The opening essay of the present section gains its importance from Royce’s concern for “social consciousness.” A somewhat muted theme during the period when he utilized the language of the “Absolute,” Royce’s developing insight to the irreducible social dimension of human consciousness and experience should not be blocked from view.¹ It is unfortunate that Royce did not fulfill his “Plan of a Book” on *The World and the Social Consciousness* (Royce Papers, Harvard University Archives, Widener Library, folio 97).

The remaining essays in this section are taken from Royce’s Gifford Lectures of 1899. He received this opportunity when William James temporarily declined the invitation due to a serious psychological affliction. The resultant volumes by Royce, *The World and The Individual*, are perhaps his best known work. They are, however, often bloated in style and signify Royce’s last effort at vast metaphysical synthesis. From his opening discussion of the meaning of an “Idea,” Royce goes on to hold that “the empirical world is a whole, a life fulfilling the purposes of our ideas. It is that or it is nothing.” (*WI*, 1:368; below, 1:558) In order to sustain this view, Royce’s theory of being requires an aggressive statement of the unity of the “Absolute Experience” and our potential knowledge of the universe as a whole. “Our finitude means, then, an actual inattention,—lack of successful interest, at this conscious instant, in more than a very few of the details of the universe. But the infinitely numerous other details are in no wise wholly absent from our knowl-

¹ In this regard, it is virtually unknown that Royce’s thought is considerably anticipatory of the work of George Herbert Mead, who studied with Royce during the academic year, 1887–88. For an exception to this judgment, see Paul E. Pfuetze, *The Social Self* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1954), p. 104, n. 25; p. 106, n. 49; p. 220, n. 224.
edge even now.” (WI, 2:59; below, 1:578-79) Royce, therefore, sets for himself the herculean task of having a philosophical doctrine provide total accountability for the nature of our experience.

Although Royce contends that The World and The Individual remains a basis for his subsequent thought (PC, 1968, ed., p. 38), an examination of his logic and theory of interpretation will show that he later recognized the need to provide, at the very least, more explicit recognition of the constructive character of human experience in the formulation of meaning. Given this development, there are at least two other reasons why we should read The World and The Individual. First, it is metaphysics in the grand style and certainly the supreme example of an American philosopher doing “System” philosophy. Second, and considerably more significant, the philosophical sophistication and awareness of experiential complexity, so characteristic of Royce’s mature thought, as found in The Philosophy of Loyalty, his logic, and The Problem of Christianity, depends directly on the nature of the undertaking in The World and the Individual. Readers of the later work of Royce should see the problems as he saw them. It is with this in mind, that I have presented the core of his Gifford Lectures in the essays reprinted below.

Readers may wonder why I have not included the intriguing “Supplementary Essay” to The World and The Individual, vol. 1. Aside from the burdensome and painful problem of space, which afflicts all efforts of this kind, I have omitted it for the following reasons. First, it is partially a polemic against the thought of F. H. Bradley and assumes some knowledge of this dispute. Royce’s reference is to Bradley’s Appearance and Reality (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1893). Second, The “Essay” is an unusually extended effort to deal with one question, namely, the logical soundness of the “concept of the actual Infinite.” In its quasi-logical form, the “Essay” only hints at Royce’s later masterful effort to deal with this problem under the terms of formal logic. The concluding essays of part VI, vol. 2, of the present work are more representative of Royce’s intention and his ability to deal with this issue.