Experience, Ethics, And Politics. The Intersubjective Horizons Of William Ernest Hocking

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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William Ernest Hocking's notion of *nuclear experience* is a response to the limitations of the subjectivism of the Cartesian and Kantian type. In this dissertation I aim to show that the triadic structure inscribed in this notion is meant to emphasize the role that the over-personal *It* plays in the transition from self to other (physical objects in the knowledge of other subjects, provisional postulates in ethics, the *co-agent state* in political relations). The first part focuses on the origin, development, and structure of Hocking's theory of *nuclear experience*. It includes a brief historical contextualization of Hocking's thought within the history of American philosophy, American pragmatism, and Husserlian phenomenology. The second part deals with Hocking's ethics of sin, an ethics that interprets the human instinctual make-up as will-to-power. Attention is paid to the role that postulates play in the transition from the individual to the collective sphere. The third and last section unpacks Hocking's political thought in relation to the history of both classical and new liberalism. The last chapter is an assessment of Hocking's theory of the *co-agent state* as *vital circuit* innervating all human beings. Seen in its entirety, the dissertation intends to extend the notion of *nuclear experience* beyond the domain of theoretical and phenomenological analysis of intersubjectivity (ethics and politics) and, therefore, to clarify what Hocking's contribution to American and Continental thought is.

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I: INTRODUCTION

The present work is an attempt to provide a systematic account of William Ernest Hocking's philosophy, one that would integrate rather than isolate (as most of the secondary literature has tended to do over the years) the diverse theoretical paths crossed by him throughout his entire career. Those who are already familiar with Hocking's work may regard such a goal as too ambitious given the broadness of his philosophical production, but resisting any effort to bring into unity domains of thought such as epistemology, metaphysics, psychology, ethics, law, sociology, and politics - all of which Hocking treats with equal rigor and attention - would make his philosophy fade once more into obscurity. I say once more because even after an important publication like *A William Ernest Hocking Reader: A Commentary* (2004), Hocking's thought remains largely ignored and, if noted at all, perceived as too derivative to attract attention. As an antidote to such extremes, I endeavor to look at his work not only systematically, as I mentioned earlier, but also in terms of *continuity* among the diverse components that make up the whole of his philosophical system.

The word *continuous* (συνεχής), hence the term *continuity,* is a recurring throughout the history of Western philosophy (Aristotle, Peirce, Mach, James)[1] and plays a pivotal role in the

[1] "I call two things *continuous* when their respective boundaries, by which they are kept together in contact, become one and the same." (*Met. XI*, 1069 a5). The notion of continuity in Peirce appears to be strictly related to his *synechism,* which, by his own admission, is "not an ultimate and absolute metaphysical doctrine" but rather a "regulative principle of logic," and to his doctrine of categories: "continuity represents Thirdness almost to perfection." In any case, Peirce is to me much clearer as to what continuity entails in mathematical terms rather than in philosophical terms: "We all have some idea of continuity. Continuity is fluidity, the merging of part into part. But to achieve a really distinct and adequate conception of it is a difficult task, which with all the aids possible must for the most acute and most logically trained intellect require days of severe thought. If I were to attempt to give you any logical conception of it, I should only make you dizzy to no purpose. I may say this, however. I draw a line. Now the points on that line form a continuous series. If I take any two points on that line, however close together, other points there are lying between them. If that were not so, the series of points would not be continuous." (CP 1.164.) Unlike Peirce's, Mach provides a psychological definition of continuity: "When once the inquiring intellect has formed, through adaptation, the habit of connecting two things, A and B, in thought, it tries to retain this habit as far as possible, even where the

evolution of mathematics (Dedekind, Cantor).[2] Despite this already rich background, a preliminary clarification is still necessary. Many of the ways in which we assume *continuity* to operate in both the physical and non-physical realm tend to miss what is most important about it. Continuity cannot simply entail the repetition of a pattern, but rather the increment or growth of a pattern. This fundamental aspect is well explained by Dewey in his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*: "Its meaning excludes complete rupture and mere repetition of identities on the other; it precludes the reduction of the "higher" to the "lower" just as it precludes complete breaks and gaps. The growth and the development of any living organisms from seed to maturity illustrates the meaning of continuity"[3] Unless we can detect the presence of a qualitative growth in the shift from one context to another, continuity is destined to remain theoretically unclear. This premise also implies that within the sphere of theoretical investigation both the concept and the theoretical context in which the former operate are kept on an equal footing. The concept that I shall more in detail investigate is *nuclear experience*, in my opinion Hocking's most philosophically productive conception. *Nuclear experience* invites us to surmount the limits of our solitary existence. It tells us that experience should not be simply of the I, but rather of the I-It-Thou taken together. The *continuity* that I intend to highlight is the one that emerges from how this triadic structure operates within Hocking's theory of experience, ontology, ethics, and, finally, politics.

circumstances are slightly altered. Wherever A appears, B is added in thought. The principle thus expressed, which has its root in an effort for economy, and is particularly noticeable in the work of the great investigators, may be termed the principle of *continuity." (The Analysis of Sensations and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical*). James has a similar take on continuity within consciousness: "Passing of one experience into another within the same self." (*World of Pure Experience*)

[2] R. Dedekind, *Continuity and Irrational Numbers* (1901); G. Cantor, *Mathematische Annalen* (1878-1883).

[3] J. Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1938) 23.

Albeit Hocking's proximity to the major idealistic figures of his time (Royce, Howison)[4] may justify the categorization of his philosophy as idealistic,[5] we find many examples in scholarship that effectively demonstrate the opposite, that is, neither epistemological nor ontological idealism can be taken as essential features of his thought.[6] An equally problematic interpretive impasse is found in the tendency to separate the secular aspects of Hocking's thought from the religious ones.[7] His religious philosophy has been generally restricted to a matter of inquiry within the sphere of either mystical experience or inter-religious dialogue. The studies

[4] At Harvard, Hocking had had the chance to study with Royce. During his two years as a professor at the University of California (1906-1908) he had worked with George Howison.

[5] For examples of idealistic readings of Hocking's thought in the 1950's and 1960's Cfr.: J. L. Blau, *Men and Movements in American Philosophy*, (Prentice Hall: New York, 1952); Y. H. Krikorian. "Hocking and the Dilemmas of Modernity." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 55, 7 (March 27, 1958), 265 – 275; A. R. Luther, *Existence as Dialectical Tension; A study of the First Philosophy of W. E. Hocking* (Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague, 1968); D. S. Robinson, *Royce and Hocking: American Idealists an Introduction to Their Philosophy, with Selected Letters*, (Christopher Pub. House, 1968). For the same tendency in recent scholarship see: R. E. Auxier. "Mysticism and the Immediacy of God: Howison's and Hocking's Critique of Royce." *The Personalist Forum* 15, no. 1 (1999): 59–83; J. Stuhr, *Pragmatism, Postmodernism, and the Future of Philosophy* (Routledge, 2003); D. N. McDonald. Review of *A William Ernest Hocking Reader with Commentary*, by J. Lachs & D. M. Hester]. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, *41*(1), 2005, 232–238; G. Dorrien, J. Louisville, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, and Postmodernity, 1950–2005* (John Knox Press: Westminster, 2006.

[6] The early reviews of the *Meaning of God in Human Experience* already discuss Hocking's critique of idealism: W. A. Brown, Review of *The Meaning of God in Human Experience: A Philosophic Study of Religion*, by W. E. Hocking. *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, *10* (9), 1913, 242–251; J. W. Hudson, Review of *The Meaning of God in Human Experience: A Philosophic Study of Religion*, by W. E. Hocking]. *The Philosophical Review*, *22*(5), 1913, 546–550. See also: Macintosh, D. C. "Hocking's philosophy of religion: An empirical development of absolutism." *Philosophical Review* 23 (1), 1914, 27-47; T. Manferdini, *Studi sul Pensiero Americano*, (Edizioni Alfa: Bologna, 1960), A. J. Reck, "The empirical idealism of William Ernest Hocking: Career as philosopher; Theory of God; Theory of man; Theory of politics." *Recent American Philosophy: Study of Ten Representative Thinkers*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964); C. Hartshorne. "Idealism and Our Experience of Nature" Rouner, L.S. (eds) *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization* (Springer, Dordrecht, 1966); B. A. Bacon, *Hocking's Theory of Nuclear Experience*. (Dissertation: Saint Louis University, 1969); L. S. Rouner. *Within Human Experience: The Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); C. R. Bowman. "William Ernest Hocking on Our Knowledge of God and Other Minds." *Religious Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1974, 45–66.

[7] For insights on Hocking's ethics and politics Cfr. D. S. Robinson. *Political ethics: an application of ethical principles to political relations*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1935), "Hocking's political philosophy." *Crucial Issues in Philosophy: Studies of Current Problems and Leading Philosophers from the Standpoint of Philosophical Idealism*, (Boston: Cristopher Publishing House, 1955); A. J. Reck, *Recent American Philosophy: Studies of Ten Representative Thinkers*, (Pantheon Books, 1964); L. S. Rouner. *Within Human Experience: The Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); R. B. Thigpen, *Liberty and Community: The Political Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking*. Springer, Netherlands, 1973); T. Buford, "Institutions and the Making of Persons: William Ernest Hocking's Social Personalism," in A William Ernest Hocking Reader with Commentary, ed. John Lachs and D. Micah Hester, (Vanderbilt University Press: Nashville, 2004).

dedicated to these aspects are numerous.[8] However, upon a more attentive reading of Hocking's work in its entirety, it emerges that the religious dimension is strictly related to the ethical one, and this to the sphere of socially organized political action. The binding factor that laces all these perspectives together is, once more, *nuclear experience*. Why? Because this important philosophical device meant to respond to the limitations of both Cartesian and Kantian subjectivism discloses a structure in which the intersubjective It (physical objects/nature in the knowledge of other selves, universal postulates in ethics, *co-agent State* in political relations) guides the transition from the I to the Thou and from the individual to the social sphere. A triadic structure replaces a dyadic one (think of Buber's *I-Thou*) and provides a solution to what really is a longstanding problem in philosophy: the relation of one thing to another.

In *Human Nature and Its Remaking* (1918), Hocking's ethical manifesto, religion finds its space through an ethics of sin that incentivizes self-scrutiny and interpretation but also reliance upon over-personal postulates (Universal It). Hocking speaks of the necessity for a *religious innervation of democracy* in a historical moment in which the society of his day (perhaps even the society of our time) encourages merit over constructive self-depreciation. If properly understood,

[8] J. W. Bainbridge, A Comparison of "The Idea of the Holy", by Rudolph Otto, With "The Meaning of God in Human Experience", by William Ernest Hocking, Considered in the Light of Present Day Problems, (Dissertation: University of Alberta, 1931); R. P. Rice. *Mysticism in the Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking*. (Dissertation. Boston University, 1954); L. S. Rouner, *Idealism, Christianity, and the World Faith: William Ernest Hocking's View of Christianity and Its Relation to Non-Christian Religions* (Dissertation: Columbia University, 1961);James Alfred Martin. *Empirical philosophies of religion; With Special Reference to Boodin, Brightman, Hocking, Macintosh and Wieman,* (Books for Libraries Press: New York, 1970); M. E. Giegengack. *Can God Be Experienced? A Study in the Philosophy of Religion of William Ernest Hocking*. (Dissertation, Georgetown University 1972), B. Mackinnon, "God in the philosophy of William Ernest Hocking: a centenary memoriam: 1873-1973", International Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. XIII, 1973, 507-522; R. Woods. *The Social Dimension of Mysticism: A Study of the Meaning and Structure of Religious Experience in the Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking*, (Dissertation, 1978). M. L. Furse. *Experience and Certainty: William Ernest Hocking and Philosophical Mysticism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); C. B. Stidsen; *William Ernest Hocking's Theory of the Reconception of Christianity* (Dissertation: McMaster University, 1992); R. Wood, "Mysticism and Social Action: The Mystic's Calling, Development and Social Activity", in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol. 3, 1996, 158-171.

self-depreciation can represent a step towards individual and collective moral advancement. The ethics of sin as a model for both personal ethical awareness and collective moral standards finds an equivalent in Hocking's political theory. For Hocking, the goal of political activity should be that of transforming classical liberalism's solipsistic myth of the *rights-without-duties* into the principle of *rights-with-corresponding-dutie*s. In so doing, Hocking does not reject historical liberalism as a whole. He retains the principle of Lockean classical liberalism stating that freedom in the pre-political sphere is not a "*state of licence*" in which everything is permitted and confronts it with the challenges of the American society of the time, disrupted, as it was, by the 1929 Wall Street Crash and ensuing depression. In line with other liberal socialists (L. T. Hobhouse, T. H. Green) Hocking supports state intervention in social and economic matters. Against the *laissez-fairism* endorsed by most Americans prior to the crisis and against the threat of the then-nascent totalitarianisms, he supports the idea that the only legitimate way in which the State can exercise its power is through *co-agency*, in other words, through a non-physical and inter-penetrative form of power whose final goal is to unite all citizens within the same *will-circuit*. The unity of all citizens and State (*will-circuit*) is not mere passive unity though. Each citizen should consider themselves a free and responsible being who can actively express dissent whenever they deem it appropriate.

Each chapter of this work is a major step into the clarification and expansion of the conception of *nuclear experience*. The first chapter attempts to situate Hocking's thought within the history of American philosophy and American pragmatism. The main point that I develop is that beginning with Jonathan Edwards the American philosophical tradition develops a notion of experience and, more in general, of knowledge, as *duality* (not dualism) between the theoretical and the practical sphere. In so doing, I fully espouse Hocking's view that the pragmatist maxim

tends to look at immediate practical results at the expense of ideas whereas both moments can both exist independently from each other and in a state of reciprocal support. The second chapter traces the roots of Hocking's *nuclear experience*. Here, I engage with Hocking's early metaphysics of experience at its non-*nuclear* level (mere subjective experience) as passive-active unity between something received and something done. According to Hocking, pure passivity does not exhaust the full spectrum of what experience really is. Both moments are essential to its nature. By expanding the notion of experience in such a manner as to include another self and a common object/nature (*nuclear experience*) Hocking comes close to the Jamesian conception of the *conterminousness of two minds into one object* and to a realistic ontology that defies the easy categorization of his thought as idealistic. Chapter three gets deeper into Hocking's intersubjectivity and engagement with the phenomenological tradition. Since for Hocking an inference of the other is not a true experience of the other, only pure experience can guarantee a true encounter with another fellow being. Attention is paid here to the role that bodily expressions play in the encounter with another human being.

The fourth chapter marks the transition from Hocking's theory of experience to his ethics. In this chapter, I present Hocking's ethical system as a critical response to Edwin Bissell Holt's synthesis between behaviorism and Freudianism as outlined in the *Freudian Wish* (1915). Hocking is convinced that as human beings we are creatures of instinct *(moral realism*) as much as we are creatures capable of moral advancement (*moral idealism*). Human nature's remaking process begins when we realize that we are not simply instinctual creatures, in other words, that we are not simply slaves to our biological instincts (passivity), but rather active interpreters and active re-makers of our instinctual make-up (activity). The agency of remaking as grounded in a passive-active unity reproduces the previously mentioned metaphysics of experience. Chapter five

goes deeper into Hocking's religiously informed ethics through a deeper assessment of his notion of *sin*. Against what constitutes the standard approach to his religious philosophy, I here attempt to provide a synthesis between Hocking's religious thought and his ethics. Conscious moral improvement strictly depends on how we interpret our impulses. If the interpretation is wrong or misses the very purpose of an instinct, we commit a *sin*. Chapter six is dedicated to Hocking's use of postulates. I here show how Hocking's postulate ethics is best understood as: 1) an attempt on Hocking's part to transfer the triadic structure of *nuclear experience* into the ethical domain 2) an attempt to bridge the gap between ethical autonomy and social ethics.

Chapter seven deals with Hocking's political thought. As I have earlier mentioned, Hocking's political stance is somewhat of a middle ground between the Lockean description of pre-political life and the liberal socialism expressed in figures such as T. H. Green and L. T. Hobhouse. Still, Hocking's critique of the *laissez-faire* economic system and his endorsement of state intervention in economic affairs results in a greater affinity with the latter tradition. Chapter eight concludes the journey throughout Hocking's political philosophy by analyzing the notion of the *co-agent* state. This notion constitutes at once an expansion of Hocking's theory of the *will-circuit* and a transfer into the world of concrete social and political relations of the basic structure of *nuclear experience*. Against the so-called realistic conceptions of the state that legitimize the use of physical force against the social body, Hocking opposes his notion of the state as *co-agent*, in other words, of the state as a co-agent being that collaborates with society in the pursuit of a pre-determined common goal. The *co-agent* state is the principle that permeates all wills at once and that guides the transition from individual to social interests. Once again, a more developed and enriched version of the very same triadic structure previously seen in *nuclear experience*.

If *nuclear experience* is Hocking's biggest contribution to the philosophy of experience and intersubjectivity, the conception of the *co-agent* state and of the *will-circuit* are his most significant addition to the sterility of today's social and political dynamics. In a situation in which the political debate is nothing but divisive, these long-forgotten notions can offer richer alternatives to the current populistic rhetoric. The notion of *co-agency* demands that we actively collaborate towards a common goal and express dissent. This is an important aspect. Dissent is now regarded as a hinder to the realization of a more cohesive social body when, in fact, it represents the *conditio sine qua non* of any democratic enterprise. Hocking makes us notice that the perfect coincidence of the will of the leader with the will of the whole society is the antechamber of totalitarianism. What we need are more adequate interpretive tools that would encourage the individual and collective critical spirit of the whole world community rather than the limitation or, worse, control of the spaces for discussion. There is nothing worse than what Hocking calls *evil peace*, in other words, a situation in which all forms of dissent are sacrificed in order to guarantee the overall social equilibrium. Social equilibrium without dissent is nothing but a false equilibrium, the opposite of a solid social tissue. The hope is that this as much as other features of Hocking's thought convinces the reader of the relevance of his work within the history of American and Continental philosophy but also, and perhaps more significantly, of the potential expressed by his ethical and political reflection.

II: HOCKING'S THOUGHT WITHIN THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION

A few years prior to the publication of Hocking's first major work, James Bissett Pratt had indicated two possible routes to pragmatism. The first, through "Kant's doctrine of the primacy of the practical reason," and the second, via the scientific meaning of hypotheses. "Hypotheses," said Pratt, "are handy ways of telling us what has happened or what we may expect." [9] The ethos of this quintessentially American philosophical approach was to break the barrier between philosophical and scientific thinking rather than passively drawing the last consequences of the Kantian separation between speculative and practical reason. So far so good, one would think. But at the twelfth meeting of the Western Philosophical Association that will be held three years later at the University of Chicago (April 5-6, 1912) German philosopher Günther Jacoby will completely overturn Pratt's argument by declaring the direct ascendency of American pragmatism from the German tradition:

> In opposition to Professor James 's formula: "Germany lags behind in pragmatism," we propose that "America lags behind Germany." American pragmatism is the reaction of a biological type of philosophy against the rationalistic idealism of the so-called "Hegelian" school of this country. Forty years ago a similar biological philosophy in Germany reacted against the true Hegelian school of Hegel himself. From this anti-Hegelian movement derives the well-known German pragmatism of Ernest Mach, Wilhelm Jerusalem, George Simmel,

[9] James Bissett Pratt, *What is Pragmatism?* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1909).

> Richard Avenarius, Wilhelm Ostwald, and Hans Vaihinger, whose recently published standard work on "Die Philosophie des Als Ob" was written in 1816-1818. If American pragmatism meets at present with disapproval in Germany this is due to the fact, that just at the time when anti-Hegelian pragmatism became popular in this country, Germany had become tired of it and had just entered a new counter-reaction, the so-called "revival of philosophy." The German revivalists reject pragmatism as a kind of utilitarianism. But this is a misunderstanding. It appears that pragmatism is the best, if not the only method, by which the tendencies of the new German movement can be worked out satisfactorily." [10]

Hocking's entrance into the world of professional philosophy begins in this transitional moment in which pragmatism is accused of being inconsistent, derivative, and in at least one case, wholly false,[11] a moment in which the first platform of the six realists has already announced the end of idealism and the arrival of new realistic philosophy.[12] If not a moment of crisis, certainly a moment in which none of the major philosophical tendencies can be said to prevail over another. Between the years 1905 and 1909, the rejection of solipsism had become a prominent theme among pragmatists and realists alike, especially after James's first formulations of his radical

[10] H. W. Wright, "The Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Western Philosophical Association." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 9, no. 13 (1912): 350–57. For more on this see: James Campbell, *A Thoughtful Profession: The Early Years of the American Philosophical Association* (Open Court: Chicago, La Salle, 2006).
[11] Cfr. John Thomas Driscoll. *Pragmatism and the problem of the idea* (New York: Longmans, Green and co. 1915). See also: Arthur O. Lovejoy, "The Thirteen Pragmatisms. I." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 5, no. 1 (1908): 5–12; Paul Carus, "PRAGMATISM." *The Monist* 18, no. 3 (1908): 321–62; A. Schinz. *Anti pragmatism: an examination into the respective rights of intellectual aristocracy and social democracy.* (Boston: Small, Maynard and company. 1909).
[12] Holt, Edwin B., Walter T. Marvin, W. P. Montague, Ralph Barton Perry, Walter B. Pitkin, and Edward Gleason Spaulding. "The Program and First Platform of Six Realists." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 7, no. 15 (1910): 393–401.

empiricism.[13] Such a multifarious context informs, on the one hand, Hocking's notion of *negative pragmatism* (that which does not work is not true), and, on the other hand, Hocking's necessity to bridge the chasm between ideas and social life outside of the narrow limits within which the pragmatist debate around the nature of meaning and truth had confined philosophical discussion. Hocking is convinced that: "The pragmatic prescription may be good in special cases, especially for beginners. But if one has acted, and the salt of action has lost its savor, it will not be salted by more activity! (…) It is not a choice between thought and action; but between action guided by a worse thought and action guided by a better thought," [14] The relationship between the theoretical and the practical sphere should not be assumed as entailing a dualism of thought and action, but rather a *duality* of thought and action, a word that Hocking will adopt later in his career. Unlike dualism, *duality* expresses "that certain relations between ultimate categories can be read in either direction with equal validity." [15] The principle according to which thought and action are of equal validity has distant origins, origins that bring us back to the very beginnings of American thought. Edwards's early notes on *The Mind*[16] are a primary example. According to the Puritan philosopher,

[13] Boyd Henry Bode. "`Pure Experience' and the External World." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 2, no. 5 (1905): 128–33; W. James. "Is Radical Empiricism Solipsistic?" *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 2, no. 9 (1905): 235–38; F. C. S. Schiller. "Is Absolute Idealism Solipsistic?" *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 3, no. 4 (1906): 85–89; John E. Russell. "Solipsism: The Logical Issue of Radical Empiricism." *The Philosophical Review* 15, no. 6 (1906): 606–13; Walter B. Pitkin. "Why Solipsism Is Rejected." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 3, no. 13 (1906): 344–50; James Bissett Pratt; "Truth and Ideas." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 5, no. 5 (1908): 122–31; J. Dewey. "The Logical Character of Ideas." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 5, no. 14 (1908): 375–81; F. C. S. Schiller, F. C. S. "Solipsism." *Mind* 18, no. 70 (1909): 169–83; Addison Webster Moore. "Pragmatism and Solipsism." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 6, no. 14 (1909): 378–83.

[14] W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience, Including Thoughts on Death and Life* (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1957), 106

[15] Hocking, *The Meaning of Immortality,* 111.

[16] The actual dates for this group of notes are hard to trace. For more on this see: Leon Howard, ed. *"The Mind" of Jonathan Edwards, A Reconstructed Text* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

only *constant experience* (in other words, not immediate sense-experience) and the testing of it can guarantee theoretical certainty:

> Our Senses, when sound, and in ordinary circumstances, are not properly fallible in any thing: that is, we mean our Experience by our Senses. If we mean anything else, neither fallibility nor certainty in any way belongs to the Senses. Nor are our Senses certain in anything at all, any other way, than by constant experience by our Senses: That is, when our Senses make such or such representations, we constantly experience that things are in themselves thus or thus. So, when a thing appears after such a manner, I judge it to be at least two rods off, at least two feet broad; but I only know, by constant experience, that a thing, that makes such a representation, is so far off, and so big. And our senses are said to deceive us in some things because our situation does not allow us to make trial, or our circumstances do not lead us to it, and so we are apt to judge by our experience in other and different cases. Thus, our senses make us think that the moon is among the clouds because we cannot try it so quick, easily, and frequently as we do the distance of things that are nearer. [17]

Knowledge is therefore not mere passivity but rather the result of reiterated experience in conjunction with the critical activity that the subject carries around the report of the senses. Experience is creativity rather than passivity. In religious matters, Edwards goes a step further. In *Treatise on Religious affections,* he stresses the principle of the indivisibility of Christian religious

[17] Townsend (ed.), *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards*, 52-3.

experience and holy practice. Both are indicative of true grace (*the twelfth sign of religious affection*). As he puts it: "To speak of Christian Experience and practice as if they were two things, properly and entirely distinct, is to make a distinction without consideration or reason. Indeed all Christian experience is not properly called practice; but all Christian practice is properly experience. And the distinction that is made between them, is not only unreasonable, but an unscriptural distinction."[18] According to J. E. Smith, the synthesis between experience and practice here operated by Edwards has its basis in a theological paradigm based on: 1) the rejection of the idea that inner experience and faith are signs of true grace [19] 2) the Puritan principle of *virtuous* sincerity according to which true belief must co-exist with holy practice.[20]

But Puritanic pessimism could sit well with the *egotistic optimism* that will later be professed by New England Transcendentalists.[21] The new generation of thinkers will prefer the ideal of the *spontaneous activity of the soul* (M.me de Staël) promoted by German philosophers over the epistemology of the Puritan theologian;[22] Coleridge and Carlyle over the Lockean empiricism of Unitarian theology. "What we strongly felt" says transcendentalist Frederic Henry Hedge "was a dissatisfaction, with the reigning sensuous philosophy dating from Locke, on which our Unitarian theology was based" [23] The focus suddenly shifts overseas, towards that German philosophical tradition that M.me de Staël had eulogized in *De l'Allemagne*. In what was, at the time, the most important vehicle for the proliferation throughout the Anglo-Saxon world of the

[18] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume II: Religious Affections*, ed. John Smith (Yale University Press, 2009) 450-451.
[19] Smith, ed. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume II: Religious Affections*, 42.
[20] In this specific case Smith is tracing a lineage between Edwards and Peirce. For more on this see: John E. Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) 17-18.
[21] [21] Isaac Woodbridge Riley*, American Thought. From Puritanism to Pragmatism and Beyond* (New York: Henry Holt, 1915), 149.
[22] Madame De Staël-Holstein, *Germany, Vol. II*, ed. O. W. Wight (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1859), 203
[23] From F. H. Hedge's letter to James Elliot Cabot (December 8th, 1883). See: Ronald A. Bosco, Joel Myerson, ed. *Emerson in his own time, A biographical Chronicle of his Life* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003) 100.
[23] De Staël-Holstein, *Germany, Vol. II*, 203.

most recent developments in literature,[24] Sir James Mackintosh delineates the route that New England Transcendentalists will take to finally break all ties with the received empiricist tradition: "Under various names and forms, it is the general tendency of German philosophy, to consider thought, not as a produce of objects, or as one of the classes of phenomena, but as the agent which exhibits the appearances of the outward world, and which regulates those operations which it seems only to represent." [25] A striking passage of Emerson's *Nature* (1836) creatively merges the Swedenborgian doctrine of correspondences with the Staëlian interpretation of Kantian and post-Kantian thought portrayed by Mackintosh. The results take us way beyond the Kantian principle of the necessary conformity of a sensible intuition with a category of the Understanding (*Verstand*): "Nature always wears the colors of the spirit. To a man laboring under calamity, the heat of his own fire hath sadness in it." [26] The perception of nature conforms to subjective moods rather than categories of the Understanding. This upgraded version of Kantianism will be the theoretical framework for the essay *Experience* (1844).

Emerson's *epistemology of moods* (Cavell) looks at the practical resonance of one's emotional disposition.[27] Moods influence our orientation in the world and decide of the degree of openness towards the Not-I. Emotional states concretize themselves into philosophical theories that shape the way in which we interact with the physical and social world: "Grief too will make us idealists (…) I grieve that grief can teach me nothing, nor carry me one step into real nature"[28]. Our temporary idealisms are not simply theories about the ontological status of the external world

[24] Kurt Muller-Vollmer, "Stael's Germany and the beginnings of an American National Literature," in *Germaine De Stael; Crossing the Border*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 143.
[25] Kurt Muller-Vollmer, "Stael's Germany and the beginnings of an American National Literature"145.
[26] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Volume I: Nature, Addresses and Lectures* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1971), 10.
[27] S. Cavell. *The Senses of Walden*. (Penguin Books: 1974).
[28] Emerson, "Experience," 29.

but rather theories about our being-in-the-world with roots in a corresponding mood. The ties with the phenomenological tradition and Heidegger's *Being and Time* are obviously many. However, Emerson emphasizes the idea that the plus or minus of moods depend on one's own biological constitution: "Life is a train of moods like a string of beads (…) The more or less depends on structure or temperament. Temperament is the iron wire on which the beads are strung."[29] Emerson's theory of experience can be said to operate in a twofold way: 1) as expression of the idea that mood, philosophical theory, and state-of-being-in-the-world are all organically connected 2) as consequence of the principle that moods depend upon the human biological structure.

Unfortunately, Emerson's theory of experience can bridge the chasm between the theoretical and the practical sphere but not the chasm between self and other. Despite episodic references to social experience,[30] most of his philosophical works remain shut within the walls of the Ego, a feature that according to Santayana constitutes an unremovable trait of the Transcendentalist ethos: "To reject tradition and think as one might have thought if no man had ever existed before was indeed the aspiration of the Transcendentalists."[31] According to this frame, Emerson does nothing but reiterate the egotistic attitude inherited from Goethe's philosophy: "But absolute egotism in Goethe, as in Emerson, summoned all nature to minister to the self: all nature, if not actually compelled to this service by a human creative fiat, could at least be won over to it by the engaging heroism of her favorite child."[32] Post-Emersonian philosophers will generally try to react against this alleged radical subjectivism or solipsism. Peirce's *What is Christian Faith?*

[29] Emerson, "Experience," 30.
[30] Cfr. this passage from *Man the Reformer*: "I content myself with the fact that the general system of our trade (apart from the blacker traits, which, I hope, are exceptions denounced and unshared by all reputable men) is a system of selfishness; is not dictated by the high sentiments of human nature; is not measured by the exact law of reciprocity, much less by the sentiments of love and heroism, but is a system of distrust, of concealment, of superior keenness, not of giving but of taking advantage." See also *Society and Solitude* (1870).
[31] George Santayana, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), 220.
[32] George Santayana, *Egotism and German Philosophy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 49.

(1893) challenges the idea that all religious feelings begin in solitude (Emerson). As a religion of love, Christianity fosters the social experience of God, in other words, it is by nature non-solipsistic:

> There is in the dictionary a word, *solipsism*, meaning the belief that the believer is the only existing person. Were anybody to adopt such a belief, it might be difficult to argue him out of it. But when a person finds himself in the society of others, he is just as sure of their existence as of his own, though he may entertain a metaphysical theory that they are all hypostatically the same ego (…) Seldom do we pass a single hour of our waking lives away from the companionship of men (including books) (…) Man's highest developments are social; and religion, though it begins in a seminal individual inspiration, only comes to full flower in a great church coextensive with a civilization. This is true of every religion, but supereminently so of the religion of love.[33]

Even without direct reference to Peirce, Royce will follow a similar path. Individuality is the *practical defect of philosophy*: "Therein (in individuality), if you please, is just where lies the practical defect of philosophy, - viz. in that it can only reach the civilized realm of our daily business by the way of the wilderness of solitary reflection." He then adds: "That it must first, to use Emerson's word, meet God in the bush, so that only later, and painfully, it learns to find him

[33] Charles Sanders Peirce, "What is Christian Faith?" *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, Vol. VI, Scientific Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 305.

in the mart and the crowded street."[34] In the past, Royce had openly rejected any accusation of solipsism but accepted the prioritizing of the I over the I/Not-I distinction as a necessary methodological move in philosophical argumentation: "As such I myself have made use of them more than once for purposes of preliminary instruction: not that they constitute the essential portion of the teachings of a metaphysical idealism (…) but merely because they are pedagogically useful devices for introducing us to the true issues of metaphysics." He then concludes: "The reason why in the end our post-Kantian idealism is not in the least identical with "solipsism" (…) is that the definition of the Self (…) is logically prior to the metaphysical assertion that a being called "I" is better known than is any being called "Not-I""[35]

But is there even an origin to the self? One that would allow us to provide a clear definition of what the self is? Following the trajectory indicated by psychologist James Mark Baldwin, Royce accepts the idea that the self is a hetero-constituted reality acquired through imitative functions. Baldwin talks about *subjective* and *ejective* stages of development in which the child, after several reiterated imitative activities, is finally able to recognize that others have the same experiences that he/she has.[36] These two developmental stages are preceded by a *projective* stage in which the child becomes first acquainted with the "distinction between persons and things, between agencies and objects".[37] Baldwin describes the whole imitative process as a "circular activity" of the bodily type: "Brain-state due to stimulus, muscular reaction that reproduces the stimulus, same brain-state again due to the same stimulus, and so on."[38] But since

[34] Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual; Second Series; Nature, Man, and the Moral Order* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), 4.
[35] Josiah Royce, "The Implications of Self-Consciousness," *The New York; a Quarterly Review of Religion, Ethics and Theology*, Jun, 1892, 294-5.
[36] See: James Mark Baldwin. "Imitation: A Chapter in the Natural History of Consciousness," *Mind* 3, no. 9 (1894): 26–55.
[37] Baldwin. "Imitation: A Chapter in the Natural History of Consciousness," 41.
[38] Baldwin. "Imitation: A Chapter in the Natural History of Consciousness," 26.

imitation always requires someone to imitate, the constitution of the self cannot but be in the end a product of social intercourse: "My sense of myself grows by imitation of you, and my sense of yourself grows in terms of my sense of myself. Both *ego* and *alter* are thus essentially social creations." [39] "A child," so Royce concludes "is taught to be self-conscious just as he is taught everything else, by the social order that brings him up."[40]

The intersubjective model just outlined is circular and dyadic. Another paradigm for intersubjectivity that Royce develops in his 1895 articles is triadic. It presupposes the existence of a middle term between ego and alter.[41] According to Royce, the primordial experience of space (*spatial definiteness*, *definite localization)* already demonstrates that the personal experience of the world cannot be separated from our acknowledgement of the presence of other fellow beings. Other fellow beings have experiential access to the same nature we experience: "The principle of spatial definiteness holds for external things only because definite localization is a *conditio sine qua non* of any appeal to another to verify the experiences that we ourselves have" [42] Without other selves, we would not be able to verify the validity of our own individual experiences of space; something that makes the appeal to other selves a necessary condition. Just as in the previous case, social consciousness has a logical priority over individual consciousness: "It is the social consciousness that defines a most important attribute of externality."[43] Nature becomes an

[39] Baldwin."Imitation: A Chapter in the Natural History of Consciousness," 42.
[40] J. Royce, "Self-Consciousness, Social Consciousness and Nature. I." *The Philosophical Review* 4, no. 5 (1895): 474.
[41] Cfr. this passage from Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*: "This world strikes us as not dependent on the inner life of any one. We view it as standing there, the same for every soul with which it comes into relation." Francis Herbert Bradley, *Appearance and Reality, A Metaphysical Essay* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1893), 262. The idea of an already intersubjective nature can also be found in Husserl's *Fifth Meditation*: "Within the limits of my transcendentally reduced pure conscious life, I experience the world (including others) (…) not as (so to speak) my private synthetic formation but as other than mine alone (mir fremde) as an intersubjective world, actually there for everyone, accessible in respect of its Objects to everyone." Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations, An Introduction to Phenomenology*, Dorion Cairns, trans. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 91.
[42] Josiah Royce, "The External World and the Social Consciousness." *The Philosophical Review* 3, no. 5 (1894) 518.
[43] Royce, "The External World and the Social Consciousness," 529.

intersubjectively constituted object, in other words, it ceases to be a mere solipsistic acquisition. Nature, Royce further clarifies, is "known or as knowable to various men, in precisely the same general sense in which we regard it as known or as knowable to our private selves."[44] Although logically distinct, the two moments happen simultaneously in experience.

It is within this triadic structure that Royce's theory of intersubjectivity encounters that of James. Albeit in strict correlation with his theory of *radical empiricism* and *pure experience*, the founding father of American psychology articulates a similar viewpoint: "Isn't the difficulty this? - *to get out of a solipsism without jumping a chasm* . . . Suppose there were conterminousness . . . my field with the question "more?" and the answer "yes! terminates where yours begins - "Philosophy 20b: Psychological Seminary – The Philosophical Problems of Psychology (1897-1898)." [45] If there is a considerable difference, it is in the reference to the epistemological chasm (the stepping out of the flux of *pure experience*). This reference that betrays James's familiarity with earlier theorizers, in particular R. Avenarius, H. Münsterberg, and E. Mach, marks the distance with Royce.[46] In James's own words, *pure experience* designates "the original flux of life before reflexion has categorized it (…) is but another name for feeling and sensation." [47] This definition implies that the overcoming of solipsism must take place within the limits of pure pre-reflective experience, a feature wholly absent in Royce.

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[44] Royce, *The World and the Individual; Second Series*, 166.
[45] William James, "Notes for Philosophy 20b: Psychological Seminary – The Philosophical Problems of Psychology (1897-1898)," in *Manuscript Lectures* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 251 - 252. For the relation between this passage and James' radical empiricism see: Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James, Vol II: Philosophy and Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 370.
[46] As David C. Lamberth has rightly pointed out, the notion of pure experience is not purely Jamesian for it is simply the English translation of *reine ehrfahrung* first introduced by R. Avenarius. For more on this see: David C. Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[47] William James, "The Thing and Its Relations," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* (Jan. 19, 1905), 29-30.

Within this rich frame of thought, the young Hocking finds himself caught in a broad range of possibilities. What trajectory will he decide to follow? A possible answer to the question can be found in the preface to his first major work *The Meaning of God in Human Experience.* All philosophical theories are valid in their *unfinishedness*. "Unfinishedness" says Hocking "is not in itself a blemish (..) But there are tolerable and intolerable kinds of unfinishedness. A thing is properly unfinished when it is finishable; when it has an identity that finishing will not change."[48] It is up to us to make philosophical theories *finishable*, in other words, to provide them with an identity. We can then shift to a contiguous philosophical theory. Idealism can be integrated with realism, mysticism with naturalism. Only pragmatism has weaknesses that Hocking hardly tolerates. It is here that his thought distances itself from the above-mentioned antecedents. Pragmatism, or, better put, the pragmatist maxim reduces "the idea everywhere to the service of action: but in all justice it only shows the idea in its struggle for independence hampered at the edges by the persistent fringes of action." [49] Ideas are not organically connected with a corresponding practice or action. They can appear in conjunction with a feeling, find a direct *lodgment in nature,* or exist in state of independence from action. Ideas, though, must operate in such a way as to facilitate the transition from the subjective state to the awareness of minds other than our own. In other words, they must respond to the demands of *nuclear experience* and its need to unite I-It-Thou.

[48] W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), XX.
[49] W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 117.

III: THE STRUCTURE OF *NUCLEAR EXPERIENCE* AND THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF THE *IT*

In framing John Wesley's quest for religious perfection as a kind of instantaneous experience, or, more broadly, instantaneousness, social reformer and Methodist bishop Frances J. McConnell concluded: "Anything which resembled or suggested a sharp crisis, anything, in a word, happening suddenly, came to be regarded as especially divine in its origin." [50] Albeit after the Revolutionary War the American Methodist Church had declared itself autonomous from the Church of England (*Baltimore Christmas Conference,* 1784), it preserved the emphasis on the immediate experience of God as one of its distinctive traits.[51] According to Leroy S. Rouner, this quintessentially Methodist trait lies at the very foundation of Hocking's gaze upon the philosophical notion of experience or, as he has it, upon the idea that "our knowledge of the real, the whole, the absolute substance, is a knowledge-in-experience."[52] It becomes somewhat of an obligatory passage, then, to have a preliminary look at some relevant aspects of Hocking's biography before moving to the core of our discussion.

Hocking is born on August 10, 1873, in Cleveland Ohio. He is the son of William Francis Hocking (homeopathic physician) and Julia Carpenter Pratt, a native of Southbridge Massachusetts and descendent of Degorie Priest, a hat-maker who came to America on the famous 1620 Mayflower voyage.[53] Shortly after, the family moved to Joliet, Illinois, where the young

[50] Francis J. McConnell. *John Wesley*, (New York, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1939), 201.
[51] Jason E. Vickers, "American Methodism: A Theological Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Methodism*, (Cambridge University Press, 2013) 17.
[52] L. S. Rouner. *Within Human Experience: The Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 1.
[53] Leroy S. Rouner, "Curriculum Vitae", (eds) *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization* (Springer, Dordrecht, 1966).

Hocking joins the Sunday evening special meetings at the Methodist church.[54] The report that he furnishes us of his first true religious feeling shows that his interest for immediacy in experience is something enduring, but also something strictly connected with his Methodist upbringing: "In any case, the guise in which religion then appeared to me was that of something enviable, and the more so as it was something to be definitely and personally achieved. One had to take one's solitary way to gain it (…) In it, something happened to one; and after it had happened, one could never again be just the same." [55] This immediacy in experience coinciding with an awareness of a divine presence innervating the totality of thought and being is shaken when, at the age of thirteen, Hocking makes his first acquaintance with the work of Herbert Spencer. After graduating from high school in 1889, he began a training in engineering working as a surveyor for the civil engineering department of the Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern Railroad. He was then accepted at the Iowa State College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts in 1894 as a student of engineering. During this time, two factors determined a radical shift in his overall career interests, one, a growing disillusionment towards Spencer, mostly solicited by more substantial readings in the scientific field and a dislike of the latter's theory of altruism, two, the discovery of William James's *Principles of Psychology*. This second factor led him to the decision to save enough money to afford to study at Harvard, where he finally enters in 1899. During the academic year 1902-1903, he studied in Germany at Göttingen, Berlin, and Heidelberg. It was at Göttingen that Hocking met Husserl and developed a friendship that will last for many years afterwards. He returned to Harvard in 1903 and concludes his Ph. D in 1904 defending a thesis entitled *The Elementary Experience of*

[54] L. S. Rouner. *Within Human Experience: The Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) 2.
[55] W. E. Hocking, "Some Second Principles," in *Contemporary American Philosophy, Personal Statements*, Vol. 1, (London: George Allen & Unwin, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), 385 -386.

Other Conscious Being in its Relations to the Elementary Experience of Physical and Reflexive Objects. In 1906 he joined the philosophy department of the University of California which at the time was under George Howison's supervision. After two years spent at this institution, he was called to Yale as an assistant professor. While at Yale, he wrote *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, the major philosophical work in which he develops his notion of *nuclear experience*.

According to Barbara Ann Bacon, who wrote the most comprehensive study on the notion, the first occurrence of the term "nucleus" is found in Hocking's class notes for the year 1902. She provides a concise but highly informative account of these notes: "In a paper on reason and belief from a collection of Harvard class notes dated 1902 he refers briefly to a "common nucleus of truth" which is derived from reason's operation on our tendencies or actions, and which is found in some universally held beliefs of mathematics, science, logic, language, or "whatever else men presuppose as a community in all their intercourse with one another in practical life as well as in philosophy"." [56] The "common nucleus of truth" to which Hocking refers is an over-personal and transdisciplinary core that we can grasp through the use of rational thinking. The idea of a "commonality of truth" necessarily excludes the idea that truth is an exclusively subjective property. Even at such an early stage, Hocking seems to be already paving the way for his critique of pragmatism. The idea that a common nucleus of truth precedes theoretical and practical life both in its subjective and intersubjective sphere seems to hint at the principle that idea and action must be always be put at the same level. We cannot think of an action taking place without a common nucleus of truth functioning as its substratum. With slight variations, a line from *Meaning of God in Human Experience* utilizes a similar metaphorical language to strengthen the principle of idea-action simultaneous correlation: "But all will makes use of knowledge, prior or simultaneous.

[56] B. A. Bacon. *Hocking's Theory of Nuclear Experience*. (Dissertation: Saint Louis University, 1969), 88.

There is no human will that does not contain a nucleus of *knowledge* which is not our own act." [57] The nucleus is something we direct our attention towards, something whose presence is revealed to us when we act, but also when we inter-act. It is subjective and intersubjective; it underlies knowledge and truth as much as it underlies practice.

In the *Function of Science in Shaping a Philosophic Method* (1905) the same notion emerges again, but, as we shall see, with different connotations and implications that puts the conception of nucleus in direct relation with the notion of experience. In this article, Hocking gives himself the task of estimating the validity of those philosophical conceptions that more than others can support and strengthen natural sciences' methodological approach towards the physical realm. There is no need to go through all aspects and subtleties of such conceptions but what is worth mentioning is that Hocking's discussion on experience already reveals its debt to Royce in addressing the limits of empiricism: "Experiences may be comprehensive to any finite degree (…) but each one of them has its limits, be they sharp or vague, constituted by the moment of attention or reflection. Beyond these borders the authority of the insight given in the experience ceases." [58] While it is certainly true that empiricism can find no better ally than pluralism, in Hocking's view, it lacks connection and order. As he puts it: "Pluralism legitimately expresses the between of experiences, the moment of segmentation and discontinuity in all transition; but fertility expresses a degree of belonging-together of new and old, a moment of connection in the very material, not alone in the form, of experience."[59] The moment of connection amongst elementary components of both experience and objective reality is guaranteed by a conception of the world that Hocking

[57] W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 250.
[58] William E. Hocking. "The Function of Science in Shaping Philosophic Method." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 2, no. 18 (1905): 479.
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[59] Hocking. "The Function of Science," 480.

calls: fluent and prolific. This conception depicts "the genuine prodigality of the world, the 'superabundance of life' as different from its 'confusion.' This fertility is not to be described as an assembling, out of the void, of experiences accidentally twinkling into existence, but as a growth and sprouting from the present world as a nucleus, a central hearth and brooding-place."[60] Unlike the previous account, this notion of *nucleus* indicates the presence of a fertile core out which something emerges and that discloses some kind of order and structure. This core is in all probability identical with what we might label as: objective pole of experience; that towards which our scientific grasp directs itself. That the notion of nucleus is a characterizing element of experience seems to be further confirmed by Hocking's subsequent article the *Transcendence of Knowledge* (1906).

Here Hocking takes his first steps towards a more comprehensive theory of experience. And he does so by responding to the observations that J. Dewey and C. M. Bakewell had raised a year before around the constitution of immediate empiricism.[61] In order to fully grasp Hocking's early reform of experience we need to briefly look at Dewey's considerations as they emerge in the "Postulate of Immediate Empiricism" (1905). Dewey makes it clear that his version of *immediate empiricism* or *immediatism* is meant to be a response to both sensationalistic empiricism and transcendentalism. His rendition of it implies resources that are directly experienced. In this sense it can be legitimately called empiricism. However, in so doing, he also makes the misleading choice to combine the language of empiricism with the language of rationalism. A pre-ordained

[60] Hocking. "The Function of Science," 480.
[61] J. Dewey, "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 2, no. 15 (1905): 393–99; C. M. Bakewell. "An Open Letter to Professor Dewey Concerning Immediate Empiricism." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 2, no. 19 (1905): 520–22.

structure (the postulate of the title) that determines how the nature experience should be understood, represents, if not a concession to transcendentalism, a departure from *immediatism*:

> Immediate empiricism postulates that things-anything, every-thing, in the ordinary or non-technical use of the term 'thing'- are what they are experienced as. Hence, if one wishes to describe anything truly, his task is to tell what it is experienced as being. If it is a horse which is to be described, or the *equus* which is to be defined, then must the horse-trader, or the jockey, or the timid family man who wants a 'safe driver,' or the zoologist or the paleontologist tell us what the horse is which is experienced.[62]

For Dewey, the difference between something experienced "as" and something experienced as a "known thing" lies in how I happen to relate to what is experienced. My relating to something experienced "as" determines a change or, better put, a shift into the "known thing": "I start and am flustered by a noise heard. Empirically, that noise is fearsome; it *really* is, not merely phenomenally or subjectively so. That is *what* it is experienced as being. But, when I experience the noise as a *known thing*, I find it to be innocent of harm."[63] Both experiences as such are real, meaning that: "The experience has changed; that is, the thing experienced has changed - not that an unreality has given place to a reality, nor that some transcendental (unexperienced) Reality has changed, not that truth has changed, but just and only the concrete reality experienced has changed." [64] To a more thorough analysis, however, this demarcation seems not as definite

[62] J. Dewey. "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism." 393.
[63] J. Dewey. "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism." 395.
[64] J. Dewey. "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism." 395.

and clear as Dewey takes it to be. If we assume our relating to what is experienced as a correction or rectification, in other words, as something distinct from the experienced; we inevitably step outside of the organic relationship with the objective pole of experience (the experienced "as"). Our experiencing and what is experienced cannot be regarded anymore as one and the same thing. This very problem is raised by C. M. Bakewell in his response to Dewey. Bakewell understands the process of correction of experience to be something operating not within the realm of experience but outside of it, thus, as something that leads us to a distancing of the subject from that which is experienced: "My difficulty, in short, is simply this: Either everything experienced is real exactly as, and no further than, it is then and there experienced, - and then there is no occasion to speak of correcting or rectifying experience; or, there is in every experience a self-transcendency which points beyond that thing as experienced for its own reality,-and then good-by to immediatism."[65] If the object of experience is known through a self-transcendent action on my part, it can hardly be considered as immediate but rather mediated through my knowing activity. This observation raises the fundamental question of whether experience is a purely passive matter or if it requires the subject's active engagement with respect to its correlative objective pole.

Hocking's solution is to introduce a third feature between the "what" and the "how" of experience. This third feature is a moment internal to the tissue of experience within which the subject actively formulates a judgement around an invariant objective core. This implies that for us to be able to exhaust the totality of what experience is, we must consider three stages within the same development: "But it is possible to observe the development of experience (a) from *Vorstellung* to *Urteil*, (b) from problematic judgment to verified judgment, (c) from an attitude in

[65] C. M. Bakewell. "An Open Letter to Professor Dewey Concerning Immediate Empiricism." 521.

its first intention ethical, esthetic or otherwise to self-consciousness, i. e., to reflexive judgment upon that experience; and it is possible to distinguish the invariant from the variable elements in that development." [66] In its immediacy, the representation (*Vorstellung*) is not yet knowledge, it is simply something given to us. It is only at the level of cognition, or *cognitive experience*, as Hocking calls it, that a primary acknowledgment takes place around a representation through the formulation of a judgment (*Urteil*): "At the moment of cognition, that is, at the moment of judgment, or of certainty, a distinct change takes place in experience, but it takes place upon an invariant core: the experience which at that moment becomes 'object' in full standing is undisturbed in quality, intensity and continuity with its context."[67] Hocking recuperates Brentano's threefold classification of the forms of consciousness (Vorstellung, Urteil, Gemütsbewegung)[68] when he explicitly mentions "the mode in which consciousness refers to its object, *Urteil* being but one of these modes."[69] While cognition simply acknowledges the presented object, knowledge creates a new one by situating the previously given experience within the overall structure of experience: "Knowing, as process, is essentially the work of placing a given experience within the entire system of experience (…) Knowing does not change this object; it creates it."[70] Knowledge is therefore an activity, not a passive reception of *Vorstellungen.* The internal moment of *Urteil* requires a less refined activity on the part of the subject, but still an activity. But unless something is given in the form of an invariant objective core, there is nothing that the subject can direct its attention towards: "It is the nature of knowledge to *supervene* upon an experience that is not yet

[66] W. E. Hocking. "The Transcendence of Knowledge." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 3, no. 1 (1906) 6.
[67] W. E. Hocking. "The Transcendence of Knowledge." 6.
[68] F. Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1874; (2nd, enl. ed. by Oskar Kraus, 1924, Leipzig: Meiner).
[69] W. E. Hocking. "The Transcendence of Knowledge." 5.
[70] W. E. Hocking. "The Transcendence of Knowledge." 10 -11.

knowledge." Such an invariant objective core towards which we direct our judging activity, is then labeled by Hocking *nuclear*: "The psychological moment indicating the minimal and nuclear presence with which that cognition is concerned."[71] If the term *nuclear* designates the invariant objective core of which Hocking talks about here, then, the nucleus can be said to possess the character of *centrality* (something towards which cognitive experience is directed) but also the character of *permanence* (it constitutes the invariant element of experience).

All these layers taken together find a common denominator in Hocking's widened empiricism, an aspect that will interest us later on. [72] Going back to our focus, Hocking's intervention at the Ninth Annual Meeting of American Philosophical Association (1910) demonstrates how, in responding to Dewey and Bakewell, Hocking is also critiquing immediatism: "Now an idea is not a useful scratch on the surface of experience (James, Bergson, Lovejoy) intrinsically different from the experience; it is the experience itself assuming quasi-political relations with other experiences."[73] According to Hocking, that aprioristic rejection of intellectualism that characterizes Bergson's intuitionism equally impairs James's radical empiricism and pure experience, as we can see from a later article of his dedicated to the French philosopher: "These points of resemblance between James and Bergson have their root in a deeper ground of agreement, their common enmity towards "intellectualism " (…) To this second way of knowing, Bergson now gives the name of "intuition""[74] In order to exhaust the totality of experience (the totality of moments that characterize its inner structure) we must look at both sides

[71] W. E. Hocking. "The Transcendence of Knowledge," 11.
[72] W. E. Hocking. "Marcel and the Ground Issues of Metaphysics." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 14, No. 4, (1954); "From the early days of the *Logische Untersuchungen*." *Edmund Husserl 1859–1959: Recueil Commémoratif Publié a l'occasion du centenaire de la naissance du philosophe* (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1959)
[73] W. E. Hocking "The Ontological Value of Ideas and Feelings." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association: The Ninth Annual Meeting*, Yale University, December 27-29, 1909. (1910). *The Philosophical Review*, 19 (2), 175.
[74] W. E. Hocking. "The Significance of Bergson." *Yale Review*. 3 (January) 303-326 (1914).

of the spectrum, or, to use Leuba's language, both at pure experience and the elaboration of it.[75] Again, in taking such a stance, Hocking is recuperating - despite his generally lukewarm evaluation of his Harvard mentors - [76] Royce's critique of empiricism. As we can see from Royce's assessment of the second conception of being: mysticism, the argumentation is similar: "The mystic is, as I said before, the only thoroughgoing empiricist. We owe to him an illustration of what an absolutely pure empiricism, devoid of conventions, and alone with immediacy, would mean (…) The ineffably immediate is also, if you like, far above knowledge, but that is because knowledge ordinarily means contamination with ideas."[77]

Hocking's critique of anti-intellectualism and naïve empiricism allows us to trace a connection with Royce, but also a connection with Husserlian phenomenology. Husserl's *Ideas* I, (18) exposes the same defective nature. More precisely, empiricism's excessive reliance on the purity of the given. Husserl speaks of a "controversy with empiricism" due to an "hostility with ideas" that prevails among sciences, psychology included: "What forces this dispute upon us is the fact that "ideas," "essences," and "knowledge of essences" are denied by empiricism." [78] A similar critique can also be found in Marcel's *Metaphysical Journal* (January 1st, 1914). Around that time, Marcel had already begun to explore the work of Royce and Hocking: "An empiricism, in that it

[75] James H. Leuba, James H. "The Immediate Apprehension of God According to William James and William E. Hocking." *The Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 26 (1924): 701–12.
[76] "I listened to his lectures on metaphysics and felt power and more than power – a certain intellectual majesty and moral greatness. I was attracted to his view and held by the massive dignity of his thought without being wholly persuaded by his argument." James is exposed to a somewhat similar criticism: "Yet James's method, or lack of method, and his results left me confused and unsatisfied." W. E. Hocking "Some Second Principles." *Contemporary American Philosophy: Personal Statements* (George Plimpton Adams and William Pepperell Montague, eds.) Vol. I (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930) 389.
[77] J. Royce, *The World and the Individual, Gifford Lectures; First Series: The Four Historical Conceptions of Being* (New York: Macmillan 1900), 83.
[78] E. Husserl. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*. Trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht-Boston-London: Kluwer Academic Publishers 1989) 34.

is a philosophy of the immediate, is self-destructive."[79] On this very matter, the genealogy proposed by Hocking takes us back to Hegel's critique of *sense-certainty*. Marcel and Husserl share a similar conception of *widened empiricism*:

> Hegel's starting point in the Phenomenology is the this-now, the particular immediate with its sense-certitude. This, in his view, so far from being concrete and tangible is the abstract *par excellence*, "die abstrakteste und aermste Wahrheit." The concrete lies at the far end of his discussion; and this discussion could be defined as a repeated putting of the question "What is it?". The particular must be infinitely patient to that question, infinitely receptive to the emerging answers, the "whats." These concepts that emerge, these whats, are not something else; they are simply what that particular is. The concrete, therefore, for Hegel, is *this same particular*, but thoroughly conceived, thoroughly known.[80]

However, as I have previously pointed out, Hocking's epistemology can hardly be reduced to a Hegelian identity between philosophy and idealism (*Science of Logic*, 154-5) that would relegate the given to a state of mere non-being. If only in experience is there truth (*Nur in*

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[79] G. Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, trans. Bernard Wall (London: Salisbury Square, 1952), 1. Husserl's *Ideas I* was published in 1913, but written during the summer of 1912, the year in which *Meaning of God* first appeared. Marcel's *Metaphysical Journal* was first published in 1927, but its entries begin from Jan. 1st, 1914. Presumably, by 1913 he had completed the reading of *Meaning of God in Human Experience*: "At the outset I should explain that I have owed a debt to Hocking ever since 1913 when I first read *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*." In G. Marcel. "Solipsism Surmounted." *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization*. *Essays in Honor of William Ernest Hocking* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1966), 23. Hocking seems to remain the lens through which Marcel looks at Royce's metaphysics: "I am certain, however, that several years before I began to study Royce I had read not only Bradley's Appearance and Reality and Essays on Truth and Reality, but also the magnum opus of W. E. Hocking, The Meaning of God in Human Experience, which, I am sure, had a lasting influence on me." In G. Marcel, *Royce's Metaphysics*, trans. Virginia and Gordon Ringer, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1956), X.

[80] W. E. Hocking. "Marcel and the Ground Issues of Metaphysics." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1954) 446.

der Erfahrung ist Wahrheit), as Royce, in a burst of Kantian spirit,[81] had once claimed, then the clarification of its full constitution remains a matter of fundamental importance. As Hocking specifies, thought must be considered as a function within experience "engaged in remaking experience by enlarging our resources for the understanding and control of nature." [82] However, any *Vorstellung* preceding our active response is not, as in Hegel, "*die abstrakteste und ärmste Wahrheit,*" the most abstract and poorest truth, but the rather ground that solicits our active response; the origin of experience but not the principle that fulfills it.

Is Hocking then simply reproposing a Kantian epistemology? Answering this question will lead us to embrace the full meaning of *nuclear experience*. If, on the one hand, Hocking partially recuperates the Kantian idea that sensible intuitions (receptivity) must be brought under the unity of a category of the Understanding (spontaneity) in order to be fully grasped, on the other hand, he rejects that dilemma of modernity of which Kant is one of the initiators: solipsism.[83] As we know, solipsism is what nuclear experience is meant to overcome. B. A. Bacon notices how from the 1940's onward Hocking starts using the word "nuclear" in correlation with the word "experience."[84] In *Living Religions and a World Faith* (1940) we find a somewhat vague definition of *nuclear experience* that takes us back to the domain of Peircean *secondness*: "This is the element of insight in the Indian conception of Nirvana; only, Nirvana is carried along with us in the nuclear experience of struggle as well as of peace, and requires the experience of struggle to elicit its meaning."[85] A few paragraphs earlier we see Hocking using the expression "nuclear security" to

[81] I. Kant, *Kant's Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, ed. By Paul Carus (Chicago: The Open Court, 1949) 151.
[82] W. E. Hocking. "Dewey's Concepts of Experience and Nature." *Philosophical Review*, 49 (March) (1940) 232.
[83] "On this point (solipsism) Leibniz alone is fully consistent (and more resolutely than Kant, who evaded the issue of the "we "): minds are monads." W. E. Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, (George Allen & Unwin Ltd: Museum Street London, 1958) 27.
[84] B. A. Bacon. *Hocking's Theory of Nuclear Experience*, 91.
[85] W. E. Hocking. *Living Religions and a World Faith* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940) 219

refer to that psychological/solipsistic age in which we find ourselves: “Our age is "psychological"; it is skilled in observing its own states. It naturally begins with "experience" regarding experience in some sense "inner," that is, as belonging to the self (…) Our time is at home in this position of nuclear security, and from this position moves outward towards its objects.” [86] This psychological age is in no way different from modernity. It inherits its spirit, its attitude to regard the world as an exclusive object for an exclusive subject. In the *Foerster Lecture on Immortality,* Berkeley, California (1942) Hocking links the origin of this issue back to Descartes’ I-think and view of experience as “noncommunicating globules of being (…) containing its own version of the entire world.” [87] Beyond this important elucidation that Hocking provides, we also find a first articulation of the structure of *nuclear experience*: “What we now recognize is that this *nuclear certitude is composite*: in our lonely self-awareness we are not and cannot be solitary; the thinker without something-thought-about is a zero; and the something-thought about is something-to-be-shared, as common object with a "Thou," co-present with the self.” [88] Prior to being something *permanent*, or *central*, or *germinative*, *nuclear experience* is a *composite* reality that brings different I-It-Thou into unity. This articulation of the notion of *nuclear experience* is not included in Bacon’s research, presumably because it clashes with her categorization of it as *simple,* in other words, as non-composite. However, *nuclear experience* is more than subjective intentionality (subjective pole with its correlative objective core) since it allows the presence of another subject and a common object.

The clarification of *nuclear experience* as a composite reality allows us to go deeper into Hocking’s overall philosophical project. Not only for Hocking do we start from the experience

[86] Hocking. *Living Religions and a World Faith*) 215.
[87] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience*, 199.
[88] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience*, 200.

of something objective (nature or of God) but also from an irreducible triadic structure in which the *tertium quid* (the *It*) is already a shared domain. Through the *It*, I get to experience something of your experience, and you can experience something of my experience. Although the way I relate to the *It* does not coincide with yours, it nonetheless posits itself as the ground for me to partake of your experience. Using a Buberian terminology, we could say that the I-Thou relationship is possible only through the mediation of an *It*.[89] Hocking's final work *Coming World Civilization* reveals the anti-Cartesian orientation that operates at the background of the notion of *nuclear experience*. The Cartesian I-Think is inconsistent with its very solipsistic implications: "It is the same nonsolitude as that on which Descartes wisely and inconsistently acted when, having lighted on the solitary I-exist as his ultimate certitude— meaning for him I-Descartes-exist—he published it to the world as the basis for all future philosophy!" [90] Its very rationalistic foundations reveal similar logical weaknesses in that any notion of *I-exist* must necessarily presuppose a notion of a *not-I-exist*, that is, a contradictory term that would complete the essence of the *I-exist* as such: "The proposition "I am incurably alone" implies that I know what being-alone is contrasted with: the proposition is significant only if I know what it would be to be not-alone." [91] Additionally, no thinking process can take place without something other than knowledge itself, a permanent objective pole distinct from the act of thinking: "There is no I-think (period). It is always I-think (something)."[92] Therefore, to be logically solid, the Cartesian formula would have required a

[89] Buber's view is obviously different: "Only concerning it may you make yourself "understood" with others; it is ready, though attached to everyone in a different way, to be an object common to you all. But you cannot meet others in it (…) "You cannot make yourself understood with others concerning it, you are alone with it. But it teaches you to meet others." M. Buber, *I and Thou*. Transl. by Ronald Gregor Smith. (New York: Scribner 1958, 1986) 33. The differences and affinities between Buber and Hocking have been discussed by Richard Woods in *The Social Dimension of Mysticism: A Study of the Meaning and Structure of Religious Experience in the Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking* (Dissertation; Loyola University: Chicago, 1978). As he says: "Buber (…) tended to oppose I-Thou relations to I-It relations, whereas Hocking saw them as complementary and conjoined." (367).
[90] W. E. Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, 22.
[91] W. E. Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, 33.
[92] W. E. Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, 33.

different formulation: *cogito aliquid ergo sum, et aliquid est*: I think something, therefore I exist, and something (else) exists."[93] For Hocking, the presence of any *aliquid* already presupposes their *sharebleness*, their status as intersubjective objects. Even though at the level of immediate experience the world as object is a *simple thereness*, the subsequent moment of reflection discloses its *sharebleness*: "To catch a glimpse of one's self requires a shift of vision, a turn which we call "reflexion" (…) *The same turn that brings the I-think into the picture brings also the sharableness*: the simple thereness is already *common* experience, common receptivity toward an intersubjective action." [94]

The simultaneous deconstruction and reconstruction of the Cartesian *ego-cogito* that Hocking carries out is not in line with the project that the father of phenomenology had earlier proposed in the Paris Lectures. *Nuclear experience* resists the "turn towards the subject himself." [95] Hocking's preface to the 1963 edition of *Meaning of God in Human Experience* helps further clarify this point. It is only when the notion of experience endorsed by Modern philosophers (Locke, Descartes) is left behind, that notion that makes the subject the point of departure and arrival of the investigation of experience, that we finally enter "a postmodern era." [96] The entrance into the postmodern era requires, however, our constant attention, for even in presence of new theoretical paradigms subjectivism can still reveal its presence: "This I-think is present in, and sustains, not only the later idealisms from Kant to Bradley, Bosanquet, Royce, but also the pragmatisms of James and Dewey, the operationalisms of postrelativity physics (as with Bridgman), and at various points the speculations of Russell and the majestic synthesis of

[93] W. E. Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, 36.
[94] W. E. Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, 38-9.
[95] E. Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to phenomenology*, Trans. by D. Cairns (Boston-London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982) 2.
[96] W. E. Hocking. "Preface to the 1963 Edition." *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963) xiii.

Whitehead."[97] Hocking is convinced that, despite his need to overcome solipsism, in the Paris Lectures Husserl hardly provides a solution to the matter at stake: "And in the end, though he fights to overcome solipsism, he fails to throw off the ever-recurring net of the monadic vision. His "*monadologische Intersubjektivität*" falls of being a thorough intersubjectivity, because he bases it only on the consubjectivity of fellow monads, and not on the Intersubjectivity of the universal Thou-art." [98]

But even with the positing of a Universal Thou-art, the ontological status of the *It* remains to be fully clarified. The treatment of this matter will allow us to finally resolve a major misunderstanding about the status of Hocking's epistemology and ontology: the labelling of his methodological approach as idealistic. The belief in the existence of absolute values and the frequent references to Royce and other fellow idealists (consider Hocking's responses to McTaggart's *Some Dogmas of Religion* in *Meaning of God in Human Experience*) have led a considerable number of scholars and interpreters to assume that Hocking's intention was to conform his philosophy to a precise idealistic agenda. The self-proclaimed resistance against the *retirement of the intellect* in religious matters has played a positive role in strengthening this assumption. A primary indication of this tendency is W. H. Werkmeister's *A History of Philosophical Ideas*. "As Hocking sees it," Werkmeister writes, "what pragmatism requires of idealism is "more genuinely real opportunity, real freedom, real individual creativity", and what realism demands is "more valid objectivity, substantiality in the world beyond self" (A, 11) Both of these demands, Hocking maintains, idealism can satisfy and still remain idealism, for idealism, he is convinced, is "not incapable of admitting into its world-picture variety, change, growth,

[97] W. E. Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, 38-9.
[98] W. E. Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, 72.

personality, freedom, also objectivity of a sort" (A, 11)."[99] And he comes to such a conclusion by transforming a question into a declaration of philosophical intent. "Can idealism entertain the Real, and still remain idealism?,"[100] Hocking asks. The answer to the question is somehow already contained in the same passage: "Idealism can entertain much of what pragmatism, realism, and the rest have brought forward, and still remain idealism; whether it can entertain all, is doubtful. It is not incapable of admitting into its world-picture variety, change, growth, personality, freedom, also objectivity of a sort. The question is, of what sort?."[101] As it emerges in the concluding part of the 1912 preface, Hocking appears to be anything but open to assigning a definitive label to his philosophical project. If there is one epithet that he is more prone than others to accept, that epithet is *radical idealism*. But given the way he describes it, one wonders how authentically idealistic such a philosophical orientation in fact is: "I know not what name to give to this point of convergence, nor does name much matter: it is realism, it is mysticism, it is idealism also, its identity, I believe, not broken. For in so far as idealism announces the liberty of thought, the spirituality of the world, idealism is but another name for philosophy —all philosophy is idealism. It is only the radical idealist who is able to give full credit to the realistic, the naturalistic, even the materialistic aspects of the world he lives in."[102] Nothing of Hocking's stance is hard to contextualize motivate, especially if we accept James Campbell's indication that "as the WPA (Western Philosophical Association) and APA (American Philosophical Association) were being founded (…) idealism's hold as a dominant American philosophy was slipping. This overall decline was taking place despite the obvious facts that so many of the early presidents of the

[99] W. H. Werkmeister, *A History of Philosophical Ideas*, 294.
[100] W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, XXI.
[101] W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, XXI.
[102] W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, XXI, XXX.

associations – Thilly, Creighton, Ormond, Royce, George Trumball Ladd, Albert Ross Hill, Hugo Münsterberg, Bakewell, and Calkins – were themselves idealists and that many other members were still so inclined."[103] To this, it must be added that the famous manifesto *New Realism: Cooperative Studies in Philosophy* is perfectly coeval to the publication of Hocking's first work.[104] Still, although attempts to defend common sense realism had already shown their urgency in the late Nineteenth century American philosophy, it is Royce's harsh critique of it in the *World and the Individual* that generates the need in many to argue in favor of a broader conception of realism that would save it from easy criticism.[105] It is within this dynamism between idealism and realism, characterized (as Italian scholar Tina Manferdini has aptly pointed) by "the necessary integration of idealism with ontological and mystical realism, based on the participation of the I, communicative subjective being, to the real and objective Being," [106] that Hocking's real intentions can be fully grasped.

This oscillation between epistemological idealism and ontological realism had somehow found its way through Charles Hartshorne: "In experiencing nature we are being, insofar, "created" by God. This was rather like Berkeley: nature is a divine language in which Deity speaks by causing us to share in some of His "ideas." The exact differences between Hocking and Berkeley have never been clear to me."[107] However, in recalling a conversation he had had with Hocking when he was still a student at Harvard, Hartshorne recognizes a trace of realism in the former's metaphysics: "It will perhaps scarcely be denied that much – the best-reasoned portion – of the

[103] James Campbell, *A Thoughtful Profession: The Early Years of the American Philosophical Association* (Open Court: Chicago, La Salle, 2006) 106.
[104] The 1912 publication is preceded by the "Program and First Platform of Six Realists" published in July of 1910 and presented at the APA's Tenth Meeting.
[105] W. H. Werkmeister, *A History of Philosophical Ideas in America*, 370 - 374.
[106] T. Manferdini, *Studi sul Pensiero Americano*, (Edizioni Alfa: Bologna, 1960), 303. Trans. Mine.
[107] C. Hartshorne. "Idealism and Our Experience of Nature" Rouner, L.S. (eds) *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization* (Springer, Dordrecht, 1966).

opposition to idealism, was due to idealism's apparent denial of the reality of time and contingency, its identification of the real with the rational, necessary or eternal. From this Hocking did at least as much as to save me as the "realists""[108] A few paragraphs later he once more assimilates Hocking into the same idealistic roots in which he had initially put him: "It remains valid that *when known* the thing known *becomes* part of the life of feeling and/or thought of the knower. Here Hocking was right (…) Neither Berkeley, Hegel, nor Hocking (perhaps, directly or indirectly, influenced more by Hegel than by Berkeley) seemed to have a clear way of showing the compatibility of these two (to me) evident truths."[109] Despite Hartshorne's cautious portrayal of Hocking's thought, two major works: A. R. Luther's *Existence as Dialectical Tension; A study of the First Philosophy of W. E. Hocking* (1968); D. S. Robinsons' *Royce and Hocking: American Idealists, an Introduction to Their Philosophy, with Selected Letters* (1968) will contribute to the perpetuation of the idealistic cliché. Robinson sees Royce and Hocking as equal "founders and creators of a unique and distinctly American school of idealistic philosophy," [110] while Luther approaches Hocking's metaphysics from a Hegelian, Roycean, and even Kierkegaardian perspective with the intent of showing that for Hocking Absolute Infinite Being and the many finite beings relate to each other through "a dialectical tension." [111] For Luther: "The Real involves both the One and the Many. Given the immediate concrete existential situation, one without the other is an abstraction." [112] Sporadic concessions to common sense realism, however, can still be found throughout the book: "There is no doubt about the independence and objectivity of Nature.

[108] C. Hartshorne. "Idealism and Our Experience of Nature", 73.
[109] C. Hartshorne. "Idealism and Our Experience of Nature", 73.
[110] Daniel Sommer Robinson, *The Self and the World in the Philosophy of Josiah Royce*, (Christopher Publishing House, 1968), 9.
[111] A. R. Luther. *Existence as Dialectical Tension; A study of the First Philosophy of W. E. Hocking* (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1968) 4.
[112] A. R. Luther. *Existence as Dialectical Tension*, 4.

Its independence and objectivity define its factuality in relation to man." [113] Luther's conclusion is then that the *It* of nuclear experience is not physical, nor ultimately reduceable to it: "Our experience of Nature is a direct experience of the world-mind, our primordial experience is a social experience, and Nature in its original character is between minds." [114]

If we take Luther's statement that "Professor's Hocking vision is that the Real is Mind" as valid and apply it to *nuclear experience*, a series of problematic consequences arises. If Hocking's *nuclear experience* is nothing but an appendix of Roycean intersubjectivity, the original character of Hocking's *nuclear experience* disappears. In addition, if the *It* is merely an ideal object, the concrete existential situation of which Luther talks about evaporates into dialectical abstractness. It is perhaps for these reasons that less than a decade later, Carroll Bowman puts the spotlight back on the realistic side of Hocking's thought As she puts it: "Hocking concedes to the external world a factual brutality which cannot be found in Berkeley."[115] The heterogeneity of thought and being is for Bowman an indication of Hocking's affinity with James and a proof of his distance from Royce: "What Hocking does not tell us is that, in departing from Royce, he was also following another revered professor – William James." [116] However, in overemphasizing Hocking's Jamesian dimension at the expense of that form of anti-Jamesianism that Hocking proclaims in the first few pages of *Meaning of God in Human Experience,* Bowman's interpretation reveals important flaws as well. When Hocking addresses the problem of the "general disaffection from the religion of reason, and from its philosophical framework, absolute idealism," [117] he is not addressing the issue with intent of overcoming the Jamesian gaze over

[113] A. R. Luther. *Existence as Dialectical Tension*, 13.
[114] A. R. Luther. *Existence as Dialectical Tension*, 26.
[115] *Religious Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, (1974) 54.
[116] Carroll R. Bowman. "William Ernest Hocking on Our Knowledge of God and Other Minds." *Religious Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1974, pp. 45–66.
[117] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963) vi.

religious experience: its excessive reliance on the religion of feeling at the exclusion of the religion of thought. While this is not equal to embracing idealism (on this point Bowman's realistic reading maintains its interpretive solidity) it is certainly not equal to a full-fledged rejection of idealism. Hocking is seeking to find a balance between idealism and realism, a balance between thought and being that would restore nature's ontological dignity. If we take a chronological step back to the origins of Hocking's thought, we can clearly pinpoint the reasons behind his resistance towards any dogmatic assimilation of idealism.

Despite its idealistic or pseudo-idealistic frame, the *Meaning of God in Human Experience* brings to completion a precise philosophical project that Hocking had outlined in his doctoral dissertation *The Elementary Experience of Other Conscious Being in Its Relations to the Elementary Experience of Physical and Reflexive Objects* (1904). As acknowledged by him, the primary engine of his study on intersubjectivity "is to remove the ground from that epistemological idealism amounting to monadism, whereby (…) human intercourse on its cognitive side has a purely representative, that is to say, pantomimic character. No such idealism fails to give us real connections" [118] His letter to James from October 31st of the same year provides a better framework for understanding what is meant here by *pantomimic*: "The statement in the Section on the "Conterminouseness of Different Minds" that "they certainly have *Space* in common" does go far at least toward wiping out that "idiotic spat". That proposition seems to me to be the corner stone of any philosophy of communication that makes it a real process & not a pantomime." [119] Hocking is not willing to accept any version of idealism that would result in monadism, as much as he is

[118] W. E. Hocking. *The Elementary Experience of Other Conscious Being in Its Relations to the Elementary Experience of Physical and Reflexive Objects* (Harvard: Dissertation, 1904) iv.
[119] W. James. *The Correspondence of William James, Vol.X*. Skrupkelis (eds.) (Berkeley, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002)

not willing to exclude that mutual experience of true physical space that any idealistic absorption of being into thought, would systematically exclude. As Manferdini has it: "Hocking is convinced that the active phase of cognition be secondary and dependent upon the passive phase. While Royce strives to interpret the apparent *givenness* of experience as a result of the subject's spontaneity, on the contrary, Hocking stresses the coefficient of passivity and essential receptivity that lies at the bottom of experiencing and knowing."[120] As the following extract shows, Hocking is willing to retain the heterogeneity of thought and being, self and Nature against the resolution of both into a pure dialectical process:

> This judgment puts an end to subjectivism of a solipsistic variety; but it might accord with a mutual subjectivism, in which the objectivity of a physical object lies in the circumstance that other minds agree in perceiving it (…) That objectivity of the physical world whereby we consider it as not-ourselves is due to its source in this active non-ego, not to the fact that it is shared by each one with other equally passive or receptive knowers.
>
> So far, my theory of knowledge was realistic. But what we receive, we also retain and reproduce. In memory and imagination, we show an activity which answers immediately to the impressed action.[121]

Hocking is very cautious in the words he uses. The expression "so far" indicates that in positing the existence of an *active* nature that solicits our conscious awareness, we should never

[120] T. Manferdini, *Studi sul Pensiero Americano*, 351.
[121] W. E. Hocking. "Some Second Principles." *Contemporary American Philosophy: Personal Statements*, Vol. I. George Plimpton Adams and William Pepperell Montague (eds.) (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1930) 392.

marginalize the subject's active response (*Urteil*) that judges the *impressed action*. This implies that consciousness does not create everything nor is knowledge reducible to its fundamental function. In so expressing his epistemological and ontological orientation, Hocking comes close to a model for intersubjectivity that had been presented by Feuerbach a century earlier. "For I have the hundred dollars (*Talern*)," Feuerbach says, "only in the mind, but the other dollars I have in the hand (*Wirklicheit*). The former exists just for me; the latter, however, exist also for others - they can be felt and seen (…) Not Alone but only with others, does one reach notions and reason in general." [122] Despite the inaccurate translation, what is worth noticing here is that Feuerbach makes use of the famous Kantian distinction between the possible and the actual thalers to ground his theory of intersubjective experience, something that Kant himself had not thematized. Similarly to Feuerbach, Hocking understands that only a realistic ontology can get us out of solipsism.[123] The overcoming of one's own solipsistic sphere depends on whether the hundred thalers exist in reality (*Wirklicheit*) or if they are simply imaginary *(in der Vorstellung)*. This comparison will perhaps help the reader understand Hartshorne's confusion. As Hartshorne has it, in as much as Hocking is willing to preserve the reality of time and contingency, he is a realist, but in as much he tries to show how the known object becomes part of the reality of the knower, he is an idealist. What Hartshorne seems to miss in his assessment of Hocking's thought is the important fact that one thing is to say: there is no distinction between the knower and the known and therefore knower and known are a product of one's own consciousness, and another thing is to say: the given becomes part of the world of the experiencer but it is not reduceable to it. In the first case the

[122] L. Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. M. Vogel with an intro by T.E. Wartenberg, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986) 39; 58-59.
[123] For more on Feuerbach's intersubjecivity see: A. Schmidt, *Emanzipatorische Sinnlichkeit: Ludwig Feuerbachs anthropologischer Materialismus*, (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag: 1973); C. A. Wilson, *Feuerbach and the Search for Otherness*, (New York: P. Lang, 1989).

distinction evaporates, in the second case it is retained both epistemologically and ontologically. It is this composite, hybrid perhaps, dimension of Hocking's philosophy that must be clear to us before we move to a more thorough analysis of *nuclear experience*. As we shall soon see, this realistic ontology that *nuclear experience* demands lays the foundations for a theory of intersubjectivity that has, among its fundamental features, the corporeal dimension, our physical bodies moving in space and interacting with nature.

IV: FROM THE I TO THE THOU. THE ORIGINARY WAY OF EXPERIENCING OTHER MINDS

Now that the main features of the inner structure of *nuclear experienc*e have been revealed, we can confidently explore Hocking's intersubjectivity. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the spirit of both Royce and James permeates many aspects of Hocking's theory of *nuclear experience*. The reasons are evident. Hocking's intention is to ground intersubjectivity in a realistic ontology (James) while simultaneously recuperating those primary forms of intellectualization (activity/spontaneity) of the given that *pure experience* would methodologically reject (Royce). But in doing so, Hocking does not carry out the typical idealistic/Hegelian/Roycean move that would deprive the given of its independent epistemological status. The objective core is not simply absorbed into the world of thought, it rather is *received* by consciousness. By this it is meant that it is not consciousness' original product. Nor can it be said that it does not exist unless consciousness liberates it from its empirical status as given. As the reader will certainly realize, such a manner of problematizing the nature of experience reveals a lot more about Hocking's way of addressing, on the one hand, the issue of intersubjectivity, and, on the other hand, the manner of approaching the inner constitution of experience. As Hocking's son rightly points out: "The early technical shaping of Hocking's philosophy may be traced through interactions with the thought of James, Royce, and Husserl."[124] It is then through the interaction between phenomenology and American philosophy that we need to work our way through Hocking's intersubjectivity. The space dedicated in this chapter to Husserl's phenomenology is for the sake

[124] Richard B. Hocking. "William Ernest Hocking 1873-1966." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 40:118 – 119 (1966).

of showing how the thought of the latter leads Hocking to explore philosophical territories that were left uncharted by both James and Royce. The final goal is twofold: on the one hand to estimate Hocking's indebtedness to the phenomenological tradition and, the other hand, to shed some light on Hocking's peculiar contribution to the philosophy of intersubjectivity.

If we look at Hocking's commemorative essay for the centenary of the birth of phenomenology's father, the circumstances that bring the young philosopher to opt for a study period with Husserl are best described as limited and constraining: "Royce, James, Münsterberg had their own recommendations. Wundt was in Leipzig: Royce was hoping great things from his *Logik*, the logic of a psychologist. Dilthey, though aged and ill, was still in Berlin; Stumpf, Paulsen, Pfleiderer, Simmel were there. Kuno Fischer was at Heidelberg; and Windelband was just now arriving there from Strassburg. I had already conceived an interest in Rickert, then in Freiburg […] Young Husserl was decidedly a risk, a double risk since my Harvard sponsors might be perplexed." [125] We can get a sense of what Hocking really means by his Harvard sponsors being perplexed by looking at Münsterberg's reaction after Hocking's intention to study with Husserl at Göttingen is manifested: "I received from Professor Münsterberg (…) a rather sharp note (…) that the Department "did not grant fellowships in order that students might seclude themselves in provincial universities"." [126] There seem to be two main reasons as to why Hocking prefers Husserl over the above-mentioned figures. The first is Hocking's overall epistemological orientation at the time, which, as he clearly points out in the essay, makes Husserl a good fit, especially in terms of philosophical skills to hone in view of the chosen epistemological track: "Natorp had generously

[125] "W. E. Hocking. "From the early days of the *Logische Untersuchungen*." *Edmund Husserl 1859–1959: Recueil Commémoratif Publié a l'occasion du centenaire de la naissance du philosophe* (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), 2.
[126] W. E. Hocking. "From the early days of the *Logische Untersuchungen*." 5.

thumbed through with me the autumn announcements (…) If your main concern is in epistemology, there is a young man in Göttingen (…) His name is Husserl."[127] Husserl's anti-psychologism reinforces such a decision: "I (Hocking) had already conceived a distrust for psychologism in normative thinking."[128] However, it is the deeper metaphysical orientation that the opportunity of studying with the Husserl can offer, that makes such a decision more of a gratifying option for the young student: "I hoped for some stiff analysis of the bases of metaphysical truth by a man who saw that reasoning is something else than association and pragmatic purposing." [129] While Hocking is purely Brentanian, if not purely Jamesian in his dismissal of associationism, his dissatisfaction with pragmatism is indicative of a necessity to move beyond what, under many respects, is retrospectively perceived as a distinctively American way towards philosophy that Hocking finds little affinity with. We don't need to go any further into Hocking's relationship with pragmatism as we did earlier, but what is worth noticing here is that this conflictual relationship originates early on in his career. Despite this self-proclaimed departure from the philosophical world of his American supervisors, as a student in Husserl's seminar, Hocking has the chance to read the *Logische Untersuchungen* and notice the profound affinity that some of its themes have with Royce's philosophical trajectory: "*Elemente einer phänomenologischen Aufklärung der Erkenntnis.* (Elements of a Phenomenological Clarification of Knowledge). (The *Erster Abschnitt* (First Section) entitled the *Objectivirenden Intentionen und Erfüllungen* (Objectifying Intention and Fulfillments) reminded me at once of Royce's doctrine of the real as "fulfillment of purpose," expounded in his two volumes, *The World and the*

[127] W. E. Hocking. "From the early days of the *Logische Untersuchungen*." 1.
[128] W. E. Hocking. "From the early days of the *Logische Untersuchungen*." 2.
[129] W. E. Hocking. "From the early days of the *Logische Untersuchungen*." 2.

Individual, exactly synchronous (1900 and '01) with Husserl's two volumes."[130] If on the one hand Hocking recognizes the deep affinity that phenomenology has with the work of the American idealist, the pragmatic character of Royce's approach makes the world of pure consciousness as disclosed by phenomenological investigation more appealing. The descriptive approach that phenomenology offers does perhaps more justice to the nature of experience than any investigation of the pragmatic outcome of ideas.

It is perhaps through the medium of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* that Hocking is redirected to the physical and corporeal sphere and to the role that this plays within intersubjective experience. Although there is agreement that intersubjectivity becomes a major concern only in the later Husserl (just think of the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*) the exploration of the communicative function in the first logical Investigation can already be considered an *in fieri* theory of intersubjectivity. The emphasis that Husserl puts on the physicality of speech: its capacity to effectively translate the mental into the physical, later becomes a theme in *Meaning of God in Human Experience.* As Husserl has it: "What first makes mental commerce possible, and turns connected speech into discourse, lies in the correlation among the corresponding physical and mental experience of communicating persons which is effected by the physical side of speech." [131] This passage must have reasonably left a positive impression on Hocking, especially if we consider that in his treatment of the world of *description* (the world of science) Royce had declared that the corporeal sphere could not effectively translate the mental: "His body is merely a very imperfect translation of his mind into the describable language of space." [132] It is only through the mediation of the Absolute Self that someone else's mind becomes accessible to me in the world of

[130] W. E. Hocking. "From the early days of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, 3.
[131] E. Husserl. *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay, London: Routledge 1973. 277.
[132] J. Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Company, 1892/1920) 419.

appreciation: "A and B, however, are in their actual and appreciable relations by virtue of the part they both play in the inner self-consciousness of the organic and inclusive Self (…) In him they are together, in so far as each of them thinks of the other. Another person of whom I think is, as such, not the cause, but the appreciable object of my thoughts."[133] But such a model for intersubjectivity remains abstract. It evades the primordial way in which another person's mind is given to us in experience. Speech serves this specific function in as much as it realizes itself in the form of a physical occurrence that authentically translates the mental. In *Ideas II* (46) Husserl explains how*:* "In order to establish a relationship between myself and an other, in order to communicate something to him, a Bodily relation, a Bodily connection by means of physical occurrences, must be instituted. I have to go over and speak to him." [134] Physicality is what sets the knowledge of other selves into motion and at the same time it is what contributes to the knowledge of other selves. Despite it being an indirect way of displacing someone's conscious thoughts and intentions, the sphere of materiality remains a privileged medium through which another mind is authentically given to us as "another mind" or self. Husserl will later come back to this point in the fifth *Cartesian Meditation* in which he emphasizes the primordial awareness of the other as other, in other words, of the other as a being that is distinct from my peculiar *sphere of consciousness*: "This being there in person (*leibhaftig)*[135] does not keep us from admitting forthwith that, properly speaking neither the other Ego himself, nor his subjective processes or his appearances themselves, nor anything else belonging to his own essence, becomes given in our experience originally. If it were, if what belongs to the other's own essence were directly

[133] J. Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 413.
[134] E. Husserl. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht-Boston-London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989) p. 176.
[135] Though correct, Cairns' translation obscures the corporeal aspect of Husserl's discussion. *Leibhaftig* can also be rendered as "in the flesh" or "bodily present."

accessible, it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I myself would be the same." [136] This elucidation is extremely important because it solves an issue that had been at the root of Wilhelm Schuppe's philosophy of immanence: "Just be very quiet, my dear Sir, says the solipsist, you are only my representation - *Sein Sie nur ganz still, Lieber Herr, sagt der Solipsist, Sie sind ja nur meine Vorstellung*."[137] We must keep the I-Thou demarcation at the very basis of intersubjective experience, or else our individual essence will coincide with someone else's essence. What any true overcoming of solipsism demands is that the experience of the other be an experience of the other as truly "other". The I-Thou difference depends on whether the sphere of materiality is preserved for if physical expression plays no part in our theories of intersubjectivity all we are left with is telepathic communication: "Telepathy would save, presumably, the trouble of expression […] It would connect the two termini directly, without the complex series of irrelevant means."[138] But: "Even to the telepathic fancy," Hocking further explains, "the physical presence and vocal evidence of the other's thought remains the *standard experience.*" [139]

Therefore, at its *standard* level, any theory of intersubjective experience must assume physicality as its point of departure, for, if it is true that the corporeal (for Hocking as much as for the Husserl of *Ideas II*) can be assumed as the primordial horizon within which the mental sphere offers itself*,* what is also true is that this point of departure must necessarily presuppose the idea that the mental sphere coexist in organic unity with the corporeal. The opposite truth would imply the inability of the corporeal to effectively translate the mental, something that would contradict

[136] E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations, An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 109.
[137] Wilhelm Schuppe, "Der Solipsismus," *Zeitschrift für immanente Philosophie*, Volume 3, (Berlin, 1898) 327-357.
[138] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 257.
[139] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 257.

the very nature of *standard experience* and its status as an authentic donation of the other as other. It is hard not to detect here Hocking's implicit response to the Cartesian dualism of *res extensa* and *res cogitans*. While their ontological distinctness is for Hocking undeniable, their mutual otherness (their character of being other to one another) is a matter that requires further philosophical clarification. Anything that is *other* is for Hocking *obstinate* (it resists the power of external activity) but is also *creative* - which means that it has the capacity to impose its power onto something else. One object that, in this specific sense, is other to us, is nature. Nature is that totality of physical objects towards which our knowledge activity is directed, but it is also that totality that "demands our submissive attention, our empirical attitude."[140] In its being external to us nature solicits our knowledge. In so doing, it reveals its obstinacy and creativity. But being *creative* and *obstinate* qualifies the being of another mind as well. Seen from a purely egoic sphere, whenever I face the active and creative response of another self (that is, of another mind as distinct from mine) my knowledge and will are initially disrupted. This disruption in my will and thinking tells me that another mind exists, a mind that shares the same qualities which nature is made of: "I would not seek to minimize this independent priority, even obstinacy, of Nature. For it is just in this character of ultimate opposition to me and my wishes (…) that Nature begins to assume for me the unmistakable aspect of Other Mind." [141]

Matter in its appearance as body is at once the principle that connects the I with the Thou and the principle that particularizes them: "In truth, minds must be occupied with matter in order to be of interest to one another; whence it may appear that matter supplies the principle of attraction between spirits, as well as between bodies — the principle at once of attraction and

[140] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 284.
[141] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 283 – 284.

separation." [142] Given that matter as body always appears in organic unity with mind and given that obstinacy and creativity are features that both substances share; it is not the self as a pure mind that we seek to encounter, but rather, as Hocking specifies, the "Mind-in-union-with-Nature." Getting to know the mind-in-union-with-Nature implies getting to know those ideas and intentions that the mind-in-union-with-Nature expresses. If the chance of grasping those ideas directly is to us precluded, what is not precluded is the possibility of experiencing their visible embodiment. Ideas require a descent into matter to reach their full expression: "It is the assumption that men first have thoughts and then later express them (…) the expression of a thought is an integral part of taking possession of that thought (…) descent into physical expression is a progress into valid and active existence." [143] Mindful of the lesson learned from Royce, Hocking reaffirms the *unfinished* character of ideas, their constitutive malleability to our active contribution. We fulfill (finish) the meaning of ideas that would otherwise remain *unfinished*. However, as Marcel rightly notices, Hocking removes that aura of pragmatism that characterizes, if not necessarily Royce's theory of meaning, certainly the instrumentalist notion of idea: "The definitive characteristic of an idea is that it first lodges its meaning in what Hocking calls a region of indifference before it can enter into legitimate association with feeling and action. This region of indifference remains, however, a "non-impulsive background""[144] With this move, Hocking is able to strategically dispose of the organic and necessary connection between idea and action, for, as we know from

[142] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 255.
[143] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 258.
[144] G. Marcel, "Solipsism Surmounted," L. S. Rouner (ed.) *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization*. *Essays in Honor of William Ernest Hocking* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1966), 26. On this aspect see also: David W. Rodick, Gabriel Marcel and American Philosophy; The Religious Dimension of Experience (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017). An earlier and more elaborate explanation of Hocking's anti-pragmatist notion of idea can be found in Manferdini's interpretation: "What is here alluded to (by Hocking) is the 'pragmatic' theory of ideas: said theory exhausts the function of an idea in its intimate volitional dynamic, acknowledging in it just an originary conditioning on the part of the subject who then formulates it as expression and instrument of their own operative and pragmatic impulse, negating any essential 'external' objective reference, that is, the implication of a real being that would surpass the spectrum of mere ideality." See: T. Manferdini, *Studi sul Pensiero Americano*, 323.

the *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, the primal destiny of an idea is, first and foremost, to terminate into a feeling. As Hocking points out: "Wine must be defined, officially and otherwise, by its relation to the grape, ultimately by its root in nature: apart from this particular source in nature wine is not wine, though perfectly imitating all possible wine-feelings and wine-reactions. To lodge meanings somewhere in Nature seems to guarantee their genuineness; as if all meanings must be made to touch base in a *region of indifference* before they may spin lawful alliances with feeling and action."[145] Such a *region of indifference* or *non-impulsive background* where ideas-meaning find their initial lodgment prior to attaching themselves to either a feeling or action is nature, substance, or objective reality. It becomes then clear how the material sphere as nature can effectively function as the expressive support of ideas. Since the body is also material it converts those ideas that a mind contains into a corresponding material manifestation: "The body is an incredibly intricate and exact *metaphor* of every inner movement of that Other Mind. To every shade of thought and motive, there corresponds some change in the body, reflecting in its own different sphere each type of variation to which the inner state is subject."[146]

Within the general economy of the *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, the investigation of the role that the mind-body organic unity plays within the process of discovery of other selves leaves out the question of how the will concretizes itself through bodily movements directed towards nature. If it is the mind-in-union-with-Nature that we want to know, how are we to detect its intentions? As Hocking concludes: "Body seems to do no more in separating than to fix and define the simple other-ness of that Other from myself; in all other respects it does but give me that Other Mind in more tangible form than by experience of its inner life on its own grounds

[145] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 158.
[146] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 262.

alone, I could have it." [147] The function of the body does not cease nor resolves into the exposure of someone's ideas or feelings. The body receives the creative impact and obstinacy of nature and other minds but also expresses its will and desire upon them. In Hocking's later works the principle of the body as bearer of someone's will or, better put, the body as organ of someone's will, receives much more consideration. Hocking explores the will-body relationship from an angle of vision that brings us into a level of psychological investigation that exceeds the descriptive/ phenomenological domain of his first major work and opens a window towards the explanative/ psycho-biological understanding of psychic processes.

The first difficulty that one faces in approaching the question of the physiobiological origin of psychic occurrences is that of accurately tracing the totality of causal nexuses occasioning them. As Hocking rightly points out in the *Self: Its Body and Freedom* (1928), when it comes to explaining the origin of the mind-body causal nexus, there are no observable facts that could speak in favor of either a corporeal or a mental origin: "For no one ever perceives the mind in the act of affecting the body, nor the body affecting the mind; on this crucial point of the theory, there are no observable facts." [148] This difficulty emerges more evidently with emotions. The background against which Hocking develops his theory of will/body relationality is without much doubt James's *What is an Emotion* (1884). According to James, The totality of physical responses that occur during an emotional event (totality that can be registered by direct observation or through the aid of Angelo Mosso's plethysmograph) can say a lot about what an emotion really is. James is adamant that the route to follow is that of embodied experience, with respect to which even introspection confirms its undeniable epistemological and ontological validity: "The more closely

[147] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 265.
[148] W. E. Hocking, *The Self; Its Body and Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), 56.

I scrutinise my states, the more persuaded I become, that whatever moods, affections, and passions I have, are in very truth constituted by, and made up of, those bodily changes we ordinarily call their expression or consequence; and the more it seems to me that if I were to become corporeally anesthetic, I should be excluded from the life of the affections, harsh and tender alike, and drag out an existence of merely cognitive or intellectual form." [149] From a methodological standpoint, one could easily argue that James confuses description and causal explanation, but also how things are subjectively felt in their immediacy and how things are taken to be through the lens of logical scrutiny. At some point in the essay, this awareness seems to emerge but is soon left out: "It is true, that although most people, when asked, say that their introspection verifies this statement, some persist in saying theirs does not." [150] But it is exactly when some form of introspection is carried out that none of us can speak in favor or against the model provided by James.

Hocking's critique of the James/Lange theory is no less rooted in the physio-biological explanation of emotions. At a distance of almost thirty years from the first formulation of James's theory of emotion, the experiments conducted by Spanish physician Gregorio Marañón had already furnished a comprehensive disproof of James's theory.[151] The injection of adrenalin in certain patients showed that, although visceral responses were taking place, there were in many cases no real corresponding emotional response but only a cold acceptance of the sensations felt. As W. B. Cannon concluded, the: "Adrenalin induces in human beings typical bodily changes which are reported as sensations (…) in some cases these sensations are reminiscent of previous emotional experiences but do not renew or revive those experiences, that in exceptional cases of preparatory

[149] W. James, William. "What Is an Emotion?" *Mind* 9, no. 34 (1884), 194.
[150] W. James, William. "What Is an Emotion?," 193.
[151] Walter B. Cannon. "The James-Lange Theory of Emotions: A Critical Examination and an Alternative Theory." *The American Journal of Psychology* 39, no. 1/4 (1927): 106–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/1415404.

emotional sensitization the bodily changes may tip the scales towards a true affective disturbance." [152] This proves that for the most part the body-mind causality model is imperfect. Driven by the results of the experiments conducted by Cannon and Britton in 1925 that showed that the mind has an active control over bodily responses, Hocking is led to infer that the "exciting idea is in the mind" and that the mind "consents, or does not consent, to the further development of these expressive changes in the muscles under its control."[153] According to Hocking, the body is a part or *region* of the mind "the body, instead of being an additional fact, is required by the mind as a part of its own being."[154] It is in this specific sense that we can refer to the body as the expression of someone's will. And the will expresses itself in the form of consent/not-consent or control and restraint: "A self without a body would be a self without a will. The body, then, as a necessary condition for the possibility of will, is an essential region of the self." [155]

In gradually unfolding this position, Hocking comes close to Husserl's *Ideas II* (54). In this particular section, Husserl refers to living body (*Leib*) as something distinct from the Ego but still belonging to it in the form of something lying *over and against* it: "the Body is my Body, and it is mine in the first place as my "over and against," my *ob-ject* (gegenstand) just as the house is my object, something I see or can see, something I touch or can touch, etc." [156] At the same time the body is not like a mere object to me, it is the locus of physical sensations and the instrument of my will: "To be sure, the Body has its special virtues compared with other things, and as a result

[152] Walter B. Cannon. "The James-Lange Theory of Emotions," 114.
[153] W. E. Hocking, *The Self; Its Body and Freedom*, 64.
[154] W. E. Hocking, *The Self; Its Body and Freedom*, 80.
[155] W. E. Hocking, *The Self; Its Body and Freedom*, 84. According to L. S. Rouner, Hocking's conception of Self as shaped by body is akin to Chinese though. See L S. Rouner "The Metaphysics of Community: William Ernest Hocking's Doctrine of Intersubjectivity." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 15(3) (1988), 255-267.
[156] E. Husserl. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht-Boston-London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989) p. 223.

it is "subjective" in a pre-eminent sense, i.e., as bearer of fields of sense, as organ of free movements, and so as organ of the will, as bearer of the center and as seat of the fundamental directions of spatial orientation." [157] The body as *Leib* is not equal to the body as *Körper*, in other words, to the physical body as understood by natural sciences. It is on this methodological ground that Hocking differs from Husserl. A brief look at the Neo-Kantian divide between human and natural sciences will clarify the issue at stake. Think of Brentano's separation between a *descriptive psychology* (or *psychognosy*) and a *genetic psychology* based on the physio-biological/causal explanation of psychic phenomena,[158] or even of Dilthey's notion of *explanatory* psychology as a discipline that subordinates mental life: "to a causal system by means of a number of well-determined elements." [159] We can feel an echo of this discussion in Husserl's defense of phenomenology in *Ideas I* 60. Phenomenology is there presented as a "*purely descriptive eidetic doctrine of the immanental consciousness-formations*"[160] Unlike the just mentioned thinkers, Hocking decides to look at the biological and physiological paradigms trustingly: "Modern psychology owes its rapid development largely to its willingness to learn of the human self through the human body."[161] It is only when the mind is embodied and understood according to the explanative models provided by natural sciences that psychology can provide us with a more thorough understanding of the human psyche and a more refined comprehension of that very process through which the body translates consciousness. As Hocking points out, recovering a theme that he had already explored in *Meaning of God in Human Experience*: "There is a complete

[157] E. Husserl. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*, 224.
[158] F. Brentano. *Descriptive Psychology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 4.
[159] W. Dilthey. W. *Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977) p. 23.
[160] Husserl, E. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*. Trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht-Boston-London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1983) 137.
[161] W. E. Hocking, *The Self; Its Body and Freedom*, 16.

and instant expression of every state of mind in the infinitely delicate and plastic patterns of the body, as it deals with its natural environment." [162] However, the investigation of physical manifestations should not lead us to the ontological identification of the corporeal with the psychical, nor to the absorption of the psychical into the biological. In other words, the two must retain their ontological dignity and be grasped through their respective methodological patterns. While it is certainly true that the body occupies a physical space and the experience of space (mine as much as yours) constitutes one of the modalities in which we can experience one another's minds, no mental event can be said to be spatial, given that "a distant object is not a distant thought." [163] Regardless of the multiplicity of relations that can be traced between a body and the objects surrounding it, space remains one for a body, while the mind can hypothesize the existence of multiple spaces and live in a multiplicity of "time-orders at once." [164] Any physical and psychical event can be said to *take time* in the sense of having a temporal before and after, but no memory permeates physical events; there is no *retention* of the past in the physical world: "If we try to identify the mind and the body, we find we must set them apart. If we try to separate them, we must rejoin them. The solution must be found by retaining our sense of the difference between these two objects, and yet recognizing that they belong together in a single system." [165]

Methodologically speaking, the psychological model that Hocking is more prone to adopt in his discussion of the body straddles the distinction between description and explanation and the distinction between psychology as a natural science and psychology as a human science. This evidence leads us, at least in part, to resituate Hocking's discussion into the American

[162] W. E. Hocking, *The Self; Its Body and Freedom*, 20.
[163] W. E. Hocking, *The Self; Its Body and Freedom*, 29.
[164] W. E. Hocking, *The Self; Its Body and Freedom,* 35.
[165] W. E. Hocking, *The Self; Its Body and Freedom,* 49.

philosophical and psychological soil. In fact, his attempt to integrate the analysis of pure consciousness (introspection) with the physio-biological causality typical of natural sciences finds an antecedent in Mary Whiton Calkins: "Explanation, however, has a more distinctive meaning: to explain means not merely to describe and to classify, but to assign the cause, to account for a phenomenon (…) The methods of psychology are, in general, these three methods, of every science: analysis, classification and explanation. But besides these fundamental forms of procedure every science has certain methods peculiar to itself; and the method which distinguishes psychology is that of introspection." [166] Similarly to Calkins, Hocking believes that a purely explanative psychology would not lead us to a better understanding of psychological phenomena. But he equally is dismissive of a purely phenomenological/descriptive account of the human psyche, as the following extract shows:

> But if one external view of the self seems to us more nearly adequate than another, that can only be because we have some standard to judge by. And this can only mean that we have a knowledge of self which is independent of that external view. It is, in truth, impossible to abandon the internal view of self in behalf of the outer. The older refutations of materialism remain valid in principle for the newer forms of naturalism. No physical explanation of *the self can alter the fact that the self is what if appears to itself to be*. [167]

[166] Mary Whiton Calkins, *An Introduction to Psychology*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), 17.
[167] W. E. Hocking, *The Self; Its Body and Freedom*, 27 – 28.

The methodological status of introspection had been a matter of discussion in American psychology for some time. As a member of James's seminary of psychology in the fall of 1890, Calkins had become familiarized with the James's preference for the introspective method in psychology: "*Introspective observation is what we have to rely on, first and foremost and always*," and decided to keep it as a fundamental ingredient in her study of the human psyche. While on different occasions James had been not entirely sure of the capacity of introspection to shed light on the phenomena of consciousness, so as to raise serious doubts as to its exhaustiveness: "Whenever I try to become sensible of my thinking activity as such, what I catch is some bodily fact (…) It seems as if consciousness as an inner activity were rather a *postulate* than a sensibly given fact," [168] Calkins manifested a greater faith in the pedagogical value of introspective analysis and its methodological priority over other methods: "I am convinced that exercises in introspection, whenever possible experimentally controlled, should precede both the reading of textbooks and the hearing of lectures." [169] The pinnacle of this introspective attitude is, without much doubt, Calkins' personalistic psychology, with respect to which it is hard not find traces in Hocking's previous discussion and, as we shall soon see, in Hocking's discussion to come. Calkins explains how her psychological view of personalistic psychology integrates introspection with physiological and biological data: "The first and more strictly psychological form of personalistic psychology, though it does not disregard the neurological correlates of experience, the muscular reactions which accompany different mental attitudes, and the biological values of consciousness, none the less teaches that the self has a body and is not, in any sense, constituted by the body." [170]

[168] W. James, Psychology, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1892/1920), 467.
[169] Mary Whiton Calkin, "Mary Whiton Calkins". In Murchison, C. (ed.). *A History of Psychology in Autobiography*. Vol. I. (Clark University Press; Russell & Russell/Atheneum Publishers, 1930), 36.
[170] Mary Whiton Calkin, "Mary Whiton Calkins," 44.

This shift of logical and ontological priority, seen under the lens of our previous considerations, provides a context to Hocking's idea that: although the mind or self requires a body to express its will, it is not simply an instrument at its service. Nor is it, with Calkins, that a mind can operate without a body: "The third view (and the one which I hold) of the psychologist's self regards the self as distinct from body, but related to it. Thus, so far from "refusing to allow the self to have a body," I insist that it precisely *has* a body, and does not *consist in* body, is not made up of body-and-mind."[171] From a methodological standpoint, such a set of relations together with their respective pattern of priorities imply that in any attempt to grasp the nature of consciousness or self it is necessary to integrate description with explanation, introspection with external observation, mind with body. But it also implies the resistance against any easy reductionism of the self to its bodily functions.

This methodological recovery of introspection clarifies why in addressing the question of how other minds-in-union-with-nature are experienced through sense-perception, Hocking is also methodologically preserving the mere givenness of other selves in pure consciousness. To better assess this aspect, it is necessary to work our way chronologically backwards. As was earlier mentioned, despite the radically different methodological approaches, Royce's and James's solutions to solipsism converge around the fact that an argument from analogy is required on our part to be able to account for a theory of intersubjective experience. Hocking is not of the same opinion. Like Theodor Lipps before him,[172] Hocking is interested in the givenness of other selves

[171] Mary Whiton Calkins. "Psychology as Science of Self: I. Is the Self Body or Has It Body?" *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 5, no. 1 (1908): 14.

[172] "Eine völlig irrige Antwort auf diese Frage nun wäre die: Ich beurteile «die fremden Lebensäußerungen» nach Analogie der eigenen«; d. h. ich weiß, daß den eigenen Lebensäußerungen ein Bewußtsein zugrunde liegt, diesen Lebensäußerungen dieses, jenen jenes; und nun sehe ich außer »mir« gleichartige Lebensäußerungen, und schließe, daß auch diesen gleichartige Bewußtseinserlebnisse zugrunde liegen, die ich dann analog den eigenen zur Einheit eines Bewußtseins oder Ich zusammenfasse/ A completely wrong answer to this question would now be: I judge the "foreign's life expressions" in analogy with my own; I know that there is a consciousness at the basis of my own life

in immediate experience, that is, prior to any thought or inference (argument by analogy) that a subject would normally operate with the purpose of further acknowledging the presence of another fellow being. This methodological stance is wholly consistent with Hocking's early theory of experience. Things are given to us as *Vorstellungen* prior to any formulation of an *Urteil that* would validate them and prior to any thinking activity that would turn them into novel objects of thought. Although none of these moments within experience can be said to establish a supremacy over the other, it remains nonetheless certain that without a *Vorstellung* there would be no objective core towards which direct our attention. Other selves engaging with nature and exposing their feelings and intentions through their bodies must be present in our pre-consciousness before any imitation or analogy with our bodies takes place. It is for this reason that in *Meaning of God in Human Experience* Hocking introduces the notion of *ultimate empiricism.*

Ultimate empiricism (a word that emerges only in Hocking's first work and for reasons that will soon be elucidated) must not be confused with *widened empiricism*. Widened empiricism is a stretched-out conception of empiricism, one that looks at the nature of experience as a combination of passive and active elements, of immediacy and elaboration of the given, an aspect that had also emerged earlier in our analysis of *nuclear experience*. Hocking attributes this label to his and Marcel's version of empiricism, albeit the primary features of it can be found in Hegel, Royce and, to a lesser extent, in Husserl's *Ideas I*. As Hocking says of Marcel "But more immediately his disaffection sprang from his elemental trust in his own experience, his indomitable empiricism in that widened and heterodox sense which was, I believe, one original bond of

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expressions, to these life expressions this one, to those life-expressions that one, and now I see outside myself similar life expressions and I infer that at the basis of those there are experiences of consciousness of the same kind [as mine] that I then — in analogy to my own — gather into the unity of one consciousness or "I"" (trans. Mine)" T. Lipps, *Leitfaden der Psychologie* (Leipzig: 1909) p. 48. For a more detailed discussion about the topic the reader can refer to A. Gurwitsch. *Human encounters in the social world* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1979).

agreement between us." [173] The recourse to such a heterodox empiricism is motivated by the preoccupation that a greater reliance on immediacy or immediate experience might turn into a form of naïve empiricism. While immediacy is that with which or from which we all start: "In its philosophical aspect, to know when we have a datum, and to receive it as such, is the beginning if not of wisdom at least of common sense, -in the spirit of a genial aside of Whitehead's, "After all, here we are! We don't go behind that, we begin with it,"" [174] it does not provide us with whole of experience. If *widened empiricism* introduces the element of activity and responsiveness to the given, *ultimate empiricism* reminds us of the methodological importance of investigating the domain of immediacy, or, in other words, of pure experience. Similar to this distinction is Hocking's operation in *Meaning of God in Human Experience.* While the primary goal of the book is that of bridging the chasm between feeling and thought, the secondary goal is, at least to Hocking's that of complying with the path indicated by *ultimate empiricism*: "An ultimate empiricism, a deference to what is given, not makeable." [175] By carrying out this deference to the given, Hocking is able to intervene, on the one hand, on the limits of James's investigation of pure experience and, on the other hand, on Royce's critique of immediate experience (*second conception of being*). The presence of this methodological linchpin can be easily felt by looking at the following extract:

[173] W. E. Hocking. "Marcel and the Ground Issues of Metaphysics." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 14, No. 4, (1954), p. 449. For a better understanding of Hocking's widened empiricism in relation to Royce and Husserl see "On Royce's Empiricism*." Journal of Philosophy*, 53 (February 2), (1956), 57-63.
[174] W. E. Hocking. "Marcel and the Ground Issues of Metaphysics." 447.
[175] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, XVII. See for example L. S. Rouner. *Within Human Experience: The Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) or M. L. Furse. *Experience and Certainty: William Ernest Hocking and Philosophical Mysticism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

> One may seek to discover and formulate infallible criteria or signs, by which we may certainly know that we have before us another conscious being. This way out has its plausibility; for is it not the sight of other bodies and expressive movements like or analogous to our own which actually compels our judgment that another mind is here? Or, if we learn (as from Royce and Baldwin) that we rather interpret our own bodies by those of others, than the reverse; and if we find (by first steps in comparative psychology) that analogies soon fail as we try to test the consciousness of animals and plants; if we abandon, as we must, the whole argument from analogy as hopeless, certainly the psychology of our impulsive social reactions will reveal some reliable stimuli, whose presence infallibly indicates other mind.[176]

Although the expression does not appear in the extract, there is little doubt that the enactment of *ultimate empiricism* (the deference to the given, not the makeable) is what allows for a pre-inferential acknowledgment of another self's existence. This methodological linchpin establishes 1) a demarcation between *pure experience* and the elaboration of it 2) the attitude to be adopted with regards to the given). Unfortunately, what Hocking offers us in terms of the relationship between *ultimate empiricism* and intersubjectivity can be hardly seen as exhaustive. Still, what Hocking tells us about how the body of another fellow being is immediately perceived remains consistent with the *ultimate empiricism* agenda. If a body shifts its position in space, the continuity that said body observes in moving from one position to another is the same continuity that I observe: "as the place of that body alters from point to point continuously, a like continuous

[176] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 246-7.

change takes place in the physical experience of that other; the two continuities are identical, and we observe that continuity." [177] Regardless of the perspective in which my body and that other body stands, the *continuity* of that body's movement from point A to point B, or, vice versa, from point B to point A is the same for both of us. The same goes for other aspects of that movement, like its *identity* and *changelessness*: "And this continuous history, which cannot be duplicated by any other mind, is taken together with its view of the Changeless, to form the ground-work of its individual identity,—of which, thus, through our experience of that body, we get some literal glimpse." [178] To this explication nothing else follows. Yet, intentional or not, the lack of exhaustiveness can be explained by referring once more to the religious focus of the book. As Hocking says in the preface: "An ultimate empiricism, a deference to what is given, not makable, just in these regions of the supersensible and the supernatural, is an attitude wholly necessary to human dignity, and to true religion," [179] *Ultimate empiricism* is after all more of a device for religion than a methodological tool for intersubjectivity. Hocking also seems to willfully gloss over what constitutes a pivotal moment in one's own awareness of another self's spatiotemporal experience of the world. That pivotal moment is when I leave my peculiar spatial determinateness with the intention of occupying that another person. This moment is well explained by Husserl in *Cartesian Meditations* 53. In explaining *apperception* (Apperzeption) Husserl shows that the other self is more than a simple body occupying a space (a physical object), the other self is the bearer of someone else's life. An account of this fundamental moment in the experience of another mind remains absent from the book. If there is a common ground between *ultimate empiricism* and *apperception*, it is their non-inferential quality: "Apperception is not inference, not a thinking

[177] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 263-4
[178] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, 264
[179] W. E. Hocking. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience,* XVII.

act.[180]" To be able to experience what the other self experiences, I have to leave my positionality, as Husserl aptly suggests: "I do not apperceive the other ego simply as a duplicate of myself and accordingly as having my original sphere or one completely like mine. I do not apperceive him as having, more particularly, the spatial modes of appearance that are mine from here; rather, as we find on closer examination, I apperceive him as having spatial modes of appearance like those I should have if I should go over there and be where he is." [181] This omission on Hocking's part inevitably induces us to rethink the real motivations behind his theory of intersubjectivity. Looking at Hocking's work in its entirety can help us figure a way out of this impasse. To get outside of our monadic horizons, we must factually step out of our self-enclosed existence. We must move from a purely experiential domain to an ethical and social one. No theory of intersubjectivity, no matter how rigorous and exhaustive, can be taken as satisfactory at its purely experiential level. In this, Hocking is a perfect follower of Kant's ethical and practical philosophy: "The essential point in all determination of the will through the moral law is this (…) rejecting (…) all inclinations so far as they could be antagonistic to the law (…) All inclinations taken together (…) constitute self-regard *(solipsismus*)."[182] Overcoming solipsism is, prior to any theoretical consideration, a matter of conformity of one's own will to a postulate that is believed to be universally valid. An ethical and social concern. As we shall see, the exploration of this ethical domain that Hocking develops in his second major work clarifies what his true intentions are. To get out of the narrow limits of our subjectivity we need to explore the ethical, social, and political implications of solipsism. It is

[180] E. Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to phenomenology*, Trans. by D. Cairns (Boston-London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982) 111.
[181] E. Husserl. *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to phenomenology,* 117.
[182] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: 1956), 181.

within these domains of human experience and inquiry that the notion of *nuclear experience* reveals its true potential.

V: ETHICS AS EXPERIENCE. THE *INTERPRETATION* OF INSTINCT

The previous chapter ended with a glimpse of Hocking's effort to find the methodology that would best capture the totality of the human psyche and, with it, the conditions under which solipsism can be fully surmounted. In the "Holt-Freudian Ethics and the Ethics of Royce" (1916), which somehow represents the prelude to the author's major ethical work *Human Nature and its Remaking* (1918), the methodological concern guides Hocking's overall approach in ethics and individuation of the methodological obstacles to be overcome. In his view, the reductionism of ethical dilemmas to behavioristic mechanisms hinders our ability to provide a solid ground for collective moral improvement: "The prominence of 'behavior' in recent psychology is governing the statement of ethical and social problems, and so, to a certain extent, their solution." [183] While Hocking would see little issue in accepting J. B. Watson's premise that "Psychology is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science," and that "introspection forms no essential part of its methods," [184] he would not accept the principle that moral questions could be solved through the enactment of biological categories. If that was the case, society's moral improvement would solely depend on whether the demands of our instincts or drives are being met. Hocking is convinced of the validity of the opposite truth, that is, psychology must take a step back when it comes to finding ideals to live by and let pure ethics provide a moral ground for society's improvement, one that would strengthen its cohesion instead of subverting it.

[183] W. E. Hocking. "The Holt-Freudian Ethics and the Ethics of Royce." *The Philosophical Review* 25, no. 3 (1916), 480.
[184] J. B. Watson. *Behavior; An Introduction to Comparative Psychology* (New York: Henty Holt and Company, 1914), 1.

The "Holt-Freudian Ethics and the Ethics of Royce" can be understood as an attempt on Hocking's part to respond to the issues raised by E. B. Holt's *Freudian Wish and its Place in Ethics* (1915-16). This book merges behaviorism with Freudian psychoanalysis with the final intent to articulate an ethics of wish whose fundamental postulate is that any moral intervention within the domain of natural instincts leaves a disruptive effect on the human psyche, hence, all moral standards must be suspended and all instincts be let free.[185] In Hocking's words: "The psycho-analyst begins with a condition judged hygienically bad, namely the mental disorder. If this disorder is caused by a repression of wishes, then repression must be judged to be extrinsically bad. Professor Holt translates this clinical judgment into an ethical judgment: repression is morally bad." [186] "The ethical application itself," Hocking continues "is essentially Holt's work (…) It is Holt, and not Freud, who has said what these ideas are, and what they mean in terms of other ethical theories." [187] Such a discrepancy culminates in the behavioristic and psychoanalytic methodological frameworks ill according with each other. The psychoanalytic method admits the study of physiological responses only as visible manifestations of a patient's subconscious resistances, but, even so, subconscious resistances remain the very object of psychoanalytic investigation: "No doubt the states of consciousness thus revealed are represented in nervous structure by subtle interplay of motor settings; but the point is, that Freud neither seeks nor finds them there. Freud uses behavior as an aid to introspection. And what he finds is a radically different region of subconsciousness from that which Holt describes in the passages referred to." [188] Holt rejects the subjective-objective dichotomy in favor of pure objectivism: "It is not that we have two

[185] Hocking mentions other examples as well: H. E. Hunt, *The Hidden Self and its Mental Processes* (1921); H. C. Miller, *The New Psychology and the Teacher* (1922).
[186] W. E. Hocking. "The Holt-Freudian Ethics and the Ethics of Royce," 481.
[187] W. E. Hocking. "The Holt-Freudian Ethics and the Ethics of Royce," 480-1.
[188] W. E. Hocking. "The Holt-Freudian Ethics and the Ethics of Royce." 490.

contrasted worlds, the 'objective' and the 'subjective'; there is but one world, the objective, and that which we have hitherto not understood, have dubbed therefore the 'subjective,' are the subtler workings of integrated objective mechanisms." [189]

The issue of the relationship between subconscious/subliminal drives and moral choice had already found its way in the American philosophical and psychological scene through James, who, as historian N. G. Hale has pointed out, was the first to laid the foundations for such a debate: "James argued that evil was not fated and that moral acts could be performed through will and effort (…) Such effort was especially necessary "whenever a rare or moral ideal" or civilized inhibition was required to neutralize instinctive or habitual impulses."[190] In his attempt to reveal the fallacies of the Holtian-Freudian ethical paradigm, Hocking was therefore harking back to a problem that James's acumen had already touched upon. His overall ethical project, however, was more ambitious. It was not meant to make a clean sweep of any ethics from below (Holtian ethics) nor was it meant to ignore the latest developments in physiology and psychology. Both needs could be met through the harmonious interaction between the old-fashioned *moral idealism* of the pre-behaviorist era and the *moral realism* of natural instincts promoted by behaviorism. As he puts it: "The next step, whether in social philosophy, or in education, or in ethics, requires an understanding between whatever valid elements moral realism may contain and the valid elements of the challenged tradition. We find our initial common ground with this realism by accepting, for the purposes of the argument, the picture of original human nature as a group of instincts."[191]

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[189] E. B. Holt, *The Freudian Wish and its Place in Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1915), 93.
[190] N. G. Hale, Jr. *Freud and the Americans; The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in the United States 1876-1917* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 110-11.
[191] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929, Second Printing) IX. Although there is no evidence of Hocking being familiar with the work of Max Scheler, the same critique of Freudianism characterizes the latter's discussion on love: "The Freudian theory is a source of considerable danger: on the one hand it may impose upon ethics the quite fictitious dilemma of 'primitivism' versus 'ascetism'; on the other, there is the no less serious danger of blurring the distinction between a morally necessary and justifiable control of the

The unity of *moral idealism* and *moral realism* raises the question of what role to assign to those non directly observable traits that the behavioristic approach methodologically excludes, in other words, what role to assign to the inner self. For the unity to be actualized, the introspective/descriptive analysis of the self's ethical resources must work in conjunction with the causal explanation of instinctual responses to external stimuli. This methodological assumption implies no more no less than the harmonious coexistence of description and explanation that we have discussed earlier. As passage from *Human Nature and its Remaking's* 1918 preface further clarifies: "Certainly we cannot take the biological function of an instinct as a sufficient account of what that instinct means to a human being—as if hunger held the conscious purpose of building the body, or love were an aim to continue the species. The word 'instinct' has no magic to annul the obvious truth that satisfaction is a state of mind, nor to evade the long labor of experience in determining what can satisfy a mind. "[192] No understanding of an instinct is possible without an appreciation of what that instinct means to the person who experiences it. When the meaning of that instinct is clarified, the process of self-correction can take place. Hocking seems to have drawn inspiration from Thomas Huxley and William McDougall. The latter will serve as a psychology professor at Harvard from 1920 to 1927. While Thomas Huxley provides Hocking with a paradigm for ethics in which self-restraint balances or counterbalances human nature's need for self-assertion: "The practice of that which is ethically best (…) is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint,"

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sexual instinct, and a misguided 'repression' of it, whose effect is to promote disease." In M. Scheler. *The Nature of Sympathy*. Trans. Peter Heath London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954) 208-209. For more on this relationship consult: A. Luther. "Hocking and Scheler on Feeling," *Philosophy Today*. XII (Summer, 1968), 93-99. Another important aspect to be noticed is Hocking' use of the exact same terminology (ethical idealism and realism) that Royce had used in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (1885), albeit aptly modified to fit his own specific purposes in the book.

[192] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, X.

[193] McDougall's analysis of instinct furnishes Hocking with the idea that every pulsion must necessarily be subject to one's own meaning-making process: "The one thing common, then, to all the widely different physical impressions that produce the same physical effects, i.e. the same train of behaviour, is that they evoke the same meaning in the consciousness of the subject; hence this meaning is the essential link in each case between the series of physical impressions and the series of physical effects." [194] McDougall certainly provides a stronger basis for Hocking's ethical project than Huxley. As philosopher and psychologist Edna Heidbreder points out: the goal of McDougall's social psychology is the transformation and consequent moral improvement of human nature: *"*The whole question "Can human nature be altered"? was thus brought into the discussion, along with its many practical implications (…) He (McDougall) clearly stated and even emphasized the ways in which native tendencies undergo change and development. Both through their cognitive inlets and through their motor expressions, the instincts and native tendencies are, in his opinion, subject to enormous modification." [195] This thematic affinity between Hocking and McDougall is not unproblematic. In choosing McDougall as interlocutor for his ethical theory, Hocking ends up placing himself in an ambiguous moral space. Let us see why.

McDougall's fall in scientific respectability is generally attributed to the lectures on national eugenics entitled *Is America Safe in Democracy?* (1921).[196] However, if we consider the outright acceptance of biologically racist views among the psychologists of the day[197] and the

[193] Thomas Henry Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics; 1893," in *Selections from the Essays*, ed. By Albury Castell, (AHM Publishing Corporation: Northbrook, Illinois, 1948), 108
[194] William McDougall, *Body and Mind; A History and a Defense of Animism*, (Greenwood Press Publishers: Westport Connecticut, 1974), 268.
[195] E. Heidbreder. "William McDougall and Social psychology." *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, (1939) 34* (2), 154.
[196] W. McDougall, "Autobiography" In Murchison, C. (ed.). *A History of Psychology in Autobiography*. Vol. I. (Clark University Press; Russell & Russell/Atheneum Publishers, 1930), 213.
[197] Chas. H. Thompson. "The Conclusions of Scientists Relative to Racial Differences." *The Journal of Negro Education* 3, no. 3 (1934): 494–512.

impact that eugenics had had in the years 1910-1940,[198] McDougall's interest in parapsychology is more likely to have been the main cause.[199] In *Human Nature and its Remaking,* Hocking brings up the eugenic question directly: "Indeed, there are many who believe, at present, that our social pilots would do well to relax their strain in the field of conscious character-building and turn their attention back again to the stock. Perhaps nature was sagacious after all in making her improvements primarily at the point of reproduction. If anything extensive is to be accomplished, may not eugenics offer a better prospect than eternal discipline? The future of the race may conceivably be found in a new and scientifically developed aristocracy of blood." [200] This reference to eugenics falls immediately into the background as Hocking begins analyzing the various agencies of remaking. However, a further look at one of his lesser-known published works raises serious questions as to the role of the eugenic question within Hocking's ethical system: "But we are far from ready to say what part of the stock is "the best" (…) It is certainly clear that certain types, such as the feeble-minded, should *not* propagate than that certain others should propagate. Kindness to the defective does not require us to conceal from them the social importance of their remaining childless. A program of *negative eugenics* can be begun." [201]

The picture of human nature that Hocking accepts as valid within his ethical system is not simply that of a bundle of instincts: "We find our initial common ground with this realism by accepting, for the purposes of the argument, the picture of original human nature as a group of instincts."[202] As we know, biological heredity is strictly related to the notion of instinct: "For instincts are simply the elements of our heredity (so far as that consists in dispositions to act in

[198] G. E. Allen, "Eugenics and American social history, 1880-1950." *Genome*. 1989;31(2): 885-9.
[199] A. A. Roback, *A History of American Psychology*, (Library Publishers: New York, 1952), 258.
[200] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 19.
[201] W. E. Hocking, "What is Man?" in *Preface to Philosophy: A Textbook* (The Macmillan Company, 1946), 94-95.
[202] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, IX.

certain ways rather than in others) regarded in its common traits, not in its individual characteristics." [203] The eugenic question could be reasonably excluded from the overall ethical scheme by referring to Hocking's notion of *equal racial potency*: "No data at hand either now or in the future can exclude the hypothesis that racial stocks are *equivalent in possibility* (…) *Thus the hypothesis of equal racial potency is the only possible basis for an expanding world intercourse*." [204] If all racial stocks are equal in potency, then, there is no reason to adopt eugenic practices (controlled breeding, sterilization) with the goal of improving humanities' genetic make-up. To this it must be added that despite the overall propensity to discuss the notion of instinct from a scientific standpoint, Hocking's main intent in *Human Nature and its Remaking* rejects scientific reductionism, as William McDougall review of the book points out: "Hocking's account of human nature is based on the acceptance of instincts as the all-important foundations. But he is not very clear as to what instincts he accepts." [205] He then continues: "I venture to suggest that this wholesale 'slumping' of the instincts by Prof. Hocking is at bottom the expression of the impatience of the practical man and philosopher with the slow process of scientific analysis." [206] Hocking's discussion of instincts (*moral realism*) methodologically excludes the purely objectifying gaze of science. Hocking is more prone to look at the workings of the psyche and how these actively operate on instincts. His goal is not to present a taxonomy of instincts that would compensate the inaccuracies or flaws of the one proposed by James, or Thorndike, but rather to indicate the ethical resources that would allow society to morally grow. Still, Hocking accepts two fundamental linchpins of McDougall's theory of instinct: 1) the notion of purpose (*hormic psychology*) in

[203] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 50.
[204] W. E. Hocking, *The Spirit of World Politics*, (Macmillan Company: New York, 1932), 512-513.
[205] W. McDougall. "Motives in the Light of Recent Discussion," *Mind* 29, no. 115 (1920): 292.
[206] W. McDougall. "Motives in the Light of Recent Discussion," 293.

opposition to pure mechanistic biology: "An instinct must be defined by the nature of its goal, i.e., the change of situation which it tends to bring about: its essence is the purposive striving towards this goal;" [207] 2) McDougall's idea that human nature is such that it can freely determine the course of its actions in the world but also freely determine the amount of restraint to carry out over its impulsive drives. As Hocking explains: "Dr. McDougall finds two defects in physiological theory of behavior (…) First, its inability to account for persistence of effort toward an end with endless variability of the means employed (…) Second, its inability to account for responses which are responses to meanings." [208] Human beings do not mechanically select the means to be implemented for the effective realization of a goal. As fundamentally purposive creatures, human beings are free agents in the pursuit of the objective to be realized: "A machine may be regarded as making toward an end; but it makes for that end either by a rigidly fixed course of intermediate steps, as in case of the locomotive on its track, or else, as in case of the self-steering torpedo, by a course having a very limited range of variation." [209] It is therefore in the realm of the mental as *the pursuance of future ends and the choice of means for their attainment* (James) that a theory of instinct finds for Hocking its basis.

This manner of treating the notion of instinct, as McDougall aptly points out, has very little to share with biologically informed sciences. But very much to share with a philosophical way towards the ethical understanding of instincts. Instead of insisting, as has been mentioned before, on a taxonomy of instincts, Hocking insists on using philosophically informed notions that would best explain human nature as a system of drives. In this specific case, Hocking decides to exploit Nietzsche's notion of the *will to power* which, to him, represents the most accurate

[207] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 77.
[208] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 450.
[209] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 450.

depiction of human nature as a bundle of instincts. Still, Nietzsche's notion of the will to power requires an intersubjective conversion in order to function within Hocking's scheme of thought:

> Nietzsche's error is not that he struck a false note in human nature; but firstly that he supposed his expression to be adequate, and secondly that he thought of power as intrinsically competitive, a good which can be gained by one only at the expense of another. In our use of the phrase we shall at the outset reject both these errors. We do not regard the will to power as an adequate name for the central instinct. And we reject the competitive relation as necessarily implied in the concept of power. Power over nature is the type of all actual commonwealth. And the power of men over one another may be at the same time a power-for, — as the power which a parent has for, and over, a child. [210]

In so doing, Hocking reconnects with the path indicated by Royce in the *Philosophy of Loyalty*: "Power for Nietzsche, as for all ethical individualists of serious significance, is power idealized through its social efficacy, and conceived in terms of some more or less vague dream of a completely perfected and ideal, but certainly social, individual man." [211] But he goes one step further than Royce's philosophy of loyalty. Nietzsche's idea of *interpretation* as expression of the *will to power* is the perfect foundation for an ethics whose main goal is to emphasize human nature's capacity to remake itself. Through interpretation we grasp the full meaning of our instinctual drives either in the form of self-restraint or self-assertion. As Nietzsche puts it: "The

[210] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 97.
[211] J. Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, (The Macmillan Company: New York, 1908), 85.

will to power interprets (Der Wille zur Macht i n t e r p r e t i r t - *N F 1 8 8 ; G 2*): it defines limits, determines degrees, variations of power (…) In fact, interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something. (The organic process constantly presupposes interpretations.)" [212] Hocking draws similar conclusions: "The truth is, *Instinct requires interpretation*. We can set up a usable measure of social justice and the like only if we can find something like a true interpretation of instinct, or of the will as a whole. Instinct by itself has no claims, because it has no head it cannot so much as say what it wants except through an interpreter." [213] Through the use of this notion Hocking can also relinquish the matter of the taxonomy of instinct in as much as the *will to power* is the center from which all individual instincts derive: "It is not hard to see that many of the simple and general instincts deal with the fluxes of power, in one way or another, and may be referred to a general vital interest in conserving or increasing power." [214]

But how do we as human beings get to interpret the meaning of our instinctual drives? Taken by itself, an instinct like that of food-getting can simply be understood as the result of the mere need to quench one's own hunger. To a more comprehensive interpretation, that very same instinct is best understood as a call for a sense of mastery over nature: "The satisfaction of food to a thoroughly hungry man is less a matter of the aesthetics of taste than a consciousness of making something his own, a sense of mastery." [215] This "sense of mastery" of which Hocking talks about has both an inner and outward form. In its outward form, the human reshaping activity is no different from that of other animals: "Using the word art in the widest sense, as including all

[212] F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. By Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) 342.
[213] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, X.
[214] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 94. Compare the following Niezschean fragment: "In the case of an animal, all its drives can be traced back to the will to power: likewise all the functions of organic life to this one source," F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 333.
[215] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 95.

conscious efforts to remake the world, we may say that all animal behavior includes some degree of outwardly directed art." [216] But in its inner self-directed activity we are dealing with an artistry that is peculiarly human: "The human being does deliberately undertake, while reshaping his outer world, to reshape himself also. In meeting unsatisfactory conditions,— scarcity of food, danger, etc., — the simpler animal does what it can to change those conditions. The human being does likewise; but there sometimes occurs to him the additional reflection, "perhaps there should be some change in myself also." [217] Hocking directs our attention back to the notion of experience as a passive-activity moment. A whole chapter of his ethical *magnum opus* is dedicated to the notion: "Experience is an active something which plays upon a passive material, human nature, and shapes it (…) Experience works nothing in us without our cooperation; it does nothing to a passive mind." [218] Hocking then continues: "The inner factors do no work except in conjunction with outer occasions which furnish the materials and the incentives for self-judgment. And this co-operation of inner with outer factors of change is what we mean by the word 'experience.'" [219] Such a passive-activity synthesis, though, has both a subjective and intersubjective modality:

> It is obvious, however, that social experience is an integral part of individual experience; since individual experience has neither its complete data nor its working tools apart from social interaction. The various standards of self-judgment gain certainty and vigor only in the give and take of the group; there are no more impressive arguments for changing one's ways than the wholly

[216] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 5.
[217] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 5-6.
[218] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 169.
[219] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 172.

> spontaneous reactions of one's fellows; and the private self hardly knows its own desires apart from the experiences that come through play, submission, dominance, affection, and the like. Isolation, actual or theoretical, would give us as distorted a view of the work of experience as of original human nature. There is thus no point in attempting a distinction between the effects of solitary experience and the effects of companionship: the only distinction worth drawing would be between one's own reflection upon his entire experience, social and solitary, and his neighbor's reflection, especially when the neighborly views are enforced by artificial rewards and punishments.[220]

More will be said in the next two chapters about the intersubjective modality of ethical experience. What needs to be disclosed now is how our behavior changes in subjective ethical experience in response to something given. Hocking adopts an interesting terminological resource from physiological optics: the notion of *after-image.* He first presents it as one of the *methods of experience* that human nature can use as an instrument of agency over a passive something. According to J. M. Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, an *after-image* is an after-optical sensation that persists after the removal of the stimulus. [221] The notion can be further extended to more complex mental processes involving acts of attention.[222] This second notion is the one that Hocking adopts. As we can see from the following extract, a mental *after-image* is more than a simple trace that persists within our consciousness after the stimulus is gone, it is a mental state which carries within itself a conscious or subconscious *comment* that could either be

[220] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 173-4.
[221] J. M. Baldwin, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Vol. I (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1960), 25
[222] See for example: J. P. Hylan, "The Distribution of Attention, II" *Psychological Review* 10 (5): (1903), 498-533.

in line with the quality of the stimulus or in contraposition to it. This continuity-discontinuity with the quality of the stimulus is what, in the end, determines our change in behavior:

> Distinct from all peripheral consequences of a sequence is a central comment which may be subconscious or distinct, but is probably always present in the human being. It is most noticeable, naturally enough, when it is contrary in quality to either the sensible result or the general bodily condition; as when one succeeds in a competition and finds himself somehow dissatisfied with his success, or as when one fails and finds himself at peace in his failure. Such a mental after-image may appear at first as irrationally connected with my experience as the burning with the candle-flame. But it differs from the preceding types of experience in the circumstance that the comment is recognized as being not nature's comment, but my own. There is the same demand as before for analysis and induction; but this time I am required to understand. This kind of experience has such a crucial bearing upon the process of revising my behavior that we must illustrate it in greater detail.[223]

The notion is once more consistent with Hocking's desire to challenge the rigidity of the behavioristic stimulus-response pattern. The stimulus is here investigated according to the modality in which the subject experiences it: "The nature of this after-image (…) is the reaction of the *whole will* upon the partial impulse, when the full meaning of that impulse is perceived in the

[223] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 184-85.

light of its results."[224] Hocking is clear as to the not-yet-moral quality of the *after-image*: "It is not necessarily a moral reaction; remorse, shame, aesthetic revolt, etc. are its clarified varieties." [225] But precisely because the *after-image* contains a quality that I recognize as my own, I am free to draw my own conclusions on the basis of the results that I get from experimentation. Experiencing is also a form of *experimentation*, as Hocking says in a sidenote: "To experience is to experiment and to read the returns of experimentation. Experimenting is an active element; also mounting the results." [226] The instinct of pugnacity "makes for the simple and radical destruction of its object. This is what it 'means.' If this impulse appears in a mind which is incapable of any social interest in its object, the slaying of the opponent may be an entirely satisfactory result. The mental after-image may be positive." [227] The issue left to assess then is what ethical devices (subjective and intersubjective) allow us to: 1) avoid the subjective moral impasse that one would necessarily face were he/she to stop at the mere positive/negative outcome of an *after-image* or sequences *after-images* 2) find absolute (intersubjective) moral standards. The pressing question that remains to be answered is the following: How does Hocking's ethics as grounded in the notion of experience satisfy the same demands that the notion of *nuclear experience* call for? The next two chapters will provide an answer to this question.

[224] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 186.
[225] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 186-7.
[226] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 180.
[227] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 188.

VI: THE *RELIGIOUS INNERVATION OF DEMOCRACY*. THE CONSCIENCE OF SIN

It will appear obvious to the reader that the notions of *interpretation* and *after-image* can hardly be considered satisfactory given the overall intersubjective orientation of Hocking's ethics. This intersubjective orientation is satisfied by religion for religion looks for what we might call, paraphrasing Edwards, fruits. It is for this reason that, in *Human Nature and its Remaking*, we witness a shift from the empirical investigation of the mystical unity with God (the core of *Meaning of God in Human Experience*) to the broader social and political agenda that Hocking aptly denominates *religious innervation of democracy*. [228] This expression requires special attention, for, although Hocking cites it *en passant* in the preface of the book, it works perfectly well as a key to his ethics. Although the political aspects will not be a matter of discussion at this stage of our analysis, it is worth noting that the use of this peculiar expression is implicitly indicative of a will to present the religious and the socio-political as two mutually reinforcing factors. Hocking's need to find an ethical response to the crumbling of social relationships stems from an awareness of a problem that is exquisitely American and that is felt to be vital: the integrity of the American democratic experiment. The American democratic experiment is felt by Hocking to be too attached to the principles of individual freedom and competition as the sole guarantee for a cohesive society. While, on the one hand, the affirmation of the competitive spirit has endowed American society with a genuine sense of self-knowledge and self-regard, on the other hand, it has led to a widespread distrust of the other fellow being's existence; the opposite of how a cohesive social body should be. The myth of self-affirmation finds easy support in those philosophical and

[228] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, XIII.

psychological orientations that Hocking openly criticizes. For the *liberators* or *prophets of liberation* [229] - so Hocking labels the promoters of pure instinct without restraint - there is no other way of responding to the social demands of the day than by adopting a "mode of satisfying any wish that all other wishes may also be satisfied. This is clearly the principle of a democratic society applied to human desires." [230] But freedom is at once a freedom to assert desire and freedom to control or redirect desire. This twofold conception of freedom that the so-called *prophets of liberation* ignore is, according to Hocking, already prefigured in Nietzsche's thought and it is wholly compatible with what Hocking calls *interpretation*:

> It is an element of strength in Nietzsche's philosophy that he not only sees this conclusion, but seizes it and builds on it. He revolts against the discipline of Christianity, that is true: but he revolts still more against an amiable and indiscriminate expansionism. His type of liberation was one that demanded the utmost severity of self-pruning, because he proposed to give freedom to one of the *masterful* elements of human nature. *Geist*, he said, *ist das Leben das selber ins Leben schneidet* (Spirit is the life that itself cuts into life[231]); and almost furiously, in his demand for the sacrifice of the unfit in self as well as in others, he parodies the Christian paradox that life is to be saved by losing it.[232]

[229] Together with Holt, Hocking also indicates the following sources as expressive of the same orientation: E. H. Hunt's *Hidden Self and its Mental Processes*; H. C. Miller's *The New Psychology and the Teacher*.
[230] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 26.
[231] F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. By Graham Parkes (Oxford: Worlds Classics, 2005), 90.
[232] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 35.

The reading of this extract inevitably begs the question of how to reconcile this twofold notion of freedom (in other words, freedom to both assert and restrain instinct) with the project of a *religious innervation of democracy*. The innervation of which Hocking talks about leads us back to the issue mentioned at the end of the previous chapter: what principle or set of principles allow us to shift from the subjective interpretation of an instinct to universal moral agency? To answer this question, we must draw our way backwards to Hocking's early publications on Christianity. As early as 1909 Hocking manifests a reluctance towards the absolutism of certain Christian missions: "The history of missions among peoples that have independent philosophic impulse furnishes abundant illustration of the elusiveness of this kind of truth when treated as property." [233] If universality is what we are aiming for, the only basis for interreligious dialogue is the transcendence of all confessional specificities and the individuation of those principles that all religious confessions share: "Why not accept and hasten the apparent fact, that a new religion, independent of prophets and founders, is distilling gradually from the religious consciousness of all the peoples, truly universal in scope because universal in its origin, a religion for which all particular religions have prepared the way?" [234] If we carefully select those religious principles that more than others resonate with the "religious consciousness of all the peoples," we can overcome the barriers that separate one religious confession from another. We can overcome religious solipsism. According to Hocking, the principle that is more apt to awaken the religious and ethical consciousness of human nature is *sin*:

[233] W. E. Hocking. "How Can Christianity Be the Final Religion?" *Yale Divinity Quarterly*, 5, (March, 1909), 270
[234] W. E. Hocking. "How Can Christianity Be the Final Religion?" 270.

> The sense of sin is the most active agent for the deepening of subjectivity. The postulate of positive human worth is a fixed quantity: it is not able in itself to lend any deepening to self-consciousness because it refers to things as they eternally are. But the postulate of the Orient leads to a continually deeper searching of the heart, under the painful and anxious awareness that if any act of mine fail of perfection it is my fault, — that is, it is due to the fault in my nature. It is certainly a one-sided postulate; but without it the inner existence of men is shallow, and pessimism with regard to external nature and to society is irremediable; whereas the pessimism which normally accompanies this Oriental philosophy of our finite condition is but a question on its way to answer. By its sheer unfinishedness it keeps alive the searching speculative activity. [235]

In *Human Nature and its Remaking*, Hocking offers two perfectly congruent definitions of *sin*: 1) "*the refusal to interpret crude impulse in terms of the individual's most intelligent will to power*"[236] 2) "*the deliberate failure to interpret an impulse so that it will confirm or increase the integration of selfhood*." [237] In both cases, *sin* can be framed as an intentional or unintentional misinterpretation of what our *will to power* or central source of purpose commands. Interpretation reflects our capacity to endow our impulses with the correct meaning. We commit a sin whenever the meaning we attribute to an impulse is partial, misleading, or it leads to tragic consequences. The "natural way," that is, the primordial meaning of an explosion of anger caused by an opposing will would be to immediately destroy it. Yet, as Hocking says: "If (…) I allow my impulse to

[235] W. E. Hocking. "How Can Christianity Be the Final Religion?" 280.
[236] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 140.
[237] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 141.

assume its primitive and separate meaning of destruction, I give it an interpretation inconsistent, in general, with as much of my will to power as I am capable of grasping. I sin."[238] *Conscience* is the faculty involved in the interpretation of *sin*. Without *conscience*, there would be no awareness of *sin*. And the interpretation of sin can be used as a tool to respond to pressing social and cultural issues. The 1916 lectures that Hocking delivers at Yale for the Nathaniel W. Taylor Foundation (lecture whose notes were not written by Hocking himself) [239] make it explicit that only the reorganizing force of an ethics of *sin* can improve society's moral standards and counterbalance that uncritical competitive instinct that characterizes the American society of the time. The reason behind American society's moral vacuity is strictly dependent upon a lack of conscience of *sin*: "The problem of sin is unpopular just now. Sin has been dwelt upon with discouraging emphasis in the past. Nowadays, we dislike self-depreciation and approve consciousness of merit. We have drawn the false inference that the sense of merit excludes the sense of sin, hence we have committed ourselves to moral shallowness."[240] A democratic and ethically conscious society must recuperate a genuine sense of morality through the experience of *sin*. Only this can counteract that naturalization of competitive instincts that block the advancement of democracy. Although in the preface to *Human Nature and its Remaking* there is no mention of *sin*, there is little doubt that the only tool that allows us to counteract the spirit of mere self-gratification is religion understood in a specific way:

[238] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 149.
[239] See the Bibliography compiled by Richard G. Gilman at the end of L. S. Rouner (ed.) *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization*. *Essays in Honor of William Ernest Hocking* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1966)
[240] W. E. Hocking. "Original Human Nature and Its Reconstruction." *Yale Divinity Quarterly*, 12 (March 1916), 89-90.

> An age of competition, like our own, unless it is something else than competitive, cannot be a free age, however democratic in structure, because its chief concerns are lateral. To the competitive elements in our own social order we owe much:—an impersonal estimate of worth in terms of efficiency which we shall not surrender, a taste and technique for severe self-measurement, incredible finesse in the discrimination and mounting of individual talents. But we owe to it also an over-development of the invidious comparative eye, a trend of attention fascinated by the powers, perquisites, and opinions of the immediate neighbors. The eternal standard is obscured: hence we do nothing well; we lack sincerity and simplicity; we are suspicious, disunited, flabby; we do not find ourselves; we are not free. Unless we can recover a working hold on some kind of religious innervation, our democracy will shortly contain little that is worthy to survive.[241]

At this point, what needs to be clarified is how such an ethics of *sin* (understood as a fundamental force through which the religious innervation of democracy can operate) reunites with Hocking's previous discussion about instinct. To this, another important aspect needs to be taken into consideration: whether Hocking provides us with an over-personal paradigm for moral agency. The integration of the notion of *conscience* can help clarify both aspects at once. While *conscience* is for Hocking innate (all human beings have a sense of *I-ought*) it does not operate like an instinct does: "Conscience is native to human nature in the sense that it is within the capacity of human nature to be thus self-conscious in perceiving and controlling its own cosmic direction. It is not an instinct. It is the latest and finest instrument for the self-integration of instinct.

[241] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, XII-XIII.

And it is an instrument characteristically human."[242] *Conscience* reflects that innate capacity that human nature has to change itself, to decide its course. This process, however, becomes operative only after the process of *interpretation* has unveiled the full meaning of an instinct: "It plays the part of censor, for the most part permissive, and hence silent: but *de jure* it is cognizant of every act of will, and of the total policy of the self." [243] It does so not in a wholly self-sufficient way, but rather with the assistance of freely chosen external authority or source of obligation found in the external social world:

> Thus conscience behaves somewhat like a general instinct, craving an object of loyalty. It finds these objects through its social context, and so is a close ally of the social instinct. Indeed, every associate is probably to some degree a moral authority, though the disposition to centralize the sources of suggestion is marked. But conscience is not identical with sociability. It is not seeking neighbors, but authorities: and while it seems to light on the objects of its devotion often with an unreasoned tact, and adhere to them with a blindness that savors of the tropism, it does not authoritatively accept its authorities. It chooses them with the same originality as hunger shows in the selection of foods; it chooses what satisfies itself, not what satisfies the tribe.[244]

But it is only through the *conscience*'s dealings with *sin* that an individual finally becomes morally transparent to itself: "Perhaps we shall always understand our moral faculty

[242] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 123.
[243] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 122.
[244] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 121.

better on its negative than on its positive side. For it is dealing with 'sin' that the moral nature comes to its most vigorous and definite expression." [245] *Conscience*'s overall operativity is seen by Hocking from a perspective that does not elude the temporal and mundane character of human existence but rather embraces it. An existentialist approach to the moral analysis carried out by conscience that despite its limitations is part, Jaspers says, of the history of existentialism "Anglo-Saxon Pragmatism was a sort of preliminary stage. In its assault against traditional idealism, Pragmatism seemed to be laying new foundations; but what it built thereon was nothing more than an aggregate of crude analysis of life and cheap optimism, was a mere expression of a blind confidence in the extant confusion." [246] Because of the structural limitations of the human condition, dealing with sin implies making errors and improving the quality of conscience's dealing with it. Hocking identifies several logical fallacies that often lead to incorrect assumptions around the nature of *sin*. Although Kant's name is never explicitly mentioned, nor is Trendelenburg's,[247] Hocking situates his analysis of conscience within a purely Kantian path. Kant's essay *An Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy* (1763), perhaps his best work of the pre-critical era, distinguishes between two kinds of opposition: *logical* (through contradiction), *real* (without contradiction). As Kant more aptly specifies, the logical

[245] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 124. It is worth noticing that the issue of issue had been previously discussed by Royce in *The Problem of Christianity*.
[246] K. Jaspers, *Man in the Modern Age*, trans. Edan and Cedar Paul, (Routledge, 2009), 160.
[247] Although related to dialectical negation, the following passage from Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen* provides a similar distinction: "Was ist aber das Wesen dieser dialektischen Negation? Sie kann eine doppelte Natur haben. Entweder sie ist rein logisch gefasst, so dass sie schlechthin verneint, was der erste Begriff bejaht, ohne etwas Neues an die Stelle zu setzen,' oder sie ist real gefasst, so dass der bejahende Begriff durch einen neuen bejahenden Begriff verneint wird, inwiefern beide auf einander müssen bezogen werden. Wir nennen jenen ersten Fall die logische Negation, diesen zweiten die reale Opposition." But what is the essence of this dialectical negation? It can have a double nature. It is either conceived as purely logical, so that it simply negates what the first concept affirms, without introducing anything new in its place; or it is conceived as real, so that the affirmative concept is negated by the new affirmative concept, in as much as both must be referred to each other. We call the first logical negation, the second one real opposition (trans. Mine). In A. Trendelenburg, "Die Dialektische Methode," in *Logische Untersuchungen*, Erster Band, (Leipzig, 1870) 43-44.

opposition "consists in the fact that something is simultaneously affirmed and denied of the very same thing." [248] It is an insoluble either/or condition: "A body which is in motion is something; a body which is not in motion is also something (*cogitabile*); but a body which is both in motion and also, in the very same sense, not in motion, is nothing at all." [249] We are thus left in a situation in which both propositions can be taken as valid, but the positing of the two together will generate a contradiction. Things differ when we deal with oppositions of the *real* kind. In that specific case, Kant says: "two predicates of a thing are opposed to each other, but not through the law of contradiction (…) one thing cancels that which is posited by the other; but the consequence is something (*cogitabile*)." [250] To further clarify this aspect, Kant uses the example of opposite forces within the same body and the negative and positive magnitudes (positive and negative numbers) to which the title of the essay refers. Although more strictly related to the notion of dialectical negation, Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen* furnishes a similar distinction: "Was ist aber das Wesen dieser dialektischen Negation? Sie kann eine doppelte Natur haben. Entweder sie ist rein logisch gefasst, so dass sie schlechthin verneint, was der erste Begriff bejaht, ohne etwas Neues an die Stelle zu setzen,' oder sie ist real gefasst, so dass der bejahende Begriff durch einen neuen bejahenden Begriff verneint wird, inwiefern beide auf einander müssen bezogen werden. Wir nennen jenen ersten Fall die logische Negation, diesen zweiten die reale Opposition/ But what is the essence of this dialectical negation? It can have a double nature. It is either conceived as purely logical, so that it simply negates what the first concept affirms, without introducing anything new in its place; or it is conceived as real, so that the affirmative concept is negated by

[248] I. Kant "Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy," in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770,* trans. By David Walford, Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 211.
[249] I. Kant "Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy," 211.
[250] I. Kant "Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy," 211.

the new affirmative concept, in as much as both must be referred to each other. We call the first logical negation, the second one real opposition." [251]

Hocking applies a similar dichotomy through the implementation of the notion of *cancellation*. There is a radical difference between the things that pertain to our nature as active human beings in the world and those aspects of our moral existence which no action, even the most morally consistent, could retroact upon. Hocking calls the fallacy that makes us believe that "wrong cancels merit" and "merit cancels wrong" the *fallacy of cancellation*. This fallacy partially brings us back to Royce's critique of Matthew Arnold's statement: "Sin is indispensable to the effort to get rid of it" [252] and the principle of irrevocability that informs it. Unlike Royce, Hocking rejects the identity between logic and reality that constitutes the foundation of the fallacy of cancellation, that identity which lead us to identify the laws of nature with the laws that govern moral conscience.[253] Through Kant, Hocking is led to distinguish between a *logic of nature* in which "algebraic opposites neutralize one another," like "acid and base combine in a neutral salt,"[254] and a *logic of conscience* in which opposites coexists "without neutralization."[255] This dichotomy entails that, if "in the physical world, all that is real is present: the past exists only in the form of present traces, records, ruins, hereditary dispositions, brain paths, momenta,"[256] in conscience "the past retains its character as past […] there is many an a minus a, but never a zero

[251] A. Trendelenburg, "Die Dialektische Methode," in *Logische Untersuchungen*, Erster Band, (Leipzig, 1870), 43-44, (trans. mine).
[252] "Sin is not a monster to be mused on, but an impotence to be got rid of. All thinking about it, beyond what is indispensable for the firm effort to get rid of it, is waste of energy and waste of time." In M. Arnold, "St. Paul and Protestantism," in *St. Paul and Protestantism, with Other Essays* (London, 1892), 37.
[253] Compare the following passage from Royce's *Problem of Christianity*: "He will answer Matthew Arnold's advice, as I think, thus: "Get rid of my sin? How can I get rid of it? It is done. It is past. It is as irrevocable as the Archaean geological period, or as the collision of stellar masses, the light of whose results we saw here on earth a few years ago, when a new star flamed forth in the Constellation Perseus." J. Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, (The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 160.
[254] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 128.
[255] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 128.
[256] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 128.

nor a neutral."[257] Therefore, every time in which we confront ourselves with past actions, we mostly do so under the assumption that a good action would neutralize the antecedent wrong-doing, when in fact the two moments coexist within conscience without neutralization. We confuse the *logic of nature* with the *logic of conscience*. In addition to this division into two distinct logical and ontological domains, Hocking introduces a methodological distinction which betrays, together with just mentioned pre-critical Kantian orientation, an appropriation of Neo-Kantian categories. This appropriation allows Hocking to include his ethics of sin within the domain of human sciences and, at the same time, to exclude any residue of natural science's methodologies (in particular the use of natural causality). As he specifies in the opening paragraph of the chapter "Why Men Sin":

> It is possible to analyze sin, and in a measure to describe it. It is not possible to explain it. For to explain it would be to show it as the necessary or invariable consequence of certain conditions; and whatever is necessary or automatic is not sin. Sin implies that kind of freedom in which the fate and character of each conscious act comes for a moment under the control of 'self'; and neither nature nor environment nor God decides what meaning the act shall bear.[258]

Sin can only be grasped through description (*Deskription/Beschreibung*) but not through explanation (*Erklärung*). Only a positivistic approach to ethics would legitimize the partition of sin into smaller units governed by the principle of causality.[259] The conscience of sin

[257] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 128.
[258] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 150.
[259] Dilthey is perhaps the closest reference here. See for example: W. Dilthey. *Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977).

is the result of an interpretive free will. but the fallacy of *cancellation* is not the only fallacy that obfuscates our moral horizons. Another fallacy discussed by Hocking is the *fallacy of custom.* The fact that we are used to wrong-doing and that this habit turns into a custom that finds its final justification in the fundamental proposition "all men sin," or "to err is human," should not make us less responsive to the truth that an error remains an error. As Hocking has it "the usualness of a given type of wrong-doing diminishes the psychological sense of its wrongfulness, and with our increasing knowledge of evil, all types of wrongdoing appear usual." [260] This intentional narrowing of one's own moral responsiveness to *sin* finds its completion in another fallacy that Hocking summarizes into the following syllogistic argument: "Whatever is natural is right; Whatever is impulsive is natural; hence. Whatever is impulsive is right." [261] There is no need here to reiterate Hocking's position against the Holtian-Freudian ethical paradigm. These fallacies, taken together, lead to what Hocking calls: *willful blindness*. This conscious putting-aside-of-sin, no matter the fallacy involved, is in part due to the outburst of passion:

> In any full-fledged passion, as of wrath, we can readily detect this trait of willful blindness. It is characteristic of passion to exclude a part of the mental horizon. There is immense satisfaction in radical thought and radical action: by eliminating scruples or further considerations, our mental state gains at once that simplicity and unity in which we have a "necessary interest," for they insure that added intensity in the process of living which is the object of the life elan itself. The impeding call for the additional meaning is at a disadvantage, because it

[260] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 130.
[261] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 133.

> appears as hostile to more abundant life; yet as it is the achieved will to power that is attempting to assert itself, it cannot be banished: it can only be thrown into the margin.[262]

Hocking is equally dissatisfied with William Wollaston's fallacy according to which the essence of *sin* is somehow reducible to a mere matter of truth or untruth.[263] In other words, *sin* cannot be understood as relation between the content of an idea and its corresponding practice, for, according to such a view: "If I beat my wife, or betray my friend, I treat them as if they were not wife, or friend: my acts convey untruth."[264] The social meanings are what guarantee the truth or untruth of our moral conduct. If I commit a brutal act against whom should be the carrier of my affection, I commit sin. It is the work that *conscience* does with instinctual drives that provides a solid ground for moral advancement: "For us, however, the untruth lies farther back than the social usage in treating wives or friends: it is found in the general recognition by human consciousness that human acts, at any rate, must express a well-considered will to power." [265] Given that the logic of *conscience* does not allow any retroactive change (remember our previous discussion about opposites) the only way out of *sin* is found in the human capacity to deal with present circumstances. The present is the only factual opportunity for positive transformation. We need to be able to properly interpret the meaning of past actions. Without *interpretation* our capacity to read past mistakes and acts is, in fact, hindered. It is here that the operativity of *interpretation* discloses its full strength. Interpretation has both a subjective and intersubjective dimension. When

[262] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 143-44.
[263] For more on this issue refer to: Joel Feinberg, Joel. "Wollaston and His Critics." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38, no. 2 (1977): 345–52.
[264] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 147.
[265] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 147.

properly interpreted *sin* becomes a matter of "history, or better, of biography."[266] The interpretation of *sin* invests the whole meaning of time as a subjective-intersubjective dimension. In the 1938 Gifford Lectures, Hocking further elucidates this important nexus between biography and history "So far as the purpose is individual, the encounter with Fact is 'biography': we reach 'history' only as purposes are woven into a common strand."[267] While we understand through time, we always act within a time frame. As Hocking says: "There is an obvious danger of false judgment in acting before deliberation is complete; but there is likewise a danger of error in holding decision until deliberation can be complete."[268] This idea builds upon a theme that Royce had explored in his metaphysical masterpiece *The World and the Individual*, the inescapable finite determination of human existence: "Finite as we are (…) in this world of time and chance, we have still (…) our homing instinct."[269] As human beings living within a temporally and spatially determined frame, we are destined to act within those restrictions that a specific set of circumstances impinges upon us. It is within this limited circumstance that the methodical use of experience as active agency comes in handy. When we experience, we emotionally respond to an event and act accordingly. We immediately find ourselves caught in the process of testing the validity of the outcome we get from it. To Hocking, this situation stems from a primordial lack of meaning that not only characterizes any decision-making process, but also any action we deliver into the world: "No case has ever been seen by him in its full meaning (…) Thus there is wrong in delaying beyond the moment of an action's possible meaning" [270] No additional mental effort is here needed to understand how such a temporal and theoretical limitation can lead to both positive and negative

[266] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 152.
[267] W. E. Hocking, "History and the Absolute," *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization*. *Essays in Honor of William Ernest Hocking* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1966), 425.
[268] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 153.
[269] J. Royce, *The World and the Individual, First Series: The Four Historical Conceptions of Being*, 181.
[270] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 153.

outcomes. Yet, it is in times like these that the workings of conscience over *sin*, either in its biographical (subjective) or historical (intersubjective) form, sets itself as the ground for moral advancement.

It is obvious that for a thinker like Hocking, whose philosophical work is characterized by the programmatic intent to overcome solipsisms of all kinds, the exploration of the ethical horizon is, first a foremost, a matter of intersubjective experience. This fundamental need leads him to secure an anti-solipsistic dimension within an ethical system that, at least in its primary form, is subjective. Hocking knows that one of the most challenging aspects of ethics is how to find an equilibrium between intersubjective morality and genuine self-assertion. Even though as social creatures we are naturally drawn towards those forms moral guidance that we get from social interaction, no social aggregation should come at the cost of individual self-restraint. We must keep a critical eye every time we select the social group we feel we have an affinity with: "No man can live a moral life in aloofness from society and its various alliances; yet all alliance is alliance with the imperfect." [271] At the same time, social and cultural institutions are necessary in as much as they provide the individual with that over-personal objective in absence of which he/she would be lost in a moral vacuum: "Institutions exist to lend to each individual member their over-individual dimensions and scope. It is not alone a practical but a moral peril if I reject their aid." [272] The antidote to this oscillation is once more *interpretation*: "I do not say that it is impossible: I say that there is a moral difficulty in either alternative. I must ally myself; but I must vigilantly interpret that alliance." [273] *Interpretation* must rely upon a higher level of interpretive acumen because the self-protective defense of what I take to be my own values may easily turn into a form

[271] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 153.
[272] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 154.
[273] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 154.

of hostility that hinders both the process of moral self-growth and the process of social cohesion. At the same time, society must avoid the keeping of what Hocking calls: *evil peace*, that is, the avoidance of any form of dissent that would disrupt social stability. This practice is as dangerous as it is the jealous protection of one's own value system: "There is no escape from the occasional dilemma between fighting for your conviction and letting your conviction fail by avoiding hostilities." [274] While "morally tempting," evil peace can easily lead to moral blindness: "The moral seductiveness of peace lies in its method of dealing with wrong: it is apt to deal with it as an unclean person deals with dirt,—by preferring not to recognize its existence, hence leaving it unmet and uncured." [275] We must therefore move away from both the tendency to resist conflict and the tendency to use conflict as a way of annihilating the adversary for the sake of preserving the purity of one's own opinions. A middle ground between these opposites would create a space that is wholly in line with collective moral growth and the preservation of the individual's right to defend their own set of values.

However, even the just-presented paradigm for intersubjective ethical experience has negative outcomes. As Hocking rightly points out, the typical trial-and-error process that guides ethical experience can lead in some cases to sin. Making mistakes, however, do not hinder the process of individual and collective moral growth: "He who will not risk a fall into cowardice or ease will hardly find the point of an honorably pacific will. I do not say that we must fall: I say that we must risk the fall. We must find our moral equipoise through trial and the risk of error."[276] If this final remark places Hocking within some sort of Deweyan or semi-Deweyan path, the reader should not forget our earlier point about Hocking's ethical Royceanism. The idea of eliminating

[274] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 156.
[275] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 158.
[276] W. E. Hocking. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 159.

all absolutes, or, to borrow a Roycean language, all objects of loyalty, finds no space in Hocking's ethics. As we shall see in the next chapter, the investigation of Hocking's ethics will require us to take a step beyond the notion of experience as active agency and beyond the notion of sin. More significantly, it will require us to find in Hocking's ethical horizon something more than the mere reiteration of the Roycean philosophy of loyalty. As Royce says: "Are the loyal also not subject to fortune, like others?" And, in reply, I call at once attention to the fact that precisely such fate is what the loyal also unhesitatingly face."[277] What then differentiates the individual who is loyal to a cause from the one who puts all their trust in the mere use of the will-to-power through which to elevate above fate, is the fact that the loyal individual can count on the stability of a cause: "for however they may wander or lose, they view their cause as fixed and as worthy."[278] But counting on the stability of a cause is not enough. We need richer ethical system. A more refined notion of experience that would guide the transition from individual to social moral endeavors. In light of this very goal, the fundamental question that we need to answer is what postulates allow us to achieve a stable equilibrium between individual and collective interests. As I shall demonstrate, this fundamental concern stems from Hocking's interest in the real-life issues of his time. If the postulates we live by are the good ones and are collectively choses, there is no danger of falling into dogmatism. As we shall see, the operation through which Hocking brings into harmony the empirical and the ideal dimension of moral experience is consistent with the fundamental triadic structure that solidifies his notion of *nuclear experience*. Postulates can be seen as playing the same role that the *It* plays in the experience of another fellow-being, they make the transition

[277] J. Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, 89.
[278] J. Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, 91.

between individual moral experience and collective moral experience possible, but the must be carefully selected.

VII: FROM THE CONSCIENCE OF SIN TO THE ETHICS OF POSTULATES

Albeit not fully convincing in its overall depiction of German thought, Dewey's *German Culture and Philosophy* (1914) touches upon one of those pressing ethical concerns that Hocking would have certainly agreed upon: "The nature of the influence of general ideas upon practical affairs is a troubled question."[279] The influence of general ideas upon practical affairs is a troubled question. Some ideas, no matter if open to revision or not, may lead to unfavorable practical consequences. If their implementation in practical matters is the product of an uncritical reception of traditional values that systematically excludes any conscious acceptance of current circumstances, the ethical and social consequences are even less favorable. Up to this point, there is hardly anything that one would reject as ethically unreasonable. But Dewey's conclusion that Kant's principle of the necessary conformity of one's own actions to the universal practical law is what led to Germany's involvement in the First World War left many perplexed. To many who had read the book at the time (Hocking being one of them) the equivalence made little. [280] Dewey remained nonetheless adamant that because those ideas had found their way through the German educational and administrative system prior to the explosion of the conflict and that, German society was by necessity an already fertile ground for Kantian absolutism: "In short, the educational and administrative agencies of Germany provide ready-made channels through which philosophic ideas may flow on their way to practical affairs."[281] According to Dewey, the majority of these absolutistic ideas operated at a subconscious level, for instance in commander Bernhardi's

[279] J. Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1915), 3.
[280] For a complete survey of this debate, refer to: J. Campbell, "Dewey and German Philosophy in Wartime." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 40, no. 1 (2004): 1–20.
[281] J. Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics*, 16.

speeches and consequent practices: “When an aggressive and commercial nation carries on commerce and war simply from the motive of obedience to duty, there is awakened an unpleasant suspicion of a suppressed “psychic complex.” [282] However, in addressing the issue of the causal nexus between general ideas and practical affairs, Dewey was also soliciting his readers’ awareness on the opportunistic use of inherited theoretical patterns. In the 1942 re-edition of the book, he explicitly said of Hitler that: “He showed his sense of timing in the ideas he used as weapons, and he never allowed considerations of logical consistency to keep him from appropriating any idea that would serve him as a weapon (…) “Opportunism” is altogether too weak a word to convey the meaning I want to bring out.”[283] As a good scholar of Kant, Dewey knew that beyond the two-world metaphysics, the cosmopolitanism of perpetual peace offered a basis for a superior social and political cohesiveness. As C. I. Lewis rightly points out in his review to Dewey’s book, the very same idea of peaceful coexistence among nations had helped shape Wilson’s fourteen points and, thus, as a political and ethical principle had very little to share with Bernhardi’s obsession for duty; a nuance that Dewey had not missed in his description of the sage of *Königsberg*’s metaphysics: “The ultimate goal of political organization is a federation of free states for the sake of perpetual peace (…) One is surprised that those who discover a connection between Kant and Bernhardi do not go a step further and find the taint of Pan-Germanism in President Wilson's War Message and the Bryce Report” [284] Dewey was also well aware that the Fichtean nationalism that had come to substitute the Kantian cosmopolitanism of perpetual peace was a result of the threat that the Napoleonic thirst of conquest had posed on Germany and had, thus, clear contextual motivations. If there was an intellectual responsibility for Germany’s

[282] J. Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics*, 58.
[283] J. Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics*, (New York: Putnam’s and Sons, 1942), 16.
[284] C. I. Lewis, "German Idealism and Its War Critics," *University of California Chronicle*, XX/1 (January1918), 5.

nationalism, it had in any case to be ascribed to Fichte rather than Kant: "Kant was enough of a child of the eighteenth century to be cosmopolitan, not nationalistic, in his feeling (…) Fichte marks the beginning of the transformation; and, in his writings, it is easy to detect a marked difference of attitude toward .the nationalistic state before and after 1806, when in the battle of Jena Germany went down to inglorious defeat." [285] The comparison of these and other passages from the book demonstrates that Dewey's intention was in fact twofold: one the hand, to show how presuppositions can change when circumstances change, and, on the other hand, that there is danger in believing that atemporal postulates can be infinitely applied to all empirical situations. As he will later explain in his reply to Hocking, *German Philosophy and Politics* was meant to be addressed to an American audience, not to German readers; and with a specific goal in mind:

> It (the book) was animated by the hope that it might do something, however slight, to make Americans conscious of the discrepancy which exists between the tenor of our activity and our current theory and phraseology about that activity. To make a specific application, I do not feel easy when I find that, say, the divergence between President Wilson and Mr. Bryan as to the method of dealing with the present international situation rests upon a common assumption of "immutable principles" waiting ready-made to be fastened upon the situation; the divergence being that Mr. Wilson, as a lawyer, finds them already embodied in a legal code, and Mr. Bryan, as a sentimental moralist, finds them embodied in the great heart-throbs of an altruistic humanity. [286]

[285] J. Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1915), 67-8.
[286] J. Dewey, "In Reply (To Hocking)," *The New Republic*, V (October 2, 1915), 236.

For Dewey, the sinking of the Lusitania was the most tangible proof of an insoluble conflict among opposing absolutes: Wilson's call for war and Bryan's aprioristic pacifism. In either cases the empirical circumstances were being subsumed under a priori postulates of practical reason. This also meant that the attitude of both political figures was shaped by a Kantian metaphysics rather than a pragmatic or pragmatist one. The bridging of the gap between the two metaphysics (empirical and ideal) was indeed necessary not only in a situation like the one that the United States was facing at the time, but also necessary as a fundamental ingredient of individual and social moral action. Like other reviewers of the book, Hocking disagreed with Dewey's conclusion, in particular with respect to the fact that: "It is Kant in particular who has misled Germany, by giving a philosophic sanction to a certain native hypocrisy in the national blood which disposes it to revel in the inner flattery of idealistic sentiment while doing what it pleases in the outer world of hard facts" [287] Instead of responding to Dewey's concern by drawing ideas directly from the American philosophical and cultural soil, Hocking decides to put the Kantian practical philosophy under test to see whether a priori absolutes can find their way through empirical circumstances without this leading to disruptive results. According to Hocking, the issue to be overcome was the formalism and abstractness of the Kantian practical philosophy, not its emphasis on duty. As he has it, Kant "had set up an absolute principle of duty, so formal and spectral, that it could not be said to command anything in particular." [288] Its applicability to real life issues was hindered by the fact that its universal character was empty of meaning, in other

[287] W. E. Hocking, "Political Philosophy in Germany" *The New Republic*, V (October 2, 1915), 234-5.
[288] W. E. Hocking, "Political Philosophy in Germany," 235

words, it betrayed an incapacity to indicate an actual goal to be achieved.[289] Despite its vagueness and, perhaps, emptiness, the Kantian absolute law carried within itself an indication of sound moral value that, according to Hocking, had nothing in common with Germany's political and military strategies during World War One: "This is exactly the test that Kant uses; it is, in fact, his "Absolute Law," any maxim, said he, that can be made universal is a good one, any other is a bad one (…) Germany's course might be defined as experimentalism without the Kantian corrective."[290] Obligations allow the ethical solipsist to finally get rid of their inner struggle and isolation: "Obligation descends upon me from a region beyond anything that I can call mine; it has its source in the interest of some being other than myself in my conduct."[291] If C. I. Lewis is right in linking the rise of materialism and subjectivism of the likes of Feuerbach, Stirner, and Marx, to Germany's military tactics,[292] the only viable solution is the one Hocking had already prefigured within his ethical system: the overcoming of subjectivism and solipsism. To achieve such a goal, the pragmatist fear of absolutes had to be replaced with an appreciation of the imperative or set of imperatives around which to construct collective moral action: "Whatever thing is stated as the thing to which other things are relative, is by definition their absolute. The pragmatic moralists, for the most part, have simply chosen a social absolute instead of some other. Their question should be not whether there is an absolute in morals, but whether they have the right one." [293] The absolute of which Hocking talks about is not a purely intelligible principle devoid of any relation to tangible

[289] A month earlier, Frank Thilly had reached the same conclusion as Hocking: "There are also elements in Kant's philosophy of morals which have led to dangerous consequences. The gospel of duty has an invigorating ring, but unfortunately it is empty and formal: it tells men that to do their duty is their supreme law of action, but it does not tell them what their duties specifically are." F. Thilly, "Review of Dewey's German Philosophy and Politics," *The Philosophical Review*, XXIV/5 (September 1915), 541
[290] W. E. Hocking, "Political Philosophy in Germany,"253
[291] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 480.
[292] Clarence Irving Lewis, "German Idealism and Its War Critics," *University of California Chronicl*e, XX/1 (January 1918).
[293] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 481.

experience, but rather one whose status is determined by the relation in which it stands with respect to precise empirical situations. This important clarification explains why any grasp of the source of obligation is for Hocking over-personal and experiential, in other words, it is not a product of ready-made assumptions. As Hocking says: "That I have an 'ought' to another only when the other has an 'ought' also, is quite plainly a result of experience."[294] And it is the fundamental structure of *nuclear experience* that tells us not to separate the Thou from the I who grasps the source of moral obligation. By the same token, that very same source of obligation is what reunites Thou and I into the unity of the same nuclear experience. This form of *deference* towards the source of obligation is always already intersubjective: "Each (individual) is deferring to a third entity, dimly discerned as a mutual object of respect, and not to the other as individual. Is it not in some such relatively abstract third that we find the real source of obligation?."[295] For Hocking, then, the Kantian practical system of philosophy becomes invalid when restricted to a mere source of obligation (its abstractness could hardly prescribe anything in particular) but valid when seen as a criterion of right and wrong: a meter for us to determine what maxim can be made absolute and why: "The trouble with the Kantian theory is that the law in question is just a test or *criterion* of right and wrong; it is not itself the source of obligation." [296]

Since, by itself, the Kantian practical law is unable to provide an ethical path to follow, Hocking finds himself compelled to seek ethical resources elsewhere. And he finds them in Thomas Aquinas: "For the law exists only for the sake of a goal or destiny of human life,—our real obligation is to that destiny." [297] To support this claim Hocking indicates the following

[294] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 482.
[295] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 483.
[296] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 485.
[297] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 486.

Aquinian source: "Sin consists in a turning away from our ultimate goal" (*Summa* Vol. 25, Ia, 2, q. 71, a. 6;3). The relationship between the source of obligation and the destiny of human nature allows us to connect with Hocking's metaphysics of fact-field-destiny. Despite its incompleteness and tentative character, this metaphysical system rests upon a few fundamental linchpins that are worth addressing. What is a fact in the first place? Hocking rejects the merely theoretical fact. The world of facts (Nature) exists for us not as mere otherness (as mere object of knowledge) but as a plastic material waiting to receive a purposive human imprint: "Its chief function is to serve as a latent resource for an infinite succession of will-acts depositing in it cumulative meanings. *Die Welt ist das versinnlichte Material unserer Deutung (The World is the sensible material of our interpretation)*"[298] The German citation is a reworking of the Fichtean: "Unsere Welt ist das versinnlichte Materiale unserer Pflicht (Our world is the sensible material of our duty)."[299] Hocking accepts the law of the conservation of energy somewhat as an empirical fact.[300] In maintaining the principle that human nature characterizes itself as a fact-making force, Hockin is also rejecting the scientific idea of the impenetrability of facts: "If the world as a whole stands over against us with the same impenetrability to reason, philosophy becomes a counsel of acquiescence or a source of consolation." [301] Thought and action lose their value as a world-changing tools. The idea that philosophy is at risk of losing its life-changing and world-transforming force if it passively accepts the dogma of the impenetrability of nature is obviously not new and Hocking himself reveals his debt to Marx's final thesis on Feuerbach: "The gibe of

[298] W. E. Hocking, "Fact and Destiny (II): Argument of the First Five Lectures." *The Review of Metaphysics* 4, no. 3 (1951): 342.
[299] J. G. Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftlehre and other Writings* (1797 – 1800), trans. Daniel Breazeale, (Hackett Publishing, 1994), 150.
[300] W. E. Hocking, "Fact, Field and Destiny: Inductive Elements of Metaphysics." *The Review of Metaphysics* 11, no. 4 (1958): 537-8.
[301] W. E. Hocking, "Fact and Destiny" *The Review of Metaphysics*, Sep., 1950, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Sep., 1950), 5

Marx, that philosophy reflects on the world whereas the task is to change it, does but describe the daily program of every man. Only, to alter fact is not to escape fact. The degree to which fact is alterable, and by us, is itself a fact." [302] What needs to be clarified, however, is how to understand a relation between a fact and another since no fact can simply have a meaning in and of itself. It is here that Hocking introduces the category of *field*.

Field allows us to interpret fact as a plural category. No fact taken by itself is wholly self-sufficient and is always already included within a constellation of other interconnected facts. In line with this principle, Hocking adopts a Bradleyan metaphysics of relation in stating: "Taking the phrase "internal relation" in its acquired sense, as meaning a relation whose presence or absence makes a difference to the being of the relata, it is obvious that the destruction of a time-field - if we can conceive such a thing - would put an end to all events in time."[303] If facts are plural, then "*there is a field including them and essential to their being.*" The totality of relations that interpenetrate the facts is what a field is.[304] If separating, as in Bradley, the *relation* from the *relata* implies a *regressus ad infinitum*, the same would happen were we to sever any relationship between facts and field.[305] The one category requires the other to exist, and field as a constellation

[302] W. E. Hocking, "Fact and Destiny (II): Argument of the First Five Lectures." 319.
[303] W. E. Hocking, "Fact, Field and Destiny: Inductive Elements of Metaphysics." 532-533.
[304] As we shall later see, this idea grounds that of the *vital circuit* which will be later discussed.
[305] "But let us attempt another exit from this be wildering circle. Let us abstain from making the relation an attribute of the related, and let us make it more or less independent. "There is a relation C, in which A and B stand; and it appears with both of them." But here again we have made no progress. The relation C has been admitted different from A and B, and no longer is predicated of them. Something, however, seems to be said of this relation C, and said, again, of A and B. And this something is not to be the ascription of one to the other. If so, it would appear to be another relation, D, in which C, on one side, and, on the other side, A and B, stand. But such a makeshift leads at once to the in finite process. The new relation D can be predicated in no way of C, or of A and B; and hence we must have recourse to a fresh relation, E, which comes between D and whatever we had before. But this must lead to another, F and so on, indefinitely. Thus the problem is not solved by taking relations as independently real. For, if so, the qualities and their relation fall entirely apart, and then we have said nothing. Or we have to make a new relation between the old relation and the terms; which, when it is made, does not help us. It either itself demands a new relation, and so on without end, or it leaves us where we were, entangled in difficulties." In F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality, A Metaphysical Essay*, (George Allen & Unwin Ltd: London, 1920, 21). Royce goes back to the same issue in the supplementary essay to *The World and the Individual* (First Volume). See J. Royce, *The World and the Individual,*

of relations is logically inseparable from facts. But, still, there is no guidance, nor, as Aquinas has it, an ultimate goal to follow. The ultimate goal that we as members of human nature are called to reach is what Hocking calls: *destiny*, the category that completes the whole metaphysical system. As one would expect, this category is strictly related to his notion of nuclear experience. As something that falls within the domain of experience, we encounter *destiny* as a "nuclear awareness of the world."[306] Such a nuclear awareness of the world can be grasped through different perspectives. There is a nuclear awareness of one's own self, but there is also a nuclear awareness of other selves experiencing the same world that we experience and that we engage with (the Intersubjective Thou-Art). There is a nuclear awareness of "bodily well-or-ill-being as much as of certain distinctive powers."[307] But, more significantly, there is a nuclear awareness of a common destiny that as human beings we are all called to fulfill. Such an awareness does not manifest its power in the form of a formally empty duty (the Kantian practical system of philosophy) but rather in the form of a destiny in human life: "Destiny, as the elemental End, is the natural synthesis of "duty" and "happiness." Into it, there comes by degrees a specification, that of having an individual "calling," in which concept one detects (i) an undefined something for me to do, an obligation, and (ii) an undefined promise, an assurance of possible success, authoritative!" [308] Beyond the authoritative power of duty, destiny gives us an assurance of positive success that is no less authoritative. At this point, one would expect from Hocking a systematic treatment of the notion of destiny that would better highlight its relation to his system of nuclear experience. Unfortunately, such an expectation is not met. What he gives us though is a description of what

First Series: The Four Historical Conceptions of Being (The Macmillan Company: New York, London, 1900), 478-479.

[306] W. E. Hocking, "Fact, Field and Destiny: Inductive Elements of Metaphysics." *The Review of Metaphysics* 11, no. 4 (1958): 545-6.

[307] W. E. Hocking, "Fact, Field and Destiny: Inductive Elements of Metaphysics," 546.

[308] W. E. Hocking, "Fact, Field and Destiny: Inductive Elements of Metaphysics." 546-47.

life would look like without an awareness of destiny that clearly embraces the world of experience in its immediacy. As Hocking has it, a life without destiny would be a life without *worth*. *Worth* is something we experience and enjoy independently of practical outcomes. Another sign of Hocking's disaffection with the most conventional varieties of pragmatism which see meaning only in the practical outcome we get. The meaning of life can be caught in its immediacy, that is, as *worth*. As much as there is *worth* in *mere being alive*, there is worth in *fulfilling a destiny*:

> Partly also because the very attitude of rational inspection and analysis cuts across the momentum of the vital stream in which meaning naturally floats. Meaning, like appetite, *vient en mangeant*. There is much in the pragmatic advice: act first, seek your justifying flavor afterwards.
>
> But is there not some absurdity in proposing action as an answer to the question of life's meaning, when action of itself makes no statements? The pragmatic prescription may be good in special cases, especially for beginners. But if one has acted, and the salt of action has lost its savor, it will not be salted by more activity! The present age is suffering, as no previous age has suffered, from the disease of meaninglessness, it is certainly not due to a deficiency of action! And while an attitude of reflection, which interrupts action for a moment, has to suffer from its own imperfect embodiment of life, it is but preparing for better action; for action always employs some thought. It is not a choice between thought and action;

but between action guided by a worse thought and action guided by a better thought.[309]

Without this *worth* in fulfilling a destiny life would be devoid of meaning: "Many people have a feeling, perhaps a superstition, that they have a specific function to fulfill (…) when one feels that he is in the hands of an over-necessity which in the course of his world-line he could not evade except at the cost of complete futility."[310] If we connect this argumentation with what said by Hocking in *Human Nature and Its Remaking* about the ethical validity of the Christian notion *synderesis/synteresis,* we can clearly see that removing a sense of universal destiny from life would imply a relapse into the emptiness and formalism of the Kantian notion of duty. Conversely, the Christian *synderesis* awakens an irresistible human need to work our way towards a universal sense of a common good without which life would have no worth nor meaning. As Hocking says of Aquinas: "The lower animals (…) are governed by (…) a fundamental life-instinct which controls all lesser instincts (…) In man there is something which corresponds to this central life-instinct, indicating to him his destiny: it is his *synderesis* (…) a desire or longing which presents to us our total possible good in the form of an anticipatory vision." [311]

Even such a notion is at risk of remaining empty if without a set of principles supporting it. The fact that life's worth is experienced in the form of a need to fulfill a destiny and that this destiny gives life a meaning, without some ethical prescription we are in danger of remaining stuck within pure ethical experimentalism, or worse, ethical solipsism. To avoid mere ethical

[309] W. E. Hocking, *Thoughts on Death and Life*, (New York, London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1937), 149-150.
[310] W. E. Hocking, *Thoughts on Death and Life*, (New York, London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1937), 136
[311] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 486.

experimentalism and to avoid ethical solipsism, we need to carefully select postulates to live by. Such a moral path is what one can gather from Hocking's critique of Dewey's *German Philosophy and Politics*. The selection of the right postulates to live by allow us to avoid another ethical conundrum that, according to Hocking, is equally detrimental to society's moral advancement. Adopting Dewey's and Watson's idea of an "indefinite plasticity of human nature" would inevitably justify "every tyranny; since in the end human nature would adapt itself to whatever social custom required."[312] Whether this is an accurate picture of Dewey's thought matters little, for it expresses what the final intent of Hocking's ethics is: that of indicating a universal ethical parameter that would bridge the gap between subjective and intersubjective ethical experience. This goal must be integrated with the equally fundamental goal of preserving individual freedom.

On this specific aspect Hocking's ethics encounters Royce's. The issue of how to integrate universal postulates to live by with the universal postulate of the preservation of individual freedom had not found in Royce a resolutive treatment. Even so, Royce's *Religious Aspect of Philosophy* had indicated a viable path to follow with which Hocking's ethical system finds more than a point of convergence. Both systems are clearly animated by a will to fight the consequences of ethical Spencerism and of the biologization of ethics. The problem of moral burden or of moral impasse emerges for both thinkers at the intersection of conscience and the social world. Although the social world is not, in and of itself, coercive, there are occasions in which the pressures exercised by social values on the individual consciousness hinder the latter's grow. It is here that the problem of freedom fully discloses itself. And it is a dimension that had not escaped Royce's critical eye. Beyond the purely idealistic character of his philosophy, there is in Royce an attentiveness for concrete human existence. To understand the challenges that

[312] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 197.

conscience faces to its own self-knowledge and self-limitation, we must first understand the nature of those temporal restrictions upon human moral existence which a mystical world-denying attitude (a step out of temporality into the unity of a *totum simul*)[313] can temporally suspend but not fully eliminate. Royce's emphasis on loyalty to a cause or to a beloved community may have reasonably led many to believe that his ethics is nothing more than a reiteration of the Kantian rejection of the empirical in favor of the universal a priori validity of the categorical imperative, but nothing could be more erroneous. Such an erroneous approach can already be found in Giovanni Gentile's review of the *Philosophy of Loyalty*. "He does not do anything" Gentile says, "but repeat the Kantian interpretation of the nature of duty, which must be a categorical imperative, and not hypothetical, that is, it cannot but be absolute and unconditioned."[314] Contrary to what Gentile says, Royce does not avoid any direct confrontation with Kant, whose name is often mentioned in relation to the "principle of the autonomy or self-direction of the rational will of each moral being."[315] More importantly, Kant is for Royce the heir of a long tradition in ethics that looks at the autonomy of the free will as the determining ground for moral awareness. Thinkers as diverse as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine all look at an internal resource that would set itself as the basis for moral action. The consequence of such an ethical perspective is obvious: a form of self-closure that leads to solipsism. Albeit Royce's reading of Kant is to a large extent incorrect (one could mention the incentive of the moral law to resist any form of inclination towards solipsism as a valid indication of Kant's will to ascribe an intersubjective dimension to his ethics) it does indicate what the ethical route to follow is for him: the practical engagement

[313] For more on this see: J. Royce, *The World and the Individual, First Series: The Four Historical Conceptions of Being* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1900). A somewhat similar approach can be found in Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. by Katherine Farrer, (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1949.
[314] G. Gentile "J. Royce, *La filosofia della fedeltà*, tradotto dall'inglese e con prefazione di Giuseppe Rensi, Laterza, Bari 1911." *La Critica*, IX (1911) pp. 297-98. Trans. Mine.
[315] J. Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, (New York: Macmillan, 1908) 27.

with the external physical and social world. While this turn constitutes a remedy to an otherwise individualistic ethics (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Kant), it exposes his ethics to the possibility of social pressure. Here, Royce's ethics encounters Hocking's: "Social training stimulates the will of the individual self, and also teaches this self customs and devices for self-expression (…) Conformity attracts, but also wearies us. Meanwhile, even by imitation, we often learn how to possess, and then to carry out, our own self-will"[316] In a similar manner, Hocking claims: "What society imagines it wants imposes itself upon what I want, and buries it."[317] This implies that the use of critical reason over social customs must substitute the passive acceptance of any coercive social modelling: "We cannot hold a custom *against* reason, when once reason has become competent to deal with it" [318] The integration of universal moral postulates can guide our moral experimentalisms, but not at the cost of human freedom and not at the cost of authentic self-growth. Only then can postulates find their locus in life, only then can the emptiness of Kantian formalism be overcome. This emphasis on human freedom that we see in Hocking constitutes an improvement of that type of postulate ethics that we see in the *Religious Aspect of Philosophy* and in Royce's later ethics of loyalty. An improvement, as we shall see in the next chapter, that makes the Hocking's ethics fruitful in an ethical and political setting:

> In actuality society has been and is repressive; and especially in three ways. (1) The standards and ideals it sets up for me to follow are shaped to its own interest rather than to mine, — for society, like nature, must look first to the group and only secondarily to the individual; (2) the material equipment and scope which

[316] J. Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, 34.
[317] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 201.
[318] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 201.

> it offers me is curtailed by the competing needs of others,—and there are too many of us for the supply; (3) the permitted modes of behavior fall into fixed institutional forms, and hamper the movements of any life that grows beyond them. Social modelling can be good, from the standpoint of the individual, *only if all these tendencies are corrected*.[319]

The first form of repression operated on the natural freedom of the individual is reminiscent of Royce's ethics of loyalty to the beloved community that we see in the *Problem of Christianity*: "For the loyal human being the interest of the community to which he belongs is superior to every merely individual interest of his own. He actively devotes himself to this cause."[320] Contrary to this prioritization of the community over the individual, Hocking proposes the rejection of "the old theory," that is, of the a priori coincidence between individual and collective interests. This theoretical option glosses over the obvious fact that the repression that society often operates over the individual is an issue for ethics and, therefore, it does not represent something that can be sacrificed in view of the goal of creating a more cohesive social and institutional body: "Hobbes, Burke, Hegel, and others which seem to sanction any pressure society might choose to impose upon its members."[321] For this reason, his ethics of postulates reverses the prioritization of the social over the individual as a first step towards the resolution of the imbalance between collective and individual interests: "We have set up the individual life, with its natural dialectic, as the standard to which social pressures must conform."[322] As we shall later see in more

[319] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 209.
[320] J. Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, (The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 83.
[321] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 209.
[322] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 209.

detail, not even this principle is reducible to a mere ethical standard, but rather it constitutes the basis for a political philosophy which openly challenges the legitimate use of force through the use of legal systems. A brief look at the political aspect of this issue will permit us to better appreciate this aspect.

As Hocking will later explain in the *Present Status of the Philosophy of Law and of Rights* (1926), according to Josef Kohler's system of right there are *two masters to serve*: 1) right 2) culture (Kultur).[323] The latter legitimately prevails over the former restricting the individual's will-to-be: "Kohler, for example, says dogmatically that "the state remains the representative of culture, to whose will the individual must necessarily bow;" and if he resists, this resistance must be opposed "to force home the knowledge that ideals rule in culture which no nation can permit to be crippled."[324] The overturning of such a liberticide model becomes then a necessity. The right of society over the individual becomes legitimate when and only when said right finds a point of convergence with the individual's personal right: "This is the primary and original 'right' in the relations of whole and member: a man's right is to his own development; the right of society exists only where its own interest and that interest coincide (…) Not even society, then, has a right to make use of a person as a mere means to its majestic ends." [325] This idea represents no more no less than the political upshot of what Hocking calls: the *postulate of identical ideals*, whose formula is: *what others wish me to be must be identical with what I myself wish to be.*[326]

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[323] W. E. Hocking, *Present Status of the Philosophy of Law and of Rights*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 42. As Hocking specifies, following Roscoe Pound, the German word "Kultur" is best translated in English language as "civilization," rather than "culture." The issue is best discussed in R. Pound, "The Scope and Purpose of Sociological Jurisprudence," *Harvard Law Review* 25, no. 6 (1912): 489–516. Kohler's intention is that of distinguishing a sense of Kultur which is stricto sensu social, and another one which is individual. Even so, Hocking seems to remain dissatisfied with the whole idea because of its vagueness and "mystical character." What Kultur is and how the law-making system should conform to it resides in the mystical intuition of the more "far-sighted" individuals and lawmakers.
[324] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 62.
[325] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 212.
[326] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 213.

Such a postulate is anything but unempirical. It does not set itself as an a priori law grounding the will as such. As an empirically rooted postulate it demands mutual effort by both parties involved, in other words, it prescribes some preliminary form of social arrangement: "The conditions of social life everywhere assume that however wide the original disparity between what I think I would like to be, and what my environment thinks it would have me be, such an agreement can be found by some effort of thought, or by the slow working of social arrangements, or both."[327] By necessity, any form of social arrangement requires a *tertium quid* mediating between individual and collective interests. According to Hocking, a *party of recommendership* able to mediate between an individual's desire to be and society's expectations is required: "The Recommender is an agent of progress in the direction of realizing our postulate; and so far as it can make use of this (free and unofficial) triadic structure, society succeeds, as it were, in lifting itself by its own bootstraps."[328] As in the previous cases, the attentive reader will not hesitate to notice in the very mediating function expressed by the party of *recommenders* an echo of the function that the intersubjective-It (intersubjective physical world) performs within *nuclear experience*. Society has always had and will always have its *recommenders*: "In ancient times, they were the elders, the shamans, the medicine men, the prophets, the priests. In latter days, these also, and with them all whose work is the liberal reflection upon human life,—the scholars, the men of letters and of art." [329] Their presence is made necessary by the fact that neither society nor the individual possess the natural ability to recognize their tendency towards self-enclosure. Just as in the case of *nuclear experience*, only when the intersubjective *It* or, similarly, a disinterested third party, bridge the chasm between the I and the Thou and individual and social interests can individual freedom and

[327] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 213.
[328] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 216-217.
[329] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 217.

social cohesion find a balance: "If society were sufficiently self-conscious to perceive that this immensely important ideal-making function is everywhere muddled and adulterated by short-sighted egoism, its own included, it might be imagined as referring this function to a carefully chosen and disinterested third party." [330] These individuals live, Hocking says "voluntarily both within the society and mentally without it; in the theological phrase their mental position is both immanent and transcendent (…) The capacity of being, while immersed in the stream of events, at the same time reflectively aloof from them." [331]

But, given the importance of human freedom in Hocking's work, something more than simple faith in the recommender's capacity to be both within and without society is needed. Hocking is concerned that without further adjustments, the *postulate of identical ideals* might turn into another form of social contract that would put once more the integrity of one's own freedom under risk: "For the sake of living in society, I bargain away, as by an implied contract, a certain amount of liberty (…) Recommenders help to make the bargain less costly for me (…) But is not the transaction at its best after all a sale, a relinquishment of my free nature?." [332] The postulate of identical ideals must include within its logic a *principle of admiration* prescribing that: *what I admire in others I wish for myself*. Mutual admiration facilitates the convergence of identical ideals because: "What others would admire in me tends to agree with what I actually admire in them: and what I admire in them I must admire (and wish for) in myself: hence, what they would admire in me, I must wish for in myself." [333] Even so, any social experience requires some level of bargain or contract. Here Hocking develops a second postulate to reinforce the *postulate of identical ideals*.

[330] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 214.
[331] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 217.
[332] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 220.
[333] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 221.

As we had seen at the beginning of our journey within Hocking's ethics of sin, the project of a religious innervation of democracy represented Hocking's response to the *age of competition*. Since, as just stated, social relations require some form of contract, they cannot be based on purely competitive relations, nor can the Hobbesian Leviathan be implemented as a corrective measure of human nature's natural tendency towards self-assertion. The change must therefore come from within and must operate as a non-coercive force upon individual and collective tendencies guided by the postulate that: "*Every competitive interest must be so transformed or interpreted as to be non-competitive, or an ingredient in a non-competitive interest." [334]* This second postulate Robison calls the: *postulate of the transformation of competitive into non-competitive interests*[335] has a material and economic origin. As Hocking tells us: "The primary economic needs, those for food, shelter, etc., are competitive and always will be competitive; because the material objects which they require exist in limited quantities as compared with the demand, especially when quality is taken into account." [336] This evidence, however, does not lead Hocking to believe that the solution to the problem of competition is strictly related to the material or economic sphere. The use of external coercive measures to rationalize the relationship between competition and material availability can, at best, facilitate the concealment of the spirit of competition, but certainly not its actual overcoming:

> Necessary interests may appear to be competitive if made to simulate the economic pattern, as when one claims a monopoly of an idea, and patents it. And

[334] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 227.
[335] D. S. Robinson. *Political ethics: an application of ethical principles to political relations*. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell company, 1935).
[336] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 227.

> there are simple devices whereby economic needs are made to appear non-competitive. They are arrangements for simulating the common fund and the process of exchange which are characteristic of the non-competitive interest. If we oblige each member of a group to get what he wants, not directly, but by way of a common fund, it is evident that he will be concerned to add as much as possible to this common fund, and so seem to have common cause with all the rest. And if we oblige members to pursue different tasks, so that each can get what he wants only by trading with somebody else, it is evident that each will be concerned to produce as much as possible for the use of the rest. But it is clear that these indirect methods of getting are artificial and must be enforced: they conceal but do not alter the competitive nature of the underlying interest.[337]

Something greater (a more powerful creative force) must guide the whole transformative process of a competitive interest into a non-competitive one. This ideal or, better put, set of ideals, is summarized by Hocking under the etiquette of culture. Culture keeps all members of society within a non-competitive environment: "if we seek for a non-competitive form of power which shall be substantial and compelling enough to take up into itself all the competitive forms as subordinate ingredients, we can only find it if history and culture are created, that is to say, if by some positive effort the race is mentally held together." [338] In considering culture as the force through which society achieves its organic unity, Hocking is already situating the discussion beyond the ethical sphere. For in as much as the ethical sphere can now be said to have fully

[337] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 228-229.
[338] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 232.

satisfied its prescriptive prerequisites through the above-mentioned postulates, the question of how society can achieve the best equilibrium between individual and collective interests pertains, strictly speaking, to the political sphere. From a practical standpoint, the collective effort to bring each member of society into the unity of an absolute ideal can only find its completion in what we call political institutions, of which the State represents one of the fundamental engines. The State is for Hocking the linchpin that truly satisfies all the requirements of the second postulate. All antecedent attempts to re-interpret competitive interests are, in this sense, only preparatory steps, for only: "*The State is the objective condition through which a non-competitive satisfaction of the will to power becomes possible.*" [339] Whether this implies that the political sphere represents the realization of the ethical sphere is hard to tell. In saying that, we are at risk of forcing Hocking's thought into a Hegelian sort of dialectic that is at odds with the necessity to break with the ready-made character of certain idealistic approaches. What can be said with some degree of certainty is that for Hocking political institutions are needed if a society is willing to take that step further into the realization of a more cohesive social whole. This intention is somehow implicit in another of Hocking's postulates which Robinson calls: *postulate of constructive criticism*. This postulate tells us that: "*Whatever in institutions tends at any time to deform human nature shall he freely subject to the force of dissatisfaction naturally directed to change them".*[340] Once more, it is the presence of the *tertium quid* that decides of the transition from an I and a Thou as much as of the transition from an individual interest to a collective interest. Once more it is the fundamental triadic structure of *nuclear experience* that dissipates solipsisms of both kinds. But to understand how Hocking's political culture develops over the years and how it is structured in line with these principles, we

[339] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 232.
[340] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 248.

must first deal with his liberalism. The political experience dwells in that space between individual and social interests in which all conflicts arise, which is simultaneously the space in which the conditions for the resolution of those conflicts must be sought. A sound political theory is, just like any sound theory of experience, one that allows us to overcome solipsisms of both types. Whether Hocking's liberalism possesses theoretical and practical resources for achieving these goals will be the focus of the next chapter.

VIII: HOCKING'S POLITICAL THEORY

During the 1920's, Hocking felt compelled to come to terms with an economic system that had factually proven to be unsustainable and with a political and philosophical tradition supporting it that does not seem to be equipped to respond to the social and economic crisis caused by the 1929 Wall Street Crash. Although his major work in political theory (*Man and the State*) predates by three years this disruptive event, its content already reveals an anti-*laissez-faire* spirit consistent with the project of the *religious innervation of democracy* that we have previously mentioned. "Most Americans," says Hocking, "are instinctive laissez-faireists in the respect that they dislike being reminded of government, believing in their capacity and that of their neighbors to manage their own affairs on terms of fair play without the surveillance of public authorities." [341] That a thinker who openly contested solipsism as a theoretical doctrine would then find himself equally preoccupied by its resonance in other correlated disciplines such as ethics and politics should be expected. What one would not expect from such a thinker is a meticulous rethinking of the liberal roots of American culture. In December 1934, Hocking participated, along with thinkers such as John Dewey and William Pepperell Montague, to a symposium entitled "The Future of Liberalism." As we know, traces of dissatisfaction with classical liberalism's notion of the individual are already present in *Human Nature and its Remaking*. From this we can easily conclude that not only the rethinking of liberalism covers a time span of at least sixteen years, but also that the issue itself constitutes a consistent part of Hocking's overall thought. As we shall see in this chapter, the attempt to both re-examine the historical roots of American liberalism and correct the fallacies of its *laissez-faire* tendencies characterizes Hocking's reform of liberalism.

[341] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 91.

For this specific task, the use of Rudolf Rocker's *Pioneers of American Freedom* is particularly appropriate in that it specifically analyzes the main features of the American Liberal and Radical tradition from an outside perspective, that is, from the viewpoint of a German anarchist whose goal is to trace the roots of the American way to liberalism against the all-too-common idea of a complete absence of a native liberal tradition in United States and with a strong sense of the demarcation between the social and the governmental which fits well with the American political experience historically understood.

According to Rocker, at the root of American liberalism there is George Buchanan's idea that all political power emerges from the people. In this sense, the American liberal tradition differs from the European one for its more pronounced faith in social forces as primary engine of political activity. Similar to Buchanan, Thomas Paine (one of America's founding fathers) sees the social and the governmental as two distinct domains. "He (Paine) perceived," Rocker says, "in the social instinct the essential premise for every form of communal life, made a sharp distinction between the organic structure of society and the different forms of authority which have developed in the course of time and have given the human community its outer political shell." [342] Such a strict line of demarcation between the social and the governmental which results in the prioritization of the former over the latter is what we find in Paine's formula "Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil." [343] This, for lack of a better word, anti-governmental skepticism enjoys a certain fortune among later American intellectuals. We can find a similar formulation in Jefferson's "that government is best which governs least," in Emerson's "every actual state is corrupt" and, last but not least, in Thoreau's

[342] R. Rocker, *Pioneers of American Freedom, Origin of Liberal and Radical Thought in America* (Los Angeles: Rocker Publications Committee, 1949), 4.
[343] Thomas Paine, "Common Sense," in *Thomas Paine; Political Writings*, ed. Bruce Kucklick (Cambridge, 1989) 3.

"that government is best which governs not at all." Regardless of whether such formulations fit a radical or an anarchistic political and philosophical agenda,[344] they remain genuine expressions of a faith in the human capacity to collective organize in view of the realization of a common goal. Rocker is convinced that this peculiar nature of American liberalism does not stem from pre-formed theoretical patterns but rather from circumstantial reasons: "that American liberalism had no very great confidence in the regulating hand of the state lay in the nature of the country itself (…) Civilization moved slowly to the West, and wherever the first settlers came they had to rely on themselves and to struggle by the sweat of their own brows for new living conditions. The state could help them but little – it was beyond its powers." [345] One could legitimately contest Rocker's overly romantic portrayal of American pioneerism in view of the fact that the unjust treatment of Native populations during the Westward expansion gets marginalized. Even so, there remains some truth in the statement that the unique feature of American liberalism is its emphasis as foundation for political theory and action.

Despite its non-technical character, Rocker's *Pioneers of American Freedom* portrays a reasonably faithful picture of American liberalism, especially if we measure its theoretical weight with that of Guido de Ruggiero's *History of European Liberalism,* a work that remains, even today, one of the most reliable on the topic of liberalism. According to De Ruggiero, European liberalism is the product of the juxtaposition of insular and continental elements which culminates in a

[344] Rocker uses the label "radical" mostly to refer to anarchists such as Josiah Warren, Lysander Spooner and Benjamin Tucker. The label is not by itself wrong but is at risk of being confused with English Radicalism. Guido De Ruggiero's depiction of English Radicalism can help the reader get a better sense of what is generally meant by that label: "Radicalism was a ferment pervading the whole fabric of the nation, it was the French Revolution working at a distance and disguised beneath the features of John Bull. It completed the task taken in hand by the first English revolutionaries, Priestley, Paine, Price, and Godwin, the task of transforming the system of custom and tradition by means of reason and justice; a task which national pride alone had for a time arrested and delayed. Radicalism is a complex and turbid phenomenon containing in itself germs of liberalism, democracy, and socialism." For more English Radicalism see: E. Halevy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, Translated by Mary Morris, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1928).

[345] R. Rocker, *Pioneers of American Freedom, Origin of Liberal and Radical Thought in America*, 50.

synthesis between liberty in the singular and liberty in the plural. This synthesis reaches its peak in the Nineteenth Century with Hegel's idealism and its organic conception of freedom. Speaking more in detail of the insular and continental component, De Ruggiero notices that:

> For the Frenchmen of the Revolutionary period, the liberties on which Englishmen prided themselves were mere privileges enjoyed by a minority to the detriment of the community as a whole; they implied as their complement the enslavement of the majority, and were therefore a contradiction of true liberty, which formed the very essence of human personality. For the English of the same period, the liberty of the *Declaration of Rights* was an abstract right devoid of practical sanction and guarantee, which, by destroying as irrational and unjust privileges all historical guarantees and sanctions, tended to reduce individuals to a congeries of indistinguishable atoms, the easy prey of a despotic government.[346]

As Georg Jellinek has shown, the American political history plays an important role within this process because the Virginia Bill of Rights and those of other American States are the model for the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens* (1789).[347] This transmission of influences proves that, beyond all cultural specificities, the issue of how to make liberty in the singular coexist with liberty in the plural is felt on both sides of the cultural spectrum as an matter of particular concern that requires a prompt resolution. But important issues emerges here. If

[346] G. De Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, trans. By R. G. Collingwood, (Oxford, London: Humphrey Milford, 1927), 348.
[347] G. Jellinek, *The declaration of the rights of man and of citizens; a contribution to modern constitutional history*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1901) 22- 42.

following De Ruggiero, the final resolution of the two types of liberty takes place in the Nineteenth century, how are we to explain the subsequent clash in the Twentieth century between liberalism's theoretical principles and their practical application? There clearly are several features missing in the lineage we have just drawn. In the pre-political sphere of the Lockean *state of nature,* each individual is obliged by the *law of nature* to not interfere with someone else's life, health, or property, for: *the state of liberty is not a state of licence*. Still, the state of nature is not a perfect state, since self-love, passion, and revenge limits society's ability to sustain itself. The introduction of civil government becomes then necessary to guarantee an overall level of freedom and equality for all. With the rise of the *laissez-faire* economic school in Eighteenth century and the emergence in the Nineteenth of Spencerian anti-statist individualism of the *Man Versus the State* (1880), [348] the already fragile equilibrium between individual and social life that characterized Lockean liberalism disappears. The industrial revolution confuses the notion of freedom in the singular and in the plural to such an extent as to come into contradiction with its own modern roots. Speaking of the industrial revolution, De Ruggiero rightly notices: "This state of things was a stimulus to the manufacturers in their mutual relations; but what of the workmen? Formerly these were protected by the statutes of their guilds (…) this defence gone, they were exposed to every caprice of their masters at the very moment when the use of machinery and the need for cutting down the cost of production drove the new captains of industry to the most relentless exploitation of their men." [349] The change to a monadic conception of freedom operating in conjunction with the pursuit of pure egoistic gain deeply alters the meaning that freedom used to have originally. By necessity,

[348] Against this reading, there is a letter to H. Seal in which Spencer emphasizes the non-monadological nature of his version of individualism: "the tacit assumption that individualism means the solitary life of the individual is an entire misapprehension. It may and does go along with an elaborate form of mutual dependence," Quoted in S. Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology; L. T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England, 1880 – 1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 18.
[349] G. De Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, 47.

in the Nineteenth century, liberalism is called to approach the equilibrium between individualism and collectivism differently and in direct response to new social and political challenges. How does Hocking's liberalism approach the reworking of these categories? To provide an answer to the question, we have to work our way backwards to *Human Nature and its Remaking*.

As we have seen, the project of the *religious innervation of democracy* is meant to respond to what Hocking aptly calls the age of competition. Of all the postulates that we have been analyzing, the second is the one that best responds to such moral concern. According to Hocking, the ethical necessity to find a functional equilibrium between competitive and non-competitive interests does not originate with the rise of the industrial revolution but rather it emerges as a reality within primary social relations. The scarcity of any food resource would normally trigger the competitive spirit. However, objects of private possession can also become objects of exchange. And they do become so once the individuals realize that the physical nature they find themselves in is an already intersubjective domain. As Hocking points out: "Apart from political rules and distinctions men usually adopt the plan of equal sharing if they wish to preserve the peace: this is the thought-saving justice of "nature." Social rules try to secure first the least total suffering, and then proportionate suffering according to some usable principle of distribution." [350] The practices and rules of the Upper Orinoco tribes are for Hocking indicative of humanity's innate ability to promptly work out practical strategies that would preserve the inherent integrity of the social group: "Hear the anthropologist on this point: 'Among the savages of the upper Orinoco, one of the most primitive of extant peoples, whatever eatable is discovered by one of a pair is immediately divided, with much care for equality of division, though there is no political authority among

[350] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 223.

them," etc." [351] This emphasis on the social over the governmental is obviously consistent with Rocker's overall portrayal of American liberalism. However, while for Hocking social groups naturally work out their way towards a better management of available resources and to a better preservation of individual and collective needs, the only form of political power that guarantees social stability in terms of a stable equilibrium between competitive and non-competitive interests is the state:

> But if we seek for a non-competitive form of power which shall be substantial and compelling enough to take up into itself all the competitive forms as subordinate ingredients, we can only find it if history and culture are created, that is to say, if by some positive effort the race is mentally held together. It is this necessity which produces the political State. *The State is the objective condition through which a non-competitive satisfaction of the will to power becomes possible.*[352]

Hocking's theory of the state as a non-coercive apparatus whose presence in social life encourages the functional equilibrium between competitive and non-competitive interests already reveals the intention to free liberalism from its direct association with *laissez-fairism.* As he more clearly points out in one of his less considered works *Strength of Men and Nations*. *A Message to the USA vis-a-vis the USSR* (1959) the theme of solipsism has both social and political ramifications: "The principle of this observation, which we might formulate as the *universality of*

[351] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 223.
[352] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 232.

private experience, furnishes the philosophical clue for the answer (…) both to metaphysical communism and to an abstract individualism (…) It is the basis of my first book (1912) and of all my subsequent work" [353] Yet, the most substantial critique of the attachment that American liberalism proved to have with the *laissez-fair tradition* emerges during the 1930's, that is, at the peak of the New Deal era. With the rising discontent caused by Herbert Hoover's administration, American culture's identification with *laissez-faireism* starts losing its value as a healthy guiding principle of social and economic life. But if we look at what a thinker of the caliber of Dewey has to say about the visibility or non-visibility of an upcoming social, economic, and, cultural turmoil, we are inevitably led to think that the crisis was expected to arrive:

> Transitions are out of something as well as into something; they reveal a past as well as project a future. There must have been something profoundly awry in the quality, spirituality, and individualized variety of the past (…) And the defective and perverse elements have certainly not been displaced. They survive in the present. Present conditions give these factors an opportunity to disclose themselves. They are not now kept under and out of sight. Their overt manifestation is not a cheering spectacle. But as long as they did not show themselves on a scale large enough to attract notice, they could not be dealt with. I wonder very much whether many of the things that are objected to in the present scene—and justly so are not in fact revelations of what the older type of culture covered up.[354]

[353] W. E. Hocking, *Strength of Men and Nations*. *A Message to the USA vis-a-vis the USSR*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959) 9-10.
[354]J. Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*, (London: George Allen, 1931) 28-29.

Obviously, Dewey approaches the issue from an angle of vision that is different from Hocking's. According to him, the crisis in liberalism is the product of a clash between two conflicting views of individualism. Hocking's take is different, and it is more extensively developed during the December 1934 meeting of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association that I have mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. Through John Herman Randall Jr.'s report (who will later speak of the symposium rather scornfully: as a "failure" in which "there was no meeting of minds and no joining of issues" except on the idea that "any defensible liberalism must be divorced from traditional economic and political liberalism or *laisser faire*") [355] we are left with little doubt as to how serious the issue of American liberalism's future was felt at the time. Dewey's intervention pretty much restates the basic tenets of his experimentalism and of his overall stance in *Individualism Old and New*. The way out of the dead end is the transformation of doctrinal absolutism into an experimentalism guided by intelligence. In reference to the history of liberalism, Dewey has more interesting points to offer. As he has it, the whole issue originates in that early form of liberalism born of the 1688 *glorious revolution* and its idea that "governmental action and the desired freedom" are "in antithesis to each other."[356] The residues of this older liberalism survive into what Dewey calls *pseudo-liberalism*:[357] a spurious product identifiable with the American Liberty League and the then ex-president Hoover's political program. According to Dewey, the implementation of experimentalism, with its principle of "continuous reconstruction of ideas of individuality and liberty in intimate connection with changes in social relations,"[358] could set the political doctrine into a more

[355] J. H. Randall, Jr. "Liberalism as Faith in Intelligence," 256.
[356] J. Dewey. "The Future of Liberalism." *The Journal of Philosophy* 32, no. 9 (1935): 225.
[357] J. Dewey. "The Future of Liberalism," 226.
[358] J. Dewey. "The Future of Liberalism," 228.

productive route to follow. But, apparently, Dewey's recipe for getting out of the value crisis did not satisfy Morris Cohen. The simple change in methodological approach does not furnish society with a set of values to follow: "Professor Cohen can always be counted upon to assail Dewey's experimentalism and lack of a fixed set of values." [359] In Dewey's defense, Sidney Hook proposes a convergence between experimentalism and Marxian thought: "Professor Hook can always prove that experimentalism leads straight to Marx."[360] Rather than focusing on the theoretical aspects of liberalism, William Pepperell Montague advances possible strategies for overcoming the economic depression. To counteract the rise in unemployment, unemployed individuals could consider joining co-operative communities for a certain amount of time before seeking again for a job:

> If no one will hire them to work and if as individuals they cannot work for themselves, why not have them working for one another? This third way of working will, to be sure, bring no profits to any body in money. For the unemployed have nothing to pay to one another. Nothing, that is, except the goods that they can by mutual aid succeed in producing. But that kind of nothing is a very great deal. For what men really need is not money, but the goods that money will buy. And when these goods can be attained without money, the money itself becomes superfluous.[361]

[359] J. H. Randall. "Liberalism as Faith in Intelligence." *The Journal of Philosophy* 32, no. 10 (1935): 255.
[360] J. H. Randall. "Liberalism as Faith in Intelligence." 255.
[361] W. P. Montague. "Democracy at the Crossroads." *International Journal of Ethics* 45, no. 2 (1935): 153-54.

Seen in its entirety, the plan proposed by Montague seems to be more the result of a nostalgic fantasy (remember his time spent at the Helicon Home Colony[362]) than a well-thought proposal. The exclusion of unemployed individuals from greater social and economic affairs may worsen the division among social groups and exacerbate social tension. Unlike Dewey's and Montague's, Hocking's intervention adopts a different strategy that dives deeper into the theoretical and practical aspects of liberalism. The ground for discussing the true essence and future of liberalism is social relations. At the outset, Hocking makes a distinction between "liberalism" and "liberal spirit." While liberalism as a doctrine, or group of doctrines, has no reason to be further discussed, for, "as a special historic pattern of political and economic ideas has already passed: it has no future," [363] the liberal spirit must be preserved because it represents an antidote to liberalism's tendency to glorify pure individual gain. The goal of the liberal spirit is "to correct the infinite self-centeredness of that same human nature when flattered by the enjoyment of those powers which society perennially creates as it becomes complex and unequal." [364] If it is not confronted with what Hocking will say later in the *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, the expression remains uncler: "The liberal spirit pertains to human nature, not to any party, religion, or historic movement. It is human nature's revolt against its own perpetual tendency to egoism." [365] Although the liberalism spanning from 1688 till the Nineteenth century appears to Hocking to have run its full course, there are still important achievements that have been gained along the way: "Let me therefore state at the outset my conviction that Liberalism, taken as this same pattern of thought formulated (not born) in the nineteenth century, has been the most successful conscious

[362] Lawrence Kaplan. "A Utopia during the Progressive Era the Helicon Home Colony 1906-1907." *American Studies* 25, no. 2 (1984): 59–73.
[363] W. E. Hocking, William Ernest. "The Future of Liberalism." *The Journal of Philosophy* 32, no. 9 (1935): 230.
[364] W. E. Hocking. "The Future of Liberalism." 230.
[365] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937) 38.

political hypothesis of human history (…) Individualism of some sort remains a necessary ingredient of any modern society." [366] Still, the emphasis on self-centeredness remains for Hocking the reason why a fracture between rights and duties and a rigid antithesis between self-expression and social unity has always existed within the liberal tradition. As he explains it: "Liberalism has shown itself incapable of achieving social unity; that it has created a pernicious separation of individual rights from individual duties; that it has lost its emotional grip because its emotional basis was in a serious degree unrealistic." [367] The liberal spirit is the most realistic option between authoritarian collectivism and self-centered individualism: "The liberal spirit itself demands the reversal toward an element of what is sometimes called an authoritarian or collectivist form, a more unified society, capable of using its voice and its muscles, with a sterner internal discipline and a new emotional basis." [368] Liberalism can only get out of the impasse by reconfiguring the rapport between individual and society in such a way as to have both of them gaining something out of their relating with each other: "To gain unity while redefining the individual so that he too may grow strong."[369] Relation here does not simply mean being-with-each-other but rather acting-and-being-with-each-other. The unity Hocking has in mind is not abstract or ready-made. It is a unity that emerges from a concerted activity towards a common goal: "social unity is desirable – at least enough unity to act together, to decide on what is to be done, and to do it." The biggest fallacy of classical modern liberalism is that it assumed society to be something like an organism and the unity of its components was thought to be possible through a mere being-with. But the

[366] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 38.
[367] W. E. Hocking, William Ernest. "The Future of Liberalism." 231.
[368] W. E. Hocking, William Ernest. "The Future of Liberalism." 231
[369] W. E. Hocking, William Ernest. "The Future of Liberalism." 231.

very engine of social transformation is a common effort towards a common goal. That is what makes society truly organic:

> Now early Liberalism had no qualms on this head. It could assume unity as something easy to get—social wholeness was a habit inherited from feudal society (…) The popular state was to be built on the same pattern as the Leviathan, only with the circulation reversed: the many will compose just as good an organism as the tyrant can make—so it was thought. But the course of experience has shown that unity has become progressively harder to get.
>
> Society is not an organism; it only faintly resembles one and that least of all when it is analyzed into individuals, each of which can set up independent life, as the cells of a body never pretend to do. The unity of an organism exists from the first, set up by the conjunction of two cells so supplementary as to compose a working whole. The unity of a social body—possibly excepting the family - has to be achieved.[370]

Hocking seems to draw some of his ideas from Mary Parker Follett's conception of social unity as active force: "Social Unity is not a sterile conception but an active force It is a double-process – the activity which goes to make the unity and the activity which flows from the unity. There is no better example of centripetal and centrifugal force. All the forces which are stored up in the unity flow eternally in activity." [371] Hocking seems to share with Follett the idea

[370] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 41-42.
[371] M. P. Follett, *The New State, Group Organization; The Solution of Popular Government*, (Pennsylvania State Press: University Park, 1998), 59.

the social relations cannot be understood via an analogy with physical reality: "The relation of the individual to society is not action and reaction, but infinite interactions by which both individual and society are forever a-making." [372] This affinity, hardly surprising if we think that Hocking was among the readers of the *New State*'s manuscript, reveals a common tendency within American thought to use a Neo-Kantian approach towards the human-natural sciences divide. To better clarify the idea that society is not an organ Hocking uses the example of railroad construction in United States during the Nineteenth century: "Any particular railroad exists today because of the purpose which has animated the project of land transportation since the first quarter of the nineteenth century (…) The mental unity of the railroad is in its consciously-known function (…) Without this unity, three hundred types of specialist would be unable to act, and their individuality would so far be thwarted. And by themselves they would be clearly incompetent to compose that unity." [373] We could say that social unity is achieved through the cultivation of the sense of the *We*: "Political unity has to come by the political assertion of some We-thinking individual or group who can arouse in the Demos its latent unitary "We."" [374] Liberalism has somehow slowed the work of the liberal spirit down by having put the *I* before the *We*: "Our theory tells us that each individual is capable of thinking "We" as well as "I"; and that since human beings are born in groups, they will naturally put "We" first and "I" afterward. But if our individualism has trained them in the rightness and necessity of putting the ''I" foremost, it may well have brought us to a pass where no genuine political ''We" can get a voice."[375] According to Hocking, this lack of a sense of social wholeness is widespread in the United States and permeates every aspect of its

[372] M. P. Follett, *The New State,* 61.
[373] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 44.
[374] W. E. Hocking, "The Future of Liberalism." 237.
[375] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 46-47.

economic and institutional life. Not only is all economic power concentrated in the hands of a few *able heads*, but the will of these *able heads* is believed to be so crucial for the overall well-being of society that its power gets easily confused with that of governmental institutions. As a consequence of such a dysfunctional arrangement of social, economic, and institutional life, very little space is left for a genuine social unity:

> In the economic realm we have the same situation. Washington foolishly professing not to represent Business, Business represents itself at Washington. And what or who is "Business"? A lot of Able Heads, each representing millions of individual transactions in going concerns, each individual transaction entered into willingly, and therefore presumably benefiting both buyer and seller-ergo, in sum total a happy country? Not at all. Each individual transaction ably manipulated so as to leave the largest net in the hand belonging to the Able Head; each Able Head, then calling on Washington for a further individual blessing, to improve not the product, not the lot of the buyer, not the Greatest Happiness, but the Net. And will not a collection of handsome Nets constitute a prosperous land? That seems to be the fallacy. They seem to constitute rather a set of prosperous spots, like pimples of prosperity on a visage pre- dominantly pale! They do not add themselves into the General Health.[376]

This business mentality is the opposite of what liberalism in its classical form stood for. Its behavior stands in clear opposition to the pre-political law of nature of Lockean liberalism. The

[376] W. E. Hocking. "The Future of Liberalism." 232.

move forward that Hocking pushes against such a faulty type of liberalism implicates a move backwards to classical origins. With the conquest of natural rights against the medieval system of privileges comes the corresponding ethical duty to not exploit another fellow being. The idea of *rights-without-corresponding-dutie*s is more of a product of *laissez fairism* than classical Lockean liberalism: "If Liberalism had recalled its modem charter in the works of John Locke, it could hardly have forgotten that being "born free and equal" meant with him simply an immunity from being exploited; and that this situation carries with it an imperative duty to refrain from exploiting anyone else."[377] It is the tension between these two opposing forms of liberalism that has generated the antithesis between natural rights and duties and, with it, the emergence of liberalism's moral deficit: "And since rights are inalienable, it matters not what his actions or sentiments may be toward himself or toward others; no negligence, debasement, crime can forfeit what Nature has once for all kneaded in with the substance of his being."[378] The notion of *right-without-duty* can easily transform into a form of privilege (the stronghold of feudal society) exactly what Liberalism had originally fought against: "An inalienable right thus becomes a *privilege*, privilege being that specific virus which the liberal revolutions set themselves to destroy."[379] Hocking describes the *right-without-duty* attitude as a "disposition to take and to receive without acknowledgment or sense of debt." [380] His language resembles that of Emerson in *Man the Reformer*: "The general system of our trade (apart from the blacker traits, which, I hope, are exceptions denounced and unshared by all reputable men) is a system of selfishness; is not dictated by the high sentiments of human nature; is not measured by the exact law of reciprocity, much less by the sentiments of love

[377] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 54.
[378] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 54.
[379] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 54.
[380] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 56.

and heroism, but is a system of distrust, of concealment, of superior keenness, not of giving but of taking advantage." The need to preserve one's own natural right coincides with the positive rejection of any responsibility over one's own actions within the social sphg. According to Hocking, such an attitude reveals not only a tension within the history of liberalism as a specific political doctrine, but also a tension within American society: "When the common stock of America, of New England, is thus corrupted through the long, insidious schooling of rights-receivable and duty-free, Liberalism has not merely shown a flaw, it has undermined itself and prepared the way for a general regime of dependence." [381] The continuous clash between these conflicting forms liberalism comes with moral repercussions that Hocking aptly describes in the following terms: "Liberalism as a dominant note in American education has produced a nation of spoiled and juvenile minds, unable to think, devoid of the power of self-criticism and therefore incapable of mature political responsibility."[382]

If for the liberalism of the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-century Hocking proposes a recovery of Lockean origins, for the Nineteenth-century things appear to be more complex. And they do appear to be so because of the advent of the industrial revolution. Once more, De Ruggiero's analysis captures this ulterior transformation happening within the history of liberalism extremely well: "This state of things (the industrial revolution) was a stimulus to the manufacturers in their mutual relations; but what of the workmen? Formerly these were protected by the statutes of their guilds (…) this defence gone, they were exposed to every caprice of their masters at the very moment when the use of machinery and the need for cutting down the cost of production drove the new captains of industry to the most relentless exploitation of their men." [383] It is perhaps

[381] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 57.
[382] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 60.
[383] G. De Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, 47.

for this reason that in dealing with Nineteenth century liberalism Hocking finds it necessary to finds a dialectical synthesis between Mill and Marx to be necessary. A synthesis that would combine the valid elements of both figures into the unity of a more solid political doctrine: "An idea incompletely valid will lead by reaction to an opposing mode of thought; the thesis calls forth an antithesis. Mankind tries out the extremes before it finds a middle path, which is not a compromise, nor a golden mean, but a union of valid elements in both of the contrasting positions."[384] As we know, Mill draws inspiration for his pivotal essay *On Liberty* from W. Von Humboldt's *Sphere and Duties of Government.* Von Humboldt elevates the notion of self-growth to the status of supreme end of human existence: "The true end of Man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal and immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole." [385] In a similar vein, Mill considers any form of impediment to an individual's intellectual growth a danger to the overall stability of a society: "the tendency of all the changes taking place in the world is to strengthen society, and diminish the power of the individual, this encroachment is not one of the evils which tends spontaneously to disappear, but, on the contrary, to grow more and more formidable." [386] Hocking shares with Von Humboldt's and Mill's liberalism a similar attention for the development of an individual's powers (*postulate of identical ideals*). But he does not look kindly on Mill's conclusion that in order to keep the integrity of an individual's intellectual powers no critique should be raised against him/her. While the tyranny of the majority over the individual is an issue for the well-being of a democratic system, the limitation of constructive criticism not only reduces society's ability to work out a common strategy for the

[384] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 66.
[385] W. Von Humboldt, *The Sphere and Duties of Government*, (London: John Chapman, 1854) 11.
[386] J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings*, ed. By Stefan Collini, (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 17.

solution of everyday issues but also the moral growth of the individuals that compose it: "Strangely enough he (Mill) seemed to regard this as the best environment for the development of moral courage; whereas in fact, it would remove every occasion for moral courage in uttering one's thought." [387] "In brief," says Hocking, Mill "conceived a society in which everybody felt free to speak his mind on all points at all times, and in which nobody molested anybody for doing so, nor put him to any sort of disadvantage." [388] The limit of Mill's notion of freedom of expression is the limit of the notion of *right-without-duty*. By emphasizing the importance of free speech, Mill de-emphasizes the importance of moral responsibility over one's own opinions: "The right of freedom of speech does not consist in the privilege of saying anything I please without exciting any reaction. It consists in the right, and the duty, to express what I have seriously and responsibly thought, and to take the consequences of that statement." [389]

As to Mill's debt to the utilitarian tradition, Hocking does not spare criticism against the maxim of the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals. According to him, the emphasis on social utility discloses the illiberal basis of Mill's liberalism. If social utility has priority over natural rights, the very roots of liberalism recede into the background. But there is an even more serious consequence that emerges from such a configuration of thought, the systematic exclusion of the empirical reality of exploitation. To Hocking's view, this lack of responsiveness to empirical reality is due for the most part to a methodological weakness that Mill himself fails to recognize, but that is nonetheless contained in utilitarianism's emphatization of the universal over the particular: "He (Mill) was also one of the third or fourth generation of Liberals in whom the utilitarian method had dimmed the former sense of principle, while a certain gentility of existence

[387] W. E. Hocking. "The Future of Liberalism." 235.
[388] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 74.
[389] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 79.

had veiled from him the actual conditions of the life of the British workman, and a scholarly bent to generalities had obscured the sense of those very particulars, which as an empiricist he needed in his system." [390] Marx's analysis represents for Hocking a more empirically grounded depiction of society. His gaze does not gloss over the tangible reality of economic disparities. Despite his call for "class war without complaint of its incidental rigors and social ignominies," [391] Marx's empirical approach makes him a better interpreter of society than Mill: "We should have to judge Marx, in view of present facts, a truer prophet than Mill and the deeper man." [392] By necessity, the problem of quantitative distribution becomes of greater importance than the problem of qualitative relations: "Marx recognized the shallowness of this complacency, seeing that the quantity of property a man has is of fundamental importance, especially toward the lower end of the scale of incomes; that a difference of quantity may well make the difference between freedom and no freedom." [393]

Marx's emphasis on material causes leads Hocking to assume that Marx did not care much about how non-material factors contribute to changes in the material sphere. Whether this assumption is true or not, it says a lot of Hocking's debt to non-Marxian forms of socialism. The importance of the moral factor in the process of emancipation of the working class had already been a matter of discussion in *Man and the State*: "Socialists have always relied, not upon their economy alone, but upon moral resentment of wrong and moral enthusiasm for a better order, to build their community. They have announced an economic interpretation only to abandon it." [394] Foe the Hocking of *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, Marx's lack of interest in non-material

[390] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 84.
[391] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 85.
[392] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 85-86.
[393] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 86.
[394] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State.* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1926) 294,

causes of social change culminates in a deterministic view of the reality of life that is no less unilateral than the one promoted by his predecessors: "We should have to say, however, that Marx has little interest for the general problem of rights-and-duties; his philosophy allows him to concentrate almost exclusively on the economic aspect of things. He believes too easily that all the interests of personality will take care of themselves, once the economic problem is solved." [395] Against his initial intentions to overcome the limits of Hegelianism following the path initiated by Feuerbach,[396] Marx ends up undervaluing the intertwining of spiritual and material factors: "The justification for the single-mindedness of Marx was the prevalent neglect of the economic factor, especially in the top-lofty idealism of the Hegelians; his great contribution to the philosophy of society was his thoroughgoing redressal of that neglect; it is not surprising that he fell into the opposite one-sidedness."[397] In so portraying the fallacies of Marx's historical materialism, Hocking seems to draw most of his critical ideas from L. T. Hobhouse's *Liberalism*, the work where the father of new liberalism/liberal socialism develops his famous critique of *mechanical socialism* (his term for Marxian socialism):

> Mechanical Socialism is founded on a false interpretation of history. It attributes the phenomena of social life and development to the sole operation of the economic factor, whereas the beginning of sound sociology is to conceive society as a whole in which all the parts interact. The economic factor, to take a single

[395] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 90.
[396] The influence of Feuerbach on Marx will be later discussed by Hocking in relation to "realism" and the dialectical materialism elaborated with Engels: "Both Marx and Kierkegaard are Hegelians anti-Hegelians. Dialectical materialism affirms that being is matter, but finds matter, not by way of Newton's atoms, but by way of Feuerbach's "food" *(man ist was er isst*) - the economic basis of life and of the commodity-making of mankind." in W. E. Hocking, *Types of Philosophy; with the Collaboration of Richard Boyle O'Reilly Hocking* (Charles Scribner's Son, 1959).
[397] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 90.

> point, is at least as much the effect as it is the cause of scientific invention (…) Mechanical Socialism, further, is founded on a false economic analysis which attributes all value to labour, denying, confounding or distorting the distinct functions of the direction of enterprise, the unavoidable payment for the use of capital, the productivity of nature, and the very complex social forces which, by determining the movements of demand and supply actually fix the rates at which goods exchange with one another. Politically, mechanical Socialism supposes a class war, resting on a clear-cut distinction of classes which does not exist. [398]

If *official socialism* (Fabian socialism) legitimizes the control of the masses by an aristocracy of individuals: "Ostensibly there will be a class of the elect, an aristocracy of character and intellect which will fill the civil services and do the practical work of administration," [399] *liberal socialism* preserves those fundamental democratic principles that are required if social unity is to be achieved. Speaking in favor of *liberal socialism*, Hobhouse states: "It must come from below, not from above. Or rather, it must emerge from the efforts of society as a whole to secure a fuller measure of justice, and a better organization of mutual aid." [400] Through Hobhouse, Hocking is led to identify two major weaknesses of Marx's historical materialism: 1) the assumption that the engine that moves society and its history is a non-intelligent material cause, that is, a material cause external to the social will and determining it 2) that a socially organized purpose has little power over material forces. In this sense, the dialectic of Mill and Marx can only

[398] L. T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism and Other Writings*, ed. By James Meadowcroft (Cambridge University Press, 2002) 81.
[399] L. T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism and Other Writings*, 82.
[400] L. T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism and Other Writings*, 83.

find a higher synthesis in the assumption that the very motor of change is the ability that society has of organizing a purposive collective action towards a common goal, or, in Hocking's exact words, in: "the slow consensus of freely thinking and groping human minds, as they perceive the inadequacy of the thoughts which have been guiding them, and turn toward something better." [401] The turn in dialectics comes, Hocking says, "on those rare occasions when men reach a common feeling of confinement within categories that have appeared final, and an equally general intuition of a way to move beyond them." [402] As in the Hegelian *aufhebung,* the antecedent moments are for Hocking not canceled but rather retained: "Whatever this new idea may be (…) will preserve much of each, including something of that reference to social wholeness which guided Mill, and something of that subconscious individualism of Marx." [403] The new individual will not be, as in Marx: "a mere derivative (…) of the social relations in which he stands or of his economic situation," but rather someone "having some properties of the self-sufficient being" (the good ones) and a "'joining function," which implies a need for something beyond himself." [404] It will be a We-thinking individual.

Still, as we have seen earlier, without the intervention of the state the objective condition for the transformation of competitive interests into non-competitive ones disappears. Just as in the structure of nuclear experience, the transition from individual to collective interests requires the integration of a third element: the state. The *Last Elements of Individualism* ends with a conception of the state which Hocking aptly calls co-agent : "The entity we call the state is the spontaneous unity of these joining functions, a unity formed, as a rule, about something-to do (…) This state

[401] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 97-98,
[402] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 98.
[403] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 98.
[404] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 98-99.

does not pre-exist, and we are not here to serve it (…) it exists because we first exist, and because its existence may enable us to be more completely ourselves." [405]

Although labels often obscure the complexity of a thinker, and even more so with a thinker like Hocking whose political philosophy is as articulate as his theory of experience, the labelling of his political stance as liberal socialist seems, at least in the light of what said above, appropriate. Borrowing from Carlo Rosselli, we might even say that the Mill-Marx dialect that Hocking proposes is indicative of a liberalism that becomes socialist and of a socialism that becomes liberal. The next and final chapter will focus on the most important linchpin of Hocking's liberalism: the *co-agent* state. This notion rests upon the triadic structure of *nuclear experience* but brings to completion the task of surmounting solipsism from a social and political perspective, whereas the notion of *nuclear experience* simply covers the aspect of intersubjectivity and the relative overcoming of mere subjective experience. This overall approach will reveal the power of Hocking's thought in shaping a philosophical framework that would satisfy the demands of both theoretical analysis and practical engagement in the social world.

[405] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 101-102.

IX: THE *CO-AGENT* STATE

If Hocking regards the Lockean description of the pre-political phase to be a positive expression of the ethical principle of rights-only-with-corresponding-duties, the same cannot be said of how Locke, and more in general classical liberalism, imagines the relationship between society and governmental action in the civil phase to be. A similar perplexity had been raised by Dewey during the 1934 meeting of the Eastern APA. According to Dewey, there has always been a tendency within liberal thought to consider governmental action and desired freedom as two antithetical domains. But things began to change in the Nineteenth century. As De Ruggiero rightly points out, in the Nineteenth century the earlier legal Protestantism that posits human consciousness above all intermediaries (be that of a State or a Church) is forced to rethink its expectations over the sanctity of individual freedom and the protection of property in light of a social and material context that has largely mutated. As he puts it: "First the individual, then the relations between man and man, the political organism; which therefore cannot destroy or oppress its own creator, but must on the contrary serve his ends as a means designed to consolidate and increase his powers. The riper historical and scientific consciousness of the Nineteenth century will successfully attack the abstract crudity of this doctrine, and will show that the State comes into being not *after* the individual but *within* him." [406] The state begins to be thought of as an extension of social life, as something that works in conjunction with the social strive towards a common goal. To use De Ruggiero's words, Hocking's liberalism draws its vital lymph from this riper Nineteenth century political culture: "Are we not now coming to a maturity of social mind in

[406] G. De Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, trans. By R. G. Collingwood, (Oxford, London: Humphrey Milford, 1927), 24-25

which the expensive and faulty method of State-control can be discarded for something growing up more directly out of the heart of industry and of society?" [407] Precisely because social life precedes governmental activity, the state's existence is meant to represent an advantage for society's common interests and for the overall well-being of the individuals that animate it. Still, the investigation of what represents the state's legitimate power is tantamount to estimating whether Hocking can be called as a true liberal or not. Dealing with this specific issue will allow us to, first, eliminate that suspicion of conservativism that according to some scholars emerges when assessing Hocking's political philosophy,[408] second, grasp the continuity between Hocking's theory of the state and his nuclear theory of experience.

As we know, for Hocking society cannot be thought of as a physical organism. Social relations must be willfully created and strengthened. The will to cooperate is always hindered by an antagonistic force that Hocking denominates *law of decline.* This force puts the will to cooperate under stress: "Every new cooperation or stage in cooperation is the beginning of new difficulty (…) In sum, we may say that there is in the nature of human associations a *law of decline*,—of decline, that is, in their energy of union, which subtly ushers every such enterprise toward death." [409] Despite the presence of this force limiting society's effort to achieve some degree of peaceful stability, there is: "a local level of cooperative life which, with slow changes, persists."[410] The cooperative power fundamentally resides in that self-reflective spirit that characterizes human nature. When put under the pressure of the *law of the decline*, this spirit demonstrates to possess a peculiar ability to react against it through political art: "Thus, because

[407] W. E. Hocking, *Morale and Its Enemies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918) 85.
[408] ee: D. S. Robinson. "Hocking's political philosophy." In *Crucial Issues in Philosophy: Studies of Current Problems and Leading Philosophers from the Standpoint of Philosophical Idealism.* (Boston: Cristopher Publishing House, 1955); D. M. Gillmor. "Who was W. E. Hocking?" *Communication Law and Policy*, *3*(2), 231–246 (1998)
[409] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 4.
[410] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 4.

of this reflective or on-looking element of human selfhood, the same causes which provoke antagonism and disunion instigate the beginning of invention, that is to say, of art, in the management of conjoint living (…) This art is the political art *par excellence*." [411] Political art supports human nature's group-making process through a twofold activity: 1) *com-motive* 2) *term-making*. The *com-motive* is what governs the shift from "dispersed intentions to united purpose," [412] while the term-making instantiates the decisional process. Although these two fundamental factors find their completion in the executive and the judicial dimension of political and institutional activity, they cannot exist for Hocking independently of their psychological origin in as much as the human psyche is the very engine of the political:

> Nevertheless, there is a psychological distinction which justifies us in recognizing a twofold character in politics, and explains the fact that these inseparable functions have so commonly been separated in practice. Human temperaments evidently diverge in such wise that judicial genius is rarely joined with equal administrative ability, and the great executive seldom makes the ideal judge.
>
> The psychological difference here is that between *will* and *judgment*. Will might be described as the com-motive aspect of the mind, assembling scattered impulses into the current of a single purpose, while judgment is the attempt to bring conflicting facts and values into order and so to maintain the normal energy of the will. [413]

[411] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 12.
[412] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 15.
[413] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 20-21.

Hocking is convinced that human nature's psychological structure is the origin of political power and a fundamental ingredient in any sound theory of the state: "We cannot determine the significant origins of institutions without recourse to psychology." [414] Within the general economy of *Man and the State*, the positing of a psychological origin of the state, and more in general political institutions, serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, that of transcending the limits of the realistic conceptions of the state which legitimizes the use of physical force against the social body and, on the other hand, that of overcoming philosophical anarchism's identification between the state and repressive physical force. The state should be seen as a product of human nature, that is, as something that originates from it. Hocking accepts as valid the principle of philosophical anarchism that the use of coercive physical force does the opposite of reinforcing social cohesiveness: "Force taken alone can produce no social relation except subjection pure and simple: it has no capacity to stimulate the mind to considering its career in time or to reflection on its instincts; it has no shred of competence for building of states." [415] Given Hocking's exclusion of any realistic conception of the state (Machiavelli, Hobbes, Lenin) and of any language that would support it, the only notion that he feels at ease with is the notion of power as a non-physical action: "the implication is that the power of the state is not describable wholly in terms of physical force." [416] This notion of power as non-physical action allows Hocking to overcome another significant fallacy of the realistic theory of the state: the naturalization of the use of the state's physical force against the social body. Power can be instead conceived as mutual in the form of a *bargain*, that is, of a "power conferred by your possession of something I want, so that to get it I

[414] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 142.
[415] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 149.
[416] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 181.

must first supply something that you want (…) Bargain power exists only on condition that physical force is excluded"[417]

Since the power relation between society and the state is non-physical and it does not fit the structure of causal relationship (physical force/explanation) the analysis of their interaction cannot be reduced to the interplay between mutual *desires to have*, but rather it must integrate the interplay between *desires to be.* The reciprocal *desire to be* is realized through what Hocking calls the mutual *power of prestige*. While the mutual *desire to have* maintains a type of non-physical power that, for lack of a better word, rests upon a contractual basis (as in the case of marriage), the *desire to be* satisfies the human need for growth, that is, the need to become what one desires to be. This form of power reiterates the structure of the *postulate of identical ideals*:

> The desire to be, i. e., to attain certain valued qualities cannot be aided by any literal possession: it can only be aided by free association with a being who has those qualities. Thus, while marriage is, among other things, a contract, and each partner has a bargain power over the other, this power is subordinate to the mutual power of prestige, founded on a reciprocal need for personal growth which the association tends to satisfy. The desire to be tends to establish a status from which tangible benefits of various kinds naturally follow. But the primary value lies in the association.[418]

[417] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 176.
[418] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 184.

While the contract theory sees the *bargain* power as the only power exercised by the state, the *power of prestige* put into effect by its apparatuses creates the conditions for all human beings to become what they want to be. In as much as the state makes the realization of society's *desire to be* possible, the state becomes worthy of deference,[419] but not superior to society's existence: "The superiority of the state is contingent. It is as if it were conferred upon it, rather than inherent, as if men had a need to discover some incorporation of their ideals, and not finding it in any one person, hero, or king, conspired to impute it to a corporate entity."[420] Hocking concludes: "The state is a territorial body of people united under a sovereign power for the purpose of making a better breed of men, by way of participating in world history and rendering more rational the inner play of social powers." [421]

At this stage of our analysis of power, however, it is still not clear how the will of society will could legitimately become organically connected with the will expressed by the state. In other words, in what way can society achieve its common goal or purpose through the aid of the state. It is here that the *com-motive* function of political art that we had previously touched upon begins to reveal its validity as a practical tool for social action. As Hocking puts it, this function "brings all the members of the body into the current thinking, feeling, acting of the whole." It "does not subtract from their mental participation in politics;" but rather "it adds to it, at the same time that it strengthens the state." [422] One of the manners in which the com-motive function concretizes its being is through what Hocking calls the: *extrapolation of the will*, which does not implicate that the collective will is an over-personal or extrinsic entity detached from concrete social interaction

[419] Remember what said earlier about Hocking's ultimate empiricism as a form of deference to the given, not the makeable.
[420] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State*, 185.
[421] W. E. Hocking, *Man and the State, 195.*
[422] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 141.

and doings, but rather that there is one will, common to all, that permeates all social beings. "Rousseau," Hocking says, "has asserted that the will cannot be ''represented," i.e., that no one can will for another; and this is literally true." [423] All wills involved in the pursuit of a common goal maintain their ontological status as individual wills. Still, through the agreement "in respect to something which ought to be done," [424] (the common goal or purpose) all wills integrate with one another in the form of one collective will. As Hocking more aptly explains in the *Lasting Elements of Individualism*:

> It is possible for one will to make itself an agent, by an act of free decision, for carrying out a decision of another will. If I work for another man, for wages, the question hardly arises whether I agree with him: my undertaking is to "do his will" whether I approve or not. If I am a responsible agent, it becomes important that I should both understand and agree as well as ''do the will" of my principal. In carrying out his instructions, I have to make many a subordinate decision of my own. My will thus becomes an extension of his will. It is not "similar to" his will: it is an integral part of the identical act: it is a part of his will that I do what I do. He has not decided what I decide; but he has decided that I shall decide for him; hence in this respect my decisions are also his decisions. Any folly on my part is his folly, for he chose me; and any addition to my intelligence or skill, so far from taking from him, adds to his resources.[425]

[423] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 143.
[424] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 143.
[425] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 143-144.

Against Gentile's assumption that the "state must supply the individual with those thoughts which he cannot think for himself,"[426] Hocking sees society as an actively participating body in the state's affairs. Although it is true that most of the technical questions the state deals with lie beyond the comprehension of the majority of citizens, it is nonetheless true that citizens are free to dissent whenever they feel that their will has not fully realized its scope through the activity of the state. "The citizen" Hocking explains "does not know how to apprehend the criminal; but he wills that the criminal be apprehended. He does not know how to solve the legal issue nor the engineering problem; but he is concerned that they be solved. It is this original stock of purpose which constitutes the governmental deed the work of a responsible agent of the citizen, so that its deeds are ipso facto his deeds, the extrapolation of his will." [427] This further elucidation of the overall functioning of the *extrapolation of will* through the state's operativity is consistent with what D. S. Robinson calls the *postulate of constructive criticism*[428] The state cannot realize my will, nor anyone else's will, if none of us has any saying whatsoever in how effectively the state realizes mine and anyone else's will. In this we can already grasp, against Robinson and Gillmor's concerns,[429] a clear sign of Hocking's democratic and progressive stance, a stance that becomes almost blatant when he explicitly says: "This is the precise opposite of the Fascist policy, which is to abolish the mechanism of control, and so make the citizenry the tail of the state kite, with an ever deepening absurdity in the pretense that the will of the state originates in the will of the people!" [430] The state exercises its non-physical power in the form of a co-agency, that is, as a

[426] My best guess is that Hocking draws this information from Angelo Crespi's *Contemporary Thought of Italy* (1926). See: A. Crespi, *Contemporary Thought of Italy*, (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1926).
[427] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 147.
[428] W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, 221. See also: D. S. Robinson. *Political ethics: an application of ethical principles to political relations*. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell company, 1935).
[429] See my earlier note about Hocking's alleged conservativism.
[430] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 148.

power working in conjunction with society towards a common goal. In line with Hocking's earlier point about the essence of political art, the state's co-agency is com-motive in the sense that it realizes through the *extrapolation of the will* a unanimity of intention and action directed towards a common purpose: "The co-agent state is the state whose primary function is the commotive function issuing in action, which is at once particular, history-making action, and unanimous action, an extension of every citizen's will."[431] This requalification of the rapport between state and society has the additional advantage of overcoming the abstractness and ambiguities of previous conceptions of the social contract, in particular Rousseau's *General Will*, which Hocking is critical of: "Rousseau made clear that beyond the general Reason there may also be a "General Will." But this universal Will, like the universal Reason, was conceived as a generality, an idea, best expressed in legislation. Contemporary thought, impressed by the particular and historic nature of the political enterprise has been disposed to dismiss these universal notions as merely ideal and semimythical, and to consider the state enterprise as one of the flexible and current adjustment of interests." [432]

Because the *co-agent* state is immediately implicated in the empirical and historical deeds that characterize social and political life, it cannot refrain from manifesting its concrete presence within the sphere of global political relations. Developing stronger international political relations is part of the agenda of the *co-agent* state. Hocking does not think of the co-agent state project as an exclusive product of the American mind but as a form of political agency that all other co-agent states can adopt, as in the case of the International Institute of Agriculture, FAO's forerunner: "One of the best things we do is our participation in the International Institute of

[431] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 151.
[432] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 150 -151.

Agriculture at Rome. Our recent representative, Mr. Henry Taylor, knows as few men know to what extent the agriculture of the world is a common concern of every people." [433] Governmental action within the economic sphere is another key factor of the state's co-agency. Since the co-agent state "is bound to discover a course of action which will enhance rather than diminish individual initiative," [434] all forms that prevent an individual from practically pursuing their goals should, in virtue of the very same principle, be removed. This is even truer in the field of economic relations, where basic rules of fair competition are vital for the overall endurance of a country's economy. As Hocking stresses: "The touch of government is needed where the rules of competition tend to give the advantage to the meanest competitor (…) It can, for example, in consultation with business men, define codes of dealing with labor which business men would prefer to follow and would follow if their meaner competitors were compelled to follow suit." [435] State intervention is also needed: "Where the profit motive fails to make industry go. Private industry is not tuned to operate at a loss over long periods of time." [436] Hocking's apology for state interventionism in economic matters is obviously no apology of state-planned economy. For Hocking, the problem of economic distribution is not simply solvable through the "abolition of production for profit,"[437] as Marx would have had it. For although "it is true that distribution cannot be left to the contest of pressures among factors in production in which one factor, capital, has all the cards,"[438] what is also true is that without a simple mechanism of supply and demand economy gets stuck and with consequences that are harmful for all economic actors involved. "You must begin," Hocking says, "with your population as potential (and in general rightful) consumer; and require production to

[433] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 162.
[434] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 164.
[435] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 164-165.
[436] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 165.
[437] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 167.
[438] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 167.

carry the load of that rightful demand as its first charge."[439] Because "Capitalistic industry cannot make this adjustment," the industrial setting "must cooperate in setting up, with the aid of government, new organs for transmitting demand." [440] In expressing this position, Hocking gets very close to what German Ordoliberal economist Alfred Müller-Armack will later say about the worker as a producer and consumer of goods. This important factor would be seen as secondary in a centrally controlled economy when, in fact, it represents one of the primordial engines of economic relations as Hobhouse had also pointed out in his critique of mechanical socialism:

> The needs of a worker as a producer of goods cannot be divorced from his needs as a consumer (…) Thus, even the achievements of government control were marked by a positive and a negative side for the worker. From what we know today, we can no longer accept without question the view that a state controlled economy is necessary precisely because of its social qualities, particularly as we must point out that the only real success achieved (i. e. the removal of unemployment) is an aim which can and will also be pursued under a free economy- as we have seen in countries applying such systems. So, on the one hand, we have potential advantages of state control: on the other, an abundance of real disadvantages for the worker as consumer and producer of goods. Hence, he is well advised to view the promises of a centrally directed economy with scepticism. [441]

[439] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 168.
[440] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 168.
[441] Alfred Müller-Armack, "The Social Aspect of the Economic System (1947)" in *Standard Texts on the Social Market Economy; Two Centuries of Discussion*, (Stuttgart, New York: Gustav Fischer,1982) 13-14. For an analysis of the relationship between American thought and Social Market Economy see: C. Gohl, "John Dewey's Economics: A Liberal Critique of Ordoliberalism," in *Pragmatism and Social Philosophy; Exploring a Stream of Ideas from America to Europe* (Routledge: 2020)

Returning to the American social and economic context, the founding father of the Chicago School of Economics Frank H. Knight will speak rather negatively of what he denominates the political administration of economic life proposed by Hocking. According to Knight, state intervention and enterprise economy should operate as separate domains: "It is in this last connection that we find the main issue between enterprise economy and any political administration of economic life. Ideally, both would be competitive yet result in constructive co-operation. But both undoubtedly tend toward the reduction of competition and establishment of monopoly of the directive function, i.e., of power, which means dictatorship." [442] This principle leads Knight to conclude that: "The economic system is a power system, and as such has no ethical character." [443] Now that we are more than familiar with Hocking's ethical and political stance, we know that for our philosopher there would be no way out of the political, social, and economic impasse without a sound ethical paradigm to follow and, with it, a common goal guiding society towards a more equitable arrangement of economic relations. As he more explicitly says in *Man and the State*, to keep the social and economic spheres apart "is to make each set partially false, for each set needs the correction of the other." [444] The mistake of the *laissez faire* system and of Knight's position lies in the rigid dichotomization between the two spheres. Human affairs should work in such a way as to harmonize the social and ethical aspects with the economic ones because without the human interpretive work the two may follow conflicting objectives and harm instead of improving the social quality of life: "The economic ideal is the mastery of nature; the social

[442] F. H. Knight. Review of "Lasting Elements of Individualism." *International Journal of Ethics* 48, no. 1 (1937) 113.
[443] F. H. Knight. Review of "Lasting Elements of Individualism." 114.
[444] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State*, 327.

ideal is the subordination of nature to mind." [445] Hocking provides a striking example of the importance of maintaining integrating ethics and economics: "If slavery appears to be economically advantageous, and yet shows itself socially pernicious, the presumption would be that even its economic profitableness is illusory." [446] As a society we cannot privilege economic gain at the cost of social ethics.

One last feature to be examined is the concrete operativity of the *co-agent* state. In other words, its ontological presence in life. The answer to this question will reveal the affinity between Hocking's theory of the state as *co-agent* and his nuclear experience. He frames the question as follows: "We have now to meet the long deferred and crucial question whether the state, whatever its origin, is itself a mind over and above the minds of its members, a super-mind." [447] The point of departure from which Hocking develops this discussion is the notion of group minds. As we know, his philosophical program excludes all forms of individualistic atomism, so does the notion of group mind. "Thus," he says "the interests of the group are not found by taking the common interests of its members singly. The massing of men does not make a human group, and, conversely, no human group is a simple aggregate of human units." [448] This also implies, in a somewhat Bradleyan/Roycean fashion, that the relation that keeps all individuals together is internal rather than external: "But the parts that enter into an organism become something other than they were, taking on the quality of the whole organism (…) The relations of the parts are 'internal:' cut the organism to pieces and the parts can neither return at once to their form character nor hold the character they have had as parts of the living total." [449] But the existence of group

[445] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State*, 328.
[446] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State*, 329.
[447] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State*, 339.
[448] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State*, 341.
[449] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State*, 345-346.

minds cannot be reduced to their mere dwelling in a network of relations. If we go back to Hocking's ethics of instinct for a moment, we can easily understand that no individual instincts can be deprived of their objects without this causing an interruption of these very same instincts. In this sense, the network of relations which Hocking talks about involves all selves as much as the objects to which they relate:

> What is true of food-getting habits is evidently true of others. Every instinct has to make use of some 'external' objects, has to make its home in the world, and what is at first but accidentally related to it becomes indispensable to its activity So to the mechanic his particular bench and tools, to the writer his workplace, his equipment, and for the time the characters of his hook, to the farmer the familiar acres, utensils, stock, and seasonal routine ,—all these become part of the persistent body of an enlarged self. They involve excursions beyond the original self, yet they belong to the self deprived of them, the instinctive functions would be interrupted much as they would be interrupted by the loss of a limb.[450]

This finally implies that all physical objects included in the network of relations are always already intersubjective. Hocking calls this network of working relations: *will-circui*t or *vital circuit. "*A vital circuit" Hocking clarifies "need not be exclusively the property of one individual and his wishes. A group sharing the same hunting ground, a gang of workmen on the same job, partners in the same business (…) so their wills find a region of actual coincidence in

[450] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State,* 364.

the objects of common concern and use."[451] This region of actual coincidence, as Hocking calls it, serves the same purpose as the It in nuclear experience. But there is obviously more to the picture. Through a common physical object, not only do I experience what you experience but, in a way, I become aware of the fact that my mind includes yours. What takes place, to use M. P. Follett's language, is an interpenetration or intermingling of ideas. This happens because minds are not physical objects nor are reduceable to mere objects in space. As Hocking further explains: "If box A includes box B, then box B cannot include box A but mind A can take in mind B, while mind B is also taking in mind A, and much beside." [452] to fully function, the *will circuit* requires a center for that overall will to power that innervates all wills to power at once. This center is the state, which implies (there is almost no need to say it) that the state is the *tertium quid* between one will and another, just like the *It* is the tertium quid between an I and a Thou in *nuclear experience*. The state, Hocking specifies, is "*the circuit required by the will to power of each member, coincident for all the people of a defined territory, and including them*." [453] Thus, it is not hazardous to say that the theory of the state as co-agent and the theory of the will-circuit constitute together the completion of Hocking's theory of nuclear experience. For if there is something that nuclear experience misses to consider, at least in its character of mere knowledge in experience of another fellow-being, is the vital interconnectedness of all beings and their mutual relatedness to the over-personal It.

One last question to answer before concluding our journey into Hocking's philosophy is: how are we to judge the value of Hocking's political thoughts in light of current social and political issues? The call to responsibility as a transnational endeavor made by Hocking in *Lasting*

[451] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State,* 364.
[452] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State*, 368.
[453] W. E. Hocking, *Man and The State*, 371.

Elements of Individualism is without much doubt one that we should accept as valid, especially given our current situation, characterized, as we all know, by pernicious particularisms that reduce the space for *bargaining* and *prestige*: "There is also an international society to be built; one in which the simpler ideas of a personal justice based on equality are replaced by fitter conceptions based on shifting inequalities, on racial possibilities and local functions, on changes of status, problems which our lazier Liberal reasonings have not scratched the surface of." [454] Co-agency is the non-physical force that cuts across the private, public, and international demarcations. Even so, in Hocking we register a tension between the idea of universal co-agency uniting social, institutional, and transnational activity and the idea of voting as a genuine expression of the vitality of the will circuit. Vote is seen by him almost as a useless frill, an expression of human passivity to be replaced by more effective forms of co-agency:

> These illustrations indicate another respect in which the co-agent state differs in conception from our usual idea of democracy. In democracy, the citizens, as equals, are all supposed to be equally interested in all phases of the state; they consider and vote upon the same proposals. In the co-agent state, the contribution of the individual is chiefly along the line of his own special interest and capacity. Hence the relation of the free individual to a democratic state is the relatively passive relation of ''consent," one "consents" to what other people have proposed; in the co-agent state, he is the initiator in some point of what the community does—the state picks up and prolongs the line of his own activity.[455]

[454] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 153.
[455] W. E. Hocking, *Lasting Elements of Individualism*, 157.

Yet, as we have been able to demonstrate, Hocking is very clear as to his democratic stance. When he warns us of the fact that the identity between the will of the state and the will of the people is an easy expedient that Fascistic governments use to marginalize all forms of genuine dissent, he talks like someone who believes in the power of democratic co-agency to improve the overall well-being of society and facilitate the active participation of citizens to everyday social and political challenges. This message should not sound new to our ears. The rhetoric of an already given unity of will between the state and the people comes from many sides of the political and social spectrum. Perhaps, it is time to embrace Hocking's advice, even in its skepticism towards the strongholds of representative democracy. This is not to say that voting should be considered as a non-valid expression of co-agency, but rather as one of the many tools that society can use to work its way towards its final goal: the overcoming of solipsism. The challenges Hocking was dealing with in his time are, in essence, not so different from the ones we are facing now. This fact demonstrates that the *liberal spirit*, as Hocking calls it, still has a lot of work to do in more than one sector of social experience and in more than one sector of political and economic life. In fact, even today's political and economic discourse is subject to that superficial business mentality that Hocking was contesting in his day, that superficial mentality that translates all qualitative problems into quantitative magnitudes. The problem of society is not that of mere magnitude, and it requires critical instruments that are more proper to its essence. Hocking's work in ethics and politics reminds us of the importance of reading social and political relations through the lens of human sciences as opposed to natural sciences. Society is not an organism; it requires the instrument of interpretation and active participation to achieve its unity. The mere physical presence of individuals together does not create a society, nor does a philosophy that refuses to bridge the

chasm between solipsism as a theoretical issue and solipsism as an ethical and political issue. While weaknesses of the philosophical kind can still be found in Hocking's system of thought, the reluctance to find a bridge between thought and life is among those weaknesses that can hardly be found in a thinker like Hocking, who believes in the importance of vital connection and interrelation among individuals into the unity of a Whole.

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