

G.H. Mead

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Driving Impulses

G.H. Mead (1863-1931) oriented much of his intellectual efforts around three unavoidable questions for anyone living in a modern society: how are *selfhood*, *knowledge*, and *politics* understood and organized in such a society? Modern individuals continually seek answers to questions although nobody has ever come up with a definitive answer to them. Modernity, in other words, confronts us with inevitable problematics that fundamentally shape the way in which we think about certain topics. For the purposes of my discussion of Mead, I focus upon three of these modern problematics: science, selfhood, and democratic politics. But before I discuss Mead's treatment of these problem areas, allow me to briefly situate Mead as a pragmatist in relation to Dewey and James within pragmatism.

Of all the contexts framing the nature and evolution of Mead's thinking, one emerges as particularly relevant - the city of Chicago at the beginning of the twentieth century. Mead was not a Chicagoan by birth, however, nor did he grow up in the city. He was born in South Hadley, Massachusetts, on February 27, 1863. Six years later, his father, Hiram Mead, was appointed a chair of theology at a seminary in Oberlin, Ohio, and it was in this small Midwestern town that George Mead spent his childhood, attending Oberlin College between 1880 and 1883. In 1887 he was accepted at Harvard where he studied philosophy with William James, a prominent

figure of American philosophical pragmatism. This was the first time that Mead had come across this philosophical doctrine. But Mead's most significant encounter was with John Dewey, who invited Mead to join him at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 1891. This marked the beginning of a friendship and professional collaboration that would last for the remainder of their lives. In 1894, Mead followed Dewey to the newly opened University of Chicago and remained there until the end of his career in 1931.

Although deeply influenced by James and Dewey, Mead nevertheless developed a unique understanding of pragmatist philosophy. Classical pragmatism emphasizes **a processual and relational world-view**, a naturalistic and evolutionary conception of science, and a radically democratic agenda of social reform through school, social settlements, and other social institutions. Pragmatists seek to find an alternative to the point of view of 'mechanical science' that had dominated the western variant of modernity from Descartes to Kant. But as Mead writes: "the Romantic idealists changed all that. For them, the forms arose in the very process of overcoming antinomies, overcoming obstacles."ⁱ (MTNC, 155) By supplementing Hegelian idealism with Darwin's evolutionary theory, pragmatists challenge the prevalent mechanical and individualistic conception of action, human autonomy, and freedom, and restate these problems in evolutionary and social terms.

Processual and Relational World-View

Mead's holistic view of the social world is that it is forever in motion, perpetually in the midst of historically rooted, dynamic *processes* of renewal and re-creation. These processes are animated, given motion, by unfolding combinations of people and things. Such processes are often contested and negotiated, and include the on-going production of meaning, which in conditions of modernity typically require the constant renewal of one's identity as old ways of life

crumble and new ones emerge. The processes are *relational* in the sense that individuals and groups are never islands unto themselves, but are always situated in networks of social relations. The subjectivity and behaviour of people are profoundly influenced by the norms and expectations embedded within these social relations. Events and processes cannot be understood without grasping their positioning at the intersection of the various sets of dynamic social and material relations that provide them with their conditions of existence.

But Mead goes beyond the pragmatism of James and Dewey in that Mead's variant of pragmatism is better described as "social pragmatism," i.e. both a thoroughly inter-subjective process philosophy entirely compatible with the principles of the scientific experimental method (setting Mead apart from James and Dewey), and a progressive world-view at home with radical democracy (which places him closer to Dewey). As a process philosophy, Mead's social pragmatism is at odds with dualistic modes of thinking from Platonism to modern Cartesian philosophy, with their characteristic ontological distinctions between mind and body, or between thought and action. According to such dualistic philosophies, things can be studied independently of the uses people give them and, conversely, ideas, beliefs, and practices can be studied separately from the environment in which they play out. By contrast, for Mead, human agents are fundamentally problem-solvers and thought's main function is to guide social action to the solution of practical problems that confront individuals in their dealings with the environment.

It is through the lenses of social pragmatism that Mead approaches modernity. The western variant of modernity can be described as a field of discourse defined by the tension between a dominant paradigm and several, less successful, alternatives. Within each paradigm, a plurality of proposals has been generated to answer those fundamental problematics, although no definitive answer has been forthcoming. The

dominant paradigm's designation varies widely, although some reference to "liberalism" and "rationalism" are usually in order. From this viewpoint: (1) the objective and distant scientist of positivism, (2) the disembodied and instrumental self of neoclassical economics and rational choice theory, and (3) the abstract rights-endowed individual of political liberalism are but different aspects of one and the same conception of human beings and their place in the world. One of my main arguments here is that Mead's thinking can be better understood by reference to his (highly critical) responses to the three problematics that have defined the parameters of modern philosophical reflection since its inception, that is, science, selfhood, and democratic politics.

A few words on each of these problematics are now in order. At the heart of the modern project is science. The confidence – exemplarily illustrated by figures such as Galileo, Bacon, or Newton – in the combined powers of human reason and the principles of the experimental scientific method is a fundamental component of what it is to be modern. Central to the modern epistemological problematic is the tradition inaugurated by René Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (1637). Classical pragmatists tend to reject this tradition on the grounds that it assumes an insurmountable divide between the realm of material, objective things, and the sphere of idealist, subjective phenomena. The pragmatist alternative to the "Cartesian chasm between matter and mind," to use Mead's expression, is to equate knowing with intelligent problem-solving in particular contexts of action. The pragmatist epistemological critique is also thoroughly historicist. The pragmatist alternative to the rational, individualistic liberalism of a tradition that runs from Hobbes and Descartes to Kant points to an approach that takes temporality and historical time seriously. Mead's alternative to the

abstract, atomistic, and instrumentally rational individual of the contractualist tradition is a historically situated social self whose rationality is defined in terms of the creative resolution of concrete action-problems.

Closely connected with the epistemological critique of abstract individualistic rationalism and its rigid dichotomies, Mead's response to the modern problematic of selfhood is usually regarded as his main contribution to the social sciences. In which sense is this problematic of selfhood distinctively modern? The relation between identity and modernity is clarified once one realizes that modernity continually erodes certain key markers of certainty (such as tradition or religion), while it constantly strives to recover them in new guises. It is out of this constant and inevitable questioning of one's place in the world that modern identity is forged, Mead argues.

At the core of the political dimension of the western variant of modernity is the human effort to reconcile notions of individual autonomy and liberty on the one hand, and of predictability and certainty on the other. Contrary to what is usually assumed, constitutionalism and the rule of law are not distinctively modern, although they have both developed new forms in the past couple of centuries. What is distinctively modern is the assertion of individual rights and, to a certain extent, the demand for universal social equality. What makes one more modern than the other is their orientation in time. While constitutionalism is fundamentally retrospective (one has to refer back to the founding text of the polity even if one wishes to interpret it in the light of current problems), individual rights-based perspectives involve claims and aspirations that tend to be future-oriented and are, therefore, distinctively modern. Liberal individualistic moral theory, from which the doctrine of universal human rights stems, is thus the dominant discursive resource of political modernity, in

opposition to which all alternatives (e.g. socialism) define themselves.

Key Issues

A Problem-Solving Conception of Science

These modern problematics of science, selfhood, and democratic politics shape Mead's key research interests. Mead's preoccupations include a problem-solving conception of science, a thoroughly social and inter-subjective understanding of the human self, an original account of creativity, a distinctively pragmatist notion of the meaning and theory of objects, and an emphasis upon democratic deliberation. I discuss these five issues in turn.

Mead sees the scientific method of experimental science as the most developed and systematic application of human intelligence to the resolution of problems in specific segments of the unquestioned world in which we live. However, this does not equate to a positivist understanding of scientific method, according to which the methods of the natural sciences are paradigmatic for all other scientific disciplines. Mead is all too aware of the fact that the relation between objects of perception and the scientific laws supposed to explain them is not without obstacles. In the social sciences, the problematic character of this relation is all the more obvious given the self-reflective nature of their object of study. For Mead, a truly scientific social psychology does not limit itself to the study of externally observable behaviour. Rather, behaviour is to be located within an environment composed of both human and non-human agents and to be analyzed, in both its observable and non-observable

aspects, as oriented to the solution of concrete action-problems. Mead's allegiance to an experimental and problem-solving conception of science sheds important light upon the foundations of his system of thought. From the beginning of his career, Mead actively pursued research in the domain of the history and philosophy of science, endorsing a problem-solving conception of scientific activity that would lead his inquiries into the social nature of human consciousness and to the moral and political question of: "how should man live in society?"

A Social, Inter-Subjective Self

There are two main components to Mead's treatment of modern selfhood. On the one hand, he discusses it from the perspective of childhood development. In particular, the genesis of the self is explained by means of two developmental stages. The first is the stage of "play," during which children learn how to put themselves in the place of another individual. At this time children acquire a self – they do this by learning to take the role of other individuals. The second developmental stage is that of the "game," a more elaborate and demanding social experience. Here children have to take the role not only of a single individual, but also of all the individuals involved in the game. Moreover, children have to learn how to coordinate their actions according to the rules of the game. At this juncture, Mead introduces one of his best known concepts, the notion of the "generalized other." With this notion, Mead refers to the social attitudes and norms a child internalizes as part of their process of development. By learning how to take the role of the "generalized other," children acquire the ability to import the attitudes of the social group into their own selves. Thus they

begin to see themselves from the perspective of everyone else.

On the other hand, Mead analyses the self from the viewpoint of its internal structure. Following the insights of his fellow pragmatists James and Dewey, Mead conceives of the self as an ongoing social process with two distinct phases. On the one hand, there is the “I.” Mead describes the “I” as the spontaneous response of the individual to the social situation. On the other hand, there is the “me,” which refers to a socially structured, conscious self-image that we build by seeing ourselves through the eyes of others (MR, 20). Imagine having breakfast this morning – you can see yourself having milk and cereals, talking to your parents, and so on. The “I” is that phase of the self that remembers, while the “me” is the remembered self-image. For Mead, the “I” is a source of novelty and creativity, indispensable for the assertion of individuality, while the “me” refers to the set of organized social attitudes within one’s self. Mead thus rules out the rigid distinction between inner subjective life, and external objective reality. On the contrary, he conceives of the self as a process through which social experiences are permanently incorporated into the self (through the “me”) and reconstructed by the “I.” Even though their fusion can and does occur in certain circumstances (such as in episodes of heightened emotions), the fact remains that the internal structure of the self is a process characterized by the dialectical relation between these two aspects or phases. In turn, that dialectical relation between the “I” and the “me” (i.e. the self) is but a phase of a more general dialectic, that is, the dialectic between the self and society.

Creativity

A crucial element of the dialectic is social creativity. For Mead, creativity is not limited to the figure of the “artist” or the “genius.” Rather, creativity is a universal human ability. Every rational individual is endowed, Mead argues, with the ability to cope creatively with concrete action problems. The extent to which individual creativity is developed and refined is as much a question of personal development as it depends upon the kind of social experience one is exposed to. In turn, the degree of collective creativity a given community attains (expressed, for instance, in the quality of its artistic or scientific achievements) depends, as Mead puts it, upon the actual scope offered to: “individuality – for original, unique, or creative thinking and behavior on the part of the individual self within it.” (MSS, 221). The more democratic a society is, the more space it will allow for the expression of the individuality of its members. Crucially, Mead does not reduce creativity to the mere choice of alternative paths of action. Rather, the experience of living in a democracy stimulates creative thinking (and acting) regarding those very choices. Hence creativity is closely related to social criticism. The more one is immersed in the values of a community, the more able one is to exercise creative self-critical judgment of those democratic values in order to imagine alternative and more efficient policies, or more just institutional arrangements.

For Mead, then, individual and social creativity are but different phases of the same process by which original and innovative solutions are imagined to answer the problems individuals and groups face in everyday life. As an expression of reflective thinking, creativity is both a feature of the human species and a defining characteristic of modernity, the historical period in which individuality has attained its fullest expression.

Pragmatist Meaning and a Theory of Objects

A key element of Mead's social pragmatism is his theory of meaning. For Mead, meaning is neither a subjective phenomenon lodged in the individual mind nor something external to it. Mead describes the logical structure of meaning as an inner triad composed of the gesture of the first organism, the responding gesture of the second organism, and the "resultant" of the social act. The response of the second organism to the gesture of the first is the interpretation of that gesture – this response brings out that meaning. Meaning is thus implicit in the structure of the social act. As such, meaning is to be found objectively in social conduct. Mead uses the example of a footprint of a bear to explain his argument. The footprint is the symbol of a bear. When we come across such a footprint, we associate that imprinted piece of mud with the passage of a bear at a certain previous moment. We might be afraid, not of the footprint but of what it means – the bear. So the footprint is the symbol, the bear is its meaning (i.e., the 'resultant' of the social act), and to be able to identify such a symbol as leading to such a meaning is the distinctive feature of human intelligence. Hence individuals create symbols to indicate, to themselves as well as to other members of the group, the implications of a certain object or gesture. In a sense, then, symbolization creates objects. The piece of mud only becomes a "footprint" when an individual looks at it and interprets it as meaning "bear." The bear's footprint thus becomes what Mead calls a "social object." "Social objects" include whatever has a common meaning to the participants in the social act, from physical objects to oneself and other selves, scientific, religious, or political objects. Crucially, Mead conceives

of the process of meaning-creation between individuals and social objects as dialectically generative. From the continuous tension between individuals and objects, new individuals and new objects continually emerge (MR, 38). Mead illustrates his thesis through the societal shift towards modernity (MR, 40-41). Modern individuals have emerged as new objects gradually came into being, including physical objects (e.g. technological innovations such as the steam engine), scientific objects (e.g. new theories such as Einstein's theory of general relativity), or political objects, such as the seminal idea of political equality discussed by Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* (1835-1840), or legally established public lawmaking bodies such as deliberative assemblies.

Democratic Deliberation

Whilst "science and democracy" is a well-known pragmatist motto, in Mead it acquires an added significance given his more prominent favouring than both James and Dewey of experimental science. In *Mind, Self, and Society*, Mead speaks of an attitude in which the social psychological mechanism of "taking the role of the other" enables the individual to: "enter into the attitudes of the group and to mediate between them by making his own experience universal, so that others can enter into this form of communication through him." (MSS, 257) Mead is here referring to the statesman, whose ideal stance is as universal as the community in which he lives. But his argument is not limited to singular figures. Mead explicitly refers to the whole body of citizens. Democratic politics - "this great co-operative community process which is going on," (MSS, 188) - depends upon the level of participation and communicative

interaction of all citizens.

An example might help clarify Mead's position. Imagine a community facing the following political and moral dilemma. A nuclear power plant is to be built near where they live, creating jobs and tax revenues, but at the cost of a potential large-scale disaster. From the standpoint of individual members of the community, what is the right thing to do? Should one support or oppose the plan? One possibility is to give priority to the way moral norms are applied by taking into account the specific character of that situation. Moral norms such as the "safeguard of public health" or the "betterment of material life" would thus be assessed in the light of the particular characteristics of that situation. Is the region prone to earthquakes? Is the company that is to build the power plant a reliable one? Which type of nuclear reactor is to be installed? Another possibility is to provide a universal justification for the moral norms involved. The idea here is that any given moral norm that could be applied in any conceivable situation would also be considered adequate in that particular situation.

Mead proposes a third alternative, which is both universalistic and sensitive to the particular character of the situation. Mead's suggestion is that the community addresses the problem collectively, and eventually reaches a consensual solution. To be legitimate, such a consensus would have to result from an authentic intersubjective process. What Mead has in mind is an open, free, and unconstrained public deliberation on the relative merits of all the "working hypotheses" for the resolution of the problem at hand. The outcome of such a public deliberation would then be a moral solution. It should by now be relatively clear where Mead locates the ultimate source of legitimacy in a democracy. Mead places his faith in the "informed

citizenry,” whose wisdom is to be nurtured and promoted through education and whose active and continued civic participation is an essential ingredient of democratic life. An active public sphere, understood as a communicative network established by individual citizens in order to cope with common issues, is thus of pivotal importance. Mead’s reliance upon the principles of the scientific method as valid referents to moral and political action should not be confused, therefore, with the technocratic and elitist solutions that emerged in the aftermath of World War I. On the contrary, Mead interprets the classical pragmatist motto “science and democracy” in radical democratic terms – if human rationality is a constitutive feature of the human self, then the “method of intelligence” is available, at least potentially, to all members of the political community. In this specific sense, I argue that Mead, no less than Dewey, can be seen as a forerunner of contemporary deliberative democrats.

Seeing Things Differently: What is Involved in Claiming and Contesting Rights?

Alongside deliberative democracy, modern individual rights are another topic that caught Mead’s attention (MR, 221-244). Rights are conceived by Mead as part and parcel of political modernity, and specifically, as a constitutive part of the normative structure of modern political communities (Silva 2013). Understood as “social objects,” rights are both an aspiration and a defining feature of processes of political modernization. As such, rights such as the right to health care or the right to freedom of association help constitute individuals into modern citizens. Mead’s great achievement has been to render this idea, which could have remained as an orthodox

political philosophical insight, into the basis for post-metaphysical working hypotheses. They are 'post-metaphysical' in the sense that working hypotheses for the moral resolution of conflicts are tested by being subjected to democratic contestation and debate in which a potential variety of principles - perhaps involving competing rights - are brought into dialogue with a range of *in situ* realities. Resolution is not sought simply by appealing to transcendental criteria. Testing hypotheses involves as much solving scientific problems involving epistemology, social psychology, and political science, as it requires solving ethical-practical problems which require a democratic political solution. To seek combined solutions to these problems is as urgent today as it was in Mead's time.

The notion of the "generalized other" plays a key role in Mead's approach to rights. First, Mead's concept of the "generalized other" enables us to appreciate the extent to which rights are a common attitude shared by members of a political community. Mead's point is straightforward. Any given society's "generalized other" encompasses common attitudes, i.e. what we would today call "social norms." Rules are one kind of social norm. Very much like a game's rules, social norms help define the institutional framework upon which social cooperation is possible, rights-norms among them. As such, rights are an objective component of the normative structure of modern societies.

Second, internalization of the attitude of the generalized other means having a general attitude towards all members of the community, including oneself. Mead's point is that rights are as much part of the normative structure of a society as they are part of the political identity of each individual citizen. But Mead has a very specific understanding of what this entails. To have a right is not the same as having a

physical object, something that can be accumulated, measured, quantified. As a social object, to have a right is to enter a political relation, to belong to a community whose norms include that right as something anybody can assert and everybody can recognize. Mead sees the social relationships rights refer to as intrinsically reflexive. They require every member of the political community to take both roles or positions involved in a rights relation, that of entitlement and that of the obligation to respect it. This is how rights help constitute individual political identities.

Third, for Mead, to conceive of rights as relational and reflexive is also to assert their contested nature. The contested nature of rights stems from the tension within the social self between the “I” and the “me,” the former being a source of unpredictable creativity, the latter ensuring the internalization of social conventions through the attitude of the generalized other. The dialectical nature of the relation between the two phases of the self means that social norms, rights-norms included, are continuously internalized and reproduced (through the “me”) while being contested and questioned (through the “I”). For Mead, rights are contested in two different ways. First, rights can be contested within oneself. One’s legal consciousness is a dialectical process, responsive to concrete action-problems in real-world situations, and potentially evolves over time in contradictory ways. Second, rights can be contested between different selves. Politicians, judges, and ordinary citizens often disagree about the interpretation and application of rights. For instance, the application of the right to health care can either be understood in terms of a publicly funded universal health care scheme or a means-tested, contributory insurance scheme. In this sense, to affirm the contested nature of rights is to affirm the political nature of processes of identity-formation that sustain the claim to rights.

Contested, reflexive, relational; this is how Mead conceives of rights, whose meaning lies in concrete patterns of political interaction, the institutionalization of which is as much a symbolic as a material process. The inscription of rights in the text of political constitutions radically amplifies their reach and implications, transforming a disruptive idea into a world-making legal concept. The meaning of rights can only be fully understood by reference to the materiality of this process of meaning-production.

Legacies and Unfinished Business

Interest in the materiality of processes of meaning-production such as these has been central in recent appropriations of Mead's work by pragmatic sociologists. This has been partly made possible by the recent publication of texts such as "On the Self and Teleological Behavior" or "On Social Consciousness and Social Science," (MR, 21-44; 183-192). In these texts, Mead can be seen to follow in the footsteps of Hegel's theory of objectification, yet he resists Marx's one-sided interpretation of it as fetishism. Mead consistently rejects the choice between materialism and idealism. Rather, he insists upon taking the materiality of meaning-production seriously. For instance, a political constitution is neither to be reduced to an expression of material interests nor is it the progressive realization of reason. For Mead, the meaning of a political constitution is dialectically defined in the relationship between its specific material form, its content, and the surrounding environment, which includes authorized interpreters as well as the cultural and socio-economic context within which legal agents operate. This means that constitutions constitute citizens in a very

specific sense. While it is citizens who write and enact a constitution (e.g. through a constituent assembly), once that constitution is in place it powerfully shapes the lives of these citizens and of future generations, ruling out some options and pushing for others, as well as functioning as a powerful political symbol (e.g. of national unity). It is in this sense that Mead conceives of the: “mutual interrelationship of the individuals and their environments.” (MR, 27) For Mead, persons and things do not live separate lives. Rather, they mutually determine one another. The implication of this philosophical insight for contemporary sociology is obvious. In a world in which the lives of things and the lives of people are fundamentally entangled, the central task of neo-Meadian pragmatic sociology is to study how this dialectic plays itself out empirically with a view to destabilizing pervasive, yet unduly rigid, approaches.

Further Reading

Works by Mead:

Mead, George Herbert. 1959. *The Philosophy of the Present*. Edited by Arthur E.

Murphy, with prefatory remarks by John Dewey. New York: Open Court

Publishing.

Murphy assembled in this volume the Carus Lectures Mead delivered in California in December 1930 (chapters 1 to 4), two preliminary drafts of the same lectures (the first three of the Supplementary Essays), and two previously published pieces. Despite its unrevised nature, this volume is of central importance for a clear understanding of Mead’s philosophy of time. Originally published in 1932.

Mead, George Herbert. 2008. *Self, War, & Society. George Herbert Mead's Macrosociology*. Edited by Mary Jo Deegan. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Commented collection of writings by Mead on warfare. Highly pedagogical, the volume is divided into five parts that follow America's involvement in World War I. Each part is illustrated with several pieces by Mead, some of which are published here for the first time. Deegan's commentary is sound and helpful.

Mead, George Herbert. 2011. *G.H. Mead. A Reader*. Edited by Filipe Carreira da Silva. London: Routledge.

This collection of Mead's writing includes thirty pieces, ten of which are published for the first time, divided into three main parts – social psychology, experimental science and epistemology, and democratic politics. It includes an introduction by the editor and a chronology of Mead's writings.

Mead, George Herbert. 2015. *Mind, Self, & Society. The Definitive Edition*. Edited with an Introduction by Charles Morris. Annotated Edition by [Daniel R. Huebner](#) and [Hans Joas](#). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Contrary to popular belief, the bulk of the material used to compose this volume is not from student notes but from a verbatim record of a 1928 offering of the "Social Psychology" course at the University of Chicago taken by a professional stenographer hired by former students. Prominent Mead scholars [Dan Huebner](#) and [Hans Joas](#)

propose to circumvent Mead's lack of authorial control over this work by contextualizing Morris' (creative) editorial work and by detailing the origins of the text.

Secondary Literature on Mead:

Joas, Hans. 1985. *G.H. Mead. A Contemporary Re-examination of His Thought*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

The first historically sensitive, yet philosophically sophisticated, study of Mead's contributions to contemporary social theory, Joas's book brought to light the crucial formative influence of German idealism upon American pragmatism in general, and upon Mead's thinking in particular. Includes an extensive listing of primary and secondary sources. A classic. Originally published in 1980.

Cook, Gary A. 1993. *George Herbert Mead. The Making of a Social Pragmatist*. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Historically meticulous, this is one of the best studies of Mead's social psychology ever written. It also covers Mead's moral and political thinking and philosophy of nature. The listing of primary and secondary sources was the best at the time of publication. Essential reading.

Silva, Filipe Carreira da. 2008. *Mead and Modernity. Science, Selfhood and Democratic Politics*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Aimed at a sociological audience, this study provides a historically minded, yet

theoretically sophisticated, re-examination of Mead's social pragmatism. It suggests Mead's system of thinking has a triadic structure covering epistemology, social psychology, and political philosophy.

Hubner, Daniel (2014) *Becoming Mead*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The most recent historical study of Mead's ideas. Meticulous, encompassing, and sophisticated, this is one of the most ambitious readings of Mead to emerge in years. Pitched at a relatively high level, it is of interest mainly to experts.

Bibliography

Silva, Filipe Carreira. 2013. "Outline of a Social Theory of Rights. A Neo-Pragmatist Approach." *European Journal of Social Theory* 16(4): 457-475.

ⁱ References to the following works by Mead will be made parenthetically in the text using the following abbreviations: MSS – *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, Charles W. Morris, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997; originally published in 1934); MTNC – *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Merritt H. Moore, ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1972; originally published in 1936); MR – *G.H. Mead. A Reader*, Filipe Carreira da Silva, ed. (London: Routledge, 2011).