(Re)conceptualizing the genesis of a "we is greater than me" psychological orientation: Sartre meets Tomasello

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Abstract: Drawing on many areas of expertise, from paleontology to psychology, Tomasello offers a plausible, evolutionary story about how our ancestors are likely to have developed cooperative behaviors and collaborative lifeways in order to survive and thrive. He also claims that this narrative explains why they would have begun to *think* in characteristically *cooperative* and moral ways, developing a "we is greater than me" [we>me] psychological orientation. Do the arguments offered support this extra claim? This article suggests that they do not. It seeks to alleviate this shortcoming by drawing upon some conceptual resources offered by Sartre's *Theory of Practical Ensembles.* The centerpiece of the article consists of a detailed analysis of Sartre's account of the genesis of the "group-in-fusion," seeking to show that the genesis of a we-way of thinking in a group made up of *many* requires the mediation of what Sartre calls a "third party" (*le tiers*). After closely examining Sartre's treatment of the "third party" in the apocalyptic genesis of the "group-in-fusion," I evaluate the success of this notion in resolving those questions that Tomasello's account raises while,

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at the same time, addressing the ontological question concerning the nature of the individual-group relation, in a way that suggests new and significant alternatives to standard dilemmas in contemporary social philosophy.

1.   INTRODUCTION

Drawing on different sources of theory—from evolutionary anthropology, to comparative and developmental psychology, and analytic philosophy of action—Tomasello tells us a plausible, evolutionary story about how our ancestors are likely to have developed cooperative behaviors and collaborative lifeways in order to survive and thrive. He also argues that this narrative explains why they would have begun to think in characteristically *cooperative* and moral ways, developing a kind of "we is greater than me" [we>me] psychological orientation, which gives social norms their special powers of legitimacy in personal decision-making. The story is a plausible, even persuasive, account of how our ancestors developed forms of cooperative behaviors not seen in other species. However, does Tomasello's account really show how ancestors would have been naturalistically prompted in the actual circumstances envisaged in his evolutionary history to develop a kind of "agent-neutral," group-minded—not "me" but "we" as a group—perspective that could take into account equally and impersonally the perspectives of everyone involved?

This article suggests that it does not. It seeks to alleviate the above shortcoming by drawing upon some conceptual resources offered by Jean-Paul Sartre whose analyses of the genesis of the "group-in-fusion" in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* are focused of the key role of the "third party" (*le tiers*)[1]. In so doing, I pursue a twofold aim. First, I aim to show that Sartre's treatment of the third in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* provides insightful, albeit

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1   Throughout this paper I will use the term "third party," when referring to Sartre's quotes from the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in their English translation by Alan Sheridan-Smith (Sartre, 1976[1960]). When referring both to this concept and to the concrete agent outside of Sartre's quotes, I shall use the term "third," following a widespread common linguistic choice among Sartre's commentators. However, when using this term in composed words or expressions, such as third-party perspective or third-party position, I will use the term third party.

underexplored, new ways of thinking about the conditions of emergence of a group behaviour (group-oriented behaviour) and of group thoughts (or a group-minded way of thinking) that help to reformulate Tomasello's account of the genesis of group-thinking in a more detailed, convincing and persuasive manner. Second, I aim to show that this notion, which Sartre introduces to address the ontological question concerning the nature of the individual-group relation, significantly advances our understanding of how we-thinking can be both individual and common, thus providing new and significant alternatives to standard dilemmas in contemporary social philosophy.

The article is organized as follows. In the first section, I provide an overview of Tomasello's account of the origins of cooperative human thinking and then I review the main elements in this account, seeking to show that at no point does its development convincingly explain how a group-minded—not "me" but "we" as a group—perspective, a "we is greater than me" [we>me] psychological orientation is supposed to be gained. In the second and third sections, I outline an alternative framework by drawing inspiration from Sartre's account of the genesis of the group-in-fusion in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason.* In the fourth and last section, after closely examining Sartre's treatment of the third in the apocalyptic genesis of the group-in-fusion, I evaluate the success of this notion in resolving those questions (or critical concerns) that Tomasello's account raises, while, at the same time, addressing the ontological question concerning the nature of the individual-group relation.

2.   TOMASELLO'S ACCOUNT OF HOW HUMAN THINKING BECOME
        GROUP-MINDED, OBJECTIVE AND NORMATIVE

In the work of Michael Tomasello—as elaborated in his 2014 book *A Natural History of Human Thinking*—we find an insightful, original, and transdisciplinary attempt to reconstruct the evolutionary origins of uniquely human thinking (Tomasello, 2014). His main concern is to provide a plausible evolutionary narrative/story (i.e. historical explanation) of how human thinking has become group-minded, objective, and normative. According to his proposal—supported by different sources of theory, from paleontology to psychology—a major part of the explanation about how human beings came to adopt a kind of "agent neutral," group-minded perspective comes from processes of evolution by means of natural selection. "More important, though," according to Tomasello, "the selecting is done not by the physical environment but rather by the social environment" (Tomasello 2018, 75).

Tomasello's story is mainly given as "an imaginative reconstruction of historical events many thousands of millennia in the past" (Tomasello 2016, 154). The period covered includes that of "early humans" and "modern humans" by which he refers to the species *Homo sapiens sapiens* that began to emerge some 150,000 years ago, but his focus is "mainly on the 140,000-year period before agriculture and modern civil societies, when humans were still living exclusively as hunter-gatherers in relatively small-scale tribal societies" (Tomasello 2016, 87). The story is grounded on two complementary pillars. The first is a reading of our ecological history (Smith and Szathmáry, 1995) and the pressures it brought to bear on our ancestors. According to this reading, "early humans were at some point forced by ecological circumstances into more cooperative lifeways, and so their thinking became more directed toward figuring out ways to coordinate with others to achieve joint goals or even collective group goals" (Tomasello 2014, 4). The second pillar is a comparative study of the psychological processes and changes that differentiate human children from great apes in cognition and sociality (Tomasello and Carpenter 2005; Tomasello, Call and Gluckman 1997; Tomasello 2021).

The essence of his account, or its main hypothesis, is that what created an objective, group-minded perspective—not "me" but "we" as a group— were adaptations for dealing with problems of social coordination, problems presented by individuals' attempts to *co*-operate with others (Tomasello 2014, 4-5). Tomasello's major claim is that important aspects of humans' collaborative group-thinking "emanate not from culture and language *per se* but, rather, from some deeper and more primitive forms of uniquely human social engagement" (Tomasello 2014, 2). To corroborate this claim, Tomasello draws on the work of a small group of analytic philosophers of action including Michael Bratman (1992), Margaret Gilbert (1989), John Searle (1995) and Raimo Tuomela (2007),[2] who have investigated "how humans put their heads together with others in acts of so-called shared intentionality" (Tomasello 2014, 3).

Tomasello's *shared intentionality hypothesis* comprises two key steps, "both of which involved new ecological circumstances that forced early humans into new modes of social interaction and organization" (Tomasello 2016, 3): joint intentionality followed by collective intentionality.

The first step occurred "as a change in ecology forced early humans to forage together with a partner or else starve. […] To coordinate their collaborative activities cognitively, early humans evolved skills and motivations

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2   I am well aware that the above-mentioned philosophers have published more recent writings. Nevertheless, these are the texts on which Tomasello relies, and therefore I will stick to them for the purpose of this introduction.

of *joint intentionality* enabling them to form a joint goal together with a partner a joint goal […]" (Tomasello 2016, 4). In this way, a "second-personal thinking" emerged. Specifically, "what emerges for the first time with early humans, is a 'we' intentionality in which two individuals engage with the intentional states of one another both jointly and recursively" (Tomasello 2014, 47). In other words, early humans became capable of forming a joint agent "we" with a partner, and this changed the way they perceived the world, such that they could manipulate it in acts of thinking:

> Instead of just their own view on the world, early humans could also view the world at the same time from the perspective of the other, which might also include her perspective on my perspective. Early humans had not just […] a view from here, but rather a view simultaneously from here and there. (Tomasello 2014, 76-77)

The "crucial outcome" of this first step was the emergence of a "we is greater than me" psychological orientation, in which it was understood that a "me" had to be subordinated to a "we" [we>me], co-constituted by *I* and *you*.

The second evolutionary step in this hypothesized natural history was prompted by two serious demographic challenges. The first challenge was competition with other humans. Under the pressure of competition for foraging, early humans were to transform into tightly knit social groups "with joint goals aimed at group survival […] and division-of-labor roles […]" (Tomasello 2014, 82), to protect themselves from *outside* invaders. As a consequence, our ancestors "began to understand themselves as members of a particular social group with a particular *group identity*" (2014, 83). Modern human individuals identified with their cultural group because they knew that they were dependent on their group more than their group was dependent on them, for all kinds of life-sustaining help and support. At this stage, there emerged a particular "we" way of thinking, (that is, a "group-minded" way of thinking), whereby people took the cognitive perspective of their group as a whole to care for its welfare and to conform to its way. For this "we-way" of thinking—thinking as member of a particular group—to emerge a new way of forming bonds with all in-group members was needed. That new way was similarity and what has been called "social imitation." Modern individuals "began to understand themselves as members of a particular social group with a particular group identity" (2014, 83) on the basis of their behavioral similarity: "people who talk like me, prepare food like me, and net fish in the conventional way—that is, those who share my cultural practices—are most likely members

of my cultural group" (Tomasello 2016, 89). As this first we-way of thinking emerged, there arose a distinctive in-group *versus* out-group psychology: *in-*group members are those who look, act, and talk like me even if I do not know them personally, whereas *out-*group members are individuals from another group who looks, act, and talk differently from us.

Importantly, modern humans' group-minded interdependence also served to foster a sense of *felt* solidarity (based on similarity) for all in-group members who resembled in behavior and appearance. In other words, this situation led group members to be especially sympathetic, helping and loyal to in-group members but unhelpful to and mistrustful of all outgroup barbarians. In other words, the logic of interdependence made individuals caring about the welfare of all the others in the group in the form of "we" must *together* compete with and protect ourselves from "them" (Tomasello 2014, 82).

The second demographic challenge was that population sizes were increasing. At this point, modern humans began living in larger, more coherent, and tribally structured cultural groups that competed with each other for resources. As modern human groups started becoming larger, they began collaborating with sometimes *unfamiliar others* and thus faced new kinds of coordination problems. One of the main challenge for modern human individuals was "to scale up from a life based on interdependent collaboration with well-known partners to a life lived in a cultural group with all kinds of interdependent groupmates" (Tomasello 2016, 85). The solution was the creation of a set of conventional cultural practices, to which everyone expected everyone, in cultural common ground, to conform. Roles in these practices were fully "agent independent," in that they applied to anyone who would play the role, where "anyone" is a designation in principle for anyone who would be one of us. According to Tomasello, "an important consequence of modern humans' participation in cultural common ground and the agent-independent roles of conventional cultural practices was the ability to take a fully agent-independent perspective on things: the perspective of anyone who would be one of us, an 'objective' perspective, which represents maximal generality beyond early humans' more limited partner-independent perspective from within the dyadic interaction. (Tomasello (2014) contrasts early humans' 'view from here and there' with modern humans' 'view from nowhere.')" (2016, 95) As part of this process, modern human individuals began thinking not just perspectively, but "objectively."

In the end, the upshot of all these new ways of relating to one another was a "great wave of group-mindedness" (Tomasello 2014, 120) that governed the way that "we" expect "us" to do things. "Crucially, the generality involved in

this new group-mindedness" is not merely a summation of many perspectives; rather, it is the transformation of a plurality of perspectives "into something like 'any possible perspective,' which means essentially 'objective'" (2014, 92). In this respect, "human group-mindedness […] reflects a profound shift in ways of both doing and knowing. Everything is genericized to fit anyone in the group in an agent-neutral manner, and this results in a kind of collective perspective on things, experienced as a sense of the 'objectivity' of things […]" (2014, 93).

As I read this passage, it suggests that the complete story of human thinking has a major third step in which the "we-way" of thinking—the group-minded way of thinking—of *early* modern humans—got scaled up to objective thinking.

Therefore, although not explicitly stated, it is more or less clear that Tomasello distinguishes three stages in the history of human thinking. The first stage corresponds to the "second-personal thinking" of early humans which was aimed at solving coordination problems presented by direct interactions with specific others. The second stage corresponds to the group-minded way of thinking of *early* modern humans, which was objective, but from *within* a particular group, from the *internal* perspective of a specific group. The third stage, which is the point of arrival of Tomasello's story, corresponds to the so-called "agent-neutral" thinking, thinking not just perspectivally but "objectively" in terms of how any rational person, regardless of individual perspective, should think "about things that are objectively real, true, and right from any perspective whatsoever" (Tomasello 2014, 122). Importantly, as soon as a "we-way" of thinking emerges, it regulates all group members normatively, in the sense that it functions as a normative obligation to act and think in accordance to the group's norms. Overall, as Tomasello summarizes:

> Given all of these new ways of behaving and thinking, the crack in the human experiential egg now became a veritable chasm: the individual no longer contrasted her own perspective with that of a specific other—the view from here and there; rather, she contrasted her own perspective with some kind of generic perspective of anyone and everyone about things that were objectively real, true and right from any perspective whatsoever—a perspectiveless view from nowhere. […] The monumental second step on the way to modern humans thus took the perspectival and cooperativized thinking of early humans collectivized, and objectified it. Whereas early humans internalized and referenced the perspective of what Mead (1934) calls the 'significant

other,' modern humans internalized and referenced the perspective of the group as a whole or any group member, Mead's 'generalized other.' Human thinking at this point is no longer a solely individual process, or even a second-personal social process; rather it is an internalized dialogue between 'what I do think' and 'what anyone ought to think' (Sellars, 1963). Human thinking has now become collective, objective, reflective, and normative; that is to say, it has now become full-blown reasoning. (Tomasello 2014, 122-123)

As I read the above-mentioned passage, it suggests that our forebears, because they indulged in collaborative exchanges, they would have developed specific perspective-taking abilities—human-specific abilities to take and internalize the perspective of a specific or significant other first, and subsequently the "perspective of the group as a whole, or ant group member, Mead's 'generalized other'" (Tomasello 2014, 123)—that explain how they moved from second-personal and perspectival to group-minded, and "objective" thinking.

The question that interests me here is whether Tomasello gives a convincing explanation of how a group-minded thinking emerged from perspectival (and second-personal) thinking and got scaled up to objective and normative thinking. The main argument in Tomasello's explanation is that "cognitively, individuals who coordinate their perspectives with 'anyone who would be one of us' construct a kind of perspectiveless "objective" perspective on things" (2021, 318). The manner in which individuals are carried to gradually efface their own perspective in deference to the more objective, and impartial perspective of "an ever wider, more trans-personally constituted generic individual or social group—the view from anyone" (2014, 122) is thus explained by means of what Mead (1934) and Piaget (1995[1928]), among others, called coordinated *role-taking* and *perspective-taking.*

But is such an argument plausible? Does a story built around such elements *suffice* to explain how group-minded thinking might possibly emerge?

In this paper, I suggest that it does not. With this summary in place, I can now briefly formulate my critical concerns. My first criticism is that Tomasello's account is insufficient to explain the *transition* from perspectival to group-minded and normative thinking which "is not just scaling up from second-personal to multi-personal, but rather scaling up to the group's self-identity" (Tomasello 2021, 318). More precisely, I believe that this part of the scaling up requires a far more detailed analysis of how the group-perspective—not "me" but "we" as a group—is internalized, and thus obtains its subjective dimension. My second criticism is that Tomasello's account is insufficient to

explain how a we-perspective is internalized, and how this process alters and expands the first-person singular perspective of the involved parties, so that is not merely individual but also common.

To make my claim crystal clear, I believe, *first,* that Tomasello's account does not provide details about the *qualitative leap* from plurality to interiorized multiplicity, which marks the genesis of a we-perspective experienced "from within," as both individual and common and, *second,* that he leaves the crucial question concerning the nature of the individual-group relation unanswered.

In the following section, I would like to indicate a way out of these impasses—*a* way, I would like to stress, and not necessarily *the* way—by drawing upon some conceptual resources offered by Jean-Paul Sartre in the chapter of the *Theory of Practical Ensembles* entitled the "group-in-fusion."

In this fascinating and somehow forgotten book of *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*[3], where Sartre seeks to account for the social integration of human multiplicities beyond the holism/individualism dichotomy, he faults sociologists for failing to offer a proper account of the relationship between the individual and the community. It is precisely this lacuna that Sartre seeks to overcome by introducing his original concept of "third party."

In his own words, it is "a common error of many sociologists to treat the group as a binary relation (individual-community)"—in which the individual is either absorbed (and therefore dissolved) in the group or in front of it, as a separate entity—"whereas, in reality, it is a ternary relation" (Sartre 1976[1960], 421), in that each individual, *as third party,* is connected, in the unity of a single praxis and, therefore, of a single perception, with all the group members, and with each of them individually. The crucial point to be retained is that each member in the group is a third in relation to every other member: each individual might become a "regulatory" third *within* the group and might act as a mediator through whom all the others are unified. Moreover, Sartre's major claim is that "whatever relations of simple reciprocity" there are within the group, "these relations, though transfigured by

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3   It is worth recalling that Sartre's *Critique* has largely been ignored both in social ontology and in the burgeoning field of the phenomenology of sociality. Almost everyone who has written about Sartre's ideas about the "we" mistakenly considers the presentation in *Being and Nothingness* to be definitive. That work, which appeared in 1943, does contain an analysis of "Being-With (*Mitsein*) and the 'We'" in the chapter entitled "Concrete Relations with Others." But shortly after he published *Being and Nothingness,* Sartre began to modify many of its fundamental points. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind what he himself said near the end of his life: "What is particularly bad in *L'Être et le Néant* [*Being and Nothingness*] is the specifically social chapter, on the 'we', compared to the chapters on the 'you'and 'others' [...] that part of *L'Être et le Néant* failed..." (Sartre 1981, 13).

their being-in-a-group, are not constitutive" of "a group behavior and of group thoughts" (Sartre 1976[1960], 374). What is needed is a relation of "mediated reciprocity" involving the figure and the function of a third party.

My aim in the following sections is to show how this notion is successful in resolving those questions (critical concerns) that Tomasello's account raises.

There are, of course, important differences between these two approaches. Tomasello's main concern is with the historical exploration of the evolutionary origins of human thinking. Sartre's main concern is with the philosophical explanation of the genesis of groups. And with that in mind, Sartre focuses on those social relations, which can be adduced to explain the emergence of social groups from the ephemeral state of fusion (in the ephemeral "group-in-fusion") to the permanent state of institutions (Sartre 1976[1960], 348).

Despite these differences, Sartre's and Tomasello's accounts address a similar problem—namely the problem of understanding how individual thinking becomes group-minded—and can be connected in the attempt to best clarify the social processes responsible for the emergence of a "we perspective" in large-scale, plural groups (a group made up of *many*[4]). But, if we look into the details of Sartre's account—I claim—we can identify some conceptual tools and key insights that may help to reformulate Tomasello's argument regarding the transition from "second-personal" and perspectival to "group-minded" and normative thinking in a more detailed, convincing and persuasive manner. To grasp this claim, I suggest looking closer at Sartre's treatment of the third in the apocalyptic genesis of the "group-in-fusion."

3.   SARTRE'S ACCOUNT OF THE GENESIS OF THE "GROUP IN FUSION" IN THE *CRITIQUE*

Sartre begins his study of the genesis of groups with ephemeral groups "which form and disintegrate rapidly" (Sartre 1976[1960], 349), and the first of these is what he calls the "group-in-fusion" (*le groupe en fusion*), a revolutionary, newly constituted—yet still unstructured and leaderless group.

In general, a group-in-fusion is formed under the pressure of adverse circumstances (e.g., the pressures of enemy groups or the pressures of material and ecological threats such as famine, scarcity, etc.) and realizes the unification of singularities "on the spot." In Sartre's own terms, a "group-in-fusion [fused

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4   According to a well-known typology drawn by Simmel we can make a fundamental distinction, namely between the "group made up of *many*" or a plural group – formally more than three, but in fact an undefined number of participants – and the "group of *two*" or a dyadic group. (Simmel 1964, part II, chap. iii, iv and v)

group] emerges 'hot' (*à chaud*) and acts where previously there were only gatherings" (1976[1960], 357). However, through this ephemeral formation, "everyone glimpses new, deeper, but *yet to be created,* [social units] (the Third Estate as a group from the standpoint of the nation, the class as a group in so far as it produces its apparatuses of unification, etc.)" (1976[1960], 357).

With these preliminaries in place, let me go into some detail by drawing pre-theoretically on a concrete example carefully described by Sartre, namely the insurrectional gatherings that prepared the Storming of the Bastille on July 14th 1789. This example[5]—minutely described by Sartre—will provide some key insights that will be relevant in the theoretical considerations that follow.

After July 12th 1789, the people of Paris were in a state of revolt. Obviously, their "anger" had deeply rooted causes (cold, hunger, exhaustion, etc.) but so far these had all been suffered either "in resignation" or in unorganized outbursts and scattered riots. The upheaval that gave rise to the flash of collective action, and therefore to the emergence of a group, originated in a complex "external" event occasioning a situation of imminent danger. On the morning of Sunday July 12th, King Louis XVI gathered military troops around Paris to maintain order in the capital. At this very moment, the Parisians, who so far were just challenging one another or fleeing for their own lives at the expense, if need be, of the others, became aware of their common fate/destiny, namely an imminent danger to be fought. And this *situation*—this emotionally grounded sharing of *experiences* (not yet and not merely or predominantly intentions, as Tomasello would argue)—established what is sometimes, and improperly, called imitation or contagion[6]: everyone

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5 I am aware that this is a clichéd example, especially in a paper on Sartre. Nevertheless, it yields particularly rich material for a phenomenological investigation on the experiences setting the foundations for the emergence of groups. Moreover, this example is paradigmatic of emergent and minimal forms of cooperation corresponding to mass actions, demonstrations, gatherings or marches of protesting citizens—such as the *French Yellow vests movement* and the *Italian Sardines movement*—insurrectional and revolutionary movements, in general, which are a pervasive, although largely underexplored, phenomena in our contemporary societies.

6 It is plausible to imagine that Sartre is referring here to the works of Le Bon (1920[1895]) and Tarde (1890)—the founding fathers of "crowd psychology"—who had cast so much light on these mechanisms and their functioning in masses or groups. The meaning of these two mechanisms—imitation and contagion—which both come under the enigmatic concept/term of "mutual suggestion" do not seem to be sharply differentiated in the texts of Le Bon and Tarde, since they are both considered to be similar effects of some kind of magnetic influence (suggestion or suggestibility). According to Le Bon, for instance "contagion" must be classed among those phenomena of a hypnotic order, which he describes more or less as follows: in a group, every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual, immersed for some length of time in a group, soon finds

sees himself in the Other, not as individual, however, but, in this case, as an individual incarnation of "the Parisian population" (1976[1960], 354).

This was followed by a first stage of spontaneous but entirely disorganized gatherings (*rassemblements d'imitation*), for example a march followed by panic and flight, and groupings followed by an organized struggle. These gatherings were contagious, but not unifying; at the same time, they were "quasi-intentional" (1976[1960], 369), but not goal directed because no one could determine the objective clearly. People, says Sartre, "did not come out […] to carry out some definite task: they went to a particular public space in the knowledge that they would find a lot of other people there who had come under the same conditions" (1976[1960], 369). Their objective, still indeterminate, was to overcome a common fear.[7]

This stage resulted in an essential crucial step, a common, concerted and cooperative action, undertaken for the sake of the whole community: the storming of the Bastille, a royal fortress and a prison that had come to symbolize the King's repression and abuse of power. On the afternoon of July 14th 1789, "the people of Paris armed themselves against the king" (1976[1960], 355) and occupied the royal fortress.

From this moment on, something new emerged that was no longer a random crowd (e.g., a collection of unrelated individuals), and not yet an organized group, but what Sartre, in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* calls

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himself—in consequence of the magnetic influence given out by it—in a special state that much resembles the state of "fascination," which links the hypnotized to the hypnotizer and which drags him into certain situations, without realizing it and without him being able to accept or refuse it as he wishes. Similarly, according to Tarde, "imitation"—which is a form of suggestion—could be seen as arising from the fact that the group members imitate the thoughts, feelings or behavior of one of them who is at once their spiritual model and effective leader. In some cases imitation does not come from a single individual, however charismatic (a leader), nor from a separate class of individuals (political, religious, scientific or other leaders) who draw the others together and command them, but from the from a magnetic influence given out by the group as an anonymous and atmospheric whole: each imitates, or merely and unconsciously repeats, the gestures, words, actions and behaviors of other people. It is this diffuse influence of the whole group that Max Scheler (1973[1913/16]; 2008[1913]) most often relates to "emotional contagion." Returning to Sartre, he seems here to separate/make a distinction between the process of "group identification" and then mechanisms of imitation or contagion. I believe that Sartre is correct in making this distinction, as I am going to explain in more detail in what follows.

7   As Sartre further explains in a footnote, "people did not come out to meet particular individuals, or to obey some order, to carry out some definite task: they went to a particular public space *in the knowledge* that they would find a lot of other people there who had come under the same conditions and whose objective was otherwise indeterminate" (Sartre 1976[1960], 369, fn. 11).

the apocalyptic genesis of the "group-in-fusion" (1976[1960], 357): a newly constituted—though still unstructured and leaderless—group united by the undertaking of a common—albeit still inadequately determined—action.

In this respect, the Storming of the Bastille not only marked the beginning of the French Revolution—in which the monarchy was overthrown and a republic formed on the basis of the ideas of "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*"—but also the first step in the genesis of a group aware of itself as a unity of individuals in solidarity, through which everyone glimpsed new, deeper, but *yet-to-be-created* social units.

The main philosophical insight that can be drawn pre-theoretically from this example is that the genesis of a group-minded way of thinking must be linked in the first place (in temporal order) to an external occurrence, whether it is a need, an imminent danger, a threat or an enemy, which in itself might occasion their cooperative action (common *praxis*). It occurs when a danger, a threat or an enemy group reveals to people that "the impossibility of change is an impossibility of life" (1976[1960], 350). Even more precisely, what Sartre calls the "group-in-fusion" emerges "hot" (*à chaud*) under the pressure of adverse circumstances directly or indirectly connected with life. It arises as a common action undertaken to respond to such a threat.

In Sartre's own words, "The group constitutes itself on the basis of a need or common danger and defines itself by the common objective which determines its common *praxis*" (1976[1960], 350). It should be immediately noticed, however, that the external occurrence (the threat or the danger) that acts as a driving force (i.e., as a motivation) in the process of grouping (and therefore toward the constitution of the group) is not enough to create a group behavior and group thoughts. Rather, according to Sartre, any explanation of this kind will come "to a vicious circle" (1976[1960], 350), insofar as the passion of fear is ambivalent: namely, in the same way it can act as a source of solidarity and collective mobilization against a common danger, it can also trigger self-defensive mechanisms, resulting in increased violence and hostility. As, Sartre states surely, "without famine, this group would not have constituted itself: but why does it define itself as common struggle against common need? Why is it that, as sometimes happens, individuals in a given case do not quarrel over food like dogs?" (1976[1960], 350). In other words, why do individuals come to cooperate rather than struggle, compete, or even act against each other?

According to Sartre, "neither common need, nor common *praxis*, nor common objectives can define a community unless it makes itself into a community by *feeling* individual need as common need, and by projecting itself, in the internal unification of a common integration, towards objectives

which it produces in common" (Sartre 1976[1960], 350).

In other words, if the proximity of a common danger or threat lay down the objective premises for a "we" to be experienced in the pathic and dative form of a to *us*, it is not sufficient to explain the genesis of a "we-identity" and of a "we-perspective." For this to arise, we need to go through several stages that I will analyze in the following section.

Before addressing this challenge, let me sum up the main stages of the genesis of what Sartre calls the group-in-fusion—as exemplified by the insurrectional days of the French Revolution—:

1. The first stage is characterized by the emergence of an immediate danger or a threat[8]. At this stage, the group arises out of an action undertaken as a defense against a danger or an enemy. Its unity is achieved from without and negatively defined by a *praxis* that, from the outside, makes it the antagonist of a certain other menacing group. But this unity does not unite the people of Paris from within. Each person could still suffer his own fate as his own destiny. The means for affecting the positive unity within the group-in-fusion begins to arise when the members spontaneously become aware of their relation to each other.

2. The second stage is characterized by the perception of such a situation as a common threat. A moment must arise, from the pressures of the historical situation, when each individual faced with a common need, danger or enemy, spontaneously interiorizes it as a common threat and comes to feel individual need as common need. The manner in which individuals are thus carried away by a common feeling is explained by means of what is sometimes and improperly called "emotional contagion" and "imitation"[9] to signify the fact that the bond between individuals is, in its various forms, a relation of mutual recognition—that is "an immediate discovery of oneself in the Other" (1976[1960], 353)—a relation in which "I" see the advent of "myself" in the other insofar as the other sees the advent of "himself" in "me." The term "imitation" might sound inappropriate given that what is really at stake are very demanding group identification processes on the basis of which the group members identify with one another: in and through their unfolding *praxis* each individual recognizes that he is acting for every other and that every other is acting for him.

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8 Clearly, threats may take many forms, one of them is scarcity or famine, taken here as an example of a threat leading to the group-in-fusion or fused group.

9 See footnote 6.

3. The third stage is characterized by the "free constitution of individual praxis into common praxis" (1976[1960], 405). This fundamental step which marks the genesis of a "we-perspective" requires that each group member acts and thinks in a different and completely new way: "not as an individual, nor as an Other, but as an individual incarnation of the common person" (1976[1960], 357).

From then on, the main problem is to account for the agent's move from individual to group-minded thinking (and acting).

4.   SARTRE'S ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNT OF THE GENESIS OF A
       WE-WAY OF THINKING IN THE *CRITIQUE*: THE ROLE OF THE
       THIRD IN THE GENESIS OF GROUP BEHAVIOR AND OF GROUP
       THOUGHTS

How does individual thinking (and acting) become group-minded? Sartre provides an answer to this question, thanks to what he calls the "third party" in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason.* As I read Sartre, there are two ways of understanding the third party, within the context of the ephemeral group in fusion. There is what I call a *weak* way: the one that consists of conceiving the "third party" as a third in-group agent, whose function is to foster the mutual understanding and relation among group members. But beyond this, there is a *strong* way: the one that consists of conceiving the "third party" as a representative of the group or as a temporary leader, whose function is to convey the perspective of the group, as a whole, to all the others, as well as to direct and unite them for a while. By "third party" (*le tiers*), Sartre means,[10] more precisely, a third, *in*-group agent who acts as if he were the whole group acting within him.[11] He finds himself in the situation where, by acting on the behalf of the group to which he belongs (e.g., as a temporary leader[12]), he induces all

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10 As I will argue for here, the third in Sartre's *Critique* ultimately appears not only as a third in-group agent—as it has been abundantly proposed in the secondary literature on Sartre's *Critique*, which includes the important contributions by Catalano (1986; 2010) Santoni (2003) Rizk (2014; 2011), Flynn (1997)—but also as a temporary leader or as a provisional representative of the group's aims and values. The essential point to be retained is that the third party as, temporary leader, is neither an outside leader, nor a particular chosen leader. Rather everyone in the group can become a third in relation to the others and therefore unite and direct the group for a while.

11 Sartre clearly as follows expresses this concept: "His praxis is his own in himself, as the free development [...] of the action of the entire group which is in the process of formation" (1976[1960], 371).

12 In the group-in-fusion, this is obvious because every person is a potential sovereign who can lead the group for a while. However, identifying the third party with a leader is both

the other members to act immediately in the name of the same group[13] and, thereby, engenders the social convergence of human multiplicities. That is why "from a structural point of view, the third party" can be defined as "the human mediation through which the multiplicity of epicenters and ends (identical and separate) organizes itself *directly,* as determined by a synthetic objective" (1976[1960], 367).

As "creator of objectives and organizer of means," the third party "stands in a tense and contradictory relation of transcendence-immanence" (1976[1960], 381) in that he is *inside* the group yet *outside* of it as "unifier." In this respect, he might be considered as a director or as a leader, whose function is to unify a gathered multiplicity of individuals by posing in their reciprocal actions a relationship to a synthetic objective, which goes beyond each individual. As long as the fusion of the group continues, however, this power passes immediately to another individual in the group who, acting freely on the behalf of the same group, assumes in turn this function in an endless process of grouping. In other words, each member in the group might become a third and might act as a regulatory third through whom all are unified in an endless process of grouping. In this respect, as Catalano has clearly pointed out in his *Commentary,* "the law of the group-in-fusion is what Sartre terms an "alternation of statutes": each [individual], as potential regulatory third, can become equally an actual regulatory third, *without becoming a transcendent other to the group*" (Catalano 1986, 175).

In this alternation of statutes "which appear as the very law of the fused group" (Sartre 1976[1960], 381), there emerges a movement of "mediated reciprocity" between two "third parties" who come together in the generating movement of the group. Each does not act in the name of the other in front of him; he acts in the name of the group. At this juncture, there emerges the first "we-subject" (*nous*), which is "practical but not substantial" (1976[1960], 394) and plural rather than singular, because it emerges in the ubiquity of this movement of mediated reciprocity between several selves. The result is that something like a "we-perspective" emerges in a movement of mediated reciprocity where each individual is simultaneously an I and a third in relation

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an error and an exaggeration, in that it represents a function, and not a concrete figure, and most importantly, it represents a function that can be played by various actors in the group. However, this analogy contains a grain of truth in that the third party embodies the leading idea in which the group's members can have a share and which welds them together.

13 Since the example that Sartre has in mind is the French Revolution, we might think of the case of revolutionary groups. Typically, in a revolutionary group, an agitator-organizer will emerge. He is not a leader *stricto sensu,* nor one who commands or is in charge. But he acts as a director, a medium, and a channel for popular opinion.

to every other. According to Sartre, there is "nothing magical" in this result. It merely requires the interiorization of a third-party perspective, which entails a *radical alteration* of the first-person *singular* perspective, so that everyone in the group comes to think, act, and feel "in a completely new way: not as an individual, nor as an Other, but as an individual incarnation of the common person" (1976[1960], 357). The crucial point in this argument is that the shift to the third-person position is decisive to give rise to a group-minded perspective—not "me" but "we" as a group—and, at the same time, to scale up to group's identity.

Moreover, each individual who plays the role of a "third party" brings about a relation of a new, distinctive kind amongst the group members. This new relation which is born of fundamental reciprocity is no longer the simple, immediate, direct and lived relation between *I* and *you*, but a "relation of each to each, with and through all" (1976[1960], 467). The most important feature of this relationship lies in the fundamental characteristics of mediation, which is neither an object nor an objective but the group's common *praxis* "laying down its own laws" (1976[1960], 467) in each "third party."

Without going into the finer details of Sartre's very deep analyses, it is important for us to focus on the following points:

First, it is important to note that the third has a crucial role to play in the process of group identification, insofar as that the internalization of a third-party perspective—its synthetic, point of view on the group action and undertaking—is the basis on which a we-way of thinking emerges. In other words, what has to be seen, as a key idea is not only the importance of the third as a mediation between the *I* and the plural positions of *you,* but, moreover, the key role he plays in the process of group-identification, by which everyone finds himself acting in a completely new way: "not as an individual, nor as Other, but as an individual incarnation of the common person" (1976[1960], 357); that is to say, *qua* group member, qua member of a social group with a particular group identity. Crucially, the *shift* of each of *us* (of each group member) to the third-person position gives rise to a group-minded—not "me" but "we" as a group— perspective, which cannot be attributed either to a single individual or to a collective consciousness, since, as we have seen, it emerges in the ubiquity of a movement of mediated reciprocity between several selves.

Second, it is important to notice that the third functions "as a *via media*" (*middle way*) (Flynn 1981, 358) between the individual, and the group and, as such, enables the move from a subjective self-regarding perspective (first-person *singular*) to a more objective and socially inclusive view (a "we-perspective") in which each individual thinks from the particular standpoint of all those

involved, or affected, together with him/her.

Third, it is equally important to note that the *shift* to the third-party position allows the transition from a we-perspective simply experienced to a we-perspective reflexively assumed. Indeed, according to Sartre, the tendency to experience oneself as part of a "we" increases when the gaze, the speech or the action of a third person immanent to the group enters the scene and brings an element of awareness into the play.

Fourth, it is important to acknowledge that the third embodies not just the group's perspective, but also the social norms in which the group members have a share and which bind them together. That is why, the third enables each self to come into contact with the group's norms[14] and to act, as well as to think, in accordance with the normative standards of the group. In this respect, the third party can be seen as a figure of transition, a sort of link holding together the individual and the collective levels of human thinking.

Finally, it is important to note that the third brings about a relation of a new kind amongst group members. This new relation is no longer the immediate, direct relation between *I* and *you,* but a "relation of each to each, with and through all" (1976[1960], 467). To grasp the relevance of this claim, we must keep in mind Sartre's major argument according to which "whatever relations of simple reciprocity" there are within a group, "these relations, are not constitutive" of a "group behavior and of group thoughts" (1976[1960], 374). For a group-oriented behavior and a group-minded thinking to emerge what is needed is a ternary relation of "*mediated* reciprocity" involving the figure and the function of a third party. In this sense, the third functions as a "middle step" between second-personal and group-minded thinking (and acting).

All these key insights and conceptual tools will be used to address problems raised by Tomasello's account. We have now reached the place where a more detailed discussion of this point is appropriate.

5.   THE FUNCTION OF THE THIRD PARTY IN THE SCALING UP TO
      GROUP-MINDED THINKING: OUTLINE OF AN ALTERNATIVE
      PROPOSAL TO ACCOUNT FOR GROUP-MINDED THINKING

If we look closer into the details of Sartre's and Tomasello's accounts we can identify some instructive differences that may be used to reformulate Tomasello's argument, in a more detailed, convincing and persuasive manner. Of course, there is no space here to carry out an exhaustive comparison of

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14 A similar argument borrowed from developmental psychology is made by Bedorf (2006, 262).

Sartre's and Tomasello's. But, the following points seem to me of particular importance for our purposes. Both Tomasello and Sartre aim at explaining how a "we-way" of thinking (and acting) might possibly emerge. Crucially, for both thinkers the generality involved in such a we-way of thinking is not merely reducible to a summation of many perspectives; rather, it is the transformation of a plurality of perspectives into something like an "overarching" perspective that imagines things from the view of anyone of us. Moreover, both thinkers understand this part of the scaling up as involving group identification. "Group-minded thinking is not just scaling up from second-personal to multi-personal, but rather scaling up to the group's self-identity" (Tomasello 2021, 218). It is understanding oneself as member of a particular social group with a particular group identity. Despite these similarities, these thinkers' accounts of how individual thinking become group-minded are, however, very different.

According to Tomasello, group-minded thinking (and acting) always entails some kind of effacing of one's own individual perspective in deference to the more "objective," collective perspective of the group; an impartial perspective which could take into account equally and impersonally the perspectives of everyone concerned. For such an "agent-neutral," transpersonal, generic perspective to emerge, individuals must be able to "step back" from their own personal point of view and to coordinate their perspectives with "anyone who would be one of us" in the context of a world of social and objective realities that speak with an authority larger than us. The result is a kind of collective perspective, experienced as a sense of the "objectivity of things" (Tomasello 2014, 93). Crucially, what is gained in this way is not an individual perspective, somehow generalized and made large, or some kind of simply adding up of many perspectives. Rather, as Tomasello explains, it "is a generalization from the existence of many perspectives into something like 'any possible perspective,' which means essentially, 'objective'" (2014, 92). This "any possible" or objective, and "agent-independent" perspective is further fortified by a set of conventional cultural practices and social norms, handled down across generations and "governing the way that 'we' expect 'us' to do things" (2014, 92), in such a way that violators lose their cooperative identity in the group. Overall, it seems to me fair to say that Tomasello's view align with those analytic theorists which subscribe to something like an irreducible thesis (Gallotti and Frith, 2013) in which group thinking (group-minded attitudes) must be seen as an irreducibly social phenomenon and attempting to capture it in terms of the individuals involved is doomed to failure.

If we turn our attention to Sartre's analysis, we find a completely different way of accounting for the emergence of a we-way of thinking (and acting). In

general, Sartre's point is that a group-minded perspective—not "me" but "we" as a group—implies, rather than bypasses the first person *singular* perspective of the involved parties. It could emerge at the condition that each *individual* in the group functions in a completely new and different way, namely, as a *third* in relation to all the others, that means as the *transcendent other* (i.e., as the group's representative) attempting to control the group for its own purposes, without becoming a transcendent other to the group.

In this respect, and to make Sartre's claim crystal clear, a we-way of thinking come out of a radical *alteration* of the first-person *singular* perspective (I-perspective), so that it is no longer *merely* individual but also common insofar as everyone in the group—as a third in relation to all the others—comes think and to act in a "completely new way: not as an individual, nor as an Other, but as an individual incarnation of the common person" (1976[1960], 357). Moreover, the function of the third is decisive for the interiorization of the whole system of perspectives. It creates a new position at the core of the group, that elicits union "from within" without effacing the individual' perspectives of everyone concerned. In this respect, what makes Sartre's account worthy of study is that it allows us to understand how group-minded thinking could be simultaneously individual and common. As a gloss on the above remarks, we can quote Sartre's words in his preface to André Gorz's *The Traitor:*

> For today there are only two ways of speaking about the self: the third person singular and the first person plural. We must know how to say 'we' in order to say 'I'—that is beyond question. But the opposite is also true. If some tyranny, in order to establish the 'we' first, deprives individuals of the subjective image, all 'interiority' disappears and all reciprocal relations with it. (Sartre 1959, 35)

To summarize this section, both Tomasello and Sartre aim at explaining how a "we-way" of thinking (and acting) might possibly emerge. These thinkers' accounts of how individual thinking become group-minded are, however, very different. While Tomasello claims that group-minded thinking (and acting) always entails some kind of effacing of one's own personal point of view in deference to the more "objective," collective perspective of the group and is, in some sense, contingent on something much more objective than *us,* Sartre, on the contrary attempts to account for a we-way of thinking which arises "from within" the group without effacing the individual's perspectives of the involved parties. To this end, he introduces the key notion of the third, which allows him to surpass the holism/individualism dichotomy, insofar as it denotes

the individual *as* group member, "that is, as communicating identity of interest and purpose" to all the others "without claiming an impossible unity within some superorganism" (Flynn 1997, 127).

At this juncture, I shall evaluate the success of Sartre's notion of the third in resolving those problems that Tomasello's account raises. I shall present here three arguments for the relevance of the third.

The first argument is that one needs to introduce the third as a tool in the analysis in order to imagine the "missing link" between second-personal and group-minded thinking. Importantly, my claim is not just that such a "middle step" can be imagined through the figure and the function of the third. My claim is, rather, that such an intermediary step is necessary to account for the scaling up to the group's self-identity. The general outline of my argument, then, is that by a systematic consideration of the function of the third this part of the scaling up can be observed and described more accurately. It can be seen that at the origin of a group behavior and of group-minded thinking lie very demanding identification processes that cannot be reduced to what has been commonly called "social imitation" or "social contagion" insofar as they follow the schema of a double mimesis, functioning at once horizontally as identifications between subjects with one another, and vertically as identification with a third party, or group's representative who conveys the group's perspective and communicates an identity of interest and purpose to all the others.

The second argument is that Sartre's treatment of the third in the *Critique,* can provide us with a way of addressing one of the problems that Tomasello's story should be able to face, namely the problem of understanding how a we-perspective and a we-way of thinking might possibly emerge. The theoretical significance of the third lies in that it helps us to solve this crucial problem. It allows us to see that it neither flows downward from a kind of agent-neutral, impersonal and trans-personally constituted generic individual or social group (impartial spectator, or transcendent mind), nor upward from a plurality of isolated individuals deciding to act in common. Rather, it emerges in the ubiquity of a movement of mediated reciprocity (different relations of reciprocity) between several third parties, that also mean between several selves. The crucial point is that each "third party"—both inside and outside the group *as unifier,* simultaneously neutral and involved—creates a new position at the core of the group, that captures (in the moment) the whole system of perspectives and conveys them to all the others.

The third argument is that what makes Sartre's account worthy of study is that it allows us to grasp how a group-minded way of thinking could

be simultaneously individual and common. The crucial point is that group-thinking is not a superficial bond of agreement emerging among individuals deciding to act in common. It is rather a radical alteration of individual's thinking so that it is not merely individual but also common.

Finally, I shall argue that by a systematic consideration of the third, the nature of the relation of the individual-group relation and the status of its terms can be observed more accurately. The tension between the individual and the group, which still marks Tomasello's account, is supplemented by an intertwining which involves, rather than eradicates, the first-person perspective of the involved parties. Through the third, an infinitesimal but insuperable distance between the "I" and the "We," the individual and the group, is introduced and accounts for the fact that the individual is never totally integrated within the group.

In conclusion, my argument can be formulated as follows: we need to introduce the Sartrean notion of "third party" as a tool in the analysis in order to reconstruct the phenomenon of group-mindedness and to account for the transition from second-personal and perspectival to group-minded and normative thinking. This line of reasoning can be fruitfully integrated/coupled with the research work Tomasello and his colleagues have pursued on the psychology of young children, looking at children's emerging group-mindedness, and more specifically on the ontogeny of social norms (viewed as group-minded phenomena of collective intentionality).

According to this study, young children do not understand themselves as members of a social group until they are three years of age. "Before this age, when they are in a group they interact only with individuals; they do not understand the group as a cooperative entity in itself" (Tomasello 2021, 270). At around three years of age young children start becoming group-minded, gradually becoming more so, in a number of different ways (e.g., group-minded attitudes), from three to six years, for instance, enforcing social norms on one another. The key observation is that, in doing so, they adopt a third-party position. From as young as three years of age, children will intervene to sanction others for social norm violations on behalf of third parties. Importantly, in all types of third-party intervention three-year-old children "quite often use generic normative language, as in 'That's wrong' […]. Such generic language suggests that the norm enforcer is not just acting as an individual expressing a personal opinion, but rather, […] as a kind of representative of the cultural group conveying impartial and objective knowledge (in this case about how 'we' act)" (2021, 257).

In this respect, the research work Tomasello has pursued on the psychology of three-year-old children, looking at their emerging group-mindedness, seems to meet and confirm the hypothesis drawn from Sartre: the capacity to adopt a third-party position, a third personal position over and above *you* and *I*—that is the perspective of the group as a whole—is a key part of the process of becoming group-minded. In other words: the capacity to experience oneself as member of a group and to feel, think, and act as part of a "we," requires the capacity to adopt a third-party position and to internalize a third-party perspective.

6.   CONCLUSION

Both Tomasello and Sartre aims at explaining how a "we-way" of thinking (and acting) might possibly emerge. Crucially, for both thinkers the generality involved in such a we-way of thinking is not merely reducible to a summation of many perspectives; rather, it is the transformation of a plurality of perspectives into a kind of group-minded perspective that imagines things from the view of any one of us. These thinkers' accounts of how individual thinking become group-minded are, however, very different. While Tomasello claims that group-minded thinking (and acting) always entails some kind of effacing of one's own personal point of view in deference to the more "objective," collective perspective of the group and is, in some sense, contingent on something much more objective than *us,* Sartre, on the contrary attempts to account for a we-way of thinking which arises "from within" the group without effacing the individual's perspectives of the involved parties.

My general thesis in this paper is that there is an *impasse* in Tomasello's attempt to account for how individual thinking becomes group-minded. More precisely, the *move* that Tomasello's reflection is unable to make—what I call here its impasse—concerns the *transition* from perspectival to group-minded and normative thinking which "is not just scaling up from second-personal to multi-personal, but rather scaling up to the group's self-identity" (Tomasello 2021, 318). I have argued that this part of the scaling up requires a far more detailed analysis of how the group-perspective—not "me" but "we" as a group—is internalized, and thus obtains its subjective dimension. To be clear, I believe that Tomasello's account does not provide details about the *qualitative leap* from plurality to interiorized multiplicity, which marks the genesis of a we-perspective experienced "from within," as both individual and common, and leaves the crucial question concerning the nature of the individual-group relation unanswered.

In order to trace a way out of these impasses, I have argued for an alternative framing by drawing inspiration from Sartre's account of the genesis of the group-in-fusion in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason.* From this alternative perspective, the secret operator who allows each individual to take and internalize the perspective of the group as a whole, may be called the "third party," for it is in this form that the group-perspective enters into (and is assumed in) each individual's thinking. Multiplicity is interiorized, (that is obtains its subjective dimension) and a we-perspective is gained, through the mediation of a third party, who denotes the individual *as* group member, "that is, as communicating identity of interest and purpose" to all the others "without claiming an impossible unity within some superorganism" (Flynn 1997, 127).

In this respect, the shift to the third-party position fulfills two main functions. First, it entails a radical alteration of the first-person *singular* perspective in that everyone in the group—as a third in relation to all the others—comes think and to act in a "completely new way: not as an individual, nor as an Other, but as an individual incarnation of the common person" (Sartre 1976[1960], 357). Second, it creates a new position at the core of the group, that elicits union "from within" without effacing the individual' perspectives of everyone concerned. In this respect, what makes Sartre's account worthy of study is that it allows us to understand how group-minded thinking can be simultaneously individual and common. At this point, we must recall Sartre's major claim according to which the third person singular (the third) and the first-person plural (the we) are two ways of speaking about the self, and that the secret of the latter (the we) is in the former (the third).

In conclusion, we can state that, besides addressing the challenges that Tomasello's account raises, Sartre's notion of third party responds to the ontological question concerning the nature of the individual-group relation, in a way that suggests new and significant alternatives to standard dilemmas in contemporary social philosophy.

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