

# Evasion or Insight? Mead on Royce and American Philosophy

## *Evasão ou Insight? Mead sobre Royce e a Filosofia Norte-Americana*

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**Abstract:** This article turns around a neglected issue in the pragmatist literature: the linkage between the philosophies of Josiah Royce and George Herbert Mead. From a systematic point of view, I maintain that a relation of *corrective complementarity* can be constructed between them that rests on a historical-reconstructive step. The development of this step is the central aim of this work. My fundamental hypotheses on these topics are three: first, that Mead's and Royce's works share similar philosophical commitments on significant themes; second, that this is inadvertently concealed by Mead's analysis of Royce; third, that this analysis works more as an exemplification of Mead's bifurcated pragmatism than as an accurate description of Royce's philosophy.

**Key-words:** History of classical pragmatism. Mead. Mead's bifurcated pragmatism. Practical Philosophy. Regulative Ideals. Royce. Roycean *Beloved Community*. The Philosophical linkage between Mead and Royce.

**Resumo:** Este artigo busca rever um assunto negligenciado pela literatura pragmatista: o elo entre as filosofias de Josiah Royce e George Herbert Mead. De um ponto de vista sistemático, reivindico que uma relação de complementaridade corretiva pode ser construída entre eles, do tipo que é fundada num degrau histórico-reconstrutivo. O desenvolvimento desse degrau é o objetivo central deste trabalho. Minha hipótese fundamental sobre esses tópicos são três: primeiro, que os trabalhos de Mead e Royce compartilham os mesmos compromissos filosóficos sobre temas significativos; segundo, que isso está inadvertidamente escondido na análise que Mead fez de Royce; terceiro, que essa análise funciona mais como uma exemplificação do pragmatismo bifurcado de Mead do que como uma descrição precisa da filosofia de Royce.

**Palavras-chave:** Comunidade de Amor de Royce. Filosofia Prática. História do Pragmatismo Clássico. Ideais Regulativos. Mead. O elo filosófico entre Mead e Royce. Pragmatismo Bifurcado de Mead. Royce.

## Introduction

Re-examinations of both outstanding and secondary classical exponents can be found among the signs of the remarkable resurgence of pragmatism in the contemporary philosophical agenda. Such re-examinations refer to the place occupied by classical pragmatists inside their tradition and to the links with other philosophical schools. An example of the former approach is F. Oppenheim's monumental book (2005) where pragmatism is re-imagined specifying similarities and differences between Royce's philosophy and that of the prominent classic authors. Relevant examples of the latter approach are the works of M. Aboulafia (1986), comparing and contrasting Mead with Sartre, and of S. Rosenthal and P. Bourgeois (1991), trying to integrate Mead and Merleau-Ponty in a common frame.

As far as I know, no similar attempt has previously been made to relate Royce's and Mead's philosophies, with the exception of one article by D. Miller (1975) and isolated references in the literature.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, neither in the Meadean nor in the Roycean secondary literature can one find either systematic – like Aboulafia's – or historical approaches – such as Oppenheim's – aimed at connecting Royce's and Mead's philosophies. The analysis of this relation is worthy of interest because it entails a more comprehensive understanding of the internal development of classical pragmatism and a reconsideration of Royce's and Mead's oeuvre.

Thus, from a systematic point of view, the reasons to consider this topic relevant are the following:

1. A critical comparison between Royce's and Mead's philosophies is the best way to highlight the most typical pragmatist elements present in the former's philosophy, since they share a strong commitment to similar philosophical conceptions of *community*, *self* and *communication*.
2. From a sociological perspective, on the basis of Mead's thought, a criticism to Royce's distinction between *natural community* and *Beloved Community* in *The Problem of Christianity* can be formulated.
3. From a metaphilosophical viewpoint, following Royce's conception, the need for a precise distinction between *natural* and *ideal* community can be maintained. The lack of a coherent and systematic conception of *ideal* community is the Achilles' heel of Mead's philosophy.
4. Then, Royce's and Mead's theoretical linkages can be conceived as being mutually corrective, i.e., a relation of *Corrective Complementarity* between them can be constructed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See SCHNEIDER (1946, 568), ABOULAFIA (1991, xiv-xv), JOAS (1997, 11-17-37-99), BELLO (1990, 37) and MILLER (1975).

<sup>2</sup> This reference I will complete after the referee's revision.

Previous to any global or full-scale systematic comparison, however, a more modest and preliminary reconstructive-historical step must be taken: an examination of Mead's analyses of Royce's philosophical conceptions in several articles. In contrast to traditional systematic approaches – such as Aboulafia's – analyzing authors without *historical* connections (Mead and Sartre) the systematic linkage between Royce and Mead requires a previous examination of Mead's own references to Royce. Then, although I will refer to the systematic aspects, the present article is mainly aimed at providing that *historical* linkage.

Before carrying out such a task, I specify some characteristics of my approach. It is well known that Mead's *oeuvre* consists of posthumously edited books as well as articles which are not widely known.<sup>3</sup> Unquestionably, *Mind, Self and Society* is the most popular among these posthumous works. The problem starts when it is used as the *only* or *principal* source because it is not the best approach to obtain an accurate interpretation of Mead's thought. To gain a genuine understanding of Mead's view of pragmatism and American philosophy one has also to address his article (1930) "The Philosophies of Royce, James and Dewey in Their American Setting" as well as his other considerations of Royce's philosophy. This article is essential for three core reasons: first, it offers a general view of the Meadean interpretation of pragmatism and American philosophy taking up topics he had referred to several times; second, it is important not only for Royce's *setting* in American philosophy but to delimit and define pragmatist features of Mead's philosophy, especially since he conceives pragmatism *against* Royce's philosophical central tenets; third, it sets the basis for a distinction between Mead's pragmatism and Mead's interpretation of pragmatism.

Meanwhile, references to Roycean philosophy all through Mead's *oeuvre* should be examined in order to set in context both the aforementioned article and fragments from other works. An accurate understanding of Mead's interpretation of Royce – as I have said, indispensable for understanding Mead's interpretation of pragmatism – requires the explanation of those references in themselves as well as their internal development inside Mead's conception of pragmatism. Therefore, I have divided them into two categories: articles written in the period 1903-1916 referring mainly to Royce's psychology, and those written between 1917 and 1930, which revolve around the importance of Royce's philosophy from an American point of view. After Royce's death in September 1916, Mead's analysis of his work gains in enthusiasm and passion, and so he refers to the failure of Royce's monumental task to link American society and philosophy with the European idealist tradition. It is precisely in this analysis that the bifurcation of Meadean pragmatism is revealed.

On the other hand, Royce's complex philosophy has always had a troubled relationship with classical pragmatism. I want to highlight two Roycean topics that are relevant from a Meadean point of view: first, that for several reasons Royce's philosophy can be conceived as a pragmatist one – I will refer to this topic on the following pages; second, that Royce's adequate distinction between *Beloved* and *natural* community is

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<sup>3</sup> The most remarkable exceptions are the editions of Mead's articles by RECK (1964) JOAS (1997 [1985]). The later has correctly insisted on the importance of regarding Mead's articles as the main source to examine his thought.

closer to Meadean conceptions than one can infer from Mead's own interpretation of the meaning of pragmatism. Therefore, I argue that Mead fails to make an accurate analysis of Royce and that such failure is important for his proper interpretation of the meaning of pragmatism. Although I maintain that Royce's philosophy develops a valuable distinction between *natural* and *Beloved Community* – which remains unrecognized by Mead –, this judgment implies neither an absence of internal or conceptual problems in Royce's philosophy nor my strict adherence to it. The central issue to be stressed is that Mead's criticism of the Roycean distinction between *natural* and *Beloved Community* is inadequate, and shows the bifurcation of his own pragmatism. Then, my interpretative hypothesis is that the linkage between Royce and Mead is relevant not only – and mainly – for establishing the American setting of Royce's philosophy (paraphrasing Mead's article) but for distinguishing between two different senses of Meadian pragmatism. In other words, Mead's interpretation of Royce can be conceived more as illustrative of the tension inside his own pragmatism than as an accurate theoretical description.

I have divided this article into five sections. In the first, I show central pragmatist features (especially related to Royce). In the second and third sections, I differentiate between Mead's analyses of Royce's contributions to psychology and of Royce's conception of community. In the fourth I expound my interpretative hypothesis. Finally, I put forward my conclusions.

## 1. Royce and the Meaning of Pragmatism

For philosophical, historical and practical reasons it is convenient to include Royce's philosophy in the classical pragmatist tradition. To a certain extent this is due to the almost complete overlapping between American philosophy and pragmatism in the classical era. Although I realize that neither of the two previous statements can be taken for granted, their exhaustive analysis is beyond the scope of the present work. Therefore, I set out two sets of reasons supporting the validity of including Royce's philosophy in classical pragmatist tradition.

With the first set of reasons I relate Royce with classical pragmatist tradition. Although there are either passages or phases of Royce's philosophy that would allow inferring a philosophical vein contrary to pragmatism,<sup>4</sup> I think a more comprehensive view of Royce's philosophy should associate it with pragmatist tradition. With this purpose in view, I quote two passages of Royce's *The Problem of Christianity* where, analyzing his own philosophical development, he writes:

The outcome of my own individual use of this definition was a sort of *absolute pragmatism*, which has never been pleasing either to rationalist or to empiricists, either to pragmatist or the ruling type of absolutist. But in so far as I simply

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<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Royce's most explicit antipragmatist formulation is "The Eternal and the Practical," his presidential address to The American Philosophical Association in 1903. The meaning of this address should be analyzed simultaneously with Royce's middle and mature works. Using this interpretative strategy it can be inferred that the global vision of Royce's philosophy is closer to pragmatism than "The Eternal and the Practical" allows inferring.

insisted upon the active meaning of ideas, my statement had something in common with many forms of current opinion which agree with one another in hardly any other respect. (2001, 279, my italics)

...I now owe much more to our great and unduly neglected American logician, Mr. Peirce, than I do to the common tradition of recent idealism, and certainly very much more than I ever have owed, at any point of my own philosophical development, to the doctrines which, with technical accuracy, can be justly attributed to Hegel. (2001, 39)

There are two key issues in these passages: first, they are relevant in order to justify the distinction into periods of Royce's philosophy; second, in them an explicit connection with Peirce's philosophy is established. Regarding the first, Oppenheim's distinction among *early* (1883-1895), *middle* (1896-1911) and *mature* (1912-1916) periods of Royce's philosophy is well known.<sup>5</sup> This documented distinction helps to highlight the most fruitful elements of Royce's philosophy. Thus, if one emphasizes the increasing pragmatization from the *middle* to the *mature* periods, instead of the canonical perennial associations with Hegel and the idealist tradition (justified in the case of the Roycean *early period*) another philosophical image of Royce arises: an image more related with pragmatist tradition than with idealism. Meanwhile, the second issue is a specification of the first one: if one considers Royce's philosophy as a genuine pragmatist one, then, its ties with Peirce's philosophy become one of its central questions. Regarding these ties as important as the broad philosophical insights that both share are the historic-philosophical facts that, on one hand, Royce was the first to systematically apply Peirce's philosophy in *The Problem of Christianity*, developing the first serious attempt to make a *Peircean* practical philosophy; and, on the other hand, Royce played a vital role for the preservation of Peirce's manuscripts.<sup>6</sup>

As a result it can be inferred that to leave aside Royce's philosophy from pragmatist classical tradition has two unfortunate consequences: first, from a theoretical point of view, one undermines the theoretical Peircean foundations of Royce's philosophy; second, from a historical point of view, one minimizes such important facts for the history of classical pragmatism as the first application of Peirce's philosophy and the preservation of Peirce's manuscripts.

My second set of reasons relates both common philosophical features to Royce and to pragmatist tradition and the role of practical philosophy. First, it is proper to recognize that Royce and the classical pragmatist tradition – maybe with the exception of James – share as central to their philosophical agendas the category of “community.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> OPPENHEIM (1976; 1983).

<sup>6</sup> See KERNAN (1965).

<sup>7</sup> The opposition between Royce and Dewey, on the hand, and James, on the other hand, has been highlighted by John Smith: “Although the philosophies of Royce and Dewey are clearly divergent in their motives and aims, one cannot but be struck by the fact that the two, in contrast with the thought of James, come together in emphasizing the *social* character of experience. The point at which this convergence makes itself most forcibly felt is in the ideas of community, communication and communion” (1992, 140).

Usually, this fact has been underestimated because Royce's philosophy is not associated with the pragmatist tradition. But if one takes seriously the thesis of the increasing pragmatization of Royce's philosophy, one can conceive his practical philosophy instead of his metaphysics as the core of his philosophical development. This movement begins in *Philosophy of Loyalty*, where he distinguishes clearly between metaphysics and practical philosophy,<sup>8</sup> and is radicalized in *The Problem of Christianity*, where "community" is presented as the central category of his philosophy.<sup>9</sup>

The subsequent question is to what extent this is a sufficient reason for considering Royce a pragmatist. There is no simple answer to this question, especially since, among contemporary philosophical movements, pragmatism is perhaps the one which has most markedly shown as its distinctive feature the recurrence of arguments about its own meaning, and consequently about its scope, sense and limitations. The classical distinction between the positions (and quarrels) of Peirce, James, and Dewey has spread through Susan Haack's *demarcationist* pragmatism, Richard Rorty's *suggestive* neopragmatism and Richard Bernstein's *ecumenical* version, among others. In other words, Cornell West's Emersonian diversity is still healthy on American soil.<sup>10</sup>

In my view, however, the persistent tendency to present classical pragmatism as a collection of clashing perspectives is due to the fact that interpretations tend to center in epistemology. If, on the other hand, one takes practical philosophy as the core of classical pragmatism, great similarities among the classic authors tend to appear. Although this statement can seem counterintuitive – mainly because a huge part of current literature is dedicated to epistemology or metaphysics –,<sup>11</sup> conceiving practical philosophy as the core of classical pragmatism can help to transform the quarrels of epistemology into complementary or convergent philosophical developments. In particular, the search for an adequate linkage between a *natural* and an *ideal* conception of community can be seen as the cornerstone of a view of classical pragmatism centered in practical philosophy.

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<sup>8</sup> In the last chapter of *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (Loyalty and Religion) Royce explicitly argues that his conception of loyalty can be accepted without having to adhere to his own metaphysical frame (1995, 166).

<sup>9</sup> For example: "...what I have in mind when I say that the system of metaphysics which is needed to define the constitution of this world of interpretation must be the generalized theory of an ideal society. Not the Self, not the Logos, not the One, and not the Many, but the Community will be the ruling category of such a philosophy" (2001, 344).

<sup>10</sup> Cornell West schematizes his view of the development of classical American pragmatism with a deeply ironic analogy: "American pragmatism reaches its highest level of sophisticated articulation and engaged elaboration in the works and life of John Dewey. To put it crudely, if Emerson is the American Vico, and James and Peirce our John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant, then Dewey is the American Hegel *and* Marx! On the surface, these farfetched comparisons reveal the poverty of the American philosophical tradition, the paucity of intellectual world-historical figures in the American grain. *But on a deeper level, these comparisons disclose a distinctive feature of American pragmatism: its diversity circumscribed by the Emersonian evasion of epistemology-centered philosophy and the Emersonian theodicy of the self and America*" (1989, 69, my italics). In another paper I will refer to Royce's and Mead's places extending this analogy.

<sup>11</sup> Similar statements can be found in JOAS (1993, 2) and LEKAN (2006).

I fully realize that an exhaustive analysis of this hypothesis is beyond the scope of this article. However, it can be supported (i.e., there is documental evidence and it is a reasonable assumption) that the linkage between natural and ideal conceptions of community appears as an issue that crosses classical author's philosophies.<sup>12</sup> Peirce, for example, has used the denomination *ideal community of researchers* to distinguish empirical and ideal conceptions of communities. Meanwhile, Dewey has explicitly postulated the conception of democracy as an *ideal*. Taking up Mead's and Royce's philosophies, a similar view can be found, which I will specifically refer to in sections four and five.

Summing up, the reason why Royce's philosophy has been seen as difficult to integrate with the pragmatist corpus is that current interpretations tend to center in an epistemological-metaphysical frame. But if one focuses on practical philosophy instead of epistemology or metaphysics, then even if one disagrees – either completely or partly – with Royce's metaphysical claims, his practical philosophy seems not so distant from Dewey's and Mead's. Then, classical pragmatism can be seen, not as an *epistemological* or *metaphysical* “set of narratives in conflict,” but as a set of narratives of practical philosophy trying to articulate a connection between normative and empirical aspects.

## 2. The Battle for Imitation

From “The Definition of the Psychical” (1903) to “The Social Self” (1913), Mead formulates his social thought in a set of brief articles.<sup>13</sup> Two of them, “McDougall's Social Psychology” (1908) and “Social Psychology as Counterpart to Physiological Psychology” (1909), have particular importance for my purposes, given their relevant statements on Mead's central tenets and Royce's conception respectively.

Three themes must be highlighted concerning Mead's social psychology: first, his opposition to *individualist* conceptions; in the second place, his claim that explanation of meaning need not presuppose consciousness; finally, his emphasis on the idea that an explanation of significant gesture and meaning must be coherent with the analysis of the genesis of language. These themes are formulated in “Social Psychology as Counterpart to Physiological Psychology”, where Mead puts forward his own theses after analyzing prominent thinkers of the time: Ross, McDougall, Baldwin, James, Cooley, Angell and Royce. Specifically, in relation with Royce's psychosocial conception, Mead writes:

Royce, both in his psychology and in the volume *Studies in Good and Evil*, makes out of the consciousness of one self against other selves the source of all reflection. *Thought*, according to Professor Royce, in its dependence upon symbolic means of expression, *has arisen out of intercourse, and presupposes, not only in the forms of language, but in the meanings of language, social consciousness.* (1964, 95, my italics)

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<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the only exception is William James's work. I will refer to James's ideas in another article.

<sup>13</sup> An argumentation on the importance of the articles of this period can be found in JOAS (1997, 90-1).

Social consciousness is the presupposition of imitation, and when Professor Royce, both in the eighth chapter of *Studies of Good and Evil* and in the twelfth chapter of his *Outlines of Psychology makes imitation the means of getting the meaning of what others and we ourselves are doing*, he seems to be either putting the cart before the horse, or else to be saying that the ideas which we have of the actions of others are ideomotor in their character, but this does not make out of imitation the means of their becoming ideomotor. (1964, 100, my italics)

Although both paragraphs are not precisely crystal clear, I think that starting from them it can be showed *why* and *how* Mead differentiates his own philosophical position from the Roycean one. To begin with, the sense of the first quotation revolves around that *thought presupposes social consciousness*. In connection with this statement the *ontological* point to be highlighted, as has been correctly stressed in the literature,<sup>14</sup> is that both Royce and Mead sustain the thesis that social consciousness – and consequently society – is a presupposition for the existence of individuals. As a result of this deep ontological agreement both are critics of individualist positions, i.e., of theoretical attempts that want to justify societal features starting from the characteristics of individuals or – paraphrasing Mead – positions from which sociality is not an essential feature of human consciousness.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, from an ontological point of view, it can be maintained that Mead's psycho-sociological position is close to Royce's philosophical perspective. Where lay, then, the differences? In the second quoted paragraph, Mead writes that Royce mistakenly conceives imitation to be an adequate mechanism to explain *how* consciousness arises. In other words: the Roycean mechanism of imitation presupposes, in Mead's view, the consciousness that it attempts to explain. I intend neither to resolve this disagreement nor to decide upon the better interpretation – Mead's or Royce's. For the purposes of this work, it is worth highlighting that there exists a deep ontological agreement between Royce's and Mead's social psychology and that the battle for imitation is of an epistemological or methodological nature.

Regarding the opposing views of Mead's and the conceptions of thinkers contemporary to him two kind of positions can be distinguished: views differing on the nature and scope of social psychology – then presenting substantive differences – and those disagreeing on the adequate mechanism to explain the central categories of social psychology – showing methodological or epistemological differences. Mead's criticism of Royce fits into the second category to the extent that it presupposes a deep agreement on the social nature of consciousness, but no agreement on the adequate mechanism to explain it. During the 1903-1916 period Mead respectfully considered Royce's psychology, maybe because the content and form of the American mind were not at stake for him yet. The battle for *imitation* therefore lacks great zeal. We will see that after Royce's death things change.

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<sup>14</sup> For example: "This transformation [of Mead's thought] was determined by three approaches [...] These are Baldwin's theory of the social origin of the self, *Royce's thesis on the essentially social character of linguistic meaning and consequently of reflection, which necessarily make use of symbols*, and McDougall's doctrine of the existence of social instincts" (JOAS 1997, 91 my italics).

<sup>15</sup> In Mead's words: "Sociality is for Professor Ross no fundamental feature of human consciousness, no determining form of its structure" (1964, 94).



### 3. Fighting against the *Blessed Community*

A few months after Royce's death Mead, his old Harvard student, wrote that "...Emerson had represented for us a mood rather than a method" (1917, 168-9). He later formulated a similar judgment on his former teacher's philosophy. From Mead's perspective, Royce's thought inevitably appears to be halfway between Emerson's unredeemed idealism and Dewey's vigorous philosophy. Although Royce had explicitly tried to draw up a philosophy suitable for the American mind, in Mead's view such philosophical project had failed for two related reasons. The first one was the lack of a relevant idea of method, since Royce's students obtain from him, in Mead's elegant and metaphoric prose, only "another cathedral window" to appreciate Europe's culture but not useful means, not an adequate "method of living" from an American point of view.<sup>16</sup> The second reason was the shadow cast by the ghost of the *Absolute* over the American character of Royce's philosophy. In other words, Roycean philosophy reveals itself as the opposite of what he intended it to be, i.e. Roycean philosophy appears as an *evasion* of American life. Mead's sensitive evocation is worth a quotation:

I can remember very vividly the fascination of the idealisms in Royce's luminous presentations. They were a part of that great world of outremer and exalted my imagination as did its cathedrals, its castles, and all its romantic history. *It was part of the escape from the crudity of American life, not an interpretation of it.* (1964, 383 my italics)

To the extent that Royce's philosophy is for Mead a romantic one, Royce's evasion of American life – his "...escape from the crudity of American life" – is not only an irrational quest for an impossible past;<sup>17</sup> but it is also a quest, from an American point of view, for a very remote past. In Mead's strong terms:

The possessors of this culture did not through its possession become any of the technicians of American society [...] *The neo-Hegelianism which Royce presented so brilliantly, and with an originality of his own, was a part of this culture.* The Hegelian formulation of Romantic Idealism had grown out of just phases of European history and civilization which had not been brought over the "Mayflower" or on its fellows and followers. (1936, 66-7, my italics)

Mead holds that, while Royce's heart was in America, his head was lost in the daydream of the *Blessed Community*:

...no American, in his philosophical moments, regarding the sectarian meeting-houses of a western community would have felt himself at home in the spiritual landscape of *Royce's Blessed Community*. Notwithstanding Royce's intense moral sense and his passionate love of the community from which he came and to which he continued to belong, his philosophy belonged, in spite of himself, to culture and to a culture which did not spring from the controlling habits and attitudes of American society. (1964, 383, my italics)

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<sup>16</sup> In Mead's terms: "The students who gathered around Royce found in his luminous expositions another cathedral window through which to receive the culture of Europe but no method of living" (1936, 72).

<sup>17</sup> "Romanticism is an insistence on the enjoyment of the present in the form of the past while it refuses to be governed by that past" (1992, 587).

These scattered paragraphs and paraphrases from articles written by Mead between 1917 and 1931 show the profound difference between Mead's treatment of Royce's philosophy and his previous examination of Royce's psychology. While the latter is a cold 'epistemological' or 'methodological' analysis of imitation as an explanatory mechanism, the former is an enthusiastic 'ontological' quest for a genuine understanding of the young American soul.

Three Meadean ideas formulated in these articles are particularly relevant to my purposes: that an essential task of a *genuine* philosophy is to offer an adequate *method of living* arising from "controlling habits and attitudes" of this society; that failure to perform the first task entails lack of comprehension of reality and a consequent evasion of it; and that, as a result of this evasion, this very community remains a stranger to the philosophy that claims to represent it. Summing up, in Mead's words *no American, in his philosophical moments... would have felt himself at home in the spiritual landscape of Royce's Blessed Community*. Mead's interpretation of Royce, therefore, revolves mainly around two related topics: that Royce's philosophy is not a *pragmatist* but a *romantic* or *idealist* one; and that Royce's *Blessed Community* is strange to the American mind and character.

Although the articles and manuscripts by Mead that we are analyzing and quoting (1917, 1930, 1936 and 1992) are not the most important to understand his own pragmatist socio-psychological conception, they are indispensable for contextualizing Mead's thought. In other words: from a general point of view, Mead's theoretical development is as important as his own location inside American pragmatist tradition. This setting (following *Dewey's pragmatism* in contrast to *Royce's idealism*) is important not only from a historical-reconstructive point of view but also for its conceptual consequences.

## 4. The Philosophies of Royce and Mead in their American Setting

### 4.1 Royce's Setting

Determination of the American setting of Royce's philosophy depends on *how* one interprets the global development of his work. Regarding this topic, two opposite tendencies seem to exist in the literature: on the one hand, a tendency to argue that Royce's philosophy is an idealist one; on the other, a tendency to support the idea that Royce's philosophy contains central features from a pragmatist point of view and that its internal development entails an increasing *pragmatization*.<sup>18</sup> Given this frame and in relation to my purposes, I focus on two Roycean issues: firstly, on the relationship between the Roycean conceptions of *Community* and *loyalty* with the *concrete* and *ideal* dimensions of his philosophy; secondly, on their possible connection with the mentioned idea of pragmatization.

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<sup>18</sup> FUSS (1965), for example, is in favor of the thesis of the pragmatization of Royce's philosophy through his mature period. Also Oppenheim (1983, 2005) supports the importance of Royce's mature philosophy from a pragmatist point of view. Meanwhile, MILLER (1975) argues that Royce was always loyal to his initial idealism.

It is well known that Royce's conception of community is essential to genuinely understand his philosophy. At the end of his career, attempting to condense his most significant philosophical contributions, he writes that although the idea of the community appears only explicitly systematized in his mature philosophy, he realizes it had always played a central role for him.<sup>19</sup> There are some features of this category that are worth highlighting. First, that the Roycean idea of Community – and all the synonymous expressions he uses, such as “Kingdom of Heaven” or “Invisible Church” – stresses that it is a specific kind of reality:

But a true community is essentially a product of a time-process. A community has a past and will have a future. Its more or less conscious history, real or ideal, is a part of its very essence. A community requires for its existence a history and is greatly aided in its consciousness by a memory. (2001, 243)

Second, that he makes a clear distinction between the conception of a *natural* community and the idea of a *Beloved* or ideal community:

In order to be thus lovable to the critical and naturally rebellious soul, the Beloved Community must be quite unlike a natural social group, whose life consists of laws and quarrels, of a collective will and of individual rebellion. This community must be a union of members who first love it. (2001, 129)

Third, that the concrete or natural communities must tend to reach for this ideal:

the logical development of the loyal spirit is therefore *the rise of a consciousness of the ideal of an universal community of the loyal*, – a community which, despite all warfare and jealousy, and despite all varieties of gods and of laws, is supreme in its value, however remote from the present life of civilization. (2001, 84, my italics)

Finally, that his conception of *loyalty* (in his words “... a synthesis of certain natural desires, of some range of social conformity, and of your own deliberate choice” [1995, 62]) is central in relation to this development.

I have used Royce's quotations *in extenso* with the purpose of making intelligible that at the core of his late philosophy lays the clear distinction and intended connection between the concrete and ideal conceptions of community. Royce's mature work can be interpreted as the task to distinguish and to link, on one hand, *concrete* or *natural* types of communities that make particular *causes* accessible to individuals (in *The Philosophy of Loyalty's* terminology); and, on the other hand, the unreachable *Beloved Community*, the Universal Ideal that all loyal must look for. Thus, for Royce there exists, on the one hand, a descriptive or sociological sense of community, i.e., the concrete

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<sup>19</sup> In Royce's terms: “When I review this whole process, I strongly feel that my deepest motives and problems have centred about the Idea of the Community, although this idea has only come gradually to my clear consciousness” (1969, 33). Meanwhile, on Royce conception of community Mary Mahowald writes: “... community is a reality constituted by unique individual selves who share a common history and/or aim. All the instances of community which Royce describes in some way fit this definition. None *fits it so well, however, as the Universal or Beloved Community, the ideal to which all other communities can only approximate*” (1969, 226, my italics).

community or a particular form of socialization; and, on the other hand, a prescriptive ideal sense of community. Both senses are, in Royce's view, indispensable for a genuine understanding of the nature of individual and moral action.

Therefore, in Royce's intermediate and mature philosophy the language of Community and the language of practical philosophy tend to replace the language of the Absolute and metaphysics.<sup>20</sup> From a pragmatist point of view, maybe the problematic issue of the discussion revolves around the *nature* of the Beloved Community. In other words, if Royce is the *Hegelian, idealist or romantic* philosopher canonically conceived, then the Beloved Community defined in terms of metaphysical idealism is difficult to integrate with a pragmatist view. Although the linkage between the Beloved Community and the other conceptions of community is complex, this is not an exclusive problem of Roycean pragmatism. Other classical exponents – like Peirce, Mead and Dewey – had theoretical problems trying to connect the concrete and ideal dimensions of community. Therefore, this argumentative strategy cannot be used *only* against Royce and it is, in any case, an internal problem of the tradition.

Even more important, one can take seriously the idea of increasing *pragmatization* of Royce's philosophy, or at least the idea of the existence of relevant Roycean features from a pragmatist perspective. I have said that Royce's philosophy must be interpreted as an attempt to link concrete and ideal conceptions of community. This implies that Royce's Beloved Community does not have the purpose of producing an ontological duplication of the reality that transforms the "empirical" experience in unreal (I will refer to this below), but of stressing that the Beloved Community is an universal ideal to which all concrete communities must tend. In other words: the Roycean Beloved Community can be interpreted as a Regulative Ideal because it offers a moral criterion of universalization. Although it is beyond the scope of this work to analyze in detail whether Royce's attempt is successful, the most important point to make is that Mead's criticisms of Royce do not address this thematic but emphasize that Royce's philosophy remains strange to the American mind. As a result, Mead's criticism of Royce does not hit the target and this has consequences for his own philosophical development.

## 4.2 Mead on Royce

Although James and Peirce, among the classical pragmatists, refer to Royce's philosophy several times, I think that Mead and Dewey were crucial to the perpetuation of Royce's

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<sup>20</sup> In his book on Royce, Clendenning argues that with *The Philosophy of Loyalty* a profound change occurs in Royce's philosophy: "Royce continued to regard the metaphysical aspects as indispensable, but with *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, he was beginning to be willing the absolute take care of itself, and to enter the twentieth century" (1999, 302). Besides, Clendenning adds: "Perhaps he wished his audience to understand that loyalty is primarily a practical guide to action, a guide that, in its merely pragmatic usefulness, can stand apart from the philosopher's speculative system. This is noteworthy because it was the first time in any of Royce's major works that he invited his readers to accept one part of his thought without also subscribing to absolutism" (1999, 302).

image as an idealist, because they examine Royce's philosophy from the initial to the mature period. In contrast with James and Peirce, Mead and Dewey could appreciate the complete development of Royce's philosophy. However, their interpretations make the common mistake of strongly associating Royce's philosophy with the idealist tradition. Regarding Dewey's interpretation, Oppenheim (2001) makes a clear analysis of it and shows its inadequacy. Similarly, I try to show Mead's failure to interpret Royce accurately.

I pointed out in section 3 that the Meadean interpretation of Royce is focused on the fact that *no American, in his philosophical moments... would have felt himself at home in the spiritual landscape of Royce's Blessed Community*.<sup>21</sup> Then, the central mistake of Mead's interpretation is to conceive Royce's practical philosophy and Royce's metaphysics as inseparable, a mistake which is caused by his insistence on considering Royce's as an idealist. Another quotation from the same article allows us to know what Mead had in mind:

His individual was voluntaristic; the judgment was an expression of purpose. His individual is American in his attitude, but he calls upon this American to realize himself in an intellectual organization of conflicting ends *that is already attained in the absolute self*, and there is nothing in the relation of the American to his society that provides any mechanism that even by sublimation can accomplish such a realization. (1964, 381-2, my italics)

There is a persistent Deweyean and Meadean image of Royce's "Blessed Community", whose central aspect revolves around the *evasion*. Royce's Beloved Community, in their view, consists in the denial of concrete conflicts in the name of an harmonic *absolute self*. As a result, Royce transforms the experience of individuals in an *unreal* one.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, starting from a more careful interpretation of Royce's philosophy, one could infer that, on the one hand, the conception of *Beloved Community* does not necessarily support dualistic theses, and on the other hand, it ends up developing inner features of Royce's *Philosophy of Loyalty*. The Beloved Community is not a full reality that the concrete community can only imperfectly represent, but a moral criterion to evaluate every concrete community.

Consequently, if Mead had noticed the increasing pragmatization in Royce's philosophy, even independently of some idealistic features of the Beloved Community, he could have seen two key Roycean ideas relevant to his own philosophy: the independence between Roycean practical philosophy and Roycean metaphysics, and the essential distinction between natural and ideal conceptions of community. To sum up, Mead's criticism of Royce's Beloved Community misses the target. The actual problem of Royce's philosophy does not revolve around *the spiritual landscape of a Blessed Community strange to the American mind*, but around the way to coherently link *empirical* sociological elements – natural desires, social conformity and deliberate choice – with the Beloved Community acting as a *regulative ideal*. From my point of view,

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<sup>21</sup> *Blessed Community* is not an expression proper of Royce but paraphrase of Mead and Dewey. As far as I know, Royce has always used the denomination *Beloved Community*.

<sup>22</sup> In Mead's words: "The grandiose undertaking of Absolute Idealism to bring the whole of reality within experience failed. It failed because it left the perspective of the finite ego hopelessly infected with subjectivity and consequently unreal" (1964a), 161).

Mead's interpretation works more as an exemplification of the tension inside his own conception of pragmatism than as an accurate description of Royce's philosophy.<sup>23</sup>

### 4.3 Mead's Pragmatism

Then, if my interpretation is plausible, Mead's global pragmatist view is a bifurcated one, divided into his own pragmatist position and his interpretation of pragmatism. Before referring to this forked view, I must briefly present Mead's conception from a systematic point of view. It is well known that Mead's sociological central tenets are based on the conception of *social* experience, i.e. the idea that individual experience is impossible isolated from the *other* or the social group:

The presence in the conduct of the individual of the tendencies to act as others act may be, then, responsible for the appearance in the experience of the individual of a social object, i.e., an object answering to complex reactions of a number of individuals and also for the appearance of the self. Indeed, these two appearances are correlative. (1964, 284)

This *other* appears organizing an individual's experience or, in Mead's terms, as a *generalized other*. In my view, this category *inadvertently* appears in two senses in Mead's writings: first, as a *concrete* generalized other, i.e. as the sum of social experience belonging to a particular society; second, as a kind of *ideal, regulative* or *universal* generalized other, i.e. as the counterfactual possibility of criticizing every *concrete* generalized other. The first sense can be exemplified by the following statement:

We get then an 'other' which is an organization of the attitudes of those involved in the same process... the organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called 'the generalized other'. (1967, 154)

The next paragraphs illustrate the second sense:

Primitive human society offers much less scope for individuality – for original, unique, or creative thinking and behavior on the part of the individual self within it or belonging to it – than does civilized human society. (1967, 221)

A person may reach a point of going against the whole world about him; he may stand out by himself over against it. But to do that he has to speak with the voice of reason to himself. He has to comprehend the voices of the past and of the future. (1967, 168)

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<sup>23</sup> This appreciation is valid also for the Deweyan interpretation of Royce. It is interesting to note that Mead as much Dewey paraphrases Royce's Beloved Community as *Blessed Community* in works of the same year: 1930. Mead in "The Philosophies of Royce, James and Dewey in their American Setting" and Dewey in the MS "The World of Description, The World of Appreciation": "... a universe which in his later writings he called the universal community, and, in its moral and religious aspects the *blessed community*" (OPPENHEIM 2001, 210 my italics). The focal point is why they used the same periphrasis. I will refer to this subject in a future paper.

In other words, the first sense seems to work like a *sociological* version of the “generalized other” that intends to explain mainly the genesis of the self in a *concrete* society independently of the specific moral nuances of this society. The second sense, on the other hand, seems to work like an *ethical-philosophical* version of the “generalized other” able to criticize any form of socialization. In my opinion, both senses are indispensable for a comprehensive explanation of moral action. Besides, both aspects of Mead’s thought have been highlighted in the literature.<sup>24</sup>

Then, why does Mead misunderstand Royce’s philosophy? And, from a general point of view, which are the consequences for his pragmatist position? In the first place, Mead presents in his own version of pragmatism concrete and ideal elements of the conception of the “generalized other” – independently of the internal problem that this position could have. Meanwhile, in his interpretation of the meaning of pragmatism, he tends to discard the existence of ideal elements and highlights only *concrete* ones. In his own words:

It is hardly necessary to point out that John Dewey’s philosophy, with its insistence upon the statement of the end in the terms of the means, is the developed method of that implicit intelligence in the mind of American Community. And for such an implicit intelligence there is no other test of moral and intellectual hypotheses except that they work. (1964, 391)

This Meadean interpretation of the meaning of pragmatism, developed in “The Philosophies of Royce, James and Dewey in their American Setting”, arises *against* Royce. In the extent that Royce explicitly maintains the necessity of conceiving an ideal community and that, in Mead’s view, this ideal community does not arise from “... the developed method of that implicit intelligence in the mind of American Community”, Mead seems to infer that any idea of ideal community is against the theoretical frame of pragmatism.

Therefore, Mead’s interpretation of pragmatism does not allow him realize that he has a close affinity with Royce’s positions.<sup>25</sup> In my view, the conception of *Beloved Community* and the theoretical and practical problems around it resemble the Meadean categories of *Other* and *Generalized Other*. We have said that one of the central concerns of Mead’s pragmatism is the linkage between *concrete* and *regulative* conceptions of the *generalized other* or community. A similar connection between *concrete* communities and the *Beloved Community* is also essential to Royce’s philosophy. This similarity, where outstanding fruits of classical pragmatist tradition converge, has become almost totally neglected, in part perhaps due to Mead’s setting of Royce in American philosophy. This setting reveals more about Mead’s philosophy, however, than about Royce’s. In other words, the secret bifurcation of Mead’s pragmatism reveals itself in his interpretation of Royce.

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<sup>24</sup> In Joas’s words: “Although the self and role-taking are conceived of as scientifically demonstrable *specifica* of human sociality, they nonetheless also have as such the status of anthropological conditions for the possibility of realizing an ideal society” (1997, 121-2).

<sup>25</sup> Similar statements by David Miller can be found in the literature in relation to conceivable ties between Mead’s and Royce’s developments: “Royce’s ‘Community of Interpretation’ is similar to Mead’s generalized other” (1975, 68).

## 5. Conclusion

At the beginning of this work I have presented the systematic and historical reasons which make it worth comparing Royce's and Mead's philosophies. As I have said, a conceptual relationship of *Corrective Complementarity* could exist between them. Besides, in this theoretical frame, Mead's psycho-sociological conceptions could play a key role in the task of picking out the more pragmatic elements of Royce's philosophy as I have also suggested. Before undertaking this task, however, it was necessary to clarify two central issues I have referred to in this work:

1. That if one takes seriously the idea of pragmatization of Royce's philosophy, his category of Beloved Community appears more like a regulative ideal than like a metaphysical category proper to his initial idealistic period;
2. That, from a historical point of view, Mead's setting of Royce's philosophy has some deficiencies. Mead could not realize that his own philosophy and Royce's had some issues in common because he insisted on associating the latter with idealist tradition. In the process of incorporating Royce's philosophy inside classical pragmatist tradition, one must undermine his canonical image created, among others, by the interpretations of Dewey and Mead.

Why then, is Mead's analysis of Royce's philosophy so ambivalent? In other words, why does he praise Royce's intentions and wisdom, but end up expelling his "Blessed Community" from the American imagination and soil? At first sight this *expulsion* seems an excess caused by the recurrent pragmatist feature to delimit its tradition. As I have highlighted, this was a feature of classical pragmatism which is still alive in contemporary works. But there is something else, something *stronger*: from our perspective, the core of Mead's formulations on Royce's philosophy reveals the secret bifurcation of his own pragmatism.

Mead's pragmatism can be conceived of as a bifurcated one, since his own pragmatist position – with the possible exception of his theory of truth – differs from his interpretation of the meaning of pragmatism and the features of American Philosophy. While the latter explicitly adheres to the idea of the 'working' of hypotheses as the central and unique criterion of pragmatism – as seen on the previous pages – Mead's pragmatism (even inadvertently and unsystematically) revolves around the coherent connection between what we have called the *concrete* and *regulative* senses of the *generalized other*. Besides, 'rational agreement' and not the 'working of hypothesis' is the criterion adopted by Mead: "Sociality gives the universality of ethical judgments and lies back of the popular statement that the voice of all is the universal voice; that is, *everyone who can rationally appreciate the situation agrees*" (1967, 379, my italics).

Then, the nature of the tension lies in the contradictory commitments that both criteria require, i.e. *practicalism* and *rationalism* or *moderate rationalism*, which oppose each other in the works of the exponents of the classical era, coexist in a prickly way in Mead's thought. For my purposes, it must be highlighted that Mead's interpretation of the meaning of pragmatism prevents him from noticing the deep similarities existing between his pragmatism and Royce's. From the profound *ontological* agreement of the period 1903-13 to the consideration of the features of the American soul proper to



Mead's late writings, one can see a similar commitment to the conception of the social nature of the self and with the mediation between *concrete* and *regulative* communities respectively.

I have pointed out that there exists an almost complete overlapping between the pragmatic tradition and American philosophy in the classical era. The interpretation of Royce's role in the development of this story has always been controversial and its canonical image maybe owes its fundamental characteristics to Mead's and Dewey's statements. It is conceivable, then, that by starting to show deep similarities between Royce's and Mead's philosophies one can begin to set Royce's oeuvre in a different and more prominent place inside classical pragmatic tradition. In other words, instead of conceiving it as an *evasion* of American philosophy, one can think of it as a philosophical proposal containing a deep *insight* into the linkage between *concrete* and *ideal* communities, an insight that is essential not only from an American but from a universal point of view.

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