

WILLIAM JAMES' CONCEPTION OF RELIGION

IN JOSIAH ROYCE'S MATURE THOUGHT:

THREE APPROACHES

Claudio Viale

Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina

"The problem of the worth of life is often regarded among men of the world as one that the healthy have no wish to discuss, and the unhealthy no right to decide" Josiah Royce.¹

Introduction

A person who only reads Josiah Royce's (1995 [1908]) *The Philosophy of Loyalty* and (2011 [1913]) *The Problem of Christianity* could easily assume that William James' philosophy takes opposite views to Roycean ones on every fundamental issue with which they deal. Absolutism, on the Roycean hand, and individualism, on the Jamesian hand, are the labels that seems to articulate two contrary approaches to philosophy: the stress on the "eternal truths" and "the Community of Interpretation" within Royce's approach, the emphasis on "provisional truths" and "individuals' experience" for James' view. However, consideration of Royce's insightful works after James' death challenges this assumption. After 1910 Royce acknowledges the unambiguous influence of James on his thought as well as the role of Jamesian philosophy for the development of his own idealism.

Within this context I would like to examine how Royce's *mature* philosophy relates to James'. Regarding the label "mature" a few clarifying words are necessary. Royce scholars usually follow Frank Oppenheim (1976, 1983) when he divides Royce's work in three phases: an early period (1883-1895), an intermediate period (1896-1911), and a mature period (1912-1916). This distinction is grounded in what Oppenheim names as Royce's major insights. About the later insight he writes,

¹ Royce (1920: 155). The quotation belongs to the article "Pessimism and Modern thought," originally written in 1881.

Yet it was only after his late (1912) insight into C.S Peirce's method of interpretation and doctrine of signs that Royce best displayed this sensitivity. His breakthrough to Peirce, then, can mark the start of Royce's mature period (1912-1916). For his insight into the life of Peirce's "musing mind" transformed Royce's method of philosophical thinking and exposition (Oppenheim, 1983: 381)

For some authors, however, this distinction is useless or even dangerous from a hermeneutical point of view. Randall Auxier, for example, denies the existence of insights as marks in which one can see radical turns within Royce's work.² I do not say anything *substantive* in this paper regarding this question. For the purposes of my work I use the adjective 'mature' for the works that were written after James' death (that refer practically to the same years 1911-1916).

Meanwhile, the aims of this paper are mainly three: firstly, to reconstruct James' influence on Royce's mature philosophy; secondly, to highlight a similarity between them: the initial distinction that both establish between religion and morality;³ finally, to support two hypotheses: first, to show that Royce's criticisms of James are mistaken, i.e., that the problem between them relates not to individual vs. social religious experiences but to justification by faith alone vs. justification by works; second, to show why James' developments are more fruitful starting from some of his positions in the *Varieties*. To carry out these aims I divide this article in four sections: first, I examine the direct influence of James on Royce's "The Philosophy of William James and the Philosophy of Life" in section I (After James' Death: Royce on James); then, I analyze how Royce interprets

² "One certainly *can*, as Oppenheim has done, document important insights that deepened Royce's understanding of his own earlier thinking, but one *cannot* show that these moments of insight, or of sudden clarity, resulted in any decision to drop his existing major doctrinal commitments and substitute for them ideas that were at odds with the earlier ones. Royce never changed his mind in any major way, and most particularly, he never "abandoned" the concept of the Absolute (the most egregious and oft-repeated error of fact and interpretation)". Randall Auxier (forth.: 14)

³ I use morality and ethics indistinctly.

James in *The Sources of Religious Insight* in section II (Beyond James: *SRI* and Individual's Religious Experience); after that, I refer to some aspects of *The Problem of Christianity* where Jamesian issues are taken in section III (Against James: *PC* and the Religion of Loyalty); fourthly, I develop my hypothesis in section IV (The Battle for Justification). Finally, I present some conclusions.⁴

I. After James' Death: Royce on James

The first of my approaches refers to *WJ*. Royce sustains that James is an American philosophical giant of the stature of Jonathan Edwards and Ralph W. Emerson, i.e., a philosopher who was at the centre of the problems of his time.⁵ This is one of the central statements of the essay, the first that Royce wrote after James' death.⁶ From a philosophical perspective Royce highlights two aspects as essential for James' thought: that he was an evolutionist of the second generation (i.e., one more occupied with trying to understand the consequences of evolutionism than with continuous quarrels with religion), on the one hand; and that he was the outstanding head of the new psychology, on the other. Furthermore, Royce stresses the *American* character of James' philosophy with the following words:

⁴ Hereafter I refer to Royce's works in the following way: *The Philosophy of Loyalty (PL)*, "William James and the Philosophy of Life" (*WJ*), *Sources of Religious Insight (SRI)* *The Problem of Christianity (PC)*.

⁵ See, for example, the following paragraph of *WJ*: "the essence of a philosophy, in case you look at it solely from a historical point of view, always appears to you thus: A great philosophy expresses an interpretation of the life of man and a view of the universe, which is at once personal, and, if the thinker is representative of his people, national in its significance" (Royce, 1911: 6)

⁶ See, for example, the following statements of Vincent Buranelli: "James had only the warmest regard for Royce, even when denouncing him as a misguided absolutist. Royce would not let his aversion for pragmatism mar his admiration of James. His utterances over three decades prove that he was not simply honoring the precept *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*, when after James' death in 1910, he wrote the appreciative memoir "William James and the Philosophy of Life" (Buranelli, 1964: 76)

Viewed as an American, he belongs to the movement which has been the consequence, first, of our civil war, and secondly, of the recent expansion, enrichment, and entanglement of our social life. He belongs to the age in which our nation... has been attempting to find itself anew, to redefine its ideals, to retain its moral integrity, and yet to become a world power (Royce, 1911: 6)

Paradoxically, despite his Eastern background, as American James also embodied the *frontier's spirit*. In Royce's description, James was an example of the following *dictum*: "You can only win your way on the frontier in case you are willing to live there. Be, therefore, concrete, be fearless, be experimental" (Royce, 1911:23). Thus, James seems to represent the image of an intellectual pioneer, a fearless experimentalist that forges America's deepest philosophy. To examine James' work, stressing its American character, Royce divides his account in two parts: the first deals with religion; the second refers to ethics.

Regarding religion, Royce sustains in this essay the most sympathetic view he ever had on James. Although he explicitly rejects James' individualism, Royce rescues his egalitarianism: "James' view of religious experience is meanwhile at once deliberately unconventional and intensely democratic" (Royce, 1911:24). Two aspects should be pointed out here: firstly, both share unconventionality in looking for the ground of religion outside narrow theologies; secondly, both openly vindicate religion before the growing agnosticism of the day. In other words, one of the cores of James' influence, for Royce, lies in the fundamental consequence of *The Varieties of Religious Insight*,⁷ that is, the *vindication* of religion:

The result of this portrayal was indeed magical. The psychologists were aided towards a new tolerance in their study of religion. The evolution of religion appeared in a new light. And meanwhile many of the faithful, who had long

⁷ Hereafter *Varieties*.

been disheartened by the later forms of evolutionary naturalism, took heart anew when they read James' vigorous appeal to the religious experience of the individual as the most authoritative evidence for religion (Royce, 1911:21).

Despite this friendly picture, however, religion is not the best aspect of James' philosophy that Royce wants to highlight. James' individualism is insufficient to grasp the essence of religion, on the one hand, or it irremediably pervades the core of religion (its communal aspect), on the other.⁸ As I will develop in the following sections, Royce sustains this interpretation in his next books: *SRI* and *PC*.

Meanwhile, the second part of Royce's interpretation of James refers to ethics. Royce is not only describing James' philosophical development but he is pointing out the core of James' legacy: "He was, as a fact, profoundly ethical in his whole influence" (Royce, 1911: 36). For Royce, the best legacy of James should be looked for in his ethical attitudes and his ethical writings, particularly in "The Will to Believe"

If you want to estimate his philosophy of life in its best form, you must read or re-read, not the "Pragmatism," but the essays contained in the volume entitled "The Will to Believe." (Royce, 1911: 36).

Royce offers in his account a subtle and unorthodox explanation of "The Will to Believe." Usually, this article is interpreted as a way to defend the right of the believer to believe against the attack of agnostics or atheists. For Royce, instead, "The Will to Believe" is an ethical work

⁸ Regarding the distinction between collectivism and individualism, Del Castillo writes: "Following Robert Bellah, one could note that even those American ways of interpreting religion that emphasize community and external authority do *not* exclude personal freedom, autonomy as their central values. On the contrary, it is supposed that commandments and other norms liberate individuals from constrictions and allow them to be truly autonomous. The point, then, does not consist just in opposing religious *individualism* to *collectivism*, but rather in contrasting different ways of interpreting individuality" (Del Castillo 2002: 15).

whose focus lies not in stressing the importance of *consequences* –as pragmatism sustains?– but remarking the centrality of individual's *ideal attitude* toward the world:

Our estimate of our world is not to be forced upon us by *any mereinspection of consequences*. What makes life worth living is not what you find in it, *but what you are ready to put into it by your ideal interpretation* of the meaning that, as you insist, it shall possess for you (Royce, 1911: 38, *my italics*).

Consequently, Royce is doing something more than depicting James' philosophy from a general point of view, i. e., he is stressing James' influence on his own philosophy. In his words:

... but I can assure you that I myself learned a great part of my own form of absolute idealism from the earliest expressions that James gave to the thoughts contained in "The Will to Believe" (Royce, 1911: 43).

In other words, Royce's interpretation of James in this essay is relevant for several reasons: firstly, he distinguishes between religion and morality within James' thought; after that, Royce acknowledges James' influence on his philosophy –particularly James' ethics; finally, he sustains that *individualism* is the core of religion while *interpretation* is the core of morality. I draw on the first two in order to articulate my argument. I will refer to them in the following sections, particularly in Section IV.

Meanwhile, I have said that James and Royce initially distinguish between religion and morality. Perhaps, the clearest Jamesian example is the following paragraph of the *Varieties*:

Morality pure and simple accepts the law of the whole which it finds reigning, so far as to acknowledge and obey it, but it may obey it with the heaviest and coldest heart, and never cease to feel it as a yoke. But for religion, in its strong and fully developed manifestations, the service of the highest never is felt as a yoke. Dull submission is left far behind, and a mood of welcome, which may fill any place on the scale

between cheerful serenity and enthusiastic gladness, has taken its place (James, 1982 [1902]: 41).⁹

Royce sustains similar statements within *PC*:

For the moral cultivation just described is cultivation in "the law", that is, in the rules of the social will. But such cultivation breeds individualism; that is, breeds consciousness of self-will. And the burden of this self-will increased with cultivation (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 113).¹⁰

Therefore, both agree in that *mere* morality clearly distinguishes from religion. There exists, however, a crucial difference: for James, on the one hand, religion and ethics should be *always* sharply distinguished; Royce, on the other hand, initially distinguishes both aspects but looks for its *reunification* through his conception of loyalty. To sustain that James would make this kind of reunification is, in my view, Royce's crucial misinterpretation of James. In his words of *WJ*:

In consequence of all these features of his ethical doctrine a wonderful sense of the deep seriousness and of the *possibly divine significance* of every deed is felt in James's every ethical counsel (Royce, 1912 [1911]: 21, my italics).

Here one faces Royce's momentous error in his interpretation of James: James never looks to reconcile morality and religion, for this would be fatal for his entire conception. In other words, there is no *possibly divine significance* within ethics for James without destroying the religious justification *by faith alone*, which is one the essential grounds of his philosophy of religion. I will take up this issue again in Section IV. Before that, I examine Royce's interpretations of James in *SRI* and *PC*.

⁹ Hans Joas pointed out this distinction between morality and religion in James's thought. See, for example, Joas (2000) chap. 3.

¹⁰Another example of Royce's position is the following paragraph: "This evil constantly increases. The Burden grows heavier. Society can, by its ordinary skills, train many of its servants, -servants who, being under rigid discipline, submit because they must... He may obey. That is conduct. But he will naturally revolt inwardly" (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 112-3).

II. Beyond James: *SRI* and Individual's Religious Experience

My second approach is based on Royce's interpretation of James' conception of religion in *SRI*. A first remark to be made turns on the link between *WJ* and *SRI*. Although they were written only a year apart, they depict different pictures of James. While in *WJ* Royce establishes a difference between morality and religion and acknowledges James' influence on his philosophy via morality, in *SRI* he only deals with James' thought as a proponent of individual religious experiences. In other words, only the James of the *Varieties* (the religious individualist in Royce's account) is considered in *SRI*; the James of the "Will to Believe" is put aside.

Meanwhile, for the purposes of my paper *SRI* is important for three reasons: first, Royce analyzes individual and social experiences regarding religion in relation to James; then, he expounds the conception of religion of loyalty that is the ground of *PC*; finally, he deals with the idea of the church as the zenith of religious insight. Therefore, from Royce's seven sources of insights (individual and social experience, reason, will, loyalty, sorrow and church) I examine three: individual experience, loyalty and church, as they are presented in *SRI*.

But, what is an insight for Royce? In *SRI* he offers this definition:

Insight is knowledge that makes us aware of the unity of many facts in one whole, and that at the same time brings us into intimate personal contact with these facts and with the whole wherein they are united. The three marks of insight are breadth of range, coherence and unity of view, and closeness of personal touch (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 6).

Meanwhile, insight relates to a Roycean postulate, the postulate of salvation:

The central and essential postulate of whatever religion we, in these lectures, are to consider, is the postulate that man needs to be saved. And religious insight shall for us mean insight into the way of salvation and into those objects whereof the knowledge conduces to salvation (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 9).

In other words, the need for salvation is a basic mark of religion for Royce and the insights are the sources to answer to this need (*SRI* 11-12). The core of the book, however, is based on the idea that there is a gradual difference of richness between primary and higher forms of insights, from individual experience to the church.

Consequently, individual religious experience is the most basic form of insight to the extent that it is the more capricious for Royce and needs to be supplemented.¹¹ Society then channels this energy toward more ordered forms. Although Royce refers to individualism in general, he is discussing James' conception in particular. Perhaps one of the most exquisite passages of *SRI* refers to the nature of individual religious experience:

James insists that the sources are mainly from within the individual and are only incidentally social. A religious discovery has in common with a poetic creation that fact that the religious genius, like the artist, sees his vision, and produces his spiritual miracle, in solicitude (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 63).

However, social experience as a source of religious insight is very limited, or, in Royce's expression, it is *narrow*. As I attempt to show in the following section, genuine individuals arise only from genuine societies, i.e., *natural* social experience –to use Royce's terminology- should be always supplemented by higher forms of insight. As with individual religious experience, thus, social religious experience should be supplemented

for other forms of insight within Royce's framework. Loyalty and church will be the insights that accomplish that task, i.e., they are the insights *par excellence*.

As is well known, Royce uses the term loyalty in one of his more popular books: *Philosophy of Loyalty*. The way for Royce to unify human beings' lives is through loyalty to a cause, i.e., to serve definite purposes. A higher cause, however, exists: the cause of loyalty to loyalty, a purpose that unifies detached human beings. In Royce's terms:

Moreover, that which I have called the cause of all the loyal, the real unity of the whole spiritual world, is not merely a moral ideal. It is a religious reality. Its servants and ministers are present wherever religious brotherhood finds sincere and hearty manifestation (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 279).

The point to be stressed is that Royce's philosophy sustains the necessity of an ideal order (contrary to the natural order) as a way to redeem individuals. This is a moral as well as a religious undertaking for Royce, which is fully grasped by a particular insight, the idea of church:

I call the community of all who have sought for salvation through loyalty the Invisible Church. What makes it invisible to us is our ignorance of the facts of human history and, still more, our narrowness in our appreciation of spiritual truth (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 280).

Royce's richest religious insight is the Invisible Church, i.e., the universal community of loyals. This church is invisible because it is not grounded in a visible and institutional church but in the moral action of individuals. Therefore, *SRI* could be read as Royce's attempt to edify a "natural religion," i.e., a religion that is not based on revelation, on the one hand, and that looks for universality beyond particular creeds, on the other. Royce is beyond creeds in *SRI* but he is also beyond James when he sustains that individual religious experiences are necessary as well as precarious. However, I think that Royce misses the target with his criticisms. In other words, the critical point, as I will show at length in the remaining sections, relates not to

¹¹ See, for example, the following statement of *SRI* "Without intense and intimate personal feeling, you never learn any valuable truths whatever about life, about its ideals, or about its problems; but, on the other hand, what you know only through your feelings is, like the foam of the sea, unstable –like the passing hour, doomed to pass away" (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 30).

individual vs. social religious experiences but to justification by faith alone or justification by works.

III. Against James: *PC* and the Religion of Loyalty

The ground of my third approach is *PC*. It is well known that this book is the peak of Royce's mature thought where he attempts to merge his philosophy of loyalty, individual and collective religious experience, and to answer the question if in creed one can be modern and Christian simultaneously (Royce, *PC*,). It is beyond the scope of this article to analyze at length Royce's theses and my purposes are limited to Royce's interpretation of James' conception of religion. Regarding religion, it should be said that Royce departs from James' views in *WJ*. Consequently, James' *Varieties* appears, at the very beginning of *PC*, as an intellectual endeavor in the antipodes of his own project:

Yet in one very important respect the religious experience upon which, in this book, I most depended, differs very profoundly from that whose "varieties" James described. *He deliberately confined himself to the religious experience of individuals. My main topic is a form of social religious experience... This social form of experience is that upon which loyalty depends.* James supposed that the religious experience of a church must needs be "conventional," and consequently must be lacking in depth and sincerity... this, to my mind, was a profound and a momentous error in the whole religious philosophy of our greatest master in the study of the psychology of religious experience (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 40-1, my italics).

I analyze two categories of Royce's *PC* that are relevant for my work: loyalty and church. Regarding the first, one cannot appreciate many differences between *SRI* and *PC* in relation to the concept of loyalty. In the latter he writes that

Loyalty, if it comes at all, has the value of a love which does not so much renounce the individual self as devote the self, with all its consciousness and its powers, to an all-embracing unity of individuals in one realm of spiritual harmony, the object of such devotion is, in ideal, the community which is absolutely lovable, because

absolutely united, conscious, but above all distractions of the separate self-will of its members. Loyalty demands many members, but one body; many gifts, but one spirit (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 132).

There exists, then, the same purpose: the unity of individuals through a universal cause, loyalty to loyalty. This is a persistent view of Royce's in his intermediate and mature period. Meanwhile, regarding church one can see the same *spirit* in *SRI* and *PC*:

For the true Church, as we will see, is still a sort of ideal challenge to the faithful, rather than an already finished institution, -a call upon men for a heavenly quest, rather than a present possession of humanity. "Create me," -this is the word of the Church, viewed as an idea, addresses to mankind (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 77).

There exists, however, some differences: firstly, while the idea of invisible church is genuinely universal the idea of church in *PC* circumscribes itself to Christianity as the superior religion of loyalty;¹² secondly, Royce takes again revelation as necessary, i.e., as an indispensable condition for the interpretative role of Paul. I will take up these topics again in Section IV. Consequently, while *SRI* is an attempt to edify a natural religion, *PC* is an effort to give simplicity and modernity to Christianity appealing to social bounds.

Based on Royce's purposes and developments in *PC*, then, one can find that Royce and James differentiate each other on at least three points: first, while James circumscribes himself to "religious geniuses" Royce

¹² An example of this is the following paragraph of *PC*: "other religions have been inspired by loyalty. Other religions have identified a community with a divine being. And, occasionally... non-Christian thinking and non-Christian religion have conceived an ideal community as inclusive as mankind, or as inclusive as the whole realm of beings with minds, however vast that realm may be.

But historically speaking, Christianity has been distinguished by the concreteness and intensity with which, in the early stages of its growth, it grasped, loved and served its own ideal of the visible community, supposed to be universal, which is called its Church" (Royce (2001) [1913] 134).

attempts to analyze religious experiences as could be lived for anybody; second, James highlights the subconscious aspect of religion within *Varieties'* final chapter, while Royce openly says that his view of religion is grounded in a conscious effort to be loyal; third, while James clearly distinguishes between morality and religion, Royce wants to join them. Let me put the first two points aside and focus on the latter one.

Despite their differences, I have said before that Royce and James agree *primarily* to distinguish between morality and religion. In this sense, at the core of *PC* lies a kind of dialectical movement: the *natural* man has natural ties with his society that can be overcome only through an act of unconditional love or, in Roycean terms, through a loyal act. I have highlighted some features of loyalty above. So, through loyalty morality and religion link each other. In his terms,

Although this was so far a too abstract conception to conquer the world of contending powers, the spirit of loyalty was also not without its religious relationships, and tended, to make the moral realm not only a world of human consciousness, but a world of divinely ordained unity (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 96)

In a similar way to Royce, James also uses a dialectical schema to explain the redemption of the sick souls. But the ways in which those souls are saved never includes a *moral* salvation. There are aesthetic redemptions, mystical ones, etc. but never moral redemption. What is more, the forms of redemption in James are essentially anti-moralistic:

Under these circumstances the way to success, as vouched for by innumerable authentic personal narrations, is by an anti-moralistic method, by the "surrender" of which I spoke in my second lecture. Passivity, not activity; relaxation, not intentness, should be now the rule (James, 1982 [1902]: 110)

This is what I call James' *Lutheranism*: the idea of salvation by faith alone.¹³ Although there are outstanding differences between Martin Luther's and James' conceptions, James several times refers to Luther's idea of salvation by faith as a way to give place to genuine religious feelings. In the *Varieties* this Lutheranism appears in passages like the following one:

On the whole, one is struck by a psychological similarity between the mind-cure movement and the Lutheran and Wesleyan movements. To the believer in moralism and works, with his anxious query, "What shall I do to be saved?" Luther and Wesley replied: "You are saved now, if you would but believe it." And the mind curers come with precisely similar words of emancipation (James, 1982 [1902]:107-8)

In other words: from a psychological and philosophical point of view as well, James thinks that religious experience can be grasped only if one already has a belief in salvation. Moral action, therefore, adds nothing to this state. On the contrary, if one incorporates the moral dimension one destroys the radicalism of the belief because salvation turns on the works of the individual and, in this case, applies James' statement against the "moral athletes"

The moralist must hold his breath and keep his muscles tense; and so long as his athletic attitude is possible all goes well—morality suffices. But the athletic attitude tends ever to break down, and it inevitably does break down even in the most stalwart when the organism begins to decay, or when morbid fears invade the mind... The sanest and best of us are of one clay with lunatics and prison inmates, and death finally runs the robustest of us down. *And whenever we feel this, such a sense of the vanity and provisionality of our voluntary career comes over us that all our morality appears but as a plaster hiding a sore it can never cure* (James, 1982 [1902]: 46-47, my italics)

¹³ It is well known that Lutheranism refers not only to salvation by faith alone but to the principle of *sola scriptura*. James refers only to faith and he says nothing of the second principle. In this frame when I speak of Lutheranism I refer only to the principle of justification by faith alone.

At least for some temperaments, for James, morality never cures. In other words, James thinks that moralism destroys the most genuine aspect or religious experience while Royce thinks that without moral religious experience lacks fundamental features.

IV. The Battle for Justification

After comprehensively researching Royce's and James' philosophical relationship, Oppenheim writes that "it seems no exaggeration to say that William James was even more present to Royce's reflections after James' death" (Oppenheim, 2005: 86). Furthermore, following Oppenheim, Royce's philosophy seems to correct or supplement (or both) James' thought:

American philosophy is indebted to Royce for his crucial correction of William James' one-sided approach to religious experience. Counterbalancing James' individualistic tone, Royce insisted on communal religious experience and on the form, depth, and potential genuineness of such experience (Oppenheim, 1987: 310).

I think this correction is not possible and can be added to several examples of misunderstandings between James and Royce. Against James' interpretation of Royce, for example, Vincent Colapietro accurately highlights that Royce's conception of the Absolute does not attempt to sustain *moral holidays* but to transform lost causes in the most genuine ones.¹⁴ Another instance turns on James' view of Royce's temperament as *healthy*. This is openly mistaken because it does not consider that Royce continuously employs the conception of the natural as a stage to be overcome. Consequently, contrary to James' interpretation, Royce rejects once-born philosophy and develops a twice-born one.

On the opposite side, meanwhile, Royce erroneously interprets one of James's philosophical cores to revolve around the notion that moral redemption can have a

religious aspect. Furthermore, Oppenheim and Royce think that it is possible to supplement James' conception of religion with a social ideal source of religious insight. Therefore, they would take James' pearl (the vital faith) and the conceptions of loyalty and church to make the religious experience more adequate.

In my view James and Royce converge on two essential issues: firstly, both sharply distinguish religion and *mere* morality; secondly, both stress the importance of the dark side of the existence. Regarding the first issue, I noted above not only that James draws this distinction without any attempt to later reconcile morality and religion, but that Royce establishes a distinction between moral and religion only to attempt to unify them through his theory of loyalty. Meanwhile, the second issue reveals an important coincidence: that their conceptions of "natural man" (Royce) and "sick souls" (James) have some similarities. In other words, both conceptions need a kind of redemption; the condition of the natural man and of the sick soul must be overcome and this is *primarily* a religious task.¹⁵

Despite this convergence my argument is that James' and Royce's conceptions cannot be coherently complemented (as sustains Royce and nowadays Oppenheim). They entail two contrary views of religion: justification by faith alone, on the one hand, and justification by works, on the other. For James, salvation presupposes faith and faith requires relaxation and not action. In other words, the state of faith is all that one needs to have a religion. He thinks that morality brings anxiety about individual action while religion essentially brings relaxation. On the other hand, Royce acknowledges a role for faith in *SRI*. His mistake, from a Jamesian framework, lies in trying to supplement faith with action because it destroys the essential psychological task of religion: to bring peace to

¹⁴ Colapietro (2011).

¹⁵ There are also non-religious redemptions for James in the *Varieties*. They are, however, beyond the scope of my work.

individuals through their relationships with "higher powers."

The decisive question is the following: is it necessary to link religion and morality? Regarding this question I have shown that James thinks that it is not necessary to join religion and morality and that eventually moralism destroys faith. On the other hand, Royce sustains that without morality one cannot grasp the complexity of religious experience. So, how can one decide between these contrary approaches?

I think that two topics are important for this analysis: first, some issues that James deals with in the *Varieties*; and second, the relevance of James' and Royce's Protestant background. Regarding the first, James in the *Varieties* magisterially shows that there are several forms of religiosity: the once-born, the sick souls and the twice-born. In other words, the point of James' *Varieties* does not revolve mainly around his individualism but around the descriptive pluralism he offers in his phenomenology of the religious souls. Without attempting a detailed analysis of James' view, one can appreciate a pluralistic endeavor to capture essential features of religion.

One could say, then, that Jamesian pluralism fits better with the modern world than Royce's moral monism. But I think that there is something more: James' view depicts a more empirical sensibility and this sensibility grasps better the irreducibility of religious feelings than moral monism. In other words, there can be some links between morality and religion, to take Royce's purposes, but these are *contingent* links. This contingency is shown in the heart of James' *Varieties*: healthy souls, for example, need some kind of moral milieu to develop. On the other hand, sick souls need some kind of anti-moralistic redemption. Consequently, *morality is not essential for religion*. Therefore, James' pluralism and James' *Varieties* as well seem to be more sensitive to the many faces of religious experiences.

What is the core of religion? Morality has only contingent ties with religion. Another possibility is to appeal to faith. James shows that only faith can be considered a nucleus shared by several religious temperaments: first, the healthy ones are the examples of pure faith to the extent they trust that everything is going well in the universe; second, the sick souls need a strong faith to overcome their natural tendency to morbidity; finally, the twice born, who have recovered because they had faith. So, the nucleus of religion turns on faith and justification by faith, which have indispensable ties with religious feelings, while works and justification by works alone have contingent links with religion.

How does this account relate to the Protestant background of James and Royce? In my view Royce did not see something that James clearly perceives: the religious power of individuals. Confronted with an age of growing secularization James radicalizes the best aspect of the Reformation, conceiving that, in religion, everyone is a pastor:

The pivot round which the religious life, as we have traced it, revolves, is the interest of the individual in his private personal destiny. Religion, in short, is a monumental chapter in the history of human egotism. The gods believed in—whether by crude savages or by men disciplined intellectually—agree with each other in recognizing personal calls. Religious thought is carried on in terms of personality, this being, in the world of religion, the one fundamental fact. To-day, quite as much as at any previous age, the religious individual tells you that the divine meets him on the basis of his personal concerns (James (1902) 472).

This is why James sounds paradoxically more modern than Royce who explicitly looks to conciliate modern thought with Christian creeds: "can the modern man consistently hold a Christian creed?" (Royce 2001 [1913] 65). Royce is still trapped with an old vocabulary ("atonement," "original sin" above all "Church") while James, in the words of Charles Taylor, prefigures our

post-Durkheimian era.¹⁶ To put it another way, Royce is still talking with words that reference a Catholic tradition prior to the Reformation. On this point I openly disagree with Oppenheim (1987: 311) who sustains that Royce's Protestant background causes a shortcoming in his philosophy. On the contrary, he was not Protestant enough to see the power of individuals.

What, then, is the problem with the use of the term Church? There are several problems in Royce's thought with this term. First, his conception of church depends on his conception of morality and, therefore, the church—invisible or ideal—is a community of moral agents. This does not allow him to understand the sick souls, for example, as a religious phenomenon as described by James; second, derived of the first, the idea of church as a community of moral agents puts aside faith as the essential core of religion; finally, Royce puts aside the best aspects of *SRI*—it does not deal with revelation—highlighting that Christianity is the superior religion of loyalty in *PC*. Consequently, his conception of a natural religion surrenders before Christianity.¹⁷ As I have said before moral can have a contingent link with religion, but Royce's conception of church does not grasp this phenomenon because it interprets the connection between moral and religion as necessary.

Conclusion

I have examined three approaches of Royce's mature philosophy to James' conception of religion. In *WJ* he acknowledges James' influence on his philosophy and establishes a distinction between religion and morality. After that, he departs from James' philosophy in *SRI* dealing only with the James of the *Varieties*. In other words, in *SRI* Royce goes beyond James. Meanwhile in *PC* Royce presents their works as opposites: an individual account of religious experience vs. a social explanation of religious experience. Therefore, in some ways Royce writes *PC* against James. In *SRI* and *PC* as well, Royce puts aside the James of the "Will to Believe" and criticizes the James of the *Varieties*. Moreover, he does not recover the distinction he made between morality and religion within James' work.

I have attempted to point out that Royce is mistaken in his interpretation of James (the opposition between individual and social views). What is at stake between them is the clash between the idea of justification by faith and the idea of justification by works respectively. Within this frame I have tried to show that James's philosophy of religion fits better with the modern religious pluralism, on the one hand, and that the *Varieties* help us to establish a contingent relationship between religion and moral, on the other hand.

¹⁶ See Charles Taylor (2002).

¹⁷ See Footnote 12.

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