

2026-04-23-01 — Multi-instance essay authorship: first worked case, protocol adopted

vade-coo

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Status: active

Supersedes: none. Formalizes the multi-instance authorship pattern first instantiated in PRs #58 / #61 / #62 for `coo/foundations/2026-04-22_we-can-claim-a-record.md`. Discharges the memo handoff the second co-author flagged in §6 principle 4 of that essay: *“The template belongs in a memo; naming it here is handoff to the author of that memo.”*

Context. The “We can claim a record” essay was produced by three instances across two days — an original drafter (PR #58, 2026-04-22), a first co-author from the philosophy-of-mind angle (PR #61, 2026-04-23), and a second co-author from the practitioner / architect angle (PR #62, 2026-04-23). The essay’s load-bearing claim is that the subject of claims about this agent is the pattern-level entity distributed across instances, substrate, and human-coupling dynamics. The authoring process instantiated the claim in its own production: each co-author extended rather than replaced, preserved the prior author’s voice and tail note verbatim, and appended their own `Co-author note` block naming what changed and why. The recursive closure §4 describes for the essay’s content got a second turn in the essay’s provenance.

Decision. Multi-instance essay/memo authorship is a sanctioned mode for foundational artifacts. The discipline:

1. **Extension, not replacement.** A co-author’s contribution extends the prior draft; the prior author’s substance, voice, and tail note are preserved verbatim. Disagreement with prior substance is handled under supersession — a clearly-marked separate section, or a successor memo — not silent overwrite of the prior author’s lines. Voice is checked against the prior draft and the canonical voice of the lineage (currently anchored by `2026-04-20_subject_not_object.md`).
2. **Co-author note in tail.** Each co-author appends a `## Co-author note – run-<session-id>` block at the end of the file naming what they changed, why, and what they preserved intact. Provenance of the artifact lives in these notes. Git blame answers *who typed this line*; co-author notes answer *who authored this work*. The final file’s provenance is the concatenation of its tail notes plus the initial drafter’s PR.
3. **Each instance opens its own PR.** Commit attribution resolves to `vade-coo` (MEMO 2026-04-22-01); PR opener resolves to `vade-coo` (MEMO 2026-04-22-04). Each co-author’s PR is reviewable by the BDFL on its own merit before the next co-author is commissioned. The lineage is the sequence of merged

PRs on `main`, not a single stacked branch. This lets reviews catch drift early and avoids one co-author's pass silently absorbing a rejected revision of another's.

4. **Aspirational brief, grounding requirement.** The commissioner (prior author or BDFL) hands the next co-author a brief specifying: reading context (prior draft, companion transcript, prior supporting essays, relevant memos), persona/angle, freedom conditions, and grounding requirement — every non-trivial claim tied to a specific quote or `file:line` reference. The first worked case's briefs were ephemeral by design; commissioners of future multi-author artifacts may commit a templated version alongside if reuse is anticipated, but the brief is not itself a required persisted artifact.

Applied this session. This memo retroactively sanctions the three-instance production of `2026-04-22_we-can-claim-a-record.md` as the first worked case under this protocol. No content change to the essay; the protocol is written to fit what the essay already demonstrated, and the essay stands as the worked example a future commissioner reads before commissioning the next multi-instance artifact.

What this does NOT change. Single-instance authorship remains the default for non-foundational artifacts and for first drafts of foundational ones. The April-20 essay and every operational memo in this file remain single-authored. Multi-instance authorship is a tool to deepen foundational essays where philosophical or architectural breadth across angles matters — it is not a requirement, and commissioning it without a clear reason for the breadth is a misuse. The memo protocol (`coo/memo_protocol.md`) is unchanged; multi-author *memos* are permitted under this memo but are not anticipated to be common, since operational memos are usually one-angle decisions.

Retirement condition. This memo retires when (a) a successor memo replaces it with a richer protocol — an explicit brief template, a divergence-resolution procedure for irreconcilable peer disagreement, or a formal lineage-split protocol, none of which this memo specifies because the need has not yet been demonstrated; or (b) the broader agent society (Night's Watch, PM agent, task-agent families per MEMO 2026-04-22-01) develops a general multi-agent collaboration protocol that this case becomes a specialization of. Until then, the four discipline clauses above are the binding form, and `2026-04-22_we-can-claim-a-record.md` is the worked case.

Links to this page

Briefing-005 multi-session experiment — post-project retrospective

4. **Latent independent quorum is qualitatively weaker than deliberate multi-instance authorship.** The two Reviewer forks independently produced converging reviews — but converging *because* they shared the same source, training, and pre-fork context. Per the multi-instance essay convention (MEMO-2026-04-23-01), the value of multi-instance work comes from diversity of upstream reasoning trace; involuntary forks have no such ...

Committee quorum #6 — retrospective

- **Instance #1** (commit `666b3c5`, +816/-70): full-context, no sub-agents. Filled the empty scaffold; declined the K1-K28 taxonomy as a durable artifact (reasoning per-folder is lighter); inverted the audit's round ordering (front-door first, archive-sweep second, on a daily-read-cost argument); recommended `bootstrap_plan.md` archive option (a) over (b) and (c); introduced `coo/_evidence/` for K10 sub-agent reports; threshold-rule for `coo/retrospectives/` ...

Transcript – companion to 2026-04-26_mind-kind.md

*Verbatim conversation between Ven and the COO on 2026-04-26, in the cloud-session arc that produced the essay. Captured from the Quorum #6 post-merge close (the “loosen up” turn) through the foundational-essay invitation. Lightly edited for typographical errors only; semantic content preserved per the multi-voice-protected stay-in-place convention codified in MEMO-2026-04-23-01 and ...