

A Synchronicity, May 2012  
By Robert McDermott

While at the Fetzer-Kalamazoo Mentoring Project last week I experienced the following: In the early morning in the dining room before breakfast I was reading *Reverence for the Relations of Life: Re-imagining Pragmatism via Josiah Royce's Interactions with Peirce, James, and Dewey* (2005) by Frank Oppenheim, S. J. My brother John, a scholar of Royce, James, and Dewey, gave Frank the title, from Royce, for this book, Frank's *magnum opus*. Since I assisted John in editing the two-volume *Basic Writings of Josiah Royce* in 1969, Royce has probably been my favorite philosopher.

Becky Gould, professor of religion and ecology at Middlebury College, stopped by to chat and asked what I was reading. I explained how I loved Royce, the philosopher from Grass Valley and San Francisco, the younger colleague and friend of William James, and how I knew the author of this beautiful book. In 1991 I invited Frank to a seminar on *Steiner and American Thought* held at Wainright House, in Rye, NY, a mile from the house where Ellen and I had lived for 18 years and from which we would be moving the next week to begin our new life in San Francisco. That conference led to a set of essays on Steiner in relation to James (which I wrote), Royce (by Frank), Whitehead (by David Ray Griffin), Dewey (by Douglas Sloan), and feminism (by Gertrude Hughes). Soon after I was appointed editor of *ReVision: a Quarterly Journal for Consciousness and Transformation* in time for me to published these essays as a double issue of *Revision*. These essays, and several new ones, are soon to be published by Steinerbooks.

This was interesting to Becky because in response to my invitation Becky wrote one of the new essays, on Steiner and Thoreau. I also explained that the conference in Rye had been supported by Laurance Rockefeller whose nephew Steven Becky had succeeded as professor of religion and ecology at Middlebury. In a gesture typical of his uncle Laurance, Steven had given Becky copies of the books that he had used in the courses that Becky would inherit at Middlebury. I was able to report to Becky that just a few weeks before I had spoken to Steven at Elizabeth McCormack's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in New York and mentioned that I had become a friend of his successor.

A few days later, reading Frank Oppenheim's *Royce's Mature Ethics*, I learned that in 1913 Royce's son Ned had been appointed professor of music at Middlebury College. Josiah Royce learned that the Carnegie Foundation had misclassified Middlebury College in a way that disadvantaged its fund-raising. Rising to the defense, Royce wrote more than a dozen letters in defense of Middlebury College. His letter, "Provincial Independence of Middlebury College" (1915) was later used by the American Association of University Professor (co-founded by John Dewey and Arthur O. Lovejoy) as "a model for defendding the academic freedom of small colleges." Royce's defense of Middlebury, the college of Ned Royce, and later of Steven Rockefeller, and now of Becky Gould, seems to me a perfect example of Loyalty by an individual in service to an individual and a community, the core ideal of Royce's ethical and religious thought.