



IDEALISM AND LOYALTY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF JOSIAH ROYCE

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Judy D. Saltzman Ph.D.

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The Life of Josiah Royce

In celebrating an American philosopher, we must first consider his life. Josiah Royce is not only a distinguished American philosopher, but also undoubtedly the most famous philosopher ever born and educated, as a young man, in California. He was born in Grass Valley, a gold mining town. His parents had immigrated, so his father, Josiah Sr., could seek his fortune in mining and business. The father was seldom home; so young Josiah's primary influence came from his mother, Sarah Bayliss Royce, an educated and cultured woman, and three elder sisters. Mrs. Royce founded a school in Grass Valley, and personally educated her precocious son. Royce wrote that his early wandering in the hills of the Mother Lode country in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada gave him aesthetic feeling for nature, and a profound love of his native state, although he despised its lack of culture. His mother had told him that Grass Valley was a new community. A few months before his death, he wrote of his childhood:

I strongly feel that my deepest motives and problems have centered about the Idea of Community, although this ideas has only come gradually into my clear consciousness. This is what I was intensely feeling, in the days when my sisters and I looked across the Sacramento Valley, and wondered about the great world beyond our mountains.¹

¹ Josiah Royce, *The Hope of a Great Community*, Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press Inc. -1916 and 1967.

He also wrote, “Yet what actually happened in early California is a very fair illustration to you of the way an American community is formed.”²

A friendless boy in a rough mining town, Royce grew up with a sense of being physically and socially awkward, and a barbarian. He wrote to a friends about growing up in California: “I never was, in my youth, a person ‘cultivated’ in any aesthetic sense; and I remain more barbarous to such matters than you can easily suspect.”³

In 1866, the family moved to San Francisco where Royce entered San Francisco Boy’s (now Lowell High School). In 1870, he transferred to the two year old University of California, as a member of the preparatory class. It was then just a building in Oakland before it moved to the Berkley campus. Its first President, Daniel Coat Gilman, articulated the new University’s mission: It was dedicated to... “The promotion and diffusion of knowledge—a group of agencies organized to advance the arts and sciences of every sort, and to train men as scholars for all the intellectual callings of life.”⁴ Furthermore, “It was also to train young men for high and noble careers, satisfactory to themselves, and useful to mankind...”⁵ There he

² John Clendenning, *The Life and Thought of Josiah Royce*, and Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, p.21.

³ p. 4.

⁴ P. 52. It was not the oldest institution of higher education in California. Benicia Young Ladies Seminary (Later Mills College) had been founded for the proper education of young women. The Jesuits had founded the University of Santa Clara, and the Methodists, California Wesleyan (Later University of the Pacific). In 1857, San Jose Normal School (Now San Jose State University) had been founded to train teachers, who were badly needed in California. Leland and Jane Lathrop Stanford, , founded the Leland Stanford, Jr. University, adjacent to Palo Alto in 1891.

⁵ P.50.

also found two father-mentors (his own father having been remote) Joseph LeConte, the geologist, and Gilman himself. In 1875, Royce received a bachelor's degree in classics with a thesis on Aeschylus' *Prometheus Unbound*. He delivered the valedictory commencement address on "A Passage from Sophocles."

Young Royce felt the call to study in Germany. He received a loan from local businessmen to study in Heidelberg, Leipzig and finally Gottingen. Although he had little knowledge of German, he picked it up quickly, and comprehended lectures from Hermann Lotze, the Post-Kantian Idealist, and Wilhelm Windelband, a distinguished historian of philosophy. German idealism deeply influenced his philosophical development. Royce steeped himself in Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Schopenhauer, and others. In fact, he later called himself "a Germanized Californian."

After his year in Germany, he received a fellowship for graduate study at the newly formed Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. It had been formed purely for the purpose of graduate work. As luck would have it, his old friend Gilman was asked to be its first President. It was also a Ph.D. granting institution. Royce's biographer, Clendenning wrote, "Before 1876 the Ph.D., except as a German degree, was almost unknown in America. Academic departments, even in the sciences, were often staffed by amateur professors, ministers, former high school teachers, and dilatants." ⁶Gilman planned to change all that. He developed a university, which became a model for the specialized training of university professors. Royce enthusiastically accepted the fellowship. There he gave his first course: The

⁶ P.73

Philosophy Schopenhauer: He also gave a series of five lectures: Return to Kant. He struck up a friendship with the Orientalist, Charles Lanman, and studied the *Bhagavad Gita* in Sanskrit with him. Although never considered an Asian philosophy scholar, it is clear that Lanman had an influence on this thinking. In 1878 at the age of 22, Royce received his Ph.D. in philosophy with a dissertation, "Of the Interdependence of the Principles of Knowledge." The thesis synthesizes the wisdom he had learned from the German philosophers. He became Dr. Royce.

The next step in his life was the appointment as Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of California. It was the only position available to him. There was, as yet, no philosophy department. His friend, George Holmes Howison, later founded it. He was not happy back in California. He lamented the lack of philosophy, and the intellectual barren desert. He wrote: "Foundation for a higher growth we sadly lack. Ideals we have none. Philistines we are in soul, most thoroughly, and, when we talk, our topics of discussion are insufferably finite!"⁷ Furthermore, "There is no philosophy in California. From Siskiyou to Ft. Yuma, and from the Golden Gate to the summit of the Sierras there could not be found brains enough to accomplish the formulation of a single respectable idea that was not manifest plagiarism. Hence the atmosphere or the study of metaphysics is bad. And I wish I were out of it."⁸ William James also characterized Royce as "...the only philosopher between Bering's Strait and Tierra del Fuego."⁹ A consolation for his misery back in his native state was his marriage to

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⁸ P.84

⁹ P.84

Katherine Head, in 1880. She was a judge's daughter and special student in English at Berkeley. The marriage is characterized as successful, but not really happy. His marriage and social connections were not balm enough for his pain in living in a vain, ignorant and violent society. He loved the beauty of California, but despised its culture. Royce wrote: ..."Because I am a Californian as little bound to follow tradition by preaching in this wilderness; reverently, because I am thinking and writing face to face with mighty and lovely Nature, by the side of whose greatness, I am but a worm."¹⁰

In spite of his polemic against his native state, Royce was deeply interested in California, especially in the problem of how in a community different races can live together side by side, in a peaceful and interdependent manner. In 1908, he wrote *Race Relations, Provincialism and Other American Problems*. His work covered the Japanese immigrants and their Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, as well as the Chinese immigrants whose labor had built the railroads, financed by the Big Four, and especially the ruthless Robber Baron Leland Stanford, later to become Governor of and Senator from California, and Co-Founder of Stanford University.

Salvation from exile at home came in 1882, when he was chosen as a sabbatical replacement for William James at Harvard. He and James had become friends at Johns Hopkins, having met before Royce sailed for Germany. In spite of offers to lure him back to Berkeley, he published his first important book, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, and was appointed assistant professor of philosophy

¹⁰ P.90

at Harvard in 1885. There he remained for the rest of his career with occasional summer school appointments at UC Berkeley.

At Harvard, Royce's mind returned him to thinking about his Native state. He published, *California: A Study in American Character*, a history, and *The Feud at Oakfield Creek*, a novel. His career was secure, but the long years of study took their toll on him. In 1888, he suffered a nervous breakdown. He recovered by sailing to Australia, alone, for six months. Upon returning to Harvard, his career flourished, as did his friendship with William James. He was appointed full professor of the history of philosophy in 1892. His reputation and many books and papers led him to be appointed Gifford Lecturer in 1899-1900. William James had been forced to decline because of ill health.¹¹ These lectures became his masterpiece, *The World and the Individual*. Ten years later was a terrible time for Royce. His first son, Christopher, who had long been mentally ill, and his best friend, William James, died. But his brilliant career continued. He was appointed Alford Chair of Philosophy of Harvard in 1914. However, Royce could not sustain the driving of a superb mind forever. After suffering a mild brain hemorrhage and a series of strokes, he died in 1916.

The philosopher George Santayana wrote of his Harvard professor's lecturing style:

The tap, once turned on, out flowed the stream of systematic disquisition, one hour, two hours, three hours of it, according to the demand or opportunity. The voice, too, was merciless and harsh. You felt the overworked, standardized, academic engine, creaking and thumping at the call of duty or habit, with no thought of sparing itself or anyone else. Yet sprightlier soul behind the performing soul seemed to watch and laugh at the process. Sometimes a merry light would twinkle in his little eyes, and a

¹¹ James was later appointed Gifford Lecturer and these essays became his most popular book, *Verities of Religious Experience*.

bashful smile would creep over his uncompromising mouth. A whole sense of the paradox, the irony, the inconclusiveness of the whole argument would pierce to the surface, like a whitecap bursting here and there on the heavy swell of the sea. ¹²

Royce, California and the US

Royce's legacy lives on in a series of books on abstract philosophy. However, he is an important thinker regarding the facts of the history of California, and something of a sociologist. Although deeply and loyally American, Royce lamented how the United States took over California. Even in 1846, before gold was discovered at Sutter's Fort, the US had plans to make California part of the Union. Even in October 1845, the US and Mexico were on the verge of war. However, President Polk and Secretary of State Buchanan wanted to acquire California peacefully. Along with the Spanish-speaking settlers from Mexico, a significant number of Americans were already living in California. Secretary Buchanan sent a Consul Thomas Larkin to the Mexican California government in Monterey with the message: "...Should California assert and maintain her independence, we shall render her all the kind offices of our power as a Sister Republic." ¹³ And furthermore, "If the People should desire to unite their destiny with ours, they would be received as brethren."¹⁴ Meanwhile, a Captain John Charles Fremont had come to California in command of the U.S. Army Topographical Engineers, allegedly to survey the best possible railroad route to

¹² George Santayana, *Santayana on America: Essays, Notes and Letters on American Life, Literature and Philosophy*, Edited with an Introduction by Richard Colton Lyon, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968, pp.89 and 90.

¹³ Josiah Royce, *California: From the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco. A STUDY IN THE AMERICAN CHARACTER*. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1886. Quotation from Larkin Dispatch of 1846.

¹⁴ Clendenning, Quotation from the Larkin Dispatch, p.146.

California. He obtained permission from General Jose' Castro to winter his troops in the Sacramento Valley. Larkin, declaring the government's intentions, sent Fremont a dispatch. However, the secret plan was to seize California by any means available. There was also concern that the English or French would take it over before we did.

It was clear that, from the beginning, Captain Fremont encouraged hostilities between American settlers and Mexican Californians. After stealing horses from a Lieutenant Francisco Arce', the settlers took off to Sonoma and captured General Mariano Vallejo and his brother, and others. They sent the prisoners to Fremont, and raised the Bear Flag, signifying The Republic of California. The Mexican land grants were declared invalid. By this time, the United States was officially at war with Mexico. Joining the settlers at Sonoma, Fremont organized the settlers into a volunteer army and took the war south. Commodore Sloat arrived with the Navy and seized the Mexican California Capital in Monterey. At this point the Bear Flag was flying over Monterey, Sonoma, San Francisco and Sutter's Fort. The conquest was complete after the struggle for Los Angeles ended on January 14, 1847. The Mexicans had no further means to defend California, anymore than they had defended Texas, after Sam Houston made his stand. California became a Territory of the United States, and, after the massive influx of Americans during the 1849 Gold Rush, it was declared a State on September 9, 1850.

Royce interviewed General Fremont twice. Fremont denied any knowledge of the Larkin dispatch and its duplicity. Royce had discovered that Fremont, a then former Presidential Candidate, was a liar, and he could prove it. He had obtained a

copy of the dispatch.¹⁵ Later, Fremont admitted that his instructions included the phrase, “Take possession of the province forcibly, if he least chance offers.”¹⁶

Royce despised General Fremont. He considered him to embody the worst aspects of the American character: violent, duplicitous, unruly in rugged individualism, uneducated, and anti-intellectual. Royce’s biographer, Clendenning, summarizes it beautifully:

...The persistent evils in American life, greed, deception, factionalism, mob violence, legal hypocrisy, racism, and a religious compulsion to defeat the freedom of weaker nations—these themes make a moral drama of the events described in *California*. In studying each historical phase, Royce was concerned primarily with the forces and behavior that promote or disrupt the growth of new communities. Naturally he saw the conquest as a disruptive phase brought on by private and often conflicting interests of a few individuals. He sneered at Buchanan’s underhanded scheme to win California peacefully; he laughed at the settler’s childish attempt to whitewash their selfish intents, but growled at Fremont’s policy of war, his determination to win personal glory, by violence, mendacity and disobedience. The American character, Royce observed, is a little squeamish. Other nations never troubled their conscience before seizing foreign territory, but America must feel innocent and justified when it sheds the blood of peaceful neighbors. Such squeamishness produces hypocrisy. Our national conscience, Royce observed, prevents the left hand from knowing what the right hand is doing, when both are doing mischief.¹⁷

Royce is not proud of our conquest of California. We did not peacefully acquire it. We took it. It is clear that he was proud to be a Californian, but also had a love/hate relationship with his native state. However, in California, he could also see the best of the American character: idealism, courage, independence, inventiveness, and the willingness to break loose from custom and try out new ideas. After the Gold Rush fever had subsided, and mining towns, such as Grass Valley, which had originally

¹⁵ P.149

¹⁶ Clendenning, Quotation from 1846 Larkin Dispatch.

¹⁷ John Clendenning, p. 153.

consisted of greedy, uneducated men, gradually developed into communities, when women arrived. Although a long time coming, the rule of law and order was established. California began to civilize itself with churches, schools and universities. Although racial hatred still motivated many of the conquerors, Wealth was no longer always placed above responsibility. At the end of *California*, Royce sees the possibility of the best of communities:

After all, however, our lesson is an old and simple one. It is the State, the Social Order that is divine. We are all but dust, save as the Social Order gives us life. When we think of our instrument, our plaything, and make of our private fortunes the one object, then this social order rapidly becomes vile to us; we call it sordid, degraded, corrupt, unspiritual and ask how we can escape from it forever. But if we turn again and serve the social order, and not merely ourselves, we soon find that what we are serving is simply our own highest spiritual destiny in bodily form. It is never truly sordid or corrupt or unspiritual; it is only so when we neglect our duty.¹⁸

Herein he envisions a community that does not subscribe to individualism that seeks personal gain at the expense of social harmony. In spite of the fact that *California* is a study in disloyalty, at the end, he sees the possibility that it could be a community, which commands the highest loyalty. In fact, Loyalty is a theme through out the idealist Josiah Royce's work. It is to his abstract philosophical work, and to this idealistic theme, to which we now turn.

Josiah Royce's Idealism

Royce is an idealist in his epistemology, metaphysics, ethics and social philosophy. It is clear that German philosophers profoundly influenced him after his year's study in Germany. In Royce's philosophy, one can find the Post-Kantian idealism of Lotze, the subjective idealism of Fichte, and the idea of the Absolute, which Hegel

¹⁸ Royce, *California* p. 501.

advocated, and the idea of the Will in Schopenhauer. The monism of Spinoza, as well as the philosophies of the Eleatics, and Platonic and Neo-Platonic idealism, is also to be found in Royce. For all this, Royce was philosophically engaged with his practically minded American colleagues: William James the pragmatist of Harvard, Charles Sanders Peirce, the pragmaticist at Johns Hopkins, and John Dewey, the instrumentalist and founder of the Chicago School.

The first question asked by any philosopher is in the theory of knowledge: how do we know what we know? For Royce, consciousness is the beginning of all knowing. However, neither the ego-self nor experience is sufficient for knowing. Royce is a voluntarist. Knowing is an act of will:

...All knowledge, whether it be a datum of sense or innate ideas, whether contents be ordinary experience, or some transcendental knowledge of Self or Ideas, whether an External World be its object, or an external world of imagination, that all knowledge, we affirm, is found, qua knowledge, in the form of these inexplicable Acts of Will. The most fundamental and universal datum of reflective consciousness is that volitional activity which joins definitely our ideas, and give them, as thoughts, a character opposed to the indefiniteness and disorder or sensation. In other words, the term that expresses the universal datum most completely is the term Will; not the Ego, not experience, but the Will, shall be our principle of philosophy.¹⁹

For Royce, the truth of all external experience, i.e., other than that which is in our own mind, is an act of volition. Royce says that we are very limited beings. We are limited by the errors of the senses, and by mental misjudgments. What we can know can be evaluated by how workable our knowledge is in the world of consciousness we inhabit. For example, when the biologists, Crick and Watson were trying to discover the structure of DNA, the question they asked influenced their

¹⁹ Josiah Royce, "From the Will as a Principle in Philosophy, Mary Briody Mahawald, *An Idealistic Pragmatism: The Development of the Pragmatic Element in the Philosophy of Josiah Royce*, The Hague: Martinus Nihof, 1972, p. 32.

discovery of the Double Helix. The truth of this discovery was verified when Dr. Rosalind Franklin in a nearby laboratory in Cambridge, England repeated the experiment and duplicated the knowledge gained by Crick and Watson. Beyond that, we find that DNA is workable in the world through proof of human parentage and application in police work. The truth of an idea comes from its practical application. Knowledge comes from thought and action in the world. Royce took his first cue from Goethe's Faust: "*Im Anfang war die Tat.*" (In the beginning was the act). For this reason, truth is an ongoing process of clarification and refinement. George Santayana further wrote of Royce that he was obsessed with finding the truth:

...As he keenly felt and often said, the truth is like stars, always laughing at us. Nothing would help him but the *possession* of the truth, something eventual and terribly problematic. He longed to believe that all his troubles and questions, someday and somewhere must find their solution and quietus; if not, in his own mind, in some kindred spirit that he could, to that extent, identify with himself. There must be not only cold truth, but cold truth personified, but victorious knowledge of the truth, breaking like a sunburst through the clouds of error. The nerve of his argument was not logical at all; it was a confusion of religious experience, in which the agonized consciousness of error led to a strong imaginative conviction that the truth would be found at last.²⁰

As individuals, Royce affirms, we act in the world through postulating the results of situations. For example, today in July 2012, I postulate that the world is going to exist in 2013. On that basis, I have travel plans. I could be wrong, if the alarmists who take one Mayan Calendar to mean that the world as we know it is ending on December 21, 2012 are right. My postulate that this opinion is wrong based on past experience and knowledge that this may be only the end of a small

²⁰ Santayana, p. 92.

cycle within a much larger one. Royce says, "The wise live by postulates."²¹ These are not blind belief. With Charles Sanders Peirce he agreed, "Belief is the demi-cadence which closes the musical phrase in the symphony of our intellectual life."²² In other words, believe it; it is over. Postulate it, it continues. Knowledge is the constant willful expansion of our horizon of consciousness. It is a continuing point and counter point of dialectics.

How is the finite individual capable of conscious expansion? Our very capabilities, although limited in certain ways, lead Royce to postulate the necessity of the Absolute. Royce's argument is that the individual, as knowing consciousness, is possible only with an Absolute Consciousness. In *Mind and Reality*, Royce Wrote: "When the earth became filled with life, there appeared in the universal consciousness the data known as organisms. And at the same time, there arose in individual conscious beings, whose states were more or less imperfect copies of the universal consciousness in certain of these facts."²³ A way of explaining his reasoning is that each of us is aware of being an individual consciousness. However, we are also aware that our consciousness did not arise in a vacuum. There are others in the world with whom we are social beings, although we have no proof that these others are conscious in the way we are. Nevertheless, this presence of the datum of the other and the interactive web of action in the world, must lead us to think we are a part of a universal consciousness. Without this universal consciousness, there could not be individual consciousness. As personal conscious

²¹ Royce, Mahawald, p. 37

²² C.S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Volumes I-IV, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-35.

²³ Josiah Royce, *Mind and Reality*, cf. Mahawald. P.56.

beings, we did not create ourselves, nor is it logical that consciousness in organisms is an accident of evolution. Therefore, there must be a Universal Consciousness, Absolute, God or whatever one wishes to call it. Furthermore, the individual is an expression of the Eternal, just as organic life is an expression of the One Life.

In *The World and the Individual*, Royce sums will and knowledge, and the individual's place in the universe in this way:

If you ask, from this point of view, in what sense the world is to be called rather the expression of Divine Will, and in what sense it is rather the expression of Divine Knowledge, I reply that while we have by no means separated these two aspects of the universe, we can now easily see the convenience from many points of view of distinguishing them. The Divine or Absolute Knowledge this world expresses, by virtue of the unity of consciousness in which all facts are linked, and by virtue too of the universality of meaning which joins all various ideas in such wise that, every finite idea, insofar as it merely refers to another, has external reference, is general while the whole expression of these ideas is unique and individual.²⁴

This was not originally written in German, but a "translation" of this passage would be that each of us is an expression of THAT or Absolute Brahman referred to in the *Svetaketu Upanishad*, which he quotes in the Second Gifford Lecture.

James thought all of this was Hegelian nonsense. After all, it is clear that Royce's argument could be interpreted as circular. Our knowledge of ourselves as individuals depends on our knowledge of the Absolute, but our knowledge of the Absolute depends on each of us being an individual consciousness. James opted instead for a pluralistic universe in which there are many viewpoints, but no way to posit an Absolute. The ultimate criterion of knowledge is its verification through

²⁴ Royce, *The World and the Individual*, Gifford Lectures Delivered Before the University of Aberdeen, London: The Macmillan Company, 1899 and 1927. pp.461-462.

action in the world. Royce and James argued incessantly about this matter of the Absolute and its existence or lack of it.

Royce was too good a logician to not realize there were problems with his argument for the Absolute. Nevertheless, he reasoned that it is the most logical and workable conception of Being. He said there were Four Conceptions of Being. The first of the conception is Realism. This point of view argues that there is a real world. Royce's view of realism is that "to be real means to be independent of ideas which, while other than a given real being, still relate to that being. "²⁵..."The world of fact, he (the Realist) tells you, is independent of your knowledge of that world. This independence and the very knowledge of the world of fact are one."²⁶ The problems with this epistemology are obvious. If there is an objective world independent of our knowledge of it, how do we know enough even to assert its reality? Furthermore, how do we account for the idea that the world looks different to different beings? Does an ant, a cat, or even another person see the world as we do? Royce dismisses Realism as a philosophy that cannot even know itself, let alone the world of which we are conscious.

The Second Conception of Being is that of Mysticism. The problem with mysticism is that it expresses, subjective, immediate and often incomprehensible experience. How can I know what St. Theresa of Avila means when she describes being "pierced by an arrow of God," if I have not had her it experience? She expresses an interesting poetic metaphor, but does not fully enlighten us. Mysticism is too subjective . In *Varieties of Religious Experience*, written as the Gifford Lectures,

²⁵ Royce, *The World and the Individual*, p.93

²⁶ P.93

William James explains that there are different types of mysticism. For example, they can be unifying, such as Meister Eckhart's merging with the Godhead, or isolative such as Plotinus' "Going alone in the Alone." I am not suggesting that James wrote this book entirely as a response to Royce. However, Royce's point is that they are all descriptions of individual experiences. How can we verify them? James also did not suggest they were verifiable scientifically, but he was fascinated with their psychological effect.

The third Conception of Being is Critical Rationalism. His conception of this philosophy is its attempt to understand the world by having a clear and distinct idea of it. For example, I cannot see all the sides of a three-dimensional object, such as a cube, at once. It is my mathematically certain idea that an object with six surfaces, 8 vertices and 12 sidelines is a cube. But how do I know that what I see, which is a limited part of the cube, corresponds to what is really there in the world I may have mathematically perfect idea, but can I get to the reality of it as a sensuous object? As Kant would teach, can I get my concepts and percepts together?

Royce's view is that all these conceptions of Being have merit, but the Fourth Conception of Being which includes the best ideas of the other three, is the only true one. Royce presents a kind of transcendental argument. The only possible way for the universe to have meaning, and for the individual to be fulfilled in his/her moral life, is a universe in which there is an Absolute or a Supreme Good. Not only must we rid ourselves of relativities, subjective mysticism, cold rationalism, and the moral solipsism of the realist, but also we must understand that our life has meaning by realizing ourselves, as individuals, to Being as a whole. This Being is eternal, and

therefore, as beings in it, so are we. He wrote, "My human form of consciousness is indeed doubtless a transient incident of my immortal life. Not thus haltingly, not thus darkly and ignorantly, shall I always labor. But the service of the eternal is essentially an endless service. There can be no last moral deed."²⁷ With these words, it is clear that Royce is quite Kantian in that he thinks the universe is meaningless without a God or Absolute, and an immortal nature. Human life is also quite meaningless, if we are just robotic parts of God. Royce affirms that being human implies the necessity of acting with free will. Each of us individual selves is free to express the Divine Purpose. Royce thinks that one's Absolute Selfhood is expressed in his/her unity with God. One can always chose to be in harmony or not. There is a moral "ought" in the principle of harmony: "Harmonize thy will with the world's will. Express thyself through obedience. Win thy victory through accepting thy task. The world is already the Will absolutely expressed. Learn this truth by conforming thy deed to the absolute law."²⁸ Either Royce is an optimistic Schopenhauer enthusiast or a good Protestant. His conception of God, although abstract, is not without human virtues. God is, in fact, a kind of "Fellow Sufferer."—an idea, which Charles Hartshorne would fully develop in the Twentieth Century.

Royce thinks that only this Fourth Conception of Being can offer a complete and meaningful view of life. Life, present at the very beginning of the Universe, is ever evolving. Royce presents this idea in an emotional end to the Gifford Lectures:

This life is real through us all; and we are real through our union with that life. Close is our touch with the eternal. Boundless is the meaning of our Nature. Its mysterious battle, our present science, and escape our present

²⁷ Josiah Royce, Clendenning, p. 277.

²⁸ P.275

experience; but they need not blind our eyes to the central unity of Being, nor make us feel lost in a realm where the wanderings of time mean the process whereby is discovered the homeland of Eternity.²⁹

The discovery of the meaning of life through ethical choices is never ending. You are deluded if you say, "My deed is done; my aims are fulfilled."³⁰ Royce's ethics are pragmatic in that he says Truth and the Good are ever unfolding realities, which can be tested by life's experiences. For Royce, "There can be no last moral deed."³¹

In spite of his postulate of the Absolute, Royce's idea of the individual and his/her personal identity, is predicated on the view each of us a social being. As social beings, we develop our identity by interaction in a community. Furthermore, our action in a community shows us to have a much higher purpose than we would as isolated individuals. It is through the community that we develop the virtue of loyalty. Loyalty, in itself, is the highest expression of the will of the Absolute through us.

It is to this idea, which we now turn.

Royce's Philosophy of Loyalty and Community

For Royce, loyalty is the highest ethical principle. According to him, one cannot function as a moral agent without loyalty. Loyalty is devotion to the interest of another, and more broadly, defined, to an entire community. Since all of our actions affect others., we must all be careful that our actions are not performed out of personal self-love. Lack of loyalty is a form of grotesque egotism. Loyalty is "a willing, practical and thorough-going devotion to a cause." Even if the cause is just

²⁹ Royce, 277 Clendenning

³⁰ P.276

³¹ P.277

one other person, it can save us from moral bankruptcy. Royce develops his thesis that loyalty is not just to a family or personal friends, but also to a whole community. This community must ultimately be the whole of humanity.

For Royce, loyalty is like a Platonic Form. It is an ideal, which no one can fully realize on earth, but in which one, which every one can participate. Its realization is an infinite quest. But one might ask, if the person, the family, the community, the state to which we have been loyal turns out to be unfaithful and/or false? One could be faithful to a marriage only to endure the disappointment of the infidelity of the spouse. One could be loyal to a leader; only to discover that he is a megalomaniac, as happened to the Germans during World War I and II. A case in point is Rommel's loyalty to Hitler. At first, he loved the *Der Furher*, as the savior of his beloved Germany, from the excessive economic sanctions after World War I. When he realized that Hitler was destroying Germany, as well as most of Europe, he participated in the von Stauffenberg plot to kill him. When the plot failed, he was discovered and ordered to commit suicide. Field Marshall Rommel is the most universally admired general from both sides from World War II, because of his military genius, and his adherence to the code of military honor. For example, he would not treat Jewish prisoners differently. However, according to Royce's principles, his loyalty to country over leader falls short of universality. It may have gone beyond "my country right or wrong," but it falls short of the ideal of a human community.

In this same context, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian who also participated in the plot to kill Hitler, is a good case in illustrating loyalty beyond "my

country right or wrong.” Bonhoeffer was a brilliant thinker and teacher. He was offered a fine appointment at Columbia Union Theological Seminary before the war broke out. However, he realized that he needed to return to Germany to work against Hitler. In his situation ethics, he wrote that ultimately one must make the choice that has greater love in it, even if it involves the compromise of another principle. As a Christian, Bonhoeffer believed deeply in “Thou shall not kill,” but in the case of Hitler, killing him would have saved millions of lives. He was not only a dictator but also the object of cult worship. Bonhoeffer’s loyalty to his Christian faith and its devotion to humanity, led him to participate in the assassination plot. After it failed, he was discovered, and hanged in Spandau, three days before the Allies liberated Berlin. Bonhoeffer’s devotion to the teachings of the Christ, led him to a higher loyalty, and he was martyred for it.

Bonhoeffer’s case is a good example of what Royce meant by the value and cost of loyalty. It is through loyalty that we know the value of suffering. Loyalty will inevitably lead to suffering in some way. A loyal person is always willing to take a risk by devotion to a friend or lover, to a community or to a country, and ultimately humanity. All of these loyalties can end in tragedy. Great communities and states have developed through loyalty to a cause. The signers of the Declaration of Independence confirmed that “...We mutually pledge to each other, our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.” They knew they could be hanged for it. But without this loyalty and risk, there never would have been a United States. It is because of this daring and sacrifice that the universal value of loyalty is fulfilled. Given this idea, it is easy to construe that, for Royce, loyalty is more than a humanly

constructed value. *The Philosophy of Loyalty* takes a metaphysical turn. Royce wrote: "Loyalty is the will to manifest, so far as possible, the Eternal, that is the conscious and superhuman unity of life, in the form of the acts of an individual Self...." Also, borrowing a phrase from James: "Loyalty is the Will to believe in something eternal, and to express that belief in the practical life of a human being."³²

From this, it is clear that Royce thought loyalty was more than an isolated ethical and social principle, but what gives purpose to life. All virtues, such as justice, wisdom, courage, and goodness, would be empty without loyalty. Although one may have experienced disappointments in past loyalties, in Royce's view, one should be loyal to loyalty itself. The question is, however, does this glorious 'LOYALTY' give a resolution to life's problems, when there are confusions of loyalties? For example, Marcus Brutus chose to kill his personal friend, Julius Caesar, when it was clear that he was close to becoming the Emperor. He stabs his friend, not out of jealousy or personal ambition, but to save his beloved Republic. For this reason, Antony called him "the noblest Roman of them all," at the end of the play by Shakespeare. However, it has long been debated how noble was his loyalty to the Republic, which led to disloyalty to his friend. Caesar had been given the longest standing dictatorial powers in Roman history. Nevertheless, was there no other way than murder to remove him? Obviously, the Senate was too weak to take legal steps to do it.

In spite of his support for loyalty as an ideal, Royce realizes the limitations of idealism, especially when contradictory loyalties are involved. For example, the

³² Josiah Royce, p.323 Clendenning

Puritans were great idealists, and tested their values by a daring emigration from England. Clearly, their religious philosophy was very narrow and unforgiving. Nevertheless, Royce concludes, the universal value of loyalty must always be upheld, even if one discovers he/she has a misguided loyalty. He insists that we could never discover a misguided loyalty, unless there is a loyalty to a higher ideal: the Truth or The Absolute. He wrote, "The loyal, and they alone, know the great good of suffering, of ignorance, of finitude, of loss, of defeat, --and that is just the good of loyalty so long as the cause itself can only be viewed as living whole. Spiritual peace is surely no easy thing."³³

The suffering and tragedy that can result from loyalty, led Royce to take seriously the meaning of the Crucifixion and Resurrection in Christianity. He was concerned with the spiritual *kerygma* (The Message), rather than on the historicity of the story. Especially in the later Royce, God was a "Fellow Sufferer.". The balm for our suffering because of our loyalties comes not only from the Fellow Sufferer who is the highest ideal, The Absolute, but also from that of the community. For the Beloved Community was not just an association of loyal individuals, but an Ecclesia, a spiritual Body of Christ. A group of loyal individuals in a community, in its most perfect sense, is the fulfillment of Divine Love on earth.

This idea of loyalty to a community is the cornerstone of Royce's life work: In *The Hope of a Great Community*, he wrote:

The belief that mankind can be and in the end shall be one, has thus, for along time, had an increased concreteness, definiteness, practical applicability, and, in spite of all the evils of our modern social order, a genuine hopefulness. What has to be borne in mind is, that in former centuries, and above all in

³³ Royce, Clendenning, p.323.

ancient times, the community of mankind was hindered from becoming an object either of experience or of reasonable hope by the confusion of men's tongues, by the mutual hostilities of nations, of religions and of sects, and by the absence of means whereby men might learn to work together. Since the beginning of the modern world, not only have the sciences and arts helped us to work together in a material way and to understand one another regarding our various ideas, but very many of our modern intellectual and practical modes of progress have possessed a significance not only material, but deeply spiritual, and what is more to be the point in our present discussion, wisely international. The modern world has become more and more an international world. And this, I insist, has been true not only to technical and material ties, but as to its spiritual union.³⁴

It is only in this Hope of a Great Community that loyalty can be most fully expressed. In The Great War (World War I), when nations were willing to fragment the world and destroy others through self-interest, Royce wrote that the "super-individual value of loyalty" would emerge. He said:

Loyalty, the devotion of the self, to the interests of the community, is indeed the form, which the highest life of humanity must take. whether in political unity such as in a nation, or in the Church universal, such as Paul foresaw. Without loyalty there is no salvation. Therefore loyalty can ever completely express itself in the search for individual happiness, whether the happiness that is in question be that of the individual who teaches, or that of a mere collection of masses of individuals for whom some philanthropist seeks happiness.³⁵

For the Christian humanist Royce, the ideal community is the complete instantiation of The Kingdom of God. Yet to be a Holy City, it must be universal and international. Writing during World War I, in 1915, after the sinking of the Lusitania, Royce envisioned a body of international cooperation, which anticipates the United Nations, rather as Kant had done in *Perpetual Peace*. In speaking of what might happen at the "the War to end all wars," Royce hoped for an organization which would provide what he called reinsurance against war and poverty:

³⁴ Royce, *The Hope of a Great Community*, p. 41.

³⁵ P.45

“The choice and formation of an International Board of Trustees would involve no new and strife-breeding treaties among various nations. The Board, when once constituted, would have no political powers or functions whatever, its conduct of the trust funds committed would need no supervision from an arbitration tribunal. No diplomats would have any voice in its doings. Its funds themselves could be protected and the longer it existed the more varied and perfectly peaceful self-protection would become, if the Board were at the outset constituted as, with reasonable probability, it could be constituted.”³⁶

Of course we know, almost one hundred years since that, The League of Nations was ineffective, and the United Nations is quite political, has diplomats, and that is peace keeping efforts do not always succeed. Of course, many of us are glad it exists, because of the idealism of the vision of thinkers like Josiah Royce. Royce’s final philosophical quest was to bring metaphysical conception of the Unity of Being to be realized as a living community on earth. Royce admitted his quest was idealistic and religious, but that it resulted in pragmatic activity in the world. For him the real meaning of “I and my Father are One.” in The Gospel of John, is that we are all one in the loyal and beloved Community.

Royce sums up one of his final lectures with a poem from Swinburne, *A Watch in the Night*. The final stanza reads:

Liberty, what of the night? —
I feel not the rains fall,
Hear not the tempest at all,
Nor thunder in heaven any more.
All the distance is white
With the soundless feet of the sun.
Night, with the woes that it wore,
Night is over and done.³⁷

³⁶ P.85

³⁷ *The Hope of a Great Community*, P. 135.

Just as the friendship of Emerson and Carlyle did not much to bring the spiritual bonds of England and America closer together, this philosopher from California did much to unite the Eastern American intellectual tradition with the West Coast, not only because of his friendship with William James and others, but also because of his own crowning achievements. In spite of its humble beginnings, philosophy has grown in California ever since.

Today his reputation enjoys resurgence with the Josiah Royce Society, which usually meets at the American Philosophical Association. He did, and still does, much to enlighten us, this boy from Grass Valley.

In a farewell tribute to him, Laura Simmons, a former student and poet wrote in her last stanza:

Some day, in Thy good time, shall we once more
About him press, and marvel as before?
Shall we of lesser mold behold him still?
On Thy high tasks intent—dauntless of will,
And of his work the old-time matchless skill?³⁸

We can hope that such a philosopher will come to teach us again.

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³⁸ P. VII.

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