

Introduction to
The Psychology of Intellect
New Orleans Lectures 1897

Historical Context

Josiah Royce (1855-1916) delivered a course of five lectures, *The Psychology of the Intellect*, from May to June in 1897.¹ The central theme of the course, expressed in several related topics, is the social basis of the development of human intellectual processes. While psychology was an interest throughout his lifetime, beginning with youthful explorations into the psychology of character and feeling,² Royce became interested in social psychology in the early 1890s as a consequence of broadening his notion of the self to include a social dimension to conscious and self-conscious life.³ Royce had held that the attainment of selfhood consists in a self-reflexive act whereby the individual recognizes themselves in their thoughts; but now, Royce argues, the necessary condition for this act of self-recognition is social consciousness. Royce articulates this thesis in a number of essays between 1891 and 1893, including, for example, ‘The Implications of Self-Consciousness,’ and especially, ‘The Twofold Nature of Knowledge: Imitative and Reflective.’ Each essay expresses the same theme in different ways: We become self-aware only if we exist in a community wherein we consciously imitate the linguistic and cultural practices of competent speakers and actors. Gradually, we internalize and reflect upon the meaning of the social relations we imitate, and through habituation, deliberately construct and discover ourselves in the values we choose, which ultimately defines our sense of self and the role we serve in the community.

¹ For information on the manuscript, see Oppenheim’s Comprehensive Index, entry 188.

² For an autobiographical account of Royce’s psychological studies, see the 1886 introductory address to the Harvard philosophy committee: <http://royce-edition.iupui.edu/royce-autobiographical/>.

³ Clendenning, John. *The Life and Thought of Josiah Royce*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press. 1991: 187-196. For a discussion on Royce’s philosophical psychology, see Kuklick, Bruce. *Josiah Royce: An Intellectual Biography*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1972: 67-98.

The publications between 1894 and 1897, such as, for example, ‘The External World and Consciousness’ and ‘Self-Consciousness, Social Consciousness, and Nature,’ are successive attempts by Royce to extend his social theory of the ego into broader philosophical debates.⁴ The thesis of the first essay is that the idea of external reality originates in social consciousness. More precisely, we know there is a reality external to ourselves because the real is verifiable, and whatever is verifiable is publicly open for observation and description; hence, since descriptions are shared among distinct describers, agreement is possible by verification. The process of verification is, therefore, a social relation that eliminates the vagaries peculiar to specific individuals and reorients describers toward what is publicly open for observation as the object of their collective agreement and the standard by which they evaluate claims. Consequently, the real appears external to every describer due to this social relation of verification. The second essay is much larger and addresses a greater diversity of topics, but there is a series of arguments, which relate to the first essay and have a direct bearing upon the New Orleans Lectures.

Royce, in ‘Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, and Nature,’ restates and expands upon his thesis that we are first conscious of our fellows as objects of imitation, and only then become self-conscious in proportion to how our social consciousness evolves with the development of habits. There is, in this evolution, a continual contrast between the inner life of the self and what we regard as the inner life of our fellows. We first become conscious of our fellows by observing and imitating their deeds; then, we gradually become conscious of the meanings associated with those deeds. Finally, we contrast between the meaning of *our* deeds as expressive of *our* inner lives, and

⁴ Other publications from 1891 to 1897 relevant to Royce’s psychology, and some implicit and explicit themes in the New Orleans Lectures, include 1893: ‘On Certain Psychological Aspects of Moral Training,’ 1893: ‘The Acquisition of General Ideas,’ 1894: ‘Can Psychology be Founded Upon the Study of Consciousness Alone...,’ 1894: ‘The Case of John Bunyan,’ 1894: ‘The Imitative Functions, and Their Place in Human Nature,’ 1895: ‘Some Observations on the Anomalies of Self-Consciousness.’ See: <http://royce-edition.iupui.edu/online-royce-articles/>.

the meaning of the deeds of *others* as expressive of what we take to be *their* inner lives. But this contrast is itself internalized to our self-conscious life. For we can only know that to which we attend, and yet everything present in attention is meaningful only if we relate the present to the experiences of our past and future selves. Thus, we contrast the immediate experiences of our present self with experiences not now our own but regarded as the actual and possible experiences of our past and future selves. These remembered and expected experiences become individuated as belonging to us, then, only by contrasting our inner life with the inner lives of our actual and conceived fellows. But, since we can directly verify neither our past nor future experiences, nor the inner lives of our fellows, we must regard both as real in order to render our immediate experiences intelligible. Otherwise, the present is meaningless and we could never sufficiently conceive of ourselves as the individuals we are.

The argument relates to the first essay because, if the social relation of verification is what assures us of a reality external to ourselves, then we must have sufficient reasons to believe in the reality of other minds to ground our belief in external reality. More fundamentally, if the ego is the product of social consciousness, we *must* believe in the reality of other minds or there are no reasons for us to believe in the reality of our *own* minds. In other words, if we deny the reality of other minds, then we negate the ground which determines the reality of our *own* minds; and, consequently, the ground for our belief in an external reality altogether. Thus, in order to establish his social theory of the ego, and justify its extension into broader philosophical debates, Royce must present an argument as to why we have a belief in the reality of other minds and how we come to possess this belief with assurance. Royce, in 'Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, and Nature,' outlines why such a belief is fundamental and what the mechanisms are by which we come about this belief, but does not offer a compelling argument for how we are assured that these

minds are real. Besides continuing to expand upon these mechanisms, the New Orleans Lectures offers such an argument.

The Manuscript

The manuscript is in Harvard Archives Royce Papers (HARP) Box 68. The manuscript is a series of 71 typescript pages divided into four separate lectures. The fifth lecture is not in HARP Box 68, and presumably is lost. The first lecture is a 15-page incomplete typescript with handwritten alterations. There are fourteen numbered pages with a page numbered '1a' inserted after page 1. The second lecture is a 17-page typescript, and is seemingly complete because of a handwritten alteration inserted on the last page "I conclude then [...]." The third lecture is a 15-page typescript, also incomplete, and breaks off in the middle of a handwritten alteration inserted on page 15. The fourth lecture is a 31-page fragment. Pages 1-23 are typescript with handwritten alterations throughout, while the remaining are handwritten autographs which end with an incomplete sentence. There are also a set of related documents in HARP Box 103, in folder 2, and Box 105, document 12 in folder 4. HARP Box 103, folder 2, contains a 23-page typescript, an untitled 'Lecture IX,' on the social basis of our conceptions of nature. While, in Box 105, document 12 in folder 4, is a heavily edited series of discontinuous fragments that were rearranged and renumbered by Royce. The recurrence of similar number series suggests that Royce extracted these from different contexts. An attempt has been made by a group of editors to reassemble the fragments into a coherent form. Given the emphasis on the social factors of intellectual development, these typescript pages were perhaps apart, or at least related to the writing process, of the New Orleans Lectures. The first series, spanning 18-30, reviews the social formation of the intellect, then addresses where our social ideas originate, and concludes with a number of cases concerning the psychology of children. The second is a group of pages, 29-30 followed by page

15, which is torn in half, and then 34-35. These concern several topics, such as the relation of intelligence to skill and sign-activity; and include an autobiographical remark seemingly about Royce's dispute with Abbot. The next series runs from 23-30, with a handwritten section 'IV' inserted on 23 and 'V' on 29. These cover a disparate number of topics: From the importance of socialization in childhood to a discussion on method in psychology as social contrast and introspection, followed by an analysis of imitation, recognition, and memory; finally, Royce specifies three elementary epistemic processes, assimilation, comparison, and discrimination. The final series, spanning 32-38, remarks on how children learn, and then presents Locke's theory of knowledge.

New Orleans Lectures 1897

The first lecture, *The General Nature of the Intellect*, proposes to consider human intellectual capacities as products of social conditions in terms of psychological methodology. Despite its utility, introspection is not the method proper to psychology; rather, "the social comparison of what goes on in various minds by means of the study of the various ways in which minds express themselves" is the principal instrument of the psychologist (1897 MS: 4). Such expressive acts are emotive, linguistic, rational, and cultural; all of which are social in origin and nature, and are signs of various ideas, purposes, and plans. Thus, a comparative study of these expressive acts — whether in social, experimental, or physiological psychology — may lend themselves to discoveries about the general nature of the intellect and its capacities. As signs of intellect, these expressive acts reveal the grade of intelligence proper to certain beings. All animals, for example, act in response to environmental stimuli in ways conducive to their survival, acts that tend to recur with a certain degree of frequency. Whereas the animals with a higher degree of

intelligence respond not only to environmental stimuli but to their experiential interactions, both those accumulated in the past and the experiences expected in the future.

The second lecture, *The Social Basis of the Intellectual Life*, begins with a summary of the degrees of intelligence, focusing on the human animal: “We show intelligence by acts that involve the adaptation of old habits, the products of former experience to new cases which are presented in current experience” (1897 MS: 1). What specifically differentiates human from animal intelligence is conscious imitation, which depends upon social factors peculiar to human communities, and determines thereby a diverse range of expressive acts. The question, then, is: How do we become aware of our fellows as objects of imitation; and how do we come to believe that our fellows have real minds which resemble our own? Certainly, the belief is not innate, and yet, despite never directly experiencing other minds, we are assured of the fact because of how fundamental the belief is to our lives as social beings. Royce first considers an inadequate but common theory, and then offers his own answer to this fundamental question.

The common theory argues that we reason by analogy to arrive at the belief in the reality of other minds similar to our own. From infancy, we observe there are other bodies which resemble our own, and that, these bodies behave in ways similar to how we behave. Furthermore, we observe that our actions express certain emotions and ideas, such that, when we see these other bodies perform similar actions we analogically infer that these bodies are expressing similar emotions and ideas; and, since these emotions and ideas are real for us, they must also be real within our fellows. Hence, according to this theory, “my belief in my fellow’s mind is due merely to reasoning from analogy, in so far as I observe the similarities between his body and behavior, and mine [...] and construct thus [...] my whole conception of my neighbor’s inner life” (1897 MS: 9-10). Royce admits that such reasoning doubtlessly occurs, but cannot satisfactorily explain the origin of this

fundamental belief. For the child does not arrive at the belief in the reality of other minds by analogy, but rather comes “first to feel, and then more clearly to believe to know that he is dealing with minds beyond his own but as this process goes on, the child cannot well observe that other beings are doing as he does, and that other organisms resemble his own” (1897 MS: 10). The child rather becomes aware of his fellows — not as real minds — but as objects of imitation precisely because they find other people, and what they variously do, interesting. Thus, we become aware of our fellows by consciously wanting to imitate those acts which capture our attention, first as children, and continuously after as adults; only then do we seek to discover what they mean, and therefore, prepare ourselves for a belief in their reality as separate minds.

Even if we ignore the foundational role our fellows serve as objects of imitation, analogical reasoning could still never establish a belief in the reality of other minds nor depict satisfactorily the depth of the inner lives of our fellows. Concerning the latter, the most important interactions between people are not based upon analogical similarity, but arise whenever novel information is received. Royce appeals to the existence of sympathy, in which we feel for another even if their situation is foreign to us: “In such cases one does not reason ‘I have felt thus myself,’ but ‘This is new to me, but I see what it means in and for you’” (1897 MS: 11-12). If reasoning by analogy were the only means to understand the depth of the inner lives of our fellows, such situations would not occur, or at least would be insincerely understood, since we could only relate on the basis of similarity. Whereas, in fact, we often relate to our fellows precisely in ways dissimilar to our own inner lives. The problem, then, with analogical reasoning is the restriction to similar cases of ideas and actions: “I am likely to conceive these expressions of his as expressions of my own ideas, rather than his. I tend to say, ‘You have got that idea from me,’ sooner than to say, ‘This is your idea’” (1897 MS: 12). Thus, analogical reasoning can only prove that some pair of ideas or actions

might be similar, but not that the similar expressions originate from a separately real mind. Hence, reasoning by analogy is inadequate for demonstrating how and why we believe in the reality of other minds.

What is unquestionable is that our personal interactions often do result in the reception of novel information. Now, whenever information is novel, we have to ascribe that novelty to some other source, since we cannot explain that information self-referentially. What captures the child's attention as interesting is that *others* act in unfamiliar ways, and in some cases, those actions prove so peculiar that their agents become objects of imitation; and, even long after their social evolution, these individuals continue to rely on their fellows as a source of novel information. Thus, "I should say in general that we believe in another mind, the mind of our fellow, primarily because another mind is a permanent and often unfailing source of ideas about the world, of knowledge, of new plans, in short of new meanings" (1897 MS: 12). Unlike the theory based on analogical similarity, Royce's theory is based on *difference*: We know that there are real minds different from our own because they communicate ideas which differ from our ideas, and therefore, could never arise from our own minds. Similarly, Royce's theory can account for the depth of the inner lives of our fellows. Namely, since our fellows have different experiences, and consequently different ideas, we come to understand the depth of their inner lives insofar as they communicate different ideas to us by various expressive acts. Furthermore, we can contrast between the expressive acts that we deem similar and different from our own, and, by analogy, establish relations of similarity between certain ideas on occasions where separately real minds *agree*. Thus, rather than establish our belief in the reality of other minds, analogical reasoning more properly explains how a community of distinctly real minds comes to an agreement, such as the agreement that there is a reality external to ourselves.

The social basis of the intellectual life is conscious imitation. Without the capacity to imitate our fellows consciously according to certain purposes, we could neither become aware of our fellows as separately real minds, nor discern whenever distinct minds are in agreement. The third lecture, *The Social Origin of the Reasoning Process*, discusses how imitative acts evolve into conscious processes of deliberate reasoning. As the child learns language by imitating the relation of words to their objects, or social behavior by imitating actions in the proper contexts according to their objects, so too is deliberate reasoning — expressed in language and action — a conscious imitation of relations among objects. The difference is that reasoning is a rare type of self-controlled conduct, and most often a specialized skill which requires considerable effort. For reasoning is a special type of observation which explicates the meaning of our ideas according to the conscious application of general principles that diagram ideas and their consequences.

Whenever thinking occurs, there is the willful construction of an object which the idea consciously imitates according to a certain plan of action. If I perceive that p is equal to q , I can express this object linguistically as the proposition ‘ p equals q ,’ an idea which entails, in virtue of its imitative function, a plan of action, such as, ‘I ought to regard p the same as I regard q .’ I begin to reason when I attempt to explicate the meaning of an idea, such as equality, according to certain general principles. To do so, I mentally observe and experiment upon that idea. Perhaps I discover that, if p equals q , then the converse, q equals p , ought to also obtain. Experimenting further, perhaps I discover that, since I already know q equals r , that p must also equal r because p equals q . Therefore, through mental observation and experimentation, I explicate the meaning of equality as whatever set of objects are governed by the general principles of transitivity and symmetry.

Generally, the conscious application of general principles to facts is involved in every deductive syllogism. For the syllogistic process itself depends upon the general principle that the

derivation of a false conclusion from a set of true premisses is impossible, which is the condition for the deductive explication of our ideas. Such was the case, for example, in the preceding explication of the idea of equality; and, a similar principle is involved in arguments by *reductio ad absurdum*. But there are also non-deductive forms of reasoning, wherewith a set of facts in need of explanation are correlated with a general principle known to hold for some similar set of facts in past experience: “I reason just in so far as I am aware of a general principle based upon former experience, and in so far as I apply that principle to that case, and am conscious of how I can do so, or of what warrants that application, namely the agreement of the fact with the principle” (1897 MS: 5). Such an inference is hypothetical, rather than deductive, because the application of a general principle based upon past experience is fallible, since the similarities perceived between the correlated facts may be accidental or our perception erroneous. Regardless, the difference between deductive and hypothetical reasoning is one of degree, given that both depend on the conscious application of general principles to a set of facts in need either of explication or explanation.

The fourth and last surviving lecture, *The Social Origin of Our Fundamental Ideas*, traces the origins of our fundamental ideas to the requirements for exactness of conduct in social affairs. An idea is fundamental, according to Royce, if that idea is neither a contingent report of the facts nor derived from an analysis of what our ideas mean by ratiocination, but nonetheless is a necessary truth “in advance of any experience, apart from any verification or report of particular facts” (1897 MS: 5). A fundamental idea, then, is akin to Kant’s synthetic *a priori* because the content of the idea transcends what we can observe and verify, but is nevertheless presupposed as necessarily true for the proper interpretation of experience. “In looking for the causes of things,” for example, “men have always gone beyond a mere report of observed facts,” but still “have

always held that the order of the world has something necessary about it, and that this necessity was somehow known to be true in advance of definite experience” (1897 MS: 4). Similarly, “men have always believed in an outer world of matter which they conceived to be existent independently of their own existence [... and] existed before there were any men to observe it” (1897 MS: 5). These ideas, being more or less universal throughout the ages, are believed necessary and yet transcend observation and verification. The question is how have we acquired a belief in them?

Modern rationalism asserts that fundamental ideas are innate to the mind. But, according to evolutionary science, nothing is innate to the mind except certain organic tendencies. These tendencies are not innate ideas, but potential dispositions concerning the organic adaptability to certain impressions. We are, for example, not born with an innate idea of color but with a potential disposition to appreciate color if our visual capacities are functional and we are trained to discriminate between the luminosity, hue, and chroma of spatial impressions. Similarly, we are not born with an innate idea of melody, but if our auditory capacities are functional and we receive the requisite training, we can adapt to the impressions of sound in such a way that musical composition becomes possible. Thus, by parity of reasoning, all our organic tendencies, including our rational ones, must rely on experience and training: “Leave the human being wholly untrained; and he will never develop rationality. Such cases as we know of untrained minds show in their extremer forms the truth that we inherit no rational ideas, and are not predetermined to become, apart from training anything but idiots” (1897 MS: 9). Hence, given organic tendencies concern potential dispositions which require experience and training, and not determinate ideas, these tendencies cannot account for our fundamental ideas.

Modern empiricism contends, on the other hand, that fundamental ideas are derived from individual experience and privately confirmed. But while our empirical beliefs are unstable and often falsified as time passes, fundamental ideas remain stable throughout time and even become more exact and assured as civilization progresses. This is because, contrary to modern empiricism, our fundamental ideas transcend individual experience and private observation, and thus, escape disconfirmation; rather, individual experiences continuously contribute to the assurance of our belief in fundamental ideas. But how can we feel assurance of them if they are neither innate or private in origin? “Since all these generations have been dealing with a world in which universal law prevails,” argues Herbert Spencer, “in the long run the results of ancestral experience get fixed in the inherited organization of our nervous system, so that we come to believe this because this is a real world of natural law, a world where nothing happens without a cause” (1897 MS: 10-11). Despite presenting a third way, Spencer’s theory suffers from the same defects as the previous two. Even if assured belief in fundamental ideas stems from the inherited organization of our nervous system, that system is not equipped with determinate ideas but only tendencies; and these tendencies require experience and careful training in order to be used in specific ways and to acquire the type of habits our fundamental ideas signify.

Given the prominence of experience and training in the foregoing criticism, Royce argues expectantly that our fundamental ideas originate in social consciousness: “In every man I should say, the fundamental ideas come to seem so sure, partly because he has been taught them, and partly because he himself feels that if he were to take away the belief in these fundamental ideas, some of the essential conditions, upon which his whole social intercourse, and therewith his whole rational life, would depend, would be seriously endangered” (1897: MS 11). We are taught such fundamental ideas as causality and real existence because our social affairs, and consequently our

rational life, require us to regard nature as a real world external to ourselves that is subject to permanent laws. Originally, these ideas are quite crude — such as those expressed in creation myths — but, then and now, their implications remain the same: There is a stable world of things to which our shifting sentiments, purposes, and actions must conform. But, in order to conform to that stable world of things governed by permanent laws, we must provide exact descriptions. Thus, over time, our experience, training, and social affairs compel us to regard nature as an external world of exact order that regiments our inexact conduct.

“To ask the origin of these fundamental ideas then,” Royce claims, “is to ask the origin of the conception of the *Exactitude of the World of Truth*” (1897 MS: 15). Given the social basis of the intellect, we could never have understood a conception of nature as an external world of exact order unless we first had consciously imitated and performed exact actions. But we would neither have consciously imitated nor performed any exact actions unless we were demanded to do so by our fellows. The child, for example, only learns exactness of conduct through socialization; and, that exactness continues to grow in proportion to how their social consciousness evolves. “The determination of time,” for example, “is one of the most fruitful sources of the conscious conception of exactness” (1897 MS: 18). As social consciousness evolves, human beings begin to coordinate their affairs with one another according to certain agreements as to when collective action ought to be executed. From natural markers of time, such as the position of the sun, to artificial markers, such as the calendar, the recognition of determinations of time compel individuals to conform their conduct to something external and increasingly exact. With the invention of time and the necessity for collective action, human communities develop customs to coordinate their affairs. These customs take the form of societal laws — a matter of cooperation and etiquette — which serve as external standards to which the conduct of individuals must

similarly exactly conform. “But of such exactness,” Royce concludes, “taught by man to man, gives the conception of exactness that when once acquired, can be used as a basis for conceiving what a world of truth, independent of my personal experience, ought to be and is” (1897 MS: 20). The exactness of societal law in custom and etiquette becomes the basis for the exact world of truth, whether seen as the natural law of the starry heaven without or the moral law within. Such societal law of the customary kind serves to establish the relations of commercial transaction, which demand exact means of measurement in order to contract precise relations between buyer and seller about valuable items. “The things that you measure and weigh come to be conceived as peculiarly exemplary parts of the real world,” Royce argues, “so that one gradually gets the idea that natural objects are real, are independent, and are existent apart from our wishes, just in proportion as they are exact, definable, measurable” (1897 MS: 22). Thus, the demand for exactness of conduct explains our fundamental ideas, such as causality and real existence, and the result is the conception of the world as an exactly definable order of real things governed by law to which we must conform if we are to act reasonably, and effectively, as social beings.

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