EPISTEME NS, VOL. 41, N° U, 2021, pp. 41-57

Leopoldo Marquez

GEORGE H. MEAD'S EARLY PHILOSOPHY SPOTS A HIDDEN DUALISM IN THE ORIGINAL ENACTIVIST DOCTRINE OF COMPASSION

Abstract: G.H. Mead's early writings advanced an insightful conception of the self before his renowned theory of self-development as it is found in *Mind, Self, and Society* (Mead, 1934). I want to show the possible value that this philosophy has, not only in the development of his thought, but also for recent discussions of the self in the philosophy of mind and cognitive sciences, especially in relation to ethical concerns. For this purpose, I argue that Mead's criticism of G. Le Bon in the late 19th century could be used to spot an unnoticed dualism in the original formulation of the enactivist ethics in Varela, Thompson, and Rosch's *The Embodied Mind* (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991) that betrays their intentions of overcoming any form of dualism. Even though this does not imply that Mead is right about his incipient thought, it can at least provide us with an alternative reconstruction that is consistent with the original intentions and spirit of this enactivist ethics and its social concerns. If enaction involves complex processes of structural coupling between the organism and the environment in a continuous interactive historical process, and we recognize also that the human environment is a social environment, then, in an enactivist conception of education, ethics and politics, we need to concentrate our efforts in the social and material conditions for the emergence of compassion.

Keywords: Self, enactivism, dualism, embodiment, G.H. Mead, ethics

LA FILOSOFÍA DEL JOVEN MEAD DETECTA UN DUALISMO OCULTO EN LA DOCTRINA ENACTIVSTA ORIGINAL DE LA COMPACIÓN

Recibido 26-12-21 ☼ Aceptado 10-01-22

Resumen: En sus primeros escritos, G. H. Mead ofrece una concepción perspicaz del *self* previa a la reconocida teoría propuesta en *Mind, Self, and Society* (Mead, 1934). Espero mostrar el posible valor que tiene esta filosofía, no solo en el desarrollo de su pensamiento, sino también para las recientes discusiones sobre el *self* en la filosofía de la mente y las ciencias cognitivas, especialmente en relación con las preocupaciones éticas. Para este propósito, argumento que la crítica de Mead a G. Le Bon a fines del siglo XIX podría usarse para detectar un dualismo inadvertido en la formulación original de la ética enactivista en la obra *The Embodied Mind* de Varela, Thompson y Rosch (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991) que traicionaría la intención de sus autores de superar cualquier forma de dualismo. Si bien esto no implica que Mead tenga razón sobre su incipiente pensamiento, al menos puede brindarnos una reconstrucción alternativa y coherente con las intenciones originales y el espíritu de esta ética enactivista y sus preocupaciones sociales. Si la enacción involucra procesos complejos de acoplamiento estructural entre el organismo y el entorno en un proceso histórico interactivo continuo, y reconocemos también que el entorno humano es un entorno social, entonces, en una concepción enactivista de la educación, la ética y la política, necesitamos concentrar nuestros esfuerzos en las condiciones sociales y materiales para el surgimiento de la compasión.

Palabras claves: Self, enactivismo, dualismo, corporización, G. H. Mead, ética

In an interview for the *Trycicle* magazine, Evan Thompson said:

> I've become very concerned about the growing fetishization of mindfulness I was talking about and how this is being appropriated by the corporate elite, including very rightwing elements… Social philosophy and policy aren't my areas of expertise, so I don't have readily available recommendations, but it's become increasingly important for me to think about these matters. It sets up a dichotomy between "mindful" and "unmindful," where we fixate on mindfulness so that it becomes a kind of fetish, and that blinds us to how the concept or category gets used, especially socially and politically. (Thompson, 2014, p. 98)

This paper intents to be the kind of recommendation that Thompson was not able to give. My recommendation is based on Mead's social insights. This represents just a first step on a broader research line that looks for a meadian intervention into the enactivist field. At the same time, I call the attention for some of Mead's early works that have been not considered in re-

cent pragmatist development in cognitive science, being *Mind, Self, and Society* the common source. In the first part of my exposition, I briefly reconstruct early Mead's philosophy concerning individuality, education, and social reform, including his critics to Gustav Le Bon ideas on self-reflection. Then, in the second part, I compare the enactivist original formulation of the ethical doctrine of compassion with early Mead's philosophy and show how it could be used to spot a possible dualism similar to the one he found in G. Le Bon's book. Even though the comparison generates a tension between Mead and the enactivists, I suggest that Mead's strategy to overcome the dualism could be useful for advancing a non-dualist and groundless enactivist ethics and political philosophy.

I. MEAD'S EARLY PHILOSOPHY OF INDIVIDUALITY, THE ROLE OF REFLECTION, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL REFORM

Mead started his academic career in 1891 when he accepted an instructorship in philosophy and psychology at the University of Michigan. He worked there until 1894 when he moved with Dewey to the University of Chicago and established what James called "The Chicago School" (James, 1904). Mead's early writings span from his very first publications in 1894 to 1902[1]. In this period, he had not yet advanced his best-known theory of the development of the self, so we do not find concepts such as conversation of gestures, significant or generalized other, taking the attitude of the other, playing a role, and so forth; however, he had some valuable insights about the constitution of selfhood, education, and social reform, as my analysis shows. To establish the first incarnation of Mead's ideas about the self, though, we need to reconstruct it out of different observations from several obscure and dusty publications. I focus on the topics of individuality and the role of reflective thought in his 19th-century academic production.

1. Mead's 19th Century Literature on the Social Self

From 1894 to 1899, Mead published 12 works –some short abstracts, several reviews, and full-fledged papers–, on subjects like physiology, philoso-

1 I follow Hans Joas's book on Mead (Joas, 1985). Another major interpretation of early Mead's philosophy is included in Gary Cook's work (Cook, 1993).

phy (including ancient philosophy), education and social reform. In one of his earliest writings from 1894, a review of a K. Lasswitz' book, Mead dropped "the question [of] whether, wherever in nature unity in a system is found, we must suppose an ego also" (Mead, 1894c, p. 213). In the same journal, he published his first article and, even though he did not answer that question explicitly, one can recognize his denial therein. For Lasswitz, the unity of the object comes from the unity of consciousness (Mead, 1894b, p. 173). The question is: where does the unity of consciousness come from? Mead's response does not involve the notion of an *ego* at all; on the contrary: his suggestion is meant to *bring the process of unification from consciousness back to the world*. To that end, he associated what has been traditionally regarded as transcendental unity of experience with the notion of attention. He then explained attention in terms of actions and activities—which are carried out by an organism through its relationship with its environment (Mead, 1894b, p. 174).

The next year, in a review of C. L. Morgan's book *An Introduction to Comparative Psychology*, Mead introduced for the first time his thesis that "we are essentially social beings as physical and physiological beings" (Mead, 1895, p. 401); therefore, we need no mediating process to recognize mind and intentions : "the distinction between the physical and the psychical [in us and in others] is an immediate *datum* of experience" (Mead, 1895, p. 401). This stance precludes the emergence of the problem of other minds and the analogical way of construing alterity[2]. It is also relevant in this work the very first formulation of Mead concerning self-development:

> The development of the distinction between the physical and psychical in others proceeds *pari passu* with that in the child's consciousness of himself — if for no other reason because he could never form the conception of himself as psychical without the conception of others (Mead, 1895, p. 401).

To understand the significance and scope of this statement, we need to go back to the year 1897 and consider G. Class's review. This piece of thought is one of the most important early sources of Mead's reflection about the self. There, among other things that I will review shortly, he refers to "a social consciousness, that has heretofore been unrecognized" (Mead, 1897, p. 790). This is pivotal. In his very first work on the problem of psychological measu-

2 Ryan Mcveigh shows this point in (Mcveigh, 2016), even though, he does not refer to early Mead's philosophy.

rement (Mead, 1894), Mead was interested in distinguishing different kinds of consciousness and the way they relate to each other. As humans are essentially social beings, they are constituted in the context of social relationships, and the consciousness of these relations is *the essence of the self* (Mead, 1897, p. 790). Mead thus describes the self as the individual vivid and immediate "consciousness of himself as a nodal point in the operation of the social forces" (Mead, 1897, p. 790). Rather than amounting to a matter of fact, *the self is an achievement* that requires "the formation of the most extensive and essential social relationships" (Mead, 1897, p. 791).

Going back to Class' book, his point of departure results from F. Schleiermacher's insight according to which "every man shall present (*darstellen*) humanity in his own particular manner" (Mead, 1897, p. 789). Mead thinks that this classical tension between the universal (society) and particular (individual) could be successfully overcome with an organic understanding of human activities, since "the individual organ presents in its own peculiar manner the whole organism […]It is only in an organic activity that the individual can be completely individualized and yet present simple the whole" (Mead, 1897, p. 789). As I have shown, these organic activities are *social*. What creates tension is "the conception of an individual who stands outside of the processes and enters in or stays out as his conscience dictates or his desires demand" (Mead, 1897, p. 790). Mead realized that "[a]gainst this static view of the self all of the social sciences have been more or less unconsciously working" (Mead, 1897, p. 790). The problem with these social sciences is that they fall in the opposite extreme of *reducing* the individual to the social processes, being unable to recognize the legitimacy of Schleiermacher's insight, and most importantly, denying *responsibility*, which according to Mead is "the most central of all the expressions of personality" (Mead, 1897, p. 790). Ultimately, Mead's interest is to keep the individuality and responsibility of the self without postulating any fixed substance nor reducing it to social or physical forces. Thus, the self is not conceived as an entity, but as *a consciousness of an ongoing organic social process*. Therefore, the development of the self—introduced in the quote from 1895 above—means that, even though the others are immediate *data* of experience, the ethical dimension of individuality and responsibility is achieved through conscious development of social relations and the role we play in them from childhood onwards.

2. Mead's Incipient Theory of Ontogenetic Development

Mead has an incipient theory of ontogenetic development in his early papers[3], especially in "The Child and His Environment" (Mead, 1898), but also in "The Relation of Play to Education" (Mead, 1896). In the former, Mead sets forth a physiological theory of brain development. It is all about "coordinations", *i.e.*, brain interconnections that result from the process of education. At birth, theses coordinations—which, according to Mead, are "really organs of the body as the lungs or the heart" (Mead, 1896, p. 143)— have not been established. Then, coordinations come to develop in a more or less isolated way (Mead, 1898, p. 8). These isolated coordinations are the physiological counterparts of the isolated activities of the child. Mead explains:

> The isolation is not simply a lack of connection between different activities, it is a merging of all the life and energy in one act with a correspondingly rapid development. It is in this *complete absorption* in that which immediately is being done that lies the *sui generis* charm of childhood. When we have lost sight of the end and purpose of our life in the midst of consciousness of how we should live, we look back with profound appreciation and *longing to the time when we were completely swallowed up* in what we were doing with an intense interest that knew nothing beyond. (Mead, 1898, p. 8) [Emphasis added].

This idea of a "complete absorption" is important for the enactivist theory, as I will show later. In "The Relation of Play to Education," Mead had stated that "in ideal condition [,] the interest which directs any separate activity should be put an expression of the whole interest in life and carry the momentum with it of this whole" (Mead, 1896, p. 143). Thus, in a second phase of development, coordinations of coordinations are established, as long as the child starts to recognize links among her activities. It is in this way that a sense of the *unity of life* emerges, and with it, responsibilities. If we recall that for Mead the process of unification of experience is carried out through our activities and that the development of the self involves the consciousness of the social activities, we are entitled to say the following: the development of the self, the unification of our life activities, and the formation of "coordina-

3 I have found no treatment of it anywhere in the literature. Neither Joas (Joas, 1985) nor Cook (Cook, 1993) take this incipient theory into account in their interpretations.

tions of coordinations" in the structure of the brain are different aspects of the same organic process. In the same line of interpretation, we can construe the "achievement of personality" that Mead talked about in the review of Class and the development of the child self-consciousness that he mentioned in the review of Morgan.

3. Mead's Critique of G. Le Bon on Social Reform

In his last works of the 19th century, Mead wrote about socialism and social reform in a review and an article on G. Le Bon's *Psychology of Socialism* (Mead, 1899b; Mead, 1899a). Le Bon believed that human impulses were naturally altruistic, while reason was for him intrinsically egotistic. According to this position, human cognition (perception, thinking, valuations, etc.) is a *constant struggle* to fit the demands of our conscious egotistic reason upon our unconscious altruistic nature. For Mead this is a form of dualism, and links it with the promise of a utopian society:

> the belief in a New Jerusalem would be the compromise between the demand for satisfaction of individualistic passions and life itself, and the society and family impulse that calls for complete self-abnegation. In the New Jerusalem *this dualism* is to be overcome (Mead, 1899b, p. 407) [Emphasis added].

But no *dualism* can be defeated with a utopia. Mead believes that we are not forced to draw power from a distance, nor the organization of our interests represents "detached activities" (Mead, 1899b, p. 412). He distinguishes between two types of socialism: programist and opportunist. The former is dogmatic and utopic, while the latter is just the expression of an attitude: "the reaction against individualism" (Mead, 1899b, p. 406). Theoretically, this reaction finds expression in the working hypothesis of social reform that we already know: human beings are essentially social; practically speaking, this reaction finds expression in "the assumption that it will be possible to effect by constructive legislation radical changes that will lead to greater social equality" (Mead, 1899a, p. 367). Mead recognized that "we cannot make persons social by legislative enactment, but we can allow the essentially social nature of their actions to come to expression under conditions which favor this" (Mead, 1899a, p. 370). And this links with education, since in education we have to do the same for the child: "[t]he problem of educating the child is almost as

large as that of accomplishing the full development of society, representing an earlier stage in the accomplishment of the latter." (Mead, 1896, p. 144).

An important question for my purpose is the function of reason. In an article from 1901, Mead states: "the task of abstract thought is to bring to consciousness the form in which essential problems present themselves and the form which their solution must take" (Mead, 1901, p. 87). We take distance from the situation to think of possible solutions. This is a functional control that emerges in the context of a problematic situation, and only with this context in mind can we use our imagination effectively. In this respect, Mead says:

> A conception of a different world comes to us always as the result of some specific problem which involves readjustment of the world as it is, not to meet a detailed ideal of a perfect universe, but to obviate the present difficulty; and the test of the effort lies in the possibility of this readjustment fitting into the world as it is (Mead, 1899a, p. 371).

For Mead, reflection is related with the lose of old habits in the adjustment of the problematic situation: "it is true that reason attempts to bridge the break between the more or less unconscious habit and the immediate situation which calls for its readaptation" (Mead, 1899a, p. 408). This vision of the role of reason makes possible to overcome Le Bon' dualism. This *transformational aspect* of reflection is similar to the one we find in the original formulation of enactivism, as I will show next.

II. THE ENACTIVIST ORIGINAL FORMULATION OF THE ETHICAL DOCTRINE OF COMPASSION AND THE ROLE OF REFLECTION

1. Enactivism Meets Early Mead

In their groundbreaking book *The Embodied Mind* (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991), Varela *et al.* introduced ideas about the self, individuality, and the role of reflection that can be compared with Mead's initial ideas. The book introduces *enactivism* as a vision according to which "cognition is not the representation of a pregiven world by a pregiven mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that

a being in the world performs" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 9). This general definition of *enaction* was arguably already found in early Mead's writings. In his very first article on Lasswitz, he refers to the organism as "a system built up by action upon its environment" (Mead, 1894c, p. 175), and, as the enactivists, he placed this idea in the context of evolutionary theory.

One of the main concerns of Varela *et al.* is "to open a space of possibilities in which the circulation between cognitive science and human experience can be fully appreciated and to foster the transformative possibilities of human experience in a scientific culture" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, pp. viii-xix). They arguably share the same interest than Mead in his early writings, except for the fact that cognitive sciences need to be interpreted as "sciences of the mind" —meaning, physiology and psychology. By providing cognitive hypothesis on educational and sociological reformative concerns, Mead is exercising the "constructive task" announced by Varela *et al.*: "to enlarge the horizon of cognitive science [physiology and psychology] to include the broader panorama of human, lived experience in a […] transformative analysis" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 14).

In *The Embodied Mind*, the authors recognize two types of reflection, mindful and not mindful:

> [T]he abstract attitude which Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty [*i.e.* the western philosophers] ascribe to science and philosophy is actually the attitude of everyday life when one is not mindful. This abstract attitude is the spacesuit, the padding of habits and preconceptions, the armor with which one habitually distances oneself from one's experience… The dissociation of mind from body, of awareness from experience, is the result of habit, and these habits can be broken (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 25).

In contrast with this western conception of reflection as detached from experience, Varela *et al.* introduce reflection as a form of experience which can be performed with *mindful awareness*:

> When reflection is done in that way, it can cut the chain of habitual thought patterns and preconceptions such that it can be an open-ended reflection, open to possibilities other than those contained in one's current representations of the life space. We call this form of reflection *mindful, open-ended reflection*. (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 27).

The practice involved in the development of mindfulness/awareness consists in "the letting go of habits of mindlessness" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 29). The result of this kind of mental attitude is "a mastery" that we typically associate with "the actions of an expert such as an athlete or musician" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 28).

Mead would agree with the general idea of enactive reflection. For him, also "reason attempts to bridge the break between the more or less unconscious habit and the immediate situation which calls for its readaptation" (Mead, 1899a, p. 408). The enactivists think that "it is because reflection in our culture has been severed from its bodily life that the mind-body problem has become a central topic for abstract reflection" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 30). And we already saw how, for Mead, the problem of individuality emerges from "the conception of an individual who stands outside of the processes and enters in or stays out as his conscience dictates or his desires demand" (Mead, 1897, p. 790). According to the enactivists, to overcome this dualism, we need to include ourselves *in* the reflection; this is what they call "fundamental circularity." Mead considers this point when he says in his article concerning social reforms that "we are the forces that are being investigated" (Mead, 1899a, p. 371); notice that he related this point, as Varela *et al.* observe, with the function of reflective consciousness. Therefore, Mead and the enactivists agree that there are two different kinds of reflection: the one which restates the old habits, and the one which is transformational in character[4].

The first great discovery of mindfulness meditation is "the piercing realization of just how disconnected humans normally are from their very experience" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 25). This conviction could be related with what Mead recognized as an appropriate adult life. In some way, both Mead and the enactivists propose the necessity of establishing life connections. The difference is that, for the enactivists, the connection seems to be the idea of being "completely absorbed" by the activity; nonetheless, for Mead, as we have seen, this is the proper experience of childhood. Mead's connections with life, on the other hand, are established among the different activities of our life *as a whole*. The mastery of living does not apply to every

4 Mead relates the former with a logical deduction (and the formulation of the problem) and the latter with psychology (or the psychical) (Mead, 1900; Mead, 1903).

activity we do but consists in the way we carry out the momentum of life as a whole in each activity. Also, we know that, for Mead, human activities are essentially social, thus life-connections can be understood as "the formation of the most extensive and essential social relationships" (Mead, 1897, p. 791). Despite these differences, I think that both positions are very sympathetic in this respect. The main difference is that Mead stresses two points that the enactivists do not: the necessity of conscious reflection in the development of our ethical 'knowing-how' capacities, and the social conditions that allow or prevent their emergence.

2. The Tension Between Mead and the Enactivists and Mead's Strategy to Overcome Dualism

Ethical details make Mead and the enactivists go out of tune further than anticipated. For the enactivists, "the origin of human suffering is just this tendency to grasp onto and build a sense of self [in reflection], an ego, where there is none" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 61). The point is that, as "ordinary, non-mindful people," we think as an "economic man" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 246). This has a striking resemblance with the way Le Bon understands the function of reason, for him: "[r]ational belief must be always a calculation of the payment which the individual is going to get later on for acting his part as a simple member of the species" (Mead, 1899b, p. 408). The enactivists explain that:

> [b]ecause self is always codependent with other[…], the force of self-interest is always other-directed in the very same respect with which it is self-directed[…]We are already other-directed even at our most negative, and we already feel warmth toward some people, such as family and friends (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, pp. 247-48).

This could be construed as a statement about the natural social constitution of human experience, in a very similar way of Mead's hypothesis of human nature as essentially social (*cf.* I.1). But the thesis seems to be even stronger in that regard:

> Thus sunyata, the loss of a fixed reference point or ground in either self, other, or a relationship between them, is said to be inseparable from compassion like the two sides of a coin or the two wings of a bird. *Our natural impulse, in this view, is one of compassion,*

> *but it has been obscured by habits of ego-clinging* like the sun obscured by a passing cloud. (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 248) [Emphasis added]

This can also be interpreted the way of Le Bon does: human nature is altruistic; it is reason that is egotistic. But, while Le Bon explains perception and thinking in terms of this opposition, the enactivists advance a non-dualistic account of cognition. Nonetheless, as we have already seen, this implies also a form of dualism that divides our experience in terms of two forces: our natural (inborn) tendencies for compassion (altruism) and our wrong-directed desire for a solid ground that finds expression in self-reflection and reason.

The enactivists tell us that there are certain practices that we need to perform (e.g., avoiding harmful actions, performing beneficial ones, meditation) through which we could reach the optimal state needed for compassion: namely, a state of mindfulness. This is a *discipline* that would

> remove all egocentric habits so that the practitioner can realize the wisdom state, and compassionate action can arise directly and spontaneously out of wisdom. It is as if *one were born already knowing how* to play the violin and had to practice with great exertion only to *remove the habits that prevented one from displaying that virtuosity*. (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 251) [Emphasis added]

Again, this is the same dualism detected in Le Bon: something (reason) is *preventing us* from displaying our inborn capacity for compassion (altruism).

The crucial question to make here is: "How can such an attitude of all-encompassing, decentered, responsive, compassionate concern be fostered and embodied in our culture?" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 252). The enactivist answer is: "through a discipline that facilitates letting go of ego-centered habits and enables compassion to become spontaneous and self-sustaining" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 252). Maybe this means something like a Buddhist evangelization program, or maybe it does not; what is clear, though, is that, while they warn us about the dangers of bad meditative practices, they also alert us to this fact: "it is far better to remain as an *ordinary person* and believe in ultimate foundations than to cling to some remembered experience of groundlessnesss without manifesting compassion". (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 252) [Emphasis added]. If the reader is not charitable enough, he could even read a second kind of dualism into this statement: this is, one that distinguishes between ordinary people and the

"wise ones." And, if this non-compassioned interpretation is combined with the idea of a social transformation through individual *discipline*, we end up confronted with a not very "democratic" perspective, so to speak. This is the same uncharitable interpretation that, showing no mercy, involves criticizing the ethical goal of being always swallowed-up in the activity as a form of childish individualism; and the necessity of guidance from some chosen mature masters as a demonstration of the loss of individual responsibility. Preventing this kind of misunderstanding is critical.

Let's go back to Mead's strategy to overcome the dualism. The main argument is that *there is no reason to interpret self-reflection as egotistic.* And here, as we have seen, the enactivists and Mead seemed to agree: There is a restating use of reason, but there is also a transformational one. It is all about bad habits in the past —"karma," according to the Buddhists (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 116)— that need to be changed, and how are they going to be changed is something that must be evaluated case by case, since there is no way to know it in advance. But a tension remains. When we look closer, we see that Mead does not hold that our nature is "good" or something along that line; he only says that it is *social*. Mead's philosophy states no opposing forces. Therefore, there are different answers to the crucial question of what we must do.

For Mead, we must *create* the appropriate social conditions of equality and recognition: they are not already there as a given. This is for him a rational task. The Buddhist's insistence in *restoring* human minds is a foundational and dualistic stance. There is nothing already there to be restored as a given, on the contrary: the situation must be *enacted*. The idea of a pre-given goodness (or of an original conflict between good and evil) conflicts with the enactivists' intentions of abandoning any kind of *ground* for ethics. And when we drop the "idea of an inborn good", we also abandon with it reason's tendency towards egotism. In this way, nothing prevents a comprehensive ethical and political enactivism to bloom.

CONCLUSIONS: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

It seems that, according to Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, our own natural mindset brings with it the greed for foundations—an original wound of dualism that manifests itself in the ontogenetic as well as in the phylogenetic development (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 121). It is this tendency

that is responsible for the emergence of the extreme solutions of foundationalism and nihilism. The ethical promise of the book was that, "[i]nstead of being embodied (more accurately, reembodied moment after moment) out of struggle, habit, and sense of self, the goal is to become embodied out of compassion for the world" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, pp. 251-52). But the struggle continues because, for the enactivist, there is an underlying heritage of egoism that needs to be fought. On the other hand, the idea of a fully compassionate soul is an individual ideal, not the beginning of a proposal for the introduction of ethical reflection in a nonreductive naturalistic manner, and so the promise is broken. Moreover, the idea of an egotistic reason could reintroduce the "condition of schizophrenia" they criticized (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 107) to the extent that "[i]ndividuals must personally discover and admit their own sense of ego in order to go beyond it" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 253). In the end, according to the Buddhist doctrine, we are split in two, even though as "ordinary people", we are not aware of it.

Then if we are going to let the struggle to continue, Mead's recommendation is to keep it for better social conditions. As we have seen, by legislative enactment we could legitimately react to individualism. That is the reason why Mead makes so much emphasis on education, stressing the importance of "physical activity, sensory-motor learning, the immediate interests of the learner, and the organically conditioned stages of maturation" (Joas, 1985, p. 34). If enaction involves complex processes of structural coupling between the organism and the environment in a continuous interactive historical process, and we recognize also that the human environment is a social environment, then, in an enactivist conception of education, ethics and politics, we need to concentrate our efforts in the social and material conditions for the emergence of compassion. That is why Mead is so reluctant about discipline in the school: in this case, we are not dealing with environmental conditions for proper development. Instead, it is something we carry from our past convictions. Ethical and social concerns in philosophy and the sciences are all about *the present social situation*: our daily struggle is for improving today the social and environmental conditions that allow a more social human being to emerge in the future. As we have seen, all this consistent with an enactivism that is groundless and non-dualistic.

Ultimately, it is true that the self is fragmented, and as enactivists, we need to go back to that original idea. The self is fragmented because our social relationships are broken, and because society is unequal. The reunification of the self is not a metaphysical or ideal individualistic promise; it is a necessary response to our actual pressing social situation. The general theoretical guidelines that answer the question of how we are going to proceed in a non-dualist and groundless enactivist ethics is what we are still missing. I have tried to show that the forerunner enactivist ideas of Mead have great of potential in this respect.

leotagoras@hotmail.com

REFERENCES

Cook, G. (1993). George Herbert Mead. The Making of a Social Pragmatist. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

James, W. (1904). The Chicago School. Psychological Bulletin 1, 1-5.

Joas, H. (1985). G.H. Mead. A Contemporary Re-examination of his Thought. Massachusets: MIT Press.

Mcveigh, R. (2016). Mead, the Theory of Mind, and the Problem of Others. In H. Joas, & D. Huebner, The Timeliness of George Herbert Mead (pp. 209-230). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Mead, G. H. (1894). The Problem of Psychological Measurement. Proceedings of the American Psychological Association (pp. 22-23). New York: MacMillan & Co.

Mead, G. H. (1894b). Herr Lasswitz on Energy and Epistemology. Psychological Review 1, 172-175.

Mead, G. H. (1894c). Review of "Die Moderne Energetik in ihrer Bedeutung für die Erkenntnisskritik" by Kurd Lasswitz. Psychological Review 1, 210-13.

Mead, G. H. (1895). Review of "An Introduction to Comparative Psychology by C. Lloyd Morgan". Psychological Review 2, 99-402.

Mead, G. H. (1896). The Relation of Play to Education. University Record 1, No. 8, 141-145.

Mead, G. H. (1897). Review of Untersuchungen zur Phaenomenologie und Ontologie des Menschlichen Geistes by Dr. G. Class. American Journal of Theology 1, 789-.

Mead, G. H. (1898). The Child and His Environment. Transactions of the Illinois Society for Child-Study 3, 1-11.

Mead, G. H. (1899a). The Working Hypothesis in Social Reform. American Journal of Sociology 5, 367-371.

Mead, G. H. (1899a). The Working Hypothesis in Social Reform. American Journal of Sociology 5, 367-371.

Mead, G. H. (1899b). Review of The Psychology of Socialism by Gustav Le Bon. American Journal of Sociology 19, 404-412.

Mead, G. H. (1901). A New Criticism of Hegelianism: Is it Valid? American Journal of Theology 5, 87-96.

Mead, G. H. (1903). The Definition of the Psychical First Series, Vol. III. Decennial Publications of the University of Chicago, 77-112.

Mead, G. H. (1934). Mind, Self, and Society. From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist. (C. Morris, Ed.) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Royce, J. (1895). Self-consciousness, Social Consciousness and Nature (I). Philosophical Review 4, 465-485.

Thompson, E. (2014). The Embodied Mind. An Interview with Philosopher Evan Thompson. Trycicle, 38-98.

Varela, F. J., Thompson, E. T., & Rosch, E. (1991). The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Varela, F. J., Thompson, E. T., & Rosch, E. (1991). The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience. Massachusetts: MIT Press.