Beyond *Absolute Pragmatism*: the Concept of *Community* in Josiah Royce's Mature Philosophy

Para além do Pragmatismo Absoluto: *o Conceito de* Comunidade *na Filosofia Madura de Josiah Royce*

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Abstract: In many accounts of the history of classical American philosophy, the Harvard philosopher Josiah Royce — younger colleague and friend of William James, and one of Charles Sanders Peirce's interlocutors — is categorized as America's last *absolute idealist*: he is thus seen not as a pragmatist, but as a philosopher whose (somewhat outlandish) Hegelianism has, always already, been on the verge of being replaced by the newly emerging Jamesian pragmatism.

This picture of Royce has serious flaws (as, i.e., KUKLICK [1985], and OPPENHEIM [2001], have shown). Royce, the *absolute idealist*, did start his intellectual career (as he says in his Presidential Address at the American Philosophical Association of 1903) as a *very pure pragmatist* (1); and he remained influenced — during all his philosophical exchanges with William James over the *absolute* — by pragmatist motifs to such an extent that he called his *idealist* position, interchangeably, *absolute pragmatism* (2). In his latest philosophy (*The Problem of Christianity*, 1913), it is particularly Royce's engagement with Charles Sanders Peirce's signs theory by which he re-structures this continuing interest in pragmatism/pragmaticism. The leading concept at this stage of his thought — Royce's notion of *interpretation*, which he explicates in the idea of a *community of investigators* [and, in ethic-theological terms, in a Pauline concept of *church*] — attempts to re-incorporate, in new and sophisticated ways, core elements of (classical) pragmatism, while avoiding some of the shortcomings of James's *individualist* (and also of Peirce's science-bound *pragmaticist*) position.

In this paper I will show how Royce, during the three phases of his intellectual development, deploys various arguments *at the margins of (classical) pragmatism*. Royce, on the one hand, is constantly fascinated by the non-foundationalist, pragmatist project (especially in its logical, Peircean form); on the other, he keeps distance from (some versions of) this project, and positions himself carefully as a well informed critic of (primarily James's form of) pragmatism. This ambiguity makes the study of Royce fascinating (especially today since the most recent *neopragmatist* discourse starts to re-investigate the intricate relation between pragmatist claims and Hegel [BRANDOM, 2000; RORTY, 2001). To carefully read Royce's

mature philosophy, is thus not a mere exercise in history of philosophy.

My paper will consist of two parts. In segment one, I will shortly sketch the three formative stages of Royce's intellectual path: his early pragmatism (1.1), his absolute pragmatism (1.2) and his mature focus on interpretation/ community (1.3); while doing this, I will also point out in which ways Royce's leading concepts differ, f.i., from William James's form of pragmatism and from (aspects of) Peirce's *pragmaticist* notion of truth.

Part 2 of my presentation will focus on Royce's concept of *community*, which is the core notion of his mature pragmatism. This concept has epistemological bearings; but it is also, re-conceptualized as the notion of *Interpreter-Spirit*, ultimately tied to the idea of a *Universal Community*, a notion which Royce elucidates more closely in his philosophy of religion. My paper will deal with Royce's theory of *social interpretation* in two respects. In (2.1) I will argue that Royce's notion of a *Community of Investigation* (which — in some regards — is more elaborate than comparable ideas in Peirce) is crucial, if pragmatism wants to stay clear of reductionist (diadic) self-images. (I will thereby build on, and extend, an argument, that, in part, was presented by K.-O. Apel). And, in (2.2), I will compare Royce's concept of *community* with related notions in the work of two philosophical authors that Royce, ambivalently, courted: with Kant's idea of *Kingdom of Ends*; and with Hegel's concept of *Gemeinde* (in his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Part III, The Consummate Religion, *Community, Spirit*). As will be shown, Royce's mature pragmatism/idealism — while keeping away from all *transcendental* and absolute *dialectical claims* — incorporates essential thoughts from these two authors: thoughts that can be used in order to critically re-assess, and differentiate, narrower versions of pragmatism.

Key-words: Royce. Community. Pragmatism.

Resumo: *Em muitos relatos da história da filosofia americana clássica, o filósofo de Harvard Josiah Royce – colega mais novo de William James e um dos interlocutores de Charles Sanders Peirce – é categorizado como o último idealista absoluto da América: assim, ele é visto não como um pragmatista, mas como um filósofo cujo hegelianismo (algo grotesco) estivera sempre prestes a ser substituído pelo recente pragmatismo de James.*

Esse retrato de Royce tem sérias falhas (como, por exemplo, KUKLICK [1985] e OPPENHEIM [2001] mostraram). Royce, o idealista absoluto, começou sua carreira intelectual (como declarou em seu Pronunciamento Presidencial de 1903 à American Philosophical Association) como um pragmatista extremamente puro (1); e permaneceu em tal grau influenciado – durante todas suas discussões filosóficas com James sobre o absoluto – pela temática pragmatista que denominava sua posição idealista, intercambiavelmente, de pragmatismo absoluto (2). Em sua última filosofia (The Problem of Christianity, 1913), é particularmente seu envolvimento com a teoria dos signos de Charles Sanders Peirce que o faz reestruturar seu interesse continuado no pragmatismo/pragmaticismo. O principal conceito nesse estágio de seu pensamento – a noção de interpretação, que Royce explica na idéia de

uma comunidade de investigadores (e, em termos ético-teológicos, em um conceito paulino de igreja) – tenta re-incorporar, de maneiras novas e sofisticadas, elementos fundamentais do pragmatismo (clássico), ao mesmo tempo em que se desvia de certas falhas da posição individualista de James (e também da posição pragmaticista limitada à ciência de Peirce).

Neste trabalho mostrarei como Royce, durante as três fases de seu desenvolvimento intelectual, posiciona vários argumentos às margens do pragmatismo (clássico). Royce, por um lado, está constantemente fascinado pelo projeto pragmatista, não-fundacionista (especialmente em sua forma lógica, peirciana); por outro lado, ele mantém distância de (algumas versões) desse projeto, colocando-se cuidadosamente como um crítico bem informado do pragmatismo (principalmente o de James). Tal ambigüidade torna o estudo de Royce fascinante (especialmente hoje, já que o mais recente discurso neopragmatista começa a reinvestigar a intricada relação entre alegações pragmatistas e Hegel [Brandom, 2000; Rorty, 2001]). Ler cuidadosamente a filosofia madura de Royce não é, dessa forma, um mero exercício em história da filosofia.

Meu trabalho consistirá de duas partes. No primeiro segmento, esboçarei brevemente os três estágios formadores do caminho intelectual de Royce: seu pragmatismo inicial (1.1), seu pragmatismo absoluto (1.2) e seu foco maduro em interpretação/comunidade (1.3); ao fazer isso, também indicarei por quais maneiras os principais conceitos de Royce diferem, por exemplo, da forma de pragmatismo de William James e de (aspectos da) noção pragmaticista de verdade de Peirce.

A segunda parte da minha apresentação focalizará o conceito de comunidade de Royce, que é a noção fundamental de seu pragmatismo maduro. Tal conceito tem orientação epistemológica; mas também, reconceitualizado como a noção de Intérprete-Espírito, está finalmente amarrado à idéia de uma Comunidade Universal, uma noção que Royce elucida mais de perto em sua filosofia da religião. Meu trabalho enfocará a teoria de Royce da interpretação social sob dois aspectos. Em (2.1) argumentarei que a noção de Royce de uma Comunidade de Investigação (que – em certos aspectos – é mais elaborada do que idéias similares em Peirce) é crucial, caso o pragmatismo queira ficar isento de auto-imagens reducionistas (diádicas). Assim, desenvolverei e ampliarei um argumento que foi, em parte, apresentado por Karl-Otto Apel. E, em (2.2), compararei o conceito de comunidade de Royce com noções afins na obra de dois autores filosóficos que Royce, ambivalentemente, cortejava: com a idéia kantiana de um Reino dos Fins; e com o conceito hegeliano de Gemeinde (em suas Conferências sobre a filosofia da religião, Parte III, A religião consumada, Comunidade, Espírito). Como será mostrado, o pragmatismo/idealismo maduro de Royce – enquanto se mantém longe de todas as alegações dialéticas absolutas e transcendentais – incorpora pensamentos essenciais desses dois autores: pensamentos que podem ser usados para reavaliar criticamente, e diferenciar, versões mais estreitas de pragmatismo.

Palavras-chave: *Royce. Comunidade. Pragmatismo.*

In many standard accounts of the history of classical American philosophy, the Harvard philosopher Josiah Royce — younger colleague and friend of William James[1], and one of Charles Sanders Peirce's interlocutors[2] — is categorized as Americas last "absolute idealist": he is thus seen not as a pragmatist, but as a philosopher whose (somewhat outlandish) Hegelianism has, always already, been on the verge of being replaced by the newly emerging Jamesian and Deweyan pragmatism. This picture of Royce has serious flaws

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[1] While being a close friend of Royce, William James intellectually stood in a relation to him that was characterized by deep ambivalence. In 1900, he confessed in a letter to Royce:"When I write, 'tis with one eye on you, and one on the page [...] I lead a parasitic life upon you, for my highest flight of ambitious idealty is to become your conqueror, and go down into history as such [...] in one last death-grapple of an embrace." (JAMES, William. *Selected Letters*. Edited by Elizabeth Hardwick. Boston: 1961. p. 192.) For a brilliant analysis of Royce's and James´s intellectual encounters and battles see: CONANT, James. "The James/Royce dispute and the development of James's 'solution'." In: *The Cambridge Companion to William James*. Edited by Ruth-Anna Putnam. Cambridge University Press, 1997. p. 186-213.

[2] In the middle phase of his life, Peirce became interested in Royce, as his long (and critical) reviews of Royce's early books indicate (*Writings of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vol.5, p.221-234 [from 1885], and *Collected Papers*, CP 8.100-139; [from 1900]). Peirce saw clearly, what the philosophical position of Royce's mature philosophy really was: in his paper "The Basis of Pragmaticism in Phaneroscopy" (1905), he says that Royce, from good reasons, deserves to be called a "pragmatist". Peirce characterizes this position (which is also his own) as follows: "I have come to think that the common pragmatistic opinion is that every thought [...] has a meaning beyond the immediate content of the thought itself, so that it is as absurd to speak of a thought in itself as it would be to say of a man that he was a husband in himself or a son in himself, and this is not merely because thought always refers to a real or fictitious *object*, but also because it supposes itself to be interpretable." (*The Essential Peirce*. Edited by the Peirce Edition Project, Volume 2, Indiana University Press, 1998. p. 361.) Pragmaticism is thus seen to have its core in the triadic (or "mediating") relation significant for signs; it finds its most daring expression in Peirce's "objective idealism", i.e. in the speculative metaphysics which Peirce defends against James's (elegant, but nominalistically narrow) "pragmatism" (a school of thought that Peirce himself — who had introduced pragmatisms name into philosophy — had quickly abandoned since, as he writes, [pragmatism] "had been employed by philosophists to express doctrines not covered by my original definition.")(Ibid.) For Peirce, mature Royce is — unlike James — philosophically situated in close vicinity to his own, sign-theoretically informed "pragmaticism" project: If the [semiotic, and logical] re-interpretation of the pragmatic opinion is correct, "the logical breath of the term *pragmatist* is hereby enormously enlarged." It will become predicable, so Peirce, for instance of "Mr. Royce", who "impresses me quite decidedly as a pragmatist." (See also: BRENT, Joseph. *Charles Sanders Peirce*: A Life. Indiana University Press, 1993. p. 292-293, where the anecdote is reported that Royce understood Peirce's 1903 Lowell Lectures *Some topics of logic on questions now vexed* [the very same ones that James characterized with the words "flashes of brilliant light relieved against Cimmerian darkness"] "so well that Peirce was to call him Americas greatest pragmatist.")

(as KUKLICK [1985][3] has shown). Not only did Royce, the "absolute idealist", start his intellectual career (as he states in his Presidential Address at the American Philosophical Association 1903) as "a very pure pragmatist"[4]; he also remained influenced — during all his philosophical exchanges over the "Absolute" — by pragmatist motives to such an extent that he called his "idealist" position, interchangeably, "absolute pragmatism".

In my paper I will show how Royce, during his entire intellectual development, is fascinated by the non-foundationalist, action-related aspect of the pragmatism project (in his mature phase especially by "pragmaticism" in its logical, Peircean form); and how he, at the same time, keeps distance from narrower versions of pragmatism, e.g. from James's pragmatic theory of truth. Since "true" is not identical with "the expedient", *pragmatism, subjectivistically conceived* is "inadequate" and "needs to be supplemented"[5] (by stronger, trans-subjective, or "communal" claims.) This double-bind makes the study of Royce's writings fascinating — especially in an age where "neo-pragmatist" discourses start to reinvestigate the intricate relation between pragmatism and its supposed "other", Hegel's philosophy (BRANDOM, 2001[6]; RORTY, 2001[7]).

My presentation will consist of two parts. In segment one, I will briefly talk about three configurations of Royce's thought: about his early pragmatism, his "argument from error", and his "absolute pragmatism". The much longer part two of my paper focuses on the mature stage of his philosophy (i.e. on Royce's last book, *The Problem of Christianity*, 1913). In chapters 11 to 14 of this book, Royce engages with Peirce's theory of signs, expanding it into a general theory of "interpretation" and "community" that broadens and amends Peirce's concept of a "community of scientific investigators" in [proto]hermeneutical, theological and ethical ways (i.e. through a philosophical exploration of the concept of "Church", inspired by the Apostle Paul). In the course of

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[3] Kuklick, Bruce. *Josiah Royce*: An Intellectual Biography. Indianapolis, Indiana: 1985 [= *KJR*]. p.1-2.

[4] ROYCE, Josiah. "The Eternal and the Practical." In: *Philosophical Review*, 13 (1904), p. 116-117.

[5] *Royce's Logical Essays*. Edited by Daniel Robinson. Dubuque/ Iowa: 1951. p. 118.

[6] For the recent interest in a pragmatist re-reading of Hegel see: BRANDOM, Robert. *Articulating Reason*: An Introduction to Inferentialism. Harvard University Press, 2001. [Especially] p. 32-35.

[7] RORTY, Richard. "Some American Uses of Hegel: Royce on Religion, Dewey on Politics, Brandom on Language", paper delivered at the *International Conference "American Readings of Hegel in Comparison with the European Tradition"*. Venice, Italy: May, 2001. In this paper, Rorty focuses exclusively on Royce's "Argument from Error", dismissing it as a faulty "proof" for the existence of the Absolute. Royce's philosophy is thus presented only as the point of departure for Dewey, who in 1902, in a review of Royce's *The World and the Individual* critically remarked: "A difference of form and type between our consciousness and the Absolute simply once and for all makes metaphysical method impossible." Before dealing with Royce's complex philosophical arguments (and before examining their indebtedness to Hegel's "absolute dialectic as a dialectic of the Absolute", and to Peirce's pragmaticism), Rorty sets Royce quickly aside, and re-emphasizes his own, "neo-pragmatic" strategy to avoid all (theoretical) claims to "objectivity". (For a critical account of Rorty's project see: NAGL. Ludwig. *Pragmatismus*. Frankfurt/New York: 1998. p. 160-180.)

my analyses, I will distinguish four Roycean notions of community, and compare his uses of this concept *en passant* with related ideas in the work of two philosophical authors that Royce appreciated (albeit with reservations): with Kant's idea of a "Kingdom of Ends"[8]; and with Hegel's concept of "*Gemeinde*" (in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*[9]). As will be shown, Royce's mature Peirce-inspired semiotics — while staying clear of all "transcendental" and "absolute dialectical" claims — incorporates core thoughts from these two authors: thoughts that can play a key role in the attempt to critically re-assess narrower and less promising (Classical and contemporary) versions of pragmatism.

1.0 Who is Josiah Royce? A short biographical note

Royce was born in 1855 in Gras Valley, a small community in California. He graduated from the newly founded university at Berkeley in 1875 and then went for a year of postgraduate study to Germany where he studied at Göttingen under Lotze, reading Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer. In 1876 he returned to Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore where William James encouraged him to follow an academic career in philosophy. Royce received his doctorate in 1878, taught for a few years in California, and then went to Harvard as lecturer in philosophy (replacing James who was on leave of absence). In 1885 — the year he published his first major treatise, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (containing, in chapter 11, the famous "argument for error") — he was appointed as an Assistant Professor, and in 1892 as a professor, at Harvard, where he taught until his death, 1916. Among his students at Cambridge were George H. Mead.[10] and C.I. Lewis. Royce's intellectual charisma was strong. Despite being ten years younger than James, his influential early work antedated James's. Bruce Kuklick, in his book on the genesis of the Harvard Department of Philosophy[11], characterizes Royce's reputation, quoting from diaries of Royce's students, as follows: "Working under him was to witness his 'intellectual majesty', and to test oneself against his 'ponderous cogency' [...] Even those who rejected the 'massive edifice' of his thought 'longed to call him master.' "[12] His colleagues at the Harvard faculty were impressed by Royce's philosophical stature, and some, like James, were intensely struggling to free themselves from the force of his arguments.

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[8] KANT, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Edited by Mary Gregor with an introduction by Christine M. Korsgaard. Cambridge University Press, 1998. p. 41-42.

[9] HEGEL, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. University of California Press, 1998. p. 223-247.

[10] For an assessment of the influence of Royce on Mead see: MILLER, David L.. "Josiah Royce and George H. Mead on the Nature of the Self." In: *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, Summer 1975, vol. XI, no.2, p. 67-89.

[11] KUKLICK, Bruce. *The rise of American philosophy, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860-1930*. New Haven and London: 1977.

[12] *Ibid*. p. 142.

1.1 Royce, the "absolute idealist", starts as a "very pure pragmatist"

The received opinion on Royce is, that his philosophical position — due to his studies in Germany — is altogether different from that of classical Cambridge pragmatists like Peirce and James. As Murray Murphey, and later Bruce Kuklick have pointed out, this standard picture of Royce is profoundly wrong. In *Josiah Royce. An Intellectual Biography*, Kuklick argues that "the Cambridge pragmatists — Royce among them — were part of a major philosophical movement" sharing a well defined set of background assumptions. (KJR 1) The newly emerging pragmatism discourse was — in all its versions — extensively influenced by Kant's philosophy. Pragmatism, so Kuklick says, "draws from a set of connected doctrines": it aims toward "a constructionalist epistemology stressing the changing character of our conceptual schemes"; it is concerned with the nature of possible experience and has "an uncomfortableness with the dichotomy between the conceptual and the empirical"; it puts "an emphasis on the relation of philosophy to practical questions", and it "has a desire to reconcile science and religion." (KJR 2)[13] These different traits connect Royce's thought with the philosophies of James and Peirce: In Murray Murphey's famous words, the Cambridge pragmatists are "Kant's children"[14]. Not only the children of *Kant*, though, because, starting with Peirce, the pragmatism discourse has a strong affinity also with the post-Kantian project of a "metaphysical idealism" (KJR 5), i.e. with Hegel's and Schelling's attempts to *speculatively* unsettle (what Peirce will come to call) Kant's residual "nominalism". Kuklick insists that this "affinity of pragmatism for an idealistic metaphysics" (about which more will be said in parts 1.2 and 2.4 of this lecture) "is not difficult to explain once we realize that pragmatism is a neo-Kantian development." (KJR 5) From the very start of his intellectual career Royce was convinced that there exists an important connection between Kant, Hegel and pragmatism, as the following passage of his *Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908) shows: "Modern pragmatism is not indeed as original as it seems to suppose itself to be", he writes. "I was taught [to view truth in a practical way] by several great masters of modern thought. These masters were Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Professor James himself, whose lectures, as I heard them in my youth at the Johns Hopkins University [...] helped me, rather against his own advice, to read my German idealists right, and to see what is, after all, the eternal truth beneath all this pragmatism. It is, namely, eternally true that all search for truth is a practical activity, with an ethical purpose, and that a purely theoretical truth, such as should guide no significant active process, is a barren absurdity."[15]

Like Peirce and James, young Royce, in his doctoral thesis, attempts to formulate a de-transcendentalized, and thoroughly pragmatic, re-reading of Kant's critical philosophy. The "needed reform" of Kant's project concerns (in Royce as in Peirce) Kant's concept

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[13] For a considerably longer list of these shared assumptions see *KJR*, p.2.

[14] MURPHEY, Murray G. "Kant's Children: The Cambridge Pragmatists." In: *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* (4), 1968, p. 3-33. For an attempt to read William James in the light of Murphey's thesis see: NAGL, Ludwig. "Pragmatismus: Zwischen Kritik und Postulat." In: *Klassiker Auslegen, Band 12: James, Pragmatismus*. Hg. von Klaus Oehler. Berlin: 2000. p. 69-91.

[15] ROYCE, Josiah. *The Philosophy of Loyalty*. In: *The Basic Writings of Josiah Royce*. Edited by John J. Dermott. The University of Chicago Press, 1969. vol. II, p. 984.

of a "thing in itself" (*Ding an sich*) which both thinkers, like many post-Kantian philosophers (for instance Hegel), want to re-read in such a manner that it is thereby rendered superfluous.[16] The main focus of Royce's early analyses is how our judgments, as *acts* by which we raise a claim to knowledge, are possible. Cognitive judgments aim at something *beyond* their mere subjective validity: this something which they seek to express cannot, however, be understood as a "given" which is passively "mirrored" in the structure of our statement, since any object of which we talk is always already actively (= pragmatically) "mediated", *i.e.*, structured by the faculties of our mind (or, as mature Royce will say with Peirce: it is mediated by our sign use; see 2.0). The cognitive "points of reference" in our object-related judgments are neither conglomerates of immediate perceptions, nor "things in themselves"; they are, as Royce argues in his dissertation, rather *ideas* — and *independent, unattainable* ideas, for that matter: "To these unattainable ideas of fixed and stable notions we give the name of ideas in themselves. By the term we mean not that which enters into any judgment, or that which is known in its nature apart from judgment; we mean only that which one desires to have entered into every reflective judgment, and that one *postulates* as pre-existent to each such judgment."[17] Young Royce explicitly wants to substitute those *postulates* (i.e., the "ideas in themselves") for Kant's limiting notion of a *Ding an sich*. Thus *both* elements of Royce's early attempt to critically reconstruct Kant do have clear *pragmatic* connotations, a) our judgments *seen as* "*acts*", and b) the *postulated* "Ideas in themselves". For Royce, judgments are "products of will"; and the "ideas in themselves" regulating these judgments are "postulates": we ascertain their meaning by experimentation, and by examining the practical and theoretical consequences to which we are led by them. (KJR 16)

At closer examination, this thoroughly *pragmatic* re-reading of Kant leaves many questions open. Young Royce was not long content with it and soon, self-critically, moved on to formulate his famous thesis, developed in chapter 11 of *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, "The Possibility of Error": that *pragmatism consistently analyzed* entails something altogether different, absolute idealism.

1.2 The "argument from error"

If pragmatism confines its account of objectivity and truth to the propositional *acts* (and to complementary "*postulates*") of *individual* knowing subjects (as the pragmatisms of James, and of early Royce suggest), it will not be able to draw a coherent distinction between truth and falsity, since it always will resort, ultimately, to "the expedient" (i.e., to the "success" of a need, or of a wish) and will never stay (fully) oriented toward "the true". Soon after his dissertation Royce argues that in order to be able to draw the distinction between true and false we need an "absolute standpoint". We cannot, of

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[16] By this move Kant's "trancendental" project (which interprets human experiences as "phenomena") is abandoned in its original form: most post-Kantians – dialecticians and pragmatists alike – start their re-reading of the "Critique of Pure Reason" in such a "de-transcendentalised" mode.

[17] Quoted in *KJR*, p. 12.

course, place ourselves *empirically* in the position of an outside observer, capable of comparing whether our thought conforms with its object. (No such "Gods Eye view" is possible for us, as Hilary Putnam later will say). But in spite of this difficulty, Royce suggests — in his famous "argument from error" — that the claim to a "higher" standpoint turns out to be unavoidable even within a pragmatic framework (if this framework is properly analyzed).

In order to make his case, Royce explores the structure of *relativistic* claims: If we doubt everything — in the most radical form of skepticism — this still implies that error is seen as possible: otherwise the formulation of the skeptical tableau, *as a skeptical one*, would not work. (The skeptic would contradict himself, being in error about skepticism; but his very contradiction, *if* it could take place, would be *yet another* affirmation of the existence of error.) In the very heart of radical relativity thus the claim "that error exists" — a *non-erroneous* claim — stands firm and cannot be denied. And this one, undeniable certainty is for Royce not just an invariant residue in a sea of pragmatico-relativistic variants, but on closer scrutiny turns out to have enormous implications. In a recent reconstruction of Royce's argument, James Conant[18] sums up (and comments on) these consequences as follows: The only tenable account of "the logical conditions of error", for Royce, "will be one which permits itself an appeal to a 'higher inclusive thought'" — one which is capable of relating the isolated judgment [seen as possibly an erroneous judgment, L.N.] "to all other actual and possible judgments concerning the intended object of judgment."[19] In order to elucidate this appeal to a "higher inclusive thought", Royce raises, on the one hand, the plausible claim that when error is seen as error, a positive *collateral* knowledge (however vaguely conceived) of what would count as non-erroneous is implied; but he, on the other, also insists on a much stronger implication. Royce "pulls his absolute idealist rabbit — that is, "the absolute knower" — out of what at first looks to be a perfect ordinary hat [...]. If the pragmatist wishes to render the distinction between truth and falsity intelligible [a distinction that he implicitly draws when he concedes what he is forced to concede: that error is possible, L.N], he must ultimately concede the existence of an absolute knower as a foundation which underlies the possibility of all judgment."[20] In Royce's own words the fully spelled out "argument from error" runs as follows: "An error 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."[21] With this massive claim, the question, what limits any kind of *subjective* pragmatism *inadvertently* has, is definitely on the agenda at Harvard. Re-evaluated in a contemporary perspective, Royce's "argument" has (at least) two sides. On the one hand, it deploys a *tableau* of questions that remain — as will be seen — of central

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[18]   CONANT, James. "The James/Royce dispute and the development of James's 'solution'." In: Ruth Anna Putnam. *The Cambridge Companion to William James*. Cambridge University Press, 1997. [Especially] p. 184-194 ("Royce's Challenge").

[19]   *Ibid.*, p. 193.

[20]   *Ibid.*

[21]   ROYCE, Josiah. "The Possibility of Error." In: *The Basic Writings of Josiah Royce*. Edited by John J. Dermott. The University of Chicago Press, 1969. vol. I, p. 347.

concern also in Royce's mature philosophy: how to "mediate" pragmatic agency and objectivity — or, in the language of his later philosophy: what are the trans-subjective (*i.e.*, "communal") implications of our attempts at a predication of "reality", and at the implementation of the "good". ("Thirdness", in Peirce's sense of the word, is implicitly at stake, even in the pre-semiotic phases of Royce's thought). On the other hand, Royce's *rationalistic "deduction"* of the Absolute (thought of as an "absolute *knower*") as the *conditio sine qua non* of error, raises serious objections (i.a. from Peirce) — objections which forced Royce to come up with weaker reformulations of the basic intuition of this "proof". (Peirce dealt critically with Royce's claims in his first Royce Review, "An American Plato"[22], insisting, against the supposed inner-textual coherence of Royce's deduction, on the role of the "index" in the process of validating experience, and thus defending the "sense of collision" between a self and an object, which according to Peirce, is missing in Hegel's "absolute dialectic" [as well as in Royce's pre-semiotic philosophy]: "The capital error of Hegel which permeates his whole system in every part of it is that he almost altogether ignores the Outward Clash."[23] Peirce, on the other hand, saw however clearly that the question why we are discontent with our finite knowledge of the real, *i.e.,* why we know that our knowledge is still (in part) erroneous — and why we therefore continue to aim at a "real" reality (i.e.: at a reality not yet explicated), is deeply intertwined with the question of a perfect (or "absolute") predicability of the universe, i.e., with Royce's main question, properly understood.[24])

1.3 Absolute pragmatism, and beyond

In one of his later books, *The World and the Individual*, published 1899/1901, Royce reformulates his "argument from error" and develops what he now calls "absolute pragmatism". The central idea is that any correct theory of truth (and any valid explication of the possibility of error) must not only (as James, in his *subjectivist version* of pragmatism, suggests) investigate the agent's *activities* (i.e., his, or her, attempts to find truth in the

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[22] PEIRCE, Charles Sanders. "An American Plato: Review of Royce's Religious Aspect of Philosophy" (Summer 1885). In: *Writings of Charles Sanders Peirce. A Chronological Edition*, Vol. 5, 1984-1886, Indiana University Press, 1993, p. 221-234.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 225. For a more extensive analysis of Peirce's objections against the "absolute idealism" of *early* Royce than can be provided in the context of the present paper see: APEL, K.-O. *Charles S. Peirce*: From Pragmatism to Pragmaticism. University of Massachusetts Press, 1981. Chapter 7, part A, "Overture from 1885: The Defense of Meaning-Critical Realism against Royce's Absolute Idealism and Peirce's Program of a Metaphysics of Evolution", p. 134-142.

[24] After initially criticizing Royce in his review, Peirce — in the end — insists on a convergence between his and Royce' position. Apel describes the situation as follows: Peirce "wants to show Royce that their two philosophies finally converge, since each maintains as a theorem that which the other adopts as a definition. (CP 8.41) In fact, Royce asserts as a fact that which Peirce merely assumes in a 'would be' definition to be the meaning of the concept of reality, the perfect and complete concept of the real in absolute knowledge." (APEL, K-O. *Charles S. Peirce*: From Pragmatism to Pragmaticism. p. 139.)

form of a practical congruity between his, or her, assertions and the empirical results attained); it must also elucidate, as far as possible, *the framework* within which these activities logically and culturally are situated. In explaining his "absolute pragmatism" as a position "that differs from that of the pragmatist now most in vogue"[25], Royce formulates first the logical presuppositions that are implicitly contained but usually not explicated in any *pragmatism narrowly conceived*:

> There are some truths that are known to us not by virtue of the special success which this or that hypothesis obtains in particular instances, but by virtue of the fact that there are certain modes of activity, certain laws of the rational will, which reinstate and verify, through the very act of attempting to presuppose that these modes of activity do not exist, or that these laws are not valid. Thus, for instance, whoever says that there are no classes whatever in his world, inevitably classifies.[26]

This "logical" segment of the conditions of possibility of any form of pragmatism is, however, only *one* element of the (usually not explicated) "framework(s)" that inadvertently organize the background categories of our (subjective) claims: these background assumptions are all, in various ways, structured by "interpretations", i.e., by meaningful signs that are of *trans*-subjective, "communal" validity. Core assumptions, forming the background of all particular knowledge claims — for instance the always already presupposed idea of an "objectively real world" —, can not be seen as *the result* of the pragmatic activities of individual agents, but are, in all these activities, always already "in place". Once they get articulated, they become, for sure, *our constructions,* since they depend on signs: but they are *no arbitrary* constructions, *i.e.*: no mere "conceptions", since their semantics is structurally linked to our desire to conform to an *absolute* standard (and thus always goes — in a non-arbitrary manner — *beyond* what we could *empirically* verify.) Although the "absolute pragmatism" of Royce's middle phase remains deeply embedded in a world consisting of (a *subject*'s) pragmatic activities, and of their (*object*-related) preconditions — semiotically speaking: in a "*dyadic world*" — Royce starts to open up, in the third stage of his intellectual career, to Peirce's semiotics — due to a growing interest in the *sign-theoretical* implications of scientific inferences and cultural interpretations. He thus begins to move beyond the strong "rationalistic" version of his "absolute" claims raised in the "deductions" of the "argument from error".

2. The sign-theoretical turn: Community in Royce's mature philosophy

In the main part of this paper, I will deal with Royce's attempt to incorporate Peirce's sign theory into his "absolute pragmatism" by reading it as a general theory of "interpretation". Royce's turn to semiotics resulted in extensive reflections on the "communal" [i.e.: "triadic"] quality of our various validity-claims (in science, philology,

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[25] ROYCE, Josiah. "[Types of Order]", Logic and Methodology. In: *The Basic Writings of Josiah Royce.* Edited by John J. Dermott. The University of Chicago Press, 1969. Vol. II, p. 813.
[26] *Ibid.*

hermeneutics, religion, and ethics), and led him to severely criticize all pre-semiotic [that is "dyadic"] theories of meaning and action. His sign-theoretical turn re-positions his thought in close vicinity to Peirce's "pragmaticism".

2.0 The "triadic" character of interpretation

Since Peirce's lengthy review of Royce's *Religious Aspect of Philosophy* in 1885, Peirce and Royce influenced each other significantly. Not only was Royce Peirce's "decisive discussion partner"[27]; the intense intellectual relation worked also the other way round: "Peirce's impact upon Royce in his final years was immense."[28] Apel describes the history of this mutual influence as follows:

> [A]fter 1885 it was Royce's thought that was important in provoking the further development of Peirce's philosophy as a religiously influenced metaphysics of evolution intended to absorb the results of the pragmatic approach to the philosophy of science [...] After about 1900 Royce, in turn, came increasingly under the influence of Peirce, who encouraged him, with astonishing success, to study modern mathematical logic. Royce's idea of the "community of interpreters", expounded in the second volume of his last work, *The Problem of Christianity* (1913), provided perhaps the most important single contribution to the extension and development in hermeneutic and social philosophical terms of Peirce's semiotic.[29]

In *The Problem of Christianity*[30] Royce reads Peirce as the first philosopher who innovatively, i.e. by semiotic means, starts to analyze the peculiar qualities of those "community"-dependent processes in science that are neither identical with "perception" nor with "conception".[31] "Interpretations", the missing "third" in dyadic analyses, can neither be elucidated merely by means of a sense data empiricism, nor fully explained in reference to abstract, unhistorical frameworks (i.e.: in reference to "rationality" *analytically conceived*). Royce agrees with Peirce that processes of interpretation are never "dyadic", never a mere matter of "subject" and "object". Interpretations "always involves a relation of three terms" (PC 286): "That is, you cannot express any complete process of interpreting by merely naming two terms — persons, or other objects — and by then telling what dyadic relation exists between one of these two and the other." (PC 286) Neither a mere subject-object relation nor, for that matter, an abstract (that is: object-less) subject-subject relation will do: any interpretation implies (at least inexplicitly)

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[27] APEL, Karl-Otto. *Charles S. Peirce*: From Pragmatism to Pragmaticism: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981. p.135. [= APEL, 1981]

[28] OPPENHEIM, Frank M. *Royce's Mature Ethics*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1993. p. 179. [= RME]

[29] APEL, 1981, p. 135.

[30] ROYCE, Josiah. *The Problem of Christianity*. New introduction and revised index by Frank M. Oppenheim. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001. [= PC]

[31] This is, indeed, a Peircean theme, since, for Peirce, any valid predication of reality in science can be the result only of the ongoing work of an potentially unlimited "community of investigators". (See for instance CP 5.407: "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real.")

a "mediating third". Royce illustrates the "triadic" character of communal discourse (= "interpretation") with the following example:

> Suppose that an Egyptologist translates an inscription. So far two beings are indeed in question: the translator and his text. But a genuine translation cannot be a translation in the abstract. There must be some language into which the inscription is translated. Then the translator interprets something; but he interprets it only to one who can read English. (PC 286)

Thus, a triadic relation is constituted, "that is, a triad of beings — the Egyptian text, the Egyptologist who translates, and the possible English reader — are equally necessary in order that such an English interpretation of an Egyptian writing should exist." (PC 286)[32] Royce stresses that "the mediator or translator, or interpreter, must, in cases of this sort, himself know both languages, and thus be intelligible to both persons whom this translation serves" (PC 286); and he points out that "the triadic relation in question is, in its essence, non-symmetrical — that is, unevenly arranged with respect to all three terms. Thus somebody (let us say A) — the translator or interpreter — interprets somebody (let us say B) to somebody (let us say C)", and *this order of the terms cannot be changed* without a distortion of meaning:

> [A]n interpretation is a relation which not only involves three terms, but brings them into a determinate order. One of the three terms is the interpreter; a second term is the object — the person or the meaning or the text — which is interpreted; the third is the person to whom the interpretation is addressed. (PC 287)

(That the "interpreter" renders the text intelligible to *other selves* is of utmost importance in this process: "mediation" in its science-related, in its hermeneutic, as well as in its theologico-"trinitarian" and in its ethical sense depends on an *intersubjective* process that resists all decompositions into a mere series of dyadic relations.) Like Peirce Royce argues that processes of interpretation are never mere two-pole relations; they always are, at their core, *social* processes. The triadic, *communal* structures of interpretation are clearly distinguishable from the *monological* logic of "perception", i.e., from a subject-object interaction defined by a relational logic much simpler than the one constituting interpretation: "When a man perceives a thing, the relation is dyadic. A perceives B. A pair of members is needed, and suffices, to make the relation possible." (Ibid.) As Royce's semiotic analyses of "translation" show, interpretation — in contrast to perception — has always *socio-communal* ramifications. As we will hear in the following, Royce argues that, indeed, any claim (be it cognitive or normative) — even the logically disciplined and formalized truth claim raised in the natural sciences — does presuppose a triadic logic of interpretation, and thus can never legitimately be subsumed under dyadically structured patterns of explanation. Once we start to grasp the far-reaching implications of this *communal* theory, the question may arise how it affects our common-sense as well as philosophical notions of an *individual* subject?

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[32] Peirce scholars who read this will undoubtedly note that Royce creatively re-reads — or as he himself says, "freely imitates" (PC 286) — Peirce's notion of signs, thereby re-emphasizing some of its qualifications, and marginalizing others. (For an analysis of these shifts see 2.3.2.)

2.1 Royce's semiotic re-conceptualization of the "self"

We may approach this question by asking what, according to Royce, goes on when we explore ourselves in acts of "self-reflection"? Like Peirce, Royce claims that in acts like these we do never have an "immediate" grasp on ourselves: devoid of all *public* signs, we would be totally unable to "introspect" into our own, *private* self. Self-reflection is no "immediate" self-reference, but has the "mediated" quality of an internalized "interpretation" (or, as Royce sometimes prefers to say: it has the character of a "tacit mode of conversation": "When a process of conscious reflection goes on, a man may be said to interpret himself to himself" (PC 287). The self, thereby, does not have the one-dimensionally "flat" and compact quality of a mere object causally interacting with other objects. As facing itself, it is not only "perceived" by itself, but, in perceiving itself is always already also "active in its own back" (as the *activity itself that* perceives). At any moment, thus, the subject is more than what it senses as the objective reality of itself: it is, also, the (presupposed and non-thematic) *locus* of (self)perception. This Kantian thought figures (constitutive for the classical "transcendental" project, but in Royce transposed into semiotic terms) inform Royce's explorations of the dialectic qualities of the self-relation. That *the reflecting self interprets itself to itself* is a structure that repeats — at the *very center* of subjectivity — the triadic structure of "community". In any explicit self-reference a three-fold relation takes place: signs are interpreted in view of former signs and further signs. And to be one's own interpreter implies, in addition, temporality in its three modes: Metaphorically speaking, "three men are present in and taking part in the interior conversation: the man of the past whose promises, notes, records, old letters are interpreted; the present self who interprets them; and the future self to whom the interpretation is addressed" (PC 287).

Royce finds this triadic structure with its temporal ramifications at the heart of any interpretation as well as in every reflective self-reference. According to his theory, this tri-polar structure, albeit it origins in "mind", is not restricted to subjectivity or intersubjectivity alone, but is "capable of a far-reaching metaphysical generalization" (PC 288). Like Peirce in the speculative parts of his pragmaticism[33], the mature Royce will claim that "semiosis" — the ongoing process of sign-*interpretation* — is not a human matter alone: a (quasi)-"interpretative" re-structuring is constitutive also for the (natural) formation of the universe, which can be read *in toto* as a "gigantic representamen". In Royce' words: "What our inner reflection exemplifies is outwardly embodied in the whole world's history." (PC 288) (See 2.4)

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[33] Peirce's pragmaticism culminates in a cosmological metaphysics, i.e. in philosophical speculations about the "semiosis" of the universe. (For a short analysis see APEL [1981, p. 142-157]: "The Metaphysics of Evolution [1891 and after]"). Peirce's pragmatist criticism of "ontological metaphysics" does nowhere imply the claim that metaphysics *in toto* is impossible. "Peirce believed that the attempt to get along without metaphysics led only to a poorer metaphysics, since it would be an unreflective one [...] The key to Peirce's positive assessment of metaphysics is, on the on hand, his realist view of universals and, on the other, his unique conception of metaphysics as a science subject to empirical validation" (APEL, 1981, p. 143; see also: NAGL, Ludwig. *Charles Sanders Peirce*. Frankfurt/New York: 1992. p. 120-135.)

Interpretation, as triadically structured, differs from the "dyadic" world of pre-semiotic philosophies organized around the dichotomy of perception and conception (as well as from the narrower forms of pragmatism belonging to this world) in *three* respects: first (1) "interpretation is *a conversation* [external, or internalized] and *not a lonely enterprise*" (as monological perception is); second (2), "the interpreted object is itself something which has the nature of a *mental* expression" (i.e.: the object is no sheer contingency; it *is a "sign*" – for instance a text, or a structure that can be elucidated — and thus *not totally devoid of meaning*); and third (3), the interpretation *produces a new sign* that calls for *further* interpretation. "And so — at least in ideal — the social process involved is endless." (PC 289f.)

Royce sees this Peircean, triadic world of community-related interpretations in sharp contrast to what he calls the "intolerably lonesome" world of mere sense data (i.e. a "flat" world without triadic [self-] reference): "Every philosophy whose sole principle is perception invites us to dwell in a desolate wilderness where neither God nor man exists. For where either God or man is in question, *interpretation* is demanded." (PC 291) A world of contingency, i.e. of sense data *set absolute*, has *nihilistic* implications. It lacks all meaning. This lack cannot be overcome by subjective voluntarism — not by the introduction of "leadings", not by the insertion of conceptual patterns meant to "create" meaning in a world of sheer randomness. Projects like these remain within the precinct of an abstract nominalism: of a reductive philosophical position, i.e., that according to Peirce and Royce informs *narrower versions* of pragmatism (like James's). Against this, Royce insists on the semiotic qualities of a Peirce-inspired *pragmaticism*: "The life of a reasonable being is never a mere perception; nor a conception [...] Life is essentially, in its ideal, social. Hence interpretation is a necessary element." (PC 292).

2.2 Methodological interlude: Peirce and/or Hegel?

Royce analyzes "interpretation" by Peirce-inspired means, unfolding its triadic structure. Interpretation is read as the process of comparison and differentiation, i.e. as *a form of learning* for which negation, preservation, and re-integration at a higher level are the constitutive elements. This has a familiar ring: it strongly reminds of Hegel's method:

> The rhythm of the Hegelian dialectic wherein thesis, antithesis, and higher synthesis play their familiar parts, will here come to the mind of some who follow my words: and you may ask wherein Peirce's processes of comparison and interpretation differ from those dialectical movements through division into synthesis, which Hegel long since used as the basis of his philosophy. (PC 304)

In answering this question, Royce, first, insists that Peirce "in no notable way" had been influenced by Hegel when he wrote the early logical papers which are the primary source of his, Royce's, new "Peircean insight" in 1912[34]. But, more importantly: "Peirce's concept of interpretation defines an extremely general process, of which the Hegelian dialectical triadic process is a very special case." (PC 305) (What this strong claim implies

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[34] See RME, p. 38-39.

will be shown, in greater detail, in 2.3.1: Royce is convinced that Peirce's logic of interpretation is not only of crucial importance for any future *philosophical* methodology, but is also instrumental in an analysis of the background assumptions of *scientific* research processes.) In addition, Royce points out that the significant examples which both theories use to explain their thrust are quite different: "Hegel's elementary illustrations of his own processes are ethical and historical. Peirce's theory is quite as well illustrated by purely mathematical as by explicitly social instances." (PC 305) (Even if this characterization does not fully do justice to Hegel [since one of his standard examples for the dialectic process focuses on the teleology of organisms, i.e. on the evolving of a caterpillar into a cocoon and, finally, into a butterfly], the difference which Royce has in mind is quite clear. Peirce, in Royce's view, analyzes the semiotics of interpretation primarily in view of a logically informed theory of the natural sciences: his analyses of "triadicity" thus take off from a convincingly empirical basis. Royce certainly does not overlook the far-reaching similarities between Peirce and Hegel [quite like Peirce himself didn't, who insisted in "What is pragmatism" [1905] that Hegel would deserve being called one of the greatest "pragmaticists", had he only understood the real impact of "secondness" — i.e. of the "outward clash" — on semiosis[35]]); but Royce, at the same time, insists on the post-Hegelian qualities of Peirce's theory: "There is no essential inconsistency between the logical and psychological motives which lie at the basis of Peirce's triad of interpretation, and the Hegelian interest in the play of thesis, antithesis, and higher synthesis", says Royce. But "Peirce's theory, with its explicitly empirical origin and its very exact logical working out, promises new light upon matters which Hegel left profoundly problematic." (Ibid.) That Royce, "the Hegelian" (who always, however, emphasizes that — while holding Hegel in high esteem — he is not a disciple of Hegel) does opt for Peirce's project and against Hegel's dialectics, has two reasons which are closely linked to his substantial interest in Harvard's discourses on pragmatism and pragmaticism. According to Royce Peirce's theory, like all forms of pragmatism (including his own), has an "explicitly empirical origin"; and it is, at the same time, fully informed by modern logic. Hegel, on the contrary — although he has "as few others have done, described the paradoxes, the problems and the glories of spiritual life" — cannot satisfy his readers when treating "outer nature, of science, of mathematics, or any coldly theoretical topic."[36] We will see how these two elements of critique (the insistence on the empirical origin of theories, and the emphasis on contemporary logic) — *topoi* that are of primary importance for the genesis of pragmaticism (without, however, exclusively defining its profile) — gain prominence in Royce's investigations of the "communal" depth-structure of interpretation: Community, the *locus* of all triadic processes of intersubjective mediation, constitutes — by transcending "mere subjectivity" — a "higher [and potentially absolute] standpoint" (in a weak, non-deductive way) able to relativize, and to re-situate, pragmatic "expediency" *individualistically* conceived.

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[35] See CP 5.436; and Peirce's 1885 Royce review, 1.2, above.
[36] ROYCE, Josiah. "Lecture VII: Hegel." In: *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy.* Boston: 1892. p. 226f.

2.3. Community/Communities

Before we look at the *various levels* of Royce's analyses of community, we first have to sketch, *in a general form*, its basic character. According to Royce every community has (a) a temporal structure and requires (b) different individuals. A community is neither a casual group nor a crowd: "Without a remembered past and a hoped-for future, there is no common life or substance to relate the individuals to each other."[37] Its shared language, which allows for the expression of memories and anticipations, as well as for individual self-interpretations, cannot be understood as the invention of any individual: language is public, even if we can use it in a private manner. (This non-individualistic quality of our sign use will, later, puzzle Wittgenstein). Communities depend, logically speaking, on complex *relations*, and thus imply, with necessity, *distinct* individuals. For Royce communities are not a blending of selves in the sense of a "mystical" transcendence of separation — on the contrary: "It is essential for the existence of community that the members retain their individual identity because their involvement must be freely acknowledged and it must express itself in practical tasks which the individual alone can perform."[38] As has been shown earlier (2.1), individual self-identity, in Royce's understanding, is a matter of "inner conversation". Royce, the dialectician, points out, that any self, by interpreting itself, simulates a *social* situation; but, at the same time, the opposite is also true: community, as a social system of relata, is dependent on distinct *individuals*. In their most basic form, communities have the following temporal and structural qualifications:

> Two distinct selves who are willing to acknowledge or to interpret the same past fact as belonging to themselves constitute a *community of memory*; similarly the willingness on the part of two individuals to include the same hoped-for future with their individual selves constitutes them as a *community of hope*. The underlying structure is that of a triadic relation consisting of three distinct terms, the two individual selves and the common fact to which each is related in the same way.[39]

Royce explores the role of community not only in everyday life, but in various *specific* contexts of which in the following we will analyze four. *First*, he shows (still with Peirce), that the *natural sciences* cannot be understood "dyadically", that is not in terms of "perception" and "conception" alone. According to Royce the logic of science does have deep-seated *communal* implications, transcending any mere subject-object relation (constitutive, for instance, for various forms of pragmatism *narrowly conceived*) by opening up a "higher", trans-subjective perspective: For any validation of their truth claims, the natural sciences rely on an *empirical* (and anticipate an *ideal*) "*community of scientific investigation*" as the legitimating instance. (PC 324) (2.3.1) For Royce (as for Peirce) knowledge is a thoroughly *social* affair: what legitimately can count as true has to pass the test of a (potentially unlimited) "community" of the informed. *Second,* Royce shows — by significantly expanding his Peirce-inspired analysis of (what I call)

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[37] SMITH, John E. "Introduction." In: PC, p. 22.
[38] *Ibid*.
[39] *Ibid*, p. 24.

community 1 (i.e., the "community of scientific investigation") — that communal processes of self-interpretation do play a prime role not only in the natural sciences but in all branches of the *humanities*, and, in particular in *philosophy* itself (*community 2*). In this move *beyond Peirce*, the mature Royce frees the notion of semiosis from scientistic overtones that tend to limit, at various points, Peirce's own account. (2.3.2) *Third*, Royce adds to these analyses a further dimension by re-thinking, in his philosophy of religion, "Church" as a communal structure; in this context, his investigations do rely heavily on the theology of the Apostle Paul (*community 3*, the "Beloved Community" (2.3.3). These considerations, in consequence, lead to community-related reflections on a *fourth* level (where the rational core, i.e. the philosophical completion of level three is at stake), focusing on the idea of a "universal community" (*community 4*), i.e. on a semiotic re-reading of Kant's "Kingdom of Ends" culminating in Royce's imperative "Judge every social device, every proposed reform, every local enterprise by the one test: does this help towards the coming of this universal community" (PC 404) (2.3.4). Semiotic pragmaticism, reconceptualized in a complex architecture of communities by Royce, is thus reaching its highest normative level. In all its four stages, "community" stands for the "higher standpoint" missing in *pragmatism, subjectivistically conceived*. The various communities which mature Royce distinguishes, are, however, nowhere simply a substitute for, let alone are they identical with, the "Absolute" of Royce's earlier theory. They do, however, inherit significant aspects of the Absolute's critical potential, albeit in a weak, post-rationalist form.[40] The *theological content proper* of the older rationalistic account of God in Royce's "argument from error", is now re-situated within community 3: the "Church", as the prime *locus* of this resituation, cannot however, — since it is nowhere in a state of perfection — be sure (let alone being "deductively" assured) of representing, unambiguously, "the divine". Thus Royce's mature thinking explores, defends, and — in the notion of an "Universal Community" — philosophically elucidates (aspects of) the idea of God without, however, "methodologically" over-expanding it in the manner of classical rationalism.

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[40] In his mature phase, Royce does not use the term "Absolute" very often, but tends to substitute it — in theological contexts — by "Interpreter-Spirit". Frank M. Oppenheim comments on this change as follows: "Royce's significant revision of his mid-period emphasis on the 'Absolute' into his late stress on the Interpreter-Spirit of the Universe" was — in part — triggered by Peirce's jab about Royce's ineffective 'Pickwickian' god in *The World and the Individual*." Royce does not totally abandon the term "Absolute" in his late writings, however. "For in *Problem of Christianity* he refers [...] to divine reality as 'Absolute' (PC 211, 229, 350), speaks of absolute deeds, etc." (while at the same time opting for "fallibilism" and for "self-corrective interpretive processes"). A significant change occurred in Royce's image of God, however — a communal re-reading (and re-situation): Royce "steered his audience away from any image of a distant deity [..]. Instead of a Knower as impersonal as Aristotle's Thought-Thinking-Thought, Royce lead his readers to imagine a caring Community of Persons whose Spirit immerses itself in each choice and deed of the trillions of finite interpreters called to cooperate in promoting a yet closer realization of the Universal Community." (Frank M. Oppenheim, "Foreword", PC, p. XXIX.)

2.3.1 Community 1: The "community of scientific investigators"

While science, as commonly understood, is dependent upon the experiences of individuals for every one of its advances, no experience of any individual man can count as a scientific discovery until it has been sufficiently confirmed by others. This Peircean point is restated by Royce in the following way: "The individual observers discoveries have first to be interpreted to the scientific community, and then substantiated by the further experience of that community, before they belong to the science" (PC 322). The process to scientifically establish what is real depends on "community", this was already Peirce's claim:

> The real [...] is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. Thus, the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of COMMUNITY without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase of knowledge. (CP 5.311)

Thus, the "*perceptive* cognitive exchange with nature presupposes an *interpretative* cognitive exchange between human beings" (Apel)[41], or: the dyadic subject-object relation implies, with necessity, a (further) relation between subject and subject. I.e.: the logic of scientific explanation turns out to be more complex than the standard theory is willing to concede which assumes that knowledge consists in nothing but a merger of "perception" and "conception". No positivist-empiricist account, no neo-Kantian account, and no narrowly conceived "pragmatist" account of science will do. Although our claims to cognitive knowledge are, as a rule, tied to statements about perceptions and to logical deduction, their validity cannot *in toto* be explored by means of these two procedures:

> The existence of a community of scientific interpretation is presupposed as a basis of every scientific inquiry into natural facts. And the type of truth which is sought by scientific investigations is one which indeed includes, but which simply cannot be reduced to, the dyadic type to which pragmatism devotes its exclusive attention. (PC 332)

For Royce as a careful reader of Peirce it is obvious that science does not merely aim at "the expedient", but at a "higher standpoint" (which can be fully explored only by a semiotic pragmaticism — i.e., by an analysis of the triadicity of sign use — and not by a pre-semiotic pragmatism *narrowly conceived*). Scientific propositions are valid if they pass the test of the community of the informed, which frees them from the "vagaries of me and you." This condition of "objectivity" does nowhere imply, however that in such a "test" the truth claims that are raised and validated are freed from being constituted by signs that are used by (finite) interpreters: only *subjectivity in its ideosyncratic forms*, not the *subject itself*, is meant to disappear in true predication. Any valid proposition,

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[41] APEL, K.-O. "Scientism or transcendental hermeneutics? On the question if the subject of the interpretation of signs in the semiotics of pragmatism", in: *Transformation of Philosophy*, London, Boston, and Henley, 1980. p. 110. [= APEL, 1980]

for Royce and Peirce, is (at least implicitly) tied to — as Kant would say — "publicity": i.e., to the idea that claims to truth must be acceptable to the (potentially unlimited) community of the informed: "That the scientific community itself exists, is therefore one of the most important principles used in the natural sciences. Often this principle is more or less subconscious. It is seldom adequately analyzed." (PC 331)

In his investigations of community 1, Royce first follows Peirce closely: Starting from sign-theory, he "illustrates the relationship between the meta-scientific problem of intersubjective communication and the scientific problem of cognition."[42] All justifiable cognitive knowledge is in its depth-structure tied to inter-subjective processes of communication. Communal processes are the *locus* where scientific experimentation is (re)evaluated. How this evaluation takes place depends on *traditions* (*and on their critique*), not primarily, let alone only, on processes of meaning fixation that are *similar* to the meaning fixation taking place in the scientific experimentation under scrutiny. At this point, Royce's (broader) exploration of the structure of communities starts to break away from Peirce's. In Peirce, processes of communication — although at first sight seemingly distinct — are ultimately subsumed under the logic of (repeatable) experimentation. Peirce tends to overlook that the "agreement reached on the concepts and operations used in science" is *only a special* — and *not the general* case of inter-subjective agreement. In science, consensus is reached between the informed "by means of logical and technical operations that can be *repeated* by *interchangeable* experimentators"[43], i.e. by *specific* practices and conditions ("repeatability", and "interchangeability") that are not characteristic, *in general*, for communal processes. Peirce's "community of scientific investigators", while aiming at "the catholic consent which constitutes the truth" (CP 8.13), tends to blur the difference between instrumental rationality and "interpretation". Apel points out this problem as follows:

> Peirce seems to recognize *no* distinction between the process of experimental research in the natural sciences and the process of communication in the human community of interpretation. It would appear that the extent to which the meaning of all potentially meaningful symbols can be interpretatively elucidated is determined by the extent to which the community of researchers achieves an experimentally tested, objective knowledge of laws — and a corresponding technological "know-how".[44]

Royce, in his extensive analyses of community, does not subscribe to Peirce's (latent) "instrumentalism".[45] He starts to creatively re-read Peirce's sign theory, to free it from its predominantly experimentalistic connotations, and to transform it into a general concept of "interpretation". (As we will see later [in 2.4], in one important respect Peirce's logic of science remains, however, of outstanding interest for mature Royce:

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[42] *Ibid.*
[43] APEL, 1981, p. 193.
[44] APEL, 1980, p. 114.

insofar as Peirce's analyses of inference (in particular his reflections on "hypothesis formation" or "abduction") hint at a kind of "attunement" of the human experimenting spirit to (the spirit of) nature, that suggests (in a post-rationalistic, non-deductive form) that "objective idealism" might be plausible, and thus supports Royce's mature notion of the Absolute.)

2.3.2 Community 2: The "community of interpretation". Royce' post-Peircean "humanist" turn

In Royce's semiotics the general emphasis of Peirce on "experimentation" is weakened, and the logic of science is re-situated — as a *significant*, but *not at all exclusive* mode of knowing — within the broader framework of a theory of "interpretation". This expansion implies a (partial) restructuring of Peirce's sign theory. What Royce is up to can be shown quickly by a comparison between Peirce's and Royce's version of the basic, tri-polar structure of signs. In Peirce, the three poles of any sign are: "sign in the narrow sense" (= sign vehicle) (1), object (2), and interpretant (3).[46] Royce, as he says, re-reads this Peircean triad "freely" (PC 286) and thereby substitutes in two places for Peirce's (proto)structural account of sign (sign pole 1, "sign in the narrow sense"; and sign pole 3, "interpretant": i.e., in Peirce, the "effect" of an earlier sign and not, *per se*, the interpreting subject itself) two terms that are explicitly and directly related to (potentially self-interpreting) selves. For Peirce's "sign in the narrow sense" Royce introduces "the mediator/interpreter", and for Peirce's "interpretant" he inserts "the person to whom his interpretation serves". Apel analyzes this crucial shift in the following way: "Royce abandons [Peirce's] scientistic framework [...] insofar as he is no longer primarily concerned with knowledge of — experimentally testable — states of affair." Thus, so Apel, he becomes "the first person within the pragmatic movement to progress from the discussion of the interpretation of signs to the discussion of the hermeneutic problem of understanding intended meanings."[47] Royce re-applies (elements of) Peirce's analysis of the semiotic process in his analyses of processes of intellectual history, of historical, and of philological

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[45] As Apel points out, this "instrumentalism" is a significant (even the predominant) "tendency" in Peirce. A careful screening of Peirce's *opus* provides evidence, however, that the "purposive-rational" understanding of communal interaction is not without alternatives. Peirce's reflections on the logic of "self-control" (CP 5.533), f.i., can be read as moving in a direction closer to Royce's second reading of community (which focusses not on "repeatability"/"interchangeability" but on "interpretation", i.e.: on "controlling control" in Peirce's words). But even if the distinction between community 1 and community 2 – in view of some of Peirce's texts — may turn out to be not as strict as Apel's categorization suggests, it remains undeniable that Peirce nowhere gives a *full* account of (let alone provides answers to) the problems that Royce addresses in (what I call) community 3 and 4. (See in this context Peirce's own assessment of his project, chapter 2.4, first paragraph, in this paper.)

[46] For a fuller analysis of Peirce's sign theory see: NAGL, Ludwig. *Charles Sanders Peirce*. Frankfurt/New York: 1992, and: NAGL, Ludwig. *Pragmatismus*. Frankfurt/New York: 1998. Chapter 1: "Charles Sanders Peirce".

[47] APEL, 1980, p. 114.

knowledge. Apel describes this transformation, and re-situation, as follows: "Royce believes that the *triadic structure of sign interpretation* reappears in the *triadic structure of the mediation of tradition*, or rather in the triadic structure of the minimal 'community of interpretation' of human subjects which transmit tradition."[48] This transmission has the following structure: "*One (A)* must assume the function of the *mediating interpreter* who makes intelligible to a *second (B)* — or, if necessary, translates — what a *third (C)* means — or has expressed."[49] All minimal communities of interpretation do have this structure. And, as was pointed out earlier (2.1), in Royce even self-reflection, i.e. the "discourse of the soul with itself", follows this triadic logic.

Royce's "expansion" of Peirce's semiotics implies a substantial shift, even something like an upside-down re-positioning of sign theory: in Peirce's semiotic pragmaticism, man himself, ultimately, was meant to be understood as a sign (see, for instance, CP 5.314-7): i.e., the role of "synthesis" (or, in Peirce, "habit formation") was *in toto* attributed to the process of "semiosis", thus resting on the tri-polar structure of "sign in the narrow sense", object, and "interpretant"/effect itself. Royce however, in his semiotico-hermeneutic move beyond Peirce, challenges this (proto)structuralist assumption in Peirce. All sign use, for him (like for Peirce) is interpretation: but interpretation (unlike in Peirce) — be it communal or private — *always already implies distinct selves*. Although these selves learn, even about themselves, *only socially, i.e., through others* (by learning from them to use public, non-private signs, language f.i.), they are — according to the *dialectic* between the social media and subjectivity that, for Royce, constitutes the temporal logic of all interpretation — the prime (and un-substitutable) *locus of difference*, the site of any transmittal, and translation, of meaning within and between communities. Apel characterizes this post-Peircean shift in Royce's concept of community as follows:

> Peirce, as a result of his concentration on the experimentally-mediated *consensus omnium*, seeks to integrate man himself as sign into the supra-individual inferential process of sign interpretation. Royce, on the other hand, *substitutes man* as the subject of intended meaning *for the sign* in the semiotically analyzed process of interpretation.[50] (Italics L.N.)

This turning upside-down of Peirce's semiotics has far-reaching consequences. It opens the way in mature Royce for sign-theoretical analyses not only beyond the field of a logic of science, but even beyond the realm of the classical humanities, making possible his ambitious and risky project — that stands in the center of his last book, *Problems of Christianity* — to analyze, by semiotico-pragmatic means, the notion of community relevant in religious creed (particularly in Christianity, where the "Church", spelled out in "trinitarian" terms, is seen as "mediated", i.e. as guided by the third constituent of the Absolute, the "Holy Spirit"). Apel, it seems, does not fully account for the severity of the blow that Royce's move beyond a *(proto)structuralism of intersubjectivity* deals to some *epistemological* aspects of the Peircean paradigm (and thus, implicitly, also to Apel's own intersubjectivity-oriented "transcendental pragmatics" which assumes, with

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[48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.*

Peirce, that semiotics can stay clear of all "subject philosophical" implications[51]). Nor is Apel ready to follow Royce when he further expands his post-Peircean theory of interpretation into the realm of philosophical theology. These segments of Royce's analysis of community are, however, the parts of Royce's late philosophy that — to speak with Nietzsche — are written with his heart's blood.

2.3 Community 3 — The "Beloved Community". Royce's semio-pragmatically informed philosophy of religion (and its Hegelian ring)

As the Royce scholar Frank M. Oppenheim has shown, even well informed recent readings of Royce's late philosophy (like Kuklick's or Apel's studies) fail to give sufficient credit to the fact that *The Problem of Christianity* "is intended essentially as work in the philosophy of the Christian religion".[52] The notion of community, for Royce, does not primarily have *epistemological* connotations — it is, in its core, the philosophical category necessary for a philosophical re-assessment of the theological conception of "Church". Royce's *Problem of Christianity* and James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* are the two classic studies on religion written in the formative years of American pragmatism/ pragmaticism. In the introduction to his book, Royce pays tribute to the inspiration that he obtained from James's *Varieties* but, right away, points out also the main difference between his semiotico-social approach and James's concept of religion (seen by Royce again as being all too deeply embedded in an *individualistic* version of pragmatism):

> In one very important respect the religious experience upon which I [Royce], most depend differs very profoundly from that whose 'varieties' James described. He deliberately confined himself to the religious experience of individuals. My main topic is a form of social religious experience, namely that form which in ideal the Apostle Paul viewed as the experience of the Church. This social form of experience is that upon which loyalty depends. (PC 40)

Religion, as a genuine form of life, for Royce does not rest primarily on "individual experience" but rather is a social matter in its core: as informed by a "creed", i.e. by shared memories and promises, it is community-dependent. This creed is challenged in various respects by modern life and modern science. And as a "tradition" it is in need of an ongoing re-interpretation, or re-semiotisation: contemporary men — if they want to

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[51] In my article "The ambivalent status of reality in K.O. Apel's 'transcendental-pragmatic' reconstruction of Peirce's semiotic" (in: *From Time and Chance to Consciousness*: Studies in the Metaphysics of Charles Sanders Peirce. Papers from the Sesquicentennial Harvard Congress [Edward C. Moore and Richard S. Robin, eds.], Oxford/Providence R.I., 1994. p. 55-63), I have pointed out that Apel "postulates with Josiah Royce a structural prevalence of the community over the subject with respect to semiotic syntheses in general." (p. 62) This reading of Apel is correct. But Apel's reading of Royce is flawed. In contrast to Peirce, Royce explicitly re-accentuates the role of the individual within the dialectic of communities: communities do only work if the selves belonging to them are distinct entities: i.e. the synthesis of the subjects is not disappearing within the mega-synthesis of communal semiosis.

[52] OPPENHEIM, RME, p. 19.

reaffirm their beliefs under the premises of modernity — have to thinkingly re-evaluate what they believe (Kant called this project „*denkender Glaube*"). Royce expresses the "problem of Christianity" as follows: "In what sense, if in any, can the modern man consistently be, in creed, a Christian?" (PC 62) (This question, as some of you will be aware, was of concern not only Kant but also for Hegel: two thinkers that — indirectly and directly — exert great influence on Royce.) For Royce, the convincing answer to this question can consist neither in a regression into emotion or inward piety (Schleiermacher's way out that was sharply criticized already by Hegel), nor in a reduction of religion to morality. (As Kant has shown, the question of religion, genuinely raised, occurs where our actions, even the responsible ones, seriously fail: the "logic of hope" constitutive of religion is situated *on the fringes* of morality. It is thus neither identical with ethics — a realm that, in Kant, is seen as self-supportive —, nor is it the presupposition, or supposed theonomic fundament, of morality.) Royce, in his philosophical reflections on religion, is deeply influenced not only by Peirce (as will be shown, again, in the closing segment of 2.4), but also by Hegel (even if he denies this influence often in his last book.) The (unaccounted for) point of convergence between Royce and Hegel is that, for both, a full-fledged version of Christianity centers on "community" (or "*Gemeinde*", in Hegel) conceived as the realm of the "Spirit".[53] In its fully developed form the Christian creed is more than the gospel alone: it depends on re-interpretations of the founding tradition within the Church. For Royce the "Beloved Community" (i.e. the Church, or the community "in view of its relations to the doctrine of grace" [PC 125; PC 129-131]) is constituted in a thoroughly semiotic, Peircean manner: A has to be interpreted by B to C. (Similarly in Hegel the full explication of Christianity depends on the dialectical re-appropriation of the central events of the history of salvation in the "*Gemeinde*". These events are conserved, as unsurpassable, in their core meaning — but are also, with necessity, (re)interpreted in complex unfoldings of, and battles over, traditions in the church: battles that in Hegel, as in Royce, are seen as mediated by, in Royce's terminology, the "Spirit-Interpreter".[54] According to the Peircean triad used by Royce in his structural analysis of the "Beloved Community", the Apostle Paul is the (Logos-guided) interpreter (B), who interprets Jesus (A) to the Church (C): Paul's image of the Church as "the Body and its members enlivened by the Logos-Spirit" (PC 233f.) deeply informs Royce's understanding of the religious community. As John Smith,

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[53] Hegel analyzes "*Gemeinde*", the "third stage" of the "consummate religion" (i.e. of "the religion that is for itself, that is objective to itself", Christianity), in his "Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion of 1827" as follows: "The third element is the element of community. The first moment of this element is, then, the immediate origin of the community [...] It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit [Acts 2]. It is spirit that comprehends this history spiritually as it is enacted in the sphere of appearance, and recognizes the idea of God in it, his life, his movement. The community is made up of those single, empirical subjects who are in the Spirit of God. But at the same time this content, the history and truth of the community, is distinguished from them and stands over against them." (HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. University of California Press, 1998. Vol. III, p. 328-329.)

[54] When Hegel reflects on the "doctrine of teaching" of the Christian church he writes: "It is the Spirit of the community as a whole that is creative; the doctrine of the church is not

in his reconstruction of Royce's arguments, puts it: For Royce, "the religion of Jesus — the parables and sayings — cannot constitute the whole of Christianity since the full meaning of Christ must include not only his actual ministry, but also *his death and resurrection* that resulted in the founding of the Beloved Community. Only an interpreter who is in a position, as Paul was, to view the entire cycle of events is qualified to apprehend what the Christian doctrine of life essentially is."[55] Paul's interpretations were seen, from the early Church on, not as privatistic commentaries, but as the effects of a continuing salvation history whose *locus* is *communal.* The Church, like the community of investigators and the hermeneutic community of interpretation in their specific realms, is the site of a "higher viewpoint", challenging modes of mere "subjectivistic" subjectivity (for instance of *individualistic* religiosity, read in a *narrow* pragmatic sense.)

Royce tries to reformulate, in *Problems of Christianity*, the core of the Christian creed in a trio of leading ideas: "community, lost state of man, and atonement" (PC 49); these three notions are ultimately integrated in the more general idea of grace. (Royce has to say very significant things, indeed, about all these concepts, which — from lack of time — we cannot further investigate in detail here.[56]) Just one short comment: Community, the *overall* theme of Royce's philosophical re-reading of Church, re-occurs as *one* of the three leading notions explicating its governing ideas. This re-duplication makes perfect sense as it indicates the reflectively "mediated", post-"natural" character, in which the idea of community (elucidated as the love of *all* men as children of God) appears in this context: In Christianity (fully understood) the communal logic of interpretation (as present in Royce's analyses of communities 1 and 2) turns self-referential in an idealized, non-empirical form. Community is now not read only as the (latent)

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produced by the church but is cultivated by the Spirit present within it. Whether the historical origin [is] in the Bible or in tradition is not the primary issue; the community is the infinite power and authority needed for its development, for the progressive determination of its doctrine." (*Ibid.*, p. 151.)

55   SMITH, John E.. "Introduction." in: PC, p. 5.
56   Royce reads, for instance, the idea of "the lost state of man" — that man is not able, as an individual agent, to save himself — in remarkable ways. At the root of this (general, human) predicament — which "is grave with the gravity of life" and "not only an essential feature of Christianity, but an indispensable part of every religious and moral view of life, which considers man's business justly" (PC 104) — stands the way in which we are (with necessity) socialized: Man "comes to self-consciousness as a moral being through the spiritual warfare of mutual observation, of mutual criticism, of rivalry — yes, too, often through the warfare of envy and of gossip and of scandal-mongering, and of whatever else belongs to the early training that many people give to their own consciences, through taking a more or less hostile account of the consciences of their neighbors." (PC 111) Thus, the "natural" socialization process, in itself, does not produce, in itself, the love and support of others, but tends to constitute hostile forms of self-affirmation: "It breeds men who, even when they keep the peace, are inwardly enemies of one another" (PC 113). Our modern world — in its natural state — develops mans "fleshly nature [...] emphasizing every sort and grade of skillful opposition to the very social will that trains it." (PC 114) The remedy for this, so Royce, is a different, non-"natural" institution that is "in a new way social" (PC 118): the (still unimplemented) "universal community" to which we ought to be "loyal".

formal semiotic process present in any evaluation of experiments, and in every hermeneutic transmission and translation of meaning, but is seen as, itself, the *material goal* of every (still limited) socio-communal interaction: *all* men are potential members of such an idealized (invisible) "Church".

It is of crucial importance for an understanding of Royce, to keep in mind that he calls the core ideas of (all) communal interactions (i.e. community, lost state of man, and atonement) "*Christian*" *only* since they, in his view, were first explicitly articulated by the Christian community. He claims that the insights found in them are not history bound, but are of *trans-Christian* significance:

> Whatever may hereafter be the fortunes of Christian institutions, or of Christian traditions, the doctrine of the salvation of the otherwise hopelessly lost individual through devotion to the life of the genuinely real and Universal Community must survive, and must direct the future both of religion and of mankind ... (PC 42)

2.3.4 Community 4: The ideal of a "universal community"[57] (Royce and Kant)

The semiotic unfolding of the self-referential communal logic constitutive of the Church (seen as a community which encourages the faithful to become responsible, "loyal" members of its social body and to turn it into a non-exclusive "Beloved Community") is, for Royce, an ongoing process that is nowhere fully implemented: "The true Church is still a sort of ideal challenge to the faithful, rather than an already finished institution — a call upon men for a heavenly quest rather than a present possession of humanity. 'Create me' — this is the word that the Church, viewed as an idea, addresses to mankind." (PC 77) The historic churches often betrayed their ideal, even in horrific ways: "The contrast between the letter and the spirit is nowhere more momentous and more tragic than in the case of the doctrine of the nature and the office of the Christian Church". (PC 77) Being aware of the crimes and blunders that marred the history of Christianity, Royce, *first*, insists that the empirical Church(s) need to be purged of their self-righteousness, as well as of the myths, symbols and formulas encrusting their institutions.[58] But, *second*, he claimed (like Kant and Hegel) that Christianity "stands before us as the most effective expression of religious longing which the human race has, in its corporate capacity, as yet, been able to bring before its imagination as a vision" (PC 60). *Third*,

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[57]   The idea of a "universal community" is spelled out in Royce's *Problem of Christianity* in (at least) three ways: (1) it is analyzed as a pre-Christian, stoic idea, still lacking the deep insights of the Apostle Paul into the abyss of "natural" socialization; (2) it is used as a synonym of the "Beloved Community"; and (3) it is *philosophically* interpreted as the goal of any moral pursuit of mankind (be it Christian or non Christian), i.e. as "the coming universal community" (PC 405). In this paper we focus exclusively on the third, philosophical sense.

[58]   OPPENHEIM, Frank M.. "Foreword." In: PC, p. 29f. Oppenheim points out that "for this purification to occur, a wholehearted interactive dialogue of Christianity with Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Confuzianism, and other world religions is becoming indispensable." (*Ibid.*, p. 30)

however, he is (also like Hegel) well aware that the future of Christianity is uncertain[59], and he argues that its core ideas can (and possibly will) be transposed *into other, non-Christian modes of belief*:

> To my own mind [the essential Christian ideas] are such as can be interpreted and defended without our needing, for the purposes of such interpretation and defense, any acceptance of traditional dogmas. For these considerations are based upon human nature. They have to do with interests which all reasonable men, *whether Christian or non-Christian*, more or less clearly recognize. (PC 78)

Royce draws three conclusions from his philosophical reconstruction — and re-situation — of (core elements of) the "Beloved Community". All three of them are deeply influenced by Kant's concept of a *Reich der Zwecke* ("Kingdom of Ends"), that is by the socially most articulate version of his "categorical imperative"[60]. These *three* Roycean conclusions consist of *two admonitions* (*first,* to read the [religious] idea of a Beloved Community not in a parochial, but in a universalistic mode; *second*, not to take the Church's identical reproduction, prolongation or expansion for granted) *and* of *a* "*test*" that Royce advises us to perform when we plan our future actions. The crucial, second admonition runs in Royce's own words as follows: "*Look forward to the human and visible triumph of no form of the Christian church.* Still less look to any sect, new or old, as the conqueror." (PC 404) The furtherance of the implementation of the — yet unrealized — idea of a community of mankind is *not* dependent on the success or failure of this or that expansionist, but parochial, "visible" Church: our future task is rather "the task of inventing and applying the arts which shall win men over to unity, and which shall overcome their original hatefulness ..." (PC 404) Thus, the test of all future action shall be:

> Judge every social device, every proposed reform [...] by the one test: *Does this help towards the coming of the universal community*. If you have a church, judge your own church by this standard; and if your church does not yet fully meet this standard, aid towards reforming your church accordingly. (Ibid.)

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[59] At the end of his analyses of "Community" in Part III, "The consummate religion" — i.e. at the very end of his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion —, Hegel analyzes "the signs of the time" under the heading "The Passing Away of the Community". Empirically considered, Christianity seems more and more to loose its motivating power. The substantial content of religion, so Hegel, cannot be saved by religion itself: "Religion [must] take refuge in philosophy. For the theologians of the present day, the world is a passing away in subjective reflection because it has as its form merely the externality of contingent occurrence. But philosophy [...] forms an isolated order of priests — a sanctuary — who are untroubled about how it goes with the world, who need not mix with it, and whose work is to preserve this possession of truth. How things turn out in the world is not our affair." (HEGEL. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Vol. III, p. 158-162.)

[60] Kant's "communal" version of the categorical imperative contains, i.a., the following two elements that are of importance for a structural analysis of Royce's concept of a "universal community": "The concept of *every* rational being as one who must regard himself as giving universal law [...] leads to a very fruitful concept dependent upon it, namely that of a *kingdom of ends*"; and: "A rational being belongs as a member to the kingdom of ends when he *gives* universal laws in it but is also himself *subject* to the laws." (KANT. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. p. 41.)

How, in Royce's eyes, can this amelioration process be philosophically furthered? At the highest point of his multi-faceted architecture of "community" Royce, again, returns to Peirce, in particular to the speculative elements of his pragmaticism. Our trust in the ideal of community (particularly in its — "yet to come" — universal form), can, for instance, be philosophically furthered by careful reflections on the (community 1-dependent) processes of scientific hypothesis-formation, i.e. by considerations that in Peirce, as in mature Royce, lead to the idea that "objective idealism"[61] is the most plausible way to describe the universe. The cosmos itself is thus seen as the locus of (ongoing processes of) "semiosis": the predicates which we attribute to the objects when our experiments are successful, will — in the long run — turn out not just to be the arbitrary "tools" of a pragmatist "nominalism"/voluntarism, but — ameliorated through processes of corrections, and of correcting corrections — will be "fated" to (ultimately) express the core of "the real". The universe is a "vast representamen", and it "contains its own interpreter" (PC 399). Thus, various *analoga* to the concept of community are conceivable — to a concept which, primarily, is explicated by Royce in reference to *finite conscious social actions; unconscious* modes of community, present in the formative processes of nature (what Peirce, in "Evolutionary Love", calls "agapasm"[62]); and *in-finite modes,* indirectly present as the "*Grenzbegriffe*" of *our* experimentations and actions: the "real" and the "absolute" (in "community" with which, however indirectly, all our limited endeavors proceed. Now, in the final segment of this paper, let us take a (very short) look at this speculative set of assumptions that partially (re-) unite, in interestingly new ways, the thoughts of mature Peirce and of mature Royce.

2.4 Community, "objective idealism", and the Absolute

In the "closing illustration" of his philosophy of interpretation (PC 390), Royce insists

> … that there is a harmony, unexpected and interesting, between the view of philosophy which the general philosophy of these lectures defends, and the result to which we are led when we ponder, as Charles Peirce has taught us to ponder, upon the conditions which make the actual success of our natural sciences possible. (PC 390)

This may sound amazing since important aspects of Royce's philosophy of "interpretation" definitely lead us *beyond* Peirce: in the works of the founder of "pragmaticism" we nowhere do find the kind of extensive analyses of "communities" that form the center of Royce's mature studies. And Peirce himself wrote, in his last letter to Royce, 1913, that his, Peirce's, pragmaticism "chiefly goes to improve the *security* of inference, without touching, what is far more important, its *Uberty*[63]. It doesn't

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[61] In CP 6.25 Peirce writes: "The only intelligible theory of the universe is that of objective idealism, that matter is effete mind, inveterate habits becoming physical laws." (See also CP 6. 101, 6.158, 6.264ff.)

[62] CP 6.296-6.307.

[63] From L. ubertas, full-breasted abundance of goods.

for instance seem to have any thing to say as to our exaltation of *beauty*, *duty*, or *truth*."[64] Royce, in *Problems of Christianity*, certainly was able to fill some of the gaps Peirce mentions in his assessment of the limits of his own pragmaticism, since Royce investigates, in his analyses of communities 2 to 4, the basic constituents of a socio-semiotics of ethics and religion.

In spite of these improvements and innovative re-applications Royce, however, was quite aware that his use of Peirce's semiotics within the framework of a new, post-Peircean theory of interpretation (inspired, for instance, by Hegel, by elements of Kant, and by the Apostel Paul) does not fully exhaust the speculative energies contained in Peirce's logical and science-related writings. What interests him when he returns, in the closing chapter of PC, to Peirce once more, is the question what the presupposition of "the security of scientific inference" are (which *security*, as Peirce tells Royce in 1913, was of prime concern for his pragmaticism). Royce marvels, with Peirce, what kind of metaphysical implications mankind's successful practice of hypothesis formation actually has. He raises the question why our *socially mediated sign processes* are ever able to reach, and to stay attuned to, reality. As Peirce has seen, this problem is — in various ways — intricately connected with the question of the Absolute. Royce, in his exposition in the closing chapter of PC, of this *problem of a "fit" (of idea and reality)* refers to Peirce's analyses of scientific inference in a "short passage contained in his [Peirce's] extremely interesting essay entitled *A Neglected Argument for the Being of God*." (PC 390) What is at stake in this elucidation of inference is of relevance, it seems, not only for a logic of science, but also for a philosophy of religion. We might formulate the metaphysical problem, implicit in the problem of induction, in a nutshell as follows: Is the creative energy of mankind, *i.e. our inventive "spirit", just ours* in a nominalist way*; or are we*[65], of course merely potentially, *in touch with a reason that permeates everything*, nature and culture (which is the core assumption of "objective idealism"). The young Royce, in his reflections on our ability to recognize error as error, tried to deal with (aspects of this) question (although in a much too rigid, rationalistic and "deductive" manner). This question now re-occurs, reconfigured as the philosophical core problem of any theory of science, at the fringes of Peirce's reflections on inductive inference. As Peirce points out, the creative center of all logic of science is "abduction", i.e. the invention of new hypotheses. (CP 7.218; CP 5.137) Are these hypotheses "poetic inventions", i.e. nominalistic creations that, *by mere chance*, sometimes hit "reality"? Or is our (community-dependent and-controlled) thought and experimentation tied to the cosmos in a less random manner? Do we, maybe, have good reason to read the universe itself as a giant semiotic structure in which we are able to locate ourselves as contributors in an ongoing deployment of, as Peirce says, "concrete reasonableness"? (CP 5.433) Can we understand our role as that of interpreters of (natural and cultural) realities: as co-agents who, epistemically (in the "community of investigators") and normatively (in the processes of re-reading traditions in the light of an anticipated "universal community"), contribute to the cosmos' self-reflection — and thus: to its completion?

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[64] "Letter of Charles Sanders Peirce to Josiah Royce, June 30, 1913." In: OPPENHEIM, Frank M. *Royce's Mature Ethics*. Indiana: Notre Dame, 1993. p. 241.
[65] Theologians would say: as "God's image".

Royce starts his careful exposition of this question as follows: "A very good hypothesis depends, in general, for its value, first, on its novelty; secondly upon the fact that when duly tested, it is verified." (PC 395) But the more novel a hypothesis is, the more improbable it will appear. A good inventor cannot confine himself to an "antecendently probable hypothesis": "The hypothesis which is to win, in the advancement of science, a really great place, must often be, at the moment of its first invention, an apparently unlikely hypothesis, — a poetical creation, warranted as yet by none of the facts thus far known."(PC 396) But this, certainly, is not all: in order to count as relevant, every hypothesis must be *tested*. At that point an interesting problem arises: "The number of possible new hypotheses, in a large field of scientific inquiry, is, like the number of possible new poems, often very great" (PC 396); if it were left to mere chance to determine what hypotheses should be tested, scientific progress would be very slow.

> As a fact, however, [so Royce] the progress of natural science, since Galileo began his work, and since the new inductive methods were first applied, has been (so Charles Peirce asserts) prodigiously faster than it could have been had mere chance guided the inventive process of the greater scientific thinkers. (Ibid.)

This could not have been the case, had not the human mind, as Peirce says "been in some deep way attuned to the nature of things." (PC 397) According to Royce this aptitude cannot *in toto* be explained by evolutionary processes: "Natural selection could never, by itself, have produced, through merely favoring the survival of skillful warriors or industrious artisans, the genius which was so attuned to the whole nature of things as to invent the atomic hypotheses ..." (PC 398) In spite of the fact that all concrete explorations of the human mind's attunement to the nature of things depends on practical experimentation, attunement cannot be understood *merely* as a matter of pragmatic adaptation: "Our science invents hypotheses about phenomena which are, in appearance, utterly remote from our practical life." (PC 399) A much stronger claim suggests itself if we want to explain how the successes of pragmatic experimentation are possible: the claim of "objective idealism", i.e., in Roycean terms, the assumption that "the universe contains its own interpreter." (PC 399) The idea that the cosmos has, objectively, a semiotic structure (that "the universe is an immense sign" which we — *in the long run* — can *hope* to constructingly reconstruct by means of pragmatic experimentation) deeply informs the speculative metaphysics of Peirce's late writings. In Royce, these extrapolations from the logic of science are inserted into his post-Peircean general theory of interpretation and community. The ongoing semiosis of the universe contains re-readings (and, potentially, allows for amendments) on *all four levels* of community: in the natural sciences, in history, in religion, and in our attempts at making a "universal community" real. Royce expresses this Peirce-inspired (and Kant-influenced) hope as follows: "Full of wonder is nature. But the most wonderful of all is man the interpreter, — a part and a member (if our philosophy is right) of the world's infinite Community of Interpretation." (PC 399) Supported by Peirce' pragmatistic speculations about the objective idealist implications of the natural sciences, Royce reformulates his *social imperative* in the following way: "Aid toward the coming of a universal community by helping to make the work of religion not only as catholic as is already the true spirit of loyalty, but as inventive of new social arts, as progressive as is now natural science." (PC

405)[66] No scientism is entailed in this Roycean imperative: the critical re-evaluation necessary in the communal realms 2 to 4 follow *their own, specific* logics — in all of these processes, we should, however, learn *via analogy* the following lesson from science: that a consensus-oriented, free re-interpretation of the dogmatically entrenched traditional claims in history, religion and ethics is the most promising way to move things, as we humans should, in the direction of a "universal community".

In this grand Peirce-inspired pragmatico-semiotic narrative, Royce re-situates his earlier reflections on the Absolute (as the necessary, but unaccounted for presupposition of narrower versions of pragmatism). The speculative claims that he extrapolates from the logic(s) of communities are seen, however, not any longer as strict "deductions": they are neither, with necessity, "logically derived" from their presuppositions, nor are the claimed to be "transcendentally deduced" or "dialectically" generated. They have only the quality of plausible extrapolations: of conclusions that are not impossible, even likely, maybe. This open status of Royce's mature philosophical thought on semiosis, objective idealism, and the Absolute, should suffice to stimulate a pensive audience to make up its own mind.

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[66] See RICKEN, Friedo. "Charles Sanders Peirce: Religion und Wissenschaft." In: NAGL, Ludwig (ed.). *Religion nach der Religionskritik*. Vienna, Munich, and Berlin: 2003. p. 148-176.