

## **An Analysis of Field-Being**

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### **Field and Being: a Sketch of the Two Landscapes**

One of the things many philosophers enjoy doing is to divide everything in two and then try to understand how the two are connected. Field-Being philosophy resists such bifurcation, or at least comes at it from a different angle. Field-Being asks of every thing (1) how does this relate to that which is me? And then asks (2) how does that which is me relate to everything? In most Field-Being writing, we are given a schema (or two) of how these or similar questions might be answered. My plan is to eschew scheming of any kind and engage, rather, in a case study. The object of reflection (the “me”) in question is, of course, me, but I will try to say as little about myself as possible. Bishop Butler did not take Descartes seriously, and neither do I. In the chapters that follow the general analysis of Field-Being, we will take up three areas: the Socratic perspective, the chronological succession, and institutional transmission of value. We tend to believe, because we have been taught by so many experts, that real value (goodness) is transmitted either in the quotidian manner of mom, dad and the neighbors or by association with some moral giant.<sup>1</sup>

My main thesis is that Butler was right when he claimed the transmission is institutional and also right when he claimed the transmission of goodness is of such great value that as long as an institution succeeds at that transmission we should forgive the institution its short-comings. Thus the campaign for the recovery of Field-Being discourse. Just about all the people who have influenced me personally (with the exception of Bishop Butler) have been strongly anti-institutional, and for a long time I was prepared to think Butler might be mistaken. My perpetual fascination with the life, writing and reception of Butler has almost nothing to do with my agreeing or disagreeing with him on any specific point. What haunted me for many years was that when I casually mentioned Butler’s defense of the institutional church to Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, they both immediately and enthusiastically affirmed it. At that time, Kretzmann was still an atheist, so his reaction, at least, was disinterested. I suppose the reason so many people I am so fond of were anti-institutional, mystical types<sup>2</sup> is that it is just incredibly difficult to see the good that institutions do, especially religious institutions.

My father’s life was anchored by his affiliation with the Baptist Church, AT & T, the Republican Party and the American Canoe Association. I neither embraced nor revolted against particular institutions, but I always saw them as paradigmatic institutions for better or for worse.

The conclusion I have now come to is that only the being of an institution is sufficiently powerful to support the diversity of the field.<sup>3</sup> We are, then, not just socialized beings, but institutionalized beings. The wild animal consigned to the modern lifelike zoological park may look and feel free, but we know it is caged just the same. That we neither see nor feel the iron

cage does not preclude the possibility that we live, move and have our being within a total institution. "You've got to write with a red hot iron to make any impression," Emerson said.<sup>4</sup>

The first segment takes up the character of Socrates, his death and later reputation. One of the things that pushed me away from Christianity was the claim by Gregory Vlastos that Socrates was not Christian. On either side of Socrates, I place Sherlock Holmes, the best and wisest man Dr. Watson ever met, and Lewis Carroll's Alice, a most persistent explorer of the personal field of being. My main outline of modern character, of what has become modern character, begins with Aristotle, meanders into Butler, gets psychologized by Carol Bly and finally emerges as the prudentially pragmatic citizen of Heineman and Bluhm.<sup>5</sup> Additional detail is exposed in regard to love and communication, here proposed as a definition of the church.

Before going on to the second big segment, we should do a case study of progressive education in the US, with particular emphasis on the project method (William Heard Kilpatrick).<sup>6</sup> In other words, the Frankensteinian<sup>7</sup> creation of the prudentially pragmatic citizen has become the project that is my life. We also need analyze the history and theatricality of "Inherit the Wind,"<sup>8</sup> with its delightful vib of art imitating life and then life imitating the art.

The chronological chapters that follow take us into the relevant texts in more detail. Augustine's two cities, Anselm's demonstration of God, revived in upstate New York almost a thousand years later, Dante's *Comedy*, how these sources were used by Butler, and how Butler was received by Hume and Kant as well as the American apologetic tradition. (William Holt Smith project) I also try to develop at some length what I take to be the analytic tradition and its relation to the great institutions founded by James Creighton, the American Philosophical Association and the New York State Philosophical Association.<sup>9</sup> Only Butler was at Oxford. Newton, Clarke, Whitehead, Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein were all at Cambridge, and Butler would have been since he hated Oxford so much for its resistance to novelty in thought, but he refused to repeat credits as Cambridge required.

Field-Being is Bergsonian, as are all my main sources (Shaw, Kazantzakis, Morgan)<sup>10</sup>, but Whitehead is the most relevant source here since Field-Being is a process philosophy. Moore used Butler's line, "A thing is what it is and not another thing" as the epigraph of his *Principia Ethica*, and he and Russell, along with Wittgenstein founded the analytic philosophy here related to Field-Being. Max Black and Norman Malcolm carried this analytic school to Western New York State (Cornell), passing it first to Jerome Balmuth (Colgate) and then to one of his students. After serving in the Second World War, Balmuth essentially took on the theological group that dominated the Colgate department, and, with unflinching support from the college chaplain, Kenneth Morgan, set the direction of philosophy in central New York for the next half century. It detracts nothing from Edwin Burt and Huston Smith to say that Balmuth (who never bothered to get a doctorate) and Morgan had the iron discipline to keep digging deeper and deeper in one place, even when they had no idea, like Frankenstein, what their monster might end up doing or how the townsfolk would react.

Then, when I take up institutions proper, I have chapters on education (Plato, Rousseau, Dewey), politics (Burke, Lippmann, Orwell), literature (Melville, Olson, Stella), and, of course, religion (Cicero, Berkeley, Hume, James, and Kazantzakis).

**Butler is fully integrated; Field-Being is fully integrated.**

The aim of this paper is to sketch an analysis of Field-Being, but by way of introduction, I should outline the larger project<sup>11</sup> as well. Even devotees of nook and crannyism need to take in the lay of the land or risk being deceived by the lie of the land.

When analytic philosophy came into being it was at odds with British idealism and was no special friend of British empiricism. As things developed, all but a few analytic philosophers found themselves at odds with the whole mass of doctrines and techniques they called "Continental Philosophy," and there was bad blood between the analytic practitioners and those Americans who followed Edwards, Emerson, James and Dewey. It is therefore natural to expect that the philosophy of Lik Tong, known as Field-Being, would put some stress, to say the least, on an analytic philosopher. This paper argues, on the contrary, that analytic philosophy can be seen as Field-Being's friend.

How can this be? There is no contradiction since there are, officially, no doctrines of analytic philosophy, and Field-Being provides a set of themes that are lacking, for no good reason, in analytic philosophy.

A set of philosophical equations can be used to show the relevance and value of analytic philosophy and Field-Being. The equations are:

- That what the philosophers call the life of wisdom is the same as what the prophets (religious teachers) call the life of redemption or liberation.
- That the nature of the unity of all things is a personal, conscious being.
- That the way of life most natural for humans is the way of life most in accord with nature.
- To the philosophers, a life in accord with nature is known as a life of wisdom.
- To the prophets, a life in accord with nature is known as a life of redemption or liberation.
- The policy of cool-self-love coincides with the policy of pursuing virtue.

No doubt many other equations could be added here. The point is that the life of the wise is, so far as conduct is concerned, the same as the life of the redeemed (or liberated), that the best way to describe this life that comes most naturally to humans is to say that it is a life in accord with nature, and that the cement of the society of the wise and the redeemed is by its nature conscious (aware, reflexive, awesome) and personal. That is, it is our nature when we are considered not as individuals but as a conscious and personal unity.

The present condition of all this is one of striving. Those who are most correctly called wise are those who most ardently seek wisdom, not those who most emphatically claim to have wisdom, and those who are most correctly called the redeemed are those who most display compassion in gratitude for their liberation, not those who proclaim themselves to have completed what others are left struggling to complete.

Analytic philosophy can help not only in framing and evaluating equations and clarifying the implications of these expressions, but also in the process of excuse deprivation, the process of answering objections and brushing aside excuses whenever anyone invokes a self-deceptive practice instead of following the way that comes most naturally to human life (dao). Literary examples of this kind of critique are Orwell's parody of the BBC in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Swift's satire on academics in Book III of *Gulliver's Travels*.<sup>12</sup>

The best example from analytic philosophy is, of course, the therapeutic technique of Wittgenstein.<sup>13</sup> Much of analytic philosophy contributes to self-deception more than helping to alleviate it, but Wittgenstein's attack on the possibility of a private language is one of the corner stones of any structure of analytic thinking that is likely to be helpful to Field-Being philosophy.

The point is that Wittgenstein was not trying to convince people they ought to accept the proposition that a private language is impossible, anymore than he was suggesting they should waste time debating the possibility. He was pointing away from the kind of discussion that rested on the assumption a private language was possible and toward a different kind of discussion, one that rested on the opposite assumption.

Wittgenstein came to see that people were doing philosophy in one conventional position and he came to see that continuing to do philosophy in that position was useless and boring and accomplished little more than underwrite the vanity of some of the participants. So, at one point he suggested we think of philosophy not as a set of problems to be solved but as puzzles we were trying to get free of. He used the metaphor of thinking that has become knotted.

Lik Tong has used another well-known metaphor: a turning. Analytic philosophy has often been described as a tool kit, and this metaphor invites us to think of those who busy themselves keeping the toolbox well stocked with tools and providing instruction in the proper use of these tools and contrasting those folks with another group that concentrates on doing things by whatever means, using the tools as long as they prove helpful for the task at hand and discarding the tools once the job is done.

Despite the promise of analytic philosophy, all has not gone well. Analytic philosophy had already lost its way prior to its official origins. When we look at the philosophers named by Hume<sup>14</sup>, we see those who had a distaste for scholasticism, but they were not necessarily or usually opposed to religion. This group, as the name "British Moralists" implies, also took interest in politics and public morality. Anyone interested in morality but neutral on religion needs to establish the autonomy of morals and such was a main project of the British Moralists. "In determining moral values, medieval ethics had subordinated worldly interests to the interests

of the future life. Hobbes, by his doctrine of state absolutism, had subjugated the moral to the political aspect of human conduct. Locke, however, admitted self-interest and the good of the many as moral determinates, and thus enabled his contemporaries and successors to develop a system of morality which should be independent of religion as well as of state authority, and should rest ultimately on the ego."<sup>15</sup>

## **Introduction**

This paper is in two parts. The first establishes what it means to be an analytic philosopher when one is looking at any doctrine with practical implications for the conduct of life. The second then applies these criteria to Field-Being in such a way, it is claimed, that no essential questions are begged.

What seems to me the fatal error is to assume as one of the defining characteristics of analytic philosophy that it offers no guidance in the conduct of life; that it is more the child of Frege than of Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein.

Notice should be taken that during the same period of transition from the eighteenth century, when widely respected philosophers thought nothing of citing ancients such as Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, Epicurus, Plato, Aristotle and Augustine on how to live (the conduct of life) to the twentieth century when such citations were out of fashion, the language of emotion (rare in Hume) came to totally dominate the language of passion, which was the dominant discourse not only in Hume but in all of Western philosophy since Plato.

Two landmarks in William James, one much better known than the other, are critical for our story. In "The Will to Believe" (unfortunately cast in opposition to evidentialism), James sets out the conditions of popular or practical philosophy. These conditions are that choice be relevant and that the choice be forced, momentous and live. The concern here is not how to deal with evidentialists like Clifford, but with those issues that meet the three conditions. Practical ("popular") philosophy matters because its choices are live, forced, and momentous and that live, forced, momentous decisions matter is true by definition. Here we have the roots of a non-reductionist analytic philosophy of the passions, or as James would say, of our "passional nature". Reason is no mere slave but is in the driver's seat. For James this happens by an individual act of will, in Field-Being the universe is seen as a plenum-field of empowered activity, a matrix of power elements and living forces, perpetually self-organizing and self-transforming (Lik Tong).

For the Daoist, the ideal is to live in accord with nature,<sup>16</sup> and when the British Moralists following Butler took over the Stoic rule of living in accord with nature, they identified such a state as that of living with a constant sense of the presence of God, something very different from merely giving assent to the proposition that God exists. Indeed, if morality is independent of religion, then it is possible to be guided by the candle of the Lord within us and neither believe nor deny the existence of God as a substantial being.<sup>17</sup> To live in accord with nature is to live spontaneously, to live in a way the atheist Bertrand Russell advocated as the source of art.<sup>18</sup>

This is a matter of living in the present without pride or regret for the past and without hope or fear for the future. We all know intellectually that all existence is in the present, that the past was and the future is not yet, but unless we live in what some have called the immediate sense of the presence of the divine, we perpetually tend to forget our true being.<sup>19</sup>

The forgetting is usually caused by environmental distractions. As I tried to show in my paper on Bing Crosby, the sense of the divine presence is essentially the same as the abandonment of self-deception. Redemption or freedom, just because it is freedom, is easy to forget. We are easily distracted from the exuberance of gratitude, gratitude that is independent of what "happens". Good persons cannot be harmed, and it is good to feel grateful that one exists even if one is confident the "creator" is nothing more than physics and chance. Wisdom, philosophically understood, is taken as the insight that duty and interest, work and play, coincide perfectly, or at least as perfectly as matters for all practical purposes.

Some forms of discourse support living in accord with nature, and some draw us into an unnatural form of life. It goes without saying that the true way cannot be stated,<sup>20</sup> but the analytic philosopher will insist that we can and must state that the way cannot be stated and that it is imperative that we attempt to show how words fail, and that we display the implications for action of the fact that words fail. Bishop Butler proposed, hypothetically, that it would be a good idea to state only premises and allow the readers to draw their own conclusions. Such a proposal makes perfect sense if we imagine an invisible hand guiding our wandering intellects to find the way to the right conclusion not so much as stating and assenting to a conclusion, the dialectical nature of verbal discourse makes this ill-advised but in terms of action, that is, action that results from decisions that are forced, live and momentous.

## **Part I**

It has been said that analytic philosophy is nothing more than the insistence that one's statements be clear and one's arguments cogent. Clarity and cogency are fine things but hardly constitute a philosophy. To have a philosophy one first needs to have the affirmation of a way of life. Such an affirmation will no doubt involve a vocabulary, a style and a grammar of expression (diction), and certain gestures, looks and practices. One who affirms a view of the conduct of life affirms that he or she has experienced life in such a way that the philosophical expression is comfortable and easy, that such a person feels fluent in the philosophy and is recognized as fluent by others. But this first condition is not enough to count as affirmation of a philosophy.

The second Jamesian moment I want to stress came a few years later in James' presidential address to the American Philosophical Association. Again he moves individual power centers to the head of the agenda for philosophers and here he introduces Giovanni Papini as the model for professional philosophers. James is not pushing the futurist or the fascist Papini but the young, vigorous, devil may care, brash, passionate enthusiast. The Papini figure may be seen as just the sort needed to make the Common Faith explicit and militant. It should be no surprise Papini eventually wrote a life of Christ still read by Roman Catholics.

James' address of 1906 was a call to action, an injunction to live in a certain way. It was not a way that could be cast perfectly into words, but it was possible to give examples of what to strive for and what to avoid. The Platonist has no difficulty understanding that God, Dao, Nature, and Truth all unite in the Form of the Good, but as long as we persist in debating whether to assent to particular propositions we miss the point that assent to a proposition is one of the least interesting of the vast array of speech acts open to us, let alone of acts in general. The appearances may be instantiations in this world, but they are still misleading until we come to see that to experience the present is to live continuously in a state of nature, which is also a free state of spontaneity.<sup>21</sup>

One who affirms a philosophy must also claim that the fluency described above is real, not apparent or illusory, not the result of conditioning or indoctrination but rather has been arrived at by some process of deep self-examination. A common and question-begging mistake is to put too much emphasis on the details of the process of self-examination. Who are we to say of another how philosophy is to be found? It is enough if we are satisfied that the state of apparent acceptance is genuine and not simply induced or amounting to nothing more than cant or humbug.<sup>22</sup> That is the second condition.

Truth is in the making, as James would say, but we need to focus on the conditions of fluency in Field-Being. Obviously, Field-Being, unlike James' radical empiricism is still much in the making. What is a Field-Being text? What is a Field-Being reading of a text?

Reading as de-coding is a very strange theory, and as argued in my paper to the Second Colloquium, merely begs the question. That is, the whole hermeneutic family that operates as if a text has a meaning that can be stated obviously falls into the infinite regress of asking after the meaning of the meaning. A is decoded to mean B, B then decoded to mean C and so on to infinity. The hermeneutic art is no exception to Dewey's claim that we need to focus on our experience of the art object and not on the art object as if it were the property of some but not of others.

Take Lewis Carroll's Alice (not Charles Dodgson's Alice). The common practice is to see the unfolding stories of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass as a string of puzzles and paradoxes to be resolved or perhaps just wondered at. With Gulliver's Travels the tendency is even more pronounced. People want to know the meaning of the text. When told meaning in that sense is not important, students, at least, will go to a more accommodating source. Such sources are often celebrated authorities, rather like the interpreters of shadows in Plato's cave.

The hermeneutic advocated here is different. The fact that discussions, including decoding of a text, has been published is indicative of a motivation associated with the text, a tendency to feel one is sufficiently fluent to join the discussion. The decoders have so dominated the field, that some will claim any discussion must be an attempt at decoding and frustrate one who attempts to present a different point of view.

A more pertinent question regarding the *Dao De Jing* is why this one text has received so much more attention than the many others that are doctrinally similar.

Field-Being as live option. Field-Being is a live option only for those who are prepared to engage in speculative ventures in philosophy. This is not passive betting as in Pascal, but active making of truth as in James' revision of Pascal.

Field-Being as forced option. One can put off delivering a verdict but cannot put off engagement/non-engagement.

Field-Being as momentous. Looking over the list of groups affiliated with the American Philosophical Association, we see that nearly all of them are devoted to a famous dead philosopher, a general subdivision of philosophy or a national or ethnic philosophy. Only a few focus on a contemporary school of philosophy (a particular turn), and I am not aware of any that give as much attention to a single living philosopher as we do to Lik Tong.

Field-Being is also momentous in its approach to the boundary situations.<sup>23</sup> Jaspers' view seems to be that one attains full humanity by reaching the frontier, but even if this is true, how does one know one has reached the frontier and is not still in self-deception? The larger the prize, so to speak, for reaching the frontier, the more likely the self-deception. Likewise, if someone seems to have examined the boundaries of human existence and then acts in a way unbecoming, as Heidegger did, we feel free to make our own determination of what went wrong. Once again, a self-deceptive procedure.

The third condition is the pragmatic condition. One who claims to affirm a philosophy that matters in the conduct of life must do more than say the philosophy is an appealing way to rationalize actions that might have been done for any reason. Such a person must show a deep commitment to the philosophy with actions. Actions speak louder than words in the precise sense that were such a person to live the philosophy in practice but deny it in words, we would not believe the denial. This pragmatic condition holds for all philosophies, even those having nothing to do with pragmatism.

Mighty works of the imagination have the power to dilate consciousness, and it is by means of the dilation of consciousness that the personal and conscious unity becomes manifest and is able to grow naturally. Here again, we need to insist on the realization of the impossibility of a private language. It can never be the case that what one is trying to do in giving a speech is to construct in the mind of the listener an array of ideas analogous to the ideas in the mind of the speaker. One cannot try to do this since one cannot try to do what is impossible and such a transaction is impossible. At best one is trying to appear<sup>24</sup> to be trying to make such a construction. There can be no arguing with those who do not see this, but fortunately there are many mighty works of imagination that have the power to dilate consciousness. The authors may or may not have been trying to achieve such an effect, but what matters is not the authorial intent but the effect, and especially the effect with many people over a long period of time. Such effects speak for themselves and automatically involve us as soon as we give them our attention.

Some of the most important mighty works of imagination in the satiric mode are the Alice stories, *Gulliver's Travels* and *Moby-Dick*. These works are powerful because they continue to pay dividends at an accelerating rate each time we turn our attention to them, continue to have their effects in new media and with new artists, and have proved themselves able to withstand every form of derision, criticism and debasement. They exhibit fecundity. They are inexhaustible.

On the utopian side, we may mention besides Thomas More, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Anselm of Canterbury's simple and beautiful logical construction cast in the form of a prayer and delivered to his monks at their request, Augustine's idealization of Christianity in his *City of God*, or Kazantzakis' highly masculine rendering of St. Francis.

In addition to the works of the imagination that have the effect of dilating consciousness, that is, of expanding the field of observation, there are also didactic works of fiction that aim more at an alteration of consciousness. William S. Burroughs once stated that he could imagine no other reason for writing. In thinking about the need for community of some sort, and about the way most actual communities tend to fail, we still have options besides utopian and mystical visions. For example, Burroughs describes his account of the Johnsons as the construction of a mythology.

What is distinctive about the Johnson Family is that although mythical, they are based on a reality. They divide the real world into two classes deeply at odds with each other and in active conflict, a conflict that may necessarily turn violent, that will not go on forever, and the outcome of which has not yet been decided. How things turn out depends on how we (you and I) respond to both groups, the Johnsons and the Shits. There is no way to join or unjoin the Johnsons except by acting like one or not.

This sounds like what the ancient and modern moralists were talking about when they talked about living in accord with human nature. Perhaps the biggest difference in the various accounts is on the role of violence. The conventional teaching of American history discourages even mild civil disobedience today but celebrates the violent and illegal war with Britain to win independence as well as the exceptionally bloody suppression of the revolt by the Confederacy. Nevertheless, our slogan is "anarchism, pacifism, utopia".

Another important group of writings are those gathered under the concept of the Axial Age, and it is, of course, the American writing that can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosophers and Hebrew prophets that connects with the Daoist and Confucian writings in the Axial Age.<sup>25</sup>

The philosophical question here is whether we are talking about the Axial Age itself or Karl Jaspers. I am inclined to think that what has turned out to be most important to me began with Butler, moved to America with Emerson, was delivered, so to speak by James, and then merged in my consciousness with lines developed by Henri Bergson and Nikos Kazantzakis. The Bergsonian line was passed to George Bernard Shaw, Kazantzakis, Kenneth Morgan and, of

course, Lik Tong. This line seemed to me coordinate with the kind of energy that was coming from Papini through James.

This sort of intellectual memoir writing may seem hopelessly vague and subjective, but it may be thought of in terms of information theory. The signal to noise ratio is against us everywhere, but our pre-literary experience disposes us to discriminate signal from noise from particular sources in a way that is, if not unique, highly individualized. That it would be the case that someone with, say, a decade of experience with a style of thinking would then be able to discern patterns that were obscure to others hardly seems odd at all. Nor does it matter, since the discernment of the patterns has no significance unless one can find a public voice.

Thus the Jaspers to Armstrong axis is merely a convenience line on the map of life. Of greater interest for my purposes is the path from Madison (WI) to Chicago, on to Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, Poughkeepsie, and so on down to Bronx and Manhattan, ending at Brooklyn and the sea. From Albany, there is a spur to Pittsfield (MA) and Northampton (MA), from Buffalo one to Hamilton (ONT), St. Catharines and Toronto.

A good sign that the consciousness has been dilated is that important human realities appear clearly. This state is not one of privileged access to an extra-sensory reality, but a disambiguation of the common, confessed reality. Everyone agrees that human life is social and that the social aspects of life involve conflict, but much of Western philosophy has taken the individual aspects of human life as of equal or greater importance and has tried to deal with the social conflicts in terms of our inner conflicts. The roots of this dualism are found in Plato's discussion of justice in the city and justice in the soul in the Republic.

My contention is that we can use the notion of the dilated consciousness (or admission of enough light to see things as they are if not in themselves then at least insofar as they matter to us) as an analogue to Plato's analogy of the cave and as an indication of what education is. That is, to be educated is to have a certain command of the language of one's society, the common tongue, and to understand the world in the way that it is commonly understood. Thus, the philosophers who return to the cave are both living a different life and speaking a different language. Their world is incommensurate with that of the cave dwellers.

There is no claim, nor even a prospect that the conflicts will be resolved, rather, the educated person is in accord with the rest of society regarding the fact that we are social animals, that there are many social conflicts, that some are worth arguing or fighting about and others not, that some methods are better and others not so good, and finally that in some cases, at least, we should be prepared to take sides in the conflict, that is, be prepared to say that the side that should have won did or did not in fact win. Note that no universal claims are made here. As we work through the individual cases there may be exceptions.

Why be moral? A paradigm case for the scheme just outlined might be the question Why be moral?, a question that was discussed at great length during the formative years of analytic philosophy. When the earlier British Moralists discussed the question they were thinking of

ordinary people who felt an inclination, usually based on childhood or religious training, to be moral but who were conflicted, usually by their experience of the world in adult life, and found that acting contrary to common morality did not necessarily fill them with remorse. Perhaps, they thought, being moral was not a true imperative. The later analytic philosophers asked the same question, but detached that question from deliberations about how to live. Important as this difference is, we are still talking about the same question, what has changed is our understanding of what counts as a resolution of the question, and as we review our understanding of conflict resolution we see that we are getting to our most basic understanding of ourselves.

For the later analytic philosophers, the question of "Why be moral?" was to be answered by using reason and constructing an air-tight argument. Such an argument would be a list of statements one of which, the conclusion, following from the others (premises) with logical necessity and in which those premises were themselves either conceded to be true or defended as conclusions following from earlier premises. There is nothing wrong with this method, but what needs to be noted is that it does not fit in with the social process that engaged the earlier British Moralists. Within the social action of the later analytic philosophers it made perfect sense to say, "I agree we should be moral and I and my friends all agree with your premises and conclusion, but I still find a logical flaw in your argument." The first speaker would then attempt to repair the flaw. For the earlier British Moralists, such a statement would not make any sense, but the distinction is subtle. For the earlier Moralists, a logical flaw mattered only if someone who advocated or considered an immoral life might use the flaw to defend what the Moralists considered bad conduct. I believe this distinction takes us a long way in understanding why the earlier writers appear to be less clear and less rigorous and why the later writers appear less worth consulting at all.

Everyone is concerned with the state of public morality, and no one cares about having an air-tight argument to a conclusion that never was doubted or denied. Furthermore, as G.E. Moore pointed out, no argument can be all that air-tight since it is always possible to reverse an argument in which the conclusion appears to follow with rigor from premises which appear to be established. One can always argue that since the conclusion is false (or at least cannot be proved), there must be some error in the reasoning or some falsity in the premises. When the conclusion is contrary to common sense, such a reply is not only possible, it is the rebuttal of choice.

Philosophy, then, is neither a science nor a pseudo-science. Philosophy is concerned with an approach to conflict, and by conflict we now know that social conflicts are the most important and inner conflicts only images of them, philosophy favors no particular method but rather favors that method that works, and, of course, what works has to be understood in terms of what supports the side that ought to prevail.

This not only sounds circular, it is circular, but if we return to the point of the previous paragraph, we see that circularity is no sin in argumentation that is serious and that matters in real life. The point of the circularity is that what is given for one person may be in dispute for another. As long as we are faced with a forced choice we do not need to worry about perpetually

spinning around in the circle; the whole point of it being a forced choice is that one has to get off. This process is illustrated again and again in the Alice books of Lewis Carroll. Alice is constantly faced with forced choices and needs to deliberate by herself or with others, but always in terms of highly dubious argumentation.

The process is emphatic in *Moby-Dick*, since we eventually learn that the Ishmael (wanderer) character is setting out all sorts of philosophies and that in terms of survival, his position is the only one that ends up successful. *Moby-Dick* also provides a good example of live options. To sail or not to sail on the Pequod is a live option while still on shore, but it is no longer a live option while at sea, and when contact is made with other ships (gangs) it may be unclear how "live" an option it is to switch from one ship to another.

The Sherlock Holmes stories illustrate how science, or what is called science, can be used to deduce the solution of a crime, but then when it comes to apprehension and disposition of the case Holmes follows his conscience even when he is aware his conscience conflicts with the law.

Philosophy neither argues nor preaches, but guides, perhaps in the way Virgil guided Dante. As we are shown examples of empathy, we are drawn into an emphatic relationship, and as we are drawn into an emphatic relationship, the whole web of empathies grows larger and larger. Bishop Butler describes this enlargement of empathy in his sermons on the love of one's neighbors, and the web image is used in the Sherlock Holmes stories especially with relation to the spread of evil, and perhaps most famously in Eliot's *Middlemarch*.

Most of my work on Field-Being has tried to connect Field-Being with Bishop Butler on the one hand and the American pragmatists on the other. This is really one project since long ago I tried to place not only Butler but Butler's success in a line running from Pascal to William James, so in arguing we can see Field-Being as Dewey's common faith, I am equally arguing we can see Butler's philosophy as Dewey's common faith, and unless I have totally missed Dewey's point, to make these claims is not to assert that Field-Being or Butler already is the common faith, but rather that we can take it as a project to make them become the common faith, that they are disposed that way and that it would be a good thing if we did so.

Philosophy has no problems, and therefore no solutions, but neither does philosophy tinker with puzzles. Philosophy is a guide to life showing us, pointing us, at those conflicts that most deserve attention and those that are best left alone, suggesting the means of conflict resolution that are likely to be most successful especially when the conflict involves how to deal with options that are momentous, live and forced. Science comes up short here not because we favor superstition or bullshit but because life constantly confronts us with live, momentous and forced options in circumstances that preclude the use of scientific method.

Bishop Butler was fond of the phrase "state of religion," and often asserted that we are in a state of religion. He did this, I believe, to try to emphasize that things are as they are whether we believe them to be so or not, and we must live with the consequences of our actions,

consequences that depend both on what we believe and what is so. James' point was, of course, that there are cases in which what we believe can help to bring into being the very condition we wish for.

A parallel point in Butler is that in many practical matters a mere probability, even a less than even chance, may be more than enough to justify action that is as determined and as vigorous as would be action on full certainty. I take Field-Being to be affirming that we are in a state of field-being, and that we are in such a state whether we believe in or understand our condition or not.

The equations mentioned earlier in this paper may be understood as affirmations of identity (or inclusion), but also as denials of an alleged dualism and therefore as guides to the resolution of conflict associated with that dualism.

Bertrand Russell's work in philosophy was mainly concerned with reductions, determining what could be reduced to what. Russell would not allow that any of his popular writing or any of his practical writing was part of his philosophy. Most readers ignore this point, and for some practical purposes it does not matter. The distinction does matter, however, when we are concerned with the proper business of philosophy. Following Butler, or at least my interpretation of Butler, I begin with a consideration of the proper business of life.

Human life is defined by its boundaries: death, struggle, suffering, guilt and chance. No matter how optimistic, enthusiastic and reform-minded we may be, these are the limits of our existence and to deny them or even to fail to appreciate their significance is to fall into self-deception. If we think of philosophical discourse (in the traditional sense of serious discussion of important matters) as the cement of society, we quickly see that a solution or resolution that satisfies me or me and my friends may not even be progress on the philosophical point at issue. We are social beings and necessarily so. Therefore, the proper business of philosophy is to mind or tend to that discourse, to identify the problems worthy of study and to try, test, and then advocate for methods of working on those problems, but also to recognize that sometimes we have a prior certainty regarding the conclusion so that in the dialectical process it may be that we are drawn to a problem not because the uncertainty torments us but because we are so confident we are and will always be on the right side.

An example of such a dynamic is found in Carol Bly's work on bullies, or what she usually refers to as the "jerks" who rule the world. Bly never expresses any doubt about who is right, of course the jerks are just jerks. Her main moral dichotomy is similar to Burroughs' distinction of the Johnsons and the Shits. We, of course, are free to defend the Jerks or the Shits, or at least to maintain that important questions have been begged by using such names, but even if someone took such a view I think it would be a mistake to try to move Bly or Burroughs onto a level playing field. Charges of unfairness or the need to be polite and deferential do not take hold here. We may, however, in the general framework of partisanship, take exception to particular examples, just as Dante cannot very well advocate fair play for the inhabitants of Hell but can ask pointed questions about why a particular person has been assigned a particular position,

especially when something seems amiss. This point is particularly important since it is obvious from the reviews that what I am calling the Bly/Burroughs model has often been misunderstood. Bly and Burroughs see the world in Manichean terms and they are actively trying to recruit anyone who will listen to take the side they favor and to become a partisan of that side. The means they use, a combination of prose essays and imaginative fiction, along with some explicit exhortations, is a means that can be vindicated only by its results. As with Butler, all that matters is the effect.

We are now about ten years into the campaign to establish Field-Being discourse. Field-Being is opposed not so much by those who advocate an incompatible philosophy as by those who are indifferent to Field-Being or to philosophy in general. My main suggestion in this paper is that Field-Being will be better off if it tries to appropriate analytic philosophy rather than by distancing itself from analytic philosophy. I think this is true for essentially the same reason I think analytic philosophy should return to the modus operandi of the British Moralists rather than continue to pretend to be one of the natural sciences. These claims may not be controversial, but I believe they are worth making.

Philosophers should not merely analyze the world, they should strive to change it. Having a debate in which both sides are afforded equal time and in which evidence and arguments are weighed and scrutinized is only one way of getting things done in philosophy and whatever its exact status ought not to be elevated to the most favored or only method of operation.

People come to philosophers for help with knots, impediments to clear thinking. It takes one with much experience to analyze the nature of these knots. This is where analytic philosophy can be of great help. It is worth noting that once the knots are undone, or cut, as the case may be, the "ropes" that facilitate clear thinking are essentially the same. Thus we come to the equations of the life of the prophets, the life of the wise, the life of the redeemed, the life of the free, the life of self-love, the life of love for others, the live of total submission to the divine will and the life of trade and commerce. Happy families, as Tolstoy said, are all the same. Books are like drugs in that they will have an effect great or small independently of what we want or do not want, but not entirely independently of how we administer them or of our expectations, because of the placebo effect.

There is at least one additional condition that analysis reveals when we try to determine what it means to affirm a philosophy with implications for the conduct of life. The final condition is that all the first three conditions must have held good for a considerable period of time.

One who claims to be an existentialist at bedtime may fairly be asked whether existentialism will still be affirmed in the morning. The first-year student who discovers and embraces Transcendentalism is not really a Transcendentalist until graduation four years later finds the student still in communion with the Over-soul. (See Transcendentalism and Popular Culture.<sup>26</sup>)

## **Part II**

To be an analytic philosopher is not necessarily to affirm or deny Field-Being, but only to have an inclination to conduct a self-examination along the lines of these four conditions. Any person, regardless of that person's orientation on other issues of philosophy who seems fluent with the characteristic language-games of Field-Being, who has taken up such language-games by free choice after careful deliberation, and who has acted over a considerable period of time in specifiable ways that can be attributed to the acceptance of Field-Being may be said to have accepted Field-Being.

This second part of the paper goes on to argue that there are independent reasons for thinking that one of the central problems of philosophy is the metaphysical and epistemological egocentric predicament and the parallel doctrines of psychological and ethical egoism in economics and morals. So, if Field-Being can provide a home for those who have lost, abandoned or otherwise been done with their selves, especially their petty individual selves, then the only remaining question is how the treatment of the self, and non-substantialism generally, stands in comparison with other philosophies, especially pragmatism, transcendentalism, Vedanta, Buddhism and process philosophy. Field-Being does not score a knock-out blow, but it does have some telling advantages over the others. Perhaps the main advantage is the open texture of Field-Being. Field-Being is old enough and well-founded enough to have an identity, but it is new enough for that identity not to be frozen. (Papini on pragmatism)

The literature of Field-Being can present a challenge for the uninitiated, but if Field-Being is primarily a mode in which life is conducted, then Field-Being itself cannot be rejected even if all the literature of Field-Being fails. That words fail is a widely affirmed doctrine. Field-Being should be tried and tested by independent methods. The mode of investigation that is most widely celebrated is that of Sherlock Holmes. For example, in his commentary on the John Kennedy assassination, Norman Mailer twice refers to the need of a Sherlock Holmes. Holmesian investigation is simple. One must begin *de novo*, taking nothing on faith. The trouble with the official police, Holmes says, is that they lack imagination. We say, the consciousness must be fully dilated. There is no such thing as a perfect examination of a crime scene, but we know the less experienced one is the more likely one will be overly impressed by what is actually of less significance and the more experienced one is the more likely one will notice significant points that escape the attention of others.

The teaching of almost any subject tends to fall in the middle, attempting to attract the students' attention by appealing to the least common denominator. Our new observations must be supplemented with those stored in memory and the testimony of others. We may characterize the presentation of evidence at trial as follows: witnesses are called who are allowed only to testify to what they observed, not what conclusions they drew, and who testify only in response to questions asked them. The witnesses are not allowed to select what evidence they will present. The questions are posed by advocates, evenly matched, who each aims to vindicate one side or the other. An impartial judge presides over the presentation of evidence and then instructs those who are to draw the conclusion, if any, on what is relevant and what is not. The triers of fact are then required to deliberate in private before reaching a conclusion. It is

important that the triers of fact be familiar with the general culture and language but not have any prior knowledge of the specific facts or personalities of the case.

## NOTES

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1. According to the Great Religions cartel, the number of such giants is strictly but not necessarily exactly limited. There may be from eight to twelve of them

2. "The mystic is a man who knows, by immediate experience, the organic continuity between his self and the cosmos. This experience, which is the normal fruit of sensitivity, becomes intense in a man whose native energy is great; and lest it turn into an overwhelming, shattering burden, it must be ruthlessly disciplined and ordered. The easiest defense from this mystic burden is of course the common one of denying the mystic experience altogether. An anti-mystic age like ours is simply one so innerly resourceless that it solves, by negation and aggressive repression, the problem of organic continuity between the self and a seemingly chaotic world—thus perpetuating the inward-and-outward chaos. The true solution is too arduous for most men: by self-knowledge and self-discipline, it is to achieve within one's self a stable nucleus to bear and finally transfigure the world's impinging chaos. For the nucleus within the self, as it is gradually revealed, is impersonal and cosmic; is indeed the dynamic key to order in the "outward" world. By this synthesis of his own burden, the mystic escapes from destruction and becomes a master." Waldo Frank, "An Introduction to Hart Crane," *New Republic*, LXXIV (1933), 11-15.. "Frank's first published novel, *The Unwelcome Man: A Novel*, is a psychoanalytic look into the life of Quincy Burt, a man struggling to find his place in a tumultuous, industrial society. Faced with the realization that he does not belong, the man purchases a gun with the intention of committing suicide; however, before he pulls the trigger, he realizes that he does belong precisely because, like everyone else, he is already dead, both spiritually and intellectually. Frank owed much of the inspiration for this novel to American transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and especially Walt Whitman. A self-professed "naturalistic mystic," Frank's ideology came from a fusion of Freud, Hegel, Marx, Spinoza, Eastern mysticism, Judaism, and American transcendentalism. He believed that many of the world's problems would be solved if each individual achieved a oneness or wholeness with the universe." (University of Delaware, "Biographical Note," Waldo Frank Papers)

3. In another paper, read at the Rochester Institute of Technology, but not yet published, I discuss the problem of institutional integrity from a Butlerian point of view.

4. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "American Slavery," 6 February 1855 (Houghton Library of Harvard University, bMS AM 1280.202).

5. Robert Heineman and William T. Bluhm, *Ethics and Public Policy: Method and Cases* (Prentice Hall, 2006).

6. Patrick Shannon, *The Struggle to Continue: Progressive Reading Instruction in the United States* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990).

7. Frankenstein and his monster shared an inextricably entwined existence. Though the former had created the latter through his actions, the Creature in turn defined and controlled his creator through his own relentless behavior. After repeatedly confronting and reacting to each others' desires, the monster reminded Frankenstein that they were both responsible for, and had

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power over, the happiness and existence of the other: “You are my creator, but I am your master-obey!” Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein Or, the Modern Prometheus* (New York: Collier Books, 1961) 142. In the same way, the two halves of the creative loop, creator and critic, or performer and audience, should dance around each other, shaping and being shaped by the others’ behavior. This is a very general principle—essentially that of a feedback loop—that lies at the heart of a wide range of dynamic systems, whether within the psychology of a single creative mind, or between a pair of interacting individuals, or among the groups generating and responding to artifacts in a particular culture, or even among species interacting in an ecosystem. If only one side of any of these systems can change, then it will only change until it is in line with the other fixed component, and then creativity and innovation will stop. Both sides must be free to adapt to the other for continuing novelty to be generated. See Peter M. Todd and Gregory M. Werner, *Musical Networks* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

8. When first asked why I wanted to study "Inherit the Wind," my immediate answer was: "Because I love it." But as I read the play again and again ... and again, I began to find what had always interested me without my realizing it - the intensity of the characters and the complications of modern life, but also the ultimate faith, not in God, but in other people. "Inherit the Wind" is about the human condition and how we relate to each and how we survive—together. Lyndsey McCabe, "About the Play," in *American Studies Program* (The University of Virginia, 1996).

9. At least one field being, Ken Inada, was invited to address the Creighton Club. Sadly, the event never came off.

10. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1990).

11. See Appendix.

12. Max Black, "The Prevalence of Humbug," *The Prevalence of Humbug and Other Essays* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) and Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

13. James F. Peterman, *Philosophy as Therapy: An interpretation and defense of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophical Project*. (State University of New York Press, 1992).

14. Others have provided slightly different lists.

15. William Turner, *History of Philosophy*, (Boston: Ginn, 1903), Chapter LVIII.

16. *tzu jan*

17. All my work hangs on a trinity of historically conditioned feelings that can be felt and understood as a single state, but only with great effort. Most of the difficulty is derived from the sand we have kicked up (Berkeley). The sense of the presence of God is philosophical wisdom, and so is the sense of being free (redeemed). None of these involves any ontological or epistemological claims, and therefore there are no doctrines in this philosophy. The thesis of identity means that, contrary to appearances, there is no significant conflict in practice, in living, with the sense God is watching and the confident conviction there is no God. I feel there is a burglar in the house: I feel my dead father is with me on a fishing trip; I am so impressed by a play that I feel it is not an actor but Abe Lincoln himself. In my psychology, the sense of God's presence is the same as the abandonment of self-deception, and the thesis of identity must be true if fully integrated is possible. There is, we feel, no sense in trying to hide from God. This

psychology, which runs all through the Bible, gets long well enough with or without an ontological belief in the supernatural. There is a fairly exact parallel, I believe, in that if literature matters at all to philosophy, it makes no difference whether the literature is fiction or non-fiction. What matters is how well I understand what binds those who are attracted to the literature and how that literature has been an era in my life. (Newman and Thoreau)

18. Bertrand Russell, *Authority and the Individual* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1949).

19. Joseph Butler, "Charge to the Clergy at Durham" (Durham: Lane, 1751)

20. *Dao de Jing*.

21. The best exposition of this point of view and how it applies to non-philosophers as well as professionals is in John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee, 1980/1934).

22. Frankfurt, op. cit.

23. See Karl Jaspers on conditions of the boundary situation: death, guilt, suffering, chance and struggle, in his *Way to Wisdom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), pp. 19-20

24. Dewey, op cit.

25. Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Random House, 2006).

26. [http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=320](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=320)

## APPENDIX

### Book News

*Now out of print, but available as a used book:*

**Who's Who in Hell: A Handbook and International Directory for Humanists, Freethinkers, Naturalists, Rationalists, and Non-Theists**, compiled by Warren Allen Smith (Barricade, 2000). ISBN 1-56980-158-4

*Just published:*

**The Works of Bishop Butler**, edited by David White. (University of Rochester Press, 2006)  
ISBN 1580462103

*At newsstands or by subscription:*

**Philosophy Now: a magazine of ideas.** Issue 56 July/Aug 2006  
<http://www.philosophynow.org/>

# CALL FOR PAPERS, POEMS AND POST- CARD ART

We are an informal alliance of psychiatric archaeologists and institutional ethnologists (gay/straight/married/single) working on the campaign for the recovery of Field-Being discourse, seeking to channel the power of the old Erie Canal from its reception in Brooklyn to the last stop in Buffalo. The axis of our project is "The Humanist" (a work in fiberglass by Anita Weschler), now permanently displayed in Albany (Institute of Humanist Studies), but previously resident in Greenwich Village (Anita's studio and home of Warren Smith), Buffalo (Council for Secular Humanism) and Rochester (St. John Fisher College, The Highlands, Greenwood Books).

**Warren Smith   David White   Timothy Madigan   Jeremiah White**

## Submissions are Invited

Any object relating to Bishop Butler (or in the case of things like Durham Cathedral, representations thereof) may be sent to Bishop Butler, P.O. Box 10704, Rochester, NY 14610. Post-Card Art relating to Russell, Moore or Wittgenstein should be directed to the Bertrand Russell Society, Writers & Books Literary Center, 740 University Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607. Video is being collected by Jeremiah White, 35 Luella St., Rochester, NY 14609. Please send an artist's statement or letter of inquiry first to Jeremiah at 725 4th Ave., Apt. TT1, Brooklyn, NY 11232. Material on philosophy and popular culture intended for the UNESCO World Day of Philosophy, *Philosophy Now* magazine or the Popular Culture Association may in the first instance be sent to Dr. Timothy Madigan, Department of Philosophy, St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Ave., Rochester, NY 14618. Please send religious tracts (any persuasion, we're post-moderns) to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 25 Westminster Rd., Rochester, NY 14607. Attn: parish librarians.

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