

"A New World': Philosophical Idealism in America, 1700 to 1950"¹

Lecture V

(Draft. Please do not quote without permission.)

Harvard University opened its Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 1872, but its first attempt at something like graduate education in philosophy had come two years before that, in the form of "University Lectures" arranged by the university's ambitious young president, Charles Eliot. (Eliot started his career as a teacher of chemistry. William James had been among his students.) C. S. Peirce was one member of the team that Eliot assembled. Ralph Waldo Emerson was another. Emerson lectured on "The Natural History of the Intellect," and according to his daughter Ellen, the work of the lectures ate him up. He signed on for a second year, but he was too discouraged or exhausted to make it all the way through. After his last lecture his wealthy son-in-law took him to California to recuperate; a party of twelve traveled by rail from Chicago to San Francisco in a private car. The University Lectures, meanwhile, were deemed a failure.²

Francis Bowen, another of the University Lecturers, was a Harvard professor, the author, in fact, of a touchy review of Emerson's *Nature* that I mentioned in the footnotes to Lecture III. He lasted long enough at Harvard to teach George Santayana, who remembered him, despite his "fits of coughing and invectives against all who were wrong and didn't agree with Sir William Hamilton," as an excellent teacher.³ ("Sometimes," Santayana relates, "he would wander into irrelevant invectives against John Stuart Mill [author of the withering *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*] who in a footnote had once referred to Bowen (who was then editor of a reputable review) as 'an obscure American.'" Should I mention that Bowen used to cough into his handkerchief, inspect the contents with disgust, and return it to his pocket?) It's tempting to contrast the overwhelmed amateur Emerson with the hardy professional Bowen, teaching through his coughing fits, but in 1870, there was really no one teaching philosophy at Harvard, or anywhere else in America, whom we'd call a "professional" in the present-day sense of the term. For a proof of this, we can consult the list, compiled by George Herbert Palmer, of the "agencies" responsible for the professionalization of philosophy at Harvard.⁴ Palmer joined the Harvard department in 1872 as Bowen's assistant, meaning that Bowen "directed all my work, even what books my classes should use" (p. 41). When he retired in 1913, Palmer was the most senior full professor. His full professor colleagues in the years between were William James, Josiah Royce, Hugo Münsterberg, and George Santayana.⁵ Here are the leading elements on Palmer's list (pp. 71-2), called by him a "Table of influences aiding philosophic advance" (p. 71).

1. Resort to Germany for graduate study. [The budding professional had to go abroad, because adequate preparation was pretty much unavailable at home. When Palmer himself contemplated graduate study, before The Johns Hopkins University was founded in 1876, he decided that the best domestic choice was a divinity school (pp. 20-1). Even his undergraduate education at Harvard had been spotty. Bowen then "offered only a single course," more elementary than any of the thirty courses offered after Palmer's retirement. The Harvard curriculum as a whole, Palmer thought, though no worse than others, "would seem to have been arranged by a lunatic." He joked that its only value lay in making way for Eliot's reforms.⁶]

2. Professors make a specialty of single subjects.

....

4. Possibility of aiming at a professorship even though not a minister.
5. Philosophic staffs employed in place of Presidents or single Professors. [In the older system, in which Jonathan Edwards for example was educated, philosophical instruction by the president was the capstone experience.]
6. For courses beyond elementary, textbooks and mere criticism of authors abandoned and orderly constructive work expected of Professors.
7. Lectures substituted for recitations. [In an early twentieth-century manifesto on educational technique, a recitation was understood as "a mere recital of things diligently garnered from the pages of a text-book."⁷]
8. Books reserved in the Library, and large private reading demanded of students.
9. Sabbatical years [which, he explained, were "introduced at Harvard in 1878"]

This gives us a good sense of the state of things in 1870, before Palmer's influences had begun to exert themselves. Yet even in this pre-professional atmosphere, Emerson saw himself as an amateur. Seneca, he declared almost regretfully in 1870, was a "professional philosopher," unlike the more personal Plutarch, who was, Emerson made very clear, much more to his liking than Seneca—and much closer in spirit to Emerson's own self.⁸

With today's lecture, we come to the first of our major figures whose standing as a professional cannot be questioned. Josiah Royce was very conscious of his professionalism, perhaps partly because he saw it, rightly, as a novel attainment. Just as Royce was coming of age, the structures of the profession (those Palmer lists, as well as others) were being put in place. But at the University of California, Berkeley in the early 1870's, when Royce, a native Californian, was an undergraduate, they were nowhere near. The university offered no formal instruction in philosophy at all.⁹ Whatever philosophy Royce formally acquired was imparted by Berkeley's distinguished professor of geology, Joseph LeConte. LeConte himself is a fascinating figure.¹⁰ His interests in philosophy ran deep. "Until I was thirty," he writes in his autobiography, "I could not have said whether my tastes were more in the direction of science or of art and literature or of philosophy" (p. 285).¹¹ He was channeling his commitments by 1850, when he arrived at Harvard to study with Louis Agassiz. LeConte met with Emerson while he was in Cambridge—"sometimes," he records, "not often" (p. 143)—and grew especially close to both Agassiz and Benjamin Peirce. But even after his Harvard and Cambridge education in science, he recounts, "I could never be a specialist in the narrow sense of the term" (p. 286). He tore into Comte and Whewell, studied Sir William Hamilton, Cudworth, and Herbert Spencer, and "dipped into" many other philosophers, among them Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Berkeley (p. 287). He claimed never to have mastered what he called "the technology of philosophy" (in fact it "repelled" him, he says [p. 287]), but he was, for young Royce, a vital resource.¹² More significantly, perhaps, for our purposes this afternoon, LeConte was an absolute idealist, affirming, much as Emerson had before him, "the immanence of Deity in Nature" (p. 49).¹³ If we could pierce nature's veil, he pledged, we would discover an "Infinite Person" directly behind it—the only "Complete Personality that exists." LeConte conceived of the physical and chemical forces whose terrestrial operations were his particular field of study as a "diffused" and "unindividuated" portion of "the omnipresent Divine Energy," and "therefore *not* [as] *self-active* but having its phenomena determined directly by the Divine Energy" (p. 49). His conception of creation and its tendencies was broadly Fichtean. "God may be conceived as self-sundering his Energy, and setting over against himself a part as Nature. A part of this part, by a process of evolution, individuates itself more and more, and finally completes its

individuation and self-activity in the soul of man," in whose immortal life God's plan will eventually be realized (pp. 49-50).

When Royce completed his work at Berkeley he headed (in unconscious conformity with Palmer's guidelines) to Germany for further study. When the Johns Hopkins University opened its doors in 1876, Royce was among its first students, receiving his Ph.D. in 1878. Unlike the Harvard or Yale of the late 1870's, Johns Hopkins wasn't an undergraduate college with a graduate school grafted onto it. It was created a university. Among its earliest instructors was C. S. Peirce (who arrived in 1879, too late to teach Royce, though Royce did hear him lecture in Cambridge in both 1892 and 1898), who authored—with a workman's pride in the new institution, I expect—the following definition of "university" for the twenty-volume *Century Dictionary*:¹⁴

An association of men for the purpose of study, which confers degrees which are acknowledged as valid throughout Christendom, is endowed, and is privileged by the state in order that the people may receive intellectual guidance and that the theoretical problems which present themselves in the development of civilization may be resolved.

The purpose of this new institution wasn't the grooming of ministers. It wasn't even teaching. Its purpose was simply "study." And the immediate objects of its concern weren't adolescents in particular, but "the people" in general, and the theoretical problems of their common life.

Royce joined Harvard's philosophy faculty in 1882. Not long after, he became the first full professor in the department to hold a Ph.D. He published his first book, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, in 1885, when he was still (according to the title page) an instructor. (He had been hired originally in 1882, to replace James while he was on leave.)¹⁵ The final paragraph of the book's preface is eerily similar to the corresponding paragraph in many of the first books of today. After noting that he commenced work on the book's main argument in his dissertation ("a thesis for the Doctor's degree of the Johns Hopkins University in 1878"), he acknowledges two recently created journals—the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* and *Mind*—where earlier versions of parts of the book had first appeared.¹⁶ Over the next fifteen years, the earnest professional returned to the argument again and again: tinkering with it, defending it, and exploring its connections with an ever-widening collection of themes. That argument—the argument from error—will be my topic in this lecture. It purports to be a "coldly theoretical" proof of absolute idealism (p. 337). I hope you'll recall the diffidence of Berkeley and Edwards at the same stage in their careers, as they contemplated the introduction of their idealisms into the learned world. To smooth the way, they both thought, it would be prudent not to promise demonstration. Not so Royce. His immodest aim was "to set forth an absolute idealism as a demonstrable theory" (p. 383).

As Royce begins his demonstration, he says that his calculated way of proceeding "commends itself as avoiding the greatest danger of idealism, namely, fantastic speculation with noble purposes, but with merely poetical methods" (p. 337). Now who, in our American past, could he have in mind? Who is the fantastic speculator with noble purposes who operated by merely poetical means? It's hard to resist the suspicion that it's Emerson Royce has in mind, and therefore that it's Emerson he is trying to surpass.¹⁷ And this suspicion turns out to be correct, because when Royce's rigorous march ends nearly one hundred pages later, having carried us, or so he was persuaded, from the uneasiness of doubt into the reassuring and capacious lap of Absolute Spirit, he encapsulates his argument by quoting three of Emerson's best-known lines of verse.¹⁸ But before I quote those lines a word of explanation is in order. Santayana once observed that it was characteristic of Royce to begin proofs of the sublime with something "sad and troublesome."¹⁹ Royce's starting point in the present case is universal doubt, and with it the possibility of error. His argument is that no matter how desperately the skeptic tries to fly from

the Absolute, his own doubts, and the attendant presupposition that objective error is possible, return him to the Absolute.²⁰ "Truly the words that some people have thought so fantastic," he writes in triumph as the demonstration concludes, "ought henceforth to be put in text-books as a commonplace of logical analysis" (p. 434). A poetic cloud has been condensed into a clear drop of argument. The word "fantastic" recalls his earlier warning of idealism's dangers, and the words he quotes are from Emerson's poem "Brahma".²¹

They reckon ill that leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings,
I am the doubter and the doubt.

Here is the whole of the poem:

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same,
The vanished gods to me appear,
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

Suddenly Emerson, poet and dilettante, doesn't look so shabby. He not only intuited Royce's conclusion, but stumbled upon the general outline of Royce's method. Emerson saw that as we try, on the wings of Doubt, to escape from the Absolute, Brahma or the Absolute is powering our very flight. But for Dr. Royce, Mr. Emerson's glimpse of this truth had to be a lucky accident. The larger share of the credit should go to the coolly rational professional. Emerson, we're asked to agree, fell victim to idealism's greatest danger. Royce has escaped the danger and led the rest of us to safety. His idealism is the reward not of imaginative theft, but of honest philosophical toil.

Royce published five versions of the argument from error: in chapter 11 of *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (1885); in a popular lecture included in *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (1892); in an essay on "The Implications of Self-Consciousness," also published in 1892, and later reprinted in *Studies of Good and Evil* in 1898; in *The Conception of God*, a lecture delivered at Berkeley in 1895, on which both LeConte and George Holmes Howison (about whom you'll hear much more next week) were asked to comment; and in his first series of Gifford Lectures, published in 1899 as volume 1 of *The World and the Individual*. For reasons both literary and philosophical, I believe his first presentation is the most revealing. Royce referred to his initial statement on every later occasion, and I plan to give it most of my attention.²² But I will make

some use of each of the others, particularly the last, where the argument is amplified in ways both striking and profound.

Royce's argument from error created a sensation—or as much of a sensation as one can expect from an attempt at demonstration. Howison reports running into Edward Everett Hale, the revered author, editor, and reformer, coming from the lectures on which *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* was based. You've got to meet this man, Hale told him. "What do you think I heard him doing in a lecture the other afternoon? Why, nothing less than showing that our human ignorance is the positive proof that there is a God—a supreme omniscient being."²³ I do think there's something sensational about it; the argument deserves a place, it seems to me, in our introductory textbooks, not as a lesson to be learned (that's what Royce himself hoped for), but as a nagging argument that any thoughtful person, even one who supposes they're uninclined towards philosophy, will find hard to ignore. But I'm going to be very hard on it nonetheless, for two broad reasons. The first is that I think it (and by "it" I mean the argument, not Royce himself) fundamentally misrepresents the real strength of monistic idealism, which is its (hoped for) coherence or systematicity: its promise to bring order to a vast range—indeed, the whole range—of our intellectual and spiritual concerns. This is what made it appealing to LeConte, and to some of the other American thinkers we'll encounter in Lecture VI. It is what made monism appealing (for as long as it was appealing) to Howison, for whom it was always true that "nothing stands alone and isolated in the universe present to genuine thinking; each truth rests on every other and on all" (p. 237 in "Josiah Royce"). I think Royce himself always believed this too, even if he sometimes found it hard not to hope for a knockdown argument (and who wouldn't?). The argument disappears from Royce's writings after 1900, and I'm not sure that the metaphysics of his *Problem of Christianity* (1913) is even consistent with it. I hope to return to this (though even there I must be brief) in Lecture VI. The second reason I'm going to be hard on the argument is simply that it seems to me to be open to many particular objections. These objections still leave me impressed with its value, however, because they show that the argument raises, pressingly and vividly, many of the deepest metaphysical and epistemological questions that preoccupied American philosophers in the first half of the twentieth century.

1. *The argument's precedents*

Royce's argument from error belongs to an ancient and distinguished class. When Santayana declared it characteristic of Royce to begin with something sad and troublesome, he made the argument's starting point seem odd—more a matter of personal proclivity than rational necessity.²⁴ There may indeed be something odd and personally revealing about it. But Royce's starting point, however idiosyncratic it may seem at first glance, begins to look more familiar when we consider it as a member of a broader kind. Royce's argument is an instance of the form of argument that the British idealist Bernard Bosanquet, in accord with a long tradition, labeled "*a contingentia mundi* [from the contingency of the world]."²⁵ It is, according to Bosanquet, "the essential argument of metaphysics": an inference "from the imperfection of data and premisses" to an unconditioned absolute.²⁶ We begin with something imperfect, fragmentary, or incomplete, and infer the existence of something perfect in which imperfection is grounded or completed.²⁷ The cosmological argument is a familiar example.²⁸ So is the overall argument of Descartes's *Meditations*—an example that brings us closer to Royce, because Descartes's starting point isn't the contingency or imperfection of the whole world, but the imperfection of our own selves, or a single aspect of that imperfection: our exposure or proneness to doubt. (I'm speaking here of the overall argument of the *Meditations*, rather than of the proof of God's existence in the Third Meditation. The Third Meditation argument has an ambiguous starting-point: a perfect idea that exists in an imperfect thing.)

But the example nearest to Royce, at least in my view, is Plato's, in the *Meno's* paradox of inquiry.²⁹ An inquiring mind is an imperfect mind; if it knew everything, it would have no incentive to undertake the labor of inquiry. From the existence of an inquiring mind with some chance of success (which means that its outlook, though not entirely bleak, is nonetheless precarious or uncertain), Socrates is made in the *Meno* to infer a mind more perfect, or more perfect than we think: a mind already acquainted with what it seeks, and struggling now to recollect it. Royce's argument is closely similar, as the following illustration, from *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, suggests:

What I intend by . . . saying that the self which thinks about an object, which really, even in the midst of the blindest ignorance and doubt concerning its object still means the object,—that this self is identical with the deeper self which possesses and truly knows the object,—what I intend hereby I can best illustrate by simple cases taken from your own experience. You are in doubt, say, about a name you have forgotten, or about a thought that you just had, but that has now escaped you. As you hunt for the name or the lost idea, you are all the while sure that you mean just one particular name or idea and no other. But you don't yet know what name or idea this is. You try, and reject name after name. You query, "Was this what I was thinking of, or this?" But after searching you ere long find the name or the idea, and now at once you *recognize* it. "On, that," you say, "was what I meant all along, only—I didn't know what I meant." Did not know? Yes, in one sense you knew all the while,—that is, your deeper self, your true consciousness knew. It was your momentary self that did not know. But when you found the long-sought name, recalled the lost idea, you recognized it at once, because it was all the while your own, because you, the true and larger self, who owned the name or the idea and were aware of what it was, now were seen to include the smaller and momentary self that sought the name or tried to recall the thought. Your deeper consciousness of the lost idea was all the while there. In fact, did you not presuppose this when you sought the lost idea? How can I mean a name, or an idea, unless I in truth am the self who knows the name, who possesses the idea? (pp. 371-2. This is the passage Mander cites on p. 453 of his paper.)

From the existence of a mind whose beliefs can be in error, Royce infers a mind more perfect: an error-proof mind fully acquainted with the object of which the error-prone mind has only an incomplete or fragmentary idea. In the Socratic argument, every imperfect mind has its own more perfect counterpart. In Royce's argument there is only a single perfect counterpart, the same for each of us. Plato's argument discloses the hidden resources of an immortal self who is one among many. Royce's argument discloses the hidden resources of an immortal absolute in whom each of us lives, moves, and has her being. That this immortal self is our true self is made especially clear in "The Implications of Self-Consciousness," where Royce identifies two distinguishing features of an "Idealism of the post-Kantian type" (p. 145). The first is "a criticism of the inner nature of finite self-consciousness." Its main finding is that "the true Self is . . . far more than the 'empirical' self of ordinary consciousness." "The flickering and limited self-consciousness of any moment of my life," Royce writes, "logically implies far more than it directly contains." It logically implies the presence of "far more of a self than I now know myself to be" (p. 145). The second feature is that external objects, "although external to this finite self," are "not external to the true and complete Self of which this finite self is an organic part" (pp. 145-6). "Uniting these two features we have," Royce explains,

this result: The self of finite consciousness is not yet the whole true Self. And the true Self is inclusive of the whole world of objects. Or, in the other words, the result is, that there

is and can be but one complete Self, and that all finite selves, and their objects, are organically related to this Self, are moments of its completeness, thoughts in its thoughts, and, I should add, Will in its Will, Individual elements in the life of the Absolute Individual. (p. 146)

2. *The argument's conclusion*

When idealism makes its first sustained appearance in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, it is as a postulate or hypothesis. In a chapter entitled "Idealism," Royce "consider[s] very generally and briefly what idealism could do for us *if it were established*" (*Religious Aspect*, p. 334, my emphasis). The brief account he gives is the fullest in his writings, and I'll review its outcome before we turn to his proof.³⁰

Considered hypothetically, as a potentially "simple, adequate, and consistent hypothesis about the nature of external reality" (p. 338), idealism is defined by Royce as the view that "*our thought is true by reason of its correspondence to the facts of an actual consciousness external to our own*" (p. 342). This, as he explains, is simply Berkeley's hypothesis ("there is an *Omnipresent Eternal Mind*, which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view"), stripped of its causal and teleological commitments (p. 342; for the quotation from the *Three Dialogues*, see p. 340). The hypothesized relation between our thoughts and those of the external mind is correspondence, pure and simple. It's not part of the hypothesis that the external mind is the cause of our thoughts, or that the external mind ordains the correspondence in order to achieve some end or purpose. Correspondence itself is somewhat abstractly understood (p. 343):³¹

In order . . . that my consciousness should correspond to some other consciousness, external to mine, it is only necessary that for each event or fact in my consciousness there should exist some event or fact in the other consciousness, and that some relation existing among my conscious states should be like or parallel to the relation existing among the conscious states external to mind. The more numerous the points of resemblance between the two series of states, the closer the correspondence. But correspondence in the abstract implies only some one definite and permanent resemblance found throughout the two series.

The correspondence between my consciousness and the omnipresent eternal mind is, however, *perfect*: every relation existing among my conscious states has its mirror in relations holding among the conscious states of the Absolute. Royce makes this point by considering my thought of a clock, which includes not only my present consciousness of its outward condition, but various "possibilities of sensation" (p. 344). Both my present consciousness and those possibilities must be "represented," in the form of what Royce calls "facts," in the hypothesized eternal consciousness (p. 345). Because I conceive of the clock as inhabiting a universe—as a thing related to its now unseen parts and inner workings; to the wall on which it hangs; to the people who consult it; to the building it occupies; to the neighborhood around it; to its maker; to its restorer; to the motions of the sun and moon and to the fixed stars in far-off space—every one of its co-inhabitants will be reflected in the consciousness of the "Knowing One" (p. 345).³² In this consciousness, all of my possibilities of sensation—indeed, all of *anyone's* possibilities of sensation—are actually *present*.³³ "For us," Royce explains, "colors and odors suggest possible sensations, which science interprets as being in the last analysis the possible sensations known as atoms, motions, velocities, distances. For the universal consciousness, these atoms, motions, velocities, and distances, or the ultimate facts to which these notions correspond, are not possible but actual data" (p. 347).³⁴

Royce imposes various requirements on the idealist hypothesis, but the most important is that it capture what we mean when we speak of the world as "external." Royce is confident that it does so:

This supposed universal knowing consciousness, this "Not-Ourselves," has, under the conditions stated, all the essential characteristics of a real world. It is beyond us; it is independent of us; its facts have a certain correspondence to our sensations. Under the supposition that by nature we tend to be in agreement with this consciousness, progress in the definiteness and extent of our agreement with it may be both possible and practically useful. This agreement would constitute truth. (p. 346)

Note that this universal knowing consciousness is not said to be the *cause* of our sensations. This is deliberate. Royce denies that the Absolute is, like the God of Berkeley or Edwards, the cause of our sensations. And he denies that being the cause of our sensations is an essential component of our conception of external reality. These denials will occupy us later on, but let me say a bit more about them here.

In *The Religious Aspect*, Royce's God is no creator. "A creator would have to be finite," he explains (p. 476), and that for two reasons: its "infinite Power would become finite as soon as there was in existence something outside of it" (p. 274; I find this point obscure), and, more tellingly, "the concept of producing an external thing *involves, of necessity, a relation to a Law, above both producer and product, which determines the conditions under which there can be a product at all*" (p. 274). Hence "the creative power must . . . work under conditions, however magical and mysterious its acts may be. And working under conditions, it must be finite" (pp. 274-5). The existence of a creator (as opposed to an all-knower) could only be established by experience (p. 274), and "experience furnishes no evidence of single creative powers that are at once unlimited and good" (pp. 476-7). (The argument from error is, by contrast, *a priori*.) "God as Power would be nothing, or finite. God as thought can be and is all in all" (p. 477). "The World of Divine Life" is "in deepest truth not a Power at all, but the Infinite Knowing One, for whom are all the powers, but who is above them all, beyond them all,—no striving good principle that cannot get realized in a wicked world, but an absolute Judge that perfectly estimates the world. In the contemplation of this truth we may find a religious comfort" (p. 382).

3. *The argument's structure*

The argument from error is, at its most abstract, a dilemma. "Total relativity, or else an infinite possibility of truth and error; that is the alternative before us. And total relativity of thought involves self-contradiction" (p. 422). We have a choice to make, between what he calls the total relativity of truth on the one hand, and the infinite possibility of objective error on the other. Total relativity is self-defeating or contradictory, so we have no choice but to acknowledge that the threat of error—the threat of *objective* error—is omnipresent and perpetual. No matter what we think, there's a chance that it's mistaken. Now, as we focus in more closely on the argument's details, comes an inference to the best explanation—indeed, an inference to the only possible explanation. (The argument wouldn't be a *demonstration* if any other explanation were possible. Hence Royce declares, in *The World and the Individual* [1: 349], that the argument's conclusion is logically or absolutely necessary.)³⁵ That the chance of error casts its shadow over all of our judgments can be explained in just one way: by supposing that all our ideas and judgments, and all of their objects, are present to a single absolute mind. In fact, Royce insists, mere presence isn't enough: they have to be *constituted* by the mind's awareness of them.³⁶

Royce formulates the doctrine of total relativity in several ways. They all have two things in common: first (the negative part), the insistence that there is no *real* or *objective* difference between truth and error; and second (the positive or constructive part), the suggestion that when call things true or false, we're appealing to a *subjective* standard (pp. 379, 420, 421). Formulations differ because the suggested standards—or "indexes," as I will call them—vary. In one of Royce's statements of the doctrine (pp. 393-4), talk of truth and falsehood is indexed to social consensus: "there's no real difference between truth and error, but only a kind of opinion or consensus of men about a conventional distinction between what they choose to call truth and what they choose to call error." The view resembles what Thrasymachus proposes in *Republic* 1, when he says that justice is the advantage of the stronger. When Royce restates the doctrine a bit later (p. 420), its social character has disappeared. Now the index seems to lie in each of us, taken separately, though it isn't clear exactly what it is:³⁷

Every judgment, *A is B*, in fact does agree and can agree only with its own object, which is present in mind when it is made. With no external object can it agree or fail to agree. It stands alone, with its own object. It has neither truth nor error beyond itself. It fulfills all its intentions, and is true, if it agrees with what was present to it when it was thought. Only in this sense is there any truth or falsity possible for thought.

Still elsewhere, but perhaps even in the passage I've just quoted, the index isn't merely individual but momentary. "Every sincere judgment is indeed true for the moment in which it is made," Royce writes, laying out a relativistic view he confesses he once held, "but not necessarily true for other moments" (p. 388). Indexes, then, can vary. In the three versions we've considered (if the second is really distinct from the third), the relativizing index (or the entity in which the index lies) is ever more drastically circumscribed. At first it was a social group. Next it was an individual. Finally it was a moment or dispensation in the life of an individual. Other versions of the doctrine are easy to imagine.

Royce, as I said, confesses that he once "tried" to hold the doctrine (p. 387). The . . . doctrine to be sure has no real meaning," he says, "but the author used with many others to fancy that it had" (p. 388). Reading Kant was to blame, he explains. It had convinced him that our judgments are founded "on a union of thought and sense" (p. 387), on an integration of *a priori* forms of intuition with *a priori* concepts of the understanding that might well be temporary. This integration makes things appear to us as they do. "If either thought or sense altered its character," however, "truth would alter" (p. 388). Hence sincere judgments are true for the moment in which they are made, but not necessarily true for other moments (p. 388). But in this form or any other, Royce insists, the doctrine of total relativity is self-refuting: "meaningless" (as he says on pp. 376, 388, and 394) or self-contradictory (as he says on p. 422). Here is the argument:

If there is no real distinction between truth and error, then the statement that there is such a difference is not really false, but only *seemingly* false. And then *in truth* there is the distinction once more. Try as you will, you come not beyond the fatal circle. If it is wrong to say that there is Absolute Truth, then the statement that there is absolute truth is itself false. Is it however false only relatively, or is it false absolutely? If it is false only relatively, then it is *not* false absolutely. Hence the statement that it is false absolutely is itself false. But false absolutely, or false relatively? And thus you must at last come to some statement that is absolutely false or absolutely true, or else the infinite regress into which you are driven makes the very distinction between absolute and relative truth lose all meaning, and your doctrine of total Relativity will also lose meaning. "No absolute truth exists,"—can you say this if you want to? At least you must add, "No absolute truth exists *save this truth itself, that no absolute truth exists.*" Otherwise your statement has no

sense. But if you admit this truth, then there is in fact an absolute distinction between truth and error. (pp. 375-6)

Here Royce is zeroing in on the relativist's first or negative claim: the common core of all of the versions I've identified. Could a canny relativist refuse to say that the claim is objectively true? Could the claim simply be that it's *seemingly* true? Perhaps so, but then Royce would of course ask whether it's objectively true that it's seemingly true, and he could direct a similar question at any relativist's version of the second or constructive claim: is it objectively true that our judgments are called true or false only in relation to your chosen index? I'm not sure I see why the regress, as far as the relativist is concerned, has to end. He or she might be content as a rook, circling ever higher above Royce's goshawk. Royce will tire eventually, but he has a parting shot, which is that nothing has yet been said. To that, the relativist can shrug his shoulders. Of course, Royce can shrug his own shoulders in turn, but I'm not sure what we, observing from the ground, should make of it all.

If you're a skeptic, and especially if you're a self-conscious skeptic—one who takes himself to be doubting, *really* doubting as opposed to doubting seemingly—you can bypass the first stage of Royce's argument. As Royce understands you at least, you're already committed to a real difference between truth and error. Your worry is that we can't safely discriminate between them. Unlike the total relativist, you think that objective error is possible.³⁸ But how?³⁹

4. Royce's pragmatism

Royce's argument from error is shaped by a pragmatism that becomes, over the course of the argument's restatements, more pronounced.⁴⁰ Royce's first ambition was always analytical, as were those of James in the lectures published as *Pragmatism*. James asks throughout what various realities (or alleged realities) *are*, and to ask this, he advises, is no more than to ask what they are *known as* (see pp. 50, 74, 86 138, and 142 in the original edition). Royce's analytical project moves in the very same direction. "What do you now *mean*," Royce asks, in a sympathetic exposition of Berkeley (whom James was to identify as a predecessor in pragmatism, "by calling [something] real?" "No doubt it *is* known as somehow real," he says, "but *what* is this reality *known as* being?" (*The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 357). With this question alone, Royce begins releasing idealist energies that had always been present in pragmatism, as Peirce for example recognized. For the pragmatist, Peirce proclaims, "the absolutely incognizable is absolutely inconceivable." The pragmatist's criterion of meaning is both anti-Cartesian (because it denies the existence of unknowable realities) and "directly idealistic," according to Peirce, for,

since the meaning of a word is the conception it conveys, the absolutely incognizable has no meaning because no conception attaches to it. It is, therefore, a meaningless word; and, consequently, whatever is meant by any term as "the real" is cognizable in some degree, and so is of the nature of a cognition, in the objective sense of that term. ("Some Consequences of Four Incapacities")

Full (ontological) idealism is the doctrine that the real is of the nature of cognition is the *formal* sense of that term, and we are not yet there. But Royce thinks that we are on our way—on our way to the conclusion that "there can exist no fact except as a known fact, as a fact present to some consciousness" (*The World and the Individual*, 1: 397).

In *The World and the Individual*, Royce's pragmatism is especially evident.⁴¹ "What," he asks there, "is an idea?" (p. 16). An idea is not a moment of "purely intellectual life" (p. 21). Nor

are ideas "merely images" (p. 22). They include a consciousness of how we propose to act. Ideas are "the motor soul of life," packed with will and "active meaning." They embody attitudes and intended behavior. They are, quite simply, "plans of action" (p. 22). Each is the fulfillment, however partial, of a purpose (p. 24). Ideas are "tools" (p. 309) with a defining "teleological structure" (p. 310). They are "volitional process[es]" that embody both purpose and meaning (p. 311). In his posthumously published *Lectures on Modern Idealism* (in the editing of which his student Jacob Loewenberg did have a hand, perhaps a heavy one [p. vii]), Royce, in a passage to which we will return, seems to endorse the pragmatic theory of truth:⁴²

Idealism has appeared in recent thought partly as pragmatism, insisting that all truth is practical, that is, is true by virtue of its practical relation to some finite need. For many thinkers, pragmatism is essentially opposed to an absolutism which suggests, or perhaps positively maintains, that the world in its wholeness has an absolute constitution in the light of which all finite truth must be interpreted. Now I myself am far from pretending to possess any peculiar revelation as to what the content of absolute truth may be. But I do maintain that a pragmatist to whom whatever is true, is true relatively, that is, with reference to some finite need or definition, is actually in need as I am of attributing to his world whatever constitution it actually possesses. Truth meets need; truth is also true. Of these two propositions I conceive idealism to be constituted. If one attempts to define a world of merely relative truth, this world, as soon as you define it in its wholeness, becomes once more your absolute, your truth that is true. In acknowledging truth we are indeed meeting, or endeavoring to meet, a need which always expresses itself in finite form. But this need can never be satisfied by the acknowledgment of anything finite as the whole truth. For, as Hegel well insisted, the finite is as such self-contradictory, dialectical, burdened with irrationality. It passes away. Meanwhile it struggles with its own contradictions, and will not be content with acknowledging anything less than its own fulfilment in an Absolute Life which is also an absolute truth. . . . I may assert that personally I am both a pragmatist and an absolutist, that I believe each of these doctrines to involve the other, and that therefore I regard them not only as reconcilable but as in truth reconciled. (pp. 257-8).

I should add something about Royce's persistent linking of an inquiry into what error is with an inquiry into how error is possible (as on pp. 390-2 of *The Religious Aspect*). He's after a "real definition" in the traditional sense—one that will exhibit the "cause" of the thing in question, and establish its possibility. The search for real as opposed to merely nominal definitions is, I think, the best context in which to view pragmatism.

5. *The case against the common sense alternative*

In *Pragmatism*, William James set out to analyze truth or agreement with reality. Royce is interested in analyzing *candidacy* for truth or agreement with reality.⁴³ What makes something *eligible* for truth and falsehood? James argues that agreement doesn't attach to a truth in isolation, meaning: in isolation from us, our aims, our practices. Royce argues that eligibility for truth ("truth-evaluability," as it's called by philosophers nowadays) doesn't attach to a judgment in isolation. The judgment can't "reach out" to its object—to the fact with which it hopes to agree—unless it's part of an "organism of thought."⁴⁴ So a judgment's truth-evaluability exists only in reference to "a higher inclusive thought," which must, "in the last analysis, be assumed as Infinite and all-inclusive" (p. 393).⁴⁵

In *The Religious Aspect*, Royce offers common sense realism as the only alternative to his absolute idealism. Common sense, he says, treats each judgment as a separate creation (p. 393). The judgment stands alone (not in isolation from the judging mind, but in isolation from other judgments), looking towards its object, yearning to agree with it (p. 393). But the object, according to common sense, isn't present to the mind. How, then, does the judging mind look towards it?

In order to be in error my judgment needs an object. That object (p. 397) is neither the subject of the judgment (that is, its "subject-idea," on which see p. 403) nor its predicate (or "predicate-idea," on which see p. 403 again).⁴⁶ These ideas are in the mind. They are constituents of the mental occurrence that is the judgment.⁴⁷ The object, by contrast, is something external to the judgment. But of "the infinity of real or possible objects," how does the judgment pick out the one that is its own (p. 397)?⁴⁸ (Royce never really makes it clear whether the object of which he speaks is an object in the world corresponding to the subject-idea, or, supposing the judgment is true, a fact in the world corresponding to the judgment as a whole. I'm going to assume, for now and with admitted uncertainty, that it's the first rather than the second, partly because Royce seems to think even a judgment that is false has a corresponding object in the world. [Could it be, though, an intentional object—an object *as conceived*? So much is suggested by p. 399, but Royce has to show more than that *intentional* objects exist in the Absolute. He has to show that worldly objects *themselves* exist there.] If the judgment is false, that object can't be a fact. The "object" corresponding to a false judgment could be what we sometimes call a proposition—a Fregean thought—but that wouldn't be an object in the world, at least not according to common sense, whose presuppositions Royce now seems to be granting.) There must be something in the judgment that makes the selection. Royce calls it "the intention wherewith the judgment is accompanied" (p. 397). But how is such an intention possible? In order to intend the object, the judgment (in company with the intention, which we're meant to see as a constituent of the judgment) must "know" it (p. 398).⁴⁹ But the isolated judgment *doesn't* know it, because the isolated judgment, if in error, is wrong about it. Remember that we're talking about an isolated judgment. It isn't directed towards its object by its fellow judgments, but stands alone. So we can't correct the problem by introducing other judgments, even true judgments.⁵⁰ (Here I'm suggesting, in effect, that common sense can't accommodate a genuine holism. See p. 405 for an indication that Royce himself agrees.)

This brings common sense up against the following undermining syllogism (pp. 398-9):

Everything intended is something known.

The object even of an erroneous judgment is intended.

[Therefore] *The object even of error is something known.*

Or: Only what is known can be erred about.

The problem is that this contradicts the fact that the object of an erroneous judgment is not known—not by the judgment in question, anyway. Common sense has no way around this antinomy; it has too little to work with. Royce anticipates that common sense "will at once reply . . . that our syllogism uses *known* ambiguously." But on the common sense view,

the object of any judgment is just that portion of the then conceived world, just that fragment, that aspect, that element of a supposed reality, which is seized upon for the purpose of just this judgment. Only such a momentarily grasped fragment of the truth can

possibly be present in any one moment of thought as the object of a single assertion. Now it is hard to say how within this arbitrarily chosen fragment itself there can still be room for the partial knowledge that is sufficient to give to the judgment its object, but insufficient to secure the judgment in its accuracy. If I aim at a mark with my gun, I can fail to hit it, because choosing and hitting a mark are two distinct acts. But, in the judgment, choosing and knowing the object seem inseparable. No doubt somehow our difficulty is soluble, but we are here trying first to show that it is a difficulty. (p. 399)

The argument so far has been perfectly general, as Royce observes on p. 406. But beginning in section V, on p. 406, he offers a series of striking applications.

I might be in error about my neighbor's states of mind (p. 406). How can I intend my neighbor as the object of my thoughts when my neighbor is not an object for me at all (p. 408)? Here Royce is thinking of what I earlier called a subject-term. (Royce's dependence is very much like what we now call "direction of fit." As I've learned from Gabriel Marcel, this act of stretching towards a vaguely felt beyond is the germ of what became, in *The World and the Individual*, the volitional character of ideas.⁵¹) How do we make John or Thomas our object? My conception of Thomas is one thing and the real Thomas is another (p. 408). (I should probably note that this example comes from Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said that when John and Thomas have a conversation, "at least six personalities" are taking part in the dialogue, the real John, "known only to his Maker"; John's ideal John; Thomas's ideal John; the real Thomas; Thomas's ideal Thomas; and John's ideal Thomas. See *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1889], pp. 71, 72.) It is my conception of Thomas, rather than Thomas, that enters into my thought. So how does the real Thomas enter in? Royce's answer is that according to common sense he never does.

Can common sense reply that my conception of Thomas can represent the real Thomas? Yes, Royce admits, but what is representation? A plausible answer is that picking out an object is a matter of fit. But, Royce objects, resemblance isn't enough. On p. 413, he considers a dream "to which there should happen to correspond some real scene or event in the world." "Such correspondence would not make the dream really 'true,' nor yet false." "It would be a coincidence, remarkable for an outside observer, but none the less would the dreamer be thinking in his dream not about external objects, but about the things in his dream" (p. 413).⁵² Then there is the memorable case of A and B, which he starts putting together later on p. 413. A and B live in separate rooms. There is no communication between the rooms. (They are, as he says on p. 416, in "perpetual imprisonment.") But there are pictures of B's room on the wall of A's room, and pictures of A's room on the wall of B's room. *And the pictures are accurate.* "A cannot make mistakes about the real room of B," says Royce, "for he will never even think of that real room" (p. 414).

A well-known painting by Magritte provides a vivid illustration of Royce's point.⁵³ If I see only the canvas, I do not thereby see the landscape, even if the two of them are, as in the painting, perfectly matched.



Elsewhere Royce uses the mental life of replicas or twins to argue against the sufficiency of likeness. "I have, for instance, in me the idea of a pain. Another man has a pain just like mine. Say we both have toothache; or have both burned our finger-tips the same way. Now my idea of pain is just like the pain in him, but I am not on that account necessarily thinking about *his* pain, merely because what I am thinking about, namely my own pain, resembles his pain. No; to think about an object you must not merely have an idea that resembles the object, but you must *mean* to have your idea resemble that object" (*The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 370). In *The World and the Individual*, his statement of the case brings him close to the "Twin Earth" arguments of present-day philosophy:

If in fact you suppose, as an ideal case, two human beings, say twins, absolutely to resemble each other, not only in body, but in experience and in thought, so that every idea which one of these beings at any moment had was precisely duplicated by a thought which at the same instant, and in the same fashion, arose in the other being's life,—if, I say, you suppose this perfect resemblance in the twin minds, you could still, without inconsistency, suppose these twins separate from infancy, living apart, although of course under perfectly similar physical conditions, and in our human sense what we call absolute strangers to each other, so that neither of them, viewed merely as this human being, ever consciously thought of the other, or conceived of the other's existence. In that case, the mere resemblance would not so far constitute the one of these twin minds the object of which the other mind thought, or the being concerning whom the ideas of the other were true. (I: 350-1)

Meaning, as we now say, "ain't in the head." The lesson Royce draws is different: "the resemblance of idea and object, viewed as a mere fact for an external observer, is . . . never by itself enough to constitute the truth of the idea. Nor is the absence of any externally predetermined resemblances, such as you from without may choose to demand of the idea, enough to constitute any specific sort of error" (p. 351). The key words here are those conveying externality. There is no *external* fact

that constitutes anyone's *intending* or *meaning* the object he or she intends or means. (Now we're on our way to a superlative fact, of course.)

To return to Thomas, even if there were a perfect fit between my conception of Thomas and the real Thomas, my only object, other than my conception of Thomas, would be an ideal Thomas tailored to my conception, rather than the real Thomas. Common sense tells us that Thomas is never in our thoughts, but that we can "blunder about him" nonetheless (p. 409). But common sense can't tell us how we do so, because the object of our "phantom Thomas" is "ideal Thomas," the Thomas that fits our phantom to a "T".

Further illustrations concern the future (pp. 417-18) and the past (p. 419). Future moments, for example, "are not now given to my consciousness" (p. 418).

I may postulate . . . that I can [later] look back and say: Thus and thus I predicted about this moment, and thus and thus it has come to pass, and this even contradicts that expectation. But can I in fact ever accomplish this comparison at all? And is the comparison very easily intelligible? For when the event comes to pass, the expectation no longer exists. The two thoughts, namely expectation and actual experience, are separate thoughts, far apart in time. How can I bring them together to compare them, so as to see if they have the same object? It will do to appeal to memory for the purpose; for the same question would recur about the memory in its relation to the original thought. How an a past thought, being past, be compared to a present thought to see whether they stand related? (pp. 418-19)

6. Royce's solution

Royce restates the difficulty on p. 420: "If every judgment is . . . by its nature bound up in a closed circle of thought, with no outlook, can any one come afterwards and give it an external object?" We might throw up our hands. "Shall we now give up the whole matter, and say that error plainly exists, but baffles definition" (p. 422)? His reply is that "this way may please most people, but the critical philosophy knows of no unanswerable problem affecting the work of thought in itself considered." This is Benjamin Peirce's old principle of Correspondence.⁵⁴ It is a premiss in Royce's argument, and it complicates his claim of demonstration.

Royce's solution is to suppose that John and Thomas, for example, are both actually present to and included in a third and higher thought (p. 22). He supposes the same about the past and future, which had provided him with other cases in which the mind's purported (or sought-for) object of thought lies beyond it. (Thus he asks, on p. 419, how a "not-given future [can] be a real object of any thought." And "a present thought and a past thought are in fact separate, even as were John and Thomas.") "Let us," he writes,

overcome all our difficulties by declaring that all the many Beyonds, which single significant judgments seem vaguely and separately to postulate, are present as fully realized intended objects to the unity of an all-inclusive, absolutely clear, universal, and conscious thought, of which all judgments, true or false, are but fragments, the whole being at once Absolute Truth and Absolute Knowledge. Then all our puzzles will disappear at a stroke, and error will be possible, because any one finite thought, viewed in relation to its own intent, may or may not be seen by this higher thought as successful and adequate in this intent. (p. 423)

But how? If the absolute is directly acquainted with Thomas, how does that help me? The case is much the same, he suggests, as when I judge that the color now before me is red, and realize I would blunder were I to judge it blue. "One includes in one's present thought three distinct elements, and has them present in the unity of a single moment of insight. These elements are, first, the perception of red; secondly, the reflective judgment whose object is this perception, and whose agreement with the object constitutes its own truth; and, thirdly, the erroneous reflection, *This is blue*, which is in the same thought compared with the perception and rejected as error" (p. 423). It is the co-presence of all these elements "that makes their relation plain" (p. 424). Just so, Royce writes,

we must conceive the relation of John's thought to the united total of thought that includes him and Thomas. Real John and his phantom Thomas, real Thomas and his phantom John, are all present as elements in the including consciousness, which completes the incomplete intentions of both the individuals, constitutes their true relations, and gives the thought of each about the other whatever of truth or error it possess. In short, error becomes possible as one moment or element in a higher truth, that is, in a consciousness that makes the error a part of itself, while recognizing its error. (p. 424)

But what does it mean for the absolute to complete my incomplete intention? "Only as actually included in a higher thought, that gives to the first its completed object, and compares it therewith, is the first thought in error. It remains otherwise a merely mental fragment, a torso, a piece of drift-wood, neither true nor false, objectless, no completed 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" (p. 431).

In what does the knowledge of the Absolute consist? The all-inclusive Thinker is directly acquainted with them all. And this is because they all exist in (that is, inhere in, and have no existence apart from) the all-inclusive Thinker:

The deepest assertion of idealism is not that above all the evil powers in the world there is at work some good power mightier than they, but rather that through all the powers, good and evil, and in them all, dwells the higher spirit that does not so much create as constitute them what they are, and so include them all. (p. 335)

This universal consciousness and the individual minds make up together the sum total of reality. (p. 351)

All reality must be present to the Unity of the Infinite Thought. . . . You and I and all of us, all good, all evil, all truth, all falsehood, all things actual and possible, exist as they exist, and are known for what they are, in and to the absolute thought. (p. 433)

All things are for Thought, and in it we live and move. (p. 435)

This Universal Thought . . . we have ventured . . . to call God. It is not the God of very much of the traditional theology. . . . We do not regard the Universal Thought as in any commonly recognized sense a Creator. (p. 476)

The absolute is, as Royce says, a *constituter*, and it constitutes things by being conscious of them. But is this solution, along with the many new questions it raises, out of proportion to the problem it's meant to solve?⁵⁵

7. Assessment

William James was exhilarated, and perhaps for a time convinced, by his younger colleague's argument from error.⁵⁶ "California may feel proud," he concluded in a review, "that a son of hers should at a stroke have scored so many points in a game not yet exceedingly familiar on the Pacific slope." "Turn and twist as we will," he wrote, "we are caught in a tight trap. Although we cannot help believing that our thoughts *do* mean realities and are true or false of them, we cannot for the life of us ascertain how they *can* mean them. If thought be one thing and reality another, by what pincers, from out of all the realities, does the thought pick out the special one it intends to know?" James was ready to agree with Royce that the question is insoluble on common-sense terms, and "to suspect that his idealistic escape from the quandary may be the best one for us all to take."⁵⁷ I too find Royce's argument a creative response to a profound difficulty, but I'm inclined to hold back, taking my cue more from James's cautious words (he *suspects* that Royce's route *may* be the *best* one to *take*, leaving us with several points at which we might excuse ourselves) than from his tone.

(i) *Presence to the Absolute v. constitution by the Absolute.* My most elementary difficulty is that I don't think Royce succeeds in explaining why the absolute has to be a *constituter*. Why doesn't the argument establish only that the absolute must *know* or *perceive* all things? Why does it follow that being perceived by the absolute must *constitute* them?⁵⁸

(ii) "*What do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations?*"—Berkeley, in the *Principles of Human Knowledge*. At least in *The Religious Aspect*, Royce seems to assume, with Berkeley, that we're acquainted with nothing other than our own conceptions or ideas, and when he asks whether those conceptions or ideas can represent anything beyond them, he gives detailed consideration only to likeness or resemblance. These policies or assumptions should be defended.⁵⁹ On p. 407 of *The Religious Aspect*, Royce cleverly observes that "even a Scot will admit that I have nothing but representative knowledge of my neighbor's thoughts and feelings." But the Scot won't admit that he has nothing but representative knowledge of bodies. In the end, Royce needs his argument to be perfectly general, as he often emphasizes. Only then will he get to the Absolute. (I understand that this may only be the beginning of a long argument. The same holds for my other objections. But Royce claims to be *demonstrating* his conclusion.)

(iii) *Acquaintance v. description.* Why not solve the problem of error as follows? The subject-term of a judgment picks out an object, while the predicate-term picks out a potential property of the object. The judgment says that the object selected by the subject term has the property selected by the predicate-term. The object and property are known. But the truth of the proposition is not known. (Royce himself speaks in almost identical terms in *The World and the Individual*, 1: 319-20. The point here is that this way of talking seems to be available to common sense. A judgment, even on the common sense view, isn't as undifferentiated—as "blank" or unarticulated—as Royce makes it out to be.) The distinction between knowledge of things and knowledge of truths is emphasized by Bertrand Russell. We can be acquainted with the "things"—the object and their possible properties—and thereby form the thought or make the judgment. This is akin to aiming. But whether we hit the mark—whether the thought or proposition is true—is a further question. The following passage appears in Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy*, in a chapter tellingly entitled "Idealism":

[I]t is by no means a truism, and is in fact false, that we cannot know that anything exists which we do not know. The word 'know' is here used in two different senses. (1) In its first use it is applicable to the sort of knowledge which is opposed to error, the sense in which what we know is true, the sense which applies to our beliefs and convictions, i.e. to what are called *judgements*. In this sense of the word we know *that* something is the case. This sort of knowledge may be described as knowledge of *truths*. (2) In the second use of the word 'know' above, the word applies to our knowledge of *things*, which we may call *acquaintance*. This is the sense in which we know sense-data. (The distinction involved is roughly that between *savoir* and *connaître* in French, or between *wissen* and *kennen* in German.)

Thus the statement which seemed like a truism becomes, when re-stated, the following: 'We can never truly judge that something with which we are not acquainted exists.' This is by no means a truism, but on the contrary a palpable falsehood. I have not the honour to be acquainted with the Emperor of China, but I truly judge that he exists. It may be said, of course, that I judge this because of other people's acquaintance with him. This, however, would be an irrelevant retort, since, if the principle were true, I could not know that any one else is acquainted with him. But further: there is no reason why I should not know of the existence of something with which *nobody* is acquainted. This point is important, and demands elucidation.

If I am acquainted with a thing which exists, my acquaintance gives me the knowledge that it exists. But it is not true that, conversely, whenever I can know that a thing of a certain sort exists, I or some one else must be acquainted with the thing. What happens, in cases where I have true judgement without acquaintance, is that the thing is known to me by *description*, and that, in virtue of some general principle, the existence of a thing answering to this description can be inferred from the existence of something with which I am acquainted.

C. S. Peirce makes much the same point in a review of *The Religious Aspect*, written for *The Nation* (but never published there), called "An American Plato." He thinks Royce mistakenly assumes that objects must always be captured descriptively.

If the subject of discourse had to be distinguished from other things, if it all, by a general terms, that is, by its peculiar characters, it would be quite true that its complete segregation would require a full knowledge of its characters and would preclude ignorance. But the index, which in point of fact alone can designate the subject of a proposition, designates it without implying any character at all. A blinding flash of lightning forces my attention and directs it to a certain moment of time with an emphatic "Now!"

"Index," for Peirce, is a technical term, the ancestor of our word "indexical." An "*index*," he explains, "like a pointing finger, exercises a real physiological *force* over the attention, like the power of a mesmerizer, and directs it to a particular object of sense. One such index at least must enter into every proposition, its function being to designate the subject of discourse" ("An American Plato"). It directs our attention to objects not by insight into their characters, but by "blind compulsion" ("Index," 1: 532 in Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*). It is "difficult, if not impossible, to instance an absolutely pure index," but it's no less difficult, in Peirce's view, "to find any sign absolutely devoid of the indexical quality" (*Dictionary*, p. 532).

Both Russell and Peirce suggest that acquaintance with an object will put us in a position to refer to it.⁶⁰

Royce does have some things to say here. In *The World and the Individual*, he argues that there are difficulties in knowing "individuality as such" (1: 292). External experience doesn't present us with individuals but with merely conceived "types" (p. 293). Nor can we define individuals abstractly (p. 295). We can work our way to *what's* that are more or less specifically defined, but no matter how finely we chop things, we'll never get down, by experience or by description, to a unique *that*. Their individuality—their "baffling no-other character"—will forever elude us (p. 295). We stand, then, in no immediate relation to any individual (p. 299). An individual, with respect to any finite mind, is a "limit" (pp. 297, 298, 299), reached only in the absolute. (Peirce's reply to this would be a Kantian one, that Royce has intellectualized appearances. Hence Peirce, in "An American Plato," calls on Kant's doctrine of intuition, and on the brute individuating power of space and time. This is the beginning of a "naturalist" response to Royce's argument that culminates in Dewey.)

(iv) *How do my intentions exist in the Absolute? Are they present to its consciousness as objects or ideas are, or is the relation between them more intimate—and more "inward"?* For the story I am telling in this lectures, this is the most important worry. Is an intention (or an intention as Royce understands it) something the Absolute *perceives*, as it perceives objects and ideas?⁶¹ Are intentions objects of *observation*? I'm inclined to say no: they are not objects of observation or introspection *even for me*. I know my intentions by *enacting* them, by "having" or *performing* them. Their *esse* is not *percipi*, but *velle* or *agere*—as Berkeley says in his notebooks. But then the Absolute must *enact* my intention. But what then becomes of me? Is the intention any longer mine? It is constituted by divine enactment, so there is nothing left for me but to participate in it. But what is participation, and can it make the intention my own? We are back to Channing's worry about the pantheism of Edwards.

A similar point can be made about power. Is power (or power as Royce understands it) something the Absolute *perceives*? Here again I'm inclined to say that the *esse* of power is not *percipi*. Power simply isn't the sort of thing whose *esse could be percipi*—which is another point made by Berkeley. Berkeley's distinction between ideas and notions is often treated as an embarrassment. I'm treating it as an insight. The *esse* of power *would be percipi* if power were constant conjunction. But that just goes to show that it isn't. If Royce believes that power is objective, and if he doesn't reduce it to constant conjunction, he'll have to say that the Absolute constitutes power by *exercising* power. But then what becomes of me? Can an exercise of power any longer be my own?⁶²

8. Conclusion

"No accusation is more frequent than that an Idealism which has once learned to view the world as a rational whole, present in its actuality to the unity of a single consciousness, has then no room either for finite individuality, or for freedom of ethical action" (*The World and the Individual*, p. 433). This was our accusation against Edwards. Royce offers a complex response, in volume 2 of *The World and the Individual* and in *The Problem of Christianity*, that we cannot pursue here. (It is a partly attempt to transport the theory of finite individuality beyond the confining categories of traditional metaphysics.) His conception of God or the absolute is "not pantheistic. It is not the conception of any Unconscious Reality, into which finite beings are absorbed; nor of an Universal Substance, in whose law our ethical independence is lost; nor of an Ineffable Mystery, which we can only silently adore" (*The Conception of God*, p. 35). Howison, as we'll see

in next week's lecture, was not so sure. "We do not escape pantheism, and attain to theism, by the easy course of excluding the Unconscious, or the sole Substance, or the Inscrutable Mystery, from the seat of the Absolute. We must go farther, and attain to the distinct reality, the full *otherhood*, of the creation" (*The Conception of God*, p. 61). He worries that Royce has "reduce[d] all particular so-called selves merely to modes of his Omniscient Perceptive Conception," and made God "the only and only real *agent*," thereby robbing even God of personality, by robbing him of sociality—"the consciousness of self and of other selves as alike unconditional ENDS (p. 82). Royce gives us a union of God and man (*The World and the Individual*, 2: 479-80). *That are thou*, he often says there. In a late essay on "The Problem of Truth in the Light of Recent Discussion," he quotes Tennyson: "Oh living will that shalt endure / Flow through our deeds and make them pure."⁶³ It seems that he could just as easily have quoted Emerson: "From the heart of God proceeds, / A single will, a million deeds."⁶⁴ But if the will is God's, can the deeds be ours?⁶⁵

Kenneth P. Winkler
February 19, 2012

¹ This is the text of the fifth in a series of six lectures, honoring Isaiah Berlin, delivered at Oxford University in January and February, 2012. For the opportunity to give them, I'm grateful to the benefactors and electors of the Sir Isaiah Berlin Visiting Professorship in the History of Ideas, to the Faculty of Philosophy, and to Corpus Christi College. The present lecture was delivered on February 14. This document isn't an actual transcript of my talk—it was prepared before I spoke (and lightly edited afterwards), and contains more than I was actually able to cover—but it is written as if to be spoken. It is more loosely structured than a formal paper would be. Some of the footnotes are reminders to myself; others raise issues that call for further, more disciplined thought. This is, above all, a draft piece of work, and I ask that it not be quoted or cited without my permission.

² My source is Robert D. Richardson, Jr., *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 562-4. As Richardson observes, the University Lectures were in some respects like extension courses. It would be interesting to compare them, so viewed, to the lectures given at Bronson Alcott's Concord Summer School.

³ *Persons and Places: The Background of My Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 245. The next quotation is from pp. 245-6.

⁴ *The Autobiography of a Philosopher* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), p. 70. Palmer himself doesn't speak of professionalization, but in giving witness to "its entire development" and to his own role in "shaping its policies" (p. 48), he is charting what we now regard as the birth of his profession in America. For an insider's account of the rise of Harvard philosophy that concentrates less on its nuts and bolts, see George Santayana, *Character and Opinion in the United States* (New York: Norton, 1967), pp. 35-63. *Character and Opinion* was originally published in 1921. Professionalization is a main theme in Bruce Kuklick's *The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

⁵ The popular image of turn-of-the-century Harvard is of a hotbed of pragmatism, but of the five full professors who served in those years, three—Palmer, Royce, and Munsterberg—were professed idealists. As Santayana testified in 1921, "philosophic tradition in America has merged almost completely in German idealism. In a certain sense this system did not need to be adopted: something very like it had grown up spontaneously in New England in the form of transcendentalism and unitarian theology. Even the most emancipated and positivistic of the latest thinkers—pragmatists, new realists, pure empiricists—have been bred in the atmosphere of German idealism" (*Character and Opinion*, p. 145). Judging from the resentful tone of Munsterberg, who laments pragmatism's "spread[ing] among our academic youth like a contagious disease" (*Science and Idealism* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906], p. 29), and the subsequent misgivings of Ralph Barton Perry, who had been a graduate student at Harvard in the 1890's ("Realism in Retrospect," p. 188 in *Contemporary American Philosophy: Personal Statements*, edited by George P. Adams and Wm. Pepperell Montague [London: Allen & Unwin, 1930], volume 1), pragmatism prevailed among the graduate students, even as the idealism of the old guard (or as

Munsterberg put it, their "unprejudiced study of Kant and Fichte," p. 29) inoculated most of them against it.

⁶ George Herbert Palmer, "Introduction," in *Contemporary American Philosophy*, 1: 20.

⁷ F. C. French, "Lectures versus Recitations," *Educational Review* 23 (1902), pp. 345-6. French was actually writing in criticism of the lecture system and in favor of a revamped system of recitations that would require more active participation from students.

⁸ This is in his 1870 introduction to Goodwin's edition of Plutarch's *Morals*.

⁹ See Royce, "Autobiographical Sketch," p. 128 in *The Hope of the Great Community* (New York: Macmillan, 1916). Things weren't any better between 1878 and 1882, when Royce, after receiving his Ph.D. in philosophy, returned to California to teach English. "There is no philosophy in California," he wrote in a letter to William James, "—from Siskiyou to Ft. Yuma, and from the Golden Gate to the summit of the Sierra. . . . Hence the atmosphere for the study of metaphysics is bad, and I wish I were out of it" (in Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James* [Boston: Little Brown, 1935], 1: 781).

¹⁰ I wish I could pause to relate more episodes from his life. In 1844, he took a long camping trip with his cousin John LeConte, who later became a renowned entomologist. I don't know whether they told John James Audubon about the birds they saw (Joseph collected birds for much of his life), but that same year, Audubon named a sparrow after "John LeConte"—either Joseph's cousin or his brother, who later served as president of the University of California. After meeting John Muir in 1870, Joseph became one of the founders of the Sierra Club. Audubon also named a thrasher after John LeConte.

¹¹ Quotations are from *The Autobiography of Joseph Le Conte*, edited by William Dallam Armes (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1903).

¹² Royce praises his former teacher, who first taught him to address philosophical questions "with the calmer piety and gentleness of the serious reason," in Josiah Royce, Sidney Edward Mezes, Joseph LeConte, and G. H. Howison, *The Conception of God* (Berkeley: Philosophical Union of the University of California, 1895), pp. 6-7. See also Royce's "Autobiographical Sketch" in *The Hope of the Great Community*, p. 128. For further details see John Clendenning, *The Life and Thought of Josiah Royce*, revised and expanded edition (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999), pp. 44-7.

¹³ LeConte is classed as an idealist by G. H. Howison, about whom we'll hear more later in this lecture and in the next. See Howison's contribution to *The Conception of God*, pp. 53-4. Howison and LeConte were intimate friends (see LeConte's *Autobiography*, p. 261). The upcoming quotations in the main text are from LeConte's contribution to *The Conception of God*, pp. 43-50. LeConte addresses the question of idealism directly in *Evolution and Its Relation to Religious Thought* (New York: D. Appleton, 1888), pp. 283-4. "But some will object that this is pure *Idealism*. Yes, but far different from what usually goes under that name. The ideal philosophy as usually understood regards the external world as having no real objective existence outside of *ourselves*—as literally such stuff as dreams are made of—as a mere phantasmagoria of trooping shadows having no real existence but in the mind of the dreamer, and each dreamer makes his

own world. Not so in the idealism [here] presented. According to *this* the external world is the objectified modes, not of the mind of the observer, but of the mind of God. According to this, the external world is not a mere unsubstantial figment or dream, but for *us* a very substantial objective reality surrounding us and conditioning us on every side." He goes on to consider the objection that his view is pantheistic, and again answers yes. In an earlier work, *Religion and Science: A Series of Sunday Lectures* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1875), LeConte disavows pantheism but seems to accept idealism. "What is spirit?," he asks. "It is this same all-pervading force of Nature—this same Divine energy, or a portion of it, individuated more and more until it becomes a separate entity, a self-conscious person" (p. 278). God "made all the forms which exist in the universe," and is "the ordainer of the laws of the universe, of the order and beauty of the cosmos"—a truth opposed to "*materialism*, which teaches that all this is done by forces and laws residing in matter itself" (p. 265).

¹⁴ The *Century Dictionary* was published in New York in 1889. I'm quoting from p. 331 in *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings (Values in a Universe of Chance)*, edited by Philip P. Wiener (New York: Dover, 1966).

¹⁵ For more details on the beginnings of Royce's career at Harvard see John J. McDermott, "The Confrontation Between Royce and Howison," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 30 (1994), pp. 779-90.

¹⁶ (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1885), p. xiii.

¹⁷ See also pp. 333-4: "Many writers have presented . . . idealism as a sort of product of poetical fantasy, and have thereby helped to bring it into disrepute."

¹⁸ Royce returns to Emerson's "Brahma" several times: in *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1849), p. 99 and especially p. 349, where he notes, as he had in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, the structural similarity between Emerson's imaginative insight and his own hard-won argument; and in his lectures on metaphysics as transcribed by several of his students (Josiah Royce, *Metaphysics: His Philosophy 9 Course of 1915-16*, edited by William Ernest Hocking, Richard Hocking, and Frank Oppenheim [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998], p. 187). There are fainter echoes of the Emersonian insight elsewhere in Royce, for example in *The World and the Individual*, 1: 427: "We win the presence of God when we most flee." For Royce's assessment of Emerson's historical significance, see the opening pages of "William James and the Philosophy of Life," pp. 3-45 in *William James and Other Essays on the Philosophy of Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1912). See also the interesting reflections in Clendenning, pp. 93-4.

¹⁹ *Character and Opinion*, p. 100.

²⁰ On p. 4 of *The World and the Individual*, Royce speaks of "the wilderness of solitary reflection." "None prize the home-coming more than those who wander farthest"—a point also made by Berkeley in the Preface to the *Three Dialogues*.

²¹ "Brahma," in *Collected Poems and Translations* (Library of Liberal Arts), p. 159. In Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Brahma is identified as "the principal deity of the Hindu pantheon. As originally conceived, Brahma may be compared to Spinoza's Substance. He was the one self-created and self-subsisting thing." Although Spinoza is now often read as a materialist,

his metaphysics served, in nineteenth-century America (due partly to the influence of Schelling), as a model for monistic idealism.

²² In the Preface to volume 1 of his Gifford Lectures, Royce says that "the philosophy here set forth is the result of a good many years of reflection. As to the most essential argument regarding the true relation between our finite ideas and the ultimate nature of things, I have never varied, in spirit, from the view maintained in Chapter XI of my first book, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*. That chapter was entitled *The Possibility of Error*, and was intended to show that the very conditions that make error possible concerning objective truth, can be consistently expressed only by means of an idealistic theory of the Absolute,—a theory whose outlines I there sketched. The argument in question has since been restated [in some of the intervening works I name above] without fundamental alteration of its character" (p. xiv). Later he says that in the lectures, "this argument assumes a decidedly new form, not because I am in the least disposed to abandon the validity of the former statements, but because, in the present setting, the whole matter appears in new relations to other philosophical problems, and becomes, as I hope, deepened in its signifi- cance by these relations" (p. xv).

²³ The conversation with Hale is recounted in Howison, "Josiah Royce: The Significance of His Work in Philosophy," p. 234. It must have taken place in 1882 or 1883; Howison didn't actually meet Royce until 1884.

²⁴ Thus T. L. S. Sprigge describes the basis of Royce's argument as "surprising" (*The God of Metaphysics* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006], p. 359).

²⁵ It is so classified by G. Watts Cunningham in his able and thorough survey, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy* (New York: Century, 1933), pp. 378-82, 428-51.

²⁶ *The Principle of Individuality and Value* (London: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 262, 267.

²⁷ This makes the argument "transcendental" in the present-day sense. Several commentators have stressed the transcendental character of Royce's argument. See for example W. J. Mander, "Royce's Argument for the Absolute," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36 (1998), pp. 443-57, p. 444. Another word for Royce's strategy is "dialectical." His conclusions are extracted from the presuppositions or concessions of his interlocutors. John E. Smith gives the following account of Royce's procedure. "He began with an accepted fact and sought to show that its reality necessitates the reality of its conditions, etc., until the analysis finally results in the necessary recognition of the infinite or absolute" (*Royce's Social Infinite: The Community of Interpretation* [Hamden: Archon Books, 1969], p. 18). Smith remarks that given such a starting point, Royce "was justified in calling attention to the empirical character of his philosophy."

²⁸ When Kant introduces the cosmological argument, he describes it as the proof "which Leibniz called the proof *a contingentia mundi*" (*Critique of Pure Reason* A 604/B 632).

²⁹ See Mander, "Royce's Argument for the Absolute," p. 453, where Mander takes note of echoes, in *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, of Plato's doctrine of recollection. Royce himself recalls another Platonic precedent in *The Religious Aspect*, p. 396: the *Theaetetus*, where, as Royce

explains, Socrates says "that his great difficulty has often been to see how any opinion can possibly be false." I think Royce's argument could be reformulated as an argument from inquiry.

³⁰ There may seem to be a fuller elaboration of idealism in Lectures VII and VIII of *The World and the Individual*, volume 1.

³¹ For more on correspondence see *The World and the Individual*, 1: 303-4.

³² When Royce calls this consciousness "hypothetical," he means only that it's *hypothesized* or *supposed* (p. 345).

³³ "We see the clock-face; and for us the inside of the clock is possible sensation only. For the supposed consciousness the inside of the clock will be as present as the outside" (p. 347).

³⁴ Are all these data present *at one moment* in the universal mind? Royce is cagey on this. On pp. 351-2, he says that the hypothesis settles the Kantian question of the subjectivity of space—it is subjective, considered as "belonging to the states of the universal consciousness," but "to us objective, since in thinking it we merely conform ourselves to the universal consciousness" (p. 352)—but he does not address the corresponding question about time. Elsewhere, immediately after saying that the hypothesis is silent "as to [the] succession" of the states of the World-Consciousness, he writes that individual conscious beings are made or unmade, "according as there arise or disappear in this universal consciousness certain groups of data that, as represented in our mortal thought, are called organic living bodies. . . . These groups pass, and with them the individual consciousness that coexisted with each" (p. 350). The latter claim seems to imply that the states of the World-Consciousness *are* successive, and therefore in time. All unmade individuals will be present to the World-Consciousness, but not at any one moment. This leaves me wondering, though, about possibilities that are never actualized. It seems that they can't be present *now*, because if they were, they'd be nosing out future actualities in the race towards being. But that means they can't be present at any *later* moment either. But then how are they present at all? One can say that they are present *as possibilities*, but this needs explaining. For an analysis of Royce's evolving views on succession in God or the absolute, see Smith, *Royce's Social Infinite*, pp. 13-18. For more on Royce and the open future, see the essay by Charles Hartshorne I cite below.

³⁵ See also "The Implications of Self-Consciousness," p. 162: "If then, this analysis of the concept of Personality be sound, there is logically possible but one existent Person, namely, the one complete Self." In *The World and the Individual*, Royce's presentation centers on an antinomy. The antinomy must be resolvable, and absolute idealism is (he argues) the only way of resolving it. For the antinomy and its resolution see 1: 320-4. I cannot examine the antinomy's resolution here. The whole of volume 1 of *The World and the Individual* is really one long argument for idealism. Being can be conceived in four different ways. The first three self-destruct. The fourth not only survives, but gives us everything (everything valuable or legitimate) that the first three views were seeking.

³⁶ Royce sometimes appeals to "immediate insight" (*The Religious Aspect*, p. 392). I'm not altogether sure what to make of this. On the page he also says that the argument "is not any effort to demonstrate in fair and orderly array, from any one principle or axiom, what must be the nature of error." He will, instead, proceed opportunistically, using "every and any device that may

offer itself, general analysis, special example, comparison and contrast of cases,—anything that shall lead us to the insight into what an error is and implies." But his dialectical argument—his argument that common sense collapses in contradiction when it tries to come to terms with error—is, I assume, intended as demonstrative, even if it is *ad hominem*. (The claim of demonstrability reappears on the title page of the second edition of *The Conception of God*, as I note in Lecture VI. I would say that Royce's *illustrations* are "opportunistic"—they are, at least, very varied and colorful—but at its core the argument still strikes me as demonstrative. We begin with two alternatives, total relativity and error's infinite possibility. Total relativity is reduced to absurdity. That leaves us with the possibility of error. There must be an explanation but there can be only two, common sense and absolute idealism. Common sense is reduced to absurdity. Absolute idealism is left standing, and it checks out.

³⁷ This *is* intriguing: why the shift from a "social" relativism to a subjective one? I suppose even social relativity places "objects"—in this case, constellations of opinion or deliverances of convention—beyond the boundaries of any single finite mind. So relativism allows for a possibility of error, even if the "object" isn't what it seemed to be at first. (It can be argued, of course—and Royce does argue—that the object is what it seemed to be at first: part of an objective world that stands apart from whatever any one believer, or even the corporate body of believers, might think of it. It will be an objective fact that a convention is thus and so, or that general opinion gravitates towards *this* rather than *that*.) I wonder whether Royce, recognizing the public character of language, would say that social consensus plays a role in the fixing of any index. If we relativize our judgments of truth and error to moments in the lives of individuals, it is only because this is licensed by social convention. In that case, relativization to convention is in some sense unavoidable.

³⁸ See p. 395 for a Roycean argument that any real doubt "impl[ies] an assumed order of being. Mander, on p. 449 of "Royce's Argument," expands on this as follows: "If there is no error, then since at least some people believe there is, they at least must be in error, so there *is* error after all."

³⁹ On p. 389, Royce actually describes total relativity as a form of "imperfectly defined skepticism"—and, at one time, as the only view he could provisionally adopt. But he escaped it, he says, by asking "the one question more." "If everything beyond the present is doubtful, then how can even that doubt be possible?" "With this question," he says, "that bare relativity of the present moment is given up," because the conditions that make doubt "logically intelligible" evidently "transcend the present moment." We're left, he concludes, with at least one general truth: "All but the immediate content of the present moment's judgment, being doubtful, we may be in error about it." For helpful discussion of the relativity of truth in Royce and James (with some comments on James's "Emersonianism"), see James Conant, "The James/Royce dispute and the development of James's 'solution,'" in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, edited by Ruth Anna Putnam (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 186-213.

⁴⁰ In *Josiah Royce: An Intellectual Biography*, Kuklick argues that "Royce was a pragmatist like James prior to writing *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*" (p. 40; see also pp. 16-17). In a quotation from "How Beliefs are Made" (p. 243 of Kuklick's book), the young Royce seems to be repeating lessons learned from Peirce.

⁴¹ See, however, the cautionary note in Marcel, *Royce's Metaphysics*, pp. 162-3, as well as Kuklick, *Josiah Royce*, pp. 128-9, and my conclusion.

⁴² This book was published in New Haven by Yale University Press in 1919.

⁴³ As Royce says on p. 431, he could have reached the same result if he had started by asking "what is truth?", though as I suggest in the footnote just below, his question would really have been "what is knowledge?"

⁴⁴ I expect that I'll later be saying something along these lines. It isn't true (as James and Royce himself both suggest) that Royce's argument can be restated as an argument from truth. (Royce makes the point in both *The Religious Aspect*, p. 432, and in *The World and the Individual*, 1: 323.) At best it would have to be cast as an argument from *the knowledge of truth*, but it is not even that: it is an argument from *the finite or imperfect knowledge of truth*. That's because Royce is unable (constitutionally) to see any mystery in the *absolute's* knowledge of truth. Why is that? One possibility is that the absolute has infallibly individuating descriptive knowledge of every thing. Another possibility is that each thing exists in the absolute, and has no existence apart from it. Because the thing is present *in* the absolute mind (and has no existence that doesn't consist in that presence)—because it inheres in its—it is present *to* the absolute mind. *Epistemic* presence doesn't call for an explanation, because its underwritten by *ontological* presence or inherence. But if that's correct, it isn't really necessary that each thing be part of a living and thriving organism of thought. There might be nothing more in the absolute than a single, solitary thing. But it would still be known. (It's interesting to wonder whether we could know it. "No," it might be said, "because it doesn't exist in us." But I haven't said that ontological presence is *necessary* for epistemological presence, only that it is sufficient. If the (creaturely) universe were a "contracted" one, amounting to no more than a single individual, we could master all of the descriptive information about it, without running up against the limits of our finitude. Is it an unspoken premiss of Royce's argument that the (creaturely) universe—and I'm going to allow myself to speak in that way, in order to hold the world, or *natura naturata*, apart from God, or *natura naturans*, even though Royce denies that his God is a creator (see p. 476 of *The Religious Aspect*), and may not have any tolerance for the scholastic or Spinozistic distinction I've invoked—is infinitely complex, and therefore beyond "descriptive capture" by any finite mind? Here I'm imagining two forms of "capture," descriptive and ontological. C. S. Peirce, in his unpublished review of *The Religious Aspect*, suggests another, broadly consistent with Bertrand Russell's separation between knowledge of things and knowledge of truths. I take up Peirce and Russell later on.

⁴⁵ Though it can't be followed up here, a stray comment in *The Religious Aspect* indicates that Royce might have argued for the absolute from agreement or disagreement, or from their possibility. "Two judgments cannot have the same object save as they are both present to one thought," he says on p. 425. This suggests that the absolute may be our only escape from referential solipsism—or from a referential solipsism of the present moment.

⁴⁶ Each idea is a "mass of consciousness" (p. 403), something very much like a mental atom or (as Royce in fact calls it) an "element" (p. 403).

⁴⁷ On the judgment as a mental occurrence, see the "provisional psychological description of a judgment as a state of mind" put forward on p. 402, as well as p. 403, where Royce calls a judgment a "mental phenomenon." Royce bases these descriptions on Ueberweg's definition of a judgment as the "Consciousness about the objective validity of a subjective union of ideas." On p.

403, Royce explains that a judgment, due to its sense of dependence, looks "to a somewhat indefinite object as the model after which the present union of ideas is to be fashioned." On p. 404, the sense of dependence is said to *contain* an intention.

⁴⁸ I wonder about the word "infinity." If there were only finitely many objects, could a finite mind achieve "world contact" without the support of an engulfing absolute?

⁴⁹ The intention is (or is closely bound up with) what Royce calls "the *Sense of Dependence*" in every judgment, "whereby we feel the value of this act to lie, not in itself, but in its agreement with a vaguely felt Beyond, that stands out there as Object" (p. 402).

⁵⁰ This raises a question about the prospects of an argument from truth. The possibility of truth—or knowledge, rather—seems easier to explain than the possibility of error, because a true judgment does "know" its object. But it knows it only partially. It doesn't know it well enough—that is, fully enough—to separate it from the many other objects that might satisfy its subject-idea.

⁵¹ Marcel, *Royce's Metaphysics*, translated by Virginia and Gordon Ringer (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1956), pp. 21-36. This volume is a translation of four articles originally published in *La Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale* 1918-19 (p. 159).

⁵² "Things in his dream" is an allusion to a scene in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, where Tweedledum and Tweedledee torture Alice with the thought that all of them, Alice included, are nothing but things in the dream of a king—the Red King—who lies sleeping before them. Earlier in the book, on p. 352, in the course of dismissing the possibility that the "Welt-Geist" is a power, Royce puts "things in his dream" in quotation marks. See also pp. 380 and 407. Royce was a great fan of Carroll, as Clendenning's biography testifies. See his *Life and Thought*, pp. 343, 351.

⁵³ I'm borrowing this example from Michael Della Rocca (via Gilad Tanay). Michael uses it in his lectures to bring out the shortcomings of the view that representation is resemblance.

⁵⁴ Royce repeats it in other places, for example in *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 346, where he says that there is no rational question that couldn't be answered by a person sufficiently wise.

⁵⁵ I sometimes wonder how Royce can hope to explain how my mind reaches out to one thing by hypothesizing that there is an infinite mind that reaches out to everything. But I think what I say below, in part (i) of section 4, helps to explain this. The infinite mind isn't really reaching out. It is reaching out—the inescapable fate of finite minds—that presents a problem. A self-contained mind—a mind whose objects are "inherent" or internal—presents no problem at all. Am I wrong to saddle Royce with the notion of inherence, and with the substance-mode metaphysics that follows in its train? On p. 11 of volume 1 of *The World and the Individual*, Royce announces that "it is of 'God, the only Substance,' that your lecturer, if his Ontology so far agrees with Lord Gifford's, will principally speak," but I'm not sure how seriously this should be taken.

⁵⁶ I don't think it's fair to describe James as a "Roycean" in 1885 (as Bruce Kuklick does in *Josiah Royce: An Intellectual Autobiography* [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972]), or even to say that "he accepted Royce's doctrine" (Kuklick, p. 38). As we'll see in a moment, James's official verdict on Royce's argument, despite the effusiveness of his 1885 review, is hedged. James does say in *The*

Meaning of Truth (New York: Longmans, Green, 1909), p. 22) that Royce's "powerful book maintained that the notion of *referring* involved that of an inclusive mind that shall own both the real *q* and the mental *q*, and use the latter expressly as a representative symbol of the former," and that "at the time I could not refute this transcendentalist opinion." But to say that he couldn't refute it isn't to say that he embraced it. James could have been agnostic about the basis of referring even if he thought that Royce gave the "best" account of it. Even the best account might not be good enough to justify accepting it.

⁵⁷ William James, "The Religious Aspect of Philosophy," pp. 276-84 in *Collected Essays and Reviews* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1920). On p. 282, James refers to Royce's absolute as an "Over-Soul." The review was originally published in 1885.

⁵⁸ Some further thoughts on this first criticism: The space between the absolute as knower and the absolute as constituter may be most evident in *The Conception of God*. There Royce defines God as "a being who is conceived as possessing to the full all logically possible knowledge, insight, and wisdom" (p. 9). He then argues, in the style of *The Religious Aspect*, that beyond the mere "fragment" of experience that each of us enjoys, there must be "some more organized whole of experience, in whose unity this fragment is conceived as finding its organic place" (p. 31). But then it is simply asserted that "to talk of any reality which this fragmentary experience indicates, is to conceive of this reality as the content of the more organized experience"—by which he means, as *nothing over and above* the content of the more organized experience (p. 31). But why does this further claim follow? Royce's answer to my objection would, I suspect, be this: if the *esse* of things were more than their *percipi* by the absolute, we'd face the problem of error all over again. But if this is the answer, Royce is making two assumptions he should openly acknowledge and defend. The first is that if an object exists in the mind, it's needless to explain how the mind can refer to it. This assumption is debatable. A mode, for example, can exist in a mind without the mind's being able to refer to it. I admit that the objects now under consideration are in the mind "not by way of mode or attribute," as Berkeley puts it, "but . . . by way of idea." But my whole question is why it isn't enough for them to exist in the absolute "only by way of idea" (which is in fact what Berkeley says, though the present emphasis is mine). What reason do we have to say that the being of these objects is *exhausted* by their being known? (For an earlier criticism of Royce along these lines, see J. Harry Cotton, "Royce's Case for Idealism," *Journal of Philosophy* 53 [1956], pp. 112-23.) The second assumption is that if an object doesn't exist in the mind, it's *imperative* to explain how the mind can refer to it. (There is, however, a puzzle here. In "The Implications of Self-Consciousness," Royce writes that "no human reflection has ever yet fathomed perfectly the consciousness of even a single one of our moments" [p. 155]. It seems that we can be mistaken even about what lies within us. Does this mean that the ideal Thomas is not present to the mind after all, and that what we took to be the ideal Thomas is actually an *ideal* ideal-Thomas? Dickinson Miller quotes this curious sentence in "The Meaning and Truth and Error," p. 417. He says that "the statement may be true; but how such a defect of memory or introspective power proves the existence of any metaphysical mare's nest concealed in the shadows I cannot divine.")

I should consider whether, in *The World and the Individual*, Royce's distinction between internal and external meaning might enable him to dispense with the two assumptions I've identified. The internal meaning is, very roughly, my conception of the object. It is akin to the ideal Thomas. The external meaning is the object itself (the real Thomas, for example). It's been suggested that Royce's distinction coincides with Frege's sense/reference distinction. (For discussion see Elizabeth Flower and Murray G. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America* [New York: Capricorn, 1977], 2: 714-15; Christopher Hookway, "Truth and Reference: Peirce versus

Royce,' pp. 108-34 in his *Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism: Themes from Peirce* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], pp. 132-3; and Sprigge, *The God of Metaphysics*, p. 376.] I'm not sure of this partly because an internal meaning is more than a spectator's conception: it's a conception suffused by the object's practical bearings. An idea has a sort of aspiration, a kind of transcendence or "dependence" (as Royce calls it in *The Religious Aspect*, p. 402), contained within it. This is part—but only a part—of what becomes, in *The World and the Individual*, the volitional character of ideas. External meanings, Royce argues there, are only apparently external. Internal and external meanings cannot in fact be "sundered." The partiality or promise of every internal meaning is fulfilled or completed in the absolute, in which the external meaning is wholly contained. In the absolute, internal and external meanings are joined. (At the very least, Royce seems at times to be seeking a vocabulary that will take him far from the antique terms and assumptions that I am perhaps forcing on him here. For one thing, in *The Problem of Christianity*, volume 2 (pp. 268, 418, and 426), he explicitly denies that the finite mind is a substance. (See also *The World and the Individual*, 2: 291-2 and elsewhere.) The notion of substance, he argues there, is a remnant of realism, the first of the three conceptions of being he had struggled to overcome in *The World and the Individual*. A substance, in the realist sense, is an "independent" being, but a finite mind is not independent. It is "a meaning embodied in a conscious life" (*Problem of Christianity*, 2: 418), and it therefore has its full existence only in the absolute. It is less clear to me, though, that Royce does not continue to conceive of the absolute as a substance. What, after all, could compromise the independence of a being so total and self-sufficient? He certainly conceives of the absolute as a substance in earlier writings, for example in *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*. See for example p. 418, where he proudly observes that "our theory," instead of veiling the world's substance, as double-aspect theories do, "undertakes to know what this substance is." "It is," he says, "the conscious life of the Logos.") Yet in the end, the argument of *The World and the Individual*, for all its length, seems to close with an appeal to immediate insight, and my own apprehensions don't seem to track those of Royce.

In making this first criticism, I've been assuming that it's the absolute's *intimacy* with objects that enables it to know them. (The flip side is that our diminished intimacy, or partial estrangement, makes our knowledge of them problematic.) But could the driving force instead be the *totality* or *completeness* of its field of view? So much is suggested by Royce's repeated claim that we make contact with objects only as parts of an organic whole. But there is something suspiciously back-to-front about achieving reference through totality. If making contact with a single object is a problem, how can it be solved by positing a mind that enjoys contact with every object? Mustn't its contact with each be something more fundamental than its contact with all? But this, perhaps, is simply what a holist would deny.

Perhaps this first doubt be expressed most simply as follows: why does presence *to* the mind require presence *in* the mind? This is roughly the question that Arnauld asked Malebranche. *Presence-to* is an epistemic. *Presence-in* (or inherence) is ontological. But could it be Royce's view that the joint presence of all is precisely what constitutes the inherence of any element, taken distributively, within the all?

⁵⁹ Again, some additional thoughts: Royce argues that likeness or resemblance is insufficient, and yet he argues, in chapter 10, that because our ideas must be like their objects, their objects must themselves be ideas. I'm not sure what to make of this. Perhaps that argument is part of a hypothetical or postulated construction that he moves beyond in chapter 11. (An interesting question: how much of the patient but hypothetical argumentation in chapter 10 is made superfluous by the quick strike in chapter 11?) He does take up causation in *The World and the*

Individual. As he acknowledges there, "for many of the older theories of knowledge," an idea's object is "that which arouses, awakens, [or] brings [it] to pass" (1: 312). But neither the past nor the future, he then argues, is the cause of our present ideas (1: 314-16). Here he can be criticized for considering only direct causal relations, but indirect causal relations won't by themselves solve the problem. There is typically a very long chain of intervening causes between past moments and the present (or between the present moment and the future). How can one item in the chain be singled out as the thing to be represented? Peirce's theory of the index, which I discuss below, amounts to a causal theory, but he seems to do without conceptions that exist only in the mind. In Peirce's view, the causal relation holds between the organism and its environment. He simply has a different starting point.

⁶⁰ Did Royce respond to this point in his metaphysics seminar (p. 73 in *Metaphysics*)? There he says that "the *intention* is lacking," his point perhaps being that I can be acquainted with something without meaning or intending it. Acquaintance does fall short of intention, but couldn't acquaintance be all it takes to make something available to an intention?

⁶¹ Unless the Absolute knows my intentions, Royce cannot solve the problem he sets for himself. Let's grant that my idea and its object both exist in the Absolute. The Absolute can therefore compare them, as (for the moment) I'll grant I cannot. I'll also grant that comparability matters, though this does call for more discussion. The Absolute can now say that my idea is false of a particular object. It can say the same of my friend's idea. But suppose I intend the object and my friend does not. Only I am in error. (My friend, let's suppose, intends a different object, and he's right about it.) I can be in error only if my *intention* exists in the Absolute. But what is my intention, and how does it exist in my idea or judgment? That was our difficulty, and I'm as much in the dark about it as I was at first. The Absolute will know my intention if I have it (as my friend does not), but what is it for me to have it? Perhaps Royce will reply that I'm working from the wrong end. I'm supposing that the Absolute knows of my intention because I have it, as if my intention is something that exists prior to its recognition in the Absolute. (I have to admit that Royce's talk of knowledge suggests as much.) But perhaps the Absolute *itself* intends the object—something I shouldn't find mysterious, because the object is present to it—and I simply share in that intention. But what then am I, and what makes the intention my own?

⁶² Here are some further things that give me pause.

(v) *The Red King objection: why isn't the "world" just a thing in the Absolute's dream? "If that there King was to wake, you'd go out—bang!—just like a candle."* Even if the absolute is the constituter of all objects or ideas, I continue to worry that it will not constitute a world. Imagine that there is another mind more "knowing" than my own, with whom I tend to agree as I grow in knowledge, but suppose that this mind, unlike Royce's absolute, is finite. It will be beyond me; it will be independent of me; and its "facts"—that is, the states or contents of its consciousness (which is all that "facts" can mean, so far)—will correspond to my "facts," that is, to my own sensations or ideas. I don't think this has the slightest tendency to show that as we grow in agreement, I will be achieving or approaching truth. And I don't see what difference it makes if we suppose this other mind is all-knowing—unless, that is, we let the word "knowing" do the work, and treat its "facts" not as bare occurrences, but as notions that are (in a sense as yet unanalyzed) *true*.⁶²

Now I have, I admit, ignored something in the important passage I quote at the top of p. 8 (from p. 346 of *The Religious Aspect*), and it may seem to make all the difference. Suppose that

it's *practically useful* for me to agree with Royce's "Not-Ourselves" (or, for that matter, with my more finitely perfect companion). Royce has a bit more to say about utility or practical power, as he begins the long paragraph that includes the lines I've quoted:

We can easily see how, under this supposition [that is, under the idealist hypothesis], conformity to the supposed universal consciousness will become on my part a goal of effort. Knowledge of possible experiences is useful to me. But all possible experiences are or will be actual in the hypothetical consciousness. [Note that we have, here, another temporalization of the universal consciousness. For discussion see the footnote above.] If I am standing near a concealed pitfall, or am in danger of a blow, or in danger of death from poison, that fact, translated into ultimate terms, means, we may suppose, that in the universal consciousness there is now the knowledge of certain relative positions and motions of atoms. (p. 346)

But in the absence of additional, specifically "pragmatist" argumentation, the fact that I find agreement profitable doesn't mean that it is *true*—unless, as I said, we treat the "knowledge" of the mind I've taken for my model and guide as representations of external fact (and therefore as true in a sense that has so far eluded our analysis), rather than brute occurrences.⁶²

Is there some further ingredient, short of truth understood as correspondence to external fact, that we can add to Royce's idealist recipe, so that it can keep its promise to capture the ordinary understanding of "external reality"? I think a large part of what's missing is something that Royce very deliberately excludes: a causal relation between the world-consciousness and our own sensations or ideas.⁶² So long as the world-consciousness "does nothing, [but] merely looks on" (p. 350)—so long as it's just a world-consciousness and not an active "World-Spirit" who weaves, as Spirit claims to do in Goethe's *Faust*, its own "living robe of Deity," a Seer and not a Creator (p. 350)—I have trouble seeing how its "experience," however full it may be when compared to our own, can be called *reality* in the ordinary sense of that expression.⁶²

Royce doesn't address my objection in the very terms I've used, but he does admit that in the ordinary picture, external reality is endowed with causal power. "We are," he says,

concerned to show why we have left out of view the causal element that popular thought makes so prominent in its conception of Reality. For popular thought, the world is a Power that causes our perceptions. But we, both here and in our subsequent religious discussion, shall consider the eternal not as Power, but as Thought. Why is this? We shall try here to explain, still regarding the real world merely as something postulated to meet the inner needs of our thought. (p. 354)

To explain his choice, Royce stages a contest between two postulates. The first postulate is that "our ideas have something beyond them and like them" (p. 356). The second is that this thing standing beyond them is their cause. He argues that the likeness or correspondence postulate is deeper than the causal postulate, and that the latter depends on the former for whatever realist "punch" it may possess. When I say that sensation *s* was provoked by cause *C*, he points out, my claim favors the reality of *s* only on the assumption that my idea of the causal relation "correspond[s] to the truth of things" (p. 355). Can I even conceive of a real cause, he then asks, "save by virtue of a postulate that my conception of a real cause is like the real cause itself?" (p. 355). "Surely," he argues, "I do not know the validity of my idea of a causal relation merely on the ground that I know this idea . . . must itself have been caused by the real existence

of causal relations in the world. Such an attempt to justify my idea would mean endless regress. The deeper notion that we have of the world is therefore founded on the insight or on the postulate that there must be, not merely a sufficient cause for our thought, but a sufficient counterpart thereto" (p. 355).⁶²

Much of this part of chapter 10 is an argument against a "Disfigured Realism" that banishes the likeness postulate and clings to the causal postulate, leaving us with "the notion of an utterly unknowable external cause of [our] sensations" (p. 358). From such a realism we can, Royce complains, expect no reports. Of the reality it offers us "nothing will be said, but that it is" (p. 358). "Science, experience, serious reflection about reality," Royce laments, "will utterly cease" (p. 358). Faced with this depressing blankness, we may, he predicts, begin inventing. "All degrees of likeness or unlikeness [will be] assumed," he suggests "according to the tastes of individual thinkers." "External reality is once for all absolved from the condition of being intelligible, and becomes capable of being anything you please, a dead atom, an electric fluid, a ghost, a devil, an Unknowable" (p. 360).

Against this "Disfigured Realism," Royce has a point. A causal realism can't completely let go of the likeness postulate—not without finding some replacement—because it's forced to conceive of the causal relation (insofar as we know it), at least, as real in a non-causal sense. But this doesn't really meet the concern I believe I share with Renouvier. I want the idealist to supplement the likeness postulate with the causal postulate, my worry being that without it, the idealist won't be in a position to capture a crucial common-sense commitment. What disfigures agnostic realism, in Royce's view, is the vain hope of dispensing altogether with the likeness postulate. This leaves room for a more comely and more confident realism, in which the two postulates are blended, and the scope of the likeness principle is narrowed as much as it needs to be to preserve the name of realism. Royce does have an argument against this, but it's a cautious and (to my mind) uncertain one. Once we concede that "external reality is somewhat like our ideas of its nature," he justly observes, "likeness remains to be defined" (p. 360). But then he simply seems to insist that it be defined in idealist fashion. There are, he thinks, two idealist ways of understanding likeness: as a relation between my present conscious state and other actual states, past or present, my own or another's; and as a relation between my present conscious state and merely possible conscious states—between my present state and "possible experience" (p. 361). What Royce calls "modern phenomenism," a broad current of post-Kantian speculation that includes (to cite only the more luminous names in the long list Royce presents on p. 362) Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Ferrier, Mill, and Renouvier, holds that "thought, when it inquires into its own meaning, can never rest satisfied with any idea of external reality that makes such reality other than a datum of consciousness, and so material for thought" (p. 363). Royce urges that we accept this, but only as "the simplest and least contradictory postulate" (p. 363).⁶² Can we, after all, readily conceive of external reality "as being, although in nature like our conscious states, yet in no necessary relation to consciousness?" (p. 361). Mustn't any reality of which we can conceive stand in "a definite relation of likeness to my present consciousness" (p. 362)? These are awkward and indirect statements of Berkeley's familiar likeness principle: only an idea can be like an idea. Near the end of his chapter on idealism, Royce condemns Berkeley's "theological hypothesis" for assuming more than it should (p. 369)—for pouring into the pure current of idealism a causal mixture that modern phenomenism wisely filtered out. My worry is that without that mixture, the external reality of the idealist won't coincide with the external reality of common sense. I've been recommending not a disfigured realism, but a blend of the causal and likeness postulates—a realism with a human or idealist face.

One further point about Royce's understanding of idealism. Mill, as we saw, is recruited by Royce into the noisy and colorful crowd of "modern phenomenists." Mill called matter a "permanent possibility of sensation" (pp. 362, 364), and with this Royce so far agrees. (In *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, he calls it "a very fair beginning" [p. 359].) But matter is not, Royce insists, a *bare* possibility (pp. 364-5). A bare possibility calls for nothing more than freedom from contradiction. If the material world were nothing more than permanent possibilities in this sense, it might as well include unicorns as horses. The existence of any material thing needs, he says, an actual ground, and that ground, as we've also already seen, must stand in "a definite relation of likeness to my present consciousness." We must therefore conceive of it as "the object of an absolute experience" (p. 369)—as an object, indeed, of an *actual* absolute experience. But we can't conceive of an actually experienced object without an actually experiencing subject. "To complete our theory," as Royce says, "we want a hero"—an absolute world-consciousness.⁶² This is the "simple and adequate" hypothesis (p. 369) whose truth Royce seeks to establish in his chapter on the possibility of error.

My question, I suppose, is whether the argument from error allows Royce to dispense with the argumentation of chapter 10. I suppose it's meant to. He doesn't need the likeness principle because he has another way of establishing that things are ideas: they are ideas because if they were not, we couldn't be right and wrong about them.

I complained earlier that Royce's absolute cannot constitute the world unless it plays a causal role. But doesn't it? If my ideas of sight are caused (let's say) by particles falling on my retina, then those particles, *with their causal power*, exist in the absolute. So in the end, the absolute has causal power built into it—a point that becomes more evident as Royce's views develop, and his conception of the absolute as will more prominent. But all causal power exists, so to speak, *within* the absolute, rather than *between* the absolute and something (such as a finite mind) that stands outside it. But perhaps this is as it should be. Royce is not Berkeley.

(vi) *Dickinson Miller's theory of error*. Miller's "The Meaning of Truth and Error," *Philosophical Review* 4 (1893), pp. 408-25, is an (oblique) response to Royce that develops a non-idealist (but not anti-idealist) theory of error. Miller's theory is an elaboration of Royce's third conception of being (though Royce hadn't yet called it that): being as validity. The basic idea is Berkeley's: to believe in an object is to form expectations, expectations concerning the laws or patterns that my future ideas will exemplify. (This idea is present throughout Royce's writings, from *The Religious Aspect* on, though it's erected into a conception of being only in the Gifford Lectures.) If my expectations are defeated, I am in error. But my error isn't (and needn't be) absolute. It's enough for my present expectations to be at odds with a distant and persistently corrective future. The basic question raised here is whether error, in order to be error, must be "deep" or *absolute*. Perhaps the possibility of relative error—of "surface" discrepancies between present expectations and future disappointments—is all that we require. Miller's view seems to have persuaded James. He writes in *The Meaning of Truth* that "largely through the influence of Professor D. S. Miller," he "came to see that any definitely experienceable workings would serve as intermediaries quite as well as the absolute mind's intentions would" (p. 22).

(vii) *An ever-ascending hierarchy of minds? A consensus at the end of inquiry? Why one Absolute Mind? Why not a distinct and more inclusive mind for every possible error? Would we need an infinite hierarchy of ever more inclusive minds. I'm not sure we stand in need of anything at all that is infinite? Why can't we make do with the finite? Royce's thought seems to be that the condition of error must be infinite because error itself (or, rather, its possibility) is itself infinite.*

But this seems hasty. How many actual errors have there been? And how many actual errors will there be? I don't think Royce can assume either an infinite past or an unending future. Could there (to take a different tack) be several minds that serve as conditions for error? That would call for a "segretation" of error, but how do we know that such segretation isn't possible?

Consider Royce's definition of error on p. 425 of *The Religious Aspect*:

What, then, is an error? An error, we reply, is an incomplete thought, that to a higher thought, which includes it and its intended object, is known as having failed in the purpose that it more or less clearly had, and that is fully realized in this higher thought.

There is a possibility here of pragmatic clarification, along Peircean lines. The "Absolute" would then be something merely possible—an ideal. Here Royce would fall back on his earlier condemnation of the barely possible. (This is a recurring theme. See for example "The Implications of Self-Consciousness," p. 166, and especially *The Conception of God*, pp. 25-30, where Royce works his way from reality as Peircean consensus to reality as absolute experience.)

The idea of the barely possible, in which there is no actuality, is an empty idea. If anything is possible, then, when we say so, we postulate something as actually existent in order to constitute this possibility. The conditions of possible error must be actual. Bare possibility is blank nothingness. If the nature of error necessarily and with perfect generality demands certain conditions, then these conditions are as eternal as the erroneousness of error itself is eternal. And thus the inclusive thought, which constitutes the error, must be postulated as existent. (pp. 429-30)

The objection I have in mind here was raised by Peirce himself in his review. (It's actually anticipated by Royce, who ascribes it to Thrasymachus and calls it "the only outwardly plausible objection to his view." See also *The World and the Individual*, p. 361.) Peirce recognized himself as Thrasymachus, who believes that "the real is that which any many would believe in, and be ready to act upon, if his investigations were to be pushed sufficiently far" ("An American Plato"). "Upon the luckless putter-forth of this opinion Dr. Royce is extremely severe." According to Royce, a barely possible judge is not enough. But Peirce does not think this judge is *barely* possible. "Our experience in this direction warrants us in saying with the highest degree of empirical confidence that questions that are either practical or could conceivably become so are susceptible of receiving final solutions provided the existence of the human race be indefinitely prolonged and the particular question excite sufficient interest." There are interesting (and interlocking) questions here about the grounding of possibility, the nature of idealization, and the force of the pragmatic maxim. (Good starting-points for an examination of some of these issues are Hookway, "Truth and Reference," pp. 129-34, Mander, "Royce's Argument," especially pp. 446-8 and 457, and Sprigge, *The God of Metaphysics*, p. 363.) Here is Peirce's entry on "Pragmatism" in volume 2 of James Mark Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* (1902):

This maxim was first proposed by C. S. Peirce in the *Popular Science Monthly* for January 1878; and he explained how it was to be applied to the doctrine of reality. . . . The writer subsequently saw that the principle might be misapplied, so as to sweep away the whole doctrine of incommensurables, and, in fact, the whole Weierstrassian way of regarding the calculus. In 1896 William James published his *Will to Believe* and later his *Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results*, which pushed this method to such extremes as must tend to give us pause. The doctrine appears to assume that the end of man is action—a stoical

axiom which, to the present writer at the age of sixty, does not recommend itself so forcibly as it did at thirty. If it be admitted, on the contrary, that action wants an end, and that that end must be something of a general description, then the spirit of the maxim itself, which is that we must look to the upshot of our concepts in order rightly to apprehend them, would direct us towards something different from practical facts, namely, to general ideas, as the true interpreters of our thoughts. Nevertheless, the maxim has approved itself to the writer, after many years of trial, as of great utility in leading to a relatively high degree of clearness of thought. He would venture to suggest that it should always be put into practice with conscientious thoroughness, but that, when that has been done, and not before, a still higher grade of clearness of thought can be attained by remembering that the only ultimate good which the practical facts to which it directs attention can subserve is to further the development of concrete reasonableness. (Later, Peirce came to regret some of what he said here.)

The reference to incommensurables is extremely interesting. Peirce's worry, I think, is that there may be no "lived meaning" to the notion of an irrational number, because we can, practically speaking, make do with approximating fractions. For Royce, this is a central preoccupation. He's desperate that his notion of the absolute have pragmatic meaning, and he wants its meaning to be different from the Peircean notion of what the community of inquirers is fated to agree on at the imagined end of inquiry. See *The World and the Individual*, 1: 36-8, where Royce discusses the notion of a limit, and addresses irrational numbers in particular.

Throughout this lecture, I've emphasized Royce's assumption that objects in the world aren't present to us. I've said less than I should have about the fragmentary character of our knowledge, and about the "atomism" of common sense. That atomism applies not only to judgments (or "truth-vehicles") but to *facts* (or "truth-makers"). Royce believes that Truth is One: that the truth-maker of any true judgment is the whole of reality. Peirce gives us a whole that is not the Absolute: an ideal (but not a "barely possible" ideal) rather than an actually existing "all knower."

(viii) *The volitional character of ideas*. I'm not sure I understand what it means for ideas to be volitional in character. There are at least three distinguishable elements. (1) There is behavior for which an idea might prepare us. (2) There is our desire to sing a melody. Here the melody is serving to illustrate ideas. (Though at one important point Royce *contrasts* melody and idea.) We have an *interest in* ideas—an interest in ideas *themselves*. Or so the example of the melody suggests. (3) Counting is another paradigm of an idea-directed process. We want to go on—we will to go—and we know how to do so (*The World and the Individual*, 1: 338). There are anticipations of Wittgenstein and Kripke here. What we intend transcends what is present before us. Is the Absolute a "superlative fact"?

(ix) Is Royce faced with modal collapse? "Error, if possible, is eternally actual" (*The Religious Aspect*, p. 425). Are there possible errors that we will never make? It seems not, on Royce's view. The only errors established as "possible" are those that turn out to be actual. Or so it seems. The possibility of other errors is "bare," or purely logical. But perhaps that's enough, at least for Royce. There are related questions about the openness of the future, explored by Charles Hartshorne in "Royce's Mistake—And Achievement," *Journal of Philosophy* 53 (1956), pp. 123-30.

⁶³ This essay can be found in *William James and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), pp. 187-254. The quotation from Tennyson appears on p. 253.

⁶⁴ "Woodnotes II," p. 47 in *Collected Poems and Translations*, in the Library of American edition.

⁶⁵ Does Royce's absolute have ends of its own, or are all the ends included in it finite ends? Royce wants to say that there is a finite need for absolute (or infinite) truth. Pragmatism gives "a correct account of man's natural function as a truth seeker" ("The Problem of Truth in the Light of Recent Discussion," p. 222). It "correctly describes the nature truth possesses insofar as we actually verify it" (p. 223), but truth "cannot be defined solely in terms of our personal experience and our success in controlling this experience" (p. 224). In seeking adequate expression of our absolute nature, "we strive in the empirical world for a success that can't be defined in merely relative terms" (p. 252). Pragmatism cannot conceive of itself as merely instrumentally true (pp. 218-22). (On this see Conant, "The James/Royce dispute," and James, *A Pluralistic Universe*.) Its aspirations must be absolute. Pragmatism must therefore recognize "all truth as the essentially eternal creation of the Will" (p. 254). Absolute truth has "a distinctly and intensely practical import" (p. vii). Royce's distinctive strategy is to find a pressure toward the infinite exerted by the finite. It is a pressure exerted by our finite needs themselves. But "pressure" is probably the wrong word. It is really a need or a lack, and in this respect Royce is, perhaps, closer to Edwards than he is to Emerson or Thoreau. Emerson's individual can't be confined. Thoreau's individual is elastic. In Royce, as in Edwards, we suffer from a need, but we don't have the promise of (natural, unassisted) expansion. Or do we? I'm really not sure. The absolute self is our true self, after all.