

*Introduction to the
Autobiographical Remarks
of Josiah Royce 1886*

At the very top of the typescript's first page is a handwritten note which reads, "Solomons May 27 '98 before Philos'y Comm."¹ Despite this insertion, the manuscript itself has no title and internal evidence suggests the composition was actually twelve years before: On the third page of the typescript is the remark "on coming to Harvard four years ago." Given that Royce was admitted to the Harvard faculty in 1882, this sets the date of the typescript's composition sometime in 1886. The typescript was apparently read before the Harvard philosophy committee, to offer an overview of Royce's studies up until that time and causally speaks of Royce's interests in philosophy and psychology, the origins of those interests and how they were nurtured and developed, as well as his fidelity to science. The majority of the content, quite surprisingly, is devoted to psychology: Royce's earliest studies in the psychology of character and feeling to understand human nature, the therapeutic function psychology has for self-clarification and to develop sympathy with various perspectives; as well as an assessment of the psychology of Royce's time, what the science ought to become and how it should be taught, and the value psychological research has for philosophy and life. The typescript, in other words, offers insights into Royce's self-assessment of his own intellectual development until 1886, insights not found in his formal writings.

Royce's remarks on his philosophical development are, in comparison, quite scant; but, what is said about philosophy certainly sheds light on why Royce was so devoted to psychology. The origins of Royce's interest in philosophy, he says, were youthful speculations upon the problem of life and human nature. This led to some naive *a priori* philosophizing, stimulated by Max Miller's introduction to ontology and a bewildered reading of Spinoza's *Ethics*. After an introduction to science, Royce became more serious. Once he returned to philosophy, Royce already had rejected materialism, was focused on the relation between religion and science, and began wrestling with psychophysical parallelism. The primary focus of this period up until Harvard was, he says, epistemology, and afterward, general metaphysics. But, in the meantime, Royce sought to understand human nature and the mind of the scientist, psychology and philosophy, both understood scientifically. Royce's desire to understand his neighbor not only explains his interest in psychology, but the value he believes psychology has for philosophy: To aid in overcoming misunderstanding and conflicts of opinion, so that we can understand ourselves and others and therefore learn to value and appreciate humanity. As Royce exclaims, "How beautiful my brother is! This is the real lesson of psychology, its message to the human heart. And not only how beautiful my brother is, but how beautiful life is, when we see it from the standpoint of character: when we have learned not merely to look *at* it but to feel *with* it" (1886 MS: 20).

Written by Joseph Dillabough
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¹ Note that the handwritten notes inserted in the typescript do not appear to be Royce's hand.