

AMERICAN INTERPRETATIONS OF HEGEL: JOSIAH ROYCE'S PHILOSOPHY OF LOYALTY

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are three kinds of bookshelves in Robbins Library, located on the second floor of Emerson Hall. There are those that Harvard students use frequently; these are almost always picked over, leaving only a few copies of Rawl's *A Theory of Justice* and Russell's *Philosophical Essays* behind. There are those that are seldom used, save the few days during exams when students are forced to revisit the history of philosophy. And then there are those that remain largely neglected; these hold the works of American pragmatism. Next to this shelf, in a truly forgotten corner of Robbins, is a very old-looking collection. This collection consists of the generous gifts from the personal libraries of the university's faculty. George Santayana, for example, donated his copies of William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and Josiah Royce's *The World and the Individual*. Royce bequeathed his personal copies of Kant's first critique, the *Metaphysics of Morals*, and James Martineau's *A Study of Religion*. In many instances, the notable owners of these volumes used them as makeshift notebooks, providing commentary and translations that demonstrate important turns in their thinking. Such is the case with two volumes that will serve as the focus of this article: Royce's copies of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Logik*. On the flysheets and in the margins of the books, Royce provided a detailed interpretation of these texts, the study of which dramatically alters the chronology and study of Royce's concepts of loyalty and communities of interpretation. In these books, we get to return to the unique conversation that Royce had with Hegel and to appreciate fully the affinities and differences that emerge in the discussion.

Royce began his investigation of German idealism in 1875 and extended it when he attended Johns Hopkins University for graduate study

in the following year. As John McDermott notes, Royce, like John Dewey, was a neo-Hegelian and continued to maintain a Hegelian project, “to provide a *strengwissenschaftliche Geistesgeschichte*,” until the middle of his career.¹ This being said, very little has been done to investigate the precise points of contact between Hegel and Royce. Royce’s Hegelian legacy can be traced from his reading of the *Phenomenologie* and *Logik* in the late 1880s, through to his mature ethics in the *Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908), to the very last moments of Royce’s life as reflected in his final piece of writing that Stephen Royce finds on his father’s desk in 1916. This interpretation does not reveal that Royce had a “Hegel period” in the 1890s, as John Clendenning suggests, but that his entire philosophy was shot through by a particularly reading of Hegel.² This is not to say that Royce was a Hegelian, but the development of this intellectual lineage gives us a better sense of the origins of Royce’s philosophy and also exposes the Hegelian legacy of American philosophy more broadly construed. As Walter Kaufman noted in 1965, Royce served as “Hegel’s unauthorized deputy in America for a generation.”³ Royce’s interest in the history of philosophy, and more particularly in Hegel, would affect the education and subsequent writing of a generation of philosophers that would include C. I. Lewis, William Ernest Hocking, Horace Kallen, and Richard Clarke Cabot.

Royce addresses Hegel’s philosophy in detail, devoting four of his *Lectures on Modern Idealism* to its explication in 1906 and commenting on the *Phenomenology* at length in the *Philosophy of Loyalty*. In light of this fact, it may seem unnecessary to use Royce’s library and marginalia as the focal resource of this study. This approach, however, provides new evidence in the study of Royce’s thought and is methodologically faithful to Royce’s understanding of philosophy as the process of interpretation. Various aspects of Royce’s mature ethics can be understood as an interpretation of Hegel’s texts. As Frank Oppenheim highlights in detail, Royce’s thinking underwent a significant transformation after his mental collapse and his curative voyage to Australia in 1888. The problem of evil, the nature of error, and the challenges to communal loyalty take center stage at this point, a development that forces Royce to revise his understanding of absolute idealism. Many of the volumes at Robbins Library are the books that Royce investigated during this period, and the marginalia reveal the nature, extent, and philosophical impetus of this transition. For example, on the front cover of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which comes into Royce’s possession in 1878, Royce writes: “Notes on this copy interleaved and annotated for the lecture course of ’89–’90. Translations suggested for class as free renderings in sight of the text not as a full characterizations and literally complete expressions of Hegel’s meaning.”⁴ While a similar inscription cannot be found on the copy of the *Logik*, the tone and handwriting of Royce’s commentary sug-

gest that he read and reflected on both of these works at approximately the same time. Exploring Royce's reading of Hegel, unsurprisingly, may lead us to a new reading of Royce that helps us understand the role that Hegel's philosophy plays in his 1888 transition.

2. *THE LECTURES ON MODERN IDEALISM:* INTERPRETING HEGEL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Before exploring Royce's marginalia on the character of Hegelian philosophy, it is necessary to say a few words concerning the two interpretative frames that were used to study Hegel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first of these frames, which delimits the "traditional" understanding of Hegel, presented his work in a pointedly metaphysical light. Scholars who maintained this position gave priority to a particular interpretation of Hegel's later works and particularly to the *Logic of Sciences*, published between 1813 and 1816. As the British idealists such as F. H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet found out, this interpretation was vulnerable to criticism. On the ground of this traditional view, Hegel could be considered more of a *pre-Kantian* philosopher who falls prey to the very sort of metaphysical monism and dogmatism that Kant seeks to overcome in his critical project; Hegel's later works were shot through with neoplatonic ideals and smacked of the Christian mysticism that held sway at the beginning of the modern period. Instead of being a successor to Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories, the "transcendental logic" that Hegel developed actually harkened back to the theologically rooted metaphysics of Leibniz or other early moderns. It was in light of this interpretation that pragmatists such as William James and analytic philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore dismissed Hegel and his followers, such as Bradley and Bosanquet, in the early years of the twentieth century.⁵ Royce would be a casualty in this analytic-idealist debate. Even though his views differed significantly from other idealists of the time—a fact that was highlighted in Royce's disagreement with Bradley concerning the *World and the Individual* (1902)—Royce was pigeonholed as a "Hegelian" along with the British idealists and the St. Louis Hegelians, led by William Torrey Harris.

Alternative interpretations of Hegel's corpus, however, were developed that downplayed the absolutist metaphysics and attempted to declaw the critics of Hegelian thought. These interpretations highlighted the way in which Hegel successfully negotiated the reflective and historical aspects of critical philosophy. In effect, these interpretations suggest that Hegel is best understood as a postcritical philosopher who investigates not only the form but also the social and historical content of transcendental philosophy. Karl Klausman's work in the 1960s advances this postcritical

interpretation of Hegel's writing and tends to place the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in the foreground, instead of emphasizing some of Hegel's later works. This is the interpretation that a prescient Royce would express in his *Lectures on Modern Idealism* and in his early writing.

When Royce gave his *Lectures in Modern Idealism* in 1906, he reflected a detailed understanding of the two interpretative frames described above.⁶ He notes that Hegel's later writings, produced during his tenure at Berlin, had a particularly "bureaucratic" flavor and, like bureaucracy itself, tended to neglect the creative, individual, and dynamic aspects of human living and human knowing. This was the monism into which James and other critics of Hegel loved to sink their teeth. Along these lines, Royce rightly observes that historians of philosophy continually judged Hegel's entire philosophy on the grounds of these later metaphysical works and dismissed it as dogmatically absolutist for this reason. This trend was not mitigated by the fact that many advocates of Hegel, such as Bradley, hung their idealistic hats on precisely these works. Royce, anticipating the postcritical interpretation of Hegel, focuses his 1906 lectures on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, addressing the *Logik* of Hegel's "mature system" only as the extension and fulfillment of this earlier work. This focus leads John Smith, along with J. C. Cotton and Gabriel Marcel, to suggest that Royce believed that "the Hegel of the *Phenomenology* is superior to the Hegel of the *Logic*."⁷ Smith's position is on the mark: Royce seems to believe that the phenomenological method employed by Hegel ought to serve as the foundation for a study of human nature. Indeed, even his readings of the *Logik* are marked by a willingness to read Hegel's systematic work phenomenologically and analogically, as the unfolding of conscious personhood.⁸ Additionally, Royce's concern for the human self, as described by Cotton and others, coincides with the *Phenomenology's* abiding question concerning the self and the dialectic of human experience.⁹

Royce opens his Hegel lectures by gesturing toward this point, commenting that the subtitle of James *Varieties of Religious Experience*, "A Study of Human Nature," could equally serve as the title for Hegel's first major work of philosophy. Considering James' disdain for all things "Hegelian," this comment was undoubtedly intended as a friendly jab at Royce's Irving Street neighbor. Royce's appeal to the experiential side of Hegel was, at least in part, an attempt to defend Hegel from the pragmatic critique that James leveled against German idealism. For this reason, Royce tries to align the Hegelian dialectic with the pragmatic method, stating that "[i]n the *Phenomenologie*, the dialectic method appears from the start in what I have before called the pragmatic form. The antithetical stages, the contradictory phases through which imperfect thought passes, on its way toward truth, are to be viewed in

this book as constituting a series of stages which are both represented in the history of science and in the history of civilization."¹⁰ Expressing this sentiment was an attempt to draw idealism closer to the budding pragmatism of the 1890s but also an attempt to put distance between Royce and the British idealists such as Bradley who continued to support the "traditional" understanding of Hegel at the turn of the century. Whereas Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* (1893) echoes with the most mystical expressions of Hegelian metaphysics, Royce's lectures self-consciously avoid the language of mysticism and attend very closely to the transitional forms of consciousness described in the *Phenomenology*. Indeed, Royce seems to take his cues from the St. Louis Hegelians who repeatedly employ Hegel's works as tools in the philosophy of education rather than as the foundations of metaphysical doctrine or the remnants of mystical reflection; Royce visited W. T. Harris in 1878 at the end of his graduate study and seems to have adopted the general interpretative line of Harris' school.¹¹

Many authors in Harris' *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* maintained that Hegel's first treatise ought not to be translated as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* but as "The Phenomenology of Mind or the Science of the Experience of Consciousness."¹² Royce seems to agree and repeatedly opts to underscore the practical, psychological, historical, and dramatic aspects of Hegel's work. His effort to rescue Hegel is at once an effort to rescue idealism from the countervailing forces in American philosophy. By the time Royce reaches his final lecture in the Modern Idealism series, it is obvious that he has been wrestling with his own place in the history of American thought. He concludes this struggle, stating, "I am both pragmatist and an absolutist" and explains that he regards pragmatism and absolutism (as a rendering of Hegel system) "as not only reconcilable but as in truth reconciled."¹³ A more detailed understanding of Royce's Hegelian legacy is warranted if we are to understand the reconciliation of absolutism and pragmatism that Royce had in mind.

3. ROYCE'S *PHENOMENOLOGY*

If philosophy, in Hegel's words, is the process of lifting one's time and circumstance to the level of ideas, then Royce's writing in the late 1880s and early 1890s was philosophy *par excellence*. As Oppenheim, McDermott, and others have noted, Royce successfully lifted a transitional time in his life—both tragic and hopeful—to the level of thought.¹⁴ As his family threatened to disintegrate and professional tensions mounted, Royce allowed these circumstances to affect his reading and writing of philosophy. McDermott suggests that, in the midst of marital troubles and troubled children, Royce is forced to confront the problem that

will define the rest of his intellectual life, the problem of evil. Why do the innocent suffer? What makes life worth living? Why do the well intentioned err so grievously? What is the meaning and significance of an individual life? For Royce, these are but variations of the problem of evil. This problem came to define his reading of Hegel in the late 1890s and begins to show itself in Royce's unpublished summary of the *Phenomenology* that he provides on the first flysheet of the volume and that he gives to his class in the fall of 1890:

The Problem and Method

- 1) The *Phenomenology* as the effort to reach and define Absolute Wissen [Knowledge] concerns such Wissen as the fulfillment, or truth of self-consciousness. The argument apart from its chronological allegories and other quasi-historical figures of speech, contains two main theses, one related to the object of consciousness, the other the nature of the Subject of Consciousness.
- 2) As to the Object, the thesis is comparatively simple. It is that of the first three sections, frequently referred to later, and summed up in the doctrine that, by immanent dialectic, the object proves to be in nature identical with the process of self-consciousness. In recognizing the object the Subject is only recognizing itself.
- 3) The other thesis relates to the Subject, and depends on more complex considerations. The phenomenal or imperfect stages of self-consciousness are related to the final one wherein the subject grasps its own nature, in ways that involve several types of imperfection on the part of these lower stages. They are:
 - a) where the Subject concerns itself too exclusively in theoretical or too exclusively in practical terms. The absolute view unites both of these aspects. The merely practical stages are blind; the merely theoretical stages are empty. Each stage means its own contradiction and so leads thereto.
 - b) Stages where the subject, sure in advance that it is its own object, *still finds this object as if foreign and fails to recognize unity.*
 - c) Stages where the subject assuming a special form, finds opposed to itself other forms of subjectivity, which therefore appear to it as more or less objects of the type b or d.
 - d) Stages where the subject either saves its own clearness and obviousness by calling itself this ego, thereby losing all absoluteness and becoming accidental; or else asserts itself as world-possessor as absolute, as exclusive, and thereby fails to give itself express, obvious and clear content.

- 4) According to the fulfilled self of the Absolute Wissen, must be:
 - a) An union of theoretical and practical consciousness.
 - b) A self that is conscious of objects without going beyond itself to find them.
 - c) A self that on principle appears to itself as an interrelated community of selves without being the less one Self (Geist)
 - d) A Self that saves its absoluteness by assuming special embodiments.¹⁵

This outline reveals several important points concerning Royce's reading. Royce conceives of the *Phenomenology* as primarily a description of the unfolding and development of selfhood, not ostensibly as the final coming to consciousness of God or Spirit. The *Phenomenology* focuses on the "phenomenal or imperfect" transformations of forms or images (*Bilder*) and the ongoing metamorphosis of these images (*Bildung*). This gallery of images, composed by the stages of conscious selfhood, are defined by either a practical or a theoretical attitude. In either case, the stage of consciousness remains an imperfect one, for, in Royce's words, the practical stages are blind, the theoretical stages are empty. In truth, these are not Royce's words but rather Kant's. In Kant's investigation of understanding and sensation in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he states, "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (*Gedanken ohne Inhalt sind leer, Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind*).¹⁶ Kant continually confronts the problem of how sensation and understanding are related such that conception might have empirical content. It is significant that Royce understands Hegel as dealing explicitly with the epistemic tangle of Kant's first critique, one of the primary obstacles to transcendental idealism on the whole. Royce also notes that this knot can only be untangled by the union of the practical and theoretical knowledge, in the dynamic of *Bildung*. For Royce, however, Hegel is not Kant warmed over. Kant develops the sections on the transcendental theory of apperception and the schematism to negotiate the divide between perception and conception, and he devoted large swathes of his later writing to explain how the purposiveness of nature makes possible the union of practical and theoretical knowledge.

Commentators, however, continue to debate the success of Kant's attempts; he often seems to betray himself as a dualist. Hegel's approach is markedly different. Royce writes in his notes for the 1889–1890 Hegel course, that "Hegel was never really a dualist at heart."¹⁷ For Hegel, unity is realized between the practice and theory in the movement of history and in the development of selfhood. More specifically, the relation between practical and theoretical must be established in the history of

individual consciousness as depicted as *Bilder* in the *Phenomenology*.¹⁸ However, when we look to this history, this “Science of Experience,” we find not a consummate harmony between practice and theory but a tension that keeps things perpetually unsettled. Hegel is not a dualist in the Kantian sense, but he does suggest that the realization of unity is not going to move smoothly in some predetermined pattern. As Royce will note in 1892, the picture of the *Phenomenology* is not some “Absolute on parade” but a warring spirit that subjects itself to the contradictions of everyday life. This unsettledness, this subjection, rendered as the defining mark of human existence, seems to interest Royce the most.

In his Hegelian interpretation, Royce observes that consciousness often finds its ill-suited home in a world of “foreign” objects or in a realm where “other forms of subjectivity” appear as foreign objects. In both cases, consciousness remains unsettled and “fails to recognize unity.” This failure to recognize unity, the continual threat of “going to pieces,” rests at the heart of the problem of evil. For Royce, this was not an observation made from a philosopher-window. He had witnessed first-hand the social dislocation of immigrants who had suffered from prejudice and discrimination in California throughout the 1870s; he found himself as an outsider in the exclusive academic setting of Harvard Yard; and he had experienced the painful fracturing of his family. In these instances, Royce recognized the way in which individuals could be alienated from their surroundings, plucked out of the very relations—familial, social, and political—that constitute selfhood. This was not the fate of just a few unfortunate souls but rather the general lot of being human.

This is the point where the problem of evil makes its entrance in Royce’s *Phenomenology*. Royce understands Hegel as developing Absolute Knowledge as a response to this problem, to the danger of dislocation and disintegration that conscious selfhood continually faces. In this sense Hegel, according to Royce, envisions the fulfilled self of Absolute *Wissen* as “a self that on principle appears to itself as an interrelated community of selves without being the less one Self (Geist).” As the “special embodiment” of Absolute Wissen, finite consciousness forever seeks a home in an interrelated community of selves, yet seeks this ideal largely in vain. In an especially candid interpretation of §238 of the *Phenomenology*, Royce writes, “In just this position of endless search, conscious of the contradiction of purpose and of fact, driven by the contradiction to work for unity that we cannot hope to attain, are we all today, Hegelians however much they may protest. The only alternative is indolence.”¹⁹

This personal and experiential approach to Hegel’s writing was typical for Royce in the late 1880s and early 1890s. As Oppenheim explains in detail, his trip “down under” in 1888 was Royce’s attempt to cope with

the existential alienation and angst that had emerged in his early years in Cambridge. In Australia, Royce discovered a means to meliorate the effects of this alienation: the meaning of human loyalty. On his sea voyage, Royce discovered loyalty *in concreto*; he discovered it *in abstracto* in his reading of the *Phenomenology* and the *Logik*. As Clendenning recounts, "Royce admired the Australian public spirit . . . 'it could be all fire and ferocity' or 'bitter as gall,' but it seldom lost 'faith in the value of faithfulness.'"²⁰ It seems that Royce also admired Hegel's Spirit that suffered through painful turns of dialectics but maintained its ethical bearing by way of faithfulness and loyalty.

4. LOYALTY, TRAGEDY, AND DEATH IN HEGEL

In 1951, Otto Kraushaar wrote that, "from Hegel [Royce] learned system building, but accepted little else without reservations."²¹ This comment underlines the way in which Royce extends and revises the project of German idealism but downplays the striking similarities between Royce's development of loyalty and the position that Hegel maintains in the *Phenomenology*. As Oppenheim notes, Royce returns to the United States in 1888 primed to focus on the concept of loyalty and dedicates himself to the study of ethics. It is in the ethical realm that the problem of evil can be faced; it is in the ethical realm that practical and theoretical knowledge can be harmonized; it is in the ethical realm that Royce's metaphysics could find concrete expression. With this in mind, it comes as no surprise that Royce's marginalia is consistent and detailed in the sections of the *Phenomenology* entitled "The True Spirit. The Ethical Order." Hegel introduces this chapter with a claim that Royce underlines: "The living ethical world is Spirit in truth."²² Royce attends closely to Hegel's comments on the way that "Spirit which is for-itself preserves itself in the reflection (*Gegenshein*) in individuals; and it is implicitly Spirit, or substance, in that it preserves them within itself."²³ This comment resonates closely with two positions that Royce gives expression to in *The World and the Individual* and the *Philosophy of Loyalty*: (1) individuals find themselves in and through the movement of the Absolute, and (2) the Absolute preserves itself in the reflection of individuals. In the margin, butting up against Hegel's comment, Royce scribbles the following equation that begins to point in this direction: "*Gegenshein* = mutuality of display of individuality = mutual loyalty in and through the display of personal freedom and power."²⁴ This mutual reflection, or "counter-shine" lies at the heart of Royce's conception of loyalty, which aims to establish reciprocity between individuals and their communities, a term that Royce begins to use in place of the "Absolute" after 1888. For Royce, this mutual reflection serves as the ideal and end of human activity.

Neither Royce nor Hegel has allusions concerning this ideal; it is neither easily realized nor easily maintained. In Hegelian terms, the moment of reflection (*Gegenschein*) in the moral order is a beautiful, yet fragile, moment in the development of spirit. *Acting* on behalf of this ideal is necessarily precarious and continually jeopardizes the very communities and relations that individuals seek to establish. In "The Ethical World. Human and Divine Law: Man and Woman," Hegel explains the underlying reasons for this danger: "The ethical perception of a given action is an actual situation with many ethical connections. . . . [T]he plurality of ethical moments become the duality of a law of individuality and the law of universality."²⁵ Before an action is taken, it establishes an immediate duality between the law of the individual and the law of the universal. Once the action is taken, however, this duality becomes actual and is expressed as a conflict between two laws. This a difficult passage to translate and to understand, but Royce takes the time to unpack the section, writing in the margin, "The conflict is now to be between my social duty as absolute and society's ordinance for my guidance: The paradox of good citizenship."²⁶ Having been trained in the classics and the literature of romanticism, Royce gets the gist of Hegel's comment. Hegel is pointing to the character of tragedy. Our commitment to one ethical call makes us necessarily deaf to others, and we transgress in our very act of loyalty. Once acted upon, our ethical commitments often lead us into tragic situations such as the ones suffered by Antigone and Oedipus.

Royce follows Hegel's lead in highlighting the way in which human action tragically disturbs the ethical world as the "Spirit in truth." In Hegel's words, "The deed is the actual self and disturbs the peaceful or organization and movement of the ethical world."²⁷ Next to this passage, Royce writes:

The Individual in this twofold relationship must act in order to realize his relationships. To act here, however, owing to the instable equilibrium, is to sin against one or other. To Act is to fall prey to fate and so to become in the end the outcast (Oedipus). Naïve confidence of action of him who is at once a loyal citizen and loyal member of family: his paradoxical double duty brings him prey to fate, yet he acts in either sense with full consciousness of duty. He knows no conflict of duty.²⁸

In the opening sections of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel shows the inadequacy of individual subjectivity, an inadequacy that manifests itself as an experiential lost-ness or "unhappy consciousness" that Royce repeatedly felt. It was only through an unselfish loyalty to a cause that an individual rescues him- or herself from this unhappiness. Enacted loyalties, however, manifest their own form of unhappiness and are inherently flawed. In the above passage, Royce notes that to act loyally in

the ethical sphere is necessarily to sin against the various commitments that one *cannot* fulfill. This is the destiny of human activity—finite, limited, tragic. It is in this sin that one falls prey to fate and becomes an outcast. The language of tragedy and Christian narrative belongs equally to Hegel and to Royce. The actor, according to Royce, remains “loyal . . . the actor above all is not selfish, not sentimental. It is the absolute end that he seeks, [yet] the very loyalty of the act is its fault because of the doubleness of loyalty.” These words were written in 1889, more than a decade before Royce begins the development of the *Philosophy of Loyalty*. These notes reveal the fact that Royce’s budding interest in loyalty stems, at least in part, from Hegel’s move to “Spirit” in the fourth section of the *Phenomenology*. Royce is interested not only in Hegel’s general treatment of duty but in the specifically tragic form that the “doubleness of loyalty” assumes in the *Phenomenology*.

For Hegel in the “Ethical Order,” ethical action is torn between the mandate of divine law, represented by the family on the one hand, and the human law, represented by the state on the other. These are the exclusive commitments that Antigone and Creon embody. In his marginalia written 1889, Royce focuses on the divine and “unconscious” law that Antigone acts upon, describing it as, “the Family duty [which is] not the furtherance of prosperity nor yet the education of the citizen, but family piety. Family piety is not the furtherance of happiness, nor the production of the good fortune of the family member, but piety toward the memory of the dead.” This commentary is juxtaposed against Hegel’s point that the funeral ceremony is to give an account of the departed and, in so doing, to give a communicable meaning to the life and death of the individual. In Hegel’s words, the commemoration of the departed “makes him a member of a community which prevails over and holds under control the forces of particular material elements [Nature] and the lower forms of life, which sought to unloose themselves against him and destroy him.”²⁹ The threat that nature poses to a finite individual, the threat of death, is constant and unshakable; the positive action of the ethical order, for Hegel, exists in the elevation of the individual above this danger.

In 1889, Royce dwelled on these passages and seems to echo Hegel in his mature ethics to the extent that the philosophy of loyalty aims to overcome the isolation, vulnerability, and alienation that individuals, as finite natural beings, invariably experience. Upon his return to the United States in the summer of 1888, Royce was informed that his father had passed away. Clendenning notes that Royce was not personally affected, yet his reading of Hegel seems to reveal that this event, among others, affected him philosophically.³⁰ His marginalia in the *Phenomenology* trails off abruptly after the section that details the

importance of family piety. Little else seems to match the importance of these sections for the American idealist. Next to Hegel's final words concerning Antigone's act, Royce scribbles, "The importance of the funeral rites." These words echo through Royce's later works. Death and the rites surrounding this event remain central to Royce's conception of loyalty, preserving and recalling the individual's commitment to a specific cause. In 1908, he opens his *Philosophy of Loyalty* by stating that "loyalty is not now or yesterday, but always." This, in fact, is Antigone's claim and one that Hegel cites in the *Phenomenology*; Antigone asserts that the divine law and the funeral rites that it entails are "not now or yesterday but always this law has lived; no one knows when it appeared."³¹ In these words, Antigone becomes the hero for what would come to be known as "the cult of the dead." In Greek antiquity, this cult saved the corpse from returning to ground of nature by honoring it in a cultural ritual that established patron spirits (*Penates*) or deities of the household (*Lares*). For the Greeks, and for Hegel, the family existed to promote the cult of the dead.

Karen Halttunen argues that, in the Victorian period (1837–1901), the cult of the dead had a meaningful resurgence; complex funeral rites became the norm in the United States. Americans in large numbers re-established the practice of honoring *Lares* by preserving lockets of hair, mementos and pictures of recently departed family members, objects that could be used in ceremonies of remembrance. Indeed, the ethos of the mourning cult, instead of being reserved to the sphere of familial duty, seemed to infuse society on the whole. This infusion is documented in the mourning literature that dominated the sentimental culture of the nineteenth century. Sentimentalists regarded death as the opportunity to experience two of life's most valuable feelings: bereavement, or the direct mourning of the dead, and sympathy, the fellow feeling of humankind. The pious Victorians held that mourning was a pointedly Christian reaction to death.³² A mourning manual written in 1836, a pamphlet meant to regulate the expression of these cherished feelings, stated, "How naturally does affliction make us Christians." The divine law, which once served as the stricture of the Greek family, was expanded to the Christian law that regulated a large swath of middle-class America. Royce was both the product and critic of this culture of sentiment; his treatment of loyalty and the funeral rites demonstrates this fact.

While Royce's comments on Antigone and Creone in the *Philosophy of Loyalty* point to Hegel's distinction between the divine and the human law, he generally downplays the ironic strife that exists in this distinction. Royce does not follow Hegel into the detailed discussion of culture that succeeds the drama of Antigone and the cult of the dead.

Royce bypasses Hegel's description of culture for several reasons. First, to examine Hegel's theory would have only accentuated the division between the family, rendered as the seed of the ethical order, and subsequent growth of culture. Sentimental culture of the 1850s and 1860s was grounded in the attempt to plumb the depth of human feelings and to extend the "natural" feelings of family to a broader fellow-feeling that might underpin the workings of society on the whole. Second, Royce wants to envision an ethical space that *does not* fall prey to the alienation and dislocation that defines Hegel's description of culture in the *Phenomenology*. Hegel's "Culture" is one in which individuals have lost touch with their social surroundings and in which the vastness of society produces a sense of dislocation in its members. In the *Philosophy of Loyalty*, Royce referred to Hegel's phrase "the self-estrangement of spirit" to describe the sorry state of selfhood as it loses its way in growing complex of cultural forces.³³

This is Royce's fear of "bigness"; only by way of a "wholesome provincialism" can one maintain an immediate and personal care for a group and community. Instead of elaborating on Hegel's rendering of culture, Royce chooses to fixate on this drama of death and remembrance and to expand the scope of the family; in his marginalia Royce writes, "Mankind is one family. The business of the state is to preserve this one family relationship."³⁴ His comment resonates closely with his extensive discussion of Pauline ethics and is a loose interpretation of Hegel. Royce, however, does not merely parrot Christian theology or mimic German idealism; his marginal notes constitute early and original glosses of his own philosophy of loyalty. If the family is to be enlarged to encompass the human species, the duties of the family and the ceremony of burial must take on global significance. Royce's position, at least at first glance, seems to be a reflection of the sentimental milieu of the time. For Royce, the feelings that are associated with the act of mourning are not only valuable in themselves, or in isolation, but are signs of a loyal and active commitment to a cause. The funeral ceremony stands as the preservation of the collective past, the legacy of loyalty, and the ideals of Royce's Great Community.

Royce's interpretation of Hegel's "Ethical Order" extends beyond the *Philosophy of Loyalty* and serves as the lynchpin for the *Hope of the Great Community*, published posthumously in 1916, which includes Royce's "Lusitania Address." To insist upon Royce's Hegelian inheritance in this case may seem odd given the fact that Royce appears to disavow his ties to Hegel in this collection of lectures, stating ambiguously that "before the years of 1890, I never supposed myself to be under the strong influence of Hegel." This comment, however, may cut in one of two directions: either Royce remained unaffected by his reading of Hegel, or he

considered himself to be under the influence of Hegel after 1890. The evidence seems to point to the latter case.

On May 7 1916, Royce spoke in commemoration of the first anniversary of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, an event that drew the United States into World War I. In this speech, Royce harkens back to his interpretation of tragedy and loyalty in Hegel, explaining how Antigone's cult of the dead should be understood in the context of his own philosophy of loyalty:

One of the simplest and most familiar expressions of the innermost spirit of the cult of the dead is contained in the great word: "They rest from their labors and their works do follow them." Upon this word faith has spoken, and still speaks its long and deep message. . . . Man's civilization is the heir that has inherited the treasures and the wisdom which our fathers toiled to win. The works of our beloved dead do indeed follow them because our memory and our piety will not let go our hold which is best and dearest in the past; and for this reason each commemoration of those whom we reverence is a momentous deed in our present lives. When we commemorate we are not idle. We do not thus let go our hold upon the life that is, or lose the present in a mere dream about what is lost and gone. No—commemoration is itself creation. . . . Our science as well as our arts, our loyalty as well as our power to invent, our lawfulness and our new ways of living, our reason as well as our imagination, depend on our power to remember and to remember with piety what we inherit from the past and so from the dead.³⁵

For Royce, death, as the terminus of a life of duty, serves as the fulcrum in a philosophy of loyalty. On the one side of this fulcrum, community members achieve broader and richer self-realization in being loyal to a cause for which they would be willing to devote their lives. Indeed, some devotees are asked to sacrifice their lives, both figuratively and literally, in the name of this cause. Ideally, the loyal actor would be willing say in regard to the life of his or her community, "Thy will is mine and mine is thine. In thee I do not lose but find myself, living in proportion as I live for thee."³⁶ This statement speaks to both the heartfelt commitment to a cause that is required in loyalty and also to the reflection (*Gegenshein*) between the individual and the community of interpretation.

On the other side of the fulcrum is the commemoration of the loyal life, expressed in the eulogy and remembrance ceremony, which is itself an act of loyalty and interpretation on the part of the living. Again, Royce is not simply replaying the Victorian demand to sympathize or to feel deeply. In fact, Royce had harsh words for those who would confuse genuine loyalty and the dramatic and sentimental displays that characterized

burial ceremonies of his day: "Benevolence without loyalty is a dangerous sentimentalism."³⁷ The commemoration of the dead does not have as its goal a display of sentiment but aims to recall and interpret the heartfelt relation between a group, defined by a common cause, and a particular member. The fact that the eulogy speaks to, and is a sign of, a *particular* life is important to the extent that the community does not compromise the singularity of its constitutive individuals. The burial rites underscore the point that Cotton makes, namely, that "[n]o one can take my place among the loyal. If my deed is left undone, the world will miss my deed."³⁸ Similarly, if the deed of a loyal individual is cut short in death, the loss is suffered simultaneously by the individual and by the world to which this deed was dedicated.

5. INTERPRETING "THE LAST WRITTEN WORDS OF JOSIAH ROYCE"

On September 15, 1915, Stephen Royce surveyed his father's study in Cambridge. His father had died the night before. On his father's desk, Stephen found Josiah Royce's dying words, words that perfectly mirror the "Lusitania Address" and generally reflect the Hegelian interpretations that Royce began to develop after his 1889 voyage to Australasia:

Amongst the motives that have made the religious life of humanity intense, endlessly disposed to renew its youth despite all its disillusionments and unfailingly precious despite all of its changes and disappointments is the motive expressed in one of the oldest and newest of cults—the cult of death. In this cult the most ancient peoples whose monuments are known to us join with the latest mourners who deplore, who commemorate and who reverence their lost ones. No one religious practice or faith, no limited range of beliefs regarding whether there is only human life after our bodily death, or regarding what such a life be if there is one, can be justly regarded as invariably necessary in order that a genuine and vital cult of the dead should be born a part of the religious experience of men. . . . This cult has survived countless changes of opinion. It will survive countless transformations of belief such as the future may have in store for us. Its spirit will grow.

What is the significance of Royce's dying words? What is the significance of dying words, in general? They are taken as the attempt, forever partial, to sum up the reality of a life, a self that has exhausted itself through its commitments and actions. The last words serve as a sign, an indicative mark that points toward an odd process: the unfolding of selfhood that terminates in, but is also realized through, its communal commitments. The "motive" represented in cult of death—which belongs

equally to the Greek, to the German. and to the American—is a desire to preserve these words as a sign of the departed. In Royce’s passing words that trail off in ellipsis,

[s]o long as love and memory and record and monument keep the thought of our dead near to our lives and hearts, so long as patriotism and the spirit of brotherhood enable us to prize what we owe to those who have lived and died for us, the cult of the dead will be an unending source to us of new and genuinely religious life . . .”³⁹

In the *Problem of Christianity*, Royce states that nobody’s self is either bald datum or reified abstraction. A self is “a life whose unity and connectedness depend upon some sort of interpretation of plans, memories, hopes and deeds.”⁴⁰ Neither selves nor communities exist without the creative articulation that is embodied in loyal interpretations.⁴¹ Royce’s last words, scrawled on a scrap of now-yellow paper, points a way back to his own philosophy of loyalty, back to his interpretations of Hegel, back to his interpretations of Antigone, and back to the significance of interpretation itself.

Josiah Royce’s words do not stand alone on this now-yellow scrap of paper. Next to his parent’s words are the words of Stephen Royce: “Last written words of Josiah Royce found on his desk after his death never completed.” Like Antigone, giving voice to her brother’s final deed, Steven Royce’s words help situate and reorient his father’s final interpretation. His assertion that this piece of writing was “never completed” seems to fit nicely with both Royce’s insistence that the dialectic of interpretation, developed as an offshoot of Hegel’s work in the *Phenomenology*, is necessarily open-ended. Indeed, Royce’s last words invite and require another act of interpretation.

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NOTES

1. John McDermott, *The Drama of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 33.

2. John Clendenning, *The Life and Thought of Josiah Royce* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 230.

3. Walter Kaufman, Hegel: *Reinterpretation, Texts and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday Press, 1965), 139. This remark was not unfounded. Royce proposed to translate the *Phenomenology* for Holt Publishing in 1893 after delivering the lectures from his 1890 metaphysics seminar. The offer was declined,

however, and Royce was forced to work through Hegel indirectly—by developing his own manuscripts in the 1890s; see Clendenning, *Life and Thought*, 203.

4. *Phanomenologie des Geistes* (Berlin: Berlag von Dunder und Humblot, 1841), front cover, Robbins Library, Librarian's Private Collection, glass case, Harvard University.

5. William James, "Hegel and his Method," in *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York: Longmans Green and Co., 1909), 87.

6. This is the distinction that Royce makes in the preface to the *Religious Aspect of Philosophy*: "There are in recent philosophical history two Hegels: one the compromising idealist, with his general and fruitful insistence upon the great fundamental truths of idealism; the other the technical Hegel of the Logik whose dialectic method seems destined to remain not a philosophy but the idea of a philosophy." Royce goes on to say that we have the first Hegel to thank and the second Hegel to discount. See Josiah Royce, *The Religious Aspects of Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1885), x.

7. Josiah Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), vii. Smith is cited in James Harry Cotton, *Royce on the Human Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 155.

8. A detailed study of Royce's copy of Hegel's *Logik* seems in order, for it appears that many of the themes that Royce develops in the early 1890s originate in his reading of this text between 1889 and 1890. For example, the description of inquiry as a process of wandering and the way the philosopher must be at home in this wandering—see "Problem of Job" (1892)—can be traced to the *Logik*. Royce writes that "Wesen must be at home in wandering. . . . Shubert's wanderer has no city. . . . The duty of das Wesen is the endless search. . . . The true story therefore is the seeker's calling to seek, of his determination to be knight errant." For Royce, there is no determinate place that one is to call home; rather, "[h]omecoming is finding the calling of Wesen." All these comments appear, almost verbatim in Royce's mature ethics. The connection between the interpretations of Hegel's *Logik* and this body of work seems to deserve further attention.

9. Cotton, *Royce on the Human Self*.

10. Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, 143.

11. Robert Hine, *Josiah Royce: From Grass Valley to Harvard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 98. Royce's account of Essence in the *Logik* coincides with Harris's in *Hegel's Doctrine of Reflection: Being a Paraphrase and a Commentary Interpolated into the Text of the Second Volume of Hegel's Larger Logic, Treating of "Essence"* (New York: Appleton, 1881).

12. "Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*," translated from the German of Rosenkrantz by G. S. Hall, *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 6 (1872): 320.

13. Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, 258. This sentiment is expressed by Royce in his metaphysics seminar in 1889 and 1890. See "Notes and Papers 1889–1893. Hegel: Phanomenologie. Lecture Course of 1889–1890," 62:9, Royce Papers, Harvard University Archives, HUG 1755.5.

14. Frank Oppenheim, *Royce's Voyage Down Under* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1980).

15. Royce's copy of *Phanomenologie des Geistes*, Robbins Library.

16. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A51 B75.

17. "Notes and Papers 1889–1893. Hegel's *Phenomenologie*, box 101, folder 3.

18. In *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* ([Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996], 215), Royce calls the *Phenomenology* "a freely told philosophy of history." The *Phenomenology*, however, is not a world history but a history of consciousness. The *Phenomenology* ought to be regarded as the history of the education of a specific individual who must be formed to knowledge by becoming aware of what Hegel calls his substance. This project is not wholly different from Rousseau's *Emile* or Royce's *The World and the Individual*.

19. The section of the *Phenomenology* that Royce glosses is in the section translated as "The Certainty and Truth of Reason." Here Hegel negotiates the relation between reason and things of the world: "The pure Reason of this idealism, in order to reach this other [the thing] which is essential to it, and thus is the in-itself, but which it does not have within it, is therefore thrown back by its own self on to that knowing which is not a knowing of what is true" (Royce's copy of *Phanomenologie des Geistes*, Robbins Library). This comment is echoed by Royce in *The World and the Individual*: "The finite idea essentially seeks its Other [its object] so long as it remains indeterminate, that the quest can be attained only when the will of the idea is so embodied that no other embodiment can be sought" (*The World and the Individual* [New York: Dover, 1959], 359).

20. Clendenning, *Life and Thought*, 173.

21. Otto Kraushaar, "Josiah Royce: Introduction," in *Classic American Philosophers*, ed. Max H. Fisch (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1951), 189.

22. Royce's copy of *Phanomenologie des Geistes*, 322, Robbins Library.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 324.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*, 336.

28. *Ibid.*, 336.

29. *Ibid.*, 327.

30. Clendenning outlines many of the experiences that led the young Royce to focus on the philosophical importance of mortality and human finitude. See Clendenning, *Life and Thought*, 36.

31. Royce's copy of *Phanomenologie des Geistes*, 322, Robbins Library.

32. Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle Class Culture in America 1830–1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 124–53.
33. Josiah Royce, *Philosophy of Loyalty* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1908), 238.
34. Royce's copy of *Phanomenologie des Geistes*, 352, Robbins Library.
35. Josiah Royce, "The First Anniversary of the Sinking of the *Lusitania*," in *The Hope of the Great Community*, 94.
36. Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, 43.
37. *Ibid.*, 146.
38. Cotton, *Royce on the Human Self*, 249.
39. The original piece of writing is unprocessed and under glass at Robbins Library, Harvard University. Parts are cited in *ibid.*, 7.
40. Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan Press, 1913), 2:113.
41. This point is developed at length in Kenneth Stickers, "Royce and Gadamer on Interpretation as the Constitution of Community," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 15, no. 1 (2001): 14–19.