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A Comparison of Royce's Key Notion of the Community of Interpretation with the Hermeneutics of Gadamer and Heidegger

Recent work in hermeneutic theory on the Continent has tended to stress the finite self in its private relation to a text or utterance. Out of this relation has emerged a concern for the hermeneutic horizon which governs the interpretive transaction between self and artifact. By framing the hermeneutic problem in this fashion Continental thinkers have limited the scope of both the agent of interpretation and of the object. This has in turn forced hermeneutic theory into a subjective and non-generic structure. The interpretive burden is placed on those acts of fusion by and through which one historical horizon becomes binding for another. These acts of fusion are themselves the provenance of the individual and fall outside of the quest for communal validation. As a result of this subjective delineation of the problem hermeneutic theory remains unable to emancipate itself from the sphere of privacy.

As a necessary corrective to this inadequate way of grasping the hermeneutic circle it behooves us to examine carefully the later work of the American philosopher Josiah Royce. In his 1913 theory of the community of interpretation Royce provides us with both a new theory of the self and with a radical conception of the interpretive transaction. In his grafting of Peirce's semiotics to a generalized theory of community, itself made possible by a rethinking of the nature and role of the Absolute, Royce brings us into the region where a regrounding of hermeneutic theory can take place. This in turn enables us to delineate the metaphysical structures of communication and intelligibility.

Of initial importance is the transition made in Royce's thinking around

1912 where Royce grapples with both the semiotics of Peirce and with his own understanding of the primitive Pauline communities of the early Christian church.¹ From the perspective of hermeneutic theory the most important element is the semiotic redefinition of the self and its objects. In *The Problem of Christianity* Royce places the finite self within the sign series of the community as that community unfolds across time and place. The finite self can best be seen as a microcosmic community itself constituted by signs and sign relations. Under the impress of Peirce, Royce rejects the Cartesian notion of a substantive self as the basis of knowledge and will and instead offers a self as an unlimited sign series. This self has neither beginning nor end and is unified not by an alleged transcendental unity of apperception but by the sign series which form its conscious and evolving life. Yet the meaning of the various semiotic series can only be found in acts of comparison with other selves in the community.

Contrast and comparison are necessary if a sign is to become transparent to the semiotic self. Signs cannot interpret themselves but require a "third" idea which itself comes from the community which forms the horizon for each sign translation. Royce delineates this transaction as follows:

Thus a complete act of comparison involves such a "third," such a "mediating" image or idea, — such an "interpreter." By means of this "third" you so compare a "first" object with a "second" as to make clear to yourself wherein consists the similarity and the difference between the second and the first. Comparison must be triadic in order to be both explicit and complete. Likenesses and differences are the sign that a comparison is needed. But these signs are not their own interpretation.²

We can call this framework the "semiotic triad" which involves signs contiguous to the given sign to be interpreted. The "third" sign or concept renders comparison and generic identification possible and enables the 'new' sign or signs to become part of the communicative horizon of both the individual and the community.

Signs, as the objects of any act of interpretation, can never be found outside of a concrete sign series. Each sign is governed by its antecedents and, through future projection, by its consequents. No sign can be made transparent by a direct phenomenological act but must, often with great urgency, unfold its meanings from within the evolving sign series. The finite interpreter stands within an undelimited number of such sign series and must address each new sign to the appropriate series as these series are part of the internal structure of the community of interpretation. A given sign must, as noted by Peirce, be interpreted both in the light of past signs and in the light of available interpretees. A sign thus has a double embeddedness. On the one hand it belongs to one or more sign series while on the other hand it must be rendered intelligible to one or more interpretees who themselves stand within the meaning horizon of the community of interpretation.

In this dual process of sign translation, governing "thirds" are essential if proper comparisons are to emerge. Thirds function to preserve and present identity and difference in the complexes and signs that are examined by the community of interpretation. Royce allows that these thirds may function as leading pragmatic ideas. That is, they may so unify inquiry as to give a stable and reliable basis for prediction and the generic extension of knowledge claims.

Thirds can emerge in a number of ways. Like Peirce, Royce rejects the facile model of knowledge stemming from a simplistic understanding of scientific inquiry. Thirds can, of course, come from inductive generalization or simple deductive reasoning. Yet they can also emerge through a form of semiotic play or musement. This process need not be lineal or directed toward a specific goal or goals. Hence a certain randomness is allowed in generating mediating (third) ideas:

Now in the individual case, an interpretation, a mediating idea, may come to mind through almost any play of association, or as the result of almost any degree of skill in invention, or as the outcome either of serious or of playful combinations.³

One can find a mediating idea purely by accident or by the free actions

of imaginative association. The source is not as important as the projected outcome. The mediating thirds will be tested by the general community in its quest for ultimate intelligibility. Standing 'behind' the given community of interpretation is an ideal observer who functions as the guarantor of given interpretations. This ideal interpreter is no longer the a-temporal Absolute Self of the pre-1912 work but functions as the time-bound Spirit of interpretation which animates and governs the community in its quest for semiotic validation. Royce recasts Christology so as to make the spirit of interpretation central to his understanding of both the early Christian community and of the community of interpretation:

What is practically necessary is therefore this: Let your Christology be the *practical acknowledgement of the Spirit* of the Universal and Beloved Community. This is the sufficient and practical faith. Love this faith, use this faith, teach this faith, preach this faith, in whatever words, through whatever symbols, by means of whatever forms of creeds, in accordance with whatever practices best you find to enable you with a sincere intent and whole heart to symbolize and to realize the presence of the Spirit in the community.⁴

The Spirit thus functions to guide and direct our hermeneutic acts toward the hoped for communal validation in the Universal and Beloved Community. The Spirit works in and through the various sign series in order to insure that all interpreters have the necessary openness to ramify and articulate signs in ways guaranteed to enhance the creation of the larger community.

Given his understanding of the community of interpretation and the semiotic structures to be found 'within' it, his definition of reality should not come as a surprise:

We all of us believe that there is any real world at all, simply because we find ourselves in a situation in which, because of the fragmentary and dissatisfying conflicts, antitheses, and the problems of our present ideas, an interpretation of this

situation is needed, but is not now known by us. By the "real world" we mean simply the "true interpretation" of this our problematic situation.⁵

The "real world" is not yet known to us but when it does become known, presumably by the Beloved Community, it will be the "true interpretation" of the semiotic structures available to finite interpreters.

The community of interpretation is the horizon through which our various interpretations and signs are filtered on their way to eventual validation. Royce's pre-1912 notion of the Absolute is transformed into the temporal realm of the community as guided by the Spirit. The semiotic triad of antecedent, present, and hoped for sign, forms the mechanism for smooth sign translation for both the individual and the community. Each individual achieves both internal and external semiotic transparency only through the constant sign translation which forms the living body of the community. Hence the community and not the finite self forms the horizon for each hermeneutic act. The general interpretive horizons which are constitutive for personal perspective are all products of communal ramification and articulation. The community of interpretation is thus both the horizon and the source of horizons for all hermeneutic acts. Outside of this horizon no knowledge claims can hope to have validation or enrichment.

At this point we are ready to make explicit comparisons between the mature Roycean view and those of Gadamer and Heidegger. Of initial importance is the concept of horizon itself.

The notion of "the" or "a" horizon emerged in the work of Husserl as a way of dealing with the surrounding phenomenal field of our intentional acts. Yet the hermeneutic understanding of horizon emerged more fully with the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer. He defines horizon in his major work, *Truth and Method*:

A horizon is not a rigid frontier, but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further. Thus horizon intentionality, which constitutes the unity of the flow of experience, is paralleled by an equally comprehensive horizon intentionality on the objective side. For everything that is

given as existent is given in terms of the world and hence brings the world horizon with it.⁶

Both subject and world belong within the intentional structures of a moving and open horizon. The horizon must not be seen as a closed totality which is itself fully determined. Rather, it is something which lures us beyond ourselves into larger stretches of experience and world-encounter. As we shall see, Royce's community of interpretation functions in this manner.

Another way of understanding horizon is in terms of perspective. A perspective is not merely a subjective coloring of reality which we can enter into at will. Rather, a perspective, like a horizon, is something that is larger than the subject. It governs and directs human experience into certain paths. Justus Buchler, in his work, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, rethinks the nature of perspective in a way not unlike Gadamer's understanding of horizon:

A perspective is a kind of order, that kind of order in which a given set of natural complexes function as procepts for a given proceiver or (distributively) for a community of proceivers. To say that different proceivers share the same perspective is to say that the order in which each is related to a class of procepts is one and the same order. But some relations or orders are unique and unrepeated, even though they are, in part, of a common and repeatable character, and an instance of such an order would be the proceptive domain itself.⁷

For Buchler, a perspective is a "humanly occupied order" which has a direction and a meaning beyond given conscious intents. Natural complexes, his term for "whatever is in whatever way," function as procepts for the individual or the community. A procept is a natural complex as it relates to a proceiver (*roughly*, an object of experience as it relates to the individual). Thus, a perspective is that which governs the way natural complexes are 'experienced.' We can have a common (or parallel) perspective in so far as two or more proceivers jointly

assimilate and manipulate the same natural complexes. We can have different perspectives in so far as we cannot repeat or share our procepts. Buchler, largely under the impress of Peirce and Royce, sees the community as the place where perspectives are shared and communicated.

Gadamer's notion of horizon, as stated above, is not unlike Buchler's notion of perspective. Both horizon and perspective govern the ways in which the world is seen or otherwise rendered available for human probing and possible sign translation. Both can be either private or held in common. Both the horizon and the perspective transcend that which is conscious or clear and distinct. For Gadamer, we can have a "fusion" of horizons, while for Buchler, perspectives are amenable to translation and comparison. Within a given horizon or perspective a certain order obtains, however minimal, and this order governs the ways in which horizontal and perspectival intersections are to occur. Further, each semiotic addition to a horizon or perspective is governed by the 'internal' structures of the 'parent' framework.

More specifically, we can say that a horizon (perspective) has both temporal and spatial traits. As temporal the horizon is a felt continuity with the past and an expectation for the future. Royce's "community of memory" and "community of expectation" function in just this way. As spatial the horizon is extended across numerous signs (or, more generically, natural complexes) and represents the occupation of a domain. The spatial scope of the horizon grants and preserves place. The hermeneutic articulation of place is horizontal topology. As temporal the horizon is the clearing within and through which what is can come to manifest appearance. The horizon (perspective) has both temporal and spatial scope and is constituted by both achieved and achievable meanings. Surrounding meanings had and hoped for are those which can never be made available to human community. Closure marks the boundary of any horizon; a penumbra which both grants and hides the light. Hence, the horizon can never achieve total illumination. It stands as the encompassing which yet, in its fitful withdrawal, allows meaning.⁸

Yet horizons are not self-contained monads but must, often with tragic urgency, interact with other horizons. For Gadamer, this process is known as fusion. In horizontal fusion the various modes of time

are brought together. Thus, in one dimension, fusion involves the temporal aspect of a given horizon. In another dimension it involves the reach across horizons to generate and sustain horizontal intersection. Concerning the temporal dimension of fusion Gadamer states:

In fact the horizon of the present is being continually formed, in that we have continually to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing is the encounter with the past and the understanding of the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves.⁹

This analysis of horizons in terms of temporal spread and fusion is remarkably similar to that of Royce. The concept of the community of interpretation involves the presence of both the felt past of common (and heroic) deeds and hoped-for consummation in an ideal future. No so-called present horizon can function without the co-presence of past and future. Tradition forms the evolving matrix, which itself functions as a lure, for each 'present' assimilation and manipulation of signs and complexes. Fusion, for both Royce and Gadamer, is a phenomenological given of individual life. For Royce, of course, fusion is also constitutive of communal transactions.

In the second dimension, fusion entails the co-penetration of alien orders. Royce's 1908 article on provincialism entails that a given perspective will have built-in semiotic parameters (Royce does not, at this time, frame the problem in semiotic terms) which govern or force the manner of fusion. That is, the beliefs (Gadamer's "prejudices," *Vorurteilen*) of one province can be brought into intersection (fusion) with those of another. In the process neither province is forced to lose all of its unique elements. The result is greater semiotic spread for *both* provinces. Yet no over-arching horizon of horizons will come to dominate all provincial horizons. The integrity of each will be preserved even while the scope increases.

For Buchler, perspectives are translatable into each other even though this process can never produce strict one-to-one correspondence. Perspectives remain at least partially unique:

All perspectives may be called irreducible, however, in the sense that they are distinctive; and by definition, that which is distinctive or unique cannot be translated into another which is exactly equivalent, though of course it can be "translated" in the important sense of being rendered available.¹⁰

To render "available" is to make a perspective function as part of a newer and larger perspective. That is, the elements in the perspective can occupy important places in an encompassing perspective. Thus, for example, the perspective known as primitive medicine can take on a new role (be rendered available) in the larger perspective of modern psychiatry. By becoming available in this way the primitive forms become "translated" and reworked so as to serve the new perspective. In the process nothing remains *quite* the same. Yet certain continuities are evident. The process of translation is akin to the process of fusion in the second dimension. The alien horizon or perspective becomes available in a transformed fashion.

The parallels to Royce should be evident. The community of interpretation functions as the horizon or perspective through which all signs pass on their way to interpretive transparency. The community of interpretation has both a felt past and a hoped-for future of semiotic convergence. Further, it has its own perspective, its own way of understanding the signs at its disposal. The perspective governs the process of serial ramification. No sign can remain free from the pressure of the dominant horizon or perspective which is the community of interpretation. The process of "translation" is the process of serial ramification whereby a given sign "I" becomes sign "I¹". On the higher level, when one *entire* perspective confronts the community of interpretation we have to deal with whole sign series as they function in an alien environment.

Royce and Gadamer part company when they respectively treat of the 'objects' of hermeneutic determination. Gadamer, under the impress of

Heidegger, sees language as the essential expression of meaning in our finite situation.¹¹ Language is the proper object of our hermeneutic acts because it is in language that our being-in-the-world is most fully expressed. This form of "language-mysticism" harks back to the hermeneutic program of the liberal theologian Schleiermacher for whom the written document stands as the external expression of the internal mental evolution of the author. Given Gadamer's harsh criticism of Schleiermacher this ironic parallel should not pass without our notice. The turn toward language functions in both Schleiermacher and Gadamer to limit the generic power of the general framework. Gadamer expresses the centrality of language as follows:

The occasionality of human speech is not a casual imperfection of its expressive power; it is, rather, the logical expression of the virtuality of speech, that brings a totality of meaning into play, without being able to express it totally. All human speaking is finite in such a way that there is within it an infinity of meaning to be elaborated and interpreted. That is why the hermeneutical phenomenon also can be illuminated only in the light of this fundamental finitude of being, which is wholly linguistic in character.¹²

Our finitude can only come-to-expression in speech acts. Gadamer places the stress not so much on the product as on the speaking. Yet the emphasis is still on the utter centrality of language as the carrier of meaning. While language can 'express' the inexpressible, it remains the locus of attained meanings. Language is best understood, by Gadamer, as finite human speech.

Royce would reply that meaning can be conveyed by any sign. A sign need not be expressed or expressible in language. To go back to Peirce, an iconic sign need only show its common structural or pictorial form with its referent in order to convey meaning. Of course, in Royce's 1913 appropriation of Peirce's semiotics the division of signs into icons, indexes, and symbols is not carried over into the hermeneutics. Yet such a general extension of sign structures outside of natural human speech was envisioned by Royce. Any artifact or gesture can convey

semiotic meaning. The orders of Nature are more than ripe with analogical and indexical meanings. Hence, meaning need not be limited to the order of human utterance. Any complex can function as a sign in so far as it impacts on human awareness in meaningful ways.

In what many might see as an advance beyond Peirce, Royce recasts semiotics in such a way as to downplay the reference relation so as to broaden our understanding of the spectrum of responses in the sign relation. Justus Buchler sketches this divergence as follows:

Royce and Mead, though not so aware as Peirce of the possible complexities of the sign-relation, sensed the greater importance of interpretation or response in the sign-relation and the lesser importance of the sign as a designation, a vehicle of reference.¹³

The emphasis on the *response* to the sign or sign series gives Royce's semiotics a more dramatic flavor than that found in Peirce. By moving away from a precise delineation of the reference function Royce was able to give greater articulation to the semiotic process of triadic progression in the unfolding of serial meaning. The response patterns (habits of mental life) found in the community of interpretation govern the scope of both meaning and possible reference for each sign. We can say that reference is a 'secondary' act which functions in a general teleology of convergent validation. By shifting the burden of semiotic theory in this direction Royce made a bold advance beyond Peirce while at the same time placing his general conclusions on a more secure foundation than that which emerged out of the work of Gadamer. This advance is noted by Karl-Otto Apel in his work on Peirce:

Royce's idea of the "community of interpreters," expounded in the second volume of his last work, *The Problem of Christianity* (1913), provides perhaps the most important single contribution to the extension and development in hermeneutic and social philosophical terms of Peirce's semiotic.¹⁴

By recasting semiotics and in turn grafting it to the horizon of the com-

munity, Royce gave greater scope to the 'object' of hermeneutics. His rethinking of the nature of the self, as a sign series in need of communal contrast, is of a piece with his extension of semiotics beyond the reference function. Both revisions enhanced the generic power of his hermeneutic theory.

Since anything can function as a sign, there is no theoretical need to isolate one type or genus of signs as being fundamental in all respects. The "language-mysticism" of Gadamer and Heidegger imposes a priority scheme which reduces the status of non-linguistic sign meanings. For Heidegger, language exists as that primal Saying which calls forth all beings into presence. Outside of this evocation beings are condemned to remain hidden. Further, Saying calls-forth that presence itself which is conveyed in the word "Being" (*das Sein*). Like Gadamer, Heidegger assumes that only language in its speaking (Saying) can present and preserve meaning. In his 1959 essay "The Way to Language" he states:

Language first of all and inherently obeys the essential nature of speaking; it says. Language speaks by saying, that is, by showing. What it says wells up from the formerly spoken and so far still unspoken Saying which pervades the design of language. Language speaks in that it, as showing, reaches into all regions of presences, summons from them whatever is present to appear and to fade. We, accordingly, listen to language in this way, that we let it say its Saying to us.¹⁵

Our relation to language is, in one sense at least, passive. We listen to the ways in which language itself speaks. True language, namely, Saying, forms the "House of Being" through which and in which beings can appear in the fitful light of Being. Hermeneutics becomes the art of letting Saying gather us into the Appropriation which holds Being and mortals together in co-transparency. Saying grants us our very 'place' in the world and lets meaning become present to us.

At no point can the individual listener appeal to a larger community in order to test and validate that which Saying evokes and provokes. Heidegger, as has often been said, cuts off all possible relation to a living community which would serve to 'filter' the oracular sayings of

language. The very idea of validation is held to be alien to 'true' Thinking which is primarily a listening to the mittances of primal Being.

Heidegger is, of course, correct when he criticizes the conception of language which stresses the exclusively denotative function of terms. Only a conception rooted in the paradigm of the noun, which in turn rejects verbal and gerundial functions, can see the sentence (proposition) as constituted by simple one-to-one reference to independent state-of-affairs. Indeed, Wittgenstein moved to the same insight in rejecting the picture model of the proposition. Heidegger has, as is well known, a deeper reason for rejecting a purely denotative conception of language, namely, the desire to preserve our authentic relation to beings. In his 1935 lectures on metaphysics Heidegger states:

Words and language are not wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are. For this reason the misuse of language in idle talk (*Gerede*), in slogans and phrases, destroys our authentic relation to things.¹⁶

Idle talk casts a veil of semblance over the pristine emergence of the things in our environment. Our own inauthentic existence drags language downward into the very flattened realm of information and unreflected thinking. The hermeneutic problem is tied irrevocably to the problem of personal authenticity. In authentic existence, however fitfully present in time, language is rescued from the decay which fuels mere curiosity and boredom. In this movement toward authenticity (which occurs in both the 'early' and 'later' Heidegger) beings are allowed that pristine showing which can only come from a renewed relation to language. Language, as the "House of Being," becomes the gathering-clearing through which, for authentic Dasein, beings become what they are.

Language, as the 'site' of meaning, functions as a gathering in which beings and their meanings are brought into fundamental relation and belonging. In the same 1935 lectures Heidegger states:

Because the essence of language is found in the act of gathering within the togetherness of being, language as everyday speech comes to its truth only when speaking and hearing are oriented toward logos as collectedness in the sense of being.¹⁷

Truth, as the coming-into-presence of beings, emerges from out of the gathering presented and preserved in language. Untruth prevails when language is no longer attuned to the gathering of logos but stands outside of such a prethematic horizon. When proper speaking is attuned to proper hearing, the truth of the gathering can become manifest. Language can no longer be seen as the lineal carrier of discrete meanings and references. Rather, language is that shrine within which we recapture our belonging to the gathering of meaning which transcends our human projects.

This radical rethinking of the nature of language and meaning forces Heidegger to deconstruct what he understands as the tradition of metaphysics in Western philosophy. Metaphysics emerged as a separate discipline when Plato turned away from the primal notion of truth as presence to his doctrine of the forms in which being becomes the merely correct. Language, whether Greek, Latin or Modern, has been captured in the vortex of metaphysical and representational thinking which concerns itself with beings in terms of 'mere' generic traits or of a highest being. The light of Being has been in eclipse since the beginning of philosophy proper and is now at the stage of deepest darkness. The crisis of nihilism (hardly an experience for Peirce or Royce) shows us just how far we have fallen from the pre-Socratic evocation of presence. In the poetic thinking envisioned by Heidegger we can bring ourselves into the position to recall that which has fled from the West. Or rather, we can let ourselves be gathered into the withdrawal of Being so as to stand in this withdrawal in a fateful manner.

The nihilism of our epoch entails a crisis in the nature of our hermeneutic acts. If the source of meaning is itself in eclipse then it follows that our efforts to recapture meaning are vain unless we can earn that perspective which allows the ground of meaning to return. In the radical turn toward meditative (as opposed to calculative) thinking,

Heidegger insists that meaning, as preserved in the Saying of language, can return. The burden for this turning toward Being is placed on the shoulders of the solitary Thinker or poet who, because of a deeper relation to language, shows us the fateful path toward Being's unearned presence.

Royce would reply that all interpretation is interpretation for another (interpretee). It may appear to us that no such other is present (either potentially or actually) but we cannot fully grasp a sign or meaning until we enter into the triadic logic of sign-translation which is itself communal. Even if we were to admit that language is primarily the Saying of Being, we would still have to present that Saying in the communal structures of both awareness and utterance. The very fact that Heidegger has written extensively on the Saying of *language* shows that he is aware of the larger hermeneutic problem of effective communication. Yet Heidegger remains tied to what Ricoeur calls a hermeneutics of the "I am." Ricoeur states, "The kind of ontology developed by Heidegger gives ground to what I shall call a *hermeneutics of the 'I am'*, which is a repetition of the *cogito* conceived of as a simply epistemological principle."¹⁸ Ironically, Heidegger returns to a form of substance-mysticism in which the finite individual is forced to be the self-enfolded source and receptor of meaning in time. Given Heidegger's basic ontological delineations he is unable to escape the sphere of privacy which has so vitiated the Cartesian trajectory in philosophy. Royce, in an advance beyond the type of thinking envisioned by the later Heidegger, not only admits the communal dimension but carefully exhibits its constitution and function. His semiotic redefinition of the self makes the communal dimension of meaning transparent in a fashion unavailable to Heidegger.

Returning to Buchler, we see that community is essential to any conveyance of knowledge. True communication is symmetrical in that it is shareable. It is a-symmetrical, as understood by Royce, in that a sign translated is a sign changed. It is impossible to return to a sign before its transformation by other signs and interpretees. The symmetrical aspect of communication (its shareability) is described by Buchler:

Symmetrical communication is both a requirement of animal survival and an avenue of abstract knowledge. It is both the condition of awareness and the fruit of awareness. It presupposes community, and community presupposes sharing. Now in order that community should obtain, it is necessary that some natural complex be a dominant procept for more than one individual in the same respect.¹⁹

Hence we cannot hope to have communication without community. As shown above, the community occupies a perspective and this perspective (or perspectives) governs how signs or complexes will be interpreted. Further, as not fully grasped by Heidegger, this communication must be symmetrical. That is, the interpretive process must flow from interpreter to interpretee. In doing so it renders signs available for reinterpretation by the original interpreter who receives an already transformed meaning from the interpretee.

Buchler's formulation comes closer to the Roycean model than does that of either Gadamer or Heidegger. Meanings conveyed must be articulated anew if they are to enter into the full scope of communal ramification. Royce's community of interpretation functions as the horizon or perspective which governs this process. It is a symmetrical process in that both interpreter and interpretee share in the constitution of meaning. It is an a-symmetrical process in that one cannot go back from "I¹" to "I" for both temporal and interpretive reasons. Temporally, the past is altered in its translation into the present. Interpretively, a sign interpreted is a sign changed. We cannot erase either form of transformation. Hence the hermeneutic process is both symmetrical and a-symmetrical but in different respects.

In both Peirce and Royce there is a theme which is of central importance for the hermeneutics of Gadamer (and in a more subtle form, for Heidegger). Peirce, in his discussion of methodology, introduced and exploited the idea of "interpretive musement" as a way of playfully manipulating meaning. As noted above, this free-style method is richer and more open than abduction and induction. Royce was also sensitive to this dimension of sign articulation and rejected mechanical methods which would deaden the novel elements in sign series. For Gadamer,

the rough equivalent to "interpretive musement" is play (*Spiel*). As is well known, Gadamer introduces his understanding of play in the context of his reflections on the work of art. Yet the concept of play serves a much larger ontological role as a primary way of access to meaning.

In play the distinction between player and game played is dimmed as is the means/ends distinction. To play is to be set free from mere method and the mechanical pursuit of final goals:

If we examine how the word 'play' is used and concentrate on its so-called transferred meanings we find talk of the play of light, the play of the waves, the play of a component in a bearing-case, the inter-play of limbs, the play of forces, the play of gnats, even a play on words. In each case what is intended is the to-and-fro movement which is not tied to any goal which would bring it to an end. This accords with the original meaning of the word *spiel* as 'dance', which is still found in many word forms. The movement which is play has no goal which brings it to an end; rather it renews itself in constant repetition. The movement backwards and forwards is obviously so central for the definition of a game that it is not important who or what performs this movement. The movement of play as such, has, as it were, no substrate.²⁰

Play, as thus understood by Gadamer, is obviously more than the attitude of detached manipulation of possibilities. It functions to reveal the true nature of things by freeing us from those mechanical methods which promise premature closure. The "to-and-fro" movement of play enables us to enter fully into the radiant aspects of beings as these beings strive to become unhidden. To play, in this ontological sense, is to hover (cf. Karl Jaspers on his understanding of *schwebend*) over diverse possibilities and perspectives. It is important to note that play is not substantive in the sense that some 'foundation' underlies it. It exists simply as the movement of free interpretation.

In a passage remarkably akin to Royce, Gadamer states that play has a representative function beyond itself. The thing or rite being played points toward an audience:

All representation is potentially representative for someone. That this possibility is intended is the characteristic feature of the playful nature of art. The closed world of play lets down as it were, one of its walls. A religious rite and a play in a theatre obviously do not represent in the same sense as the playing child. Their being is not exhausted by the fact that they represent; at the same time they point beyond themselves to the audience which is sharing in them.²¹

Representation can function in two modes; an object or event points to that of which it speaks (Peirce) and to an audience. The audience functions as the interpretee. Gadamer has rightly shown that play is not a solipsistic movement around purely private meanings. Rather, it enters into the communal structures and renders meaning available for further playful articulation. The audience becomes part of the play as it makes its to-and-fro movement between and among diverse meanings. The play and those played belong together in the playing. Hermeneutics is concerned with showing just what this to-and-fro movement has achieved.

Play, interpretive musement, and serial ramification all function to free interpretation from time-worn and mechanical paths. They cannot be reduced to methods if methods are understood as applying prefabricated means to envisioned ends. Peirce, Royce, and Gadamer all sought to free the interpretive process from the closure which kills meaning. In this sense they are in accord. Yet Gadamer errs in the direction of subjectivism. Even though he allows the possibility of an audience, the interpretive process remains largely in the hands of the individual. This tendency toward subjectivism is reinforced by the above mentioned "fusion of horizons." In the process of fusion, at least as rendered by Gadamer, the alien horizon (perspective) becomes so distorted as to become something else. The question is not whether or not changes occur, this much is granted by Royce, but rather, how are we to distinguish between severe distortion and interpretive enrichment? Using Gadamer's hermeneutic principles it is unclear how we could make such a distinction in practice.

Royce's community of interpretation functions to govern present and

future interpretations so as to insure that each sign manipulation is reasonably faithful to the previous signs and sign series. Each new interpretation must 'listen' to the sign series which are handed to the interpreter by the community of interpretation. Royce's semiotic triad insures that the manipulation of signs takes place in a controlled manner. It serves to reduce the danger of arbitrary interpretations. The community of interpretation is itself the horizon or perspective which governs sign articulation. It contains the necessary internal structure for providing objective understanding of signs.

Unlike the isolated individual the community of interpretation is capable of sign articulation of a high degree of complexity. The community is spread across both time and individual interpreters. Past sign manipulations can be retained in communal memory and present hermeneutic acts can be compared among individuals. No sign is condemned to purely private articulation. The community of interpretation is capable of detailed comparisons between interpretations. This comparative process insures that a high degree of objectivity remains. Play, in the general sense, is itself governed by the community as it seeks to validate each interpretive addition to its hermeneutic stock.

Royce corrects a strong subjectivistic tendency in 20th century hermeneutic theory. Yet his formulation requires further articulation and reconstruction if it is to bear the burden of regrounding hermeneutic theory. In what follows, suggestions are made for such reformulation.

In order to appropriate Royce's insights it is necessary to secure a more generic clearing for hermeneutic theory. This clearing can be best won by radicalizing the concept of horizon in such a way as to make community central to the hermeneutic transaction. This calls for what I shall term a "horizontal hermeneutics."

The function of horizontal hermeneutics is to let horizons and subaltern horizons appear in a manner which is appropriate to their complex makeup. It lets "what is" show itself in a non-legislative fashion. In that sense it is *the* clearing for our interpretive life. Horizontal hermeneutics functions as a prolegomenon for general ontology. The function of a general ontology is to delineate those traits which are of extreme generality. This does not entail generating a deductive schema or positing first principles. Rather, to delineate traits is to let the com-

plexes of Nature show themselves in terms which are appropriate to their own constitution.

Yet before we can examine generic traits, we must provide the clearing through which complexes (whether signs or not) will show themselves. This can only be done by a hermeneutics which is horizontal in scope. A few further words about my concept of horizon are in order.

The horizon or horizontal order stands as the primal event of interpretation in our lives. That is, the horizon is our initial and basic 'slice' of the world's complexes. This 'slice' is in some sense arbitrary yet it functions as the experiential and conceptual framework for *all* of our dealings with the orders of Nature. These dealings need not be conscious nor need they be rendered in propositions. Each comportment, no matter how 'unconscious,' reveals something about the horizontal order.

Yet the horizon (horizontal order) is not without subaltern or partial horizons. Any large order horizon or perspective will be constituted by numerous partial interpretive frameworks. These subaltern horizons are not, however, simple reductions of the horizon itself. Rather, they represent enrichments of the horizon. Together the orders of subaltern horizons insure horizontal plenitude. This multiplication of subaltern horizons is not without its dangers. The part-horizons can often come into conflict and negate each other's respective claims. This can happen, for example, when an individual has numerous conflicting self-interpretations. Finding a stable contour among these subaltern horizons can be a difficult feat.

To understand the horizon it is necessary to understand the totality of subaltern horizons. Each person occupies many perspectives and each given perspective must show its relation to the horizontal order which it serves. Whenever a subaltern horizon or perspective fails to show its relation to the horizontal order it risks bifurcation and decay. In psychological orders such a bifurcation is a form of schizophrenia. Our lives are a constant struggle against horizontal breakdown.

As noted above, the horizon involves temporal and spatial traits. Personal and communal horizons are spread across time in the forms of memory and expectation. They are also spread across part-selves and other selves. This dual spread gives the horizon a scope far beyond that

of a given place or moment. This entails that the examination of a given horizon is an event of great complexity. No horizon can be grasped by some sort of immediate phenomenological "seeing" (*Wesensschau*). Rather, horizontal plenitude and the presence of subaltern horizons insures that the hermeneutic task requires both time and communal validation. This vindicates Royce's commitment to the community of interpretation. Only such a community has the necessary internal structure for the articulation of horizons and their subaltern orders.

Thus a horizon represents a primal interpretation (articulation) of this "our problematic situation" (Royce). This primal articulation involves numerous subaltern perspectives and has ramifications far beyond the given situation of either the individual or the community. Whenever two or more persons jointly manipulate the same complexes they form a community. This community will have its own horizontal order. Needless to say, the horizon of the community will be of *very* great complexity. On an even higher level of generality we have the complex intersection of different communities. The resultant co-penetration of horizontal orders produces not a final 'horizon of horizons' but a stretching of the communal orders. In this stretching the communities involved can, if the conditions are right, enrich their stock of subaltern horizons. Of course, the threat of horizontal conflict and its resultant closure of perspectives remains always present. It is the social task of horizontal hermeneutics to fight against such premature closure.

Horizontal hermeneutics seeks to understand the totality of interpretations which comprise the horizontal order and its subaltern horizons. It cannot do so in any final sense yet this remains as its task and direction. To do so, hermeneutics must carefully articulate the complexes and signs which go into the complex makeup of the subaltern horizons. From an analysis of subaltern perspectives hermeneutics can begin to articulate the horizon itself. From the outer side of the hermeneutic circle, the initial sense of the horizontal order can help in the complex delineation of the traits of the subalterns. In this dialectical process the horizon and its subalterns are arranged in their proper 'places.' This task concludes with the evocation of the topology of all complexes and meanings.

The community of interpretation, or better, community of articula-

tion, provides the horizon for horizontal hermeneutics. Outside of this community, interpretations remain opaque and misdirected. Within the community of articulation these interpretations can emerge fully clothed with the garments of the social order.

The ethical direction of horizontal hermeneutics is toward that openness which enables individual and communal existence to flourish forever. As Royce saw so well, hermeneutics serves a social role by enabling alien interpretations to enter into the ongoing life of the community. By horizontal "fusion" or translation the alien perspectives are freed from the torment of self-closure. By being so freed they can fully enter into the never-ending process of social ramification. Closure is slowly negated under the impress of the opening power of hermeneutics. Horizons are freed to show their horizontal contour and the richness of their subaltern perspectives. In this process the world itself is allowed its full emergence as the Providingness [Buchler] of all complexes.

Our task in the years ahead is that of fulfilling the pioneering work of Josiah Royce. We can best do this by keeping before us his great insight into the community as the horizon for all our interpretive acts. In this community, as guided by the spirit of interpretation, we can begin to find our place in a world which often exceeds our grasp and which frequently withdraws in opaque reticence.

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NOTES

1. For insight into the distinction between an early and a late Royce cf., Peter Fuss, "Royce on the Concept of Self: An Historical and Critical Perspective," anthologized in *American Philosophy from Edwards to Quine*, edited by R. W. Shahan and K. R. Merrill, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), and Frank Oppenheim, S.J., "Josiah Royce's Intellectual Development: An Hypothesis," *Idealistic Studies*, 5 (1976), pp. 85-102.

2. Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, edited by John E. Smith, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 300.

3. *Ibid*, p. 310.

4. *Ibid*, p. 399.

5. *Ibid*, p. 337.
6. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 217.
7. Justus Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, second, revised edition, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979), pp. 124-25.
8. For a detailed conceptual analysis of my concept of horizon and sign-function see my "Horizontal Hermeneutics and the Actual Infinite," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 8 (Spring 1982), pp. 36-97.
9. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 273.
10. Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, p. 6.
11. In Heidegger's reflections on language three stages can be distinguished: the first, in *Sein und Zeit*, where he distinguishes between authentic discourse (*Rede*) and idle talk or inauthentic discourse (*Gerede*), the second, in the 1930's, where he speaks of language as *Sprache*, and finally, in the 1950's where he speaks of language as Saying or *Sage* (*Sage*). The differentia between discourse (authentic or otherwise), speaking, and Saying, must be kept in view if an adequate grasp of Heidegger's hermeneutic of language is to be obtained.
12. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 416.
13. Justus Buchler, *Nature and Judgment*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), pp. 155-56.
14. Karl-Otto Apel, *Charles S. Peirce: From Pragmatism to Pragmaticism*, translated by John Michael Krois, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), p. 135.
15. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter Hertz and Joan Stambaugh, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 124.
16. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 13-14.
17. *Ibid*, p. 173.
18. Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, edited by Don Ihde, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 223.
19. Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, p. 33.
20. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 93.
21. *Ibid*, p. 97.