Josiah Royce’s Great Hope

Liberty, what of the night?—
I feel not the red rains fall,
Hear not the tempest at all,
Nor thunder in heaven any more.
All the distance is white
With the soundless feet of the sun.
Night, with the woes that it wore,
Night is over and done.

—A. C. Swinburne

On May 7th in 1915, a German submarine sank the Lusitania thereby helping to precipitate the United States’ entry into the First World War. This was the “9/11” attack of the day. The American philosopher, Josiah Royce, was outraged and devastated by this disaster which he considered a war crime and in response to which he wrote the paper, “The Destruction of the Lusitania.” He blamed Germany for the war which he described as a militaristic state bent on attacking not merely the democratic polity represented by the Allies but nothing less than civilization itself. No doubt contributing to his revulsion was his love of German high culture and the inspiration he took from it. As a student he had sojourned in Germany to study under Lotze, coming under the spell of Hegel and Schopenhauer and the German Romantic poets. For Royce Germany’s aggression must have been a disillusioning betrayal of what was best in her—significantly, he died only a year after the Lusitania’s sinking.

His paper on that disaster was later published as a chapter, along with other papers relating to the Great War, in the The Hope of the Great Community. Another chapter in that book is the eponymous “The Hope of the Great Community” in which Royce brings to bear on that crisis the fundamental idea of his metaphysics and the central ideal of his ethics, namely, that of community. During the dark days of the war he
did not give way to despair as he would have had every right to do so. Contemporaries of his such as the historians Jakob Burkhardt, Henry Adams, and Oswald Spengler, surveying the course of human events with a prophet’s eye, had become convinced pessimists. But not Royce: He found grounds for hope in the possibility that his ideal of community might at last be realized.

This paper undertakes to do the following: (1) briefly describe Royce’s idea of community; (2) explain why he thought that the era of the First World War was propitious for realizing the hope of the great community; (3) draw out the implications of Royce’s vaticinal interpretation of the crisis of his time for the crises of our own such as international terrorism and the European Union’s attempt to preserve the sovereignties of its member states, and see what hope can be gleaned from them.

To begin, however, a brief word about Royce. He together with Peirce, James, Dewey, and Santayana marks American philosophy’s coming of age as well as its Golden Age. Born in Grass Valley, California, Royce, after studying in Germany, took the Ph.D. in philosophy from the newly founded graduate school of Johns Hopkins University and subsequently joined the philosophy department at Harvard. He was a belated absolute idealist who synthesized elements of Hegel’s objective idealism, Schopenhauer’s voluntarism, British empiricism and Peirce’s pragmatism. I turn now to Royce’s conceptions of community and of loyalty its basis.

Human beings ineluctably belong to communities. For Royce a community is organic in nature: “A community is not a mere collection of individuals. It is a sort of live unit, that has organs, as the body of an individual has organs.” The community has a mind of its own which manifests itself in such forms as language, customs, and religion.
Communities, moreover, tend to become integrated into ever wider, composite communities: “States are united in empires; languages cooperate in the production of universal literature; the corporate entities of many communities tend to organize that still very incomplete community which, if ever it comes into existence, will be the world-state, the community possessing the whole world’s civilization.”

The Great Community, inclusive of all humanity, should be, according to Royce, the sole and highest object of our moral concern or loyalty. He found the inspiration and paradigm of his ideal community in the Apostle Paul’s vision of the Church Universal conceived of as “an ideal community of all the faithful, which was to become the community of all mankind, and which was to become some day the possessor of all the earth, the exponent of true charity, at once the spirit and the ruler of the humanity of the future.”

A member of a community may be devoted to and serve it as if it were itself a “super-personal being.” Examples of communities that might command one’s devotion and service as a member are “one’s family, one’s circle of personal friends, one’s home, one’s village community, one’s clan, or one’s country.” Royce calls this active devotion of an individual member to his/her community “loyalty” which he further defines as,

the willing and thoroughgoing devotion of a self to a cause, when the cause is something which unites many selves in one, and which is therefore the interest of a community. For a 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 him to this cause.

The loyal, whatever the communities to which they are devoted, are as one, and from an awareness of their loyal unifying spirit emerges the communitarian ideal inclusive of all humankind:

The loyal are, in ideal, essentially kin. If they grow really wise, they observe this fact. The spirit that loves the community learns to prize itself as a spirit
that, in all who are dominated by it, is essentially one, despite the variety of special causes, of nationalities, or of customs. The logical development of the loyal spirit is therefore the rise of a consciousness of the ideal of an universal community of the loyal, — a community which, despite all warfare and jealousy, and despite all varieties of gods and of laws, is supreme in its value, however remote from the present life of civilization.³

Loyalty functions as Royce’s categorical imperative to which he reduces all the other moral virtues and regards as that which forms persons into a community. “The whole moral law,” he maintains, “is implicitly bound up in the one precept: Be loyal.”⁴

However, Royce is careful to preserve the distinction between the self and its cause (the object of loyalty). A sense of self must always remain; otherwise, in the loss of self-awareness there is no self left capable of active service: “One must be in control of one’s powers, or one has no self to give to one’s cause. One must get a personality in order to be able to surrender this personality to anything.” On the other hand, one must regard the cause as something greater than one’s self, and superior to all one’s private interests; the cause is perceived “outside of him,—something vast, dignified, imposing, compelling, objective.” Loyalty is serving a cause higher than one’s self; not doing so is to wallow in a constrictive self-centeredness. Though in Royce’s conception of loyalty the contrast between the self and its cause must be preserved, the gap between them ought as much as possible be closed—though closing it completely would be neither desirable nor possible. To close the gap between self and cause—to unite them—requires that one must act in the service of a cause:

For my objective cause and my inner private self, in case I am loyal, are sharply contrasted. I have to think of both of them, if I’m to be loyal; but they must be brought into unity. Only my deeds can accomplish this result. My loyal sentiments, if left to themselves, would merely emphasize the contrast without giving life any acceptable unity. Loyalty is that loyally does.
The cause becomes, in a sense, one’s larger, higher self, whereas he/she, its devotee, becomes its willing self: “The cause, then, is not only another than his private self; it is in a sense his larger self. Despite the contrast he becomes one with it through his every loyal deed.” Royce, then, conceives the cause as a person a “supra-” or “virtual person”—which transcends any and all individual persons. My cause is not only my larger self, but also the larger selves of all those others who are likewise devoted to it.

“You are here to become absorbed in a devotion to some cause or system of causes,” proclaims Royce—this is our raison d’ être, and the sole means to our self-fulfillment. “Loyalty, the devotion of the self to the interests of the community, is indeed the form which the highest life of humanity must take,” affirms Royce. “Without loyalty, there is no salvation.” The ultimate object of our loyalty ought to be nothing less than the community of all selves or persons which is realized through loyalty.

Royce’s identification of loyalty with morality may strike one as questionable; there are examples of blind, idolatrous, and pernicious loyalty such as the loyalty of the Nazis to Hitler or that of his followers to Jim Jones, which are anything but moral. Royce is well aware of such perversions of loyalty. However, he believes that we can distinguish the principle of loyalty from its individual instances, and it is this which is intrinsically good—we ought to be loyal to loyalty itself. Moreover, he provides a criterion for distinguishing good or authentic forms of loyalty from bad, or false, forms. If one’s loyalty to a cause does not interfere with others’ loyalties to their causes, and all these particular loyalties have as their common end the realization of the Great Community which in their various ways they help to create, then it is good. Royce’s ideal community “existing in aspiration rather than as yet in fact, is the true object of love.
and loyalty. The true moral maxim becomes ‘loyalty to loyalty,’ which expresses devotion to the whole community, the source of being for the individual.”

I come now to Royce’s qualified optimism, of why he thought a time darkened by global war should nonetheless bode well for realizing his hope of the Great Community.

Royce identified two interpretations of the First World War. According to the one it was just another international conflict involving competing national ideals with one side in the right and deserving victory. According to the other interpretation, Royce’s own, it was “a conflict between the community of mankind and the particular interests of individual nations” with the community of mankind being the Triple Entente and the individual nations comprising the Central Powers. Royce’s interpretation suggests that much more was at stake in this war than the interests of rival nations—it was nothing less than civilization itself together with his communitarian hope.

In 1916, despite the war, Royce thought the time ripe for the emergence of his ideal community. “At this very moment,” he writes, “the material aspect of civilization favors, as never before, the natural conditions upon which the community of mankind, if it were reasonably successful, would depend for its prosperity” because “the growth of the natural sciences as well as of the technical industries of mankind also makes possible” more “comprehensive forms and grades of cooperation which men have never before known.” This has made for a truly global community betokening a deeper spiritual bond among peoples.

Interestingly and significantly Royce believed that the emergence of the Great Community would not be achieved through political reform or revolution. Indeed, he had a low opinion of the political order. “Amongst the many social functions of a nation or,
for that matter, of any human community,” he writes, “the political functions of such a community, at any rate, as they have been conceived and carried out up to the present time, are ethically amongst the least important.” He cites the examples of ancient Greece of the poleis, the Israel of the Prophets, and Germany before unification under Bismarck. Each made its greatest contribution to culture before or without achieving political unity: “there seems to be some opposition between the political power of a nation and its power to contribute to the ideal goods of the community of mankind.” Look not to government for salvation: “the salvation of the world will be found, if at all, through uniting the already existing communities of mankind into higher communities, and not through merely freeing the peoples from their oppressors, or through giving them a more popular government, unless popular government always takes the form of government by the united community, through the united community, and for the united community.”

Royce’s suspicion of politics is well founded. If Machiavelli is right in contending that politics is but the pursuit and wielding of power, then nothing could be more contrary to the spirit of that exponent of true charity, the redemptive community of St. Paul. In Herman Randall, Jr.’s words, “Political states or nations are not communities in the true sense, since they foster a spirit of partisanship, exclusiveness, and animosity toward one another. They breed individualism, and that is the sin against the Holy Ghost.”

Instead of coming on the foot of new political forms or institutions, the Great Community will come about, so Royce thinks, through apolitical but practicable means like the machinery of international business: “international business is already approaching a stage wherein, if the spoilers do not indeed too seriously wreck or too deeply impair our progress, we may actively begin to further international unity, without
in the least interfering with the free internal development of the social orders of individual nations.” One form of business Royce had in mind is insurance since, as he says, “the business of insurance depends upon devices which are, so to speak, essentially unifying, essentially reconciling, essentially such as to exemplify a type of social community.” Moreover, it would not require much in the way of innovation but be based conservatively on existing models: “This new enterprise would involve no essentially new type of insurance. It would be based upon international needs which are already recognized, which have already created certain very successful corporations, which actually do an international business.”

Royce’s mentioning in “Hope of the Great Community” a scheme of international insurance as both exemplifying and promoting his communitarian ideal is particularly significant insofar as elsewhere in the same volume with this essay there is another entitled, “The Possibility of International Insurance,” where he explains how international insurance might advance the cause of community by reducing the likelihood of war.

In the book-length War and Insurance, which amplifies this theme, Royce proposes that “a group of nations should form an organization for the mutual insurance of its members against any kind of risks,” an application of the principles of insurance to international relations. This organization would be administered by “a Board of Trustees, with powers and duties which would be in the main fiduciary and with no political powers or obligations whatever.” The membership of the Board would be international, being made up of representatives from the nations forming this insurance organization, and they would be compensated for their services from a trust fund. Their conduct would be guided by clearly stated rules assented to by all the participating
nations; the amendment of these rules would be subject to the assent of the nations involved and might not curtail rights already conferred by currently existing rules; however, allowance would be made for establishing rules, when necessary, to regulate the conditions under which a nation could relinquish its rights under the insurance plan.

The Board would be entrusted with an enormous fund, contributed to by the insured nations, from which they might be wholly or partially compensated for a loss, and deposited in a traditionally neutral state like Switzerland and invested in many different ways among the insured nations to minimize the risk of its being seized by a hostile power. Any nation, no matter its history or current status, would be eligible to join this international organization for mutual insurance. If the sovereignty of an insured nation were destroyed by revolution, lost by its incorporation into some larger federation, or dissolved through conquest by another nation, then the Board would have the prerogative to declare that nation “dead,” thereby causing its insurance rights to lapse and its insured funds to return to the general fund. Further, if a conquering power demanded the insurance rights and funds of a vanquished nation to be handed over to it, then the insurance contract would be automatically declared null and void. Nations might be insured against any kind of risks whose economic impacts can be quantified and redressed. These would include natural disasters like earthquakes and floods and man-made disasters like wars and revolutions. The insured nation would have sole jurisdiction in determining how the insurance money would be distributed among its citizens in the event of some calamity.

International insurance would contribute to the emergence of a community of humankind by broadening the range of a people’s or a nation’s loyalty. Ideally, for
Royce, a people’s loyalty should extend well beyond the borders of their own land and culture even to peoples markedly different from them. A more inclusive loyalty needs be substituted for a narrowly exclusive one or, in Royce’s words, “the growth of some higher type of loyalty, which shall absorb the men of the future so that the service of the community of all mankind will at last become their great obsession.” The great community for which Royce hopes is one that knows neither geographical boundaries nor racial and ethnic barriers, but is transnational and universal. The last best hope for its realization, thinks Royce, is international insurance. Parodying Lincoln and echoing the bible, Royce foresees, “whenever insurance of the nations, by the nations, and for the nations begins, it will thenceforth never vanish from the earth, but will begin to make visible to us the holy city of the community of all mankind.”

Royce conceives this “community of all mankind” as itself being constituted of distinct communities which currently exist: “its members will not be merely individual human beings, nor yet mere collections or masses of humans beings, however vast, but communities of some sort, communities such as, at any stage of civilization in which the great community is to be raised to some higher level of organization, already exist.” The great community now exists latent awaiting its full actualization when, presumably, its constituent communities are coordinated. What is particularly noteworthy about Royce’s communitarian conception is its conservatism. The great community will not be born of convulsive and wrenching changes in the form of political revolutions but will evolve naturally from a pre-existent order—the seeds of this community have already been sown and await germination. An example of the evolution of this community from currently existing institutions is Royce’s prospective
international scheme of insurance modeled on the structure of private insurance companies.

Moreover, and this is especially significant, the pre-existent communities, such as nations, that will be integral to the great community and from which it will emerge would remain intact and retain their individual identities. In other words, Royce’s communitarian ideal, for all its cosmopolitanism, is not hegemonic or incompatible with nationalism or what he calls a “wise provincialism.” “The citizens of the world of the future will not lose their distinct countries,” Royce assures us. “What will pass away will be that insistent mutual hostility which gives to the nations of to-day, even in times of peace, so many of the hateful and distracting characters of a detached individual man.” Here Royce is referring to the state of nature in which nations now exist. He iterates that we ought to look beyond politics for our individual and collective salvation, and that means honoring the integrity of individual nations:

Liberty alone never saves us. Democracy alone never saves us. Our political freedom is but vanity unless it is a means through which we come to realize and practice charity, in the Pauline sense of that word. Hence the community of mankind will be international in the sense that it will ignore no rational and genuinely self-conscious nation. It will find the way to respect the liberty of the individual nations without destroying their genuine spiritual freedom.¹⁸

Incidentally, I do not understand how respect to the liberty of the individual nations might destroy their genuine spiritual freedom, unless he makes a distinction between political liberty and spiritual freedom which I think he might. Given his low opinion of the political order, at least as to its contributing to the emergence of the great community, it would be feasible to think that he has in mind a form of freedom superior to the political kind or democracy. Royce does not explain what this spiritual freedom is which accounts for its genuineness in contradistinction to political liberty. He might mean that
genuine spiritual freedom is voluntary loyalty or devotion to a transcendent cause as represented by the community of all mankind. If so, then it is something like Kant’s ideal of genuine freedom which is voluntary obedience to the moral law. By the way, Royce’s great community is a moral community of the sort postulated in Kant’s Kingdom of Ends. Again, for Royce, the political order ought to be subservient to the spiritual or moral order. Democracy is vindicated only if it is an instrument for promoting and practicing benevolence.

Moreover, the great community, as Royce conceives it, would require that the integrity of individual nations be preserved; indeed, it can be realized in no other way: “There can be no true international life unless the nations remain to possess it,” Royce insists, just as “there can never be a spiritual body unless that body, like the ideal Pauline church, has its many members,”¹⁹ and just as a cause to be actively served requires that the individual selves serving it must remain intact to be of service to it at all. The motto of *E Pluribus Unum* should apply to the community of mankind no less than to the American Republic.

In summary, Royce’s communitarian ideal is distinctive in the following respects. First, it is pluralistic. It honors and allows for the inviolability of each individual member of a community and the particularity of each sub-community like a nation or culture making up the community of mankind thereby avoiding the extremes of either individualism or collectivism which make for anarchy and totalitarianism respectively within the socio-political order. Second, it conceives of the bond uniting authentic community as apolitical. Third, this communitarian ideal is conservative: the great community will not spring from political revolutions or even reforms but will
emerge naturally and spontaneously from existing institutions. Royce finds the incipient stages of the great community, even paradigms of it, in the international community of scientists loyal to the cause of truth, in the business of insurance, and the beloved community of the Pauline Church. Fourth, according to Royce’s ideal conception, the expansion and integration of extant communities into the international community of mankind is inevitable—in a sense, this community already exists as a theoretical possibility if not in fact.

Royce has proven prophetic in several ways. His belief that a “wise provincialism” in the form of enlightened nationalism is compatible with and, indeed, necessary for a well-ordered and unified international system has been vindicated by history. “The prophets of the nineteenth century predicted many things,” writes Isaiah Berlin, “but what none of them, so far as I know, predicted was that the last third of the twentieth century would be dominated by a world-wide growth of nationalism.” And in words no less applicable to the beginning of the twenty-first century as to that of the twentieth, Royce presciently remarks, “The modern world has become in many ways more and more an international world. And this, I insist, has been true not merely as to its technical and material ties, but as to its spiritual union.” Those hitherto comprehensive forms and grades of cooperation made possible by science and technology that Royce foresaw as a possibility have now come to fruition in ways perhaps far exceeding his expectations—think of the Internet with Facebook and its legions of blogs, and electronic media like Twitter which helped foment the recent Arab Spring. There are today, moreover, schemes of international business other than that of international insurance that Royce did not anticipate, though undoubtedly would have
approved as means of fostering the emergence of his ideal community—think, for example, of NAFTA and the World Bank. Then there are our current international scientific bodies like the Royal Society and the American Academy of Science representing the paradigmatic community of scientists, and the ecumenical movements within the Church and various schemes of cooperation among the great religions of the world now afoot.

If the great community is ever to become an historical reality, nations would do well to heed Royce. He condemns chauvinism, jingoism, and cultural isolationism, symptoms of pernicious nationalism. He would undoubtedly have deplored the buccaneering, unilateral foreign policy initiatives of the Bush administration that precipitated the Iraq War. As a Hegelian, he understood that all peoples and nations are organically connected. He advocated cooperation among nations, adherence to the principles of international law, and diplomacy. “We shall always be required to take counsel of the other nations in company with whom we are at work upon the tasks of civilization,” he admonishes. “Nor have we outgrown our spiritual dependence upon older forms of civilization. In fact, we shall never outgrow a certain inevitable degree of such dependence.” Yet, learning from others does not mean our slavish imitation of them: “The way to win independence is by learning freely from abroad, but by then insisting upon our own interpretation of the common good.” 22

Royce’s proposal for world peace, which would be a practical means of achieving the great community, has historical precedents. Leibniz, for example, sought tirelessly to bring about peace among the nations by proposing the establishment of an international league under the aegis of the Holy Roman Empire for settling their political disputes
under the rule of law, and to effect an accord between the Catholic and Protestant Churches (whose conflicts since the Reformation had been the chief cause of war) by laying a foundation for their ecumenical union. He failed signally in both these endeavors.23 And Kant published in 1795 under the title of *On Everlasting Peace* an irenic proposal similar to Leibniz’s for establishing a league of nations through which conflicts among them might be adjudicated in court, not settled in the field. His proposal, lamentably, also came to nothing.

Royce’s proposal bears comparison with theirs. Like Leibniz’s, it is conservative insofar as it emerges from an extant order—Leibniz’s international league would have emerged within the political order of the old Holy Roman Empire, whereas Royce’s international community would emerge from an insurance scheme. However, Royce’s proposal for world peace differs markedly from both Leibniz’s and Kant’s; theirs are traditional judicial conceptions involving the application of the principles of international law, whereas Royce’s is a novel mercantile conception involving the application of the principles of business.

Royce’s conception of the great community and the manner of its realization has, interestingly, precedents in the American intellectual tradition thus revealing an historical continuity. Edward Bellamy, in his utopian novel *Looking Backward* describes a fictional American society as it might have existed in 2000 from the perspective of 1888, the date of its publication. The novel’s protagonist, Julian West, like Rip van Winkle, falls asleep in 1887 only to awaken a hundred and thirteen years later. He finds himself a guest in the home of Dr. Leete with whom he converses at length about the institutions and customs of the brave new world in which he finds himself. West asks his host how
this utopia came about. Leete explains that it “came as a result or process of industrial evolution which could not have terminated otherwise. All that society had to do was to recognize and cooperate.” Moreover, in its coming about, says, Dr. Leete, “there was absolutely no violence. The change had been long foreseen. Public opinion had become fully ripe for it, and the whole mass of the people was behind it. There was no more possibility of opposing it by force than by argument.” The private trusts or monopolies of the Gilded Age evolved naturally into a public monopoly of the people, by the people, and for the people. In Dr. Leete’s words:

“Early in the last century the evolution was completed by the final consolidation of the entire capital of the nation. The industry and commerce of the country, ceasing to be conducted by a set of irresponsible corporations and syndicates of private persons at their caprice and for their profit, were intrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. The nation, that is to say, organized as the one great business corporation in which all other corporations were absorbed; it became the one capitalist in the place of all other capitalists, the sole employer, the final monopoly in which all previous and lesser monopolies were swallowed up, a monopoly in the profits and economies of which all citizens shared. The epoch of trusts had ended in The Great Trust.”

Just as Bellamy’s utopia, Royce’s great community on a smaller scale, evolved naturally and inevitably, so will, according to Royce, the more encompassing community of mankind.

Moreover, there is a curious continuity of lineage between Edward Bellamy and his ancestor, Joseph Bellamy, a disciple of Jonathan Edwards, who wrote a digest of the latter’s theology, and a continuity of thought between Bellamy’s imagined utopia and Edwards’ millennial hope, and Royce’s hope of the great community. Edwards’ idea of how the millennial golden age will dawn resembles both Royce’s idea of how the community of mankind would emerge and Bellamy’s fictional account of how the utopia
of 2000 would be established—not suddenly and apocalyptically, but gradually and ineluctably from what is already in place. Richard Hall describes Edwards’ postmillennialist eschatology in contrast to the traditional premillennialist one as follows:

According to it [the premillennialist view of history], the millennial age would be inaugurated cataclysmically with the literal second-coming of Christ. The premillennialist view was of the Kingdom’s coming as a *deus ex machina* which would obtrude upon history, short-circuiting the course of nature and nullifying natural laws. However, Edwards believed that the millennial age would end, not begin, with the second-coming. Edwards’ *post-*millennialist view, . . . , is of the millennium as an event evolving inexorably but gradually through the normal processes of history and nature, with human institutions and the laws of nature remaining intact. In short, the postmillennialist historicized the millennium as something emergent within rather than supervenient upon history.²⁵

Both Bellamy’s fictional utopia and Royce’s great community are secularized versions of Edwards’ postmillennialist conception of the millennium.

Royce’s qualified hope that the community of mankind will in time become a reality is an expression of his measured optimism. Royce’s entire system of philosophy might be taken as a disguised theodicy. He harbored the faith that in the end the ideal, e.g. the community of mankind, will be realized and prevail thereby revealing the hidden meaning of suffering: “Every idealist [Royce being one] believes himself to have rational grounds for the faith that somewhere, and in some world, and at some time, the ideal will triumph, so that a survey, a divine synopsis of all time, somehow reveals the lesson of all sorrow, the meaning of all tragedy, the triumph of the spirit.” But it is not for us to know the place or the time. He cites Kant to the effect that the eventual realization of the ideal is imperative if life is to have any value: “If justice meets utter wreck, then there is no worth whatever in the continued existence of human life in this world.”²⁶ William Ernest Hocking, Royce’s student and disciple, advocated his mentor’s cosmopolitanism as
represented by the idea and ideal of the Great Community believing it to be no pipe-dream. In his *The Coming World Civilization*, Hocking declares (from the perspective of the 1950s), “Today, we seem to stand on the threshold of a new thing, civilization in the singular.” But he then cautions, haunted by the Cold-War specter of a nuclear holocaust, “The era of ‘the civilizations’ being past, what we now enter is either the era of civilization or the era of universal desolation.”

A fit emblem for Royce’s theodicy undergirding the hope that his communitarian ideal must be eventually realized, a hope he clung to even during the darkest days of a world at war, is Mahler’s apocalyptic second symphony, subtitled “Resurrection.” I seem to recall Leonard Bernstein’s remarking on how long and arduous is the way to that glorious denouement promised in the symphony’s subtitle—like Dante, one has to go through hell to get to heaven. The first movement, entitled, “Funeral Rite,” as Mahler explains in a program note, “poses the great question: *To what purpose have you lived?* To what purpose have you suffered?” The third movement provides a tentative answer: Again, in Mahler’s words, “life can seem meaningless, a gruesome, ghostly spectacle, from which you may recoil with a cry of disgust!” The fifth and final movement begins by depicting the Last Judgment but ends with the Klopstock chorale “*Aufersteh’n*” (“Resurrection). The chorus sings the following verse: “Thou has not lived and suffered in / vain! . . . O ever-present suffering, / Thee I have escaped. / Oh, all-conquering Death, / Now art thou conquered!” However, this consoling resolution is not reached until after almost an hour and half from the beginning of the symphony. Royce too is under no delusion that the realization of the great community will happen quickly—it
may take a long while. But he nevertheless hopes that it will become a reality because its seeds have already been sown and they must bear fruit.

The grounds of hope in our own time may be found in Royce’s beliefs that the emergence of the great community is inevitable and that its seeds have been sown already; to use biblical phraseology, the kingdom of God is not yet but, in some sense, has come. As Randall notes, Royce’s “Great Community is ‘real,’ not as actually embodied in existence, but as the eternal moral basis of all order.”29 Its future existential embodiment is something approached asymptotically. Something like Royce’s community of mankind may be gleaned from the following passage in a lecture by a French scholar to his class at the Collège de France after the German occupation of Paris during another war, the Franco-Prussian War:

Gentlemen, as we meet here today we are in a free country, the republic of letters, a country which has no national boundaries, where there is neither Frenchman nor German, which knows no prejudice nor intolerance, where one thing alone is valued, truth in all her manifold aspects. I propose to study with you this year the works of the great poet and thinker, Goethe.30

Here in its magnanimity lies a counsel of hope for any generation even in its darkest hour.

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5 Ibid., pp. 255, 237, 239-40, 238.
6 Ibid., p. 246.
7 Royce, “Hope,” p. 45.
8 Interestingly, the object of loyalty in Royce’s characterization is essentially the same as Paul Tillich’s object of ultimate concern, for whom the devotion to which defines one’s religion. “Religion,” according to Tillich, “is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our life.” Cited by James C. Livingston, Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion (4th ed.; Upper Saddle River,


11 Ibid., pp. 37-38.

12 Ibid., pp. 54-55, 57, 49-50.

13 Randall, Jr., “Josiah Royce,” p. 64.


16 Royce, War, pp. 24, 80.


18 Ibid., pp. 51, 52. Most recently Michael Walzer has echoed Royce’s insistence on a wise provincialism by affirming. “For the survival and freedom of political communities—whose members share a way of life, developed by their ancestors, to be passed on to their children—are the highest values of international society.” See Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1977) p. 254.

19 Ibid., pp. 51.


23 Leibniz’s various papers on behalf of peace among the nations as well as among the churches are voluminous and perhaps for this reason, along with their being overshadowed by his logic and metaphysics, these aspects of his thought have been undeservedly neglected. However, a good place to begin investigating his political and religious philosophy is Carl J. Friedrich, “Philosophical Reflections of Leibniz on Law, Politics, and the State,” Leibniz: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Harry G. Frankfurt (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972). For his ecumenism consult G. J. Jordan, The Reunion of the Churches: A Study of G. W. Leibnitz and His Great Attempt (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1927).


26 Royce, “Hope,” p. 27.


29 Randall, Jr., “Josiah Royce,” p. 64.