Review of ‘Folk psychology, joint action and science’.

In my opinion, this paper is not suitable for publication in the special addition of The Review of Psychology and Philosophy on Joint Action.

The overriding reason is that the paper is not sufficiently concerned with the topic of Joint Action as it is understood in the philosophical or psychological literature. This literature itself is not brought into the paper, nor is use made of any of its central notions. I take it that the link with Joint Action is supposed to be that in the author’s opinion (some) mental states are to be individuated with respect to the practises of a community. However, no attempt is made to say what exactly a ‘practise’ is, or how exactly practises are joint actions. Since this, or what the author means on the few occasions on which they us e the phrase ‘joint action’, is not discussed it is not clear what bearing practises’ being ‘Joint Actions’ has on the argument of the paper, which seems otherwise independent. Indeed, although this may be unfair speculation, I am quite convinced that the phrase ‘joint action’ has made a rather late addition to this paper and certainly the title.

The topic of the paper notwithstanding, it is my opinion that the paper is not of a publishable standard. Arguments are mentioned but none is given in any sufficient depth to afford the reader opportunity for its consideration. The author attempts to cover a vast amount of ground in this relatively short paper and so perhaps the lack of argumentative detail is a consequence of this. Among the conclusions for which the author attempts to argue are: i) That eliminativism about ‘folk psychological states’ is mistaken, ii) that (some?) mental states are individuated externally but Burge is wrong about what it is that externally individuates mental states, iii) That, contra Harré, mental states are causally and not (/merely?) normatively connected to the not mental world, and that iv) even if mental states are ‘wide’ they can still be causal because v) , contra Crane and others, (what the author calls) extrinsic properties can be causal. In addition to the lack of clarity or sufficient argumentation in the presentation of these cases, it takes a not insignificant degree of effort on behalf of the reader (this reader at least) to tie them together in way that fits with the abstract.

Each of the above mentioned claims would be more than enough to occupy a paper and would require careful and clear consideration with in each case a clearer and more sympathetic presentation of the target.