Nota Sobre uma Formulação Geométrica para Operadores de ω-Fecho

A Note on a Geometric Theory of ω-Closure Operators

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Resumo: Pretende-se construir uma teoria geométrica (no sentido do Programa Erlangen de F. Klein) relacionando-se uma certa classe de operadores de conseqüência, denominados operadores de ω-fecho, definidos sobre um conjunto X com a noção de grupos agindo sobre X utilizando-se a partição formada pelas suas órbitas.

Palavras-chave: Lógica universal. Operadores de conseqüência. Operadores de fecho. Grupos agindo em conjuntos. Topologia.

Abstract: *We intend to construct a geometric theory (in the sense of F. Klein's Erlangen Program) relating a certain class of consequence operators, named ω-closure operators, defined on a set X with the notion of groups acting on X using the partition of its orbits.*

Keywords: *Universal logic. Consequence operators. Closure operators. Groups acting in sets. Topology.*

1. Introdução

Em dois trabalhos seminais (ver TARSKI, 1983a e b), A. Tarski inaugurou o que hoje conhecemos por lógica abstrata ou lógica universal. Ele introduziu uma série de axiomas que procuravam captar as principais propriedades da noção de conseqüência que valem para uma ampla classe de sistemas lógicos de naturezas bastante diversas (e.g., sistemas clássico, intuicionista, modais, paraconsistentes, etc.). Isso ocorre porque em todos esses sistemas tem-se essencialmente uma definição da noção lógica de dedução (i.e., derivação de sentenças a partir de axiomas, regras de inferência e sentenças de um conjunto dado). Tarski introduziu e estudou um tipo de estrutura formada por um par (X,Cn) em que X é um conjunto enumerável (que representaria as sentenças da linguagem de um sistema formal) e Cn uma função (dita operador de conseqüência) que age nas partes do conjunto X, atribuindo, para cada subconjunto A de X, o conjunto das conseqüências de A, denotado por Cn(A) (que seriam as sentenças dedutíveis no sistema formal a partir do conjunto A).

    Tarski considerou quais as propriedades mínimas que o operador de conseqüência Cn deveria obedecer para que pudesse captar a noção de dedução em uma ampla classe de sistemas lógicos conhecidos. Verificou que essas propriedades deveriam ser as

seguintes (ver apêndice para as definições formais): inclusão, monotonicidade e idempotência. (Na verdade, ele utilizou uma noção mais forte que monotonicidade, que foi a propriedade de compacidade.)

Poderíamos, então, afirmar que a lógica universal consiste no estudo matemático das propriedades dos operadores de conseqüência e dos conceitos que podem ser definidos a partir dos mesmos, *e.g.*, teorias, teorias maximais, teorias consistentes, etc. Um breve resumo do estudo dessas propriedades pode ser encontrado em Souza, 2001 e Souza e Velasco, 2002.

Ora, um primeiro problema que se coloca a todo estudioso de lógica universal consiste em encontrar outras estruturas matemáticas que possam representar (em um sentido que pode ser precisado) as estruturas do tipo (X,Cn). Esse problema pode ser resolvido de muitos modos diferentes, cada um deles lançando uma nova luz às estruturas estudadas. Apenas para citar alguns deles, existem estruturas denominadas de sistemas de fecho (X,F), em que F é uma família de subconjuntos de X que e fechada por intersecções, tal que se pode definir uma operação que se verifica ser uma operação de conseqüência sobre X. Por outro lado, dada uma estrutura (X,Cn), pode-se encontrar F tal que a operação definida é idêntica a Cn. Outra possibilidade é a utilização de estruturas valorativas (X,V) em que V é apenas uma família não vazia de subconjuntos de X, e define-se facilmente uma operação que represente Cn.

Posto isso, o presente trabalho versa sobre o mesmo problema de representação mencionado acima. Porém, procuramos aqui um modo de representar uma subclasse dos operadores de conseqüência por meio da noção de grupos agindo sobre X. Ou seja, procuramos o análogo do Programa Erlanger de F. Klein, para o caso de certa classe de operadores de conseqüência. Como é sabido, Klein classificou os sistemas de geometria conhecidos em sua época estudando os invariantes gerados por grupos agindo no espaço. A geometria clássica, por exemplo, seria caracterizada pelo grupo de transformações rígidas do espaço. Para o caso dos operadores de ω-fecho (que serão definidos no decorrer do texto) o problema está resolvido e sua solução será esboçada na presente nota. (Incluímos um apêndice matemático com as definições precisas de todos os termos utilizados no texto.)

2. Grupos Agindo em Conjuntos

Considere um grupo G agindo sobre um conjunto X (que no decorrer de toda essa nota sempre representará um conjunto não vazio enumerável, de modo que as estruturas aqui apresentadas terão sempre por base esse conjunto fixado), isto é, cada elemento g de G pode ser visto como uma função em X tal que a unidade de G corresponde à função identidade em X e composição de elementos de G agem como composição das respectivas funções em X. Quando possuímos uma ação de um grupo G em um conjunto X, denominamos X de um G-espaço.

Se x é um elemento de X, g(x) representa o resultado da aplicação da função correspondente ao elemento g de G a x. Definimos a órbita associada a um elemento x de X com base na ação de G como o conjunto formado pelo resultado de aplicar a x todas as funções correspondentes a todos os elementos de G; e denotamos esse conjunto por G(x), a G-órbita associada a x. Assim,

$$G(x) := \{g(x): g \text{ em } G\}.$$

É fácil ver que, em virtude do elemento unidade de G que age como a função identidade em X, x sempre é um elemento de G(x). Assim, o conjunto de todas as G-órbitas corresponde a uma cobertura de X. Considere agora a seguinte relação binária ≈ entre elementos de X: para elementos x,y de X, x ≈ y se e somente se existe um elemento g de G tal que g(x) = y. É fácil ver que ≈ constitui uma relação de equivalência em X, isto é, uma relação que é reflexiva, simétrica e transitiva e que, portanto, as ≈-classes de equivalência são exatamente as G-órbitas. Dessa forma, vemos que o conjunto das G-órbitas forma uma partição de X, isto é, uma família de subconjuntos de X dois a dois disjuntos cuja união é o próprio conjunto X. Vimos, então, que toda ação de um grupo G sobre X induz uma partição de X formada pelas G-órbitas. Por outro lado, não é difícil ver que a toda partição de X, pode-se encontrar um grupo agindo sobre X tal que as G-órbitas constituem exatamente a partição dada. Basta tomar como G o subgrupo do grupo das bijeções de X formadas colando-se todas as possíveis bijeções correspondentes a cada partição. Temos, assim, uma correspondência biunívoca entre grupos agindo em X e partições de X.

3. G-Invariantes

Considere, agora, um subconjunto A de X, e denotemos por G(A) o conjunto formado pelo resultado de aplicar a todos os elementos de A todas as funções correspondentes a todos os elementos de G, isto é,

$$G(A) := \{G(x): x \text{ de } A\}.$$

Quando A for idêntico a G(A) dizemos que A é um G-invariante do G-espaço X. Como as G-órbitas formam uma partição de X, o conjunto vazio Ø e o próprio conjunto X são G-invariantes. Não é difícil ver que os subconjuntos de X que são G-invariantes são uniões de G-órbitas e, portanto, são os elementos da álgebra de Boole gerada pelas próprias G-órbitas. Isso segue diretamente do fato mencionado acima de que as G-órbitas formam uma partição de X.

Com base no G-espaço X considerado, passemos à definição do principal objeto a ser estudado nessa nota. Seja A um subconjunto qualquer de X, definimos o G-invariante gerado por A, denotado por $Inv_G(A)$, como a intersecção de todos os G-invariantes que contém A (observe que a família dos G-invariantes que contém A não é vazia, uma vez que o próprio conjunto X é um G-invariante, de modo que a noção G-invariante gerado por A está bem definida). Assim,

$$Inv_G(A) := \cap \{F: F \text{ é G-invariante e } A \text{ é subconjunto de } F\},$$

e segue diretamente da definição que, considerando-se InvG como uma função que opera nas partes do conjunto X (o conjunto de todos os subconjuntos de X), cada G-invariante constitui um ponto fixo de INV_G, isto é, se F é G-invariante, $Inv_G(F) = F$. Além disso, INV_G satisfaz as propriedades de inclusão, idempotência, o conjunto vazio é um ponto fixo e comuta com a união finita de subconjuntos de X.

4. Operadores de Conseqüência e de Fecho

Operadores definidos no conjunto das partes de X que satisfazem as propriedades de inclusão, monotonicidade e idempotência são denominados operadores de conseqüência (ver TARSKI, 1983a e b). Cabem, aqui, algumas palavras sobre essas propriedades. Por um teorema de ponto fixo do próprio Tarski, monotonicidade implica a existência de pontos fixos. Ademais, por idempotência, tem-se que a imagem de operadores de conseqüência sempre são pontos fixos. Finalmente, por inclusão, o valor de um operador de conseqüência para um dado argumento é o menor ponto fixo que o contém.

Considerando-se os operadores INV_G definidos acima, é fácil ver que os mesmos são monotônicos e, portanto, operadores de conseqüência. No entanto, observando-se que o conjunto vazio é um ponto fixo de INV_G, e a comutatividade de INV_G com respeito à união finita de famílias de subconjuntos de X, tem-se que esses operadores pertencem a uma subclasse dos operadores de conseqüência denominados operadores de fecho (Kuratowski, ver KELLEY 1975) para os quais valem as seguintes propriedades: idempotência, inclusão, o vazio é um ponto fixo e o operador comuta com uniões finitas de subconjuntos de X.

5. Operadores de Fecho e Topologia

Operadores de fecho possuem uma relação direta com topologias definidas sobre X. Considere uma topologia T sobre X (isto é, uma família de subconjuntos de X, denominados abertos da topologia T, que é fechada por uniões quaisquer e intersecções finitas e, além disso, contém o conjunto vazio e o próprio conjunto X) e um subconjunto A de X. O fecho de A é a intersecção de todos os fechados (complementos de elementos de T) contendo A.

Considerando-se então o fecho como uma operação sobre o conjunto potência de X, vemos imediatamente que se trata de uma operação de fecho de Kuratowski. Este operador determina completamente a topologia, pois A é fechado se e somente se A é idêntico ao seu fecho. Por outro lado, operadores de fecho sobre X determinam uma topologia sobre X no sentido do seguinte resultado devido a Kuratowski: Seja C um operador de fecho sobre X e seja F a família de todos os subconjuntos A de X que são pontos fixos de C. Considere a família T dos complementos dos elementos de F. Então, T é uma topologia sobre X e C(A) é o fecho de A com respeito a T.

6. Operadores de ω-Fecho

Na presente nota, estamos interessados em um caso ainda particular de operadores de fecho que descrevemos a seguir. Trata-se de operadores de ω-fecho que satisfazem uma propriedade mais geral de união, a saber, comuta com a união de famílias enumeráveis de subconjuntos de X.

Assim, operadores de ω-fecho em X são operadores nas partes de X que satisfazem idempotência, inclusão, o vazio é um ponto fixo e o operador comuta com uniões enumeráveis de subconjuntos de X.

Temos, agora, todos os elementos necessários para a formulação do problema a que nos propomos resolver no presente texto.

Dado um operador de ω-fecho em X, existe um grupo G agindo sobre X tal que o operador associado Inv_G é idêntico ao operador dado?

A resposta ao problema acima é sim e a solução será esboçada a seguir.

Considere um operador de ω-fecho C definido em X, isto é, C opera nas partes de X e satisfaz: inclusão, monotonicidade, idempotência, o vazio é um ponto fixo e o operador comuta com uniões enumeráveis de subconjuntos de X. Pelo exposto acima, nosso problema resume-se a encontrar uma partição de X que seja definida de forma canônica a partir do operador C dado. Para isso, podemos simplesmente encontrar uma relação de equivalência entre os membros de X, que dependa exclusivamente do operador C. Considere, então, a seguinte relação binária ≈ em X: para elementos x,y de X, x ≈ y se e somente se C({x}) = C({y}). É óbvio que ≈ é uma relação de equivalência em X. Lembremos, agora, que como X é enumerável, qualquer subconjunto de X é também enumerável. Assim, dado um subconjunto A de X, temos que A pode ser escrito como uma união enumerável constituída pelos unitários de seus membros. Portanto, como C comuta com a união de famílias enumeráveis de subconjuntos de X, C(A) é a união dos C(*a*) para cada elemento a de A, isto é, uma união de elementos da partição dada. Segue-se que o grupo G associado à partição gerada pela relação de equivalência ≈ é o grupo procurado.

7. Conclusão

O próximo passo da pesquisa consiste em estender (ou provar a impossibilidade de) o resultado para operadores de fecho em geral (comutatividade do operador apenas com uniões de famílias finitas). Como operadores de fecho podem ser representados por espaços topológicos, é a partir da consideração desses espaços que o trabalho deve continuar. Em particular, investigaremos em que tipo de espaço topológico temos, *e.g.*, "base" disjunta de fechados (*i.e.*, partições compostas de fechados tais que todo fechado seja união finita de elementos da partição).

Para o caso mais geral dos operadores de conseqüência, o trabalho é mais complicado porque não temos um teorema de representação da forma obtida no texto (pois, nas estruturas de conseqüência (X,Cn) o conjunto vazio não é em geral um ponto fixo de Cn e este não comuta com uniões finitas de famílias de subconjuntos de X). Para esse caso, procuramos encontrar famílias de subconjuntos de X para as quais valem as propriedades de operador de fecho e, para cada família, encontrar grupos que as representem. A estrutura inteira (X,Cn) seria, então, representada por uma família de grupos agindo sobre X.

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Apêndice

Apresentaremos aqui as definições de todos os conceitos e objetos matemáticos que aparecem na nota (detalhes em Bourbaki, 1968 e 1989).

Um grupo é um par $(G,\cdot)$ tal que G é um conjunto não vazio e $\cdot$ é uma operação binária em G,

$$\cdot: G \times G \to G,$$

que satisfaz às seguintes condições:

(i)   Associatividade: $(fg)h = f(gh)$ para todo f,g,h em G;

(ii)   Elemento unidade: existe um elemento 1 em G tal que $g1 = 1g = g$ para todo g em G;

(iii)   Elemento inverso: para todo elemento g de G, existe um elemento g^{-1} em G tal que $g^{-1}g = gg^{-1} = 1$.

Note que estamos utilizando a notação fg para $f\cdot g$.

Dizemos que um grupo age sobre um conjunto X se existe uma função

$$\Phi: G \times X \to X,$$

que satisfaz às seguintes condições:

(i) $\Phi(f, \Phi(g,x)) = \Phi(fg,x)$, para todo f,g em G e x em X;

(ii) $\Phi(1,x) = x$, para todo x em X.

Utilizando-se a notação f(x) para $\Phi(f,x)$, as condições acima podem ser escritas como: $f(g(x)) = (fg)(x)$ e $1(x) = x$, para todo f,g em G e todo x em X.

Para todo x em X, a G-órbita associada a x é dada por $G(x) = \{g(x): g$ em $G\}$.

Um subconjunto A de X é um G-invariante se $A = G(A) := \{G(x): x$ em $A\}$.

Denotemos o conjunto das partes de X como P(X).

Assim, o operador Inv_G definido no texto é dado por:

$Inv_G: P(X) \to P(X),$
$A \to Inv_G(A) = \cap\{F: F$ é G-invariante e A é subconjunto de $F\}$.

Seja P uma família de subconjuntos de X. Dizemos que P é uma partição de X se a união de P é X e se para A,B em P com $A \neq B$, tem-se que $A \cap B = \emptyset$, isto é, os elementos de P são dois a dois disjuntos.

Seja C um operador definido nas partes do conjunto X, isto é:

$$C: P(X) \to P(X).$$

Dizemos que C satisfaz inclusão se A é subconjunto de C(A), para todo subconjunto A de X.

Dizemos que C satisfaz monotonicidade se A subconjunto de B implica que C(A) é subconjunto de C(B), para todo A,B subconjuntos de X.

Dizemos que C satisfaz idempotência se C(C(A)) = C(A), para todo subconjunto A de X.

Dizemos que C é um operador de conseqüência se satisfaz inclusão monotonicidade e idempotência.

Dizemos que um subconjunto A de X é um ponto fixo de C se C(A) = A.

Dizemos que C comuta com intersecções finitas de subconjuntos de X se dado uma família finita $(A_i)_i$ em I de subconjuntos de X, tem-se que

$$C(\cap\{A_i: i \text{ em } I\}) = \cap\{C(A_i): i \text{ em } I\}.$$

O mesmo vale para uniões e para o caso enumerável em que o cardinal de I é o cardinal de ω.

Dizemos que C é um operador de fecho se C satisfaz idempotência, inclusão, o vazio é um ponto fixo e o operador comuta com uniões finitas de subconjuntos de X.

Dizemos que C é um operador de ω-fecho se C satisfaz idempotência, inclusão, o vazio é um ponto fixo e o operador comuta com uniões enumeráveis de subconjuntos de X.

Uma topologia em X é uma família T de subconjuntos de X, cujos elementos são ditos abertos da topologia, que é fechada por uniões quaisquer e intersecções finitas e, além disso, contém o conjunto vazio e o próprio conjunto X. Um fechado na topologia T é um complementar de algum elemento de T e, dado um subconjunto A de X, o fecho de A é o menor fechado que o contém.

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Ethics as a Method and the Meanings of Ideal I: Toward a Critical Conceptual Reconstruction of Mead's Moral Philosophy*

Ética como Método e os Significados do Ideal I: para uma Reconstrução Crítico-conceitual da Filosofia Moral de Mead

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Abstract: This article constitutes the first part of my examination of Mead's moral philosophy. My central purpose is to reconstruct Mead's theses on moral philosophy from a critical point of view in order to provide an indispensable frame for my second article on Mead's moral philosophy: "Ethics as a Method and the Meanings of Ideal II. Overcoming the Shortcomings of Mead's Moral Philosophy." The aims of the article are two: on the one hand, to reconstruct Mead's theses on moral philosophy; on the other hand, to show the difficulty within Mead's thought to develop a coherent account of the linkage between the conception of ethics as a method and the twofold meaning of the term *ideal*. I want also to highlight the tension that exist between his sociologically relevant theory of action (through the use of the conceptions of "generalized other" and "self") with the universalistic demands of his normative theory.

Keywords: Mead. Mead's moral philosophy. Mead's *ethics as a method*. Twofold meanings of *ideal. ideal world*. democratic ideal. "Self," "Me," "I," and the "generalized other." Normative aspects of ethics. Tension between Mead's *ethics as a method* and Mead's conception of ideal.

Resumo: *Este artigo constitui a primeira parte do exame que faço da filosofia moral de Mead. Meu propósito central é reconstruir as teses de Mead sobre a filosofia moral de um ponto de vista crítico, para fornecer um quadro indispensável para meu segundo artigo sobre a filosofia moral de Mead:* "Ethics as a Method and the Meanings of Ideal II. Overcoming the Shortcomings of Mead's Moral Philosophy". *Os objetivos do artigo são dois: por um lado, reconstruir as teses de Mead sobre a filosofia moral; por outro, mostrar a dificuldade dentro do pensamento de Mead para desenvolver uma abordagem coerente da ligação entre a concepção de ética como método e o significado duplo do termo ideal. Quero também realçar a tensão existente entre sua teoria sociologicamente relevante da ação (pelo uso das concepções de "outro generalizado" e de "self") e as exigências universalistas de sua teoria normativa.*

Palavras-chave: *Mead. Filosofia moral de Mead.* Ética como método *de Mead. Significado duplo de* ideal. Mundo ideal. *Ideal democrático. "Self", "mim", "eu" e o "outro generalizado". Aspectos normativos da ética. Tensão entre a* ética como método *e a concepção de ideal em Mead.*

1. Introduction

This work constitutes the first part of my examination of Mead's moral philosophy.[1] My central purpose is to reconstruct Mead's theses on moral philosophy from a critical point of view in order to provide an indispensable frame for my second article: "*Ethics as a Method* and the Meanings of *Ideal* II. Overcoming the Shortcomings of Mead's Moral Philosophy." The aims of the article are two: on the one hand, to reconstruct Mead's theses on moral philosophy; on the other hand, to show the difficulty within Mead's thought to develop a coherent account of the linkage between the conception of *ethics as a method* and the twofold meaning of the term *ideal*. I want also to highlight the tension that exist between his sociologically relevant theory of action (through the use of the conceptions of *'generalized other'* and *self*) with the universalistic demands of his normative theory. Particularly, I want to highlight the tension that exist between his sociologically relevant theory of action (through the use of the conceptions of *'generalized other'* and *self*) with the universalistic demands of his normative theory. To carry out this task I have divided this article into four parts: this introduction; a second part where brief reference is made to some characteristics of Mead's philosophy and its development within classical pragmatism; a survey of Mead's theses on moral philosophy and, finally, a conclusion.

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[1]   I use the expressions *moral philosophy* and *ethics* indistinctly. An analysis of Mead's moral vocabulary in relation to a contemporary one can be seen in Hans Joas (1997, ch.6) and in Gary A Cook (1993, ch.8).

2. Mead and Pragmatism

Pragmatism has experienced an outstanding resurgence in the current literature. Consequently, the inescapable relevance of classical authors is broadly recognized. However, this revival is manifestly stronger in theoretical rather than in practical philosophy.[2] Although it is beyond the purposes of this article to analyze if this is the case (i.e., to judge if and how the *global* resurgence of classical pragmatism is addressed more to theoretical than to practical philosophy), an image of classical pragmatism centred in practical philosophy should unquestionably place Mead's philosophy in a more prominent position.

Thus, regarding the evolving history of pragmatism, Mead's philosophy bears the consequences of a double process: on the one hand, it was forgotten with the rest of the pragmatist tradition, and it was unnoticed in the recent revival; and, on the other hand, it was disregarded because of the shortcomings of his own philosophical legacy. At first sight it seems that Mead's shortcomings arise mainly from the way in which his work has been published and received, since a great part of it was posthumously edited. These editions (especially the famous *Mind, Self and Society* edited by Charles Morris) were important in order to make Mead's philosophy known; but this knowledge came at the high price of the simplification of its central issues.[3] Also, they have been decisive in another unforeseen sense: maybe the most unexpected consequence that these posthumous editions have produced is the neglect of Mead's articles since for many years *Mind, Self and Society* has seemed to be the *unique* official version of Mead's thought and even nowadays it is indubitably Mead's most quoted book.[4]

Although *Mind, Self and Society* is an unavoidable source,[5] several of Mead's articles –through the explicit attempt to clarify the links between substantive pragmatism and the interpretation of the meaning of pragmatism-[6] are clearer and contain vital elements for a crucial development of a pragmatist practical philosophy, namely the connections between normative and empirical aspects of the conception of community. For this reason, an appropriate way of pondering over Mead's writings is of the utmost importance since his neglected articles contain more accurate formulations of his thought. Therefore, a truthful image of Mead's philosophy should simultaneously consider both sides: the well known *Mind, Self and Society* as well as his less famous articles. With this

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[2] An analysis of this argument can be seen in Joas (1997) and Lekan (2006).
[3] Joas (1997) insists in this point.
[4] Until the edition by Andrew Reck (1964), Mead's articles were difficult to find.
[5] Regarding the relations between the *Selected Writings* and the posthumous editions of Mead's manuscripts, James Campbell argues that the latter "… flesh out the skeleton of Mead's thought presented in his published works." (2000, 541). Campbell also maintains that "Mead would certainly have wanted to make changes of greater or lesser degree had he seen his lectures and drafts thus 'fixed.' Still, I think it is legitimate to consider these volumes as representing Mead's thought, especially if we remain guided by the skeleton provided by his published essays and reviews and focus on the themes to which he returned again and again" (2000, 541-2). I completely agree that this is a necessary strategy.
[6] Maybe the most important article for this purpose is "The Philosophy of James, Royce and Dewey in Their American Setting", published in 1930.

task in view, I offer a detailed conceptual reconstruction analysing Mead's articles on moral philosophy as well as scattered affirmations on this subject that can be found in other works.[7]

There are two sets of reasons why it is worth reconstructing Mead's moral philosophy: first, if the revival of classical pragmatism is to be extended to practical philosophy, Mead's moral philosophy is indispensable; second, Mead's social-psychology develops relevant conceptual categories in order to offer a practical philosophy of contemporary significance. Regarding the first, I think Mead's moral philosophy, despite being so problematic from a textual point of view, could be conceived as one the most valuable among classical pragmatist developments.[8] Its comparison with the moral philosophies of classical pragmatists shows that: first, Meadian philosophy – unlike the Peircean conception – cannot be interpreted as differentiating between the conception of method and rationality proper to a community of *scientific* researchers and the normal procedure followed by a natural community or human society, a distinction that leads to an unacceptable evasion of rationality in relation to human practical-moral matters;[9] and that, contrary to William James's philosophy, Mead's moral thought has an accurate sociological dimension that avoids an untenable ethical individualism.[10] Mead's conception

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[7] See Joas (1997, 122).

[8] I think Royce's moral philosophy is at least at the same level. I have referred to the philosophical links between Royce and Mead in Viale (2007) and 2008 (a and b).

[9] The following is a Peircean example: "Thus, pure theoretical knowledge, or science, has nothing directly to say concerning practical matter, and nothing even applicable at all to vital crises. Theory is applicable to minor practical affairs; but matters of vital importance must be left to sentiment, that is, to instinct" CP 1, 623. Several authors think this distinction is representative of Peirce's philosophy: I. Sánchez de la Yncera (1994, 32-39), and G. Bello (1990, 52). C. West interpret that "Like Emerson, Peirce falls back on moral sentiment and instinctive action as the alternative to a 'scientific' ethics. His rather vague and arcane moral viewpoint surprisingly gives reason no significant role in conduct... How do we account for Peirce's valorizing of change, revision, openness, and newness in science and his defense of dogma, custom, habit and tradition in ethics and religion?" (1989, 46-7). This distinction could not be far away from Mead's conception: "This process, whether met in the field of mechanical invention, or the range of engineering, or that of scientific research, is recognized as the most absorbing, most interesting, most fascinating intellectually with which the mind of man can occupy itself, and this interest belongs legitimately to the solution of every moral problem, for the procedure is identical intellectually" (1964, 91).

[10] Why do I say that James's individualism is deficient in sociological and ethical aspects? I cannot develop my argument in detail but I can show what I have in mind: first, that James always begins his theoretical developments from individuals and therefore "adds" a social dimension; second, as a consequence of the first subject, his moral and sociological approaches become problematical from an epistemological point of view because his *individualism* distorts his analytical field. Of course, a solid defense of these statements needs an independent article. A good analysis of James' individualism can be seen in Ramón del Castillo (2007). Regarding this subject, he writes: "... the social realm could represent the dissolution of authentic morality in the abstract sea of social conventions. For James, practical morality means *concrete* human commitments opposed to abstract ways of social relationship" (2007, 13). Unlike James's conception, Mead's pragmatism

of intersubjectivity, a central category for a pragmatist moral philosophy, could be considered as more fruitful than Dewey's.[11]

My second set of reasons refers to a nucleus of Mead's moral philosophy already mentioned, i.e., the necessity to establish a clear link between empirical and normative aspects. Although the tension between these two aspects is a feature inherent to classical pragmatist tradition, I think Mead's moral philosophy paradigmatically exemplifies it. The core of this Meadian tension lies in the difficulty of linking a sociologically relevant theory of action (through the use of the conceptions of *'generalized other'*, *self* and, to a lesser extent, *rule*) with the universalistic demands of his normative theory. Although Mead's moral philosophy unsatisfactorily handles the connection between empirical and normative elements, I think it provides noteworthy elements. Therefore, from a pragmatist point of view, the task of the day consists in overcoming the difficulties that appear in Mead's work through a conceptual reconstruction that revitalizes the importance of his moral philosophy.

3. Mead's Theses on Moral Philosophy

With the exception of moral philosophy, the systematic disposition of Mead's theoretical development has been pointed out in several examinations of classical pragmatism.[12] However, a careful reading of his texts shows that Mead has always returned to the same moral topics with similar theoretical purposes. Therefore, perhaps Mead's moral philosophy may also have a systematic disposition, although it must not be looked for in a single book but rather in the several works in which Mead has addressed related issues during his lifetime. In a way all of them refer either to sociological-descriptive or normative aspects regarding the theory of action and the epistemology and methodology of morals. I reconstruct the Meadian conceptions of *ethics as a method* and the conceptions of *ideal*,[13] sketching the central theses that are shown in Mead's works:

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supports, in some sense, the priority of *social* aspects over the individual: "When a self does appear it always involves an experience of another; there could not be an experience of a self simply by itself [...] when taking the attitude of the other becomes an essential part in his behavior- then the individual appears in his own experiences as a self; and until this happens he does not appear as a self" (1967, 195).

[11] I am following here Joas's argument: "Far more than even Dewey, George Herbert Mead, in his analysis of the origin of human gestural and linguistic communication, was the one who thought through this problem and step by step reached a solution to it. And because he was credited with solving this problem, Mead became the strategically central figure of the Chicago School. This is true regardless of how unimpeachable his solution was and how thoroughly sociologists were acquainted with his thought" (1997, 23).

[12] See, for example, Joas (1997, xi) and Sánchez de la Yncera (1994, 52).

[13] One of the reviewers of the first draft of this paper points out that I "extract certain theses from Mead's work, rather than reconstruct theses already found in Mead's work." This criticism was partially true. Therefore, I avoid in this new version the use of term *descriptive* attached normally to a *real* reconstruction. Although my intention is not to offer a traditional reconstruction of Mead's thought (there are plenty of very good works in this direction, for example Aboulafia (1992) I have tried to present my theses on Mead's moral philosophy as close to his thought as I could.

1) that the main task of ethics is to take into account all values or elements which are, or are thought to be, relevant to the situation, and that this evaluation must be made from a rational point of view;

2) that moral problems arise within particular situations;

3) that moral actions must be explained in a manner analogous to the pragmatist explanation of the action;

4) that moral actions entail creativity, i.e., Mead's conception does not imply that individuals *only* or *necessarily* adapt themselves to their social environment;

5) that *ethics as a method* opposes dogmatic positions;

6) that ethics refer both to the means and the ends of actions;

7) that democracy is the adequate frame for developing the *implicit* ideals of the human social structure;

8) that a conception of *ideal world* arise from that of *ethics as a method*;

The first thesis is held by Mead in different articles as the cornerstone of his moral philosophy. Perhaps his most emphatic statement on this issue can be found in "Scientific Method and the Moral Sciences" (1923):

> what the scientific method does require, if it is to be consistently used, is that all the conflicting ends, the institutions and their hitherto inviolable values, be brought together and so restated and reconstructed that intelligent conduct may be possible, with reference to all of them. Scientific method requires this because it is nothing but a highly developed form of impartial intelligence. (1964, 255-6)

Therefore, the central idea of this article turns around the supposition that an "impartial intelligence" is essential in order to overcome the social conflicts of ends, institutions or values. The methodological edge behind this supposition is that the "scientific method" applied to moral science can help to establish new habits of conduct through social reconstruction. The following issues revolve around this central idea: First, is the single meaningful criterion the possibility of application or the success of moral ends, institutions or values, i.e., a clear hegemony of *concrete* elements? Second, do other relevant factors also exist, particularly, *ideal* factors? Third, in the case that both elements exist, how can they be coherently connected? Of course there are theoretical advantages and disadvantages associated with a plurality of positions. Mead supports two different responses regarding these topics: first, that only concrete elements are decisive and that ideal dimensions are either superfluous or negative from the point of view of the "moral sciences;" second, that ideal factors are important only if they arise from the use of the appropriate method.

An example of the first response can be found in Mead's early article (1899) "The Working Hypothesis in Social Reform": "the highest criterion that we can present is that

the hypothesis shall *work* in the complex of forces into which we introduce it [...] What we have is a method and a control in application, not an ideal to work toward" (1964, 3). Similar statements appear in other articles, particularly in his mature (1930) "The Philosophies of James, Royce and Dewey in Their American Setting," where he presents his agreement with Dewey's pragmatism in an analogous way: "… for such an implicit intelligence there is no other test of moral and intellectual hypotheses except that they work" (1964, 391). Although 30 years separate these articles, they share a similar philosophical tone: they show the conception of the *working* of a hypothesis as the central issue of Mead's thought.

Meanwhile, Mead's second response incorporates an *ideal* aspect, i.e., the thesis that through the application of a reconstructive method a "democratic ideal" arises. In his own words:

> The claims of the ideal world are that the individual shall take into account all of the values which have been abstracted from their customary settings by the conflict and fashion his reconstruction in recognition of all of them [...] That is, they have been given a form which abstracts them from the restrictions which economic, feudal, and cultural class distinctions lay upon great numbers in the community. This sets up what may be called the 'democratic ideal' of removing such restrictions. (1964, 405-6)

In my view, there is a clear difference between both responses that shows diverse philosophical commitments. While the first one appeals *only* to the world's empirical restrictions in order to justify a moral hypothesis (*"… What we have is a method and a control in application, not an ideal to work toward"*); the second one proposes a reconstruction as a methodological imperative of the "ideal world" and it also maintains that this procedure sets up a "democratic ideal." I will take up again this issue in the analysis of thesis 7.

Thus, there exist two uses of the conception of ideal in Mead's thought: a methodological use and a substantive use. The last issue regarding thesis 1 relates to the link between ethics and rationality. For Mead's conception rationality is a necessary prerequisite for the moral act: "the moral act must take into account all the values involved, and must be rational – and this is all that can be said" (1967, 388).

Thesis 2 -that moral problems arise within particular situations- can be seen as the metaphysical or ontological basis on which Mead's methodological approach is grounded. For example, in "The Philosophical Basis of Ethics" (1908) Mead argues that

> In conclusion may I refer to another loss which moral conduct dependent upon an *external* ideal involves. The interpretation of sin and wrong with reference to a moral order external to the conduct fails to identify the moral defect with the situation out of which it springs and by whose reconstruction it may be eliminated. (1964, 93, my italics)

At first sight, *external* only means in this context an *ungrounded* ideal. Its meaning turns around the lack of true or grounded ties between a problematic moral situation and an ideal, i.e., in this case the ideal is a preconception disconnected from the problematic situation. Although this is accurate, from the analysis of Mead's regular use of the concept of ideal another meaning can be inferred, one that establishes an opposition

between external and *internal* ideals. In other words: an ideal can be denominated *internal* to the extent it has risen from concrete situations. My hypothesis is that Mead mistakenly thinks that his conception of "democratic ideal" works as an internal ideal since, contrary to the external ones, it attempts to establish *grounded* links with the problematic moral situation through the appropriate use of the method. In Mead's conception the "internal" ideal springs from the appropriate use of the method, i.e., the ideal springs from the proper situation as a desirable end after pondering all the *given* elements of the situation. This procedure would be the exact reverse of the way in which the external ideal works, i.e., trough a *preconceived* ideal. I will refer to this below (analysis of thesis 7).

Thus, from a Meadian perspective, a moral philosophy whose core is either an external ideal world to be reached or a net – or fixed hierarchy – of values to be attained, leads us to conceive the present only in relation to that ideal or hierarchy. One of the worst consequences of this idea is that we do not understand how moral problems arise and are effectively solved. As a result, within Mead's thought, this conception is ineffective as a guide for moral actions as well as useless for its theoretical analysis. In other words: a preconceived or external ideal cannot help us solve moral problems because it has not methodological links with the moral problem. Mead opposes to this view a "situationalist ethics", i.e., one which states that situations, or their relevant elements which pose moral problems must be borne in mind. The heart of this second thesis is the Meadian conception *that moral problems arise from maladjustments that occur in the particular situations where action takes place*. This ontological statement allows connecting the first two theses directly with the pragmatist theory of action.

Regarding thesis 3 -that the moral action must be explained in a way analogous to the pragmatist explanation of action- it is well known that the traditional pragmatist account of action, developed by Peirce, is grounded on the concepts of belief and doubt. Although there are many issues involved here, I am interested in highlighting the thesis that the doubt presupposes belief, i.e., that doubt only has meaning as a *real* uncertainty or indeterminacy as a product of a concrete process of research. From an epistemological point of view, this is a broad anti-skeptical and anti-Cartesian background, common to classical pragmatists from Peirce to Dewey, including Mead:

> I am calling attention to the fact that the experimental method can only be applied where a reality which is not called in question sets the conditions to which any hypothetical solution must conform. The scientist puts a question to nature, and so far as the answer to that question is concerned, nature cannot herself be problematical. The scientist's technique consists largely in distinguishing that which is in doubt from that which is *indubitable*. (1964, 333, my italics)

This epistemological primacy of beliefs over doubt in Mead's thought has a parallel in practical philosophy in the preeminence of the *normal* situation over the *problematic* situation. In his words:

> But ethical problems arise for individual members of any given human society whenever they are individually confronted with a social situation to which they cannot readily *adjust* and *adapt* themselves, or in which they cannot easily realize themselves, or with which *they cannot immediately integrate their own behaviour*. (1967, 320, my italics)

Therefore, analogously to the *indubitable* reality of the physical world, the social world is normally *indubitable*, i.e., the moral standard remains unquestioned. As a result, individuals can immediately *adjust* and *integrate* their behavior to their social world. The problematic moral situation arises, then, when maladjustments between individuals and the moral standard occur. These maladjustments entail a *strong* tension in the social world, since they originate two opposite tendencies: on the one hand, a tendency to immediately reestablish the normal course of action; on the other hand, a tendency to evaluate and to ponder the solutions to these maladjustments.

Summing up, *a similar idea to that proposed by Peirce for the fixation or establishment of beliefs is found to be at work here on the same kind of philosophical grounds:* for action in general, and for moral action in particular, it is important to have some kind of element (habits, rules, conception of good etc.) *fixed* or *established* in relation to the action which allows us to leave the state of doubt. In particular, it is necessary to establish rules with regard to moral action. Such fixation or establishment of rules, as the Peircean one, is provisional and will remain while not firmly disputed. Given a problematic situation – problematic means that customary patterns of action are disputed – different moral elements, i.e. values, conceptions of good, norms, etc. come into play depending on the individuals involved. The scientific method applied to ethics cannot tell us which of such elements are correct, good etc., but it can only state that the relevant ones – according to social standards of relevance – should be considered and it can propose a reconstruction of the situation which develops into a new habit. In this context (following the pragmatist theory of action whose central dictum is to avoid doubt) the fixation of a new habit is more important than its characteristics. I regard this as a crucial point in Mead's work, since one must find feasible ways to "transcend" our society in order for such an establishment not to be mere conformity to society, or the social imposition that cultural relativism would subscribe to.

The subsequent theses I reconstruct relate the way in which Mead attempts to highlight normative or deontological aspects of his approach. Thesis 4, for example, states that Mead's moral philosophy does not merely *come down to* social demands but it leaves room for the criticism and creativity of individuals.[14] To understand this thesis a brief reference to Mead's conception of the self is required. It is well known that Mead's conception of self is twofold. In Mead's view, the self has a primary *conventional* side as a member of his own society (from internalization of its rules, values, and principles) that he calls "Me". In this context individuals only look for unconventional moral elements when maladjustments in a particular situation occur or a new kind of situation appears. I have referred to this issue above. On the other hand, it is well known that there exists another dimension of the self in the frame of Mead's thought: the dimension of the "I". The problematic aspects of this category have been broadly highlighted in the literature.[15] My specific interest here is to briefly point out two nuances that Mead offers regarding

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[14] This was explicitly remarked by Joas: "... the manner of his approach makes it clear that the understanding of morality as sociality does not come down to a morality of conformity" (1997, 135). A detailed analysis of the conception of creativity can be seen in Joas (1993, 245-51).

[15] See Joas (1993, 249).

this issue. The first one turns around the inevitability of change, i.e., that even the most conventional behaviour inevitably entails social changes. In Mead's words:

> The "me" is a conventional, habitual individual. It is always there. It has to have those habits, those responses which everybody has; otherwise the individual could not be a member of the community. But an individual is constantly reacting to such an organized community in the way of expressing himself, not necessarily asserting himself in the offensive sense but expressing himself, being himself in such a cooperative process as belongs to any community. The attitudes involved are gathered from the group, but the individual in whom they are organized has the opportunity of giving them an expression which perhaps has never taken place before. This brings out the general question as to whether anything novel can appear. *Practically, of course, the novel is constantly happening and the recognition of this gets its expression in more general terms in the concept of emergence.* (1967, 197-8, my italics)

In this paragraph it can be appreciated that Mead's conceptions of emergence and individual ("I" in his terms) have a close relation. However, the theoretical consequence of this linkage is *empirical* and not *normative*: newness, the emergence of the new, occurs only because individuals *react* and this necessarily entails change. Therefore, newness is an essential feature of every society.

On the other hand, the core of the "I" in the second nuance does not revolve around *facticity* (i.e., individuals, to the extent they act, inevitably and even unintentionally produce changes) but around the awareness of the consequences of his action, which allows us to infer that the 'I' has a *justificatory* task regarding moral and social changes. In Mead's terms:

> "the moral necessity lies not in the end acting from without, nor in the push of inclination from within, but in the relation of the conditions of action to the impulses to action. *The motive is neither a purely rational, external end, nor a private inclination, but the impulse presented in terms of its consequences, over against the consequences of the other impulses. The impulse so conditioned, so interpreted, becomes a motive to conduct*". (1964, 87, my italics)

Therefore, to the extent that the "I" is not only a *mere reaction* to the conventional "Me", this paragraph shows another function for it: the *justificatory* task, whose core lays in the transition from *impulses* to *motives*, since *motives* ponder the consequences of actions. Then, although an individual without the "Me" aspect is *sociologically* unintelligible (and, consequently, the social environment works as a frame for the justificatory task) the justification of the self's actions is a task that can only be carried out by the "I". Even the most conventional individual (the heteronymous individual that only follows the conventions of his social environment and therefore is almost completely a "me") has at least decided to follow these conventions. In other words: to judge one's own actions and one's own society from a moral point of view is an unavoidable task for every self, i.e., nobody can justify (for me) my own actions and the moral ground of my own society except myself. Within this unavoidable task of the "I" lays the possibility for individuals to criticize the moral standard of their own society, as has been explicitly recognized by Mead: "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).

These voices of the past and the future represent the more abstract level in Mead's theoretical development. For analytical purposes I explain their meaning starting from the more *concrete* categories. "I" and "other" are correlative in Mead's thought: "… and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of others individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behavior in which both he and they are involved" (Mead 1967, 138). This is not, however, a mere other but an *organized* other: "We get then an 'other' which is an organization of the attitudes of those involved in the same process" (1967, 154). In Mead's terms this is called "the generalized other": "the organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called 'the generalized other'" (1967, 154). This "generalized other" could be called a *concrete* one,[16] since it is constituted by actual norms/rules and expectations of the social environment(s) to which the individual belongs. But speaking of the voices of the past and the future Mead is not referring to this *concrete* or *limited* "generalized other," but to an ideal or unlimited one. It is possible to speculate that, had Mead more accurately specified this view, he could have said *unlimited community of researchers* (à la Peirce) or *ideal community of interpretation* (à la Royce).[17] Then, this "generalized other" t is not concrete but *an ideal one*. Therefore, every concrete "generalized other" can (and *must*) be criticized from the perspective of the ideal one. A consequence of the conceptions of "I"/"Me" and "generalized other" is that subjectivism is impossible within Mead's practical philosophy. In Mead's words: "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).

I finish the analysis of thesis 4 stressing some aspects of the "Me" and "I". The relationship between the "Me" and the "I" could be thought as disclosing a tension similar to that which can be seen in Peirce's logic of action: on the one hand, the need to fix the belief; on the other, the need to have true beliefs. In consequence, analogously to the regulative function of the concepts of *Truth* and *Reality* in Peirce's frame, I think the normative aspect of Mead's philosophy implies that a rational solution to a moral problem would be identical for anybody who *could* consider it from a rational point of view, i.e., *everyone who can rationally appreciate the situation agrees*. Thus, there is a similarity between Mead's approach and Peirce's conception of convergence "in the long run", i.e., that anybody who rationally does research about a topic or problem should "in the long run" get to the same result as any other rational being. The big difference between Mead's and Peirce's approaches, however, is that the latter recognizes the tension between these two aspects of the logic of action and Mead does not. Considering the tension between the "Me" and the "I", three features must be acknowledged: that the "Me" is clearly connected with the idea of social conformity;

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[17] I have referred to the philosophical links between Royce and Mead in Viale (2007) and 2008 (a and b).

[16] It is more accurate to speak of "generalized others" instead of "generalized other" because there are many of them depending on the different social groups the individuals belong to.

that at least some aspects of the "I" are related to the solution of moral problems and its justification; finally, that the important task of the "I" does not imply any kind of subjectivism in Mead's approach.

Some aspects of the analysis of the last thesis are strongly connected with thesis 5. As I have said, *Antidogmatism* constitutes an explicit Meadian thesis on moral philosophy. Regarding this issue, Mead has argued that "Scientific method is at war with dogmatism whether it appears in doctrine, or cult, or in social practice" (1964, 256-7) and "the most fundamental attack that can be made upon race prejudice is through the careful and scientific application of the intelligence test" (1938, 510). This is a central thesis of my interpretation because, on the basis of this antidogmatism, Mead explicitly highlights the *self-conscious* adaptation to the environment as an essential feature of a moral order: "the order of the universe that we live in is the moral order. It has become the moral order by becoming the *self-conscious method* of the members of a human society" (1964, 266, my italics).

Analyzing Mead's references to the self-conscious method of adaptation as well as his conception of moral order, different nuances related to the first three theses I have analyzed can be noticed. On the one hand, in these theses, Mead conceives the scientific method for the moral sciences as carrying out a reconstructive task mainly centred around the working of a moral hypothesis in a given context. Consequently, the core of these theses turns around the possibility of application of a moral hypothesis. On the other hand, the conception of a moral order revolving around a *self-conscious method* stresses mainly the idea of evaluation and justification of moral hypotheses rather than an analysis of the possibilities of their application. Although these dimensions, in principle, do not necessarily oppose each other, they should be explicitly and coherently integrated. Perhaps the best way to integrate them is to acknowledge the inherent tension between the logic of the fixation and the logic of the evaluation or justification of beliefs. In my view, within Mead's philosophy the nucleus of this tension lays in the twofold tasks the self must carry out: the "Me" must reach a successful adaptation to the social environment; while the "I" must justify the actions even against the "Me".

Thesis 6 – that both means and ends of actions should be rationally evaluated – is a central feature of classical pragmatist ethics that discloses his *cognitivist* commitment. The Meadian conception of ethics as a method rejects the thesis that a rational approach to moral ends is impossible and what is assessed is the rationality of the means. It is important to explain this clearly, since Mead's conception of ethics as a method may lead us to think that a rational evaluation of moral ends and values is impossible. To think that Mead's ethics as a method is grounded on the impossibility of rationally examining and pondering moral ends and values is a serious hermeneutical error. In Mead's terms: "... it would be a mistake to assume that the scientific method is applicable only in the fashioning and selection of means, and may not be used where the problem involves conflicting social ends or values" (1964, 254). Therefore, Mead's philosophy enables us to show how dangerous it is for a moral community to accept a radical dichotomy between means and ends, since it renders a rational discussion impossible, and transforms substantive differences into *mere* methodological ones. This is clearly pointed out by Mead when he maintains that: "it is through the use of the means that we advance to the redefinition of the end" (1938, 474) which implies that it is not possible to judge either the rationality or the morality of an end without judging the means as well.

Thesis 7 turns around Mead's statement that democracy is superior to other social systems, to the extent it overtly permits individuals to develop their potentialities and capabilities, i.e., that democracy is superior to other social systems from a moral point of view:

> *One may say that the attainment of that functional differentiation and social participation in the full degree is a sort of ideal which lies before the human community. The present stage of it is presented in the ideal of democracy.* It is often assumed that democracy is an order of society in which those personalities which are sharply differentiated will be eliminated, that everything will be ironed down to a situation where everyone will be, as far as possible, like everyone else. But of course that is not the implication of democracy: the implication of democracy is rather that the individual can be as highly developed as lies within the possibilities of his own inheritance, and still can enter into the attitudes of the others whom he affects. (1967, 326, my italics)

Similar assertions can also be found in other sections of *Mind, Self and Society.*.[18] Another important source regarding this issue is (1930) "Philanthropy from the Point of View of Ethics." Although the central aim of this article is to examine diverse aspects of the phenomena of charity (from the generous impulse to help needy people to the social organization of charity), its last part analyzes the connections among, in Mead's terms, *rational procedure*, *ideal world* and *democratic ideal*.[19] Two ideas concerning these connections are relevant for my purposes: that it is necessary to transcend the social order to overcome its conflicts[20] (I have also referred to this in the analysis of thesis three); that social reconstructions offered through rational procedure require a *democratic* background to be successful. In Mead's words:

> It is clear, however, that reason would operate in a vacuum, unless these values of enlightenment – of science, aesthetic appreciation, and human associations – can take on forms which are freed from the social restrictions placed upon them by the groups which have possessed them. (1964, 405)

This last paragraph is closely related with thesis 8 -that the conception of ideal world arises from that of ethics as a method. In Mead's terms:

> In logical terms there is established a universe of discourse which transcends the specific order within which the members of the community may, in a specific conflict, place themselves outside of the community order as it exists, and agree upon changed habits of action and a restatement of values. Rational procedure, therefore, sets up an order within which thought operates; that abstracts in varying degrees from the actual structure of society. It is a social order, for its function is a common action on the basis of commonly recognized conditions of conduct and common ends. Its claims are the claims of reason. It is a social order that includes any rational being who is or may be in any way implicated

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[18] For example: "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)
[19] Especially (1964, 404-407).
[20] See especially (1964, 404).

in the situation with which thought deals. *It sets up an ideal world, not of substantive things but of proper method. Its claim is that all the conditions of conduct and all the values which are involved in the conflict must be taken into account in abstraction from the fixed forms of habits and goods which have clashed with each other.* It is evident that a man cannot act as a rational member of society, except as he constitutes himself a member of this wider commonwealth of rational beings. (1964, 404-5, my italics)

This outstanding paragraph of (1930) "Philanthropy from the Point of View of Ethics" is essential in order to highlight two Meadian issues: the sharp distinction that Mead establishes between the concrete world, "the actual structure of society," and the need of the ideal world to overcome moral conflicts. For my purposes, it is also essential to pay attention to the nuances that Mead introduces in his argument, specifically his conception that the ideal world is a result of the use of the method, i.e., an ideal world is meaningful only when it is a rational conception methodologically linked to the situation.

The relevance of the conception of method within Mead's practical philosophy is beyond question. From his initial articles, for example (1899) "The Working Hypothesis in Social Reform," to the mature ones, for example (1930) "Philanthropy from the Point of View of Ethics," he has always stressed the need to understand moral ends and values in terms of their possibilities, i.e., taking into account the means to their realization. Meanwhile, Mead's conception of ideal lacks clarity. The core of the problem is that his conception of ideal has two different meaning: it works as a methodological requirement in order to manage a problematical situation (moral situation in this context); it also works as a substantive aspect, i.e., it establishes desirable (democratic) ends that the conception of ethics as a method *must* reach. But there is not a necessary link between these meanings, i.e., from the idea of considering all the elements relevant for a problematic moral situation as a reconstructive method *does not necessarily follow* that a "democratic ideal" arises. This link is *merely postulated* more than *theoretically developed* by Mead.

It is noteworthy that Mead always introduces the concepts democratic ideal and progress, for example, with doubts, i.e., with inverted commas ("This sets up what may be called the 'democratic ideal' of removing such restrictions") or putting before the word adverbs that denotes imprecision ("We vaguely call it 'progress'"). The point should not be, however, to weaken *the normative* aspect of his philosophy (with inverted commas, adverbs or imprecise terms) but to find a coherent link between normative and empirical aspects.[21]

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[21] I think the root of this problem lies in Mead's philosophical naturalism. I will refer to this issue in the next article: "*Ethics as a Method* and the Meanings of *Ideal* II. Overcoming the Shortcomings of Mead's Moral Philosophy."

4. Conclusion

Hans Joas has pointed out that Mead did not have enough talent for his genius.[22] The meaning of this statement is that he was unable to develop a major version of his work (at least a book) but only fragmentary articles. Although this statement is accurate, one should simultaneously emphasise the systematic character of Mead's philosophy. In other words: although Mead's philosophy was unsystematically exposed, it does not mean it has a fragmentary character. For instance, even within Mead's moral philosophy (perhaps the most fragmentary among Meadian issues) one always finds the examination of the same topics, analyses of the similar theoretical aspects and recurrent references to the same concepts. Therefore, despite Mead's disposition his philosophy discloses a systematic character.

With the purpose of making this systematic character clear, I have reconstructed and critically examined the fundamental theses that I have found in Mead's text. I think the empirical aspects of Mead's thought (the definition and use of the concepts of "I," "Me," "self," and the "generalized other") are the best part of his conception. Meanwhile, in the normative part he uses inadvertently two different meanings for the word *ideal*. The meanings related to solving (moral) problems, on the one hand, and the meaning related to democratic features, on the other. Mead's confusion regarding this issue is the core of the entire problems that arise within his moral philosophy. This imprecision also makes impossible a solid link between the empirical and normative aspect of his philosophy.

To develop a link between both aspects, however, is not impossible. I will attempt to carry out some steps in this direction with my second article: "*Ethics as a Method* and the Meanings of *Ideal* II. Overcoming the Shortcomings of Mead's Moral Philosophy."

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[22] "Heinrich Heine's remark about the composer Hector Berlioz often comes to mind when I ponder Mead: He did not have enough talent for his genius" (JOAS, 1997, xi).

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