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From World Exegesis to Transcendence. Jaspers's Critique of Nietzsche

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For Jaspers, Nietzsche stands as an exception to the tradition of philosophy. As an exception, Nietzsche puts pressure on the categorial frameworks that have animated more traditional analyses of the human process and its relation to the innumerable orders of nature. Nietzsche's radical perspectivism goes beyond a constitutive disclosure of substance and self-consciousness to affirm a hermeneutic understanding of the nature and role of categories in giving shape to present immediacies. Metaphysics, as the generic analysis of the fundamental traits of existence, becomes transformed into what Jaspers calls "world exegesis." Such exegesis is concerned with tracing the internal contours of projective and arbitrary metaphysical horizons.

If thought is fundamentally horizontal, then it follows that the analysis of horizons is the basic strategy of metaphysics. Rather than driving toward a first genus or toward some sense of totality, metaphysics as world exegesis moves within the fitful and chaotic realm of changing horizontal fields. This movement is both passive and active. It is passive insofar as it is gathered up into the horizontal giving of meaning contours. It is active in that it generates translation mechanisms by and through which the conceptual plenitude of one horizon becomes available to another. Put differently, the movement between and among perspectival horizons entails that each horizon become permeable to other horizons of value and meaning.

Jaspers develops an alternative understanding of the internal possibilities of Western metaphysics. Instead of following Nietzsche, who reduces metaphysics to world exegesis, Jaspers acknowledges that it is impossible to think without basic categorial structures. Such structures are sensitive to the modes of givenness of the world, especially as manifest in the various modes of the Encompassing, yet remain permeable to Transcendence. This dual openness, to the orders of the world and to Transcendence, can only come when metaphysics allows itself to recover its deeper relation to the Encompassing. This transfigured metaphysics, termed "periechontology", honors the modes of difference within the world and illuminates the ultimate difference that speaks from out of the Encompassing. Unlike world exegesis, however, periechontology is not self-referential. It is best understood as the categorial clearing that enables worldhood and its modes to become available to the human process. Jaspers's critique of Nietzsche would lose much of its force were it not for his own alternative reading of the internal possibilities of metaphysics.

Periechontology (encompassing ontology) avoids falling into the kind of manic posturing that would impose an idiosyncratic horizon onto the world as a whole in the

name of difference or categorial freedom. Instead, it carefully traces the ways in which genuine identities and genuine differences emerge phenomenologically. Its stance is judicious. In *Von der Wahrheit* Jaspers lists several distinctive features of periechontology:

It illuminates a **space** in which we then find that all Being approaches us in it... There occurs a clarification of the **whole** in which we find ourselves as well as everything else... Its symbol: a dynamic **interweaving of relations** ... It aims at a **systematics of what is**.¹

In the transformation of traditional metaphysics, with its concerns with a first genus or highest being, into periechontology, thought becomes freed from the narrow orbit that remained opaque to the Encompassing. If Nietzsche's world exegesis remains content to comment on its own horizontal productivity, periechontology provides the space within which the world can become clarified through an open systematics. It breaks out of the circle of immanence to become a locus for that which is without a specific shape.

Transcendence, which speaks from a realm beyond the 'sum' of all horizons, is never found within world exegesis. The hermeneutic unfolding of the signs and symbols of a given horizon takes place without reference to that ultimate import which stands on the edges of all horizontal fields. Transcendence, here understood as the radical and divine alterity that limits the scope and hubris of horizons, remains masked by the sheer plenitude of intra-horizontal meanings.

Nietzsche thus reduces metaphysics to the hermeneutics of horizons and their innumerable perspectives. Validation is no longer a meaningful concept and becomes replaced by an aesthetic "hovering" over diverse possibilities. The light of transcendence is refracted through horizons that are themselves reticent to show all of their internal and referential traits. Of course, the very concept of a referential horizon is denied in Nietzsche's celebration of sheer conceptual play.

Being, along with its articulation in metaphysics, is denied autonomy and becomes a mere product of exegesis. Projective horizontal structures encompass Being and render it a product of manic human play. For Jaspers, Nietzsche undermines any positive sense of substance or validation:

All being is a product of exegesis: "There are no things in themselves and there is no absolute knowledge; the perspectivistic, illusory character belongs to existence." Nor is there such a thing as an "event per se. What occurs is a group of phenomena selected and united by an interpreting being." From this Nietzsche concludes (1) that there can be no true conceptual apprehension of an enduring self-sufficient reality, and (2) that epistemology is impossible.²

If substance is one of the most persistent categories within metaphysics, then the denial of anything self-sufficient or substantial puts pressure on any conceptual framework that would claim validity. Being is the mere shadow of those exegetical projections that establish momentary stabilities within the eternal flux of the will-to-power. Since in Nietzsche's view the object of knowledge cannot obtain outside of those constitutive acts that give it its perspectival appearance, it follows that epistemology is no longer a distinct discipline with its own validation structures or modes of legitimation. World exegesis swallows up both metaphysics and epistemology.

If Being is no longer a genus or even that reality that transcends the genera, it is exemplified or embodied only within the structures of projective interpretation. The will-to-power is nothing more than an infinite series of self-interpretations by that which has no substantive or extra-horizonal reality. The traditional role of metaphysics is taken over by a world exegesis that consists of an interpretation of interpretation. Jaspers states:

Nietzsche's exegesis, which acknowledges that all knowledge is exegesis, will assimilate this knowledge to its own exegesis by holding that the will-to-power itself is the ever operative and infinitely various urge to interpret. Nietzsche's interpretation is actually an interpretation of interpreting, and for that reason different from those of all earlier, comparatively naive interpretations which were undertaken without awareness of their own interpretive character.³

Exegesis has as its object the innumerable horizonal structures that emerge from the will-to-power's momentary forms of concrescence. Insofar as the will-to-power moves back and forth between the two poles of mere preservation and enhancement, it will deposit specific, if indefinitely malleable, horizons of value and meaning into momentary centers of awareness. The conceptual self-capturing of the will-to-power is the task of a world exegesis that abandons any search for extra-horizonal structures or constraints.

This double layering, namely the discovery that philosophy is the hermeneutics of prior interpretations, drives the search for constitutive principles further into the background. By transforming metaphysics into the elucidation of the internal meaning and sign-values of horizons, Nietzsche destabilizes his own enterprise and cuts off any genuine relation to Transcendence. Everything becomes a mere means to the further expansion of the will-to-power, and human creativity eclipses the very origins of the self that are responsible for such creative transformation. By collapsing metaphysics into a horizonal morphology of the will-to-power, Nietzsche pushes the depth dimension of the human process into a self-encapsulated region from which it cannot emerge to govern the evolution of the self. Radical Existenz ceases to open out the relational power of Transcendence.

Jaspers decisively links Nietzsche's reconception of metaphysics and exegesis to the loss of our Existenz. Put in different language, Nietzsche so overstates the manipulative and creative dimension of the human process that he ignores the equally fundamental dimension of assimilation in which the power of Transcendence enters into the self in order to realign it toward that actuality which is not a mere horizon or horizontal meaning. Jaspers states:

However, the exegesis misses something within the original being of human Existenz that has nothing to do with will-to-power and is, in fact, only discoverable apart from it. The will-to-power is unrelated to the self-being that acknowledges responsibility for itself, to the independent point that is unconditioned and exists only in relation to transcendence, to communication as loving struggle that neither wills nor exerts power, and to the truly free and open horizon. To be sure, Nietzsche's metaphysics unveils the perversions of these types of essential being, but their true substance remains untouched.⁴

It is as if the self that creates and sustains meaning horizons is itself reduced to being the mere product of such a horizontal field. In this curious dialectic, the projecting consciousness forges a meaning horizon that in turn provides for its own recurring self-definition. The horizon extruded from the self becomes the "shell" (to use Jaspers's term) that serves as the only measure for the self's internal portrayal. The originating impulses which govern true creation of meaning are derailed and a hermeneutic self, that prevails as the locus of innumerable signs, occupies the place that should properly belong to radical Existenz. The true self cannot be conditioned by finite horizontal values or signs and remains unconditioned in the face of Transcendence.

Jaspers contrasts radical Existenz to the other dimensions of the human process and insists that Existenz can only be elucidated on the other side of the content-filled orders of human life. Our bodily and social existence (*Dasein*) remains filled with the content of our biological and communal realities. Our general consciousness is filled with the validation structures of the collective scientific consensus. And our spiritual reality is filled with the ideal content of our culture and its various symbolic forms. These dimensions of life are themselves modes of the Encompassing and prevail as orders of vast scope within which we find and define our existence. Our Existenz, on the other hand, is unconditioned by any of the realities that constitute the other dimensions of the self. As such, Existenz has its own relation to the Encompassing. In *Reason and Existenz*, Jaspers states:

Existenz is the Encompassing, not in the sense of the vastness of a horizon of all horizons but rather in the sense of a fundamental origin, the condition of selfhood without which all the vastness of Being becomes a desert. Existenz,

although never itself becoming an object or form, carries the meaning of every mode of the Encompassing.⁵

Whereas Nietzsche would deny the autonomy of Existenz and pull it into the conditional reality of horizons and perspectives, Jaspers insists that the true depth dimension of the self remains free from the demarcated and delimited structures of the other modes of the Encompassing. Nietzsche's drive to undermine constitutive metaphysics and epistemology served to obscure the true origin of genuine philosophizing. The energy for Nietzsche's own philosophic enterprise came from a dimension of existence that he failed to elucidate or understand.

Nietzsche reduces the self to a series of finite and immanent interpretations all driven toward a totalization that cannot be attained. Ironically, the liberation sought by Nietzsche makes genuine overcoming impossible. Richard Howey, while expressing reservations about Jaspers's interpretation of Nietzsche, makes this point clear:

The real root of the problem, for Jaspers, however, is once again transcendence. Here also Jaspers understands Nietzsche's critique of the traditional notions of transcendence to mean a total rejection of the very notion of transcendence.... Jaspers believes that Nietzsche's exegesis in terms of the Will to Power is fundamentally deficient in that it omits a facet of human Existenz which cannot be grasped in terms of a doctrine of immanence.⁶

The movement of self-overcoming, culminating in the appearance of the Overman, does not emerge from true Existenz but drives outward from less ultimate dimensions of the self. The orders of the world are themselves mere products of linguistic and metaphoric conventions and exert no counter-pressure of their own that would limit the narcissistic reach of the self. Nietzsche thus seeks a kind of artificial transcendence through the props of a manipulative and constituting self.

Existenz thus lies beyond all world exegesis and makes it possible for such exegesis to prevail at all. By the same token, Transcendence, which only emerges for radical Existenz, lies beyond all of the horizons that represent the surface dimensions of the human process. Nietzsche's projective narcissism filled the world with horizontal content but failed to find Transcendence. Beyond all content is the ever self-effacing power that locates and measures the human process. In *Von der Wahrheit*, Jaspers states:

Transcendence, the Encompassing of all Encompassing, is that which, as the absolutely Encompassing, implacably "is," even as it is not seen, vanishes as it is thought, and hides behind any image or configuration.⁷

No finite symbol or sign can fill in the elusive power of Transcendence and give it some kind of determinate content. As such, Transcendence actively overturns the hubristic drive of that world exegesis which would claim to encompass and comprehend

all content.⁸ The light of Transcendence is beyond the 'sum' of all horizons and can only be experienced in a kind of foundering or shipwreck that sees through all horizontal structures toward their hidden source.

Nietzsche absorbs all of space under the power of the eternal return of the same. The inner logic of becoming is the temporality that gathers all becoming into the endless return of the same configurations of will points. For Jaspers, Nietzsche's drive toward Transcendence remains bound to the spheres of immanent reality. The elevation of time over spatial configurations merely deepens the grip of those finite actualities that cover over the power of Transcendence.

Writing in his notebook in 1885, Nietzsche makes clear his conception that the world is not the locus of Transcendence but the 'sphere' within which the eternal play of forms occurs. He states:

This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole, of unalterable size, a household without expenses or losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by "nothingness" as by a boundary; not something blurry or wasted, not something endlessly extended, but set in a definite space as a definite force,... a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and a flood of its forms;..⁹

The "nothingness" that surrounds the world is devoid of value or intrinsic meaning. To attain meaning, each center of willing must carve some perspective out of the endless play of forces that make up the world. Such meanings are finite projections of an aggressive or passive will in search of periodic stabilities and do not efface themselves before that elusive power that stands on the other side of all intra-worldly horizons.

The only Transcendence left in Nietzsche's perspective is that manifest in a series of leaps within these immanent structures. The greater leap toward Transcendence is denied in principle. Jaspers states:

Being, and the endless becoming of life and the will-to-power in the circle of recurrence, is reached by a series of leaps: from occurrences experienced as near and actual to distant possibilities of occurrence in general, and from these latter to the becoming of the natural world in its entirety. These leaps, always made within the world, take the place of the leap to Transcendence. Already they transcend, for they no longer arrive at compelling empirical knowledge of things in the world. But such transcending leaps over specific things to the totality of immanent existence, instead of proceeding from the self-being of Existenz to Transcendence.¹⁰

While these immanent leaps, governed by the ruling power of temporality, are no longer mere inductive generalizations about actual and possible states-of-affairs, they remain ensnared in the recurrent patterns of the immanent spheres of actuality. Even though the metaphysics of the will-to-power claims totalization for itself, it is still unable to find a route to Transcendence in time. The eclipse of Transcendence is sustained by the non-teleological and value-neutral return of the same.

For Jaspers, we attain freedom from the bindingness of the immanent when we suffer and overcome those boundary situations that mark our journey through time. By experiencing a shipwreck we become freed from those shells of life that encapsulate us and embed us in immanent structures. Nietzsche, who like Kierkegaard lived as an exception, experienced his own forms of shipwreck on the boundaries of the human process. However, he was unable to enter into the clearing of the Encompassing because of his failure to let his own Existenz become shriven and clarified by the power of Transcendence. It is as if Nietzsche only experienced the dark side of shipwreck without participating in the inner logic of boundary situations.¹¹ The internal lure of a genuine foundering points toward a sustaining potency that does not require the rigidity of a fixed conceptual and experiential place. Behind all genuine foundering is the lure of Transcendence that both inaugurates and completes the shipwreck. Like Martin Luther, Jaspers insists that love is the inner core of that wrath which appears in our shipwreck on the boundaries.

While the human process struggles in vain to impose its own boundaries on nature, history, and its own inner dimensions, the orders of reality exhibit and impose their own boundaries. Nietzsche's radical perspectivism failed to experience these natural boundaries and remained within a self-validating sphere of immanence. While pushing toward the boundaries of constitutive metaphysics, with his reconstruction of philosophy under the framework of world exegesis, he reduced the genuine encounter at the boundaries to the mere repetition of aesthetic projections within immanent horizons.

The deeper meaning of these boundary situations lies in the realization that they propel us beyond the horizons that govern our life within the spheres of immanent actuality. Writing in his *Philosophy* of 1932, Jaspers describes the inner logic of boundary or limit situations. The image of the leap serves to elucidate the move from bare existence toward Existenz:

In limit situations, each form of the leap leads me out of existence to Existenz - to Existenz as a germ enclosed in the seed, to Existenz as elucidating itself as possibility, to Existenz as actual. After the leap, my life is something other to me than my being in the sense of merely existing. When I now say "I am," this statement has a new meaning.¹²

In the pervasive experience of guilt, which has no specific object or referent, I encounter a non-escapable limit to my existence that shows me my origin in an actuality that is not the mere sum of my aesthetic projections. I become a gift to myself and live within the continual re-giving of that gift which comes from a source just beyond my numerous self-pictures. Without the limit situations of guilt, death, and suffering, I cannot comprehend my ownmost *Existenz* and its necessary relation to Transcendence.

Nietzsche understood guilt, death, and suffering and thus participated in the outer circumference of limit situations. But he did not persevere in the inner movement of existence on the boundaries and remained cut off from the resurrection of meaning that prevails on the other side of suffering. The positive side of limit situations can only be experienced in the movement of Reason that binds the various modes of the Encompassing and brings the self to an awareness of that which lies beyond all horizons of meaning.

When thought moves beyond the outer edge of limit situations and enters into the movement of the Encompassing, it stands ready to transform the nature of philosophizing from that of mere world exegesis to a type of thinking that transforms and empowers metaphysics. Jaspers, unlike Heidegger, insists that the history of metaphysics is still capable of giving birth to new and essentially healthy forms of general world analysis. Such categorial insights are neither bare projections nor the residuum of a hermeneutics of prior interpretations. Rather, the transformation of philosophy wrought by its encounter with boundary situations brings it into active contact with nature and history. While Jaspers often privileges human communication over the larger orders of nature, he does acknowledge that Transcendence is not limited to the dialogue of *Existenzen*. The orders of history, especially as manifest in the axial period and its paradigmatic figures, present and preserve the power of Transcendence in such a way as to provide guidance for our contemporary encounters with the limits of our existence. In the domains of art and the culturally significant symbolic forms, *Existenz* becomes open to Transcendence through finite and materially embodied ciphers. In a sense, no order of nature, history, or art, is totally bereft of the light of Transcendence once it has become quickened by radical *Existenz*.

Nietzsche, by failing to penetrate beyond the negative aspects of limit situations, struggled toward an encompassing metaphysics that undermined the possibility of traditional substantive metaphysics. His own conceptual failure was most clearly manifest in the ironic tension between his totalizing pretensions, with his global analysis of the will-to-power and the eternal return, and his lack of understanding of the nature of genuine Transcendence. World exegesis was no more able to replace the kind of generic level reflection found in the tradition of metaphysics than to provide a clearing within which Transcendence could appear. On the one side, his world exegesis could not escape from the aesthetic recapitulation of horizontal shells toward a conceptually

adequate account of the generic traits of existence. On the other side, his perspectivism, always ready to experience negative shipwreck, could not become permeable to that which was not yet one more interpretation or sign system. Put in different terms, Nietzsche was not the thinker who brought an end to the history of metaphysics, but was a thinker who simply projected a weak and conceptually impoverished framework onto the infinitely complex fabric of nature. In the process he suffered a shipwreck without redemption.

Does the experience of boundary situations entail that metaphysics be reduced to the exegesis of horizontal structures? Initially it would seem that the loss of conceptual form and content at the limits of reflection would force thought to accept that its categorial possibilities were nothing more than finite aesthetic projections onto a world devoid of intrinsic structures. Further, the quest for validation would be reduced to the analysis of internal consistence or aesthetic richness. Nietzsche's loss of faith in the Platonic tradition may have stemmed from the continual breaking of conceptual shells on the boundaries of thought. But Jaspers wishes to redefine metaphysics in such a way that it can become strengthened under the impress of that which breaks horizons while yet serving to give them a new power and clarity.

Whether we call fundamental reflection metaphysics or, with Jaspers, "periechontology," it will always move toward types of unity. But these unities are not self-contained totalities any more than they are mere moments in some over-arching totalization. Nietzsche's aesthetic horizons remain closed off from each other and unable to share any of their meanings or values. Jaspers moves beyond Nietzsche by exhibiting the movement of Reason that lies on the other side of our boundary situations. This Reason, as the bond of the modes of the Encompassing, gathers together the orders of nature, history, and art to show their unity and mutual permeability. Beyond the shattering power of shipwreck lies a deeper harmony. In *Von der Wahrheit* Jaspers states:

In the shattering of every unity which shows itself in this shattering to be preliminary and inadequate, Reason wants to prevent metaphysical breach, the tearing apart of Being itself and of the true unity. Thus Reason, the primal source of order, accompanies even that which breaches order; it remains patient, constant, and infinite before all that is alien, before the invader, before the failure.¹³

Nietzsche's impatience with the sources of genuine unity was most clearly manifest in the artificial totalizing of his doctrine of the eternal return of the same. Between the pseudo-totality of the eternal return and the active movement of Reason lies an abyss of difference. Reason remains bound to antecedent orders and powers and honors that which lies beyond its scope or potency. Unlike the aggressive projections of temporality

and will, the traces of Reason function in the forms of communication that enliven human existence. Fundamental thought has its own piety as it listens to the modes of the Encompassing and their respective ways of being. The encounter with limit situations does not deny the sources that speak out of nature, history, and art. Just beyond negative shipwreck lies the positive appearance of Reason that unites what had been shattered. But this unity is not that of a bare identity. Rather, it is a unity that gathers up moments of difference and gives them a clearing within which to appear. Metaphysics stands on the positive side of shipwreck and serves the orders that give it its own unique forms of validation. Rather than being at an end, such metaphysics continually renews itself at the sources of Being.

While Existenz and Transcendence are themselves without a positive content, they are nonetheless bound to the other modes of the Encompassing. The articulation of each unique mode and of its complex relationships is the task of metaphysics. For Jaspers, this articulation is never complete and can never reach totality. Metaphysics is the gift of Reason to human thought. As such it remains open to the world and to Transcendence and keeps both open to each other.

More specifically, metaphysics, as periechontology, must illuminate the basic features of the human process, community, worldhood, and the divine natures. Transcendence is manifest in each of these orders and is never encountered outside of some finite location. In the human process Transcendence is manifest within the various modes of finitude that propel the body and its social reality (*Dasein*) toward death. Within natural and interpretive communities Transcendence is manifest in those rare transfigurations of meaning that enliven our semiotic systems. On the edges of worldhood Transcendence is manifest whenever we encounter the infinite potencies of nature. Finally, the divine life itself lives within the elusive light of Transcendence. The drama of redemption occupies the divine life as well and enables God to deal with its own forms of finitude.

Periechontology represents a turning within Western metaphysics rather than some form of consummation or self-inversion. Nietzsche's struggles to transform the realms of immanence lack generic scope and remain opaque to the deeper potencies of the world. His insensitivity to Transcendence closed off the world and compelled him to remain suspended in his own horizontal play. The transfiguration of metaphysics into periechontology, always a possibility within metaphysics, makes it possible to understand the human process, communal life, worldhood, and the divine natures in spite of the categorial closure of world exegesis. Transcendence is only manifest on the other side of world exegesis and finds its locus within the realms of Reason.

Notes:

- ¹ *Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans., by Ehrlich, Ehrlich, and Pepper, (Athens, 1986), pp. 198-199.
- ² Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: an Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, trans. by Wallraff and Schmitz, (Chicago, 1965), p. 288.
- ³ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, pp. 294-95.
- ⁴ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, pp. 317-18.
- ⁵ Karl Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, trans. by William Earle, (New York, 1955), pp. 60-61. The original was published in 1935.
- ⁶ Richard Lowell Howey, *Heidegger and Jaspers on Nietzsche*, (The Hague, 1973), p. 63.
- ⁷ Karl Jaspers, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, p. 175.
- ⁸ For a further elaboration of the problem of totalization, see my "Metaphysics Without Foundations: Jaspers's Confrontation with Nietzsche," *Dialogos*, Vol. 52, July 1988, pp. 73-95.
- ⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. and ed. by Walter Kaufmann, (New York, 1968), pp. 549-550.
- ¹⁰ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, p. 431.
- ¹¹ For an analysis of the relation between shipwreck and boundary situations, see my "Hermeneutics and Psychopathology: Jaspers and Hillman," *Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall 1987), pp. 70-80.
- ¹² *Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings*, p. 99.
- ¹³ *Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings*, p. 180.

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

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COSMOLOGY

four competing claims of justification: fiction theory, concession theory, contract theory, and realist theory. The first of these claims is the earliest known defense of corporate personality. Fiction theory, as John Dewey notes in his historical analysis of the subject matter, is traceable back to Pope Innocent IV's (1243–54) claim that the corporation has no body, soul, or will and thus cannot be considered a person. Hence, the designation of corporation as person must be considered nominalistic as it exists only as a creation of the mind. This idea, Dewey argues, is closely related to (and often conflated with) another popular theory during the Middle Ages, concession theory, which holds that no corporation or association can be deemed legitimate (i.e. legal) unless it is recognized by the state. State power, in the feudalistic age, was threatened by the consolidation of guilds; as a result, state power was eager to suppress its rivals. Hence, a corporate entity was not legitimate unless it was recognized by the state. According to Dewey, these theories, when conflated, comprise much of the justification of early American legal precedent: they are fictional entities that are nonetheless recognized by the state as subjects having the right to enter into contracts, hold and transfer property, and sue or be sued. However, as the nature of industry changed so too did the defense for corporate personality. With the growth of joint-stock companies in the nineteenth century, focus moved away from fiction and concession theories and became more concerned with individual stockholder rights and the aggregate/contractual dimension of corporations. Thus the contract theory holds that corporations consist of rights-bearing individuals contracting with one another for organizational purposes – the corporation becomes a legitimate entity/subject upon its contractual creation. This position moves the debate over corporate essence away from the state legitimization of concession theory to the associational character of right-bearing individuals who comprise the corporation. However, questions concerning liability prompted a new formulation in the twentieth century: realist theory. According to this theory (and in contrast to contract theory), corporations comprise an independent existence separate from that of its shareholders. The corporation has its own holdings and its own interests, similar to that of a physical person, irrespective of its shareholders. According to realist theory the corporation should be understood as an actually existing social entity with its own personality. However, in his treatment on the subject, Dewey criticizes these traditional approaches to

corporate personality for being beholden to the wrong logical method. He argues that the issue of corporate subjectivity should not be defined by whether or not corporations share certain essential or intrinsic characteristics that define persons (i.e. the search for universals by finding analogous characteristics between persons and corporations). Instead, he suggests we should define corporations in terms of their social consequences and relations.

Further reading

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COSMOLOGY

Philosophical cosmology has a different set of interests from the type of cosmology currently being done in astrophysics. While the latter is concerned with the birth of matter, gravity, and space time from a singularity, the former is concerned with the structure and role of meaning in the vast expanses of nature, a nature that cannot be reduced to matter and energy. There are many orders that cannot be translated into physical energy, such as possibilities, and there are structures that pertain to a much larger conception of the "population" of the world. Put differently, while astrophysics talks of the "universe," philosophical cosmologists talk of the "world" and or of "nature." As we shall see, these are larger conceptions than those of scientific cosmology.

Further, many philosophers are less concerned with the conditions of origin for the innumerable orders of the world and more concerned with what could be called structural issues. Cosmogogenesis often gets played down as the focus shifts to the generic features of existence, to use Dewey's apt phrase. The concept of "ground," especially in neoplatonic cosmologies, is rendered more problematic and no longer serves as a first principle that generates all others. Other cosmologies rethink ground in ways that are not necessarily incompatible

with Big Bang cosmology, but which would locate the Big Bang in orders of lesser scope.

In a taxonomy of philosophical cosmologies within the classical American tradition, four stand out as having the greatest scope combined with interpretive precision. They are: (1) transcendentalism's neoplatonic cosmology; (2) pragmatism's agapastic cosmology; (3) process cosmology; and (4) ordinal cosmology.

Starting in 1836 in his epoch-making essay *Nature*, Emerson creates a neoplatonic cosmology that challenges the then dominant patriarchal vertical cosmology of a divine agent creating the world out of nothingness. Emerson shifts his focus to the depths of nature rather than toward a supernatural realm of absolute meaning and value. Nature itself is constituted by a series of emanations that have no first emanation or governing primal source that somehow stands back from the nature that is allegedly created by an extranatural power.

The world of nature is one that has neither beginning nor ending; only a series of endless emanations that rise out of each other in a chaotic and tumbling fashion. To go against the realm of infinite emanations is to become insane. This insanity comes from the desire to find an *arche* or first principle from which to deduce all others in, for example, the tradition of Leibniz. In Emerson's perspective the Big Bang would be but one special and violent form of emanation, but would not exhaust the fecundity of nature's endless self-fissuring. Elsewhere Emerson uses Spinoza's distinction between *nature naturing* and *nature natured* to signal that the depths of nature are inexhaustible and not a once-and-for-all created event. His own rethinking of *natura naturans* could be translated as the power of nature creating itself out of itself alone (via endless emanations), while *natura naturata* would be the innumerable orders of the world as manifest from out of the bosom of *nature naturing*.

Within the heart of nature is the Over soul that represents the depth-structure of the human process. We are cosmic beings who have ridden on the back of endless nature and our essence is found in the light that pours out of the orders of the world. Emerson celebrates the infinitude of the self, although he modifies this commitment after 1844. The self, while limited by temperament, is the agent through which infinite nature comes to an awareness of its own depths and its own scope. In a striking parallel with the Western esoteric traditions, Emerson sees the cosmic self as a microcosm of the vast macrocosm. In his neoplatonic cosmology the human process edges out

the former infinite god as the locus of truth and ceaseless self-transfiguration.

While Plotinus has but one emanating source (the One), Emerson pluralizes the emanational patterns so that there is no ground of all grounds. In the tradition of German Idealism, by which he was influenced, the ground is more like an abyss (*abgrund*) than a place upon which to stand in atemporal security. His neoplatonic cosmology is radically decentering and invokes the depth-powers of the torrents that we call nature.

Peirce, on the other hand, seeks a form of rational stability in his pragmatist cosmology. He coined the term "pragmatist" to distinguish his form of pragmatism from that of William James, who had popularized the term "pragmatism." In Peirce's pragmatist cosmology the focus shifts to the future where the world of nature is seen to be evolving toward a state of ultimate convergence. While Emerson placed far more emphasis on nature than on history, Peirce made history a foundational category in his cosmology. The past is seen as the seed bed of a triumphant future in which what he called "concrete reasonableness" would shape the laws and habits of the universe of nature. Even the divine order is caught up in this process-style evolutionary cosmology.

What makes Peirce unique among the pragmatists, such as James and Dewey, is that he created foundational categories that were cosmic in scope. While James has an ontology of vital centers of power and Dewey has an event ontology, Peirce sought the absolute starting point for nature in its vast scope and fecundity. In this process of forging his cosmology he unfolded the three primal categories that he called "firstness," "secondness," and "thirdness." These three structures operate both in his cosmology and in his phenomenology (theory of human experience). Our concern is with the former use.

Firstness is the most difficult category to define, for the simple reason that it lies before language and any attempt at meaning-formation. Peirce likened firstness to the Garden of Eden before language emerged – a state in which all was primal perfection and there was no stain of existence/actuality. In other contexts Peirce envisions firstness as pure qualitative immediacy: that is, not a known and articulated quality *per se* but the realm of what could be called "pure quality." As pure it is not any order or structure that could be encountered by sign-using creatures like ourselves. Attempts have been made to link firstness to the unconscious in nature but these moves are still problematic (cf. Corrington 1993).

Secondness is much easier to define as it involves two forces in dyadic interaction. It is an emergent (emanation) from firstness and represents the class of finite powers. Peirce gives the example of the rough hand of the sheriff upon one's shoulder as an example of secondness. It is important to note that secondness is not yet intelligible as it is a bare causal relationship that has no admixture, at this point, with thirdness. It should further be noted that Peirce considers sequential talk of the three primal cosmological categories to be an abstraction, or what he calls a form of "pre-scinding" in which a category is ripped out of the total phenomenon which may represent a swirling admixture of all three categories.

The category of thirdness is the most important cosmologically. It represents the mediation of firstness and secondness around a law or general principle of reasonableness. Thirdness can also be defined as cosmic habit, that is, the realm of attained habits that the innumerable orders of the world have fallen into over the length of evolution. The entire universe of nature is growing both at its edges and at its center: namely, at the point where thirdness reweaves the fabric of dyadic secondness around a mediating third that is the upshot of secondness as it passes over to its teleological fulfillment in thirdness. Nature groans toward the full manifestation and display of thirdness in which all human sign systems will ideally converge with the reasonableness at the heart of nature and the divine (which will be fully revealed in both its secondness – sheer existence – and thirdness).

The culminating moment of his pragmaticist cosmology lies in his concept of agapasm. He believes that evolution is not solely Darwinian but also involves a principle of cosmic and evolutionary love in which the purity of firstness and the ravages of secondness get redeemed around crystalline thirdness that stands in a loving relationship to the "lower" orders of creation. Cosmic mind unites thirdness with all orders of creation: "In genuine agapasm, on the other hand, advance takes place by virtue of a positive sympathy among the created springing from continuity of mind." (Corrington 1993: 196). Like later process thinkers, Peirce was a panpsychist: namely, one who believed that so-called matter was actually a form of frozen mind and that mentality is the genus of which mere matter is a nonfoundational species.

Process cosmology carries Peirce's panpsychism forward and makes it a foundational category in its strongly evolutionary perspective. While Peirce talks about the feelings a primitive protoplasm has, process thought speaks of the ultimate constituents

of the world as having highly complex feelings in their own right. The basic building block of process cosmology is the atomic structure termed the "actual occasion." These occasions are in space and time although they are akin to infinitesimals: namely, a reality that is infinitely small yet greater than zero. The actual occasion is a drop of experience that has what are called "prehensions" of all past occasions in the universe or world of nature. A prehension is a feeling of feelings that is open to the influence of other occasions. While it is impossible to have a present prehension, the past is almost immediately available for what is called "ingression," that is the internal presence that shapes what the new actual occasion is to be. An actual occasion, small and episodic, has both positive and negative prehensions of the past world of occasions. A negative prehension is one that rejects a possible ingression into the brief life of the given occasion while a positive prehension is one that lets a past event, now solidified, matter to it.

The actual occasion has a special form all of its own, termed the "subjective form," that determines the shape its world of ingressions will take. It also has a subjective aim which is its inner teleological purpose, its drive to become something unique and valuable to the universe. The aim and the form work in consort with each other to make the actual occasion a unique event in the world, one that cannot be repeated by any other occasion. The time between the birth of the actual occasion and its solidification into its unique status is very brief but during this period it scans the universe to find its relevant internal matter.

The second major constituent of the world of nature is the "eternal entity," which is akin to a Platonic form in that it is a nonchanging possibility that gives the universe its texture and permanent structures. The actual occasion also allows eternal entities to become relevant to it as it shapes its internal life and becomes immortal as just the structure that it is and no other. For both Whitehead and Hartshorne eternal entities reside in what is termed the "primordial mind of God," which is the eternal and always relevant repository of the forms that shape the world of nature and which collectively occupy the eternal mind of the absolute side of God. God entertains these eternal entities and further helps, via persuasion, to make appropriate ones relevant to the given actual occasion as it goes through its series of prehensions. God does not work by coercion or by the blind use of power but by persuasion, by providing a divine lure (the initial aim) that can appeal to the actual occasion

as it struggles to pick its way among the formal possibilities of its being.

But God has a second nature that is truly processive and that represents a distinctive contribution of process cosmology to philosophical theology. The second divine nature is the "consequent nature" and represents God as growing with the universe of occasions. In this nature, God itself prehends all of the actual occasions that have become objectively immortal, that is, completed in their becoming. Hence, the process God is both eternal and temporal but in different respects. One implication drawn from this perspective is that the human society of occasions is not subjectively immortal but only objectively so as its occasions become remembered by the consequent nature of God – its internal subjectivity ceases to prevail in nature and its orders.

Ordinal cosmology is of more recent vintage and represents a refinement on pragmatism and naturalism. Created by Justus Buchler, ordinal metaphysics challenges the idea that there are ultimate simples in nature and argues instead that everything whatsoever is complex in its own traits and in its relational traits. Instead of the actual occasion, Buchler speaks of "natural complexes" that have no built in "what." This is an important point in that it refuses to assign any one trait to nature as a whole and allows the orders of the world to have nonreductive traits that are in each case unique. There is no order *of* nature or order *for* nature, only orders in relation. All container images are rejected in the ordinal perspective. Further, like Emerson, Buchler downplays any sense of the ultimate whence or whither of nature and works *in medias res*. Peirce's eschatology and process divine lures are denied in a universe that has fecundity but no telos. This is naturalism at its most refined and at its starkest. It is a cosmology that puts the sense of origin in the heart of nature. Again like Emerson, Buchler uses the twin terms *nature naturing* and *nature natured* as his ultimate cosmological realities with the former term referring to the sheer fecundity of a depth-less nature and the later term referring to the uncountable orders of the world. In place of religious grace Buchler uses the term "providingness."

Perhaps most important in the ordinal perspective is the commitment to ontological parity, which is contrasted to ontological priority. As the terms suggest, priority schemes privilege one reality over all others and makes the others less real – this is often done almost unconsciously and without systematic elaboration. Thus, for example, Schopenhauer can make will more real than phenomena

and thus push the realm of finite experiences into the less real. The commitment to ontological parity is harder to realize in principle as it entails an ongoing effort to let all discriminanda be equally real. Hence, Hamlet is not less real than Shakespeare, only differently real. The sense of parity allows the world of nature to express all of its richness without condemning any orders to the dubious realm of the less real.

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CREATIVITY

In ordinary usage, "creativity" usually denotes a psychological phenomenon, a state or a process within an individual human being. This is the primary sense of creativity that analytic philosophers seem to have in mind when investigating, for example, the creative processes of scientific discovery, such as the creation of novel hypotheses. The concept of creativity has, however, been thematized by American philosophers from broader perspectives. In both pragmatism and process philosophy, as well as in the traditions of idealism and personalism, creativity is viewed as a metaphysically significant, even cosmic, process of the emergence of something new. The novelties produced in such creative processes are, however, not chaotic or random but (humanly) significant.

Creativity in pragmatism

American pragmatism is a philosophy of creativity *par excellence*. The pragmatist insists that ideas must be put into action in order to find out their proper meaning. We should make creative use of our thoughts and concepts, experimentally employing them in the course of experience. Even the most theoretical ideas should be creatively tested in terms of human practices. Insofar as reality itself

ROYCE, JOSIAH: EPISTEMOLOGY

Unlike many contemporary philosophers Royce does not make a rigid distinction between metaphysics and epistemology. That is, for Royce, the theory of knowledge is part of the larger question of the nature of the Absolute Mind or Self that is fully aware of the finite particulars of the world and its orders. There is a shift of emphasis in Royce, moving from a fairly static understanding of the Absolute (1885–1912) to a more pluralistic and time-bound understanding of the Spirit as the agent of interpretation. The later Royce, c. 1912–16, writes under the influence of Peirce's semiotics and the biblical writings of St Paul.

In his first major book, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* of 1885, Royce develops his idealistic epistemology along hermeneutic lines. He rejects realism with its view that a given thought intends and corresponds to an external object by insisting that only an internally coherent and finite/infinite parallel structure for thought exists. The finite thoughts of my mind are coherent in their own right insofar as they emerge from volition and attention to realities that transcend the empirical. From his dissertation on Kant he unfolds the idea of what he calls the "postulates" that are thought forms that reach beyond the empirically given into values, norms, and categorial structures that are linked to the Absolute. We are creatures of will and the core of our self is rooted in the Absolute Self that is a Will beyond time and space. Finite ideas standing alone leave us with epistemological chaos until they are woven into the fabric of the Absolute.

The hermeneutic dimension of his idealistic epistemology is seen in the problem of psychological interpretation. He gives the example of two people, John and Thomas, who must come to an understanding of each other, that is, to correctly interpret the substantive self with whom they are in dialogue. But this process soon fissures into six selves; namely, John's idea of Thomas, Thomas's idea of John, John's idea of himself, Thomas's idea of himself, and the real John and the real Thomas. Royce argues that there is no possibility for genuine knowledge in the finite realm of psychological projection and reciprocity, only an entanglement of delusion. The way out of this morass is through an attunement to the Absolute Mind for whom the real John and the real Thomas are fully known outside of the vicissitudes of time. Structurally, Royce argues, my thought a:b must be isomorphic with the Absolute thought A:B. However, we get few clues at this stage (1885) as to how the isomorphism is to be accomplished by finite minds.

In his next major work, based on his Gifford Lectures of 1899, *The World and the Individual* (1901), Royce refines his analysis of the correlation between finite ideas and the world of the Absolute by introducing the mathematical idea of the self-representative system as explicated by Richard Dedekind. The finite willing world of the human self lives in what he calls the world of description while the divine mind lives in the realm of appreciation. The link between mere external description and full internal appreciation is through the self-representative system that links finite to infinite knowledge. Royce gives the example of someone who is asked to draw a perfect map of England. They are to represent everything in England on this map. When they are finished they find that they have left out one element, namely the map itself which is now a part of England. So they must draw the map on the map, but now this leaves the project incomplete yet again as the second map is now also part of England, so a third map must be drawn inside of the second one. This process continues to infinity. The important point is that any one map in the self-representative system can stand for the series as a totality through a projection outward and downward simultaneously. In our finite epistemological and hermeneutic moves we catch a piece of the infinite series through a kind of epistemic grace whereby the Absolute bestows its plenitude upon us. Yet it remains a mystery of how, phenomenologically, we actually encounter the self-representative series and know when we have done so.

A major turning point for Royce took place around 1912 when he carefully works through the semiotic writings of the early Peirce. The idea of the self-representative system becomes more "earth-bound" by becoming transfigured into the idea of sign series as they unfold within the structure of community. His earlier idealistic epistemology becomes reshaped into a communitarian and more fully hermeneutic model in which finite selves unite to work in and through the Spirit. Interpreting to create and sustain what he calls, following his understanding of St Paul, the "Beloved Community." In *The Problem of Christianity* (1913) he works through Christian scriptures and Peirce's semiotics to unfold a semiotic epistemology that places priority on how finite minds, each loyal to the semiotic processes of other selves, unite to forge a spirit-filled community in which genuine knowledge takes place. The atemporal Absolute of 1901 is modified into the Spirit that lives and moves through communitarian and earth-bound structures.

We traffic in signs and know that we do so. Like Peirce, Royce argues that signs come in series with neither beginning nor end in view. We interpret a sign whenever we encounter it in any modality and this encounter creates a new sign that functions to amplify and deepen the original sign. Sign structures are triadic in several senses. Whenever a perception and a conception come together we get an interpretation (again pointing to the hermeneutic dimension of his epistemology). Second, whenever we, for example, translate a text we have three terms: the text, the interpreter, and the interpretee. Third, we see the present self interpreting its past self to its future self. All three modalities are epistemological dimensions of semiosis. In the mature Royce knowledge is semiotic and interpretive. The energy within these triads comes from the Spirit Interpreter who coaxes signs into birthing further and deeper meanings. Here there is a kind of grace that is even more evident than in the earlier Royce as the structure of knowledge is tied to the Spirit that infuses the community with its infinite powers. In the Beloved Community we are known as we truly are and we know other loyal selves as they are. The finite and the infinite have now come together in the time process.

Further reading

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ROYCE, JOSIAH: EVIL

Josiah Royce (1855–1916) struggled with the problem of evil throughout his life, exploring it from various approaches and with different refinements throughout his career. For Royce evil was a genuine philosophical problem as well as a practical one.

Royce believed that one could account for the moral world only by a form of metaphysical idealism and thus evil was a metaphysical problem. However, he equally saw evil as a fact of the world and he knew the pessimism it could invoke. Further, as a native Californian and historian of early California, he described ways in which evil manifested itself in social relations among persons, in social bodies infected with racism, greed, a variety

of harmful prejudices, expressions of hate, and mob violence.

In, *Studies of Good and Evil* (1899) Royce provides an overview of the problem of evil. Thus he asks how far the knowledge of evil contributes to moral perfection. Seeing physical life and the moral life as balancing opposing tendencies, Royce posits that moral goodness, unlike innocence, is only won through struggle with the forces of evil and it involves a rather deep knowledge of evil – a knowledge that unfortunately can lead to sin. This thesis is further explored in his essay, “The Case of John Bunyan” (1894), where Royce presents a case of an actual good man triumphantly struggling with his own profound problem of evil. Royce continually stresses the personal and experiential in dealing with the problem of evil. A consistent theme, both philosophically and practically, is the necessity of a courageous struggle against evil in all its forms. For Royce, individuals could only achieve genuine spirituality and morality by detesting and subordinating evil. Thus, for Royce, good is not a simple concept but rather an idea inseparable from the idea of evil. Further, the essence of moral life is not to seek a pure good or a distant ideal God but rather to find God in the present within the mix of good and evil and to see the truly good man as one who takes his part in the struggle with evil.

In “The Problem of Job,” (1897) Royce presents a fairly succinct overview of the traditional statement of the problem of evil and various standard solutions. Job views God traditionally, namely as wise, omnipotent, all powerful, and all good, and sees his own situation as one of universal unearned ill-fortune, and a reigning down of evils on a good man. For Royce, Job represents the fundamental psychological fact about the problem of evil, namely the universal experience of unearned ill-fortune. This, asserts Royce, is the experience of every person, the kind of evil that each person can see for themselves every day if they choose, and this fundamental experiential and psychological perspective grounds Royce’s own answers to the problem of evil as well as his dismissal of the various traditional answers. Thus, for example, there is the view that the purpose of the world is “soul making,” that pain teaches us the ways of the world and helps us develop our higher potentialities. Royce believes this answer inadequate because it presupposes a greater evil, namely a world which allows evils as the only way to reach given goals. Such an answer Royce believes unacceptable to a sufferer of evil and undeserved ills.