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Consideraciones analíticas

Margaret Masterman, su crítica a la noción de paradigma y su invisibilización

MARÍA CAROLINA ÁLVAREZ PUERTA

El papel de las heurísticas en el desarrollo de una Inteligencia Artificial General

LUZ MARINA BARRETO

El Dilema de Benacerraf como una objeción al Platonismo tradicional en matemática

RICARDO DA SILVA Y SOLANI RIVAS

Fundamentos técnicos y dilemas éticos en los modelos de lenguaje natural en las Inteligencias Artificiales

NAHIR HURTADO

An interpretation of the I/Me distinction in G. H. Mead's "The definition of the psychical" and H. Joas' criticism

LEOPOLDO MÁRQUEZ VELASCO

¿Hay matemática más allá de la lógica?

EDGAR VALENZUELA

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Contenido Consideraciones analíticas

Presentación

DA SILVA, R.: Presentación..... *i*

Artículos

Págs.

ÁLVAREZ, M.: Margaret Masterman, su crítica a la
noción de paradigma y su invisibilización
(*Margaret Masterman, her criticism of the
notion of paradigm and its invisibility*)..... 01

BARRETO, L.: El papel de las heurísticas en el
desarrollo de una inteligencia artificial
general (*Heuristic's role on the development of a
general artificial intelligence*)..... 25

DA SILVA, R. Y
RIVAS, S.: El *Dilema de Benacerraf* como una
objeción al Platonismo tradicional
en matemática (*Benacerraf's Dilemma
as an objection to traditional Platonism in
mathematics*)..... 49

HURTADO, N.: Fundamentos técnicos y dilemas éticos en
los modelos de lenguaje natural en las Inteli-
gencias Artificiales (*Technical foundatinos and
ethical dilemmas of natural language in Artificial
Intelligence*)..... 81

Marquez, L.:	An interpretation of the I/Me distinction in G. H. Mead's "The definition of the psychical" and H. Joas' criticism (<i>Una interpretación de la distinción Yo/Mí en "The definition of the psychical" de G. H. Mead y la crítica de H. Joas</i>).....	95
Valenzuela, E.:	¿Hay matemática más allá de la lógica? (<i>Is there mathematics beyond logic?</i>).....	121
<i>Notas y discusiones</i>		
Blanco, F.:	Notas introductorias al concepto de «Lógica» (<i>Introductory notes on the concept of «Logic»</i>).....	137
Chávez, M.:	¿Es la <i>existencia</i> una propiedad, o una <i>modalidad</i> ? (<i>Is existence a property, or a modality?</i>).....	153
<i>Recensiones</i>		
Bogoljubskij, S.:	Posy, C - Intuicionismo matemático (<i>Mathematical Intuitionism</i>).....	159
<i>miscelánea</i>		165

RICARDO J. DA SILVA ARAUJO

PRESENTACIÓN

Bajo la premisa de que la unidad filosófica no exige uniformidad temática, este número ofrece un panorama diverso donde la multiplicidad de problemas abordados cobra sentido bajo el rigor que el análisis filosófico confiere a la investigación académica actual.

Aunque es factible trazar conexiones entre ciertos núcleos temáticos que se comentarán más adelante, el verdadero denominador común de esta entrega es el compromiso de presentar los problemas desde una visión argumentativa que los sustente. De esta manera, cada texto aquí reunido destaca por la claridad conceptual empleada para desarrollar sus hipótesis, ofreciendo al lector un ejercicio de pensamiento crítico y estructurado.

Aunque el índice obedece a un orden lexicográfico, podemos reagrupar los artículos según ciertas similitudes. Los primeros serían aquellos que reflexionan directamente sobre la obra de un autor. Así, María Carolina Álvarez se propone revalorizar y visibilizar las críticas que Margaret Masterman le hiciese a la noción de “paradigma” de Thomas Kuhn en la edición de 1962 de *La estructura de las revoluciones científicas*; por su parte, Leopoldo Márquez propone una nueva lectura de la subjetividad en el trabajo temprano de George H. Mead, heredada luego por su obra madura, tratando así de sustentar una exégesis continuista sobre el pensamiento del autor.

En otra dirección, encontramos trabajos que giran en torno al tema de la inteligencia artificial, tales como su capacidad para capturar la semántica del lenguaje y los desafíos éticos que presentan estas nuevas herramientas. Luz Marina Barreto busca examinar el desarrollo de algunos métodos algorítmicos de procesamiento de lenguaje y explicar, especialmente, las limitaciones de los grandes modelos de lenguaje (LLM) para actuar como modelos de razonamiento sin la retroalimentación continua de anotadores humanos. Nahir Hurtado, por su parte, hace un recorrido elucidatorio por los mecanismos que han hecho

posible el surgimiento de modelos como GPT, pasando así revista a las redes neuronales y las arquitecturas transformers. Ambas autoras concluyen remarcando el énfasis en las consideraciones éticas y en las exigencias de legislación sobre el uso de estas nuevas tecnologías.

El último par de artículos trata sobre cuestiones inherentes a la filosofía de la matemática. Edgar Valenzuela revisa la persistencia de la lógica en el quehacer matemático a través del estudio de sistemas lógicos no clásicos, defendiendo, así, una tesis pluralista en contraposición al monismo lógico tradicional. A su vez, Solani Rivas y Ricardo Da Silva realizan una reconstrucción argumentativa del dilema de Benacerraf en contra del platonismo matemático clásico y presentan la propuesta de Mark Balaguer, el platonismo pleno, como un intento de solución.

El presente número se ve, además, enriquecido con dos notas ensayísticas y una reseña bibliográfica. La primera de las notas, escrita por Francisco Blanco, busca indagar en un concepto de lógica que se reconstruya desde sus compatibilidades e incompatibilidades semánticas con otros conceptos. En este sentido, el material puede servir de apoyo para las primeras sesiones de un curso de lógica en cualquier pregrado de humanidades. La segunda nota, de Marcel Chávez, revisa críticamente la idea de que la existencia es una propiedad de los individuos, es por ello que esboza una interpretación desde la ontología de Duns Escoto, desde la cual se concluye que la existencia no es una propiedad, sino una forma de modalidad. Finalmente, Sebastián Bogoljubskij reseña el texto *Mathematical Intuitionism* de Carl Posy. La obra reseñada forma parte de la colección *Cambridge Elements: The Philosophy of Mathematics* y tiene por objetivo introducir a los lectores en la filosofía intuicionista de la matemática desde consideraciones filosóficas y formales. Bogoljubskij reconoce la claridad analítica en la exposición propuesta por el autor; sin embargo, identifica que algunos capítulos, debido a su reconstrucción formal, no resultarían accesibles para estudiantes que no estén familiarizados con ciertos contenidos de lógica matemática.

Podemos concluir afirmando que la presente edición contribuye a la idea de que la *buena filosofía* —sea lo que sea— se sustenta en argumentos. Que resulte de provecho para todos.

LEOPOLDO MÁRQUEZ VELASCO

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE I/ME DISTINCTION IN G. H. MEAD'S "THE DEFINITION OF THE PSYCHICAL" AND H. JOAS' CRITICISM

There is nothing that has suffered more through loss of dignity of content than the "I"

G. H. Mead

Abstract: The article aims to promote a continuistic interpretation of Mead's philosophical development by challenging the thesis expressed by Joas in his 1985 book¹ about the substantial "immaturity" and contradiction of Mead's positions in "The Definition of the Psychical".² To that purpose I offer a new way of reading the role of subjectivity in Mead's early article that allows a refutation of Joas's criticism concerning the I-Me distinction. In this way, I hope to update this early and valuable work of pragmatism so that could be incorporated in different contemporary discussion. In the first part, I offer a reconstruction of Mead's essential ideas that are necessary to understand the significance of the I-Me distinction. In the second part, I elaborate a refutation to prove that there is no contradiction at all, but, as a fallback, I will show that, if there is a contradiction, then, this contradiction is also present in *Mind, Self, and Society*, and so the continuistic reading prevails.

Keywords: Self, immediacy, non-conceptual content, functionalism (psychology).

1 Joas, H., G.H. Mead. *A Contemporary Re-examination of his Thought*, Massachusets, MIT Press, 1985.

2 Cf. Mead, G. H., "The Definition of the Psychical", Decennial Publications of the University of Chicago, First Series, III, 77-112, 1903.

UNA INTERPRETACIÓN DE LA DISTINCIÓN YO/MÍ EN "*THE DEFINITION OF THE PSYCHICAL*" DE G. H. MEAD Y LA CRÍTICA DE H. JOAS

Resumen: El artículo busca promover una interpretación continuista de le desarrollo filosófico de Mead cuestionando la tesis expresada por Joas en su libro de 1985 sobre la "inmadurez" sustancial y la contradicción de las posturas de Mead en "*The Definition of the Psychical*" (1903). Para esta tarea ofrezco una nueva lectura del papel de la subjetividad en el artículo inicial de Mead que permite refutar la crítica de Joas concerniente a la distinción Yo-Mí. De esta manera, espero poder actualizar esta valiosa obra temprana del pragmatismo y que así pueda ser incorporada en distintas discusiones contemporáneas. En la primera parte, ofrezco una reconstrucción de las ideas esenciales de Mead que son necesarias para entender la importancia de la distinción Yo-Mí. En la segunda parte, elaboro una refutación para probar que no hay contradicción alguna y, como alternativa, mostraré que, si hay una contradicción, entonces esta contradicción también está presente en *Mind, Self and Society*, y por tanto prevalece una lectura continuista.

Palabras clave: Sí mismo, intermediación, contenido no conceptual, funcionalismo (psicología).

I. The Development of The Psychical

When Mead published "The Definition of the Psychical" (henceforth "DP"), he had not yet advanced his best-known theory of the development of the social self that most people know from *Mind, Self, and Society*.³ Hence, we did not find concepts such as conversation of gestures, significant or generalized other, taking the attitude of the other, or playing a role. Notwithstanding, by 1903, Mead had been working for more than a decade on his ideas and had already developed an original thought. The objective of DP is to

3 Cf. Mead, G. H., *Mind, Self, and Society. From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, Edited by Charles Morris, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1934.

define the proper subject matter of psychology, a discipline that was at that time being the subject of heated debate. In philosophical terms, the text was interested in locating the proper function of “the individual qua individual”, that is to say, *showing the context within which individuality could find its expression*. Indeed, Mead’s declared interest is *subjectivity* and how could it be incorporated into the scientific enterprise which brings Mead’s paper closer to the phenomenology.⁴

I reconstruct Mead’s developing of the notion of the psychical up to 1903 in three steps corresponding with the next three sections. The first represents psychological functionalism, where Mead establishes two different functional attitudes: habitual and reflective. The next step consists in the distinction of two modalities in reflection, the logical and the psychological. The third and final step is the definition of the psychical as an interplay between these modalities, and the idea that this interplay entails being in direct contact with experience while in a subjective attitude at the same time.

I.1 The Psychological Functionalist Framework of Mead's Early Work

Mead takes for granted a practical notion of objectivity: “Objectivity is the characteristic of a cognitive process which has reached its goal. The success of the cognitive act furnishes the criterion of objectivity, and that without even defining what the nature of the category is”.⁵ This pragmatic conception of cognition is part of the functional approach to psychology that he developed with Dewey and others at that time.⁶ According to this position “the objects in cognitive experience may all be regarded as means to the accomplishment of the end involved in that conduct”,⁷ and “[t]hought can only make us

4 Joas, G.H. Mead... cit., pp. 68,69.

5 Mead, "The Definition of...", cit., p. 77.

6 Cf. Mead, G. H., "*A Theory of Emotions from the Physiological Standpoint*" (Abstract of a paper read to the third annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, 1894), *Psychological Review*, pp. 162-164, 1895. Cf. Dewey, J., "*The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology*", *Psychological Review* 3, 357-370, 1896. Cf. Angell, James, and Moore, "*Studies from the Psychological Laboratory of the University of Chicago: 1. Reaction-Time: A study of Attention and Habit*", *Psychological Review* 3, 245-258, 1896.

7 Mead, "The Definition of...", cit., p. 106

conscious of how we act, and thus give us the advantage of a conscious technique”.⁸

Along with functional psychology, Mead recognizes two different modalities in our experience that I call “attitudes”. The first one is the *non-reflective* attitude of our unproblematic practices or habits. Our daily life is organized according to patterns acquired progressively in the experience. In those cases, “the meaning of the object is derived entirely from our reaction upon it, or, in other words, our use of it”,⁹ so we could “define the object as a group of activities co-ordinated with reference to some particular act”.¹⁰ The second is the *reflective* attitude. According to functional psychology, reflection arises from a problem presented in the immediate experience: “all analytical thought commences with the presence of problems and the conflict between different lines of action”.¹¹ Since the problematic situation breaks the usual concatenation of our habits, it belongs to a *disintegrated phase of experience*. The goal of reflective thinking is a returning to practice: “solution finally is found in the possibility of continuing the activity, that has been stopped, along new or old lines”.¹² An insight of functionalist psychology is that sensations appear once experience disintegrates:

While it is thus deprived of its objective value, while it is no longer a stimulus to action, it may become a sensation. But with knowledge of its real nature it ceases to appear in this form in consciousness. It can be sensation no longer until it again becomes the center of a problem episode in experience.¹³

Therefore, sensations (phenomenalistic contents) are not concomitants of habitual experience but manifest themselves when the object loses validity.¹⁴

8 Mead, G. H., “*A New Criticism of Hegelianism: Is it Valid?*”, American Journal of Theology 5, 1901, pp. 87-96.

9 Mead, G. H., “*Suggestions Toward A Theory of the Philosophical Disciplines*”, Philosophical Review 9, 1900, pp. 1-17.

10 Mead, G. H., “*Herr Lasswitz on Energy and Epistemology*”, Psychological Review 1, 1894, pp.172-175.

11 Mead, “*Suggestions Toward...*” cit., p. 2.

12 *Ibidem*.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

14 Joas, G. H. Mead... cit., p. 81

Following this diachronic and pragmatic conception of experience, knowledge is understood in a practical and non-representational manner, as the possibility of overcoming a problematic situation,¹⁵ and it could emerge only in this dynamic process of the reconstruction of experience: "What we have is a method and a control in application, not an ideal to work toward".¹⁶

As we can see, functional psychology is integrated within a pragmatic and diachronic conception of knowledge. This is the general framework within which Mead is going to advance his ideas about consciousness and individuality. As a first approximation, the notion of the *psychical* could be understood as the uncoordinated phase in which the subject must find a way to reintegrate the experience and return to action. Subjectivity, thus understood, would be the reconstructive phase of reflective experience in which new knowledge could emerge.

I.2 Going beyond Functionalism: The Two Reflective Attitudes

At the turn of the century, Mead started to work in some original ideas on the functional and pragmatic framework I have just reviewed. An important step is represented by the paper "Suggestions Toward A Theory of the Philosophical Disciplines"¹⁷ (henceforth "Suggestions"). There, Mead went beyond his functionalist roots, introducing an analysis of reflection and its different functions. For him, as we will see, thinking is always working within a dialectical process: restating and transforming, past and future, the old and the new. In 1900, Mead related these tendencies and processes with two different analysis of consciousness and linked them to different rational tasks:

...there are in reality two tasks which psychology has taken up, one that of analysis of the objective world in terms of the consciousness of the objective individual—suggested in Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*—and the other, the analysis of the situation within which the subjective consciousness arises and the

15 Mead, G. H., "The Working Hypothesis in Social Reform", American Journal of Sociology 5, 1899, p. 370.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 399.

17 Cf. Mead, "Suggestions Toward..." cit., p. 2.

process by which it advances to the formation of the new universal. To the former class most of the psychological work that has been done belongs. It is indeed not different in purpose from that undertaken by Kant, being the study of the structure of experience as necessarily found within the consciousness of an objective individual. The other type is represented in James' chapter on the Stream of Consciousness and in some of the work that has gathered peculiarly around the process of attention.¹⁸

The “objective” modality of reflective consciousness exercises logical reconstructions upon what we already know, but cannot produce new contents or judgments:

Deductive reasoning is nothing but the organization of one's world upon the basis of certain ideas, implying that we either deny the existence of that which does not accord therewith, or else ignore it... ...serving to separate not the real from the unreal but the known from that which is to be ignored for the time being only.¹⁹

On the other hand, Mead refers in DP to James's Stream of Consciousness as “entirely phenomenalistic”.²⁰ This is the thinking process that belongs to the subject itself (as opposed to “abstract thinking”). This subjective (phenomenalistic) consciousness needs to play a role in our cognitive capacities if we want to introduce the individual *qua* individual in the process of knowledge. The process of knowledge involves the constant maintenance of the known, along with the addition of new knowledge:

the result of consciously attempting to solve a necessary problem is to render one's world, in so far as it is affected by the problem, psychical, and the technique of the solution is psychology. I wish to insist that this consciousness does not become psychical with the mere abstraction resulting from the conflict of reactions.²¹

Mead recognizes that changes could occur without the participation of the subjective consciousness, that is, unconsciously. These are

18 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

20 Mead, "The Definition of...", cit., p. 91.

21 Cf. Mead, "Suggestions Toward..." cit., p. 8.

the slow changes that we recognize in natural history or different social processes. However, there is conscious change:

The solution that we are referring to here is not this unconscious change by which one generation differs from the next with no historical sense of wherein this difference lies and with no anticipation of further fundamental change. It is the consciousness of the change that is the essential step in the dialectic of reflective consciousness. [...] so the consciousness of the process by which we change from the old universal to the new carries with it the acceleration which always accompanies the addition of reflection to any instinctive activity.²²

The function of individual consciousness is propitiating rapid adaptations to the situations.²³ Being conscious of our problems gives us the advantage of innovative individual reflection.

We do not create contents, concepts, or new judgments when we are in a non-reflective attitude. For Mead, the formation of new knowledge occurs within the psychical phase. During the disintegration of habitual experience, we are open to a new conception of the world. The reflective “objective” attitude cannot do this work because it takes an analytical stance, not a creative one. Therefore, what we need is a notion of *reflective activity* that could bridge the gap between habitual conduct and logical reconstruction: this is Mead’s interest in DP: the working of the phenomenalist consciousness and his relation to reflection and creativity.

I.3 Cognition Dynamics in "The Definition on the Psychical" and The I/Me Distinction

Most of DP consists in a detailed review and criticism of Mead’s contemporary psychological conceptions. Nevertheless, some additions, like the notion of immediate experience and the distinction between “Me” and “I”, require particular attention. For the first time,

22 *Ibid.*, p.6.

23 This is what is usually called the evolutionary “time problem” of hominization. Nungesser, F., "Mead Meets Tomasello: Pragmatism, the Cognitive Sciences, and the Origins of Human Communication and Sociality", In *The Timeliness of George Herbert Mead*, by Hans Joas and Daniel Huebner, pp.252-275, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2016, p. 255.

Mead thematizes these notions, which are going to be part of his thought for the rest of his life. The article represents an expansion of interest from functional behavior to the contents of subjectivity from a first-person perspective, as Gregory's remark suggests:

Mead discussed the “psychical” in behavioral terms which marked it as the readjustive stage of the act. Later he used the word “psychical” to mean the content in the readjustive behavior which fails to function as intended.²⁴

In DP, Mead says: “There appears to be, therefore, a field of immediate experience within reflection that is open to direct observation [...] For this functional psychology an explicit definition of its subject-matter seems highly important”.²⁵ The idea of combining “immediate experience” with “reflection” is the central proposition of the article, as I want to show next. This is Mead’s *definition of the psychical*:

that phase of experience within which we are immediately conscious of conflicting impulses which rob the object of its character as object-stimulus, leaving us in so far in an attitude of subjectivity; but during which a new object-stimulus appears due to the reconstructive activity which is identified with the subject “I” as, distinct from the object “me”.²⁶

We know that the psychical is a moment, a phase of experience: “You can't think of subjective and objective as representing two coexisting series of phenomena, but they are successive”.²⁷ We also know that the psychical phase arises in the context of a problematic situation. It is when something does not go as expected that the stream of consciousness presents itself. For Mead: “It is equally evident that it is not the individual as a ‘me’ that can perform this function. Such an empirical self belongs to the world which it is the function of this phase of consciousness to reconstruct”.²⁸ It is the task of the “I” to

24 Gregory, R., “*The “Psychical” as Secondary and as Secret*”, *Philosophy of Science*, 15 (1), 1948, p.76

25 Mead, “The Definition of...”, cit., p. 109.

26 *Ibidem*.

27 Bawden, H., and K. Decker, “*The Evolution of the Psychical Element, by George Herbert Mead (Dec. 1899–March 1900 or 1898–1899)*”, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 44 (3), 2008, p. 500.

28 Cf. Mead, “Suggestions Toward...” cit., p. 108.

provide the hypothesis for the solution. While the “Me” represents the old lines of actions (what I have learned before, what they have told me, and so forth), the “I” stands for the creative aspects of action and cognition. The “Me” represents the abstractions of the objective consciousness, while the “I” represents the operations within the phenomenalist consciousness. The next passage explains the functions of the “I”:

this is the self in the disintegration and reconstruction of its universe, the self functioning, the point of immediacy that must exist within a mediate process. It is the act that makes use of all the data that reflection can present, but uses them merely as the conditions of a new world that cannot possibly be foretold from them. It is the self of unnecessitated choice, of undreamt hypotheses. Of inventions that change the whole face of nature.²⁹

Notice that the “I” (“the individual *qua* individual”, “the self functioning”) is characterized as a “function”,³⁰ not as an object. The “Me” represents the objective (representational) functions of consciousness, but at the same time it could be represented as an object, this is the “empirical me”. The “I” is the subjective side of reflection because the phenomenalist dimension of consciousness implies spontaneous activities, not just reaffirmation, and representation of the known. That is the possibility of the apparition of a new object, and so, a new “Me”.³¹

Even though the self is interpreted in functional terms, as I have already said, in DP, Mead is interested also in the notion of *content*. Here Mead is again going beyond his pragmatist colleagues, introducing two different kinds of contents: “what is abstracted from the former object when the conceptual object is erected in its place”,³² and “the content that appears when experience has lost its objectivity because of the conflicting tendencies to react, and that, instead of its being a reject,

29 Mead, “The Definition of...”, cit., pp. 108-109.

30 “[I]t is in this phase of subjectivity, with its activities of attention in the solution of the problem, i. e., in the construction of the hypothesis of the new world, that the individual *qua* individual has his functional expression or rather is that function”, *Ibidem*.

31 *Ibidem*.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

for the time being it includes all”.³³ This last content is identified with James’s notion of stream of consciousness,³⁴ and it is characterized as “phenomenalistic”. During the psychical process, the two kinds of contents are linked to “two fields of consciousness”:

when the coordination is broken up [...] then consciousness is divided into two fields: that within which the new stimulus or object must be constructed, and the rest of experience which with reference to the new possible object can have no other content than that of conditions of its formation.³⁵

The “Me” is related with the abstracted content and the conditions of the formation of the new object, while the “I” is related with the phenomenalistic content of the disintegrated experience that has lost its objectivity and where (and when) the new stimulus, objects, concepts or ideas could be constructed. The “I” is not “something” that falls out of the reconstruction; on the contrary, it is the possibility of throwing oneself into the reconstruction, of *questioning the self itself*. Thereby, the “I” represents the possibility of bracketing oneself. For this reason, the “I” is anchored to immediate experience, while the “Me” reflects in a detached way.

However, the self could not be wholly submerged in direct experience for, in this case, the self would be in a non-reflective attitude, not in the psychical. Then, the “field” (as he called it) that is reflectively detached in a reconstructive phase is the domain of the “Me”, and the field that is in direct contact with experience is the domain of the “I”. *The alternation and interplay of both attitudes constitute the psychical process*. This dialectic is not wholly internal as the self is open to experience in the I-moment, but, as far as reality has lost its validity (partially, of course), we are in a subjective attitude. The “I”, then, is in constant interplay with the “Me”, exercising movements freely while testing different hypothesis.

Imagine someone that is trying to solve a mechanical puzzle. She comes and goes testing different movements while she thinks logically about the process. Her hands are in direct contact with the

33 *Ibidem*.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 106

puzzle-object, this is the “I”, which manipulates the object freely, but she also says things to herself like “no, I already did this, maybe...” or “this is similar to... maybe if I...”. Once she succeeds, she has beaten not only the puzzle but also herself, her “Me”.

The requisite of *immediate experience* is important because, in the psychical process, we are expanding our knowledge of reality (adapting, changing). Mead is an empirical responsible thinker; for him, “reality lies in direct experience” (II.2). Only the individual can be in direct contact with experience. Since society has no eyes, nor hands, “something new can come to birth only in and through the individual”.³⁶ But, as we have seen, the immediate experience without a reflective attitude cannot do the job. There resides the importance of the notion of *reflective activity* that Mead characterized as “the self functioning”.

Mead enhances his proposal while taking elements from W. Wundt and J. Baldwin, combining them with the insights of James and Dewey just reviewed. From Wundt, he takes the idea that, in the non-reflective immediate experience, there is no distinction between subject and object; that distinction is a proper function of reflection.³⁷ According to Baldwin’s theory of development, the reflective minds are the product of social intercourses that allow the distinction between mind and body to arise.³⁸ For Baldwin, the original undifferentiated consciousness is called “protoplasmic”. Mead links that notion with the stream of consciousness of James -that is, the phenomenalist phase of reflection- and construe the psychical process as a “return” to the protoplasmic state:

The disintegration of the object means a return, with reference to a certain field, to the original phase of protoplasmic consciousness and within these limits there is neither mind nor body, only subjectivity. The reconstruction is the immediate process of attention and apperception, of choice, of consciously directed conduct.³⁹

36 Bawden and Decker, “The Evolution of...”, p. 491.

37 Mead, “The Definition of...”, cit., p. 100.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

It is necessary to understand that the so-called “return” is not a regression, *it is a revisiting*. It represents the necessity of continually going back to the things themselves in a consciously directed attitude, defying our fix conceptions. Mead, following Dewey, does not think that the phenomenalist consciousness is present in ordinary experience or even in objective reflection, but it is just a functional moment of experience: it is consciousness *in action*, but it is not blind action. Instead, it is *reflective transformational action*. It is the kind of creative activities that warrants the arrival of the new.

To summarize, we could recognize different functions associated with different cognitive phases, attitudes, and contents. First, we have the non-reflective immediate attitude, when there is no distinction between subject and object, body and mind, me and the other. Then, we have two reflective attitudes: the detached reflection of objective logico-representational mediations, and the immediate reflection in action that is phenomenalist, transformational, and creative. The “I” and “Me” distinction represents the intentional operations of the agent that comes and goes freely from mind to world.

II. A response to Hans Joas criticism of “The Definition of the Psychical”

II.1 H. Joas’ Criticism of DP

For Hans Joas, the significance of the definition of the psychical is that: “Mead linked the objective rootedness of the psychical in the structure of human action with the insight that psychology is essentially self-reflective in character” [Emphasis in the original].⁴⁰ Thus, Mead was trying to *situate the psychical within the world*.⁴¹ The problem is that, for Joas, Mead is not adequately social yet and so remains:

- (i) “[W]ithin the essentially monologic framework of functionalist psychology and place the individual organism and its actions in the centre of his study”.⁴²

40 Joas, G. H. Mead... cit., p. 87.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 87

Joas thinks that Mead's philosophy requires to take into consideration, "in a consistent manner":

- (ii) The social genesis of self-reflectivity as an individual precipitate of sociality.⁴³
- (iii) A concept of intersubjectively constituted meaning.⁴⁴

These two requirements imply, according to Joas, that:

- (iv) "[T]he whole frame of reference of 'The Definition of the Psychical' had first to be broken asunder".⁴⁵

Therefore, as a functionalist piece of work, DP is sufficient but "not from that of an investigation of human sociality"⁴⁶. Although, Joas thinks that:

"The Definition of the Psychical" is not merely the intra-psychological preparation of Mead's social-psychological approach, but also offers, in rudimentary form, an understanding of psychology from the standpoint of a theory of communicative action that to the present day has not been entirely equalled elsewhere, nor been fully developed.⁴⁷

I find this position ambiguous. Joas admits that Mead had "in a rudimentary form, an understanding of psychology from the standpoint of a theory of communicative action", but at the same time he says that DP is "essentially monologic". For Joas, the vision that Mead advanced in DP is not related with his mature position (for example, in *Mind, Self, and Society*), and that is why he says that "to the present day [the DP approach] has not been entirely equalled elsewhere, nor been fully developed". For Joas, it seems that the "limitations on the validity of the definition of the psychical" could not be improved, but need to be wholly discarded. Against this "rupturist" reading, I favor a "continuist" one.

The core of H. Joas' critical interpretation of DP resides in the identification of two contradictions:

43 *Ibidem.*

44 *Ibidem.*

45 *Ibidem.*

46 *Ibidem.*

47 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

Only while Mead had not yet clearly grasped the implications of this insight [the essentially linguistically or intersubjectively constituted character of the predicates used for self-interpretation] could the contradiction between this position and his belief that the “I” could be immediately experienced remain hidden from him. A similar contradiction appeared between the theory of the social genesis of the self, regarded approvingly even in “The Definition of the Psychical”, and Mead's claim that the self is directly accessible to reflection. However, both the status of the immediacy of experience and that of the psychical as essentially bound up with the moment were insufficiently clarified.⁴⁸

Both contradictions involve the relation between “immediate experience” and the social:

- (v) The *first contradiction* is between the social character of the predicates used for self-interpretation and his belief that the “I” could be immediately experienced.
- (vi) The *second contradiction* is between the social genesis of the self and “the claim that the self is directly accessible to reflection”.

Other important points connected with the contradictions are:

- (vii) Mead could not see the contradictions, because had not yet clearly grasped the implications of his insight about the social character of predicates use for self-interpretation. (This is linked with (ii) and (iii)).
- (viii) The status of the immediacy of experience and that of the psychical as essentially bound up with the moment were insufficiently clarified.

Gary Cook has a similar concern about DP and the notion of “I”:

Thus Mead's introduction of the term “I” in this context appears to be either a misleading use of the personal pronoun to refer to immediately felt action (as opposed to objects which may arise within it), or a device for bringing in through the back door an implicit reference to the same object self he has thrown out through the front [the “Me”]. The former interpretation seems most consistent with Mead's descriptions of subjectivity... Unhappily, “The Definition of the Psychical” leaves much room for doubt concerning Mead's precise view on this matter.⁴⁹

48 *Ibid.*, p. 86-87.

49 Cook, G., “The Development of G. H. Mead's Social Psychology”, *Transactions of*

The main criticism addressed⁵⁰ to the “I”, as in the case of Joas, and the last sentence of the quote expresses the same concern that (vi). The notion of “I” is so obscure for Cook that he gives no interpretation of it, he just hints that it could be something like “immediately felt action”.⁵¹ Joas does not develop the distinction either, limiting himself to a few lines where he briefly reviews James’s understanding of the notions. The core of his criticism is that the notion of “I” and immediate experience are inconsistent.

Another worry of Joas is that:

It was an open question whether human action was at all to be qualified as conscious action outside of the phases of subjectivity in which, or the points at which, the human individual becomes aware of his action. If the answer to this question is yes, then one would also have to be able to differentiate clearly human conduct from animal behaviour in these phases.⁵²

This can be restated like this:

(ix) *The problem of consciousness out of the psychical attitude*: is there any difference with animal thinking?

A related observation of Joas’ interpretation of Mead is the understanding that:

(x) “[N]ew perceptions and ideas of individuals which need to be transformed into a common language in order to acquire validity”.⁵³

In the next two sections, I examine propositions (i) to (x) in contrast with the interpretation I gave in the first part (I).

II.2 Demystifying the Notion of Immediacy

The right place to start my argumentation is the notion of “immediacy”⁵⁴ and its relation to the proper functions of the “I”. I

the Charles S. Peirce Society, 8(3), 1972, p. 174.

50 Joas, G. H. Mead... cit., p. 85.

51 The idea of “felt action” plays no role in Mead’s positive exposition.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 86-87.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

54 J. David Lewis studied the importance of contact experience in Mead’s philosophy. That is the kind of immediate experience that Mead is talking about. Cf.

want to defend that the contradictions (v) and (vi) are not well-grounded. My stronger thesis is that there is no contradiction at all, but, as a fallback, I will show that, if there is a contradiction, then, this contradiction is also present in *Mind, Self, and Society* (henceforth “MSS”), consequently, (vii) would be incorrect and (iv) would be misplaced. My interest is DP, not MSS, so I just going to give evidence that Mead retains his ideas about the immediate experience and its relation with the “I” without considering the improvements or changes in his approximation.

Perhaps it is fair to say, as (viii) suggests, that the notion of immediacy could be further elucidated, but I find its function clear enough for Mead’s purposes. The source of experience from where we obtain our new ideas is the “immediate experience”:

Relation between reality and the immediate: “Reality lies in immediate experience, and must be sought there”.⁵⁵

⁵⁶This thesis and its relation to the activities of the “I” is found in several places of MSS, but it is clear enough in this passage:

The response to that situation as it appears in his *immediate experience* is uncertain, and it is that which constitutes the “I”.⁵⁷ [Emphasis added].

Also, a couple of times in MSS,⁵⁸ Mead links the “I” and the “novel” with something that he calls the “immediate attitude”, that he relates in turn with the artist and the possibility of being different than the rest. Here is an example:

Lewis, J., "G.H. Mead's Contact Theory of Reality: immediate experience that Mead is talking about. Cf. Lewis, J., "G.H. Mead's Contact Theory of Reality: The Manipulatory Phase of the Act in the Constitution of Mundane, Scientific, Aesthetic, and Evaluative Objects", *Symbolic Interaction*, 4 (2), 1981, pp. 129-14.

55 Mead, George Herbert, "*A New Criticism of Hegelianism: Is it Valid?*", *American Journal of Theology* 5, 87-96, 1901.

56 Note that this quote is from 1901, so the notion of immediate experience is present during Mead’s whole philosophical career. It is used as early as 1895. Cf. Mead, G. H., Review of "*An Introduction to Comparative Psychology by C. Lloyd Morgan*", *Psychological Review* 2, 99-402, 1895.

57 Mead, *Mind, Self, and...*, cit., p.175.

58 *Ibid.*, pp. 183, 208, 214, 291, 298

to those values which attach particularly to the "I" rather than to the "me", those values which are found in the *immediate attitude* of the artist, the inventor, the scientist in his discovery, in general in the action of the "I" which cannot be calculated and which involves a reconstruction of the society, and so of the "me" which belongs to that society.⁵⁹ [Emphasis added].

These quotes from MSS are very similar to those we find in DP. There is a link between the "I", the immediate experience, and the transformational and innovative possibilities of reflection. Thus, my weaker thesis is evidenced and, as a consequence, proposition (vii) is weakened: it is not true that Mead should have to recognize a contradiction once he identified the implication of a social interpretation of cognition; and as far as he keeps the relation between direct experience and the "I" in MSS -where he clearly take into consideration (ii) and (iii)— it is false to say the he needed to "break asunder" the agenda of DP. Now, this does not imply that there are not contradictions like (v) and (vi) in Mead's philosophy, but it undoubtedly shows that there is something wrong with Joas interpretation and criticism.

The problem with the supposed contradictions is that they misconstrue Mead's proposal. Joas talks about "the claim that the self is directly accessible to reflection", but I have found no such a claim yet in Mead's writings, neither I have found that "the "I" could be immediately experienced as Joas asserted. As far as I know, he never says that we can experience the self *directly* or something in this vein. When Mead talks about "direct or immediate experience", he is referring to the experience of *reality* not of ourselves. In DP, the self and the "I" are functions, not objects.⁶⁰ You do not experience functions: you *exercise* functions. Thus, the contradictions (v) and (vi) are unsound.

Beyond this critical point, we might try to decipher what is the supposed contradiction about. I must confess that I cannot understand what is the problem here. For Mead, the opposite of direct experience is the representational consciousness, not the idea of a social self or social consciousness. Consider this passage from DP:

59 *Ibid.*, p. 214.

60 Mead has not yet introduced his notion of "social objects".

There appears to be, therefore, *a field of immediate experience within reflection that is open to direct observation, [...] Over against this would still stand the parallelistic* [i.e. dualistic and representational] *psychology* as presenting the conditions under which empirical bodies and minds must act in the reconstructions arising within the field of the psychical.⁶¹

There we can realize what the real opposite of “immediacy” is. There is no contradiction between immediate and development. I have perceptual capacities that allow me to have direct experience, but at the same time, these capacities develop within a social framework. Consider, as an illustration, the skillful doctor that can spot an anomaly immediately in an X-ray scan: her diagnose is supported upon a long period of social and intellectual development.

Indeed, we can find the relation between immediate and development for the first time in 1895, in his review of L. Morgan’s book on comparative psychology:

the distinction between the physical and the psychical in others is as really an immediate *datum* of experience. We are as essentially social beings as physical and physiological beings [...] 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. Or again man is essentially social.⁶²

There we can find the alleged “contradiction” (vi), as far as he talks about a distinction “between the physical and the psychical in others” that is immediate but must be developed. We are not born with a self, *we make ourselves* (“personality is an achievement”;⁶³ and we do this in direct contact with the others.

The situation repeats with the first contradiction (v) between the social character of the predicates used for self-interpretation and the

61 Mead, “The Definition of...”, cit., p. 109.

62 Mead, G. H., “Review of “An Introduction to Comparative Psychology by C. Lloyd Morgan”, *Psychological Review* 2, 1895, p. 401.

63 Mead, G. H., “Review of Untersuchungen zur Phaenomenologie und Ontologie des Menschlichen Geistes by Dr. G. Class”, *American Journal of Theology* 1, 1897, p. 791.

immediate experience of the “I”. Again, instances of the alleged contradiction appear in MSS. There he says: “The immediate reaction of children to things about them is social”.⁶⁴

The fact that Joas identifies a contradiction where, arguably, Mead can see none, reveals that he is working within a different framework. I speculate that the problem is that he and Cook maintain a *social externalism* that is at odds with early Mead’s fundamental ideas. Mead was not an externalist, for the simple reason that he denies the distinction internal/external. Dewey famously characterized Mead’s philosophy in this way:

When I first came to know Mr. Mead, well over forty years ago, the dominant problem in his mind concerned *the nature of consciousness as personal and private*. ... I fancy that if one had a sufficiently consecutive knowledge of Mr. Mead's intellectual biography during the intervening years, one could discover how practically all his inquiries and problems developed out of his original haunting question.⁶⁵ [Emphasis added].

Even though this is a quote that practically all Mead’s interpreters use, it speaks against the denial of the individual experience. DP is concentrated exactly in what Dewey is emphasizing: the *personal and private* dimension of experience. I presuppose that Joas would find a contradiction between the idea of a “private and personal” consciousness with the notion of a social self; but there is none. The point is that being social and developmental does not preclude the idea of the immediate, as we have seen. Actually, Mead is working against the reduction of subjectivity to the social.⁶⁶

Now, let’s consider (x) –namely, the idea that individual contents “need to be transformed into a common language”–, that remark reveals that for Joas, in DP, the contents of personal experience are private in a strong sense, because the immediate experience is for him something that contradicts intersubjectivity. But for Mead “there is nothing mysterious” here:

64 Mead, *Mind, Self, and...*, cit., p.184.

65 Mead, G. H., *The Philosophy of the Present*. Edited by A. Murphy, Chicago, Open Court, 1932, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

66 Mead, “Review of Untersuchungen...”, cit., p. 790.

If we ask now what sort of scientific treatment this phase of consciousness may receive, we find the reply already given. ...there is nothing mysterious about its flow. *It may be as vividly and definitely described as any immediate experience.*⁶⁷ [Emphasis added].

Indeed, we do not need any specialized training to speak about our psychical states:

Most of the persons who bore us with themselves, and the novelists who bore us with others, are but dilating upon the evident traits of such phases of our life, and they need lay no claim to professional skill of the trained introspectionist to recognize these traits.⁶⁸

Mead indeed talks about two kinds of content, the representational (conceptual, propositional) and “the content that appears when experience has lost its objectivity because of the conflicting tendencies to react”. Above and beyond, he does not explain the specific ways in which these two kinds of consciousness interrelate; he limits himself to that this is the task of psychology, and that is what the article is all about. Notwithstanding, there is no opposition between them in terms of a private-public tension. New thoughts do not grow in a private scenario, but in direct and bodily interplay with the world. If I find a way to solve a problem, then it is an objective solution as far as it works for anybody else in the same circumstances. So, it is not true that we need some translation in the process of validation.

When we are in the psychical phase, we experiment with reality in an objective and intersubjective way to advance new hypothesis *and* test them. That is what the immediate requirement is all about. We are not entitled to validate a hypothesis that we did not test. What is verified is objective and, a fortiori, intersubjective. In the note for the 1900 course, it says: “Doubt is subjective and individual. Decision (with execution) is objective, social”.⁶⁹ My conclusion is that *the validation of a hypothesis requires no transformation of content.*⁷⁰ And the reason is not only

67 Mead, “The Definition of...”, cit., p. 109.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 102

69 Bawden and Decker, “The Evolution of...”, p. 482.

70 Even though objective validation does not require a transformation of content, other psychological processes like learning or teaching a skill could involve some inter-transformations. So, another way to establish my criticism of Joas is saying

that “in self-interpretation, we are using already social predicates”, but instead, that in the psychical phase we are in *direct contact with the experience*, so objective validation is part of that process.

II.3 To Break Asunder the Monologic Reading

We can go now directly to the proposition (i). We need to consider if Mead is working in a monologic framework or not. As I said, Joas is ambiguous here, because he also admits that Mead had an “understanding of psychology from the standpoint of a theory of communicative action”. I concede Joas that, at the time when Mead wrote DP, he had not developed a theory of communication. DP is not interested in this point. Consider this quote:

will orient it [*i. e.* the definition of the psychical] with reference to immediate experience, to reflection, and the objects and conduct that arise out of reflection, and which will vindicate the relation of the psychical to the individual and that of the individual to reflection.⁷¹

The idea of combining immediate experience and reflection with conduct is more relevant for Mead's purpose than the social constitution of meaning. DP is not a systematic work where Mead expresses all his thoughts; it is on the subject of psychology, not social psychology. Despite his limitations, he was very aware of the social constitution of cognition, as Joas himself admits. As early as 1897, Mead describes the self as the individual vivid and immediate “consciousness of himself as a nodal point in the operation of the social forces”,⁷² and, as we have seen, some years before he had already stated that “we are essentially social”. Therefore, Mead was working with a social framework from the outset.

Even though DP does not discuss the social aspect of cognition, it presupposes it. Consider, for example, this quote from DP: “Action takes place in a common world into which inference and interpretation have transmuted all that belonged solely to the individual

that he probably confuses the process of validation with the learning-teaching process.

71 Mead, “The Definition of...”, cit., p. 93.

72 Mead, “Review of Untersuchungen...”, cit., p.790.

subjectively considered”.⁷³ There is no explicit mention of the social, but it talks about a “common world” and here “common” can only mean “intersubjective”, as oppose to “subjectively considered”. This idea is confirmed some pages later when he says: “one of the results of the reconstruction will be a new individual *as well as a new social environment*”⁷⁴ [emphasis added]. So, the psychical reconstruction, including the “I-Me” interplay, takes place within a social framework and affects the social environment, that “common world” into which action takes place.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, the stronger case against the monologic reading comes from “Suggestions”. There, Mead links the psychical process with ethics. We have to recall that for Mead there are two possible attitudes or “methods”, the metaphysical and the psychical: “The application of either of these methods to conduct as a whole, in their relation to the ideal or to the larger self to be attained, fulfils the function of ethics”.⁷⁶ The point here is that “To assume the [psychical] attitude, therefore, of solving a necessary problem, implies a willingness to completely invalidate one's known world”.⁷⁷ It is safe to suppose that “world” means here “intersubjectively constituted world” or “common world”, that is why the psychical is essentially an ethical stance. In the notes of a 1900 course it can be read: “Ethics deals in the activity and experience of [the] whole (individual-social) self”.⁷⁸

The monologic reading cannot explain the sense of the I/Me distinction in DP,⁷⁹ nor the incorporation of the notions of content and

73 Mead, “The Definition of...”, cit., p. 77.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

75 There also a passage in DP (*Ibid.*, p. 102, pp. 106-107) where Mead talks explicitly about the social: “the whole social environment would be more or less definitely organized as the background and sustaining whole of the individual or individuals who were the immediate stimuli of our conduct” *Ibid.*, p. 107. Again, we find the link between the social and the immediate. The problem is that this passage is part of an example that involves a social situation, that is, it is not a general statement, and so the evidence might be not conclusive enough. In any case, I think that it is still supportive of my interpretation.

76 Mead, “Suggestions Toward A...”, cit., p. 2.

77 *Ibid.* p. 7.

78 Bawden and Decker, “The Evolution of...”, p. 501.

79 Perhaps, it is still true what J. David Lewis said some decades before: “sociologists' interpretations of the ‘I’ and ‘me’ components of self have become

the immediate. The interplay between the "I" and the "Me" expresses an incipient dialogical conception. The "Me" is socially articulated and represents the known. The "I" could be understood as the possibility of overcoming the inherent social constrictions when responding in a novel way. Within the social interplay, we not only receive, but we also give something back. That makes possible the creative function of experience and thinking, that is why we have consciousness (or a mind), that is why we are individuals, selves. The same organic disposition that let us learn and be guided by others allows ourselves to teach and guide others. This reason is good enough to call Mead's philosophy in DP "dialogical", or at least proto-dialogical, as far as he has not developed his theory of communication.

Finally, it sounds artificial the idea of isolating the different cognitive phases that is present in proposition (ix). Joas expresses it very well: "Reflection, however, is not something that as such has a value in and of itself. It is, rather, embedded in action-nexuses".⁸⁰ The different phases of interpretation, action and reflection relate each other organically in a functional whole. Mead favors holism.⁸¹ One cannot just think "outside of the phases of subjectivity" as if there were sharply separated phases. The sense of the psychical attitude points to the non-reflective phase; its functions are not detached but have the whole orientation of experiences as its field of application. Being in a human non-reflective attitude implies the possibility of entering the psychical attitude. Joas is asking something similar to this: are we just animals when we are sleeping? That is a sort of general criticism to functionalist psychology that is out of place. Our digestive system does not stop its existence when fasting: digestion is an essential part of the whole organic processes. The same applies to the psychical. Reflective thinking is an integral part of our cognitive capacities, and our daily dealings with the world and the others. That is why even when we sleep, we are reflective animals, or when we fast, we are digestive organisms.

stumbling block to an adequate understanding of Mead's perspective". Lewis, J. David, "Social Behaviorist Interpretation of the Meadian 'I'", *American Journal of Sociology*, 85 (2), 1979, p.263.

80 Joas, G. H. Mead... cit., p. 79.

81 Mead, "Suggestions Toward A...", cit., p. 7.

Conclusions

I have tried to argue that the monologic reading of DP made by H. Joas is not sound. I advanced in its place an interpretation of Mead's early philosophy that recognizes the combination of social and phenomenalist dimensions of cognition. While the interpretation of Joas correctly stresses the relation between self-reflection and action, I suggested that Mead found it necessary to introduce a notion of immediate experience that bridges the gap between those extremes. Therefore, according to my interpretation, the central notion of DP is the "I", that is, "the point of immediacy that must exist within a mediate process", "the self functioning", "the individual *qua* individual". Mead enhanced the functional role of reflection to include the interplay between two different attitudes of subjectivity, represented by the "I" and the "Me".

Even if my argumentation and defend against Joas' criticism is not convincing, the most important is that this reading makes possible a "continuistic" understanding of Mead's philosophical development, and update his early work so that could be incorporated in different contemporary discussion. For example: the J. P. Guilford⁸² distinction between convergent and divergent thinking is very similar to the different kinds of reflection in Mead. Second, his recognition of a function for the phenomenological mind in the context of cognition and the necessity of introducing the subjectivity back into the scientific reflection could be relevant for recent phenomenological cognitive science (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008). Related with this, we have in the requisite of immediate experience a compromise with an embodied conception of cognition: the psychical attitude is an *embodied-reflective attitude*.⁸³ We can also interpret the psychical content as non-conceptual content.⁸⁴⁻⁸⁵

82 Cf. Guilford, J., "Creativity." *American Psychologist* 5, (9), 444–454, 1950.

83 Cf. Varela, F., E. Thompson, and E. Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991.

84 Evans, G., *The Varieties of Reference*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982.

85 Cf. Guilford, J., "Creativity." *American Psychologist*, 5, (9), 444–454, 1950.

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