

**Royce and Perry on Realism and Idealism**

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### **(Abstract)**

This thesis is primarily an attempt to reconstruct the debate between Josiah Royce and Ralph Barton Perry concerning the viability of both the realist and idealist positions. Secondly, I will show that this debate is a crucial part of an adequate understanding of the changes that took place in American philosophy in the early part of twentieth century. Royce's arguments against the neorealist position of Perry (and others) centered on both the nature of error, and the nature of independence. Perry's response to these arguments was an elaborate effort to demonstrate a coherent and consistent neorealist system which avoided the problems that Royce claimed must beset any such system. I will not attempt to assign the label of "winner" to either participant, however, I will show that the degree of incommensurability involved in the debate played an important role in the shift in American philosophy at the time.

## **Acknowledgements**

When I first began my research on the particular area that would become the main concern of this thesis, I quickly discovered that there simply was no legitimate scholarly work regarding it. Hence I was left to my own intuitions about a mountain of dense philosophical text to which I had had little previous exposure. Needless to say, I would not have succeeded if it were not for the help of both my committee, for intellectual and professional advice, and my family and friends for personal support. Specifically, I would like to thank Joseph Pitt for guiding me through the maze that is graduate school, and for helping me to realize that the piece of cheese at the end may be a bit bigger than I thought. I would also like to thank my father for his support in sharing with me his experiences in graduate school. Those stories helped me to establish a much more positive perspective on my experiences here at Virginia Tech.

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## **Introduction**

In this thesis I will analyze the debate between Ralph Perry and Josiah Royce concerning the issues of realism and idealism. While these issues were highly important for each philosopher individually, the historical importance of the debate, insofar as it suggests an important shift in the treatment of certain philosophical concepts, will be considered as well. For Royce, the issue of the relation between an idea and its object was extremely important. This issue, ultimately, was at the heart of the question or problem of the nature of Being. What are the basic and operative principles behind the interactions of the internal aspects of thought and thought's relations with external factors such as objects and the actions of the sentient being? Royce's final answer to this question was ultimately a combination of voluntarism and (a very Peircean theory of) triadic interpretation. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into great detail regarding these two concepts, it will be useful to understand how they establish the importance of the debate between Royce and Perry.

The primary motivating factor behind the bulk of Royce's philosophy was the (although it was not always referred to in this way by Royce) problem of Christianity. In a nutshell, the "problem" was simply the question of how one was to be a Christian in creed given the constant scientific and technological progress of mankind. The progress, in this sense, is meant to include the idea that man was developing a more sophisticated understanding of nature, which in turn threatened the epistemological primacy of scripture. Royce's solution to the problem was, to begin with, the assertion that the teachings of Christ (a.k.a. the Church Universal) were never boiled down into a truly essential form. In other words, the words of any one disciple were never sufficient for a complete understanding of what Christ truly meant. Furthermore, any one

individual's understanding of those teachings (whether through reading scripture or even a firsthand experience of them) could never be developed into a coherent account that encompassed everything which was being communicated. The primary reasoning behind this assertion is the nature of interpretation itself:

It is the essence of Christianity as a practical religion to reconcile God and man, to interpret each to the other. That is a progressive process; the insight is progressive; it is not stability, not any fixed dogma. The principle of development is an essentially Christian principle. Metaphysically speaking, Christianity appears, in Volume II [of the Problem of Christianity] as a doctrine of the universe as interpretation. The ideal of the positive and spiritual union of mankind in the Church is the most fundamental ideal of humanity. The Church Universal has never become visible. (Royce, 1915, 89-90)

In this passage one sees Royce alluding to a rejection of absolute knowledge in a similar fashion as Peirce. Of course, Royce would never draw out the same set of consequences as Peirce did, however the centrality of interpretation was common to both. The basic concept behind triadic interpretation was that any given input (or sign, icon, index, etc.) would ultimately have a different effect or meaning from one individual to the next. This is due primarily to the fact that each interpreter is different, and no matter how similar the signs, the process of interpretation will differ in some way. The net result of the application of this theory to the problem of Christianity is that the community of interpreters which seeks to understand the teachings of Christ and commune with God will always be faced with the task of reconciling the scripture with different modes of interpretation (i.e., there will always be different ways of understanding scripture, and none of them will be complete). This "solves" the problem of the development of science and technology by allowing for changes in one's understanding of the teachings of Christ while at the same time rejecting the intuition that any change in that understanding from a simpler form implies some type of corruption.

Next comes the concept of voluntarism. Given what has been noted regarding the nature of interpretation, it follows that Royce's most fundamental or basic epistemological and metaphysical theories should be ones that allow not only for this type of process to occur, but that some account of knowledge be possible given its adoption. This is the primary function of voluntarism under Royce's system. The intent and understanding of the knower influences the nature of the known to at least some extent. Exactly how this process plays out is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine, however, the assertion that some form of internally based influence is involved in our most fundamental understandings and perceptions of reality is a necessary consequence of Royce's system. Furthermore, Royce's primary use of the problem of error was, in fact, as a whetstone for his account of the corresponding roles of subjectivity and objectivity in judgments or propositional statements. From this it only follows that Royce would be diametrically opposed to the type of realism espoused by Perry, where in direct sensory perception is unmitigated knowledge. There in lies the importance of the debate for Royce. He must be able to reject the neorealist position either on the grounds that it cannot offer a coherent or consistent explanation of how error works (this will be referred to as the problem of error) . Or he must reject it on the grounds that it cannot describe consistently how ideas and objects (or to whatever the idea must relate) may be independent in a nonreciprocal fashion. This latter point is in reference to Royce's argument from independence, where in he asserts that the independence which the realist claims holds between an idea and its object must be mutual and universal in its character. Royce then claims that this type of independence leads to intuitively unacceptable consequences. Thus it will be the neorealist's task to give an account of independence which both satisfies the more fundamental intuitions of realism and rejects Royce's criticism. This, essentially, is the task put to Ralph B. Perry.

In the beginning of “A Realistic Theory of Independence,” Perry mentions that there has been a renewed interest in what has been called natural realism. What follows in his essay is an attempt to develop a particular version of this realism, which he refers to as neorealism, and an attempt to defend the theory from the more common objections and difficulties which it faces. Of course, this is the task of *The New Realism* itself, as it functions as a more developed platform than the original article published by the same authors years earlier. Through out this work, Perry attempts to address some of the criticisms which Royce makes regarding realism in general (although it is obvious in some cases that he had Perry in mind when he made them). The primary rationale behind most of Perry’s “responses” is simply the fact that he need only demonstrate a coherent system which does not suffer form the failings which Royce claims that it must. Hence, there is not a great deal of argumentation or effort to establish his particular definition of independence as the only possible one. What is typical of his account, however, is simply the desire to make the term understandable as it is used throughout the remainder *The New Realism*. Given this, what one sees more often than not in Perry’s essay is the establishment of certain definitions and principles by fiat. For the purposes of this thesis then, this method will be accepted, given what has already been noted about the nature of the debate.

As mentioned above, the nature of this debate strongly implies a shift in the way certain traditional philosophical issues were handled. Hence, what is truly at stake in this debate (from a historical perspective at least) is the establishment of a different treatment of both metaphysics and the importance or role of science in the scheme of human knowledge which underlies both Perry’s theory of independence and the neorealist platform as a whole. The neorealist treatment of metaphysics, for instance, deals with the issue of understanding the ontological predicate in an entirely different fashion than the more traditional philosophers did at the time (i.e., Royce).



More specifically, Perry felt that the proper subject matter for philosophy was not the questioning of such things as the nature of being, but instead philosophy should adopt certain assumptions regarding such issues universally (among its scholars) and begin its work granting those assumptions. Exactly what these assumptions are and how they operated will be dealt with in more detail below, but the main point to be noted here is that throughout Perry's account of independence, such concerns were apparent and influential.

Applying this idea beyond the example of metaphysics, one sees much the same effect for other intellectual concerns that Perry had during his career. Regarding the issues of error and teleological behavior, Perry would ultimately advocate a far more scientific approach to understanding such phenomena (e.g., the process of human choice or deliberation). This is in opposition to Royce's approach of dealing with the same issues along more traditional and philosophical lines. Ultimately, then, what one has in this debate between the traditional idealist and the neorealist is a great deal of incommensurability, and more importantly, an excellent indicator of one of the various ways philosophy was changing during the turn of the century in America.<sup>1</sup> Using the positivists as an example of the far end of the spectrum from Royce, I will show how the neorealists deviated from traditional or conventional philosophical approaches in a way that anticipated, to at least some degree, the positivist take on both the role of science and the importance (or lack thereof) of metaphysics. Through this analysis, and through a careful analysis of the primary arguments themselves, I will also show that Royce's objections did not have the impact he claimed they did, given the over all consistency of Perry's position.

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<sup>1</sup> Given that the vast majority of the American philosophers who were directly involved in this debate were influenced greatly by both German and English thinkers, then it would be appropriate to say that the debate functions well as a sign of change in philosophy as a whole. However, it is well beyond the scope of this thesis to go into any detail as to the extent of this influence.

## **Chapter One**

### **Royce's Arguments against Realism**

#### **Introduction**

Summarizing Royce's arguments against realism is a complicated task. All of the arguments are imbedded in the larger context of his positive project, and are hence not directly aimed at any one particular version of realism. Despite this, Royce does manage to attack what he sees to be the central issue of any realism, and thus this will be the central aspect of at least one section of this chapter. With this in mind, I will explicate what I see to be Royce's main arguments against the realist position. The first is the argument from independence. Here Royce sets out a version of the realist thesis of the independence of an idea from its object, and from this account, develops certain consequences which are intuitively unacceptable. The second is the argument from error. Royce's account of the possibility of error does not appear in the texts explicitly as an attack on realism, but the considerations which he brings to bear on the subject are applicable to any theory which attempts to deal with the same types of issues. The problem of error will be explicated in its most general form in the third section, and in the final section of this chapter its bearing on the realist position will be discussed in more detail. The task in this chapter will not be to determine the conclusiveness of either of the arguments explicated. Instead, the task will be to determine exactly with which considerations Perry's version of realism will have to be able to contend.

#### **The Independence of an Object from Its Idea**

One of the central issues in Royce's critique of realism is the exact nature of the relation between an idea and its object. The realists commonly claim that the object must be independent

of any ideas that pertain to it, but what is the exact nature of this independence? Will it be possible, upon further reflection, to understand how such an independence could be worked out, and still manage to avoid certain difficulties which might befall these types of attempts?

Royce's answer to this question is of course: no. His tactic is first to establish the nature of this independence that the realist posits, and then to show the unacceptable consequences that this independence creates.

The most important aspect of this independence is that it is "absolute." By absolute, Royce means that a change in the idea of an object must not necessarily reflect or cause a change in its object.

This definition of "o" as such an object that by the definition of o itself no change in o logically need correspond to any variation in the idea of o, or even of the total vanishing of that idea, - this definition, I say, will hereupon be the more fully developed statement of the proposition that the object is independent of the idea or opinion of knowledge which refers to it, or that essence and existence are mutually independent. (Royce, 1959, p. 118)

This preliminary definition of independence is meant to capture the most basic or fundamental intuition of the realist position, namely, that ideas are not causally related to their objects in the sense that the former creates the latter, or has any lasting effect on it due *only to the idea's inherent capacities*. This qualification is meant to allow for the possibility that one may act on ideas, and hence have a very real effect on certain objects, but the point is that there is nothing within the idea itself (i.e., "in mentibus") that entails a possible and direct causal link to the object. Furthermore, there is no necessary connection between the existence of either member of the pair. In other words, neither need vanish if the other does. Consider a more complete version of this definition of independence:

For Realism asserts simply that the real being of o is adequately defined by the supposed law that no change in either o or the mere idea of o primarily or essentially corresponds to any change or

variation or vanishing of the other member of this pair so long as that idea is not itself a part of o, and that any causal connection, or truthful agreement, or other such mutual dependence of o and the idea, if it ever came to exist would be a third fact, external to the primary nature of o and to that of the idea. (Royce, 1959, p.120)

From this definition, one sees that such conditions as truth (as correspondence) and causal connection are strictly contingent upon other objects (and ideas as they might function as objects), and hence are never a result of the essential nature of the object or idea. To summarize this passage, the following conditions must be met for two objects to be independent of each other:

- (1) It must not be necessary that any change in the idea of o affect o itself.
- (2) The only exception to (1) is any case wherein the idea is a part of o.
- (3) Any causal connection or “truthful agreement” between o and its idea would be, by hypothesis, a third fact, which in turn would be independent, in the same fashion, of both o and its idea.

This third criterion, as will be shown below, is crucial for Royce’s first argument. The “tertium quid,” or third object that allows for causal connections and correspondence between the two will provide the basis for the unacceptable consequences which Royce derives. Hence, this will be a point of contention or concern for Perry’s theory of independence.

The next question to ask or to consider is, what exactly does Royce mean by the terms “idea” and “object,” or in other words, what are the “relata” of which he speaks? In Royce’s Metaphysics, Gabriel Marcel sets out the only comprehensive account of Royce’s metaphysical system. Marcel offers a definition of Royce’s “idea” in the beginning of his exposition of the problem of independence.

In summary, one should mean by an idea: “any state of consciousness, whether simple or complex, which, when present, is then and there viewed as at least the partial expression or embodiment of a single conscious purpose.” (Marcel, 1956, p. 4)

This definition, taken from the beginning of the World and the Individual (first series) refers to Royce’s positive program concerning voluntarism. It is meant to reflect the theory that any thought is essentially purposive, and hence any idea concerning an “other” or some external object refers to that object in some way. The details of how this process works are of course the primary concern for Royce in the aforementioned text, but they are not the central concern here. Hence the problem with Marcel’s definition, in this context, is that it does not reflect the way in which the term is actually functioning in the arguments Royce provides. Furthermore, Marcel makes no distinction to this effect, or any remark at all as to how this definition actually relates to the arguments analyzed.

The task then, is to construct a possible definition for “idea” (and from this derive a definition of “its object”) and, through analyzing the arguments themselves, determine if the definition is successful. In “Lecture III: The Independent Beings, a Critical Examination of Realism” Royce mentions several different terms which could be interchanged for “idea”: opinion, thought, judgment, etc. However, because the argument is primarily concerned with the relation between this idea and its object, a preliminary definition could be any mental state that can function as a judgment. By judgment, I mean any thought that, by its essential form, can actually intend something else. Now this “something else” can either be another thought, or an object external to the thinker. In either case, it resembles to a certain degree the voluntaristic element of Marcel’s original definition, but it does not require that there be a particular type of expression or embodiment of the object in question. This quality of intending an “other” would

seem to be a necessary (but not sufficient) one for an idea to have, if Royce is to ask the question of how it is to relate to anything else.

But in the realist's world, as Royce points out, ideas can be viewed as objects as well. To this extent, an idea has at least a subset of the qualities which an "object" would possess. In this context, Royce is assuming a sort of mind/body monism. Ideas may be demarcated only as a certain type of object, but not as an individual class of individuals. Hence it would be possible simply to define "object" and from that definition determine the distinguishing characteristic of an object "in mentibus." The next question is, of course, what is an object? Royce rephrases the question, in this context, by asking what does it mean to be real? He then gives something of a practical answer to this question by delineating between the various conceptions of being. With the realist conception, the real may be defined by virtue of its independence from the knowing processes.

Now our first conception of reality asserts that just this independence of your knowing processes, and of all such knowing processes, as is your seeing, i.e., of all actual or possible external knowing processes whatever, is not only a universal character of the real objects, but also constitutes the very definition of the reality of the known object itself, so that to be, is to be such that an external knower's knowledge, whether it occurs or does not occur, can make no difference, as mere knowledge, to the inner reality of the known object. (Royce, 1959, p.67)

Hence to be real is to be given, and in that sense possess substantial reality, completely independent of any knowing process regarding it. Such objects are given in much the same way that a premise is given or accepted for an argument. As will be shown in the second chapter, such given and independent objects are *intended* to correspond to the "simples" of Perry's theory.

So the idea, is to this extent a mental process (i.e. a judgment) which intends some other object, which in turn is not dependent upon the idea for its reality. With this in mind, and due to

the nature of Royce's argument, it would be appropriate to conceive of the idea simply as an object "in mentibus," or in other words, an object with the additional quality of some form of conscious intent. It is important to note that this definition does not require a very particular concept of what "mind" is, or exactly what it means for something to intend something other than itself. The crucial point is, instead, that the only quality that is being delineated with respect to objects and ideas is simply that the latter maintain some teleological element. This definition allows for the distinction (or lack thereof) that Royce makes in his arguments. As will be shown below, the consequences of this standard of independence are drawn out according to the potential connections between two objects in the most general sense.

The other important point to note about this passage is that it offers a definition or treatment of the ontological predicate. It attempts to answer the very same metaphysical question which Perry claims is unanswerable. In this sense, Royce's claim is that this is the "only universal character of real objects," and hence the only sufficient basis for a definition of the real. For argumentative purposes, it is the only definition of the real which the realist can maintain. As will be noted in more detail in Chapter Three, Perry rejects this for two reasons. The first is the conceptual contradiction involved in defining an object in terms of something from which it is supposed to be completely independent. The second reason is, as stated above, the question of the nature of the ontological predicate, for the neorealist, is both inaccessible and an inappropriate subject matter for philosophy.

### **The Argument from Independence**

These definitions of "independence", "object", and "idea", in and of themselves, are not completely adequate for understanding exactly what Royce means by the *realist* definitions of "real being" and "independence." To understand these, one must understand how they are

functioning in the actual arguments against the realist position. One of the principle tactics Royce uses in the World and Individual is to demonstrate the consequences of the realist's formulation of independence, and more specifically, how these consequences would be intuitively unacceptable or untenable. The argument begins with the question: would this world of independent beings, so described by the realist, be monistic or pluralistic in nature? Assuming that it would have to be one or the other, Royce considers the latter alternative first.

If any two beings are to be distinct, then they would have to be independent in the sense described above. This is the first and a very crucial step Royce makes in this argument. It is clear that such a standard of independence would be sufficient for two beings to be distinct (and therefore support a pluralistic reality), but Royce offers no real argument as to why this standard would be necessary as well. The difficulty that this creates is that it would be possible to set a less stringent standard of independence for the case of knowledge, and in turn escape from the difficulties described in each of Royce's theses. Since this issue will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Three, and for the sake of the larger analysis, I will grant Royce this assumption for the time being. Assuming such a standard of independence to be universal in this pluralistic reality, Royce sets out to prove two theses:

(1) "The many real beings thus defined can never come to acquire or later to be conceived as possessing any possible real linkages or connections...and so these beings will remain forever wholly sundered..." (Royce, 1959, 127)

(2) "The many real beings thus defined can have no common characters, they are wholly different from one another." (Royce, 1959, 127)

The first thesis is concerned, for the most part, with the possibility of a casual connection between two such independent objects. Take any two objects so defined, and consider how they



might be connected causally. Any conceivable factor or link, would, by definition, have to be considered a third object. As per the definition of independence, neither of the two original objects would require anything of its essential nature to be dependent upon the other, and of course this would even be prohibited by hypothesis. Thus, for the case of one causing the other, there would have to be a third object which would account for the essential nature of the causal connection. However, this third object, being independent as well, would require a fourth to be related to either of the original two. At this point, the causal connection requires three independent objects; however, if the causal relationship is to be asserted regarding any of them (either A to B, or B to C), then an additional object would have to be introduced for the same reason the first was. This process would of course repeat itself infinitely, and hence the impossibility of ever establishing a link between two objects.

This argument seems to be built into the definition of independence that was given above. Any causal link must be a third fact, not essential to either the idea or its object. The notion of essence is not completely clear in this context, nor does Royce ever give a complete account of what he means by the term. However, the idea seems to be that it would be possible to satisfy or formulate a complete account of the object in question with out any reference to the other. Something similar to this must be the case if Royce is to avoid the objection that the separation of any set of objects according to the divisions of these essential natures are for the most part arbitrary, and that the pluralism of which he speaks is strictly a mental construct. That is to say that realist could respond by asserting that this “tertium quid” is being defined in a particular way so as to avoid any physical or conceptual contiguity with either of the other two objects. Royce does not address this issue specifically, but it seems to stem from his refusal to accept any other

standard of independence as a possibility. Consider a brief summary of the tertium quid argument.

-The standard of independence is such that any causal connection between any two objects would be, by definition, a third object.

-This third object would be independent of the first two in the same sense which they are independent of each other.

-In order to establish a connection between the first and second objects, or the second and third, an additional object would be required.

-This additional object would, by definition, be independent of the other members of the set.

-Hence any possible addition to the set would be subject to the same standard of independence.

-Finally, it follows that there would be an infinite regress between the original two in question.

Hence, this particular phase of the argument does manage to reject the possibility of this standard of independence, if it is viewed as a necessary and sufficient condition of the independence of two objects.

Given this analysis, it is apparent that the terms “idea” and “object” are meant to be comprehensive of the neorealist ontology. The standard of independence must apply to every conceivable object (including ideas) and preempts any attempt to assert the epistemological dependence of an object or an idea. Hence, the term “object” may be considered to correspond to either the “complexes” or “simples” of Perry’s theory, and an independent object would correspond specifically to those “simples.” At the very least, this is the type of correspondence

that Royce would have intended in order for this argument to apply to Perry's position.

However, as will be shown in both Chapter Two and Chapter Three, Perry's ontology does not correspond in such a direct and simple way.

Royce argues for the second thesis through the following example. Consider two objects, such as two cherries. Common sense would suggest that they have certain qualities in common, such as roundness, redness, sweetness, etc. But these qualities, as they are abstracted from each object, are in this sense dependent upon both. If one cherry is destroyed, then the common elements would be lost. In other words, the common redness, *as it is conceived in this way*, would cease to exist in either. Hence, the vanishing of one object would in fact affect the other, thus violating the standard of independence. (Royce, 1959, 128) It would be possible for the realist to object that the redness of one is in no way dependent upon the other, however, requiring that such abstracted qualities be viewed in this way preempts the possibility of their being considered as the composite of different instances. In other words, if I assert that a cherry has a certain quality, say redness, which I in turn define ostensively through other examples (namely another cherry), then the essential nature of that quality of that object will be dependent, in a way prohibited by this standard of independence. One could assert that the quality of redness is not dependent upon any particular cherry, but this would still leave it dependent upon the redness of at least some other object, upon which it would still be dependent. Referring once again to the essential nature of the object in question, the removal of the second object would seem to have at least some impact, which would of course contradict the original hypothesis. In this context, it is not completely clear what Royce means by "essential nature." Nor does it appear necessary that the abstraction involved in understanding a quality such as redness require

more than one instance of it. These objections will be dealt with in more detail in the Chapter Three.

Marcel claims that Royce demonstrates three consequences or theses of this type of independence. The second and third which he lists are equivalent to the two that Royce mentions in the WI, but the first requires some effort to connect to the original two:

-[“beings which are independent in this maximal sense”] “Are not capable of going through corresponding variations;”(Marcel, 1956, p. 5)

It is not at all clear what Marcel means by “corresponding variations” in this context. It would be possible to interpret this phrase as a corollary of those same objects’ inability to have anything in common. That is, if one were to read “corresponding” as “common,” and extend the second thesis (from common characteristics) to common processes, then one could make sense of what Marcel intended. However, he offers no explanation of why he included the third thesis, hence it would be appropriate to read it simply as a consequence of the original two theses.

It follows from what Royce has argued that the pluralistic world of the realist is completely counterintuitive. Any two objects would not be capable of having anything in common, or having any type of linkage or connection, causal or otherwise. This is of course in addition to the hypothetical contradiction which was demonstrated above. Royce uses roughly the same approach for the monistic alternative. It follows analytically that two independent beings simply could not exist in a monistic system or reality. Whatever Universal Knower or Universal Substance that one would posit in such a system would, by definition, be a connection between any two, otherwise distinct, beings. This third object would (or second depending on how one views the problem) be necessary for the continued existence of the second (or third), or

in this sense be necessary to its continued existence. Hence, Royce has no difficulties showing how the monistic alternative is not a viable option as well.

It is important to note that these objections to the realist position are still dependent upon the qualification mentioned above, namely that Royce has not provided an argument as to why this standard of independence should hold for each and every object in the realist's world. Hence the success of this particular set of arguments is contingent upon that assumption. How this point factors into the debate between Perry and Royce will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.

### **The Problem of Error**

The most significant of Royce's objections to the realist position is known as the problem of error. Royce's deliberations on the nature of error had a great impact on his philosophy as a whole, and for this reason, it is not necessary to discuss every aspect of this issue as it relates to his positive project. However, the formulation of the problem itself, and how it relates to the realist position are of course very important. This issue is discussed in its greatest detail (in Royce's work) in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, and to a lesser extent in *The World and the Individual*. In the latter work, Royce presents the problem as a (very Kantian) antinomy.

The thesis of the antinomy is stated as follows:

There seems to be, in the object of an idea, just in so far as it is the object of that specific idea, no essential character which is not predetermined by the purpose, the internal meaning, the conscious intent of that idea itself. (Royce, 1959, p.320)

This is similar to the assertion that it is not possible for an idea to err about itself. That is to say that, everything to which the idea refers can only be composed of that idea itself. Of course, if this were so, error would not be possible, if it (error) were defined as some type of

misrepresentation of the object to which it corresponds. The antithesis of the antinomy is stated as:

No finite idea predetermines, in its object, exactly the character which, when present in the object, gives the idea the desired truth. (Royce, 1959, p.323)

Hence the antithesis follows from just the opposite intuition than that of the thesis, namely that any given (finite) idea cannot determine itself to be true or false. Or in other words, the source of the error of which an idea may be “guilty”, can not be found solely in the idea itself. Thus this antinomy is not based on two competing apparent truths, but on two competing epistemological intuitions. There is in one sense, a limit to the class of objects to which an idea might correspond. This limit (or defining characteristics of the class) is completely dependent upon the idea itself. The antithesis, however, is one of the basic intuitions behind epistemological realism. Namely, that it is beyond the inherent capacity of any idea to predetermine the level of its correspondence with an external object.

Royce’s solution to the antinomy is essentially voluntaristic. When an idea intends an “other” (i.e., the object to which it refers), it expresses a particular purpose, one which is determined in a particular fashion. This is the *only* referent possible.

In seeking its object, any idea whatever seeks absolutely nothing but its own explicit, and, in the end, complete, determination as this conscious purpose, embodied in this one way. The complete content of the idea’s own purpose is the only object of which the idea can ever take note. This alone is the other that is sought.(Royce, 1959, 329)

This is the version of “idea” to which Marcel refers in his explication of Royce. A finite idea is the partial expression of a purpose which may or may not be found in nature. Royce uses the example of a mathematician who attempts to solve a problem, and in doing so, sets out an initial solution or attempt.(Royce, 1959, 329) This initial attempt is the expression of both the will to solve the problem (i.e., a definite purpose) and a certain representation of an object. The object

to which it refers is, in one sense, the correct solution to the problem. It is this sense which may provide the source of error for the mathematician. However, that object can never be identified as such unless the conscious purpose, which that idea represents, wills it to be so. In other words, the mathematician is seeking a particular solution to a problem. That solution, can only be identified as such in virtue of its relation to the original purpose. Thus, one could say in virtue of the antinomy, that the finite expression is a set of parameters within which the possible object must fall. In this way, the object supports or rejects the truth of the idea, but only in a way that the idea dictates.

This same problem is discussed in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*. In this work, Royce rejects what he refers to as the “common sense” account of error. Under this account, error is simply a case of a given judgment not agreeing with its object. This version, however, assumes an object which is external to the knower or the judgment, and to which the judgment must refer. This relation, in turn, creates the following difficulty. The object in question must be known for the judgment to refer to it. Hence the question arises as to what degree the judgment contains the object. If the common sense account makes no distinction in this regard, then every judgment would contain the object to which it refers simpliciter, and hence would knowingly be in error. This is of course an intuitively unacceptable result. The advocate of the common sense view might respond that the object known is known only in enough detail so as to constitute it as a particular object. Hence, one might say that, I see that tree over there and I think that it is an oak, when in reality, or upon closer inspection, it turns out to be an elm. To this Royce responds that it is not at all clear at what point the common sense view distinguishes between the very particular judgment at hand and the extended object which provides the error. If, under the common sense view, “an assertion is true or false apart from any other assertion or thought, and

solely in reference to its own object,” then the judgment (or assertion) in question must be so narrowly defined that it would be difficult to determine what constitutes the judgment per se, and what constitutes the remainder of the object which actually provides the error.

Royce uses the example of two individuals in a conversation to illustrate the problem in more detail. Suppose that John is talking to Thomas. In this conversation, there are essentially six parties involved. There are John, Thomas, John’s idea of himself and of Thomas, and Thomas’ idea of himself and of John. According to the same type of reasoning found in the antinomy, if John’s idea of Thomas is all John knows of Thomas, then it would be impossible for him to err regarding Thomas. That is to say, according to the thesis of the antinomy, the idea predetermines the nature of the object in question (i.e., Thomas). Hence it would not be possible for either individual to err about their own ideas of each other. Furthermore, under the common sense assumption, namely that no real part of either individual enters into the thoughts of the other, it is only possible for either to refer to what he already knows all too well. And to this extent, the notion of the correspondence between the idea and its object (as the common sense approach defines truth) simply does not apply. The problem of error, then, is the problem of allowing the idea and its object to maintain a certain level of correspondence, without facing the same difficulties that both the antithesis and thesis (of the antinomy) would face.

### **Critical Summary of Royce’s Arguments against Realism**

Given the explications of Royce's arguments, how exactly do they weigh against the realist position? What considerations do they force on Perry's theory of independence, even if his version of independence is not the same as the one that Royce sets out?

Regarding the argument from independence, certain conditions must be met in order for it to be conclusive in Royce's favor. In the simplest case, if Royce's formulation of independence



is an accurate portrayal of Perry's, and if Perry is forced to accept that standard as necessary and sufficient, then that argument is conclusive in Royce's favor. However, because Royce has not supplied an argument for the necessity of his standard (of independence) for all beings, Perry is only obligated to generate a more sophisticated account in which the cases of knowledge and causal connections may enjoy a conditioned independence. Consider a more complete outline of Royce's argument from independence:

(1) The standard of independence between an idea and its object is absolute.

(A1) The assumption here is that there can be no epistemological dependence of the known on the knower. This, so Royce claims, follows from the most fundamental intuition of the realist position.

(2) By absolute independence, the following is meant:

(a) It must not be necessary that any change in the idea of *o* affect *o* itself.

(b) The only exception to (a) is any case where in the idea is a part of *o*.

(c) Any causal connection or "truthful agreement" between *o* and its idea would be, by hypothesis, a third fact, which in turn would be independent, in the same fashion, of both *o* and its idea.

(3) If such a world of independent beings existed, then all such beings in that world must adhere to the same standard of independence.

(A2) As mentioned above, there is no argument for the necessity of this standard, only its sufficiency.

(4) Such a world would either be pluralistic or monistic.

If pluralistic, then it would be impossible to conceive of either a causal connection or truthful agreement between any two objects, or of a common quality between two objects.

(5) It follows by definition that it could not be a monistic reality.

(6) Hence, this standard could not be a necessary and sufficient condition for all independent beings.

Given the qualifications that have been made concerning this argument, there are several options still open to Perry. As will be shown in both the second and third chapters, Perry's primary tactic will be to show that a theory of independence can be sophisticated enough to get around the problems posed by an absolute standard. Hence, one of the main concerns in the third chapter will be to show whether or not the theses concerning pluralism (and monism indirectly) actually apply to Perry's theory.

The argument from error has a slightly more subtle impact on the realist position. The objections to the common sense account of error force the realist to formulate an account which is sophisticated enough to describe how an object can in one sense be contained in the judgment, and in another sense, remain external or independent of it. As stated above, it is not sufficient for the realist to state that the idea is contained in the judgment only in so far as it may be identified as such. In other words, one may claim to know a certain fact, and the contents of that judgment are, at the very least, enough to demonstrate to which object the idea is referring. The question becomes: exactly at what point are the contents of the judgment considered contingent upon the knower? Or what is the same, how much of the judgment in question is made up of thoughts which are truly independent of the knower. Consider the example used before. If one claims to know that a tree off in the distance is an oak, then what is really in doubt? The

contents of the judgment are such that only a particular tree can be a possible source of error, and the only way to refer to the tree is by virtue of the contents of the judgment.

Furthermore, the intuitive solution to the problem forces one to view the judgment as part of a larger series of judgments. If one claims that, while standing directly in front of the tree (i.e., removing the cause of error), this is the tree to which I referred as an oak, then that judgment is itself contingent upon other judgments which were made at the time of the original claim. That is to say that, when standing farther off, the claim was that *that* tree is an oak. It was the very same tree which was viewed as standing in relation to this or that other object. And, it is these other judgments to which one must refer to establish the original claim as being in error. This possible solution only complicates the issue for the common sense account of error. The newer judgment which claims that the old was in error is still dependent upon the same context as the old, and hence the same difficulty which applied to the original judgment applies to the new judgment. Namely, how much of this context in which the new judgment occurs is independent of the knower? Hence, the problem is a matter of distinguishing between the subjective element of the judgment and the objective element which provides the evidence for truth or error.

This formulation of the problem of error stems from a basic intuition (i.e., the common sense view) which is similar to the realist conception of independence. If the object is to be independent of the knower, *in any way*, then there must be some explanation as to how much of the judgment refers to itself, and how much of it refers to something external to the knower. It is important to note that this objection to or difficulty in of the realist position is not dependent upon a particular notion of independence. It only requires that whatever response the realist gives be able to avoid the same problems. In this sense, the problem of error is a problem for

both sides of the debate. Royce's solution is of course to allow for a degree of construction on the part of the knower. However, because he viewed the independence advocated by the realist to be absolute, Royce considered it to be a great difficulty for such a position. Hence, the nature of the solution which Perry provides for the argument from independence will influence to great extent his solution to the problem of error.

The final point to note regarding the importance of the problem of error is that it represents, in a different form, the same problem which teleological behaviorism attempts to solve. How should science approach the problem of purposive behavior? To what extent does an organism adapt or develop “determining tendencies” given changes in its environment? In other words, the philosophical question of the extent of subjectivity (and objectivity) in a judgment represents the same concern involved in the need to understand the dynamics of “subjectivity” and “perception,” as those terms are used in Perry’s theory.<sup>2</sup> Understanding this similarity allows one to see another aspect of the shift in methodology between Royce and Perry (and eventually the positivists). Royce’s solution, for the most part, is embedded in a larger metaphysical framework that attempts to answer a question the importance of which the neorealist would doubt. Hence both the question regarding the nature of the ontological predicate and the question regarding error are seen in an entirely different way by the neorealist.

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<sup>2</sup> These terms will be described in more detail in Chapter Two, however their meanings are straightforward. The former is of course the instance of dependence upon a consciousness, while the latter denotes instances of independence from a consciousness.

<sup>3</sup> Perry makes no reference to all of the thoughts and apprehensions belonging to the same consciousness, but if this were not the case, then the situation would become completely incomprehensible. However, it would be possible to understand Perry as meaning that one thought is referring to another in a looser sense such that it may not belong to that same consciousness, in which case only one would need to be experienced.

## Chapter Two

### Perry's Theory of Independence

#### Introduction

In The New Realism, Ralph Barton Perry sets forth a theory of metaphysical and epistemological independence. This independence applies across the board to any conceivable entity, or in other words, applies globally to the implied ontology. The principle point to keep in mind for this explication is that Perry is not obligated to produce a counter argument in the typical sense of the term. What Perry's theory must do, however, is provide a coherent account of a theory of independence, in both the metaphysical and epistemological senses, which avoids the problems Royce claims would necessarily beset any such theory (of realism). Hence the explication in this chapter will focus on how Perry's theory may be understood in that context. No effort will be made, at this point, to understand the relative success of the theory as it pertains to Royce's objections. The first section will deal with the notion of independence itself, and the second will deal with a metaphysical reading or understanding of the theory. Section three will focus on the epistemological aspects of the theory of independence (applying the theory to the case of knowledge), while the fourth section will deal primarily with how error and subjectivity may be understood within the context of Perry's theory. The final section will be a critical summary of the various assertions made and how they work together to reach certain conclusions.

#### A Definition of Independence

For Perry, the first step in defining "independence" is to define "dependence." He does not claim that his collection or list of ways in which entities might be dependent is comprehensive; however, he does intend it to be a starting point at which the term may be used

intelligibly. After defining the term “dependence,” he will state his definition of “independence” mostly as a negation of dependence. At that point, Perry will apply the criteria he has developed to the case of knowledge. It is this application of independence (to knowledge), in its proper context (i.e., with the understanding of how it was derived), that will be the main focus of my explication because it will serve as Perry’s primary response to Royce’s objections to realism.

The first sense in which the term “dependence” may be used is that of relation. Relation is included in the list provisionally simply because it is such a broad “logical category.” As Perry claims, it is not possible to give a complete definition of such a term, it is only possible to either accept it or reject it as such.

It is not possible to define ‘relation.’ It must either be accepted as an ultimate logical category, or be cast out altogether on the ground of the alleged dialectical in which it is involved. All exact or analytical thinking, as at present carried on, is dependent upon the conception of relation; and the empirical testimony in its favor is so overwhelming as to justify its acceptance without further ado. (Perry, 1912, p.107)

Perry’s comments, in so far as they give at least some idea of what is being accepted as a case of dependence, are very limited. The primary sense of the term as he uses it is logical in that the “abundance” of such cases (of relation) as “‘before,’ ‘after,’ ‘more,’ ‘less,’ ‘like,’ and ‘unlike’ are enough to “establish the genus.” (Perry, 1912, p.108) Hence, the true meaning of the term in this context, or how it will be used in the argument, will have to be explicated at a later stage in the theory.

The second sense in which something may be dependent is the “whole-part” or “part-whole” types of dependence. Perry introduces these as two separate instances of dependence, however, the forms in which each occur are essentially the same. With the former, a whole may be said to be dependent upon its parts in so far as it can be broken down into or analyzed according to those parts. In this sense, there are two different types or forms of the whole-part

dependence: formal and material. The former is the more general type in which there are several instances of dependence in question. Perry gives the example of the relation “between a city and its streets, or between a government and its chief executive.” (Perry, 1912, p.107) The material form would be any particular example of the former, such as the “city of London and Trafalgar Square” or between William Jefferson Clinton and the United States government. Regarding the “part-whole” type of dependence (or “relation,” as Perry uses the terms interchangeably in this context), a part may be dependent upon the whole to which it belongs when the whole in question is “organic.” It is not exactly clear what Perry means by “organic” in this context, however, the implication seems to be that the whole is necessarily viewed differently than some arbitrary arrangement of all of its parts. Here Perry gives the example of the hypotenuse of a right-angle triangle being formerly dependent upon the definition of a right-angle triangle. In this case, the hypotenuse is deriving its meaning from the “whole,” in addition to its magnitude (i.e. in comparison with other angles). A material example of this relation would of course be a particular right angle and its triangle. A question arises, however, as to whether or not the part-whole relation cannot be reduced to other types of dependence. Consider the following transitive argument.

Thus when one says that the hypotenuse depends on the right-angle triangle for its meaning, or that the conception of an hypotenuse depends on the conception of a right-angle triangle, we are virtually *naming a part for its participation in a whole*. We are virtually saying that the side-opposite-the-right-angle-of-a-triangle cannot be such without a triangle. But this is no more than to say that the conception of a triangle depends on the conception of a triangle, which is as redundant as it is obvious. Or it may be construed as meaning that a part cannot *be a part*, that is, *belong to a whole*, without the whole. But this is equivalent to saying that the complex relationship of part and whole depends on the whole as one of its terms. And this is a case of dependence of whole on part, and not of part on whole. (Perry, 1912, p.108)

To say that a part is dependent upon a whole, in so far as it is conceived, is simply to name that part as a part, and then to claim that this collection of parts is dependent upon the whole, which is in turn dependent upon the parts. In other words, the relation has been reduced to that of an absurd tautology: One must understand the whole to understand the whole. This analysis, of course, depends upon the fact that any attempt to connect a part with the whole in this fashion, requires that the part be thought of strictly as such, namely an object which is dependent upon others for its conception as relating to a whole. Or, to put it another way, claiming that the relationship between the part and whole is dependent upon the whole is an instance of a whole-part dependence because the “whole” in this case is the relationship itself, and hence the other “whole” would be a part of this relationship, and not the whole in the usual sense.

The third type of relation considered is that of thing-attribute. While, as Perry admits, this may be an example of the whole-part form of dependence, the basic idea is that any thing which is defined according to its attributes (or made up of them) is dependent upon them in at least that sense. As above, the attribute-thing form of dependence is questionable as well. Perry considers the example of redness and a rose.

Red cannot be attribute of the rose without the rose; nor would it bear the peculiar relation that it does to odor, form, and growth of the rose, were it not for the nature of the rose as a whole. But this will, I think, turn out to mean either that a rose is a rose (redundancy); or that the red-rose relationship depends on rose as one of its terms (whole-part); or that the redness of the rose is determined by its age, chemical structure, nutrition, etc. (causation). We may therefore dispense with the attribute-thing relation as a primary type of dependence. (Perry, 1912, p. 109)

To this extent, we see Perry rejecting both the attribute-thing and part-whole relations as examples of other types of dependence. The significance of this rejection will become more apparent later, but for the time being, it is sufficient to note that Perry must be careful to avoid the conclusion that the simpler component of the relation (of knowledge) is dependent upon the



process of knowledge itself. That is to say that the simple, in this context what is being experienced and forming the basis of knowledge, should not be dependent upon the complex of consciousness in any significant way.

The fourth type of dependence which Perry discusses is causation. In this context, Perry does not set forth a particular theory of causation, but only rejects a particular version. Here causation is a type of relation “of necessity between distinguishable and definable parts.”(Perry, 1912, 110) Hence the cause must be distinguishable in at least some way. This of course precludes such theories as Creationism, but it is not meant to preclude something like purposive behavior. Here Perry is trying to avoid any theory which allows for creation *ex nihilo*. It is not clear to what extent a cause must be discernible, or if any metric would be required, but the point seems to be, at the very least, that causation should in some sense be understandable and verifiable (at least theoretically) according to a linear notion of time. That is to say that “it is customary to limit the adjective ‘causal’ to laws which contain time as a variable; and to treat time in the positive or forward direction as the independent variable.” (Perry, 1912, p.110)

The next form of dependence to be discussed is that of reciprocity. Perry defines this term as a type of causation, without emphasis on “temporal antecedence and consequence.” Hence, reciprocity may “be taken to mean the mutual determination of values under the law, where the factor of time-direction is not essential.” (Perry, 1912, p.112) To this extent, reciprocity is a type of causation, simply without the chronological consideration, and because of this, Perry refers to the typical causal relation as reciprocal, and thus collapses the distinction into the single the category of causation.

The final case of dependence Perry discusses is implication. The fundamental distinction here is the one between “being implied” and “implying.” The latter is “unqualified and absolute”

in that logical necessity dictates that which is implied based on that which is implying, hence the latter is completely dependent on the former, while the former may be implied by something else.(Perry, 1912, p.112) In other words, the conclusion of a syllogism may be implied by another set of premises as well, and hence it is dependent on either set in a limited sense. Although, there is a sense in which a theorem or postulate may be exclusively implied by a particular argument or proof, in which case the dependence would be complete. The main point being that the relation of “being implied” is not necessarily a relation of absolute independence.

The above types of dependence are the main forms that Perry discusses. Hence it is the lack of these forms which constitutes independence. The first point to note about Perry’s notion of independence is that it is not a type of non-relation. More specifically, it is a particular type of relation where in the mere presence of knowledge as relation can not be used to argue dependence. This will, of course, be the central point of contention in the third chapter; however, here, it will serve as the main conclusion which Perry is attempting to reach.

At this point, Perry is able to define “independence” as a lack of dependence in the sense enumerated above.

...in order to prove the dependence of a on b it is necessary to show that a contains b; or that a is the cause or effect of b in a system which exclusively determines a; or that a implies b; or that a is implied exclusively by b. (Perry, 1912, p.117)

Any other form of relation (i.e., that of knowledge) is essentially beside the point. It is difficult, in this context, to decipher exactly what the form of Perry’s argument is supposed to be. He has set out a preliminary definition of dependence, but not given any argument as to why this definition is complete. As mentioned above, the list of the forms of relation are intended only to make the term intelligible. Perry’s task, however, is only to come up with a form of independence which is sophisticated enough to handle the objections Royce makes against

realism in general. For this reason, I will grant Perry this assumption (i.e., that no argument is really needed for these criteria of independence) for the present, and the implications of this assumption will be dealt with in Chapter Three.

### **The Theory of Independence in General Terms**

In its broadest sense, this theory of independence is a metaphysical theory as well as an epistemological one. In so far as it is metaphysical, it describes the principles operative in the interactions among the most fundamental or basic components of its ontology (i.e., the relations of independence or dependence among simples and complexes). In so far as it is epistemological, it describes how these entities are related to others in the case of knowledge. In this context, it is important to understand the former before understanding the latter.

All simple entities are mutually independent. This is the first and most important metaphysical principle that Perry sets forth (for the task at hand). The argument supporting this statement comes largely from an implied definition of the term “simple.” Any simple can not be composed, in any sense, of parts, and hence cannot be dependent in the whole-part sense. Furthermore, a simple cannot be causally related to another simple because it cannot be a value of a variable, but this particular assertion is somewhat difficult to follow. Referring back to Perry’s notion of causality (or lack thereof), one notes that one of the requirements for understanding a causal relationship is the ability to characterize both cause and effect in some way. In other words, both must be intelligible in at least some limited sense (i.e., no creation ex nihilo). In particular, Perry seemed to have in mind that both cause and effect should be material complexes, and the causal relationship between them is a formal relationship among variables (i.e., a law). Thus, if a simple were a variable, it *could* be dependent upon a constant (as per the example of  $v=gt$ , or velocity equals gravity times “some magnitude of time”) for its relationship

to its effect or cause. Simple entities are also not capable of implying or being implied. This follows from the consensus of logicians which asserts that such logical relations are confined to propositions or combinations of propositions. Hence, Perry has met his criteria for independence concerning simple entities. He does not however, in this context, actually define simples in any great detail. Although it will be possible to derive a working definition once the basic principles regarding simples and complexes have been set forth.

The second assertion regarding simples is that they are independent of the complexes of which they are a part. This follows from the obvious fact that a complex can not be a part of one of its components (i.e., by definition, and thus it could not be an example of the whole-part form of dependence). The rest of the dependence criteria have been removed as possibilities due to the assertion that simples are independent of each other.

*Simple entities are independent of the complexes of which they are members.* - It is evident that a complex cannot be a part of one of its own components. Nor can a simple constituent sustain relations of either causation or implication with its including complex. (Perry, 1912, p. 119) In other words, it has already been established by fiat that simples can not enter into either causal relationships or relationships of logical implication with any other simple and, therefore, any complex (in so far as they are made up of simples).

The third assertion is that “complexes are mutually independent as respects their simple constituents.” In other words, two complexes which share simples are not made dependent by this fact. If a given complex may be destroyed without impacting its simple constituents in any way, then another complex which is made up in part by one of the same simples would not necessarily be affected if the original complex were to change in any way. This particular assertion will have some impact on the part of Royce’s argument from independence regarding the shared qualities of two objects in the pluralistic alternative.

The fourth and fifth assertions both follow directly from the preceding assertions. First, complexes, as wholes, are dependent upon their simple constituents, and this follows from the whole-part dependence.

The cherry is dependent on 'redness,' 'roundness,' etc. This is no more than a restatement of one of our definitions of dependence. But when taken together with the previous assertion it reveals the important fact that dependence is not always reciprocal. While a complex depends on the terms into which it may be analyzed, these are none the less independent of the complex. (Perry, 1912, p.119)

Secondly, one complex is dependent upon a next if the second is part of the first. In other words, in so far as the second is viewed as a part of the first, the first is dependent upon it. In this sense, the complexity of Perry's (implied) ontology has no real upward boundary. Complexes can be part of complexes, which are in turn part of other complexes, and so on. This is not a major point, but it does avoid the intuitive objection that certain accounts of the world require a high degree of complexity, which may not be satisfied by Perry's theory. However, since the only true relations being described here are simples and "parts to wholes," Perry is not obligated to specify any real limit to the possible combinations.

The next three assertions describe the remaining ways in which one complex may be dependent upon another:

(6) "A first complex is dependent on a second complex when the first is either cause or effect of the second within a system which exclusively determines the first." (Perry, 1912, p.120)

(7) "A first complex is dependent on a second complex when the first implies the second." (Perry, 1912, 121)

(8) "A first complex is dependent on a second complex when the first is implied by the second, and is not otherwise implied." (Perry, 1912, p.121)

And from the preceding four, Perry derives a standard of independence for complexes.

(9) “A first complex is independent of a second complex whenever the first is not dependent on the second in any of the senses enumerated above, regardless of their being otherwise related.” (Perry, 1912, p.122)

Obviously, the standard of independence for complexes is meant to mirror the more general standard which Perry describes in the beginning of the text. In this sense, Perry is asserting that the independence of entities (simples, complexes, and so on) is not a matter of being a very broad type of relation, or a matter of being complete lack there of. Instead, independence is simply a matter of the absence of a very particular set of possible relations. In the third chapter, I will discuss how these relations have been tailored to create a very particular type of non-reciprocal independence which is intended to be able to deal with epistemological independence despite Royce’s objections.

### **The Theory of Independence Applied to the Case of Knowledge**

The primary or fundamental consideration regarding the epistemological side of Perry’s theory is that “when an entity is known or otherwise experienced it is related to a complex.” (Perry, 1912, p.126) The complex in this case is the physical system otherwise known as the brain. Hence, there is a difference between consciousness as content and consciousness as agent. The complex or simple which is known is in one sense contained in the complex of consciousness, and in another sense it is perceived in a particular way by that complex. Here Perry is asserting that consciousness is not, as some theories would suggest, a passive activity, but it is more accurately thought of as an active process by which external complexes or simples are assimilated into a particular form which in turn furnishes the content of that consciousness.

The important distinction to note here is that simples are not dependent upon consciousness, as a complex might be. This follows from the above assertion that simples can

not enter into any form of dependence, either with other simples or with complexes. But this independence of simples from the complex of consciousness is not reciprocal. If one is to identify a complex as such, there must be at least some recognition of its parts (i.e., its simples). As Perry asserts, the complex is dependent upon those parts or simples for its meaning and nature (as a complex). The question arises, however, as to whether or not these simples, in this context, constitute the “minimum cogniscibles” of Perry’s theory. That is to say, if one has carried analysis through to its ultimate conclusion, would the end result necessarily be a simple or a collection of simples? Perry does not answer this question in a straightforward fashion. As he claims, “it is not necessary to assert” that the minimum cogniscible be a simple, or that simples are not necessarily accompanied by some context or schematism.

It is not necessary to assert that simple entities can ever stand alone in knowledge, that they can be known without knowing something else *at the same time*. It may well be that they must be known together with some context or schematism. There may be a minimum cogniscible which is a complex. But this does not affect the question whether simple entities *can* be known. That such is the case is the universal testimony of analysis. (Perry, 1912, p.127)

The examples he gives are the simple sensory qualities of empirical theories and the logical “indefinables” and “categories” of rationalist theories. Of these he claims that, in so far as they are known, there are instances of independence. It seems then, that simple entities can be known in a theoretical sense, or that there is a bare possibility that they might be known without the aid of some schematism or contextualization. However, it does not seem necessary, under Perry’s account, that one actually know if or when this point has been reached.

The use of the word “can” in the above quote is somewhat ambiguous. Is it just that the human consciousness is inherently capable of true awareness of simples, or is it the case that, because some theories have identified possible candidates, that this fact alone suggests the possibility of a correct awareness of simples?

This is an important point to clarify if Perry is to have a successful response to Royce's objections. For, as Perry states, a corollary of this assertion is that knowledge escapes subjectivity "in proportion as it carries analysis through to the end." (Perry, 1912, p.128) In other words, in so far as one has identified a simple, one has a suitable basis for building accurate complexes, or further knowledge in general. Again, the question arises as to how one would know that this is the case, or even if the bare possibility (of our knowing simples) of which Perry speaks is just that: a slim chance which may never come to fruition. For the sake of continuing our explication, I will grant this assumption, and will return to this issue in the third chapter.

As with the metaphysical version of the theory, the complexes which one experiences are independent of knowledge as respects their simple components. In so far as a complex is made up of simples, at least those characteristics of it will be independent of any knowledge regarding it. The example that Perry gives is that of an imaginary complex. If one asserts that an imaginary complex is dependent upon imagination, there still remains the fact that the simple constituents of that complex (i.e., a pink elephant: pink, identity, and so on) are independent of imagination (but the complex itself is not).

### **Cases of Subjectivity and Error**

The final two sections in "A Realistic Theory of Independence" deal (in more detail than above) with the various senses in which something may be subjective, and by "subjective," Perry means anything that is dependent upon consciousness. By dependent, Perry of course has in mind the same sense enumerated above. It is important, however, to discuss exactly how dependence works in this sense, as this is for Perry a primary means to respond to Royce's argument from error.



To begin with, “parts of consciousness, as such, are dependent on the whole of consciousness.” As with the whole-part relation, an “object-of-consciousness” cannot be such without being referred in some way to a consciousness.(Perry, 1912, p.137) Hence the same argument applies here as above. What initially appears to be an example of part-whole dependence is in actuality the other way around. Recall that the complex relationship of part and whole is what substantiates a certain conception of the whole itself. In other words, to identify a part as such, is to identify it as being in some relation to a whole, and this relationship itself is what makes up the essential nature of the whole. So, in so far as the this relationship is composed of parts, and in so far as one’s conception of the whole is dependent upon it, then it is an example of whole-part dependence.

There is one sense, however, in which a part is reciprocally dependent as per the case of consciousness. Within the system of consciousness, a thing is a part of consciousness “by virtue of the action of the other parts.”(Perry, 1912, p.137) Hence, it is in this sense conforming to the laws of consciousness. Here Perry is implying a case of one object being exclusively determined by another, or simply that “a”, *in so far as it is this type of object- of- consciousness*, is caused by “b”, which is in turn a system which exclusively determines “a”. This is, for the most part, an analytic distinction, because the essential qualification is that “a” be conceived of strictly in terms of its being an object of consciousness. In this sense, Perry is making a fine distinction between an object-of-consciousness in a limited sense, and an object-of-consciousness in a broader sense. The former is reciprocally dependent upon the whole of consciousness, however, it is important to note here that this is not the type of “idea” to which one refers when establishing the sort of epistemological dependence that Perry is trying to avoid and Royce is trying to prove. Thus, Perry does not wish to assert that this is a case of an object-of-

consciousness (in the normal sense of the term) being unqualifiedly dependent upon consciousness.

Thus when I perceive B, B is dependent for the status 'perceived object,' upon the act of perception. And in the new role of the perceived object, it obeys the laws of perception, and is determined by the other factors involved in perception. Thus if we limit our view to the system *objects-perceived-by-M*, B's history therein, its appearance, alterations, and disappearance, are functions of the subject M. But, as we have seen, this does not mean that B is unqualifiedly dependent on M, unless it has been shown that the limited system in question determines B exclusively. (Perry, 1912, p.137)

This passage sheds some light on what Perry means by "exclusive" in this context. If there is some sense in which "B" might be conceived which is not determined by "M," then there is some sense in which "B" is not dependent upon "M." This is the same type of distinction that may allow Perry to establish successfully the particular type of non-reciprocal dependence which he is seeking. If one permits that B may be dependent in one sense and not in another, and further allow as to how that distinction is made, then Royce's objection regarding the use of "idea" in the argument from error loses some force.

At this point, Perry makes some distinctions regarding how different parts or elements of a complex act upon the "selective action" of a consciousness.(Perry, 1912, p.138) By this he means that there is nothing inherent in the concept of (for example) greenness which dictates that it be contained as a part of some consciousness. Hence, the explanation for the presence of such an element would be found "in the capacities and action of the organism." (Perry, 1912, p.138) This is another sense in which an element would not be exclusively determined by its whole or complex, but instead sufficient reason can be given as to why it happened. In other words, greenness is not solely determined by the actions of a particular organism, nor even by the capacities of a particular species. In both cases, it is still possible that greenness be perceived by

something else. This is essentially the same distinction made above regarding a conclusion being implied by more than one set of premises. Furthermore, this same relationship which determines the contents of mind (as not being completely dependent) also determines the “partnership” of the various contents of the mind. Hence, the way in which one element or part may be related to another is due to the same type of capacity that includes them as members in the first place.

The final point made of this section, and the central point of the last section, regards the difference between error and subjectivity. As Perry puts it, “the whole point of error lies in the difference between building ‘air-castles’ and *mistaking them for something more substantial.*” (Perry, 1912, p.143) Subjectivity does not imply error, but it would seem that it is a necessary condition for it (under Perry’s system). The first step, in what I will call Perry’s account of the possibility of error, is to assert that “the subject of consciousness is independent of being known.” The subject of consciousness, while being a case of subjectivity, is only dependent is so far as it is considered in that role. In other words, the subject of consciousness does not have to be known, but it is also possible that it could be known.

The second step is to claim that one consciousness may be independent of another. This is of course, in one sense anyway, a rejection of solipsism; one mind claims to contain another, and vice versa. If this were the case, then the part would be have to be completely dependent upon the whole, which has of course been rejected as a possibility by this point. That is, in so far as the secondary mind is solely determined by the primary, as solipsism would seem to suggest, the former would be exclusively determined by the latter. And this would furnish a case of part-whole dependence. (Perry, 1912)

The third step is the assertion that mental content is independent of introspection. Introspection in this context means the process by which the mind considers its own contents (i.e., usually in the past). The claim here is that there is a similar type of non-reciprocal relation between the contents of introspection (as objects) and the process itself to that of that case of knowledge. (Perry, 1912)

The last assertion in this section is perhaps the most important. The claim is that “perception and simple apprehension are independent of reflective thought.” Again, the same type of relation that holds between the method of introspection and the contents of consciousness holds between the possible objects of knowledge and consciousness itself. More specifically, perceptions or sensations are, in short, knowledge.

It would be more proper, I think, to regard sensing as a case of knowing. Even ‘smelling,’ which Professor Dewey thinks to be clearly beyond the pale, should be so regarded; for it is evidently different from “gnawing or poking” in that it introduces a specific content in to the mind, and so makes the mind aware of a characteristic of its environment. (Perry, 1912, p.150)

In much the same fashion as Locke’s simple ideas, these perceptions and simple apprehensions are the building blocks of our knowledge. Furthermore, any operation of the mind (i.e., reflective thought) which seeks to manipulate them, enters into an independent relation.

The claims made in this last section seem a bit disjointed. However, what is being described is, for the most part, a particular theoretical basis for the possibility of error. That is to say that there are certain principles in action when the mind acts on its most basic perceptions, and the most fundamental of these principles is independence. Consider a brief reconstruction of these claims:

- (1) “The subject of consciousness is independent of being known.”

The various subjects of consciousness, while in one sense furnishing an instance of subjectivity are primarily independent of the “knowing processes.”

(2) “One consciousness may be independent of another.”

It is not necessary, as the solipsist or idealist would assert, that knowing means being known.

Hence there is no need for something like Royce’s Absolute Knower, while on the other hand, it is not necessarily the case that one consciousness cannot become dependent upon another.

(3) “Mental content is independent of introspection.”

(4) “Perception and simple apprehension are independent of reflective thought.”

These last two assertions furnish particular consequences of the first two. There are at least two senses in which the mind or consciousness may enter into the same types of relations found between independent simples and complexes (due simply to the fact that that’s what they are). That is to say that the objects of internal thought are independent objects in the same sense as external objects.

How then, does this provide a framework for understanding error? In the first place, it demonstrates the ways in which error does not occur. In particular, the barest and simplest forms of perceptions are not susceptible to “cognitive misfortune.” Secondly, it allows one to understand (assuming the Perry’s theory to be true) how the mind may begin to risk error, depending on the nature of its contents. Hence, it is not given that certain judgments, because they are based on perceptions alone, are necessarily true. For example, one perceives a certain set of qualities and, based on prior experience, infers the existence of a few more. I see a large wooden object with a certain shape and texture, and I infer that it is an elm. From this I also infer that it has a certain set of characteristics such as the chemical nature of its interior. The inference I know from past experience with elms, but not this one. However, upon closer

inspection I see that the tree is really an oak. Hence my inference was incorrect. The process by which I inferred the chemical characteristic was *based* on my perceptions, however, those perceptions were simply incomplete. Thus, as soon as my mind began to operate on those perceptions, the possibility of error entered into the mix. The mind introduced an element (i.e., calling that object an elm, with all of the characteristics of an elm) into its deliberations, and erred because of that.

This example shows the relation which Perry demonstrated above in that the simple constituents of the judgment, the perceptions, were independent of the inference regarding them. In other words, if one views the complex of the judgment as a whole with its perceptions as parts, then it is quite clear how those perceptions or simples remained independent of the whole. Realizing that the elm was really an oak did not compromise the truth of the perceptions. The tree still had those basic characteristics (the initial set), but further perception rejected the judgment that several other characteristics may also belong to the object as well. The basic point, then, is that this final section provides a set of guidelines by which one may determine the nature of error given this theory of independence.

### **Critical Summary of Perry's Theory**

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Perry is not, under this analysis, obligated to produce an argument in the typical sense of the word. The theory which he is advocating need only demonstrate a coherent view of how a notion of independence can support the basic intuitions of realism without suffering from the problems which Royce claims that it must. Thus, I will here summarize Perry's position with Royce's objections in mind.

(1) Two entities ("a" and "b") are independent if they are not dependent in any of the following ways:

- a) “if a contains b”
- b) “a is the cause or effect of b in a system which exclusively determines a”
- c) “a implies b”
- d) “a is implied exclusively by b”

(2) Given an ontology composed exclusively of either simples or complexes, the following holds true:

- a) “all simple entities are mutually independent”
- b) “simple entities are independent of the complexes of which they are members”
- c) “complexes are mutually independent as respects their simple constituents”
- d) “complexes as wholes are dependent upon their simple constituents”
- c) “a first complex is independent of a second whenever the first is not dependent in any of the ways mentioned in “1a” through “1d”

(3) When an entity is known or otherwise experienced, it is related to a complex.

(4) From (3), it follows that the case of knowledge is not anomalous as regards the theory of independence. Hence, the contents of consciousness, in so far as they are composed of simples and complexes, are subject to the same principles mentioned in both (1) and (2).

(5) If subjectivity is defined as an instance of dependence upon consciousness, then the following holds true:

- a) the various parts of consciousness are dependent upon the whole of consciousness in only a limited sense (i.e., only in so far as they are thought of as strictly parts of a whole)
- b) from “5a,” it follows that the various actions of the mind or consciousness do not enter into a reciprocal relation of dependence with their objects

c) hence the subject of consciousness is independent of being known

d) mental content is independent of introspection

e) perception and simple apprehension are independent of reflective thought

Since this is not truly an argument, there is no grand conclusion. However, its test will be Royce's arguments from independence and error. Specifically, will it still be possible to respond to Royce's assertion that the object known and the object intended are inseparable (without positing some version of voluntarism), and his assertion that any realism assuming pluralism suffers from intuitively unacceptable consequences? The simplest summary of Perry's strategy is that, given a set of criteria dictating how any possible object is to be perceived or conceptualized, it is still possible to describe how two entities may share certain qualities, be truly independent of one another, and how error regarding them is still possible and understood. Determining whether or not this is truly the case will be the primary task of the third chapter.



## Chapter Three

### Analysis of the Debate

#### Introduction

#### The Argument from Independence

In his article “Prof. Royce’s Refutation of Realism and Pluralism”, Perry takes an unusual tactic in responding to Royce’s arguments. As suggested in the first chapter, he rejects the standard of independence which Royce claims to be necessary for any type of realism. However, instead of rejecting the entire argument from independence because it stems (analytically) from that definition, Perry goes on to examine and respond to each claim (i.e., the two central theses of the argument from independence) individually. With this in mind, my reconstruction of Perry’s overall defense of his theory will follow along the same lines. Initially, then, he has two options. He can either reject Royce’s standard of independence and then defend against a more generic form of each thesis (i.e., how they would apply to any standard of independence formed by a version of realism). Or he can attempt to deny the necessity of the mutual independence of the object and its idea. It is this necessity which Royce claims creates the impossibility of error under the realist system.

The latter alternative will be dealt with in more detail in the section which discusses Parker’s analysis, while the former is to be dealt with presently. So the first question to ask in this context is exactly how Perry rejects Royce’s standard of independence. He does this indirectly by rejecting Royce’s definition of “the real.”

In the first place, the realist does not propose to *define* reality in terms of its independence. This would be a palpable and clumsy self-contradiction. If a is independent of b, then a must be definable, if at all, in terms other than b. Independence itself is not a relation, but the absence of a certain type of relation. Hence independence itself does not define anything. If a be related to b,

and yet independent, this is equivalent to saying that a can be defined without reference to this relation (Perry, 1912, p.117).

The argument here stems from Perry's original definition of independence, in so far as it is a type of negative definition. Assuming one cannot prove dependence in a certain number of ways, then the term "independent" may be correctly applied. Hence the standard is in no way intended to be global, as Royce would have it. The effect of this rejection is that the standard Royce promotes can no longer be applied to every conceivable entity in a pluralistic reality. The assumption then, was that to be real was to be independent of everything, as well as to be independent of any knowing process. It is only the latter which Perry would be willing to accept. At this point, Perry seems to be in a position to reject Royce's argument entirely, because it follows (analytically) from Royce's original definition of independence. However, Royce would still assert that because ideas are objects as well (i.e., in so far as the realist denies any type of Cartesian dualism, or that ideas are merely a type of objects which in turn are capable of being independent of something else), then they must be independent of something. So the question put to Perry is: of what are they independent? Another way of putting the question is what ground does Perry have for asserting that knowledge provides a special case for independence. It is possible that the standard not apply to the case of knowledge, but why not? To this Perry would reply that the idea of O, need not be independent of O itself, but that it may be independent of another idea, namely the idea of the idea of O. However, as an object itself, the idea of the idea of O would in turn have to be independent of something, hence a possible infinite regress arises. The simple solution to this problem is to say, as implied above, that there is no need for an idea to be independent of anything. Again, this is the same as reasserting the initial conclusion that not every real object is independent of every other real object (i.e., knowledge provides a special case for independence.)

As mentioned above, the theory as it is described in *The New Realism* provides a separate counter-argument against Royce's first thesis regarding the possible causal connection between any two objects in the pluralistic reality. Specifically, Perry's standard of independence is such that, for a to be dependent upon b, b must be the cause of a in a system which exclusively determines a (this is one of the criteria anyway). Hence the initial question which Royce poses has no real bearing on Perry's system. In other words, the question changes such that there is no real need for independence to be established via a "total sundering" of every possible connection. In fact, the standard is far weaker than that, and it is far more difficult to prove dependence than it is independence. However, Royce would claim at this point that what counts as a possible link and what does not is somewhat arbitrary.

What happens when we say that they pass from mutual independence to linkage, is really that we find them, in our experience, passing from relations whose importance is to us less obvious, into relations of more obvious human interest. But now the relations of an object in ordinary experience make parts of the object itself. A change in these relations would result from the change of other objects. Hence these objects are never known as independent. (Royce, 1959, 121)

Here Royce is claiming that what qualifies as a determining factor (to use Perry's terminology) varies according to perspective or "human interest." What this amounts to is simply a skeptical rejection of the possibility of formulating a coherent account of causality which would satisfy Perry's definition of independence. It is well beyond the scope of this thesis to determine whether or not this is the case. However, it is important to determine how crucial this step is for Perry. One possible solution to this difficulty for Perry is claim that what is necessary is only an intuitively acceptable (epistemological) standard for causality. Recall that, while Perry never bothers to define causality in this context, he does demand that if one wants to claim that a causes b, then the various entities involved must be discernable according to some metric. In other words, to assert that an object is solely determined by another, one must show that every

part which makes up that complex is determined by the previous complex. Furthermore, each relation in this context must be understandable in objective terms (i.e., scientific). If this is the case, then one has reasonable grounds for asserting the dependence of one upon the other. To this extent, Perry may assert that even if this standard of causal dependence is not sufficient to fend off Royce's skepticism, what can form dependence is not solely determined by causal connection. Because of this, Perry still has other ways in which, he can assert the dependence of objects. A certain difficulty still remains, however, as to how Perry could establish that one object is *not* solely determined by another, if Royce's point still applies. If the standards are ultimately arbitrary, then what can be rejected as not providing a case of dependence becomes dependent upon how the distinctions are drawn between simples and complexes. In other words, what counts as a particular entity and (what is the same thing) what divisions are made between simples and complexes in turn dictates what would count as exclusive causal determination. However, given what Perry counts as knowledge, namely simple perceptions, he still has recourse for establishing a coherent way of making these divisions. Hence this issue is inseparably bound with Perry's assertion regarding the nature of basic perceptions and simple apprehensions. The criteria designed to establish these entities as such would in turn count as a means for determining what would count as a "simple" or "complex." Furthermore, if (by the definition of simples) simples are not capable of division, then there would be some recourse for determining the extent of a complex's possible connections. In other words, if it is possible to ascertain the extent and composition of a complex, then its possible causal connections (i.e., with other complexes) would follow from that. Again, it is beyond the scope of this paper to go into greater detail as to how this could be done. But the point remains that Perry has a coherent way of dealing with the difficulty that Royce's first thesis presents.

As regards the second thesis, the sharing of certain traits between two independent entities, Perry rejects Royce's argument in the following way:

He [Royce] supposes two independent entities to have some quality in common, such as redness or roundness. One of the beings is then supposed to be destroyed; while the other, being independent, survives. But if the first being is destroyed, then the redness must go with it; hence the surviving being can not possess redness, which contradicts the original supposition... But the argument turns entirely upon the assumption that when an entity is destroyed, its qualities are destroyed likewise, or that the simple constituents of a complex are dependent upon the complex; and this assumption, as we have seen, is false. (Perry, 1912, p.119)

In this context, Perry's rejection of the part-whole dependence doubles as his rejection of Royce's second thesis. Given that he has rejected the standard of independence, then it is simple enough to show that such cases would be examples of part-whole dependence and hence not be operative between two independent entities. Hence there is at least one sense in which "redness" may survive even though a particular instance of it may be destroyed. Considering that this assertion stems from the theoretical structure involved (i.e., it follows from the nature of the independence of simples from complexes), it requires that the quality in question be viewed in some way which involves something other than its whole. Recall that the only way in which a part could be dependent upon a whole is when it is conceived of only as part per se, and thus any other attribute of such a quality renders it independent of the object in question. The net result of this is that the "redness" of which Perry speaks is abstracted to a degree such that it is incomprehensible without other instances to support it. Hence there is some confusion as to what exactly Royce had in mind when comparing a quality common to two individuals. If the simple fact that it is common to both is essential to either instance of it, then Perry is correct in his assertion that it would be independent. However, if the redness is thought of only in terms of

a particular cherry, then Royce would be correct. Having said this, it seems that the debate centers on an ambiguity in the use of the term “quality.”

Perry elaborates on this point in “Prof. Royce’s Refutation of Realism and Pluralism.”

Suppose two objects a and b to possess a common quality Q...if a were to vanish with Q, and b were to persist with Q’, Q and Q’ could not be the same. The proposition is simple enough upon the supposition that for the realist similarity involves identity. Common sense would without hesitation attribute any quality such as Q to quite separate objects such as a and b. But even common sense would not conceive of Q as an identical entity leading a double life. On the contrary, similarity is commonly regarded as dependent upon the judgment of a synthetic consciousness. One finds a resembling b in some particular Q. In turning from a to b one experiences recognition as respects one part of the content of b. (Perry, 1902, p.457)

Here the point is the same. The quality Q is being viewed not as a part completely dependent upon the whole for its conception, but as something which exists separately in each object a and b. Hence, Perry seems to have achieved his objective of maintaining a plausible account of how two entities may share the same quality without lowering his standard of independence to an absurd point. Furthermore, he has accomplished this for both theses which result from Royce’s argument from independence. Given that these types of objections are not a necessary consequence of Perry’s version of realism, it would seem that he has successfully responded to this argument.

### **The Argument from Error**

As stated in the first chapter, the argument from error poses a more subtle threat to Perry’s position than the argument from independence. The problem of error (which is a more appropriate title for it) is essentially the challenge of demarcating between the subjective element and the objective element of a given judgment. According to the common sense view which Royce describes, the idea of a particular object should contain only enough of the object in

question to identify it as such. As per the original example, if I claim to see an oak tree off in the distance, and it in fact turns out to be an elm (or was it the other way around?), then the objective element of the judgment should be whatever part of the idea which is common to both the original judgment and the second which actually identifies the error. In other words, there must be something in the second judgment which identifies it with the first so that one knows that the second is actually correcting the first. Giving a coherent and consistent account of this process is the essential challenge of the problem of error.

Given the explication in chapter two, how can Perry respond to such a challenge? A possible response would go as follows.

-When something is known, it is related to a complex. This is the basic definition of knowledge under Perry's system. Furthermore, it means that the knower is to be viewed as a complex, or more specifically, that consciousness is to be viewed as a complex or series of complexes.

-Subjectivity, as the theoretical basis for error, is defined as the case of dependence upon a consciousness.

-At this point Perry can draw a distinction between knowledge and subjectivity. Knowledge may be a case of subjectivity in so far as the contents of a true claim may be the result of a subjective claim. The mind may operate upon basic perceptions, which are by definition cases of knowledge and independence, in such a way that incorporates a subjective process. Hence the end result is to a certain extent dependent upon that consciousness. However, because independence is not non-relation, knowledge and independence are not mutually exclusive states or conditions.

-Given this, there are at least two ways in which something may be related to a consciousness. It may be a complete fabrication (i.e., the result of one's imagination), or it may be directly or indirectly the result of sensory input.

-With the former, one has a case of dependence. If I claim to see a leprechaun riding a pink elephant, then this thought is completely determined by my consciousness (i.e., as per the basic test of independence). Hence this is simply a case of subjectivity, however, as Perry notes this is not the same as error. The error would be the actual claim that what I saw was real. In either case, Perry needs to draw this distinction between the dependence and independence of certain types of thoughts if he is to make room for error.

-In the latter case(s), if something is the direct result of sensory input (i.e., if the mind has not acted upon it in any way) then it is completely independent of the consciousness to which it is related, and it is counted as knowledge. If it is indirectly the result of sensory input then, initially, it has the potential to be knowledge or error. In other words, once the mind acts upon sensory input, the possibility of error is introduced.

-In this sense, Perry has two cases or forms of error. One stems from complete subjectivity, and the other results from the misapplication of one idea to another. The first type does not truly apply to Royce's challenge, as it does not include an objective element. The second type, however, is the main worry for Perry because it does include potentially both objective and subjective elements.

-The best way to consider how such judgments function is in terms of simples and complexes. Basic sensory input is related to consciousness as a simple is to a complex. It makes up the basic components with which are constructed more elaborate ideas (which are in turn



susceptible to error). These ideas of course still refer to objects external to consciousness, and hence objects which are independent of consciousness.

-A consequence of this, and another way to elucidate the point, is Perry's assertion that mental content is independent of introspection. In other words, one can err about one's past thoughts. The object in this case is a past thought, and is, in this respect, independent of the present consciousness. This is the simple question: Did I think  $x$  at time  $t$ ? The action to which this refers either did or did not occur regardless of what the present conscious intends. Hence it is independent. The basic input in this case would be the simple apprehension of the thought or question (at time  $t$ ). While the recourse in solving the dilemma (i.e., answering the question "Did I think about this?") is different from determining which type of tree I see, the theoretical structure of each is still the same. There must be some independent element capable of being identified with some "locus or habitat" external to the consciousness.

-With this in mind it is possible to answer Royce's challenge. What is objective about the first idea (the idea to be verified) is at the very least basic sensory input. This is the minimum requirement for identifying a possible "locus or habitat" for the external object or referent of the idea. Any further information received (which is actually relevant) conditions the initial judgment. Consider the usual example. I see a tree which I think to be an elm. This tree is roughly 100 feet away, hence some of the finer details are lost to me at this point. What I am asserting, is not only that does that object have characteristics which I actually see, but at least some of the other characteristics which elms typically possess. This latter part is the subjective element which I am attaching to the sensory input. If I walk closer to the tree, I will receive more input, and thus will experience either recognition or surprise.

This is the basic theoretical structure of error according to Perry's theory. However, it makes one important assumption that involves equating basic perceptions with knowledge, and this must be looked at in more detail, as it would be the source of an important criticism made by Royce. How does one know that one is dealing with a "basic sensory datum?" Or what is the same, given that hallucinations occur, what ground does one have for asserting their epistemological primacy? This is of course one of the most fundamental questions in epistemology, and hence one could not even hope to give a complete response. It would be more prudent then, to determine whether or not Perry needs to give a complete defense for his theory to work. The claim is made in the context of the assertion that mental content is independent of introspection.

Reflective thought in which A means or is idea of B, requires that one or both shall be 'experienced;' and therefore contains or implies whatever relation is in question when it is said that A or B is experienced. The relation of ideation or meaning is a relation within a manifold of elements, some of which already belong to consciousness in a more primitive sense. The reverse dependence, however, does not hold. In order that concept A shall be apprehended, it does not require to be used as an idea; in order that body B shall be, or be perceived, it does not require to be meant by an idea. (Perry, 1912, p.149)

While elucidating this claim, Perry states:

It would be more proper I think, to regard sensing as a case of knowing. Even 'smelling,' which Professor Dewey thinks to be clearly beyond the pale, should be so regarded; for it is evidently different from 'gnawing or poking' in that it introduces a specific content into the mind, and so makes the mind aware of a characteristic of its environment. (Perry, 1912, p.150)

The first quote is a fairly dense and ambiguous "argument" supporting the conclusion, which is restated in another form in the second quote. In the first sentence of the former quote, Perry seems to mean that when one thought refers to another, one or the other would be experienced. This is somewhat confusing, because it is clear that at the very least the basic perception should have been experienced for another thought to refer to it<sup>3</sup>. However, the second thought which makes the reference would also need to be experienced in at least some way. Of course it is

hopeless to attempt to determine exactly what Perry means by experience, for that term is intentionally left undefined.

The second sentence is simply stating that the process of ideation (or meaning) is dependent upon the consciousness in which it is taking place. Hence the last two sentences are stating that each element (A and B, idea and object) can be viewed as independent in one sense, and dependent in another. This dependent role, however, does not follow from the independent role. In other words, an idea may be referred to (as an object) without having to function as an idea itself, and a “body” or external object is inherently independent of any idea which refers to it.

The net result of this passage seems to be that there is an active/passive distinction between the ideas being used and the objects of those ideas (whether or not they are external). Hence any process which the mind goes through to act upon any idea is necessarily dependent and subjective. Again, this does not mean that those processes are doomed to err or fail, but only that such a result is possible.

Of course the second passage is much easier to understand. At the very least, sensory input provides some guidance as the nature of one’s surroundings. The only difficulty with this, is to what extent does such input provide guidance? Again, it does not seem that Perry is obligated to give a complete account of this, but instead he is only obligated to show that such guidance occurs to some degree. To this extent, Perry has not provided a definite account as to which portion of a given judgment is objective and which is subjective, but he has provided the basic framework for developing such an account. In other words, what *must* count as objective, and what *must* count as subjective has already been determined. Furthermore, the conceptual

device (i.e., the various relations among simples and complexes described in Chapter Two) through which to further define this distinction has already been provided.

### **Parker's Analysis of Perry's Counter-argument**

As stated in the beginning of the first section, Perry has essentially two options open to him. The first, described above, is to reject Royce's standard all together, and then to deal with the more generic forms of each thesis. The second, to be described here, is to focus on the nature (if it even exists at all) of the mutual dependence between an object and its idea which Royce claims exists and which Royce claims creates insurmountable problems for the realist position. The only secondary literature to deal with this particular issue is an article by Francis H. Parker entitled "Realism-Without Error?" While Parker places Perry's argument in a different context, its form remains essentially the same. However, Parker also goes into Perry's response to Royce's argument from the possibility of error. To this extent, Parker's article will offer another method of viewing the entire debate between the two. With this in mind, I will critique Parker's analysis of Perry's defense, and add what I consider to be the correct portions to my own.

Parker summarizes Royce's argument against realism in the following way.

Premise One: "Realism, by definition, means that the object is independent of the idea of it."

Premise Two: "The idea must likewise be independent of the object."

Conclusion: "Hence, the idea cannot be an idea of the object, since it is, by premise two, not related to the object; and hence, realism implies the impossibility of knowledge."

(Parker, 1967, p. 226-227)

It is clear from the first chapter's analysis that Royce's argument should not be summed up in this fashion. As stated in Chapter One, the argument from independence has several distinct

stages, each of which pose a different threat to Perry's position. However, it is Perry's response that is the focus of this section. According to Parker, realism ala Royce, in this context anyway, is defined via the independence of the whole object from the idea of it. And this includes the object's nature as well as its existence. The implication here is that the mind is capable of receiving sensory input in an unbiased way. This resembles quite closely Perry's assertion regarding the connection between basic sensory perception and knowledge.

Perry would of course agree with Royce in so far as the object should be independent of the idea of it, but premise two must be rejected. This is the same point discussed in the first section regarding the extent of Royce's standard of independence. This was the question of whether or not it should be applied in every case, including the connection between an object in *mentibus* as well as an object external to the mind. Parker discusses three main arguments in favor of Royce's point. The first is equivalent to the argument mentioned in the first section. If the idea is to be considered an object as well (as the realist would admit), then it would have to be independent of something as well. Of course Perry says to this that if it is independent of anything, it would be independent of another idea of it (i.e., the idea of the idea of O). Parker then discusses the next argument in favor of the original point. According to this argument, if the idea were not independent of its object, then it would be possible to extrapolate the existence of the object from its idea. In other words the "that" would follow from the "what." This result is of course unacceptable for the realist, and Perry handles it in the following way.

Let us suppose the idea to be in every case dependent upon the object. Consider any cognitive idea, e.g. the idea o. The idea has a certain content, o', and a certain objective reference. O' may be attributed to reality in general, or in particular. If to reality in general, then its object, *reality in general*, is, it is true, deducible from it; i.e., finding the idea of o, you may be sure of reality in general. Or the idea of o may attribute o' to reality in particular. In this case reality in some

particular is deducible from the presence of the idea of o; i.e. the specific locus to which o is attributed, may be assumed to exist. (Perry, 1902, p.451)

In this way, Perry is claiming that even if the idea were dependent upon the object, the consequences which would follow are not those described by Royce. Royce claims that such independence precludes the possibility of motivating any coherent notion of causality, similar qualities, and even knowledge. But, if the idea is dependent upon reality in general, then the existence of something would in fact be deducible from the existence of the idea. This is a perfectly acceptable consequence for the realist. If the idea is attributed to some particular object, then what is deducible is something which should correspond to the idea. This second point is unclear in the context of this passage. According to Parker's reading, this means that for every idea, there exists an object which corresponds to it, regardless of whether or not the idea is true. Parker's rationale for this reading is that the real force behind Royce's original argument is the problem of error. If the idea is independent of its object, then the notions of truth and falsity become incomprehensible. Hence it is not so much that the "that" should follow from the "what," but that the "what" and the "that" are completely removed from one another. Thus error becomes impossible.

This leaves Perry, according to Parker, with a version of realism he calls "extreme realism." As stated above, this means that for every idea, there is a corresponding object, regardless of whether the idea is true. Parker sees this as the only possible solution to the problem of error available to Perry. Hence his conclusion is that Perry has managed to defend his position against Royce's "imputations," but that the consequence is extreme realism.

However, the passage in question (the one quoted above) is somewhat ambiguous when taken on its own. The crucial question, then, is what exactly Perry means when he claims that "the specific locus to which o is attributed, may be assumed to exist." More specifically, what

should the term “locus” mean in this context? Under Parker’s reading, it seems to be synonymous with “object.” However, the following passage suggests a different meaning.

Similarly, one may contend that the truth or falsity of an idea can be construed as the hypothetical fulfillment or defeat of expectation. Subject M, holding idea x of reality, is mentally so constituted that were he to experience the content of that locus which his judgment designates as direction for himself, he would experience some degree of surprise or recognition. (Perry, 1902, p.457)

What this passage suggests is that locus is meant to designate the subjective aspect of the judgment. It is that part, as described in the previous section, which is dependent upon the consciousness, but which also designates the “habitat” in which the source of truth or error lies. Furthermore, it is painfully obvious from this passage that this “locus” is not meant to correspond directly with any idea, unless it is absolutely true.

However, it does seem possible that Parker could have recognized the inconsistencies between his interpretation and the text, and that he did this more in an effort to determine what possible position was left for Perry given Royce’s argument from error. The difficulty with this is that Perry’s theory of independence is far more sophisticated than Parker seems to acknowledge. There is no mention of subjectivity, or of Montague’s theory of truth and error in *The New Realism*. Hence it seems that Perry had other recourse than that described by Parker (i.e., the application of subjectivity as a basis for error), and furthermore that extreme realism is simply not a possible interpretation of Perry’s response to Royce.

### **Critical Summary of the Debate**

It is difficult to summarize the relative merits of Perry’s response to Royce’s objections. The explication of his theory in Chapter Two is best viewed as a sharply bracketed and contextualized account of how any adherent of the neorealist system could respond to such objections and arguments. However, before passing such judgment on the success of the

neorealist project in this context, it would be helpful to consider some of the more fundamental philosophical differences between the two modes of thought.

One of the most basic criticisms which Perry made of Royce was methodological. Perry attacked Royce's dialectical method as running contrary to basic and fundamental philosophical intuitions. He describes the "correct" philosophical approach in the following way.

The philosopher is desirous not of creating but of enlarging knowledge. He would never seek after reality if had not already found it. The proper philosophical motive is not the self-conscious pursuit after the inner meaning of unconscious utterances, but the desire to know more and better the world that is continuous with the thinker's practical life. The philosophical spirit does not direct a man from the study of real things to the study of the adjective "real," but to a study of more real things in the hope that he may compass all things in some thoughtful belief. (Perry, 1902, p.447)

The method, then, is to assume what consistently strikes one as "given," and to pursue knowledge along the lines of what is practical and practicable. It is this type of very well organized approach which should provide man with the bulk of his knowledge. Furthermore, it is the adoption of such methods by philosophy which will provide it with the best hope of progress. The opening remarks of "The Program and Platform of Six Realists" advocates this same point.

Philosophy is famous for its disagreements, which have contributed not a little towards bringing it into disrepute as being unscientific, subjective, or temperamental. These disagreements are due in part, no doubt, to the subject matter of philosophy, but chiefly to the lack of deliberate cooperation in research... A conspicuous result of this lack of cooperation, common terminology, and a working agreement as to fundamental presuppositions is that genuine philosophical problems have been obscured, and real philosophical progress has been seriously hindered. (Perry et. al. 1910, p. 1)

It is this type of attitude towards methodological considerations that inclines Perry towards rejecting Royce's methods. More specifically, Royce finds it of the utmost importance to



question the way in which one knows the real (he does not question that there is something independent of the finite knower), or in other words, to question the “adjective real.” While of course Perry finds it necessary to start with certain assumptions that preclude such questions. The only “how” involved in studying the process of knowledge is one that assumes a particular account of the “real.”

For this reason, Perry’s final response to Royce’s objections is not so much philosophical as it is psychological in nature. In the years following the publication of the collaborative neorealist work, Perry did extensive work on developing a theoretical basis for teleological behaviorism. While it is beyond the scope of this project to go into any detail about the results of Perry’s work, it is important to note, in at least a general way, how this type of work could possibly solve some of the difficulties described in the first chapter. The fundamental idea behind teleological behaviorism is that it is possible to understand purposive behavior in scientific terms. The preliminary work done to this effect was, for the most part, an attempt at constructing a basic explanatory apparatus that could account for such things as goal oriented behavior, adaptation, and the various other tendencies of certain types of organisms (namely humans).

The most interesting aspect of this work was that teleological concepts were considered necessary in a science of behavior (Kitchener, 1977, p.27). There are a number of possible reasons why Perry may have felt it necessary to take such an approach, but what makes it relevant to this discussion is that demanding that the concept be included in a scientific study of behavior left open the possibility for a better understanding of error. The very notion of behavioral adaptation (at least for intelligent beings) implies the existence of error or misunderstanding. Hence this type of approach at the very least shows some promise for

developing a coherent *scientific* theory for understanding how error is possible and how it works. Of course, undertaking the study in this way allows one to avoid holding such intuitively unacceptable positions as extreme realism. Furthermore, it provides the *possibility* of dealing with the issue altogether in Royce's terms. That is to say that, if his initial formulation of the problem of error demands a demarcation between the subjective and objective elements of judgments, then Perry is in a position to claim that he has at the very least a method for determining those boundaries in a strictly scientific way. One of the more promising aspects of Perry's behaviorism, in this respect, is his account of a "determining tendency." When an organism receives a set of stimuli which in turn is followed by another set, a pattern of expectation and or anticipation emerges. Hence, in Perry's terminology:

(S1 – R2, S2 – R2, S3 – R3, .....Goal), where S = stimuli, R = response.

If, through the course of experience, the organism that the set R1 – R3 is conducive to the goal, then that set may be adopted in the form of anticipating further stimuli. However, if the series were to change, such that:

(S1 – R1, S2' – R2, S3 - R3,.....Goal not achieved), where S2 = any modification to S2 to change the outcome,

then the organism would learn to adopt different behavior to achieve the original goal. The subjective element in this case would be the anticipated sets of stimuli and their responses, as well as the anticipated achievement of the goal. Of course, further analysis would be necessary to determine exactly what the organism was aware of in a particular situation, but again, the point is imply that Perry's purposive behaviorism has some promise for a more scientific solution to the problem of error.

At this point, then, it would be appropriate to say that Perry has two different approaches to take to solving the as yet unanswered problem posed by Royce's deliberations on the nature of error. The first was described in the second section of this chapter, namely the philosophical approach. Of this it may be said that there are not any inherent impossibilities involved, however, the methodology seems to run contrary to what Perry actually advocated for such problems. Reconsider two of the relevant ambiguities pointed out in Perry's theory:

- There is no real argument for the assertion that basic sensory input is knowledge.
- Exactly at what point is the mind considered to be acting on such input?

It seems quite clear that, given what has been noted about Perry's methodological approach, he would view psychology (i.e., behaviorism) or physiology as the better tools for handling such questions. Hence, the function or role for philosophy in this context is limited to avoiding inconsistencies. Perry's theory has shown the potential for understanding how error may occur, but it seems forced to leave the details up to science. Furthermore, this does not truly seem like a criticism of Perry's (or the neorealist) system, but only a necessary aspect of it. Finally, given that the argument from independence was rejected successfully, it would follow that, at the very least, Royce's objections to realism do not quite have the force he claims.

Another way of considering the importance of the methodological differences between Perry and Royce is to consider the similarities between neorealism and positivism. Specifically, neorealism can be viewed as a type of intermediate step between the traditional view of the necessity of maintaining at least some metaphysical theory (i.e., Royce's approach) and the idea that one may reject such inquiry all together. The prominent positivist (or "consistent empiricist" in his terms) Moritz Schlick describes the core of positivist doctrine in the following way:

The principle, that the meaning of every proposition is exhaustively determined by its verification in the given, seems to me a legitimate, unassailable core of the 'positivist' schools of thought. (Schlick, p. 54)

The specifics of the processes of verification and of the nature of propositions are of no real concern here, but the phrase "in the given" is somewhat important. Schlick considers the "given" to be whatever is "simplest and no longer open to question." Hence the basic idea is to preempt the most fundamental metaphysical questions by claiming that any such questions are unintelligible according to the criteria of meaning.

The meaning of a proposition obviously consists in this alone, that it expresses a particular state-of-affairs. This state-of-affairs must actually be pointed out, in order to give the meaning of the proposition... In order, therefore, to find the meaning of a proposition, we have to transform it by introduction of successive definitions, until finally only such words appear in it as can no longer be defined, but whose meanings can only be indicated directly (Schlick, p.40).

What can possess any meaning must in some way be capable of ostensive definition.

Furthermore, for any abstract concept to possess any meaning, its must be reducible to terms which satisfy this demand as well. Thus the primary result of adopting such criteria of meaning is that any analysis of the ontological predicate cannot be verified, or what is the same, it could never possess any real meaning. This follows from the simple intuition, which Schlick points out, that any assertion regarding the nature of "the given" could not result in any noticeable difference in reality itself.

A proposition for which the world looks exactly the same when it is true as it does when it is false, in fact says nothing whatsoever about the world; it is empty, it conveys nothing, I can specify no meaning for it (Schlick, p. 41).

It not my purpose here to evaluate these claims in any way, however, the central point to note is that the entire metaphysical project as it is typically conceived is simply unintelligible under the positivist account of meaning. As Schlick also notes, the positivist theory of meaning does not

necessarily reject all forms of realism, only any version of realism which makes specific metaphysical claims.

Given this rejection of traditional metaphysics, what are the connections between positivism and neorealism? As noted above, Perry rejects the notion that one should make any effort to understand the nature of the ontological predicate, and furthermore, this is the essential problem of Royce's critique of realism. However, this does not imply the rather extreme position which Schlick holds. In other words, there is a difference between claiming that the question is all together unintelligible and claiming that no further analysis is required to answer it. However, what must be investigated, although briefly, at this point is how the neorealist views the relative importance of metaphysics as a whole.

Perry begins his discussion of the theory of independence by separating it from the theories associated with Locke and Reid. His main concern in this context is that the reader may be likely to associate a realist theory with something similar to the substantialism of the aforementioned philosophers. Locke's theory, for example, claims that sensory perception is indicative of what is truly independent of the mind (i.e., the distinction between secondary and primary qualities), as opposed to Perry's theory that such perceptions are truly or directly representative of independent objects. Hence the neorealist position is not one that includes this type of metaphysical distinction, but one that preempts it in a certain sense. Furthermore, Perry accuses Royce of making this same incorrect association.

Of contemporary critics, Professor Royce is especially notable for expressly identifying realism with the theory of independence. Never the less, even this writer has not succeeded wholly in separating this theory from substantialism (Perry, 1912, p. 103). Thus Royce is being accused of defining "the real" for the realist, as what is well founded in what is not immediate. In other words, Royce's realist is asserting that the real is somehow

mediated by its affect on the knower. Of course, Perry would claim instead that reality is to be identified with the “elements, processes, and systems of experience,” and it is in no way dependent on the process of knowing or experiencing these processes (Perry, 1912, p. 103).

The next question to ask, then, is how does metaphysics function under the neorealist system? In his portion of *The New Realism*, Walter Marvin claims that the proper subject of metaphysical analysis is essentially the sciences themselves.

Metaphysics as a logical study of the foundations of the sciences needs as its data only two things, the sciences in their most rigorous formulation and formal logic. What metaphysics as a theory of reality needs may be more doubtful. It needs the preceding branch of metaphysics, for that study will reveal the theory of reality implicitly contained in the sciences; and with this metaphysics will certainly have to reckon (Marvin, 1912, p.92).

The gist of Marvin’s discussion is simply that the primary focus of metaphysics is the nature of proper (i.e., scientific) inquiry itself and what can be presupposed or assumed for such inquiry.

What is of special interest here, is the allusion that Marvin makes to the “implicit” theory of reality found within the sciences. As Schlick claims, the sciences as a whole reflect the positivist assertion that the only meaningful assertions are the testable ones. Hence, roughly the same type of intuition is at work for the neorealist position. Its tactic is not a constant pondering of the ontological predicate, but rather a method which parallels that of science. Of course the primary difference between positivism and the neorealism, in this sense, is that metaphysics should seek whatever is fundamental to the sciences in the former, as opposed to simply accepting the scientific method itself simply as a replacement in the latter. Thus one can discern a sort of progression between the various positions described. Royce claims that the nature of the ontological predicate is the essential question and attacks a *metaphysical* realism partially on those grounds. Neorealism claims that such inquiry is unintelligible unless couched in strictly

scientific terms, while the positivist seeks to eliminate the question altogether by appealing only to science to answer the question of “what there is.”

The debate between Royce and the neorealists, then, is somewhat indicative of a shift in philosophy regarding the function and status of metaphysics. The very method Royce used was in a certain sense incommensurable with the position that Perry was defending. Hence the debate never truly developed past its initial stages. While it may be said of the argument from error that such a problem could apply to any *epistemological* theory, the vast majority of Royce’s criticism was simply misapplied.

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