



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

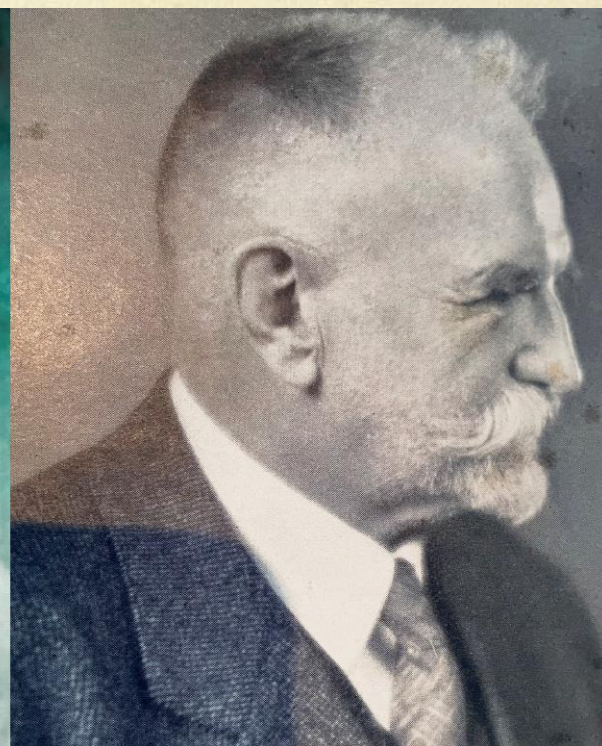
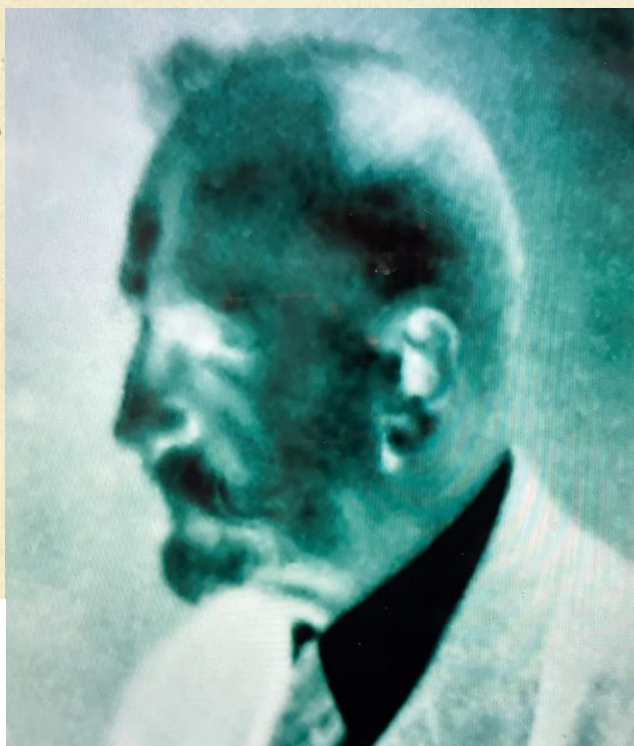
DIPARTIMENTO
DI FILOSOFIA

Mead Symposium

Università di Bologna, Dipartimento di Filosofia
Sala Mondolfo Via Zamboni 38
June 24-26 2024

Participants:

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Michela Bella
Matteo Bortolini
Jean-François Côté
Baptiste Cornardeau
Eva Debray
Francis Douville-Vigeant
Roberta Dreon
Daniel R. Huebner
Núria Sara Miras Boronat
Andrea Parravicini
Stephen Pratten
Matteo Santarelli
Bijan Warner



almæsthetics

RaMo
Radici&Motivi
del pragmatismo

Co-organized by
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Day 1: Monday June 24

9h30 Welcome and Introduction. Presentation of the Symposium and of the panelists.

10h30

Michela Bella: Mead and James

In this article, I examine the connection between Mead's social psychology and Jamesian legacy, which has not received as much attention as Mead's relationship with Dewey. The Harvard environment, particularly Royce and James, influenced Mead. The article focuses on three aspects. Firstly, it discusses the personal relationship between Mead and James, including Mead's time as a tutor at James's house and Mead's testimony about James and Royce. Secondly, it explores the influence of Jamesian functionalism in Mead's psychology, considering Mead's emotion theory, critique of Angell's functionalism, and preference for behaviorism. Finally, the article touches on their metaphysical similarities in realism.

11h30

Baptiste Cornardeau : George H. Mead's Concept of Perspective

Absent in a technical sense in George H. Mead's early writings, the notion of perspective becomes prominent in the mid-1920s, and is central to the whole of his late philosophy. It is instrumental in the resolution of his long-standing strife against philosophy's deeply ingrained dualism between body and mind, nature and consciousness (or, better, experience). Sociality is correlative of perspectives, since it is the capacity of moving from one perspective to another, and of being in several perspectives simultaneously. Taken jointly, they account for emergence as an actual feature of reality, and represent Mead's most daring, wide-ranging and accomplished philosophical proposal.

12h30 : Break – Lunch Time

14h00

Matteo Bortolini, Dan Huebner, and Bijan Warner: "A Theoretical Basis for Practical Work in the Social Sciences:" Clifford Geertz' Undergraduate Encounter with G.H. Mead

In 1950, the soon-to-be anthropologist Clifford Geertz wrote his undergraduate thesis, "G.H. Mead: Social Positivist," under the supervision of George Geiger (himself a student of John Dewey). This curious document demonstrates the depth of Geertz' engagement with Mead, pragmatism, and the social sciences. Our chapter begins with a close reading, focusing on Geertz' arguments and authorial voice, thereby highlighting his precocious ambitions, theoretical commitments, and vision for "practical work" in the social sciences. We conclude by tracing Mead's influence on Geertz' mature work, uncovering insights into the origins of symbolic anthropology and Mead's impact on 20th century social thought.

15h00

Jean-François Côté, Francis Douville-Vigeant : *The Philosophy of the Present* : Mead's Foundational Cosmology

Mead's book *The Philosophy of the Present* (1932), represents a remarkable example of his intellectual breadth and sociological insights. Drawing inspiration from Einstein's theory of relativity, this book marks a significant achievement in Mead's social philosophy: his conception of the 'sociality' of nature. This innovative framework illuminates the distinctive individuality of phenomena and underscores the intrinsic unity pervading the entire universe. Those characteristics illuminate Mead's social philosophy, as they complement his vision of human society and his theory of knowledge itself. This paper delves into his book by detailing its contents and by situating it in perspective to Mead's works.

16h00 Coffee break

16h30

Roberta Dreon: Mead's view of the aesthetic in experience

My aim is to work on Mead's view of the nature of aesthetic experience, starting from his paper dating back to 1926. Although materials are not so abundant on the subject, I his idea deserves attention, insofar as it breaks with the main Kantian tradition on aesthetic experience and is not simply superimposable on Dewey's idea of the aesthetic in experience. Furthermore, the subject is far from being debated in relation to Mead by the scholarship.

17h30 End of Day 1

Day 2: Tuesday, June 25

9h30

Stephen Pratten: Social Positioning Theory and Mead on the Social individual

Mead develops a distinctive account of rights, obligations and interests. Rights and obligations for Mead are not held by individuals prior to membership in a community. For Mead persons have rights because they are members of communities in which the institution of rights has evolved and where rights and obligations have come to be recognised and accepted. Persons, according to Mead, do not possess rights due to their common human nature. Moreover, for Mead rights are fundamentally mutual and are not inherently adversarial. He also links rights and interests. Mead's treatment of these issues is somewhat fragmented. This paper seeks to clarify aspects of Mead's account of rights, obligations and interests by drawing on a perspective in contemporary social ontology recently systematised as *Social Positioning Theory*.

10h30

Núria Sara Miras Boronat: Mead, women and feminism from the point of view of social behaviorism

The paper proposes to examine the traces of Mead's philosophy (or cross-fertilization) with the women of the progressive era with whom he interacted the most: Jane Addams and Jessie Taft. For this, the last sections of MSS are to be confronted with Taft's Thesis on Feminism as Social Movement and Addams writings on education and citizenship.

11h30

Matteo Santarelli: Psychology, history, and ethics: Mead on international-mindedness

In a 1929 essay, Mead discussed the relation between "National-mindedness and International-mindedness". In this chapter I aim at: 1) reconstructing Mead's position, which I propose labelling "concrete internationalism"; 2) connecting the idea expressed in the 1929 paper to Mead's general approach to social psychology and ethics; 3) framing Mead's position into the pragmatist discussion of pacifism and war; 4) comparing Mead's approach to two prestigious contributions to the debate on human nature and war at that time: William James and Sigmund Freud.

12h30 Break – Lunch time

14h00

Andrea Parravicini : Mead interpreter of Darwin. Evolutionary emergence, perspectives and sociality

Mead's philosophy adopts an evolutionary and genealogical approach as it rests on the foundations laid by the Darwinian revolution. This chapter examines the different aspects characterizing the relationship between Mead's thought and Darwin's evolutionary theory. In the first part, the reflections Mead devoted in some published and unpublished works about the influence of Darwin on the philosophical and scientific thought are analyzed. The chapter then focuses on Mead's very current interpretation of Darwin's approach through the notions of "emergence", "perspective" and "sociality". Finally, it discusses the application of Mead's evolutionary view on the problem of the emergence of the human mind and self.

15h00

Francis Douville-Vigeant : Mead's *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century* and the Shaping of a Socio-Historical Approach to Society.

Despite its being edited and published posthumously, thus rendering thereby a partial and a seemingly unfinished posture on his critical review of the history of the ideas since the XIXth century, George Herbert Mead's *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century* goes beyond a mere intellectual history; it unfolds the framework of his pioneering sociological foresight. This chapter examines the difficulties inherent in posthumous editing, the impact of the University of Chicago seminar environment, and the intellectual discourses woven into the book's structure. It also addresses his complete exclusion from the sociological department at Chicago, particularly from the perspective of one of his principal interlocutors, Robert E. Park. The aim of this chapter is twofold, as it uncovers long-forgotten George Herbert Mead's historical sociology and explores how it continues to resonate, shaping contemporary sociological research and sparking new avenues of inquiry for generations of social scientists to come.

16h00 Coffee break

16h30

Daniel R. Huebner: Case Studies in Mead's Forgotten Influence: James T. Farrell, W. Barnett Blakemore, and Grace Lee Boggs Reading Mead for Inspiration

This chapter lays out three case studies of individuals who were influenced by George Herbert Mead, but which have gone unrecognized in the literature: James T. Farrell's social realist fiction, W. Barnett Blakemore's theology, and Grace Lee Bogg's social justice activism. These case studies gaps in the scholarship on George Herbert Mead's influence and help us combat preconceptions in the literature on Mead. Examining the processes of serendipitous influence in these cases – which all occurred through the controversial, posthumously published Mead books of the 1930s – can help suggest mechanisms to explain how some avenues for influence are neglected in scholarship.

17.30 – End of Day 2

Day 3: Wednesday, June 26

9h30

Guido Baggio: G.H. Mead and the cognitive sciences

The pragmatist turn is the most recent expression of the second generation of cognitive science that, since the mid-1970s, has developed in the various fields of linguistics, psychology, biology and neuroscience and, since the 1990s, has seen the proliferation of new approaches to cognition. The recent interest in pragmatist authors arises precisely to respond to a possible integration of the different, sometimes conflicting, perspectives into a unified inquiry program. Of all pragmatists, however, Mead is perhaps the least popular among today's philosophers of mind and neuroscientists but most likely the most suitable for an integrated approach of different perspectives on cognition.

10h30

Eva Debray : Control

The article focuses on Mead's concept of control. It outlines three aspects of his approach to control which are closely connected to each other: the way the individual may control his own conduct, the social control over the individual, and the social reform, that is, "the application of intelligence to the control of social conditions". While a critical approach to social control, oblivious of the history of the concept, is nowadays prevalent in social sciences (partly due to the strong influence of Deleuze's and Foucault's thoughts), this contribution will draw attention to a less restrictive one.

11h30

Jean-François Côté: George Herbert Mead and Ernst Cassirer : an Unexpected Encounter

Although Mead (1863-1931) and Cassirer (1874-1945) never knew each other's works, their respective endeavors in the interpretation of symbolic forms are remarkably similar : both concerned with the problem of knowledge and conceptualization (Cassirer, 1950; Mead, 1936), they also payed attention to the role of symbols in child's development (Mead, ; Cassirer, 1933), and contemporary cosmological visions through their respective analysis of Einstein's theory of relativity (Cassirer, 1919 ; Mead, 1932). This paper will look at this unexpected encounter with greater scrutiny, to draw significant parallels between them.

12h30

End of the Symposium