Facing the finite nature of life: Royce on “negativity” and religion, and his reflections on the immanentism of Feuerbach and Nietzsche

Enfrentando a natureza finita da vida: Royce sobre “negatividade” e religião, e suas reflexões sobre o imanentismo de Feuerbach e Nietzsche

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Abstract: Josiah Royce’s “pragmaticist” philosophy of religion explores extensively human experiences of finitude, “negativity”, sorrow and evil. His religious hope postulates are inspired by Kant’s rejection of conventional modes of theodicy, and are—like Kant’s explorations of sorrow and evil—deeply indebted to a philosophical re-reading of the “Book of Job”. Royce’s defense of the validity of religion with pragmaticist (Peirce- and Hegel-inspired) means is nowhere naïve, but takes place in full view of the criticisms of religion brought forward by Feuerbach and Nietzsche.

Keywords: Royce. Philosophy of religion. Pragmaticism. Kant. Hegel. Theodicy. Anti-Theodicy. Book of Job. Feuerbach. Nietzsche.

Resumo: *A filosofia da religião “pragmaticista” de Josiah Royce explora extensivamente a experiência humana da finitude, “negatividade”, tristeza e mal. Seus postulados de esperança religiosa são inspirados pela rejeição kantiana dos modos convencionais de teodicidade, e são—como as explorações de Kant da tristeza e do mal—profundamente devedores de uma leitura filosófica do “Livro de Jó”. A defesa de Royce da validade da religião com significado pragmaticista (inspirada em Peirce e Hegel) não é de modo algum ingênua, mas ocorre dentro de uma ampla visão do criticismo da religião antecipados por Feuerbach e Nietzsche.*

Palavras-chave: *Royce. Filosofia da religião. Pragmaticismo. Kant. Hegel. Teodiceia. Anti-Teodiceia. Livro de Jó. Feuerbach. Nietzsche.*

Introduction

To experience life means *inter alia*: to experience life’s sorrows and to anticipate life’s end. How, if at all, does this aspect of our *conditio humana* inform the discourse of pragmatism? Has pragmatism, as some of its critics argue, the tendency to avoid the

in-depth exploration of negativity and of skepticism,[1] shunning all careful analysis of those abysmal aspects of life that turn out to be beyond (individual and/or social) "repair"?[2] In the following it will be argued that such a suspicion can be dispelled, if pragmatism's richness and diversity is not narrowed down, a-historically, in ways that abstractly re-focus it on an epistemology of science and a humanism that "excludes" all reference to "transcendence" (an "exclusive humanism" i.e., in Charles Taylor's sense[3]). The complex, non-reductive quality of pragmatism comes to the fore if pragmatism studies avoid to sideline (as "argumentatively weak") explorations like James's studies on "religious experience", Peirce's "neglected argument for the reality of God", or the elaborate reflections on finitude in Royce's *pragmaticist*[4] idealism.

The following essay is dedicated to Josiah Royce's philosophical explorations of "negativity". It shows, in Part 1, how Royce tries to face, in his text "The Problem of Job"—by reflecting on sorrow and evil—the abysmal nature of life, and how, as a result, he tries to re-interpret human finiteness in a non-secular, religious manner. Parts 2 and 3 point out that Royce's argumentation is, at none of its stages, naïve, but hard won by means of an analysis of the (alternative) option of a modern, religion-critical "immanentism": Royce's reflects, in innovative ways, fascinated but critical on two influential debunkings of "transcendence"—on Feuerbach's "projection theory" (2), and on Nietzsche's (post-humanistic) aristocratic world view (3)—and these explorations form the background of his pragmaticist re-conceptualization of religion.

1 Experiences of finitude and the "mission of sorrow"

Royce's writings address loss and evil over and over again. Unlike Dewey, who "would simply emphasize life's precariousness and set out to get rid of as many evils as possible,"[5] Royce focuses on an in-depth analysis of the finite nature of man and community, and tries to deal reflectively with the—persistent and recurrent—experiences of negativity and grief.[6] "What I miss in Prof. Dewey's universe," he writes

1 See CAVELL, 1998, 72-80.

2 In NAGL, 2014b the question was raised whether pragmatism, as focused on a future considered producible by our finite actions, is ill equipped to analyze religion (or "Erlösungswissen", as Max Scheler said): whether it is, indeed (as Stanley Cavell wrote) unable to sufficiently explore "skepticism" and negativity?

3 See TAYLOR, 2007.

4 For Peirce's and Royce's critiques of abstract modes of pragmatism, and for their "pragmaticist" approach see NAGL, 2014a.

5 OPPENHEIM, 2005, p. 402.

6 This advantage of Royce over Dewey was recently emphasized by Cornel West (whose prophetic pragmatism remains, at the same time, strongly indebted to Dewey's social philosophy.) In his essay "Pragmatism and the Sense of the Tragic," West calls Dewey "sane and fascinating, though in the end, unsatisfactory." (WEST, 1999, p. 175). The "only one great American philosopher" who seriously grappled with the challenge of negativity for religious belief—West continues—is the "absolute pragmatist" Josiah Royce: "In fact I would go as far as to claim that Royce´s systematic post-Kantian idealism is primarily a long and winding set of profound meditations on the relation of a deep sense of evil to human agency." (Ibid.)

as early as1891, is "the aspect that Hegel bids one look for, the *Geduld und Schmerz des Negativen*, those real pangs and the terrible negations of the actual moral world, whose theoretical correlates are the deeper problem of ethics."[7] John Clendenning, Royce's biographer, points out that in addressing "the problem of Job—Why do we suffer? Why do the heavens rain such misery upon innocent heads"—Royce offers two answers: one metaphysical; another existential. "In the first, the metaphysical thesis, Royce insists that we never see the whole of reality. Over each instance of suffering, 'a larger dome' overarches and supplements our finite grief. 'I believe in the supplement', Royce affirmed, 'but I have no sort of right to conjecture about its details.' […] In the second, the existentialist formulation, Royce insists that suffering can become the source of our creative insight."[8] "Grief", Royce wrote, "is our greatest opportunity for creation. Grief has created all the world's highest religious thought, all that is noblest in poetry, all that is deepest in human relationships."[9]

The question of negativity (which is important for Royce's early as well as for his mature, peirceanized philosophy) is foregrounded in his *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, where Royce emphasizes that Hegel rightly insisted on a non-linear (today we might say: non-analytical) concept of truth.[10] Hegel's insistence on the unavoidability of *negatio*, as well as on its *Aufhebbarkeit* in non-dyadic modes of semiosis, remains important for the complex triadic theory of interpretation in mature Royce,[11] who, in his *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, emphasized that "the dialectical method reaches in [Hegel's] work an explicitness not previously known in philosophical literature."[12] Hegel, according to Royce, focuses with utmost intensity on the interconnectedness of innovation and negation. Re-interpretation, i.e. "semiosis"—the way to express the identical, more explicitly, in a non-identical mode—always implies (forms of) *negatio*.

1.1 Royce's hope postulates

In Royce, religion—the attempt to deal with *negatio* in a non-negative way—focuses on the *limits* of our (potentially) autonomous[13] deeds: on their consequences "in the long run" (that are not *in toto* foreseeable for us) and on their starting points (that are not—or, at least, not completely—produced by our actions). Religion attempts to re-read fragmentation in view of a "wholeness" whose reality we can neither theoretically deduce, nor, as finite knowers, anticipate in its specificity.

7 ROYCE, 1891, p. 505.

8 CLENDENNING, 1999, p. 296.

9 Royce to W.E. Hocking, 22 January 1908; See CLENDENNING, 1999, p. 296.

10 I.e. on a concept that (as late Wittgenstein, similar to Royce, maintained) cannot avoid *Widerspruch* ("contradiction"): "It is the business of philosophy not to resolve a contradiction by means of a mathematical or logico-mathematical discovery." (WITTGENSTEIN, *Philosophical Investigations*, Par. 125.)

11 See "Beyond 'absolute pragmatism': the concept of 'community' in Josiah Royce's mature philosophy", *Cognitio: revista de filosofia*, vol. 5, no.1, p. 44-74 (= NAGL 2004).

12 ROYCE, 1967, p. 154.

13 For Royce (as for Kant) religion is not a prerequisite of ethics since ethics supports itself, and it is *not* the theonomic foundation of our actions: see NAGL, 2012.

In his *Lectures on Modern Idealism* Royce quotes Hegel: “The truth […] is the whole.” Royce returns to this idea—in a *post*-Hegelian, kantianized, i.e. hope-related interpretation, however—in his 1899 Ingersoll Lecture, “The conception of immortality”. As he contends there, no full knowledge of our individuality is available to us during our lifetime: “Myself, I do not know in any concrete human terms wherein my individuality consists.”[14] Such a complete knowledge would be available only to an Absolute—to the “Interpreter Spirit”, in the terminology of late Royce. This “interpreter” is a semiotician, who—to use Kant’s concept—is also a *Herzenskündiger*: someone who fully comprehends our finite deeds and who can judge (better than we ourselves and better than the public) what—in relation to the all-encompassing whole (unknown to us)—our unique place in the world process actually is.[15] This (near) Kantian set of thoughts—cautious thoughts terminating in postulates that are the result of an enlightened self-reflection: i.e. a reflection that critically considers the limits of enlightenment itself[16]—inspires Royce’s response[17] to the problem of suffering and defeat: his belief in a supplement” to (i.e. a non-finite re-readability of) our finite actions.[18] Royce’s investigation of this hope horizon is not *ruchlos* (nefarious) in the sense that Schopenhauer (and with him James) did attribute to Hegel, since it is not tied to a concretist teleology which tries to justify the supposed necessity of *particular instances* of loss and evil. Royce seeks to explicate, on the contrary, only those assumptions that are, always already, (non-thematically) implied in non-despair: basic, widely shared assumptions of *a continuity of sense in the face of negativity* that are—to speak with James—supported by the various images of historically shaped religious “over-beliefs”.

Standard teleologies are unable to defend this religious hope, however. As a student of Kant, Royce is well informed about “the miscarriage of all philosophical trials in theodicy”:[19] there is no theoretico-deductive way to justify by argument “the counterpurposive in the world”—neither “the morally counterpurposive” (“evil proper”, “sin”), nor “the physically counterpurposive” (“ill”, “pain”), nor “the disproportion between crimes and penalities in the world”—three “counterpurposivnesses […] which stand out as objections” to three “attributes of the world-author’s supreme wisdom”: “against the holiness of the author of the world”, against his goodness*”*, and against his justice.”[20] Kant, as is well known to Royce, concludes his careful investigation of the pre-Kantian theodicy discourse as follows: “Every previous theodicy has not performed what it promised, namely

14 ROYCE, 1900, p. 71.

15 See NAGL-DOCEKAL, 2010.

16 See NAGL, 2013.

17 I.e. his first, metaphysical” response (which is supplemented by a second, “existential” one, as John Clendenning points out): see CLENDENNING, 1999, p. 296.

18 Clendennig characterizes Royce’s “metaphysical” thesis as follows: “Over each instance of suffering, a ‘large dome’ overarches and supplements our finite grief. ‘I believe in the supplement,’ Royce affirmed, ‘but I have no sort of right to conjecture about its details,—its time, its place, its manner, its contents’.” (CLENDENNIG, 1999, p. 296.)

19 KANT, 1998.

20 KANT, 1998, p. 17-19.

the vindication of the moral wisdom of the world-government against the doubts raised against it on the basis of what the experience of this world teaches." This miscarriage is, however, not at all able to close the question: "[N]either can these doubts prove the contrary," Kant concludes.[21] There is no negative settling of the question of theodicy: no "anti-theodicy", to speak in contemporary terms, will—in the long run—do the job. On the one hand it remains certain—for Kant as well as for Royce—that *we* cannot deduce from experience "God's final aim", as standard "doctrinal theodicy" purported. But there exists another—non-doctrinal—mode of theodicy: Kant calls it "authentic theodicy". This mode is "not the interpretation of a *ratiocinating* (speculative) reason, but of an *efficacious practical reason* which […] can be considered as the unmediated definition and voice of God through which he gives meaning to the letter of his creation."[22] This authentic theodicy Kant finds "expressed allegorically" in the Book of Job. (Ibid.): It "less depends on subtle reasoning than on sincerity in taking notice of the impotence of our reason, and on honesty in not distorting our thoughts in what we say, however pious our intention." Authentic theodicy is thus primarily bound to sincerity, the "truthfulness of one's declaration or confession."[23]

In his exploration of negativity Royce deals extensively with Kant's favorite book of the *First Testament*: "The general problem of evil", Royce writes in "The Problem of Job", "has received, as is well known, a great deal of attention from the philosophers. Few of them […] have been as fearless in stating the issues as was the original author of Job."[24]

There are various ways, Royce writes, to—superficially—avoid, or "solve" this problem. Royce talks critically about three of them. The first one is the "naturalist" way out:

> One may escape Job's paradox by declining altogether to view the world in teleological terms. Evils, such as death, disease, tempest, enemies, fires are not, so one may declare, the work of God or of Satan, but are natural phenomena. […] The way to better things is to understand nature better than we do now. For this view—a view often maintained in our day—there is no problem of evil, in Job's sense, at all.[25]

Like Kant, Royce is not attracted to this (extra-ethical) "solution", since it avoids an in-depth analysis of our finality, and its hope-horizon: "I mention this first view only," Royce notes, "to recognize, historically, its existence."

But there is also a second, popular—but nevertheless trivial—attempt to deal with the problem of Job: a (bio-)functional "re-reading" of the necessary role of negativity. Royce sums it up as follows: "Evil" is seen as "the dirt of the natural order,

21 KANT, 1998, p. 23.

22 KANT, 1998, p. 24-25.

23 KANT, 1998, p. 27.

24 ROYCE, 1898, p. 5.

25 Ibid., p. 5-6.

whose value is that when you wash it off, you thereby learn the bath of evolution."[26] When facing "the evil we can see ourselves today", writes Royce (mentioning twice the "murderous doings" in Armenia[27]), this "talk of medicinal and disciplinary evil" becomes "cruelly, even cynically trivial, when applied to explain the ways of a God who is to choose, not only the physical means to an end, but the very *Physis* itself in which path and goal are to exist together."[28] At funerals, for instance—"in the company of mourners who are immediately facing Job's own personal problem", Royce notes, "this trivial speech about useful burns and salutary medicines makes me, and I fancy others, simply and wearily heartsick […] Quite other speech is due to men and women, when they are wakened to the higher reason of Job by the fierce anguish of our mortal life's ultimate facts. They deserve either our simple silence, or, if we are ready to speak, the speech of people who ourselves inquire as Job inquired."[29]

Attempts of this kind are made in a third and fourth approach to Job's problem. Method three, Royce writes, "takes its best known expression in the doctrine that the presence of evil in the world is best explained by the fact that the value of free will in moral agents involves, and so explains and justifies, the divine permission of evil deed of those finite beings who freely choose to sin, as well as the inevitable fruits of the sin."[30] This, however, is only a partial solution. This theory, Royce points out, "has its share of truth. There is, I doubt not, moral free will in the universe. But the presence of evil in the world simply cannot be explained by free will alone." One of the severe shortcomings of this approach is that not only the sinner is punished: "The sufferer may suffer innocently […] Armenia's helpless women and babes cry in vain unto God for help."[31]

Thus we have to look for a further, less individualistic attempt to resolve this deep, non-trivial problem. This fourth attempt is developed by Royce via a cautious re-reading of "the thesis of philosophical idealism".[32] The lesson of the insufficiency of shallow (e.g. "evolutionary") teleologies has been learned: "This view first frankly admits that Job's problem is, upon Job's presuppositions, simply and absolutely insoluble."[33] Royce and Kant agree that the usual trials in theodicy do not work. But neither Royce nor actually Kant resorts, at this point, to an inverted, "anti-theodicy" argument. Believers of all kinds of religion have confidence in an (ultimately) meaningful world: a battered hope which, in the end, is not destroyed by the blatant injustices and the abysmal modes of evil that they experience. This trust cannot be easily reconstructed philosophically: in any such attempt, Royce emphasizes, "false idealism" (i.e. "the view that all evil is merely an illusion and that there is no such

26 Ibid., p. 7.

27 Ibid., p. 4 and 8.

28 Ibid., p. 9.

29 Ibid.

30 ROYCE, 1897, p. 9-10

31 Ibid., p. 11.

32 Ibid., p. 13.

33 Ibid.

thing in God's world") needs to be avoided.[34] We can approach Job's problem in two ways only: first by keeping in mind that our perspective of the world is, and remains, finite: "You, just as you—this individual, are now but a fragment, and see [God's] truth as through a glass darkly".[35] And secondly, by trying to get a glimpse of the dialectics of reality by "no longer permitting ourselves to be deceived by the abstract meanings of the words good and evil into thinking that these two opponents exist merely as mutually exclusive facts side by side in experience."[36] This attempt to interpret reality in a non-dichotomic manner culminates in an idea which contains an irresolvable paradox for all finite modes of "understanding": in the insight that (expressed in the terminology of Christianity) "the eternal world contains Gethsemane."[37] In terms of practical ethics the result of this is not resignation; to quote Royce,

> To the serious moral agent we say: In the natural world you are the minister of God's triumph. Your deed is his. You can never clean the world of evil; but you can subordinate evil. The justification of the presence in the world of evil becomes apparent to us mortals only in so far as this evil is overcome and condemned. It exists only that it may be cast down. Courage then, for God works in you. In the order of time you embody in outer acts what is for him the truth of eternity.[38]

Does this fourth re-assessment of the "problem of Job" omit Kant's caution in a precarious, neo-Hegelian manner? Royce himself concedes that [in this essay] "the theory of evil […] brings me perhaps into a somewhat more intimate relation with characteristic statements presented and defended by Hegel."[39] This closeness is tempered, however, by the influence of Schopenhauer (who was critical of Hegel) and the post-Kantian position of Fichte on Royce's thought.[40] Nowhere does his fourth method lead to a rehabilitation of rationalistic "teleologies" (in the narrow sense of method two: the "evolutionary" justification attempt). In his fourth re-reading of the "problem of Job", Royce carefully avoids trivializing suffering and evil by nowhere re-interpreting particular instances of loss in ways the sufferer cannot accept. Royce, on the one hand, seeks to do justice to those serious concerns that—in post-Leibnizian critiques of full-blown, material teleologies—gave rise to moral "anti-theodicies". This is the case not only in his rejection of all pseudo-solutions of Job's problem (arguments 1, 2 and 3) but also in his formal analyses of the (basic) structure of religious hope. On the other hand, Royce (like Kant) nowhere *in toto* subscribes to the arguments that have been put forward in modern anti-theodicy discourses since Voltaire. (For the ongoing, and open, debate on teleology and faith see Shearn 2013; for Royce's rejection of all forms of "external theodicy" see

34 Ibid., p. 17.

35 Ibid., p. 27.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 ROYCE, 1898, p. 28.

39 Ibid., IV.

40 Ibid.

Foust 2012, and, critically, Viale 2013; for a general overview of the debate consult Philström 2013, chapter 5, "The Problem of Evil and the Limits of Philosophy".[41])

1.2 Sorrows and "moral growth"

In her study *Josiah Royce in Focus* Jacquelyn Kegley notes, that sorrows, for Royce, "become part of a 'constructive process' that involves growth rather than destruction."[42] In the aftermath of a very dark period of twentieth-century history, Theodor W. Adorno, cautiously articulated (elements of) such a precarious *inversion* by means of his *ethical* core category of *Standhalten* ("standing firm")[43]: a Kant-inspired notion that, in Adorno, assumes an explicitly anti-teleological ring. Royce does not stop at this action-related level, however, but turns, not without risks,—in the context of his community-oriented, post-rationalistic "absolute pragmatism"—to a further exploration of the (possible) trans-ethical aspects of this (first, subjectified) negation of negation: to an exploration, i.e., of the *religious* hope which aims at a non-finite re-readability of *negatio*. He thereby carefully avoids re-enacting the pre-Kantian discourse on teleology, and nowhere resorts to precarious, post-teleological modes of closure: neither to "adverbial" modes of "the religious" accompanied by an aestheticized conception of "nature" (like Dewey[44]), nor to an ethics-focused "religion without God" (like Dworkin[45]).

Various classical pragmatists further specify their postulate of hope (informed, indirectly, again by Kant) through elaborate reflections on the conceivability—as well as the in-conceivability—of immortality. This is a fascinating aspect of pragmatism discourse—an aspect, however, that in recent receptions is usually overlooked. Hans Joas characterizes our situation very well:

> To talk about that which comes after death seems to me, today, to, indeed, violate a taboo. It causes reactions that reach from silent discontent to embarrassment and loud protest. This was not the case in the first generation of pragmatists. Peirce and Royce did write about these questions, and James's contributions were obviously part of a broader discourse.[46]

41 In a *poetic* form Paul Celan's *Gedichte* deeply immerse themselves, and explore – *nach Auschwitz* – the ambiguous space between anti-theodicy and theodicy: see "Tenebrae", in *Sprachgitter*, which ends with a desperate inversion of the received direction of prayer ("Bete, Herr, wir sind nahe"—"Pray, Lord. We are near"), as well as the abysmal (hope-implying?) end of "Give the Word" in *Fadensonnen:* "Der stille Aussatz löst sich dir vom Gaumen und fächelt deiner Zunge Licht zu, Licht"—"The quiet scab works free from off your palate and fanwise at your tongue blows light, blows light." (Paul CELAN, *Die Gedichte*. Kommentierte Gesamtausgabe in einem Band, ed. Barbara Wiedemann, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 2005, 97 and 208. Translation of Celan into English: Michael Hamburger.)

42 KEGLEY, 2008, p. 90.

43 ADORNO, 1997, p. 15.

44 See DEWEY, 1989.

45 See DWORKIN, 2013.

46 JOAS, 2011, p. 230. (Translation L.N.)

Peirce as well as James and Royce discuss this topic, indeed, in compelling ways: all three authors—while maintaining, for different reasons, the defensibility of (elements of) the idea of immortality—avoid general dogmatic answers, be they positive or negative. Peirce is cautious with regard to the possibility, and the mode, of his own future life.[47] James deals with these questions in his 1897 Ingersoll Lecture, "Human Immortality".[48] Royce investigates these issues, *inter alia*, in "Immortality."[49] Thus, pragmatism, at least in its advanced forms, manages to keep on the agenda mankind's attempt to explore, as fully as possible, those questions that are tied to the anticipation of our (individual and collective) limit of "experiencing life".

2 Religious hope, challenged by immanentism: Royce on Feuerbach's "exclusive humanism"

Contemporary readers might ask, however, whether explorations of religion—like Royce's—turn out, on closer scrutiny, to be hopelessly dated? Aren't Royce's reflections deeply embedded in a bygone discourse: the discourse of an era before contemporary secularism (and a neo-stoic endurance of contingency) became widely accepted?

In order to challenge this suspicion, we will deal, in the following, with Royce's sharp-sighted considerations about the emerging immanentism, its limits and its problems. Royce's mature, community-oriented concept of religion, it will be shown, has nowhere the tendency to regress into older forms of speculative theology, but constitutes itself in extensive critical contact with thoughts that were about to exert great influence on the genesis of "secular" modernity: with the "exclusive humanism" of Feuerbach's critique of religion, and with Nietzsche's advanced form of "individualism."

2.1 Royce on Feuerbach's projection theory

Young Royce, in 1881, wrote an essay on George Eliot, who, as a young woman, before starting her literary career, had translated David Friedrich Strauss's *Leben Jesu* and Ludwig Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums.*[50] Eliot, a "reflective writer", as Royce says, became a religious poet in spite of having lost the strong faith of her youth. With regard to religion she stood "in that *open space* where you can feel the winds pulling you, now to belief, now to unbelief" (to use an expression of William James's that was recently re-used by Charles Taylor[51]). George Eliot found herself situated in, and reflecting on, the deep ambiguity that is constitutive for most advanced forms of modern religious and/or secular experience.

It is this open, unsettled background which informs and fascinates young Royce. "When a strong faith has left a man", Royce writes in his essay on Eliot,

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47 See PEIRCE, 1995, p. 287-313, "Antworten auf Fragen über meinen Glauben an Gott".

48 JAMES, 1956, p. 1-70. See also: Felicitas KRÄMER, "James über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele", in: JAMES, 2010, "Einleitung", p. 31-41.

49 ROYCE, 1969, p. 256-98

50 ROYCE, 1920.

51 TAYLOR, 2007, p. 549; see NAGL, 2011b.

"he must do one of two things: either he must fly to the opposite extreme of pure and scornful negation, or he must try to find some way in which to save for himself what was essential to the spirit of the old faith, while he rejects its accidental features, such as its ritual, its claim to give power over physical forces, its promises of material good fortune, or its asserted miracles."[52] This second option—to reconstruct the essence of faith by rejecting the accidental elements contained in traditional religions—has a definitely Kantian ring: It does not seek, as early Enlightenment materialism did, to debunk religion, but rather aims at a "thinking belief", inspired by the complex, double move of classical German Enlightenment that comprises critique *as well as* reconstruction. A thinking belief reflectively solidifies our "logic of hope", enabling the believer to stay clear of all mere "counterfeit service of God in a statutory religion."[53] It de-emphasizes those accidental elements in historic religions on which, as unalterable, religious orthodoxies tend to insist. Kant's project to reconstruct core elements of the historically developed "positive" religions, while separating them from the "delusion of religion" contained in the imagery of institutionalized belief systems,[54] was not limited to his *Critiques*, however: Hegel, quite similarly, also emphasizes that—while "nothing is further from the intention of speculative philosophy than to overthrow religion"[55]—it is philosophy's business not simply to defend religion as it stands, but to effect a conceptual re-appropriation of its speculative content. The irreducible complexity of this project is indicated by the threefold meaning of *Aufhebung* ("sublation") which, while including *negatio*, aims at a re-semiotized, and improved, *conservatio*, i.e.: at *elevatio*). Religion, for Hegel, "is precisely the true content, but in the form of representation".[56]

Young Royce (who, when writing his text on Eliot, had just returned to the United States from his studies in Germany), recapitulates German literary and philosophical discourse on religion from Lessing up to the post-Hegelian debate.[57] The central idea of these multifaceted investigations was, as Royce point out, that "nothing in revelation is to be free from the investigations of reason."[58] Royce is fascinated by these discourses which all follow a double agenda: first, "to transcend the uncritical faith of unlearned piety", and secondly, to be discontent "with the negations of pure rationalism."[59] It is this complex, multi-faceted framework which defines Royce's own, mature as well as early, attempts to examine and reconstruct the idea of religion[60]—attempts that imply a critique of the abstract idea of a "supernatural", but seek also to elaborate a philosophical defense of the

52 ROYCE, 1920, p. 264f.

53 See KANT, 1998, p. 164-191.

54 Ibid., p. 166.

55 HEGEL, 1995, p. 251.

56 Ibid.

57 See ROYCE, 1920, p. 265-267.

58 Ibid., p. 266.

59 Ibid., p. 267.

60 See, for example, ROYCE's analysis of "the religious paradox", in: ROYCE, 1912, p. 19-26.

concept of an Absolute (or, in his later work: of an absolute "Interpreter Spirit"[61]). Royce knows—with Kant and Hegel—that critique is the necessary prerequisite for any "thinking faith": "The skeptical spirit is the Mephistopheles of the religious consciousness, the companion that this Faust 'no more can do without'."[62] And so, young Royce continues, "we welcome the spirit that could look with the Germans for the abiding element in religious life without cramping poetical freedom from the very beginning by an acceptance of some cut-and-dried system."[63]

In the central parts of his essay on George Eliot, Royce focuses, however, not on Kant and Hegel, but on (aspects of) the post-Hegelian German discourse. As a translator of Strauss and Feuerbach, Eliot is not primarily concerned with the thoughts on religion developed by the philosophers of classical Enlightenment, but with the criticism of religion in the radicalized (non-dialectical) form suggested by Hegel's pupils. Royce mentions this *radicalization process* when he characterizes Strauss's attempt to "determine the inner sense of Christianity": "Strauss had recourse to the doctrines of his master, Hegel", but he interpreted them "not as Hegel would have done".[64] The "Left-Hegelian" pupils of Hegel claimed—by re-accentuating one moment of Hegel's dialectical synthesis—to be able to rectify Hegel's (as they contended, profoundly ambivalent and confusing) exploration of religion, and turn it "from the head to its feet". Such an abstract inversion of Hegel's dialectic not only characterizes Marx's attempt to politicize Hegel's philosophy, but is the leading idea also—in the field of religion proper—of Feuerbach's study *The Essence of Christianity*. Feuerbach's critique of the "supernatural" implications of (alienated, traditional) religions terminates—unlike Kant's and Hegel's reconstructive critiques of "statutary" religions—in an "religion"-debunking exclusive humanism. (This post-Hegelian move will be adopted—not *in toto*, but in significant parts—by John Dewey, who, in *A Common Faith*, tries to steer clear of traditional "religions" by introducing thoroughly humanized, naturalized and aestheticized uses of the adjective "religious"[65]).

Royce, however,—unlike Dewey—is, in his early as well as his mature writings, not simply an heir to, but in important respects also a critic of, this radicalized, Feuerbachian project.

The young Royce gives a short (and, albeit only in parts, sympathetic) account of Feuerbach's position by referring to the study by Otto Pfleiderer (a disciple of the Hegel-inspired theologian Ferdinand Christian Baur) *Religionsphilosophie auf geschichtlicher Grundlage*: "Feuerbach's view of religion", Royce writes, "is intensely skeptical, and yet not wholly unappreciative. He sees in religion the expression of a subjective want, which assumes the deceptive guise of knowledge. See through

61 ROYCE, 2001a, p. 318.

62 ROYCE, 1920, p. 288.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., p. 268.

65 For a more detailed analysis of this link between Feuerbach and Dewey see Ludwig Nagl, "'The Religious': Dewey's post-Feuerbachian 'sublation' of religion (and some critical Roycean considerations)", in: *Cognitio: revista de filosofia*, v. 12, n. 1, p. 121-141, 2011 (NAGL 2011a).

this disguise, and religion has no truth; and yet the disguise is not the only essential thing in religion, for the want creates the disguise. Man in religion treats his own being as if it were another."[66] Royce then goes on to address the core of Feuerbach's critique—first his projection theory, and, secondly, his exclusively humanistic re-reading of God's incarnation. For Feuerbach, God is nothing but a projection of our own, perfected self: "Dissatisfied with a world that oppresses him, [man] creates in his despair a supernatural all-powerful being, enthroned over the world, and worships this ideal Self as the perfect one."[67] This projection leads, according to Feuerbach, to the Christian concept of an incarnated, finite, suffering and resurrected God the Son, who "is but an objectifying of the unhappy world-weary consciousness of disappointed humanity"—of a conscience that, in this manner, "conceives this God as himself suffering and overcoming suffering, as the risen and exalted Self, that has overcome the world".[68] As Royce emphasizes, this objectification is, for Feuerbach, "only a stupendous phantasm". Thus, Feuerbach's criticism of religion by far exceeds Kant's critical re-conceptualization of God as a postulate of practical reason and Hegel's philosophical project to re-read God—via a concept of dialectical reason—as the Absolute that manifests, i.e. incarnates, itself.

Feuerbach's post-Hegelian decomposition of Hegel's "Idea of God" can thus be characterized, in a nutshell, as follows: Hegel's complex dialectics of finiteness and the Absolute (that, by Hegel's own account, cannot be reduced to one of its "moments" as the purportedly *"real"* reality-base: be it to the moment of the finite, or to the equally abstract moment of a merely transcendent infinite) is dismantled in Feuerbach's projection theory. Feuerbach argues—in a manner that by Hegel's own standards would appear linear and abstract—that the finite (as the *only real* reality) imagines, and thus inadvertently produces and objectifies, the Absolute: that finite men create the illusion of a trans-human being which supernaturally incorporates the ideal of mankind's own perfection.[69]

Young Royce is aware of the fact that Feuerbach abstractly radicalizes the complex, binary coded classical Enlightenment project, as his comments on George Eliot's reaction on Feuerbach show:

> [S]ee what after all will remain to one who accepts Feuerbach's premises, but regards this purely fantastic exercise of the religious spirit as after all intensely and eternally significant: Such a one will say, Men did indeed make to themselves the ideal of God, and these ideals were phantasms; but the spirit of religion that produced the phantasm is still ours. We reject the product that made the world seem so sublime and significant, but we work as if we were in a world where such things were true. […] [W]e can and will try to make the world as much as possible the realization of our longings. Ours it will be to give

66 ROYCE, 1920, p. 270.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 See NAGL, 2011a, p. 127-130.

> life a divine significance, even if no Providence has already done this for us before birth.[70]

An exclusive humanism of this Feuerbachian type is, for sure, an option, as the young Royce indicates, agreeing, *avant la lettre*, with Charles Taylor's analysis, that modernity is characterized by deep—and recurring—ambivalences in regard to religious faith: But it is *not* the option which—in the end—convinces Royce, the (pragmatism-critical) pragmaticist.

Royce sees, on the one hand, as clearly as Feuerbach the dependence of religion upon the needs and desires of men: "The gods, as men conceive the gods, live upon spiritual food, but viewed in the light of history, they appear as beings who must earn their bread by supplying, in their turn, the equally spiritual sustenance which their worshippers need," Royce writes in *The Problem of Christianity*: "Unless they thus earn their bread, the gods die."[71] But the *philosophical* exploration of religion is, for Royce, on the other hand, a matter not primarily of analyzing the inner-humanistic, action-stabilizing function of religion: in its fuller, semiotically mediated sense a philosophical account or religion rather rests upon the sign-theoretically configured, "triadic" analysis of the interactions between our experiences of finiteness and the infinity-related hope horizons that guide religious communities: "The core of the faith is the Spirit, the Beloved Community, the work of grace, the atoning deed, and the saving power of the loyal life."[72]

During all its stages (from Royce's early, still overly self-assured attempts to secure the idea of the "Absolute" via the "argument from error", up to his mature concept of the "Interpreter Spirit") Royce's philosophy of religion remains strongly influenced by the classical Enlightenment discourse—in particular by Kant and Hegel, who both aim at a positive reconstruction of the "representation" of God: both focus on the ethical goal of an (as far as possible) perfect humanity, without, however, absolutifying this "political" ideal by means of an exclusive, secularist humanism along the lines of Feuerbach's projection theory.

With regard to the (non-voidable) moral demand for the improvement of mankind's institutions, Royce, the pragmatist semiotician, insists on the political idea of a "Great community", while reconstructing, at the same time, religion proper via his (non-secular) core concept of "the Beloved community". Serious ethico-political endeavors cannot render superfluous (in a Feuerbachian, "exclusive humanist" manner) the attempts by religious communities to re-dimension, and deepen, social interactions by keeping alive the awareness of the *finite* status of individual, as well as communal, human actions.

Royce, the "absolute pragmatist", is—at all stages of his intellectual life—fully aware of the possibility of a secular radicalization of the Enlightenment perspective: both through his early contact with Feuerbach as well as, in his mature stage, through his interest in Nietzsche's atheistic heroism. The innovative quality of

70 ROYCE, 1920, p. 270.

71 ROYCE, 2001, p. 210.

72 ROYCE, 2001a, p. 404.

Royce's mature work (which includes the first extensive reading of Nietzsche within American pragmatism) stems, *inter alia*, from the fact that his philosophy of religion takes careful notice of the new, modernist ways of viewing the world, but avoids (while affirming the partial, political right of secularism) to simply surrender to it.

3 Royce's analysis of Nietzsche's radical individualism (in the wake of Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of God")

Royce's essay "Nietzsche", published posthumously in 1917,[73] is—as Frank Oppenheim points out—a bold "pioneer effort" that "produced a generally accurate interpretation and placed Royce among the first Americans to call public attention to the importance of Nietzsche."[74]

What proves fascinating for Royce is the complex, reflective nature of Nietzsche's individualism. Nietzsche focuses on one (of the two) poles of Royce's concept of "genuine communities" (be they secular or religious)[75]: on the self-determining human self, which—for Royce as well as for Nietzsche—is, at any time in life, attainable only, and at no time in life, fully attained. Nietzsche is, Royce writes, "not merely an individualist, but a very original one", since he "differs from other individualists in that the great object toward which his struggle is directed is the discovery of what his own individuality itself means and is."[76] Unlike "a Titan such as Prometheus" who "already knows who he is and what he wants", Nietzsche faces "above all, the problem, Who I am? and What do I want? What is clear to him is the need of strenuous activity in pressing on toward the solution of this problem."[77] Quite similar to Royce, Nietzsche aims at an ideal "higher individuality"—an aim that, as Royce points out, has a near-Kantian ring: "Even against his will, his doctrine, as soon as articulated, has the universality of a Kantian categorical imperative. Nothing is worthy of expression but the ideal individuality. Therefore the first task of every human being is indeed to revolt against tradition, but still more to revolt against his narrowness and pettiness of sentiment."[78]

Elucidating Royce's interpretation of Nietzsche, Frank Oppenheim writes: "Ethics studies how a human self should direct its personal energy within our fluxing universe." This is, to say it with Peirce, the aim of any (authentic) action as related to "semiosis". According to Royce, Nietzsche investigates "the human self's personal energy":

> He presupposed that conventional (or 'herd') morality failed to meet the required standard. For the life of authentic ethics has to lie primarily, not in conformism, but in autonomous decision-

73 ROYCE, 2001b.

74 OPPENHEIM, 1993, p. 189.

75 For Royce's concept of "genuine community" and his "avoidance of the dichotomy of 'either the individual or the collectivity'" see NAGL, 2015 (forthcoming).

76 ROYCE, 2001b, p. 175.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid., p. 176.

> making. Thus Nietzsche brought ethics back home to its true inner sanctum, rather than letting it continue its deadening search outside for group approval, customary behavior, mere rules, and principles.[79]

For Nietzsche, however, this search—in its advanced, modern constellation—presupposes Zarathustra’s (Feuerbach-informed) “first article of creed, namely, that God is dead; and that man has to live on the earth and under earthly conditions without any hope with which an older supernaturalism had surrounded his life.”[80] But this creed, as Royce points out, is nowhere considered self-sustaining by Nietzsche. The religious depth structure of the “mediated” individual, i.e. the “Absolute”—the other pole of Royce’s concept of community—reappears in Nietzsche, in transfigured modes, in two of his theories. First, in Nietzsche’s thesis (which re-enacts infinity in a post-humanistic guise) that man “is a something that shall be surpassed”[81]—i.e. in his (famous and notorious) ideal of the *Übermensch*. Secondly, it re-surfaces (transfigured into a direct, cosmological re-enactment of absoluteness) in Nietzsche’s thesis of the “eternal recurrence”: his equivalent, as Royce writes, “for what the religious consciousness had formerly sought in the conception of a divine plan of the universe.”[82] However, for Royce this second substitute concept is highly problematic: “[T]he definition of this absolute law”, he writes, “occurs in terms which had acquired a strange and decidedly fantastic significance in the mind of Nietzsche.”[83] (If we scrutinize the idea of an “eternal recurrence” more closely, at least two severe shortcomings show up: firstly, any repetition, of which the repeater is not aware, is for him or herself no repetition at all; secondly, any repetition, which is known as a repetition, is no *repetition* any more since the awareness of repetition is an *addendum*—something that was not present in the original experience—i.e. an alteration which destroys the concept of an “identical repetition”.)

That the doctrine of “eternal recurrence” is, ultimately, nothing but a weak “substitute for religion”, is a point not only made by Royce, but also by Karl Löwith in his study *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche*.[84] In Roycean terms, Nietzsche’s doctrine is a (precarious) substitute, re-occupying the place of the (unfinished) philosophical analysis of the interrelation between individuality and the Absolute.

In spite of these serious deficits, Royce, however, emphatically insists on the importance of Nietzsche’s (post- or rather: neo-absolute) thought experiment: “Seldom has a purely fantastic freak of the imagination stood in a more interesting relation to a profound problem of the formulation of an ethical ideal.”[85]

The mature Royce has deep sympathies for Nietzsche for other reasons. In Royce’s core concept of “genuine community” (particularly: in his idea of the

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79 OPPENHEIM, 1993, p. 189.

80 ROYCE, 2001b, p. 177.

81 Ibid.

82 ROYCE, 2001b, p. 179.

83 Ibid., p. 178.

84 LÖWITH, 1950, p. 401.

85 ROYCE, 2001b, p. 178.

"Beloved Community" insofar as it attempts to make real its—still unimplemented—content) individual authenticity is the prerequisite of any mode of enlightened "loyalty". Nietzsche, Royce argues, defends an advanced concept of individuality that is similar to his own. He

> declines to accept his ethical individual as something whose character is for us men now predetermined, or to be accepted *ready made*. Those who say that the ideal character has already been embodied, that what I am to be is predetermined by the example of some preceptor or master, find no support from Nietzsche. In this respect, I should say, Nietzsche is indeed at one with the very idealism whose philosophical expression, as it had been attempted in earlier German thought, he so vigorously rejected. Herein lies his highest value as a stimulating critic of life; and that value, as I must repeat, allies him to Emerson [...] and to other apostles of a higher liberty and assailants of a stereotyped ideal. For Nietzsche there is no one way of salvation except the way of being different from every other individual and complete in yourself.[86]

Nietzsche, "the immoralist", is—as Royce points out—an extremely original advocate of "the spiritual agility of the self."[87]

But Nietzsche's position—this is also obvious to Royce—has, at the same time, severe limits since Nietzsche carefully avoids any extended analysis of the interrelation between "cooperating individuals": "The great problem of reconciling the unique individual with the world-order is simply not Nietzsche's problem," Royce writes.

> Therein lies his perfectly obvious limitation. Yet there is no doubt, from the point of view of any deeper idealism, that this grave problem can be solved only upon the basis of the clearest knowledge, precisely that upon which Nietzsche insists—namely, the uniqueness of the life of every individual and the genuineness of the duty of every soul to seek its own type of salvation. That its own type of salvation will as a fact involve a higher cooperation with all other individuality, is indeed true, and it is a truth that you *cannot* learn from Nietzsche.[88]

What one can learn from Nietzsche, however, is—according to Royce—the imperative "Be dissatisfied with yourself, and yet assert yourself."[89] Nietzsche "notoriously calls himself an immoralist", Royce continues, "but by morality he means conventional morality. And his contention is in this respect not different in principle from the well-known contention of Kant, according to which what Kant calls heteronomy is ethically intolerable."[90]

86 ROYCE, 2001b, p. 182.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid., p. 183.

90 Ibid.

This (in Nietzsche often latent, and even denied) Kantianism constitutes a significant similarity between (some) core ideas of Royce's and (some) of Nietzsche's. Frank Oppenheim describes their point of contact as follows: "Royce delighted in Nietzsche's individualism because he himself increasingly emphasized the individualization of the self."[91] Royce's ethical theme "It is good to strive", Oppenheim continues, "certainly paralleled that of Nietzsche. Royce echoed Nietzschean themes […] by his insistence on the 'courage and absolute endurance' needed to bear life's tragedies and to endure the ostracism and downdrag of the 'herd'."

But Royce, on the other hand, subscribes neither to Nietzsche's thesis of "the death of God" nor to his "fantastic hypothesis of the eternal recurrence of every event in the word."[92] Yet in spite of these substantial differences, Nietzsche—as Oppenheim points out—"played a considerable role as dialogue-partner with Royce in the latter's final decade of thought."[93] Royce appreciated "Nietzsche at least for this, that 'no one has better expressed in recent times than he [Nietzsche] the ideal of the search for a consciousness of perfection'."[94]

What will can I follow but my own? The ethical problem is to find out what my will is. Royce explicitly affirms, like Nietzsche, the autonomous aspect of a genuine self: "Like Nietzsche, Royce honored the individual, noble, courageous self who could transcend narrow interests, mediocrity, and the powerful draw of social conformity in order to live as 'captain of one's own soul'", Kegley writes: "Royce asserts that one sin for a human self is self-loss, becoming part of the crowd, a 'they' instead of an 'I'."[95] This insistence on individuality articulates, however, only the first of two aspects of a genuine life: "Royce is equally concerned about community," Kegley continues. "Thus, near the end of his life, he noted that his task as a teacher was to teach 'that we are saved through community'. Parallel to the sin of 'self-loss' there is the sin of 'self-sufficiency', of the individual who 'goes it alone' and believes that genuine selfhood can be achieved in this manner."[96] Nietzsche (like Royce and Peirce, the adherents of the idea of "semiosis") rejects every static concept of "the ideal". Any finished creed as to what an individual ought to be at once arouses his spiritual repugnance.

Commenting on Royce's Nietzsche essay, Rossella Fabbrichesi recently suggested that the semiotic openness which characterizes the concept of man in Royce and Peirce can be read (in view of Royce's sympathy for Nietzsche) as a kind of "a-theism" that envisages a new ("de-personified") anthropology as the goal of community: "As Nietzsche thought, the Death of God (considered as the loss of any ancient value) means the Death of Man, of a person considered as a simple and unitary organism, as the sum of body and soul. I think," Fabbrichesi continues, "that Royce and Peirce could have joined [Nietzsche] in this particular form of a-theism. The 'trans-valuation' of any value implies a new evaluation of the word 'man' and

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91 OPPENHEIM, 1993, p. 192: "This is often overlooked because some Roycean scholars place a one-sided stress on community."

92 ROYCE, 2001b, p. 179.

93 OPPENHEIM, 1993, p. 192: "Few have recognized this role", Oppenheim points out.

94 Ibid.

95 KEGLEY, 2008, p. 98.

96 Ibid.

its significance, towards a new ‘anthropology’. […] Royce and Peirce worked to undermine the old article of faith concerning the integrity of human personhood, and helped us to see it in more relational and complex terms. Maybe, we could say, they helped us to start thinking of a process of de-personification of humanity.”[97]

This interpretation, while accentuates important motifs, is one-sided, nevertheless: Fabbrichesi rightly points out that neither in Peirce nor in Royce the idea of man is static, but she avoids to re-construct, in necessary detail, Royce’s and Peirce’s claims that the dynamico-semiotic openness of the self is, ultimately, religiously embedded. (For Peirce’s theistic outlook see “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God”[98]; in regard to Royce’s religious focus, Oppenheim showed that “Royce placed each human self in communities and held that their universal processing is guided by a pathfinding Spirit of Interpretation—not a Nietzschean ‘dead God’ but an *immanent and transcendent* Spirit of the Universal Community.”[99])

Royce admires Nietzsche as a radical philosopher focusing on the “spiritual agility of the self.”[100] Nietzsche is not just, however, on an “endless search for individuality”, he “quite as much needs something eternal.”[101] Thus, within the framework of his precarious idea of an “eternal recurrence”, the “deepest question of an ethical individualism” reappears, namely the issue “whether life in any sense constitutes a significant whole, and whether this wholeness has a determinate and individual character.”[102] This question, Royce continues, “can be solved neither by the theory that there is, once for all, a substantial individual soul having its permanent static character which our ideal life merely portrays in successive deeds” (it cannot be solved, after Kant’s critique, by a “metaphysics” of the soul); nor can it be solved “by the doctrine that the moral law is something merely static or abstractly universal” (that is to say through the claim that ethics is either a collection of “material values”, or a matter of a merely formal reflection without the need to concretize). “The individual and significant wholeness of our life”, Royce concludes, “must depend upon something which is not now completely expressed, but which, on the other hand, is in no sense a static substance, but something now in the making.”[103] This anticipated “whole” was the theme of Hegel’s (proto-semiotic) conception of a (self-elucidating) “movement of *Begriff*”, and it is encircled in Peirce’s “evolutionary love” as well as in the mature Royce’s idea of the “Interpreter Spirit”. Nietzsche—while not altogether abandoning the quest for a “significant whole” —seeks to transform it: “In Nietzsche’s Godless world of natural necessity”, according to Royce, “the concept of eternal recurrence is the sole means by which he can conceive this unity of life’s plan.”[104]

97 FABBRICHESI, 2012, p. 92-93.

98 PEIRCE, 1998.

99 OPPENHEIM, 1993, p. 193: “Royce recognized that Nietzsche had not fairly appreciated Christianity, especially in its early forms”, Oppenheim concludes.

100 ROYCE, 2001b, p. 183.

101 Ibid., p. 184.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid., p. 184.

Nietzsche’s criticism of Christianity is, however, not the last word for Royce: “Nietzsche abounds in paradoxes when he discusses [in *Genealogy of Morals*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *Antichrist*] the faith that lies nearest to his own early training and that had obviously most deeply influenced much of his sensibility. [...] There is here no historically accurate estimate of Christianity; and much of the onslaught upon its teachings involves many of the trivialities of negative liberalism.”[105] But, at the same time, Royce emphatically insists that Nietzsche’s heteronomy-distant, aristocratic ethics has found (and can find in the future) a place within Christianity: “As a fact, Nietzsche’s own individualism has had its place in the history of Christian doctrine. There is no question of the shallowness of a great deal of what is called altruism, and of the dangerous tendency toward the commonplace which a conventional Christian morality has frequently involved. But there is that in the original Christian ideal which is not at all foreign to the spirit of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra.”[106] Royce, in this context, quotes what Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*—“Let us seek for [our virtues] in our own labyrinths [...] [I]s there anything nobler than seeking for one´s own virtues? [...] We too, in our way, are men of duty”—and concludes: “As a fact, it is not selfishness in its narrower sense; it is certainly not sensualism. It is still less any sort of supposable scientific outcome of Darwinism that characterizes Nietzsche.” Nietzsche, Oppenheim writes, “cannot define what his absolute perfection is, but no one has better expressed in recent times than he the ideal of the search for a consciousness of perfection. Nietzsche glorifies the aristocratic self; but the self of which he speaks turns out to be an invisible and ideal self.”[107] This Nietzschean “ideal self” is quite similar to the authentic self that is worthy of being a member of the “invisible Church”: It is, Royce maintains, “as unseen as is the risen and ascended Lord of the ancient faith; as much an object of service as was ever the God against whom Nietzsche revolted.”[108] While affirming Nietzsche’s perfectionist ideal, mature Royce distances himself from Nietzsche’s overall attack on Christianity—an attack which “abounds in paradoxes,”[109] as Royce says.

Thus the philosophical search for the valid core of mankind’s religious energies does not, for Royce, become obsolete after Feuerbach and Nietzsche.

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105 ROYCE, 2001b, p. 186.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid., p. 187.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid. p. 186.

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