

Introduction

This work attempts to re-envision experience as a fluid process of creation and destruction of value. It offers a way of looking at the world which is practical, in that it not only discloses areas in which there are unstable lacunae of value or unstable accumulations of low-level value, but also offers a method for solving such problems of value.

Like all philosophical offerings, this one has a lineage. That lineage can be traced to the ideas of Josiah Royce (1855–1916) and Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947). These two great thinkers—I do not hesitate in upgrading this to *greatest*—with their pragmatic emphases on the world as an organic process of community subtly but definitely shaped by the *human* aspect of experience, have been my guiding stars. I have attempted to blend the vision of these two, if not in equal measure, then as seemed wise to me, in an interpretation that builds upon the best of both. A few words on that blending will serve to orient the reader.

From Royce the preeminent insight made use of is the assumption that the world is a community of interpretation, or as Royce put it in *The Problem of Christianity*: “The world is the interpretation of the problems which it presents.”¹ The simplest way to explain this to the reader is to say that if we view our experience as presenting us with tasks, challenges, difficulties, and differences, then, following Royce, our most promising opening move in engaging that experience is to assume that *there is always an interpretation*, i.e., an experience between any two other diverse and so far problematic experiences, which, when once achieved through some action which appropriately engages experience, joins the diversity of experience—solves the problem if you like—in a way which creates *meaning* in the chain of experience. The diverse experiences thus meaningfully joined, or *interpreted* to one another, are then called *a community of interpretation*, and the world as a whole is one of these communities. The notion of a

community used here is far broader than is usually understood, although it certainly includes everything that the usual and historic notion of a community—as, for example, of a village built through the cooperation of its inhabitants—includes.

The notion of interpretation used here meanwhile may be said to differ from the usual use of the word only in that it remembers what is generally forgotten in our usual uses of the term. As Royce illustrates the use of the term interpretation: the Egyptologist who translates an inscription into English requires both an inscription and an English reader for her translation, and she thereby becomes the interpreter *between* the inscription and the reader, i.e., the Egyptologist interprets the inscription *to* the reader, i.e., interprets a sign (the physical inscription) of one who has acted (the ancient writer) to another who is acting (the contemporary physical reader).² The simplified chain of interpretation is thus: ancient writer—inscription—Egyptologist—modern reader. The elements within the chain (inscription and Egyptologist) are thus *placed and placing themselves between*, or, *interpreting*, the outer elements (ancient writer and modern reader). The outer elements in turn are interpreting to further elements, e.g., the ancient writer's sources and the modern reader's friends. There are other interpreting elements moreover which can be emphasized or uncovered as necessary, some will be human, e.g., the publisher who interprets between the Egyptologist and the modern reader, and some will be human created objects, e.g., the glasses of the Egyptologist which help her read the ancient inscription, and some will be natural objects, e.g., the desert wind which has uncovered the ancient stela that holds the inscription.

Each element, human or otherwise, may be called an experience, i.e., it is the locus of a chain of experiences. The various interpretations interpret these experiences. The interpretations are practically speaking endless: the glasses were made by someone and thus interpret their maker to the Egyptologist, for example, and the publisher's secretary stands between the publisher and the Egyptologist, and so on. We thus have an expanding chain of interpreted experiences, joined to other chains of experience, which, woven together as a whole make up *the world to be experienced*, that world being a problem to solve wherever the interpretation between any two or more experiences is not yet complete and evident.

The foregoing illustrates partially the expanded sense of interpretation I am after here. The process of conscious reflection that an individual undertakes in order to interpret herself, illustrates it further. In the latter case, for example, the *present individual*, remembering something which

their *past self* promised or undertook to do, and saying something like “this is what I promised or meant to do,” goes on to address their *future self* in some such way as “therefore such and such is what I will do to fulfill my promise.” In this way the individual, interprets her past self, *to* her future self, *through* her present. ***I ask the reader to always bear in mind that whenever I speak of interpretation in what follows, the foregoing is the sense of interpretation which I have in mind.***

But again, this is no different from the usual sense of interpretation, except the usual use of the term forgets, or covertly assumes the former conditions. Thus, in Royce’s sense and mine, if I say, as in common speech: “I interpret this old letter of mine to mean so and so,” it means that I, as the present self, am interpreting the letter as a sign of my past self *to* my own future self. The usual use of interpretation simply fails to bring these assumptions out into the open, it likes to assume that “I am interpreting something” means something less than “I am interpreting something *to* something else.” My suggestion throughout is that it never means less than the latter. This ongoing connecting of one’s past and future experiences, through an interpretive effort in one’s present, is a community of selfhood and gradually becomes a community of ethical selfhood, both to be discussed later. The self is thus a community of interpretation, as above, a “village built through the cooperation of its inhabitants,” i.e., a community formed by interpretive contributions from, for example, “the curious child I was at 8; the brash young adult I was at 23; the man I will be next year, etc.”

From Whitehead, meanwhile the preeminent insight made use of is the assumption that experience is preeminent, i.e., that we do not come upon the world as abstracted into objects which influence one another according to cause and effect in unit instants of time, but rather that the world is an organic community of processes of action, of fluid experiences, which are continually interacting with—interpreting—one another so as to create new processes.

To explain this in another way with a linguistic analogy, this view does something like favoring the verb over the noun. Thus, as Whitehead would say, our experience is that “something is happening,” some event, and out of the interactions of such events, such processes, the world is continually created (and destroyed). So for example, *the experience of jogging* is preeminent, and from that experience a man in this body, in these running shoes, on this road, in this direction, during these hours, etc., may be abstracted.

Combining these positions—and they naturally combine themselves in the pragmatic action of living—we get a series of processes of experience

which can act to interpret one another so as to form and reform into communities. Royce's chains of interpretation of experience and Whitehead's organic processes are taken—by the author—to be essentially the same, though viewed in subtly different ways. To use a visual analogy one may imagine the processes as threads woven into a piece of fabric if one likes, with the temporal aspect of the experience being the length of the woven threads. These processes of action are free, although their freedom, particularly for human processes, means far more than any abstraction from their “own” experience can indicate to them. Moreover, being free and having interest in acting, they act together to join experiences to one another meaningfully, to interpret experiences, or—ostensibly—to sunder experiences from one another. And the more of such experiences of meaning there are, or otherwise put, the greater the meaningful experience is, the more *valuable* it is, i.e., the *better* it is, to put it in the ethical terms most people are comfortable with. In this creation and destruction of meaningful experience is to be found value, on the basis of pragmatic action, and thus not absolutely—in the clear-cut “good and evil” sense—but always as a *tendency* which depends upon the freely selective engagement of experiences in diverse regions of experience of varying complexity.

From this beginning we have the foundation of a philosophical methodology, the material which that methodology will engage, and the initial pragmatic results of that engagement. When I speak in the coming chapters of tendencies of action which lead to expansions or constrictions of experience, these tendencies are expanding or constricting the threads of acting processes, the chains of interpreted experience.

The goal is always the pragmatic understanding of how we create and destroy value in the world through our various types of action, i.e., how can we bring these threads of acting processes together in harmonic ways so as to create new processes—to weave a thicker fabric, or braid a stronger “rope,” of world process, to use yet another analogy—and how can we resolve the inharmonic clashes between processes which have left us, and continue to leave us, with regions of diminished value—regions of frayed or tattered fabric—i.e., regions of relatively meaningless experience (think of the destruction and chaos of a war zone as a more extreme example).

In order to do this the methodology itself must be flexible, it must be expandable, it must be applicable at all and every complexity of experience, if not immediately, then on the basis of future effort. Hyperthematics is logical but flexibly logical, which is to say that it assumes that logic is built upon possibility rather than necessity, and it is carried out as a logic

which is deliberately held as close as possible to everyday experience, and not constricted down to formulaic technicalities.

It accepts the assumption of the interpretability of experience as such and plays with it with respect to certain regions of human experience which many—perhaps most—of us find problematic with regard to value. On the other hand, if that assumption is rejected, then we part company, at least for a time. Our parting company would be a matter of indifference, depending upon who is willing or not willing to accept the opening assumption. Except for one thing: the whole point of my effort is to present a worldview which, when adopted, can actually solve some of the great difficulties which we face according to our contemporary viewpoint. I aim to “sell the goods,” by demonstrating their usefulness. I am confident that consistent application of Hyperthematics can solve a host of problems and that the results of such application will become apparent, so that eventually the logic will prove itself beyond any formalism. The idea of logic presented here, in good faith, is a pragmatic one then, with the adage: “try it, you might like it.” For its best effect, it should be understood and applied from within each process of experience acting upon the world, *if* value is sought after. Hyperthematics is “the ways of creating value.” The Hyperthematic tendencies are already at play in the world of our experience. Through them we have made the world what it now is without consciously knowing it. What I am offering is a framework, a series of flexible rules built upon an assumption, for recreating our world deliberately in a more valuable way. The only way of “proof” is to offer the framework, hope it gets applied somewhere, and then look to a corresponding increase in value to prove it.

Some of the greatest difficulties of our contemporary worldview cluster around what may be called the problem of quantity and quality, or again of objective and subjective, or of bad and good. Given our contemporary context, it seemed to me best to engage the problematic of the creation and destruction of value in the region of the actions of commercial corporations. In that region the difficulties are, if not most obviously, then very obviously, to be found. The history and the actions of the commercial corporation thus became the testing ground for the plausibility of the methodology and the opening assumption. An engagement with the actions and products of commercial corporations thus serves as a conceptual test of Hyperthematics. And yet in the course of that engagement, *any* avenue which seemed promising has been followed out, at least until the trail was marked out for future exploration. The problem of commercial corporations is only one of a great many contemporary problems. So, although it is the *main*

problem addressed here, the main test case for Hyperthematics, I have not been shy to lay as much as I could of a groundwork for the solution of other problems of value in the world.

Whether I will have the opportunity to follow those other trails, or whether others will explore them, remains to be seen. Regardless, if you, reader, can get from any aspect of this work, a sense of how value is the result of ongoing action in the world, and if at whatever scale and complexity you can apply that sense practically in creating value in the world, in making it a better place, then my effort will be worthwhile.