Introduction *by John J. McDermott*

Suffering, Reflection, and Community: The Philosophy of Josiah Royce

This Introduction is to be read in conjunction with the headnotes to eight sections of these two volumes. Together they constitute a bare outline of the major themes present in Royce's life and thought. Unfortunately, the student of Royce does not have access to a full-length intellectual biography, as for example, *The Thought and Character of William James,* by Ralph Barton Perry. Nor can he depend on an adequate personal biography, similar to *William James* by Gay Wilson Allen. It is to be hoped that the forthcoming work of Frank M. Oppenheim will rectify this serious omission. We await also an edition of the "Letters" of Royce, by John Clendenning. On the other hand, we have a number of brief but perceptive treatments of Royce's major concerns[1]

[1] See, eg., W. H. Werkmeister, *A History of Philosophical Ideas in America* (New York: Ronald Press, 1949), pp. 133–68; Otto F. Kraushaar, "Josiah Royce," in *Classic American Philosophers,* ed. Max H. Fisch (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951), pp. 181–99; John E. Smith, "Josiah Royce," in *The Spirit of American Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963); John E. Smith, "Josiah Royce," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Crowell Collier and Macmillan, Inc., 1967), 7:225–29; John H. Muirhead, *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965) (1931) J. E. Creighton, ed., "Papers in Honor of Josiah Royce," *Philosophical Review,* 25 (1916): pp. 229–522; "In Memoriam—Josiah Royce," *The Journal of Philosophy,* 53 (Feb., 1956). More extensive treatments are found in Vincent Buranelli, *Josiah Royce* (New Haven: College and University Press, 1964), and Thomas F. Powell, *Josiah Royce* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967). A detailed bibliography of secondary literature is found in André A. Devaux, "Bibliographie des Traductions d'ouvrages de Royce et des études sur l'oeuvre de Royce," *Revue internationale de philosophie,* numero 79–80, fascicule 1–2 (1967), pp. 159–82.

and several first-rate studies of specific problems in Royce's thought.[2] In the following pages I shall consider Royce's life style and his personal experience of community with its corresponding insight to the irreducible reality of suffering. Considered also will be Royce's attempt at structuring a metaphysical framework for his basic concerns and his return to a more explicit emphasis on the sociology of community as the context for his major insights.

I

At this point, Royce is an enigmatic figure in the history of American thought. The few details of his life are repeated in every commentary,[3] but a portrait in depth is wanting. He was apparently chary of biography. Jacob Loewenberg reports Mrs. Royce as stating that "it was her husband's wish that his personal history should not be published." Loewenberg adds that Royce "appeared to have had no taste for those biographies in which private fortunes and external circumstances form the chief theme." (*FE*,p.4). But if we read into the facts at hand, two dimensions of Royce's personal life invite analysis: first, the influence of his early religious experience, and second, the ambivalence of his personal style, which combines the approach of a preacher with that of an extraordinary intellectual virtuoso.

It is often said that Royce was profoundly affected by the "frontier" experience of his early California days. Those who hold that Royce maintained a doctrine of individualism trace it to these frontier days. Other commentators hold that Royce's philosophy subsumed his early experience of individualism, by virtue of an imported European metaphysics.[4] Aside from the fact that Royce's understanding of the individual cannot be sep-

[2] See, e.g.: John E. Smith, *Royce's Social Infinite* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1950); J. Harry Cotton, *Royce on the Human Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); Gabriel Marcel, *Royce's Metaphysics,* trans. Virginia and Gordon Ringer (Chicago: Regnery, 1956 (1918–19); Peter Fuss, *The Moral Philosophy of Josiah Royce* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965); Daniel S. Robinson, *Royce and Hocking, American Idealists* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1968).

[3] See below, 1:19–20, for a basic chronology of Royce's life.

[4] See, e.g., Ralph Barton Perry, *In the Spirit of William James* (Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1958) (1938).

arated from the community, in sociological terms, or from The Infinite, in metaphysical and logical terms, it is equally important to realize that the frontier is not the only decisive influence on the early Royce. Rather, a clue to Royce's life and thought is also to be found in the fact that his early experience was a continuation of American Puritanism.[5]

G. H. Palmer once said of Royce that "from organized religion he held aloof, partly because it was his disposition in all things to go his own way, partly, too, through reaction from certain rigidities of his boyhood."[6] Such non-conformism is too often taken as equivalent to a clean break with the religious experience of one's childhod. In the case of Josiah Royce, or for that matter, John Dewey, this is simply not true. In the first place, Puritanism in its American development is filled with such non-conformism and actually thrived on it. Secondly, Puritanism was not so much a creed as a radical reworking of the biblical notion of "convenant" with extensive implications for the building of a political community. Thirdly, the development of "federal theology," the "halfway covenant" and the variant forms of sectarianism, structured to meet new experiences and new needs, show the Puritan tradition to be more flexible and anticipatory of later American thought than has been traditionally accepted.[7] The Puritans began with the experience of suffering. They submitted this experience to intense and complex reflection,[8] thereby hoping to build a new community, a new Zion through which the Lord would show His presence.

[5] Sarah Royce, *A Frontier Lady*, *passim*. Royce once said (*WJO*, pp. 3–7; below, 1:207) that William James took his place after Jonathan Edwards and Ralph Waldo Emerson as distinctive American philosophers. Royce is not only in this tradition but should a detailed comparison be made, he would be found, more than any other American thinker, to resemble the Puritan divine, Jonathan Edwards, in theme and accomplishment. On his relationship to Edwards, see G. H. Howison, "Josiah Royce: The Significance of His work in Philosophy," *Philosophical Review*, 25 (1916): 3–16.

[6] G. H. Palmer, "Josiah Royce," *Contemporary Idealism in America* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1932), p. 8.

[7] See Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

[8] The contention that the Puritans were anti-intellectual or simplistic in their analysis of the biblical tradition, is sheer historical nonsense. The point of departure for a rapidly increasing literature on this point is found in Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953–54).

Royce too begins with suffering. In his early twenties, he composed an essay on "The Practical Significance of Pessimism." At that time he wrote the following:

> Contemplate a battle field the first night after the struggle, contemplate here a vast company the equal of the population of a great town, writhing in agony, their groans sounding at a great distance like the roar of the ocean, their pain uneased for many hours, even death, so lavish of his favors all day, now refusing to comfort; contemplate this and then remember that as this pain to the agony of the world, so is an electric spark drawn from the back of a kitten to the devastating lightning of many great storms; and now estimate if you can the worth of all but a few exceptional human lives, such as that of Caius.
>
> Briefly and imperfectly I state the case for pessimism, not even touching the economical and social argument, drawn from a more special consideration of the conditions of human life. Such then, is our individual human life. What shall we call it and whereunto shall it be likened? A vapor vanishing in the sun? No, that is not insignificant enough. A wave, broken on the beach? No, that is not unhappy enough. A soap bubble bursting into thin air? No, even that has rainbow hues. What then? Nothing but itself. Call it human life. You could not find a comparison more thoroughly condemning it. (*FE*, p. 152)

Such a sense of man's plight, indeed of man's experience of alienation, should not be construed as but a youthful attitude for Royce. In his *Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, published in 1885, Royce makes it clear that the experience of doubt and error are the points of departure for the understanding of The Infinite. He returns to this theme in his essay on "The Conception of God,"* in 1895 and still again, with great feeling in his chapter on "The Religious Mission of Sorrow,"* published in 1912 in *The Sources of Religious Insight.*

Royce took two roads to overcome this overwhelming sense of evil in the world. While not simultaneous, these approaches overlap throughout his life. On the one hand, he attempted to account for suffering by the development of a theory of *The Infinite*, which would maintain our commitment to the presence of ultimate meaning, while yet avoid any naiveté about the experience of evil. On the other hand, Royce by means of his ethics of loyalty, attempted to structure a notion of community, infinite in implication but responsive to the reality of evil and the need for its amelioration. And in keeping with the American tradition of sectarianism, religious and political, Royce denied that participating in the "Great Community" was signalized by agreement or by cessation of differences. To the contrary, community was char-

acterized by a never-ending series of "interpretations," by means of which both unity and a strengthening of "provincial" or "sectarian" commitments were achievable. Royce, then is far more rooted in his Puritan origins than has been acknowledged.

We turn now to the analysis of the second strand which may cast light on the character of Josiah Royce, his personal style as reflected in the problems he undertook and the quality of his writing. To the extent that it is reflected in his writing, Royce's attitude is illustrated by ponderous and bloated philosophical prose, crisp and brilliant statements of moral and religious problems, careful analyses of logic and metaphysics, and unabashedly sentimental, popular pieces. Royce could be technically rigorous in philosophic debate, sometimes to the point of losing sight of the human factors involved.[9] Yet he was also uncommonly devoted to local causes and local people, often giving hortatory lectures rich with fundamental advice on how to make the best of one's immediate situation.[10] In an essay on Royce, John Jay Chapman, describes the intellectual and inspirational power of Royce.

> He was spherical, armed cap-a-pie, sleepless, and ready for all comers. . . . Royce was the John L. Sullivan of philosophy. . . . He was very extraordinary and knew everything and was a bumble-bee—a benevolent monster of pure intelligence, zigzagging, ranging, and uncatchable. I always had this feeling about Royce—that he was a celestial insect. . . . Time was nothing to him. He was just as fresh at the end of a two-hours' disquisition as at the start. Thinking refreshed him. The truth was that Royce had a phenomenal memory; his mind was a card-indexed cyclopaedia of all philosophy. . . . His extreme accessibility made him a sort of automat restaurant for Cambridge. He had fixed hours when any one could resort to him and draw inspiration from him.[11]

Many of Royce's admirers, including William James and Chapman, felt this intellectual prowess to be a serious disadvantage. Chapman once said that "if only he had never been taught to read,

[9] In the well-known Royce-Abbott controversy, Royce was philosophically correct but surely the dispute was rooted in Royce's high seriousness and his failure to recognize the severe limitations of his opponent. See Cotton, *Royce on the Human Self*, pp. 295–302.

[10] A reading of the Royce Papers in the Harvard University Archives, Widener Library, will yield a number of these lectures and essays. See e.g., Folio 43, for his "Watchwords" to the students of the Summer Session at the University of California, Berkeley.

[11] John Jay Chapman, "Portrait of Josiah Royce," *The Outlook*, 122 (1919): 372, 377, as cited in Perry, *In The Spirit of William James*, p. 38.

Royce would have been a very great man."[12] Royce, however, was under a burden not fully understood by his commentators. He was a Californian in a nineteenth-century culture dominated by the New England mind.[13] Just as we can note a sense of intellectual inferiority, experienced by the American east over against the European cultural scene, so too do we find a like atmosphere afflicting the American west as it confronts its Eastern origins. James suffered from the former sense of inadequacy, Royce from the latter—a judgment that can be sustained by a reading of his unpublished letters. By analogy, the following text of Charles L. Sanford, on both historical and methodological grounds, should prove revealing as to Royce's situation.

> During Colonial days the collective self-righteousness of a convenanted people often hid an inferiority complex, as the colonists tried to ape the ways of their mother country. In their secret hearts, nursing convictions of a divinely appointed mission, they never doubted their moral superiority over the English; they felt inferior only in respect to their dress, their manners, their culture. Compensating for a deep sense of cultural inferiority, they made plain dress and natural expression positive virtues. Their popular contrast between morals and manners, between simple, virtuous American democrats, uncouth in their speech and dress, and suave but unprincipled European aristocrats, which dominated nineteenth-century American thought, thus had its native roots in the Colonial experience.[14]

After Royce spent a year studying in Germany, partially with Hermann Lotze, he returned to Johns Hopkins University to finish his doctorate. He then accepted a position at the University of California, his experiential home. He felt, however, a deep sense of intellectual isolation. In 1879, the same year as his hymn to the majesty of the "Golden Gate," Royce writes to James about the difficulties of his situation.

> There is no philosophy in California—from Siskiyou to Ft. Yuma, and from the Golden Gate to the summit of the Sierras. . . . Hence the atmosphere for the study of metaphysics is bad, and I wish I were out of it. On the other hand, I am at home and so among good friends;

[12] Chapman, "Portrait of Josiah Royce," p. 372. Perry, *In the Spirit of William James*, p. 37.

[13] For Royce's statement of 1879, "I am a Californian . . . ," see Loewenberg, ed, *FE*, p. 6.

[14] Charles L. Sanford, *The Quest For Paradise—Europe and the American Moral Imagination* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 106.

and further, as to my work, I am entirely free to arrange my course as I please, and to put into it a little philosophy. . . . I trumped up a theory of logical concepts last term and preached it to the seniors. It was a kind of hybrid of Hume and Schopenhauer, with an odor of Kant about it. It was somewhat monstrous, and, in this wilderness with nobody to talk with about it, I have not the least idea whether it is true or not. . . .[15]

Royce, of course, was not alone in this judgment, for as James wrote about G. H. Howison in 1883, "the California people have been nibbling about him, but its a poor place even if they give him a call."[16] The commentators on Howison's life go on to say that:

Howison himself must have seen the remote chance in much the same light. The distance was and still is much farther from Boston to Berkeley than from Berkeley to Boston. Howison had once spoken of his journey from New England to Europe as "exile"; how, then, would he name a departure for life, perhaps, into the wilderness, far off to the very Pacific! He could not be eager, even with an assured position for continuing his work in philosophy, to sever the ties that bound him and Mrs. Howison to New England.[17]

Royce, in 1882, through the intervention of William James, traveled from Berkeley to Cambridge,[18] and through the early kindness of G. H. Palmer, was able to make Harvard his home for life. He no doubt recognized the extraordinary opportunity

[15] See Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1935), 1: 781.

[16] John Wright Buckham and George Malcolm Stratton, *George Holmes Howison–Philosopher and Teacher* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), p. 72. Howison accepted a Chair in philosophy at the University of California in 1884.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] The biographers of Howison point to the irony of this reversal of roles for Howison and Royce. They cite James in a letter to Thomas Davidson of August 1883, that "Royce has unquestionably the inside track for any vacancy in the future. I think him a man of genius, sure to distinguish himself by original work." They add, however, that James goes on to remark: "But when I see the disconsolate condition of poor Howison, looking for employment now, and when I recognize the extraordinary development of his intellect in the past 4 years, I feel almost guilty of having urged Royce's call hither. I did it before Howison had returned, or at least before I had seen him, and with my data, I was certainly right. But H. seems now to me to be quite a different man, intellectually, from his former self; and being so much older, ought to have had a chance, which (notwithstanding the pittance of a salary), he would probably have taken, to get a foothold in the University." (Buckham and Stratton, *George Holmes Howison,* p. 70)

of this call to Harvard. Yet, it does seem that the intellectual pressure generated by such an opportunity never left him, and far into his career, he wrote as though he had to prove himself, again and again. This attitude, coupled with his neverending fidelity to his early moral sense of community, makes for the tension and the singular genius of Josiah Royce.

II

Turning now to a more explicitly philosophical perspective, the thought of Josiah Royce can be said to turn on his continuous effort to establish viable *relationships* between the "Absolute and the Individual." This latter phrase is the heading of his "Supplementary Essay" to "*The* Conception of God," in 1897. It stands virtually midway in Royce's philosophical career and is something of a personal watershed. Earlier in his ethical and sociological writings, Royce stated his problem in terms of the living tension between moral ideals and the needs of the individual. Even in his *Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (1885), although firmly and clearly committed to a forthright doctrine of the "Absolute," Royce showed deep concern for "moral ideals" and struggled with the fact of the persistence of evil and error in human experience.

Subsequent to the essay "The Absolute and the Individual," Royce undertook to rephrase his notion of the "Absolute," giving to "will" and "experience" a more prominent role. To these lectures, published as *The World and the Individual* (1899–1901), Royce added an important "Supplementary Essay." Anticipatory of his later logical essays, Royce attempted to defend himself against the charge that the affirmation of an "Absolute" ruled out the experience of particulars. Finally, in *The Problem of Christianity*, the entire question, now obviously under the influence of Peirce's theory of signs, is reformulated in terms of Royce's structuring of the "Community of Interpretation."

The advantages of viewing the thought of Royce in this way are considerable and obvious. We read him chronologically and developmentally. Also, we can focus on four of his major writings, each of them showing considerable philosophical power and originality. Further, in these works, Royce sets his problem in such a way that his analysis puts us in touch not only with his other

concerns but also with major currents in the history of philosophy. But before proceeding with a presentation, lamentably brief, of Royce's thought on the "Absolute" and the "Individual," a word of caution is in order.

Looking at Royce in developmental terms can obscure some profound continuities in his thought. As we have pointed out earlier, Royce's personal and speculative sensitivity to the experience and problem of evil is lifelong. His essays on "Pessimism" (1879, 1881*), "The Problem of Job"* (1895) and his chapter on "The Religious Mission of Sorrow"* in *The Sources of Religious Insight* (1912) are of a piece. It should be noted, as well, that Royce never yielded his affection for the common affairs of community life. We can draw a direct and continuous line from the essay on "The Squatter Riot of 1850 in Sacramento"* to the later essays on "Race Questions and Prejudice"* (1906) and "Provincialism"* (1908). What does change however is Royce's method of grappling with the implications of these events and attitudes.

It is not true, then, to say that Royce was not an empiricist. Nor is it even adequate to say that he became more empirical in his later works, thereby abandoning his earlier predilection for "system" philosophy. If by empiricist we mean fidelity to experience on its own terms, he was as empirical in outlook and temperament as James or Dewey.[19] But Royce sought to articulate his experience in a language not obviously in keeping with the way we actually undergo our experiences. The true development in Royce's thought, as witnessed by his major philosophical writings, is to be found in his effort to draw his language ever closer to the quality of his experience and yet maintain an overall framework of evaluation. On this issue, we depart from the main line of Royce commentary and offer the following opinion. The key to the majestic and original quality of the theory of "interpretation" in *The Problem of Christianity* is in the main due neither to an evolution in Royce's metaphysics, nor to the use of the admittedly

[19] We do not say that the thought of Royce is identical to that of James and Dewey, although he was much closer to James than either of them would admit. The point is that the difference is not to be designated by a catchall reference to empiricism. Both James and Dewey, in contrast to Royce, were "radical empiricists," which, among other things, gave them a different doctrine of relations and a different approach to the nature of experience and the role of human behavior in structuring meaning. See John J. McDermott, *The Writings of William James* (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. xiii–xliv.

helpful Peircean theory of signs. Rather, this breakthrough is more directly traceable to Royce's ability at that time to bring into the *center* of his philosophical system, his long-standing insight to the fact that community is achieved only by "reverence for the relations of life." (*Cal*, p. 500)

Royce was always aware of the primacy of these relations; his problem was to articulate, to his own satisfaction, their epistemological, logical and metaphysical ramifications. The philosophical doctrine of Royce can be gleaned from a reading of the four major works cited above. Nonetheless, as our ordering of the selections in these two volumes is meant to attest, the full significance of Royce as a philosopher yields only to those who read him in the round.

III

With these cautionary remarks fresh in our mind, let us sketch, with supporting texts, the evolution of Royce's view of the relationship between the "Absolute" and the "Individual." Royce devotes the first half of *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* to a detailed analysis of fundamental "moral ideals." Although put gently, the opening lines of Book 2, in the chapter on "The World of Doubt," introduce a sharp sense of contrast.

> When we turn from our world of ideals to the world actually about us, our position is not at once a happy position. These ideals that we have agreed upon, in so far as they are our own, do not make the world, and people differ endlessly about what the world is and means. Very naturally, then, we also must ourselves begin with difficulties and doubts. (*RAP*, p. 227)

As Benjamin Nelson has indicated of Royce: "Perplexity and doubt had driven him into philosophy. His entire undertaking was to discover a new ground of assurance on which men could eternally count."[20] Royce makes it clear that the "popular" notions about the external world, in their scientific, metaphysical and religious versions, are to be rejected.[21] "This supposed external

[20] Benjamin Nelson, "Josiah Royce," an introduction to *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), p. iv.

[21] It has to be said that Royce's writing throughout this section is overbearing and helps give rise to the later caricatures of his philosophy. Note, e.g.: "The popular notion of an external world, practically useful for many purposes, and sufficient for many scientific ends, will be refuted and rejected

world is once for all a World of Doubt, and in it there is no abiding place." (*RAP*, p. 235) After brief analyses of many contending "powers," Royce holds that each of them, physical and metaphysical, points beyond itself to the necessity of "studying the world in its eternal aspect." (*RAP*, p. 289) Royce is clear about the direction of this search. "We go to seek the Eternal, not in experience, but in the thought that thinks experience." (*RAP*, p. 289)

Further into *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, Royce works out this approach to the Eternal in terms of "The Possibility of Error."* Quite simply, no matter how extensive our doubt, we assume "the actual existence of those conditions that make error possible." Royce then contends that "*the conditions that determine the logical possibility of error must themselves be absolute truth. . .*" (*RAP*, p. 385; below, 1:322) He offers a number of demonstrations of this claim, the most succinct being his version of error as a fragment.

> That there is error is indubitable. What is, however, an error? The substance of our whole reasoning about the nature of error amounted to the result that in and of itself alone, no single judgment is or can be an error. Only as actually included in a higher thought, that gives to the first its completed object, and compares it therewith, is the first thought an error. It remains otherwise a mere mental fragment, a torso, a piece of drift-wood, neither true nor false, objectless, no complete act of thought at all. But the higher thought must include the opposed truth, to which the error is compared in that higher thought. The higher thought is the whole truth, of which the error is by itself an incomplete fragment. (*RAP*, p. 431; below, 1:350–51)

If this is so, then Royce contends that we cannot stop short of affirming the reality of an "Infinite Thought." "The possibilities of error are infinite. Infinite then must be the inclusive thought." (*RAP*, p. 431; below, 1:351) Truth and falsehood is not *made* by one thought but is *found* as true or false, because it has been thus from all eternity. In other words, separate thoughts have no claim to truth or falsehood, apart from their relationship to inclusive thought.

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in its contraditions and in its absurdities, but the soul of truth that is in it will be absorbed into a higher conception both of the eternal Reality and of our relation thereto. Our seeming loss will become our gain. That bad dream, the dead and worthless World of Doubt in which most of our modern teachers remain stuck fast, will be transformed for us. We shall see that the truth of it is a higher World, of glorious religious significance." (*RAP*, p. 236)

We can doubt the finite but not the Infinite, for "*all reality must be present to the Unity of Infinite Thought.*" (*RAP*, p. 433; below, 1:352)

Quite apart from any legitimate resistance to the apodictic character of these judgments by Royce,[22] several substantial difficulties confront his position. He does not distinguish adequately between the Infinite as an all-inclusive system of thought and the Infinite as personal, responsive to a plurality of other persons. The problem was put sharply to Royce by G. H. Howison in the form of a commentary on Royce's "Address" on "The Conception of God." Although Royce's formulation in the "Address" was improved over that in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, Howison could still ask:

> *Whose* omniscience is it that judges the ignorance to be real?—*Whose* absolute experience pronounces the less organised experience to be really fallacious? Well,—whosesoever it may be, it is certainly acting in and through *my* judgment, if I am the thinker of that argument; and in every case it is *I* who pronounce sentence on myself as really ignorant, or on my limited experience as fallacious. Yes,—and it is *I* who am the authority, and the only direct authority, for the connexion put between the reality of the ignorance or of the fallacious experience on the one hand and the reality of the implicated omniscience on the other. (*CG*, 108–9)

Royce's reply is equally clear. He holds that Howison's objection results from a "failure to comprehend that self-consciousness and the unity of consciousness are categories which inevitably transcend, while they certainly do not destroy, individuality." (*CG*, p. 333)[23] Despite Royce's claim that he has provided for the "individual," his own definition points to the need for a wider

[22] During this period of Royce's thought, the casual way in which he speaks *for* the Infinite, is quite disconcerting. A vignette in this context may prove revealing. When William James put off his Gifford lectureship, he suggested Royce as an alternate. On learning this, James's wife, Alice, wrote: "Royce!! *He* will not refuse, but over he will go with his Infinite under his arm. . ." (Gay Wilson Allen, *William James* [New York: Viking Press, 1967]), p. 387.

[23] In an editorial footnote, Howison is said to deny that "the unity of consciousness transcends Individuality. On the contrary, Individuality is itself the highest category—the very nerve of knowledge." (*CG*, p. 333 n. 1) A similar charge is lodged against Royce, at a later date, by Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man,* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 1:78–79. Niebuhr's criticism, coming after *The Problem of Christianity*, is unfair.

treatment. "The individual is indeed not *mere* will, nor mere contents of life, but *a life viewed in relation to, that is, as individuated by, the exclusive interest which is his characteristic individual will.*" (*CG*, p. 333) The question, then, has to do with those relationships between the will as individuated and absolute knowledge. In attempting to deal with this problem, Royce recognizes the paucity of his earlier treatment in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*. He will have to widen his description of the final unity of the Absolute beyond the use of the term "Thought." In his "Preface" to *The World and the Individual*, Royce sets the stage for extensively revamping his notion of the relationship between the "Absolute" and the "Individual."

> While this central matter regarding the definition of Truth, and of our relation to truth, has not essentially changed its place in my mind, I have been doing what I could, since my first book was written, to come to clearness as to the relations of Idealism to the special problems of human life and destiny. In my first book the conception of the Absolute was defined in such wise as led me then to prefer, quite deliberately, the use of the term Thought as the best name for the final unity of the Absolute. While this term was there so defined as to make Thought inclusive of Will and of Experience, these latter terms were not emphasized prominently enough, and the aspects of the Absolute Life which they denote have since become more central in my own interest. The present is a deliberate effort to bring into synthesis, more fully than I have ever done before, the relations of Knowledge and of Will in our conception of God. The centre of the present discussion is, for this very reason, the true meaning and place of the concept of Individuality, in regard to which the present discussion carries out a little more fully considerations which appear, in a very different form of statement, in the "Supplementary Essay," published at the close of *The Conception of God*. (*WI*, 1:ix–x)

The World and the Individual is such a massive work, that it would be impossible here to offer any synoptic statement of its contents.[24] The fundamental theme is clear nonetheless; the relationship between "idea" and "being." Also, it is obvious that Royce has considerably narrowed the gap between Absolute Truth and human activity. The center of the discussion takes place in the chapter on "The Internal and External Meaning of Ideas," where Royce shows that "mere generality always means practical

[24] It is with this difficulty in mind, that we have reprinted five of the most significant chapters from *The World and the Individual*, in order to present the main lines of Royce's argument.

defect." (*WI*, 1:337; below, 1:539) In a complex argument, he wishes to turn the tables on those who hold that absolute truth denies individuation. The fulfillment of our purpose and the realization of a determinate idea is achieved by wider access to other "cases" of our ideas. Should we have access to all the possible instances which could illustrate one present idea, our experience would be:

> First, *the complete fulfilment of your internal meaning*, the final satisfaction of the will embodied in the idea; but secondly, also, *that absolute determination of the embodiment of your idea as this embodiment would then be present,–that absolute determination of your purpose, which would constitute an individual realization of the idea.* For an individual fact is one for which no other can be substituted without some loss of determination, or some vagueness (*WI*, 1:338–39; below, 1:539)

From this consideration of an "idea" as purpose fulfilled, Royce offers his notion of being. "*What is, or what is real, is as such the complete embodiment, in individual form and in final fulfillment, of the internal meaning of finite ideas.*" (*WI*, 1:339; below, 1:540) We have come a long way from the language of *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*. Purpose, construction, fulfillment and "individual form," now become focal points in Royce's discussion.[25] The final step by Royce in his long and detailed analysis of the relationship between the "Absolute" and the "Individual," occurs in *The Problem of Christianity*.[26]

At this point, Royce brings together the best of his metaphysics, his logic, his ethics of loyalty, his philosophy of religion and, of course, his long-abiding commitment to the theory and practice of community. In line with the concerns of this Introduction we shall focus only on Royce's theory of interpretation and his presentation of the "Community of Interpretation."

In addition to a world of perception and a world of conception,

[25] In Royce's "Supplementary Essay" to volume 1 of *The World and The Individual*, he defends the view, against F. H. Bradley, that "an infinite multitude" can be developed "out of the expression of a single purpose" (*WI*, 1:502). Royce's approach here is characterized by his structuring of "self-representative systems." This viewpoint is enhanced by his later work in logic and ultimately exercises profound methodological influence on *The Problem of Christianity*.

[26] See John E. Smith, "Introduction," *The Problem of Christianity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) pp. 1–36, for a perceptive commentary on the main themes of that work. Professor Smith is particularly helpful in clarifying Royce's understanding of Christianity.

Royce asks that we take into account a "world of interpretation." (*PC*, 1968 ed., p. 293) Utilizing Peirce's logic, Royce claims that in our actual experience we are never possessed of pure perception or pure conception. In attempting to cut through this dualistic classification of our cognitive processes Royce points to the unique role of interpretation. On logical grounds it differs from perception and conception, because it involves "triadic" relations. "That is, you cannot express any complete process of interpreting by merely naming two terms,–persons, or other objects,–and by then telling what dyadic relation exists between one of these two and the other." (*PC*, 1968 ed., p. 286)

On psychological grounds, interpretation is characterized by the fact that in its "interest," it is "an essentially social process." This does not exclude man's inner life, however, for interpretation "transforms our own inner life into a conscious interior conversation, wherein we interpret ourselves." In this way, "reflection is an effort at self-interpretation." (*PC*, 1968 ed., p. 294) Further, for both logical and psychological reasons, interpretation is inexhaustible. Sensitive to the facts of the "social world," interpretation "demands, by virtue of its own nature, and even in the simplest conceivable case, an endless wealth of new interpretations." (*PC*, 1968 ed., p. 294) Finally, from a metaphysical vantage point, by virtue of interpretation, we are better able "to understand the constitution of temporal experience, with its endlessly accumulating sequence of significant deeds." (*PC*, 1968 ed., p. 294)

No doubt, as John Smith points out, there are ambiguities and inadequacies in Royce's treatment of "interpretation."[27] What is remarkable, however, is the liberating quality this notion has for Royce's thought. He proceeds to the heart of man's situation and is able to deal directly with those problems which had earlier forced him into such complex systematic structures, namely, the time-process, the historical dimension, and cognition itself.

In this context, one last theme awaits us, that of the "Community of Interpretation." Royce tells us that by the "real world" is meant "simply the 'true interpretation' of this one problematic situation." (*PC*, 1968 ed., p. 337) The numerous contrasts with which we are faced are not to be decided in terms of one over the other. Nature and grace, God and the world, good and evil, each of these "contrasts," presents a "problem" to be interpreted. Neither of the two

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 30.

poles can be "a judge in its own case." Mediation is needed to present the cause of one to the other.

> In brief, then, the real world is the Community of Interpretation which is constituted by the two antithetic ideas, and their mediator or interpreter, whatever or whoever that interpreter may be. If the interpretation is a reality, and if it truly interprets the whole of reality, then the community reaches its goal, and the real world includes its own interpreter. Unless both the interpreter and the community are real, there is no real world. (*PC*, 1968 ed., p. 339)[28]

Royce, in his last years spoke of "The Hope of the Great Community." Through interpretation as mediation, a series of communities could interact and, in time, build towards a "community of expectation," a "community of hope." (*PC*, 1968 ed., p. 248) Royce was wise to use the word "hope" at the end of his life. In this way he affirmed the creative possibility of the future of man, while not limiting this commitment to any set belief or doctrine. Royce never spoke of an "unfinished universe" as did William James, but make no mistake, there is nothing closed off in his understanding of the future of the "Great Community."

[28] Royce then adds a comment which indicates his sensitivity to criticism as well as his ability to learn from it. "After the foregoing discussion of the nature and the processes of interpretation, we are now secure from any accusation that, from this point of view, the real world is anything merely static, or is a mere idea within the mind of a finite self, or is an Absolute that is divorced from its appearances, or is any merely conceptual reality, or is 'out of time,' or is a 'block universe,' or is an object of a merely mystical intuition." (*PC*, 1968, ed., p. 339)