings, all freely available on the Web. See especially [In a World of Suggestions](#) and [Who Goes There?](#)

to think of groups as collective minds is that doing so allows us to ask the same questions about them that we ask about ourselves and other individuals. It lets us ask about their collective intelligence, their ethics and their sanity: how they profit from experience, and how they relate to other groups. In this chapter, we discuss how group minds learn from experience, how they feel, think and plan, and why group learning is as difficult and painful as history shows it to be.

Chapter 6 (*Collective Mindset*) identifies six sectors of mindset as the structural background to a group's decision process. As an example, we review the situation in July, 1914 when the First World War, seen as a civil war of European society, engulfed almost the whole world because one Austrian archduke and his wife were assassinated at Sarajevo. Only some notion of group mindset can explain how this minor incident sufficed to trigger such a huge and terrible result.

Chapter 7 (*Learning From History*) suggests that a worthwhile theory of history is possible, although it is not possible to predict a society's future. It suggests too that history is best studied as collective thought process about games and issues, and not just as a reconstruction of events. It concludes with an introduction to 'big history,' in which human history is placed in cosmic context as a story of the emergence first of life and then of minding in the history of the universe. The fact is that people use history both for cognitive and for rhetorical purposes; and every group wants a usable history that furthers its purposes.

Chapter 8 (*The Group for Itself*) seeks to launch a fresh discussion and theory of human groups as self-serving entities. It begins by considering certain typical drives, desires and goals that human groups will tend to have by their very nature. It then considers how groups set context for their members, socializing, directing and using them, (sometimes much against their personal interests), to achieve collective goals. After some discussion of R.J. Rummel's concept of democide and a disclosure of my own politics, it concludes with a personal take on the state of the world mind today.

Chapter 9 (*Embedded Persons*) reviews some ways in which human individuals are socialized, shaped and guided, though not controlled outright, by context pressures from the groups to which they belong, and from society as a whole. A main reason to think of human groups as endowed with minds is precisely the causal context pressures that they exert on their individual members. We are strongly shaped and influenced by groups and by the society that these comprise. Their context pressures commonly have us doing things that no individual would or could do otherwise. On the other hand, deviance and defiance remain possible, and sometimes profitable or praiseworthy or both.

Chapter 10 (*Conclusion: Life in a Social Context*) reviews the pros and cons, advantages and costs, in viewing groups as having minds of their own – and thus, in viewing politics as a cognitive process. It suggests some implications of this perspective for social science. It ends with a sketch of our species' tragedy: the ineluctable dependence of human individuals on social entities, mostly unchosen, which may or may not be worthy of our love and loyalty.

Four appendices expand on several features of this argument:

Appendix A (*Communication as Suggestion*) explains why human communication is better thought of as attempted influence (i.e. suggestion) than as a transmission of information.

Appendix B (*Order and Self-Organization*) outlines what I have elsewhere called '[the ecoDarwinian Paradigm](#)': a worldview which sees order as emerging spontaneously in dynamic systems – evolving from the bottom up, instead of being designed and called into existence from the top down by some intelligent power.

Appendix C (*The Ultrasociated Ape*) reviews the evolution of our species, reading the archaeological record as the story of some primate hominids who became specialists in group mind – thereby achieving tremendous collective power and relative security at the price of mutual dependence, and surrender of some personal autonomy to their groups and 'cultures.'

"One chimpanzee is not a chimpanzee at all," as Robert Yerkes said. Still less is a single human fully human. Humans need to belong to groups, and we derive our identities in adaptation to those groups. This fact, and certain other features of our individual mindsets, are biological givens for our species. The expression 'human nature' has a definite meaning that anthropologists can study and describe.

Appendix D (*Behold the Man*) is a thumbnail autobiography, offered as an example of the influence that world history may have on a single individual. I am a fairly good example of the embedding described in Chapter 9, as I was fortunate enough to be shaped and strongly influenced by the events of my time, but not destroyed by them. I had considerable awareness and participation in these events, without shaping them very much. I belonged to history and made my life within it – in my own way, but much like everyone else.

0.4 Acknowledgements and Caveats

With great pleasure, I begin by acknowledging a friendship of more than 50 years with John McKeefery, now a retired psychotherapist, who not only read and commented on this manuscript, but contributed substantially to the development of my thought – in numerous conversations since we met and then roomed together, when I was about 19 years and he was five years older.

Thanks, John! You figure incognito at several points in this book, especially on its last page, both where I've agreed with you and where I haven't.

Writing as an amateur, I have mostly had to do without the (very great) advantages of a university community and library. In partial compensation, I have enjoyed a great deal of freedom and leisure to browse on the Web, follow my nose, and think as an educated layperson about the world I find around me. What I have made of that freedom must justify, if it can, my presumption in thinking and writing outside the academic framework and its conventions.

Though working outside this framework, I did not lack for input from academic sources. In particular, I want to thank a few scholars, who directly inspired and challenged me, without whose work my own, less disciplined efforts would not have been possible:

- [Gregory Bateson](#) from whom I take the concept of a [cognitive ecology](#);
- [Christopher Clark](#) who turned me on to the [July Crisis](#) as a spectacular example of mindset (and collective mind) in action;
- [Antonio Damasio](#) who coined a phrase – “[the feeling of what happens](#)” for the central, really mysterious, feature of consciousness.
- [Richard Dawkins](#) from whom I borrow the convenient word and concept of a ‘[meme](#)’;
- [Daniel Dennett](#) whose writings first turned me on to the philosophical mysteries of neuropsychology and cognition;
- [Merlin Donald](#) who convinced me that the advanced cognitive capabilities of individual human minds probably evolved in adaptation to the demands of their increasingly complex group cultures;
- [Emile Durkheim](#) and [Carl Jung](#) who did more than anyone to launch the idea of [collective consciousness](#);
- [Samuel Finer](#) whose monumental study of [government](#) put me on to the idea of politics as a collective thought process;
- [Michael Tomasello](#) from whom I learned about the centrality of [joint attention](#) as a precondition for the shared cognition that has been definitive for the human species;
- [Daniel Wegner](#) and [Edwin Hutchins](#) for their work on [transactive knowledge](#) and [distributed cognition](#).

The thoughts of these individuals formed my own thinking in this field. I can only thank them here, while apologizing for any points where I have misunderstood their writing, or done them less than justice in disagreeing on some matter.

A Few Caveats

A few declarations and cautionary notes before we begin:

1) Much of this book is a survey of what is known – or what I take as known – about the human animal as a social creature. The original bits include:

- my notion of suggestion (rather than information) as the basis of human communication;
- my notion of politics as a collective thought process;
- my treatment of collective mindset as an evolving ecosystem of cognitive features and structures, susceptible to historical and sociological analysis; and, above all
- my choice to take the notion of collective mind completely literally and seriously, and to make of it what I can.

The book as a whole should be read as one attempt to develop the notions of suggestion and group mind in the context of our current knowledge.

2) Apologies are due for the sketchy history on offer at several points in this book, especially for my account of the [July Crisis](#) leading to the [First World War](#) and for the thumbnail biographies of [Porfirio Diaz](#) and [Benedict Arnold](#). This material is meant for illustrative purposes only, not as historical scholarship, and should be read with that understanding in mind.

3) The book's vast topic precludes a properly scholarly presentation and is frankly cursory in spots, assuming an altogether unreasonable amount of background knowledge in the reader. To remedy this, I have relied on the World Wide Web, especially on Wikipedia, in place of a glossary and extensive end notes. The book is meant to be read either with an eReader, or in hard copy with reverence to the PDF files online; and the reader is urged to use the hyperlinks provided, without becoming distracted from the thread of argument. Some of the pages referenced may go extinct, in which case readers will have to search the Web on their own. Rich introductory material will be found online for every keyword and phrase I've used, except for a few that are my own – and therefore defined within the text.

4) Finally, the reader deserves warning and apology for several of my stylistic choices: First, I have mostly used 'they' (meaning 'he or she') as a gender-neutral pronoun, except where that usage feels unbearably awkward. In these cases, I have used 'he' as the traditional pronoun for generic humanity. No slight to women is intended.

Second, because the words of ordinary language do not always work precisely for what I am trying to say, I have made inordinate use of parentheses, trying to make my meaning clear. I also make frequent use of scare quotes to indicate features of mindset (such as 'value' and 'belief'), that are too vague or imprecise for my purpose, but for which nothing better is available. I use familiar words like 'thought,' 'idea' and 'plan' (usually without scare quotes) for the expected products of 'minding.'