

What Went Wrong? And What is Left?

James and Royce in 1900 French Philosophy

MATHIAS GIREL, PHD,
EQUIPE "EXPERIENCE ET CONNAISSANCE"(EXECO),
UNIVERSITÉ PARIS I PANTHÉON-SORBONNE.

When dealing with the reception of James and Royce in France, with a special emphasis on the turn of the XXth century, it seems that something went seriously wrong at that time, which explains in part why James's reception was so distorted, and also why Royce was so little read in France, both in 1900 and in 2000. My first claim is that both men then suffered from misconceptions, which later, for very different reasons, had grave philosophical consequences. Still, if some misunderstandings have to be highlighted, I do *not* think that their main common concerns were totally ignored. My second claim, developed in the second section, will thus be that the "dialogue" between James and Royce was not alien to the concerns of French philosophers. Extant materials already allow us to address major issues common to James and Royce, and I shall focus on three occasions, involving idealism, voluntarism and reference, where their discussion might take a fresh start.

A Confused Reception for James and a Faint One for Royce

James's relations with French philosophers around 1900 resemble all friendships: they involve obvious affection and a good deal of misunderstandings. Two series of reasons at least account for that confused reception: (1) the texts that were at hand; (2) the use that was made of James's philosophy by major academic philosophers.

Translations and texts

Until recently, two major works by James had never been translated into French:

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(1) *The Principles of Psychology*, still not translated;¹ and

(2) *The Essays in Radical Empiricism*,² translated for the first time in 2005.

So, one should keep in mind in what follows that most of the discussions, since 1900, took place *while these two books were not available in French*.

Even worse, James's *Pragmatism* was translated only in 1911, after James's death, at a time when the debate over pragmatism was already a little less vivid.³ As a result, in 1905-1908, when pragmatism was discussed everywhere, readers had to gather what James's brand of pragmatism was all about from two sources. Firstly, from the earliest papers of the *Will to Believe*, in their partial translation by Renouvier in *La Critique Philosophique*, and, secondly, from the poor and heavily edited 1906 translation of the *Varieties*.⁴ It can safely be argued that this limited "availability" of James's texts played a major role in the *distortion* his pragmatism suffered in the first years of the XXth Century. James's position was generally construed from his earliest statements, and his more considered views—whether on psychology or on radical empiricism—were not part of the picture. This tendency was reinforced by the way James was introduced to French readers.

Boutroux, Bergson, Renouvier

James was introduced to French readers, around 1900, by "established" philosophers, such as Renouvier, Boutroux and Bergson⁵. This "first wave" of readers made a genuine philosophical use of James's texts but certainly did not allow a com-

¹ The « Jimmy » was available from 1909. A new translation has been published recently (James, 1909, 2003).

² James (1912, 2005).

³ *Pluralistic universe* was translated in 1910, *Meaning of Truth* in 1913, *Some Problems* in 1914. In most of the bibliographies, following a note by E. Leroux in the *Journal of Philosophy*, 1927, p. 202, references are made to a 1900 translation of the *Talks to teachers*. The present writer has never had such a volume in hand. The first references I have seen point to the 1907 translation by Pidoux (See: Reverdin (1913, 219); Ménard (1911, 2)). Such a 1900 translation would severely conflict with items in James's correspondence. See COWJ 10, 242 (May 1st, 1903), where James writes: "My *Talks* (nor any other of my works) ain't been translated into French". See also COWJ 10, p. 51, 1902.

⁴ As regards the poor quality of translations, a commentator wondered, in 1933, about *Pragmatism*, how a text, containing only four paragraphs ending with an exclamation mark, could turn, after translation, into one where they were one hundred and twenty two! (See Callot (1933, p. 5, n. 2))

⁵ A comprehensive account would include such readers as Fouillée, Delboeuf, Flournoy. I cannot embark here on such a detailed description. On the first of these readers, see Kloppenberg (1986), for a general bibliography, see Shook and Colella (1998). A detailed account of the role played by Durkheim is also not on order here.

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prehensive view of James's thought: his works were mainly instrumental for purposes which were independent of his own development.

As I already mentioned, the earliest papers of the *Will to Believe* were translated by Renouvier as soon as they were published in English in the 1880s and have long been James's only texts available in French⁶. As a result, the other features of James's work, his pragmatism, his radical empiricism, and, to a lesser degree, his psychology, have often been read *from that standpoint*, that is to say, as if they were further developments of what James had already said in the *Will to Believe*. From the perspective of the *Critique philosophique*,⁷ Renouvier's journal, the "real" James was that of the *early* essays, with their clear emphasis on the moral postulates and with the early theory of belief, and, accordingly, these authors assessed James's later developments against this standard. They repeatedly pictured James as a "criticist", *i.e.* as a philosopher close in spirit to the Kantian type of moral philosophy they were advocating, and read what was not in line with this reading as a betrayal of the early works. Then, a strange situation developed: the *Critique*, which was in some ways James's tribunal in France, was, because of its philosophical commitments, at odds with several of the main trends in James's thought. This is particularly clear as regards his psychology, whose physiological cornerstones were dismissed by Renouvier first when he read James's paper on Emotion, and then, by Pillon and Dauriac, when they read the *Principles*. Some themes in the *Varieties*, in particular the criticism of the « un-personalism » of science, were congenial to the personalist spirit of the *Critique*, but the way in which James reached his own conclusions was not acceptable to Pillon and Dauriac: the pragmatist philosophical background was for them at best superfluous, at worst misguided. James embodied to their eyes the mystery of a philosopher who had started in the same atmosphere as they had, but who had gradually developed in different, if not opposite, directions.

Emile Boutroux had James elected to the *Institut de France* and wrote the first book on James in French, but his works construe James's concept of *experience* as something subjective and solipsistic, which seems, to say the least, to involve a ma-

⁶ I have tried to give a detailed account in Girel (2007).

⁷ Pillon first edited *L'Année Philosophique* (*L'Année Philosophique*, Paris, 1868-1869), then it was replaced by the *Critique Philosophique* (Charles Renouvier (Ed.), *La Critique Philosophique*, Paris, 1872-1889), and afterwards by a new version of *L'Année Philosophique* (François Pillon (Ed.), *L'année Philosophique*, Paris, 1891-1913). The main difference between these periodicals is the room devoted to the publications of the year (much more important in *L'Année Philosophique*).

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for misunderstanding of James's radical empiricism.⁸ I have explored their relationship elsewhere and I won't get into more detail here. As regards Henri Bergson, things are complex. Even though both men deeply admired each other (see e.g. the warm acknowledgment by James of *Creative Evolution*⁹), Bergson had a hard time disentangling for the French public his own doctrine from pragmatism,¹⁰ and the *Foreword* he wrote for the 1911 translation of *Pragmatism* is certainly no exception¹¹—Bergson indeed had not much sympathy for pragmatism, since it seemed to imply a “technological” approach to reality that was at odds with his own “method of intuition”. Even on the most famous point—the theory of images developed in chapter 1 of *Matter and Memory*, which seems to anticipate, or to echo¹², James's ‘world of pure experience’—one should not forget that ... it is Chapter 1, which sketches out a position superseded by the philosophy of duration and memory that Bergson develops in the remainder of the book. I submit that most of the times, both men are better seen as allies against certain forms of dull rationalism. For most readers, confusions between these two distinct philosophies did not help assessing James's real insights.

One should certainly add that Schiller's declarations, here, definitely did a lot to deter readers from pragmatism and to blur certain necessary distinctions. The author of a report on the *Third Congress of Philosophy at Heidelberg* in 1908,¹³ complains that “a wave of pragmatism and humanism, coming from Anglo-Saxon coun-

⁸ See Girel (2003).

⁹ WJ to Henri Bergson, Chocorua, June 13, 1907 (COWJ 11, 376).

¹⁰ Claiming that much time is needed to reform habits of mind and of language, Bergson added: “It will be required all the more because people picture pragmatism *a priori* (I do not know why) as something that must necessarily be simple, something that it should be possible to sum up in a formula. I ceaselessly repeat, on the contrary, that pragmatism is one of the most subtle and *nuancées* doctrines that have ever appeared in philosophy (just because this doctrine reinstates truth in the flux of experience), and one is sure to go wrong if one speaks of pragmatism before having read you as a *whole*.” (Bergson to WJ, March, 31, 1910; tr. Perry (1935, 2, 632)). For a general assessment of their relationship, see F. Worms's excellent paper (Worms (1999)).

¹¹ In a curious text, “Vérité et réalité”, which certainly better applies to the *Varieties* than to *Pragmatism*. It might have been first projected as a *Foreword* to the *Varieties*, and then kept aside since Bergson was appalled at the poor quality of Abauzit's translation. See, for example, this awkward account of the development of James's pragmatism: “According to James, we bathe in a universe traversed by great spiritual currents. (...) Souls filled with religious enthusiasm are truly uplifted and carried away: why could they not enable us to experience directly, as in a scientific experiment, this uplifting and exalting force? That is undoubtedly the origin, the inspiring idea of the “pragmatism” of William James. For him those truths it is most important for us to know are truths which have been felt and experienced before being thought.” (Bergson, “Vérité et réalité”, in W. James, *Le Pragmatisme*, tr. fr., 1911, 12-13).

¹² « Echo » if one holds *The knowing of things together* (1895) to express James's insights, as they would be developed in further detail in *A world of pure experience*.

¹³ See, for an account, the report in *Revue de Métaphysique et de morale*, Paris, 1908, pp. 930 sq.

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tries, has kept sweeping this Congress.”¹⁴ The confusion between Schiller, Papini, and James's positions certainly did not help to make James's views known.

Jean Wahl and James's pluralism

The first full scale survey of James's thought, taking into account James's *radical empiricism*, made by a philosopher who “started with” James¹⁵, was certainly Jean Wahl's 1920 thesis, *Les Philosophies pluralistes d'Angleterre et d'Amérique*.¹⁶ At this time, a doctoral candidate had to write two theses: Wahl devoted one of them to the notion of “Instant” in Descartes, that is, to the independence of the parts of time and their radical dependence on God's action, and the other thesis dealt with no less than the germane topic of *discontinuity* in Anglo-Saxon philosophy. This latter thesis became *Pluralist Philosophies*, and his most penetrating readers saw at once that the whole book was imbued with James's philosophy: it turned pluralism into a *problem* and explored interesting comparisons between James and Bradley.¹⁷ Wahl's claim was that James, as Bradley had done, had seen that reality was supra-relational, that relations, whether internal or external, were only one step in the apprehension of reality. In the same line of thinking, Wahl in later works stressed connections between James's thought and later existentialism and phenomenology. His reading of Plato's *Parmenides* is written with the question of pluralism in mind, and his landmark book on Hegel's “unhappy consciousness” echoes early interests in James's “divided soul”. Wahl's *Traité de Métaphysique*, composed from his Sorbonne courses (this is also a revised version of *The Philosopher's way*¹⁸) is crammed with James on the topic of relations. It certainly proved to be a major source of Jamesian philosophy to many readers. One of his most famous students, Gilles

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 930.

¹⁵ I am very grateful to Laure Léveillé, Directrice de la Bibliothèque des lettres, École normale supérieure, who granted me access to Jean Wahl's logs. Careful examination of them, from 1907 to 1910, reveals that Wahl borrowed nearly everything that was published in the field of American philosophy.

¹⁶ Wahl (1920, 2005). For a little sketch of Jean Wahl's works and life, see my foreword to Wahl (1932, 2004), 2004, 5-26.

¹⁷ “If it were not for the concluding section of M. Wahl's work, the book might well have been entitled “The Philosophy of William James, its motivations, sources, and influence.” Such a title would be less likely to disappoint M. Wahl's readers. James is viewed as the first real pluralist, and also as almost the last real pluralist. [...] And as a treatment of James, the book is indeed admirable. It is thorough and accurate. It both portrays the general spirit and atmosphere.” (Lamprecht, 1921, 718)

¹⁸ Wahl (1948).

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Deleuze, is explicit on that point,¹⁹ but it is certainly also true for hundreds of other students. Wahl, who was very suspicious in front of the growth of logical positivism and even of John Dewey's philosophy, which seemed to him too systematic ("like buildings on the skyline"), is in particular responsible for the idea that "Americanism," as Wahl dubbed the tension he found within James's texts, might have found its expression in American art, in particular in American novels, rather than in American philosophy.²⁰ Maybe as a result, most of the times, James was not read within the context of Peirce, Dewey, and even Royce's challenges.

The "revival" of Pragmatism

Gérard Deledalle's pioneering works have been decisive in the revival of Pragmatism in France, even though he has worked more extensively on Peirce and Dewey than on James. The most recent wave of readings was prompted, as in many countries, by the debates between Hilary Putnam and Richard Rorty over pragmatism, but it also had independent motivations²¹. In addition to this debate, James has met much interest in Wittgenstein scholarship, which is very lively in France. Discussion over "rules" and "pragmatism", over Wittgenstein's philosophy of psychology, over the different varieties of realism have made James a major reference at last. A conference was recently devoted to James's *Principles*, which involved prominent neuroscientists and it is just being published: the *Principles* are not 'unapproachable' anymore.²² Another conference on *Pragmatism and Quantum Mechanics*²³ featured two quantum physicists, and one of them, C. Fuchs, built his whole presentation on James. James is not limited to "literary" circles anymore and there is good hope that the major misunderstandings he had suffered around 1900 are vanishing for good.

¹⁹ "Apart from Sartre [...] the most important philosopher in France was Jean Wahl. He not only introduced us to an encounter with English and American thought, but had the ability to make us think, in French, things that were very new: he on his own account took this art of the AND [...] the furthest", G. Deleuze, *Dialogues*, Paris, Flammarion, p. 72; tr. *Dialogues II*. New York: Continuum, 2002, 57). This "connection" has drawn some interest recently; see e.g. Zamberlin (2006).

²⁰ "If the characteristic tension within WJ's works is not present anymore in philosophers, if some elements which were in his mind characteristic of americanism have been levelled down, *aplanis, aplatiss*, these elements subsist or reappear, under a sharpened form, in several aspects of American art", Jean Wahl's MSS, IMEC Paris, Folder "Amérique".

²¹ Lapoujade (1997, 2007). Many lectures given at the *Groupe d'études sur le pragmatisme et la philosophie américaine* (Université Paris 1), between 2000 and 2004, dealt with James. A multisession international conference was devoted to James's *Essays in radical empiricism* in November 2004 (CEPPA, Université Paris 1).

²² Debru, Chauviré and Girel (Eds)(2008).

²³ Under press at Springer Verlag.

The “invisible” Royce

Royce's reception, on the other hand, was definitely less notable than that of James.²⁴ Only *one* of Royce's texts has ever been translated: the *Philosophy of Loyalty* ... and that was in 1946.²⁵ Everything needs thus to be done in that field, and in what follows, I shall focus on several minor occasions where these readings of Royce — and *in particular those in which Royce is in dialogue with James*—might have provided important clues in the debate. Royce's meeting with French readers certainly represents a missed opportunity, since in the French account of the *Heidelberg Congress of Philosophy*, also mentioned by Felicitas Kraemer, Royce's paper, *The problem of Truth in the Light of a Recent Discussion*,²⁶ was clearly interpreted as an outstanding contribution, and as one of the strongest challenges to pragmatists.²⁷ In addition to short reviews in the major philosophical periodicals,²⁸ and to a more recent study by Gladys Bournique²⁹, Royce was the subject of three commentaries that seem paradigmatic. I think that each one of them could provide a point where the debate could be resumed today, each one of them offers a standpoint from which Royce and James's dialogue can be grasped and explored; they are, starting from the most recent:

1°) A long series of papers by Gabriel Marcel in late 1910s (later retrieved in his *Josiah Royce*), focusing on Royce's “mature” philosophy, republished as a book in 1945.³⁰

²⁴ For a general and illuminating approach to Royce's reception, See F. Oppenheim (1993, ch. 1, 1-22, “Eighty years of Responses to Royce”); on Marcel, see in particular p. 13 and 16-18.

²⁵ Royce (1946).

²⁶ Retrieved in Royce (1911, 187-256). See Clendenning (1985, 330-332).

²⁷ *Revue de Métaphysique*, 1908, pp. 930-936. The reviewer (certainly Michel Alexandre) endorses Royce's criticisms of ‘instrumentalism’ and ‘individualism’, and also Royce's defence of Peirce.

²⁸ The list is available in Bournique (1988, 414-427). See her excellent Chapter VIII for some insights on Royce's difficult reception in France.

²⁹ Bournique (1988); reviewed by F. Oppenheim in the *Transactions*, Fall 1989, 25, 4, 557.

³⁰ I am borrowing the characterization of the “mature” Royce from F. Oppenheim (1993). See Marcel (1945, 2005), which retrieves papers published in the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1918, 337-388, 475-518; 1919, 119-149, 211-246. It was translated into English by V. and G. Ringer, *Royce's Metaphysics*, Chicago, H. Regnery, 1956, with a new preface by Marcel. On Royce and Marcel, see: the foreword by Miklos Vetö to Marcel (1945, 2005); see also G. Marcel himself, in Humbach (1962, 176-178). A few other texts are available: Penjon (1903); Aronson (1927); Sosset (1931-32); Townsend (1925). Sections are devoted to Royce in M. Farber (Ed.) (1950); Deledalle (1954, 132-143); Duron (1950, vol. 1, ch. III, 44-78, « Royce, James et Santayana »). Extensive use is made by R. Le Senne (1942). Royce is mentioned in Jean Wahl's 1920, 1932 and 1953. It is less known that

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2°) That of a short-lived philosopher, Henri Robet, which focuses on *The World and the Individual*, and

3°) That of Charles Renouvier in the *Critique philosophique* in 1888, which focuses on the *Religious Aspect*.

Marcel and Royce

Gabriel Marcel—who was to launch with his *Journal Métaphysique* a strong current of “Christian existentialism” (even if he was reluctant to use this term)—made, just after WWI, an extensive study of the “mature”³¹ Royce, which was to remain for a very long time the only *general* survey available in French, and even, for some time, one of the few available *in English*, just after its translation in 1956³². Since recent papers have been devoted to Marcel and Royce in the *Transactions*³³, one can be brief.

Marcel's reading implied that Royce's philosophy as a whole could only be grasped from the mature standpoint of *The Problem of Christianity*,³⁴ and, re-reading his book in 1956³⁵, he emphasized three important points in Royce that still deserved

Royce wrote an introduction to Van Becelaere (1904), the first important history of American philosophy in French, but this introduction was not translated (the interesting point of this introduction is that Royce points out two ‘omissions’ in the book ... concerning Charles Peirce and John Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. xi).

³¹ Oppenheim (1993, 13).

³² *Ibid.*, 12.

³³ Tunstall (2006 a and b).

³⁴ See in particular the totality of the fourth installment of the series of papers in the *Revue de Métaphysique*, 1919, 211-246.

³⁵ In his *Foreword* to the translation of his own *Royce's Metaphysics*, Marcel wonders whether Royce had an influence upon his own distinction between the “It” and the “Thou”, and refers to his *Metaphysical Journal*, Aug, 23, 1918, for a commentary upon Royce's “triadism” (Marcel (1945, 2005, 241)). Marcel asks for a phenomenological interpretation of Royce's “epistemological theory of the interpretation of signs” (*Ibid.*, 242), that is to say, of the very texts where Royce and Peirce are the closest. In late days, Marcel tended to downsize the influence of Royce on his thought: “I am certain, however, that several years before I began to study Royce I had read not only Bradley's *Appearances (sic) and Reality* and *Essays on Truth and Reality*, but also the magnum opus of W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, which, I am sure, had a lasting influence on me. But it cannot be doubted that Hocking's book was an advance on Royce's thought, an advance in the direction of that metaphysical realism toward which I resolutely tended” (Foreword, Marcel (1945, 2005, 242)). Royce's role becomes thus purely transitional: “it can be said that Royce's philosophy—and this is its great value—marks a kind of transition between absolute idealism and existentialist thought” (*Ibid.*, 244). Mentions are made to Royce in Marcel (1927), entries at pages 145, 193, 95, 216, 229, 255, 260, 264, 316.

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interest: his dialectic of love (his “triadism”), his doctrine of signs³⁶, and his philosophy of loyalty, which would be a strong antidote to the current individualistic trends Marcel deplored. If some points of Marcel's presentation are controversial—in particular (a) his presentation of Royce's philosophy as a “system” and (b) his criticism of “omniscience” in Royce—he certainly drew attention to Royce's thought and helped give him his due place as a major philosopher, which was no trivial matter indeed. It is just ironic that the book certainly had more influence in Royce's country than in Marcel's³⁷. Still, Marcel became in later days more responsive to James's *pluralism* and it is an interesting question to inquire whether this responsiveness would change in detail his reading, and our reading, of Royce.

Voluntarism

Henri Robet, a “Christian socialist”, who died young, just before WWI, made a detailed and profound analysis of Royce's philosophy in the *Revue philosophique* in 1907;³⁸ his paper, which emphasized Royce's *voluntarism* in order to point out his resemblances with pragmatists, tried hard to find a position strong enough to balance Schiller's *Humanism*, but that would still be compatible with pragmatism. Robet, who also had some correspondence with Dewey,³⁹ overworked himself and died suddenly in 1913. One second question, using Robet's insight would be: is there an account of practice, and of *purposiveness* in the field of the philosophy of mind, that could cover a common ground between James and Royce?

Reference: Royce's challenge in 1885

Finally, one important dimension of James and Royce's dialogue—the “Argument from error” and its alleged absolutist consequences—showed up briefly and early on the French stage. That it was a major challenge to James is not controversial. It had the same effect on other philosophers. Christopher Hookway, in his

³⁶ The obvious Peircean connection is not explored in detail by Marcel.

³⁷ F. Oppenheim (1993, 18): Marcel's criticisms “pale when compared to the widespread attention which the English version of Marcel's work received and the impulse it gave to many Roycean researchers in the United States. These included such Roycean scholars as David Casey, Peter Fuss, Charles Harthshorne, Edward Jarvis, Jacquelyn Kegley, Mary Mahowald, Frank Oppenheim, Daniel Robinson, Ignas Skrupskelis, and John E. Smith.”

³⁸ Robet (1907).

³⁹ Deledalle (1967, 36, *Letter from J. Dewey*, May 2, 1911).

Themes from Peirce, has given an outstanding reading of Peirce's reply to *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*. Hookway argues that it was the occasion for a major claim by Peirce—that “reference to external things is primarily indexical and demonstrative”,⁴⁰ and not descriptive. Peirce's reply involved a theory indexical reference, showing that we could be in cognitive contact with something and still have wrong beliefs about *it*. It is striking that, simultaneously to this reply to Royce, the same chapter had a similar effect on William James. James Conant, among others, has emphasized the role of this work in James's development⁴¹ and has claimed that radical empiricism could be read as a response to this Roycean challenge. James himself depicts in a vivid way the questions philosophers give the world from time to time, which have an intolerable way “with them of *sticking*, in spite of all one can do”⁴² and duly credits Royce for his new “*gadfly*”[*sic.*]. Royce's problem, his legacy to philosophy, does not concern ‘matter’, ‘substance’ and ‘cause’, the classical problems for empiricists, but *reference*:

How *can* a thought refer to, intend, or signify any particular reality outside of itself?⁴³

Royce's solution, involving an “infinite and all-inclusive mind”,⁴⁴ seemed at that time inescapable to James: “we are inclined, he said, to think him right, and to suspect that his idealistic escape from the quandary may be the best one for us all to take.”⁴⁵ This was to remain a pending question for him for at least eight years⁴⁶.

This leads us back to the “French scene”. We can detect in James's and Renouvier's correspondence in 1888 first attempts by James to escape some of the implications of Royce's idealism, using Renouvier's weapons. Renouvier had published in his *Critique Philosophique* for 1888 two installments of a commentary⁴⁷ on the *Re-*

⁴⁰ Hookway (2000, 108).

⁴¹ Conant (1997).

⁴² James, W, ECR, 385 (1885).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 387.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 386.

⁴⁶ Even though T.L.S. Sprigge, for example, has clearly shown that “The Function of Cognition” (1885) represents a first attempt to overcome it. See Sprigge (1997, 135).

⁴⁷ Renouvier (1888). The first installment deals with the « moral » and the second with the « metaphysical » aspects of Royce's philosophy. “The possibility of error” is discussed from p. 101 to 120. There are also references to previous papers on the same topic by Paulhan, in *Critique philosophique*, April, p. 302 and June, p. 458, and to a review of Royce, 1885, in *Revue philosophique*, September 1885, 283-286, by the same. See also the short piece by Renouvier (1887).

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ligious Aspect of Philosophy (and mainly on Chapters 9, 10&11). His commentary focused on the Argument from error, and this is no accident since it was prompted by James, who drew Renouvier's attention to Royce's book.⁴⁸ It is interesting that this commentary was important enough to be acknowledged by Royce himself in his *Studies of Good and Evil*.⁴⁹ What then could be so important? Four short points can be made:

1°) Renouvier thought that a proper answer to Royce would involve the vindication of the *reality of relationships*, and he understood Royce as denying this reality.

The point is to know whether these relationships are something real, were they not even represented actually in one consciousness. If they are, it is clear that there is, without transgressing the phenomenal nature, a possible opposition between each particular relationship, as given in the actual order of things, and the idea a thinking being entertains about it, who does not know, and who imagines, instead of the relationship that is, the relationship that is not. There is no need an actual and unique thought where the true and the false relationships would be simultaneously represented. Mr Royce's thesis, we see, comes back to what we might call the negation of the *reality of relationships*.⁵⁰

Renouvier's first claim is that *relations are as real as terms*. That is certainly something James would not overlook.

2°) Renouvier tried to show that one can account for the possibility of error without involving an "infinite knower", as long as finite consciousnesses can have among their representations the representation that others can have different representations about the same thing:

It is absolutely not necessary to conceive a unique consciousness, it suffices to conceive numerous consciousnesses, and invariable laws according to which they determine each other, partly or totally, depending each on the others, and by modifications of certain forms that are common to all, in order to understand what truth and error are.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Perry (1929).

⁴⁹ "The discussion in my chapter on *The Possibility of Error* was criticized in some detail by two French writers; by M. Paulhan, in the *Revue Philosophique* for September, 1885; and by M. Renouvier, in *La Critique Philosophique*, for 1888, pp. 85-120. To both these critics I owe a hearty acknowledgment, and I have tried to profit by their objections, though I cannot here consider them. In a later and extended form my view of the doctrine here in question has so been expounded in a work entitled *The Conception of God*, published in 1897." (Royce (1915, 140 [1898])) Bournique (1988) claims that Renouvier's critiques (in particular over the reality of evil and ethics) have been instrumental in Royce's development.

⁵⁰ Renouvier (1888, 103-04).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

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His second claim is then that *error can be understood from the standpoint of the finite knower, and as it seems, from the standpoint of the community of finite knowers*. So Renouvier accepted part of Royce's argument, since minds were necessary to settle reference, but he opposed Royce's "all inclusive mind". He thought that a concatenated system, *un système de proche en proche*, from next to next, would do the same job.

3°) He further thought that Royce's position strikingly resembled that of Spinoza⁵², and that a major problem he would have to face would be that of the "Individual". Renouvier's third claim is that *Royce turns the individual into a mystery*. This last claim is highly interesting from the standpoint of Royce's later development.

4°) Finally, Renouvier thought that, contrary to what James did, Royce did not confront major problems such as that of the infinite, of determinism and of free will. Moreover he thought that there was a conflict between Royce's ethical argument and his "cold" tone:

The main reproach we shall address him in conclusion is to have failed to address the questions of the infinite, of determinism and of free will, even though he obviously assumes they are solved in a certain way, and even though his system could not stand if they were solved in the opposite way. He has also settled the question of optimism and pessimism, and he has shown, to our opinion, an insufficient perception (*sentiment*) of the reality of evil in nature. After the explanation of evil he offers, the inner goodness of the constitution of the world, and the constitution of this divine thought in which the world is represented, might seem dubious to human judgment, to say the least. And his own judgment is really too cold.⁵³

James, who agreed on most points, was not totally satisfied with Renouvier's papers. He seemed to think that Renouvier had missed the main point, the point being that Royce was concerned not with the *ascertaining* of truth, but with its *constitution*. His next letter to Renouvier is very precious for understanding what Royce's challenge was, in his eyes:

⁵² "I understand now, more than ever, the common standpoint to which Malebranche, Leibniz and Berkeley have been led by the idealist method. I only see now, between these three philosophers, a variation in the expression. And the problem that remains is that of the real existence of the individuals. By suppressing it frankly, and only by that, Spinoza differs from these three great thinkers, the legitimate heirs of Descartes, born from the *cogito ergo sum*. M. R., it seems to me, has given a new and original formulation to Spinoza's religion, which is just the stoic religion in disguise. It is obviously a great attitude of thought, but it is as much capable, according to my own feeling and temperament, in front of the spectacle of the world, to justify the pessimistic judgment on existence than any of the systems examined in the chapter *The world of Doubt*." (Perry, 1929, 210).

⁵³ Renouvier (1888, 120).

It seems to me that you understand the Absolute Mind to be needed for the sake of *ascertaining* the error, of *verifying* the truth of the judgments which the finite individual's mind may make. Of course, all *verification* must take place in another consciousness (another act of consciousness at least) from that whose deliverances are on trial. But that is not what Royce means. He means that a superior consciousness to the one on trial is needed to *constitute* as well as to verify the truth or errors of the latter's judgments.

The representation can only be *wrong* if it *meant* to resemble that wingless horse. [...] No, a thought can only be *of* something else, if it be *used* by some power which *owns* both it and the object, and *applies* one to the other, *meaning* that the thought *shall stand* for the object.⁵⁴

If Royce's solution was "inescapable" to James, he nevertheless clearly acknowledged that Renouvier's conception of the universe was a powerful weapon against Royce's *monism*. In other words, if we are to speak of truth and reference at all, James accepted that Royce had proved the necessity of admitting the Absolute (that it was a presupposition of "reference"). Nonetheless, James claims that this Absolute was by no means necessarily *monistic*, that it was compatible with pluralism:

Royce himself thinks the Absolute thought must be monistic and total. Of that I cannot fully convince myself; and here your system of relations *de proche en proche* [from next to next] would come in.⁵⁵

Conclusion

That last line of thought, where relations are as real as terms, and where the unity of the world is not *a priori*, but made up, "from next to next", this concatenated universe, if not the definitive answer to Royce, certainly made its way in James's thought. The three debates I have mentioned help qualifying the feeling that a first glance at the literature might cause. James has been seriously misunderstood, due to several factors I have tried to highlight; Royce has not been much read, that is true. There is still much work to be done in order to defend James's pragmatism against its "misunderstanders". There is still much work to be done to get readers acquainted with Royce's thought. Still, some crucial elements are available in the French reception of both James and Royce that might help reconstructing and exploring their ongoing dialogue; these elements might even be decisive to give this dialogue a new start.

⁵⁴ COWJ, 6, 359 (March 1888).

⁵⁵ COWJ, 6, 360.

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