



The Philosophy of E. A. Burtt:

The Metaphysical Foundations for a World Community

by

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Abstract of the Thesis

Edwin Arthur Burtt (1892-1989), who spent the majority of his professional life at Cornell University, is most widely known as the philosopher and author of the works entitled *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* [1924] (1932) and *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha* [1955] (1982). These titles reflect the breadth of his philosophical interests, ranging from the philosophy of science to the philosophy of religion. These were recurrent themes in his voluminous publications appearing from the early 1920s to the late 1980s.

Thus far, no attempt has been made to examine Burtt's life's thought as a whole. This may be due to his eclecticism and penchant for incorporating ideas into Western philosophy from such diverse sources as psychoanalytic theory and Eastern philosophy and religion. Moreover, he was a philosophic activist. He sought to address the serious problems of the twentieth century, in particular the experience of the two World Wars and the threat of annihilation posed by the development of nuclear weapons. Scholars have therefore tended to refer to his works as isolated entities. His influence has been strongest at each end of the spectrum of his philosophic interests, and he is either treated as a philosopher of science or a philosopher of religion.

This thesis aims to remedy this situation by treating Burtt's work as a whole. Throughout his seventy year philosophic odyssey there is a connecting thread, namely, his determination to develop a post-empiricist metaphysics which would receive its political expression in a world community. In his view, modern science had displaced humanity from its central place and moral significance in the ancient and medieval universe. Was it possible to remedy this state of affairs? His starting point in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* was to demonstrate that the scientific world view, having "squeezed" the Divine out of the universe, itself had metaphysical foundations deep in human consciousness. Yet science, he argued, cannot say anything objective or empirical about human consciousness—the ultimate source from which it makes its empirical claims to truth.

For Burtt science and empiricism can only ever provide partial truth and only speak of partial realities. It was from this starting point that Burtt, after several detours, arrived at his theory of expanding awareness—his most original contribution to philosophy. He believed that this theory could be practiced. He believed that this would lead to a philosophic regeneration, giving rise to a post-scientific, or post-empiricist, metaphysics which could restore humanity to an experience of "at-home-ness" in the universe and of Divine Reality. He also believed this restoration could help resolve the critical problems facing humanity in the late twentieth century and in the future.

The thesis, therefore, provides an intellectual biography of Burtt's philosophic odyssey. Tracing his intellectual development from early childhood through to his death

(he was still writing at the age of ninety-six), the thesis demonstrates an intrinsic connection between Burt as a philosopher of science, a philosopher of religion, and a philosophical activist. This account of the circuitous path of his thought offers an understanding that Burt himself never achieved, and locates his gradually evolving theory of expanding awareness as the cornerstone of his mature thought.

Author's Statement Concerning Prior Publication and Originality

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying.

Signed

Date

June 30th 1994

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I owe a debt of gratitude to Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster of Seattle, Professor Burt's only surviving daughter. Mrs. Burt-Brinster, a theatre critic by profession, generously allowed me access to biographical material concerning her father. Since meeting her in Seattle in 1990, in the early stages of research, we have regularly corresponded and discussed details of the project by telephone. Professor Burt referred to Winifred as his "philosophical daughter," and sent drafts of his later writings to her for comment. She has kept copies of the correspondence between herself and her father.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the cooperation of various members of the Society of Friends in Ithaca, New York, who were close personal friends of Professor Burt. Burt left his house at 227 Willard Way to the Friends, a group of whom now live there. In 1990, Professor Thor Rhodin, a member of the Friends, arranged for me to visit Burt's study, explore his library, and examine his papers (which I catalogued) in the Archive Department of the Olin Library, Cornell University.

I have corresponded with many people who knew Professor Burt and who assisted and encouraged my research project in helpful ways. A list of these people would include Professors Eliot Deutsch, Huston Smith, John E. Smith, and Dr. Samuel Lindley. Professors Huston Smith and John E. Smith, besides encouraging me in the project, kindly forwarded copies of correspondence they had undertaken with Burt. Professor Deutsch provided encouragement in the early days of the project by communicating his belief that Burt's thought, particularly his later thought, was worthy of more scholarly attention than it had so far received. He also suggested where I may

be able to locate Dr. Lindley, a former graduate student of Burt, who arranged a tribute to Burt in *Philosophy East and West* in 1972 on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. After making contact with Dr. Lindley in Honolulu, I found him to be most informative. He provided valuable reflections (quoted in part herein) concerning his experiences of Burt as a teacher.

I also acknowledge the support of my colleagues at the University of Adelaide, too many to name individually, for their challenges no less than their encouragement.

Finally, but not least, I express my appreciation to members of my family and to friends who were supportive in various ways.

References in Abbreviated Form

The following list provides brief details in relation to each work cited. Full details are in Bibliography A.

Chief works by E. A. Burttt cited herein¹

- BPMT “Two Basic Issues in the Problem of Meaning and Truth,” *Essays in Honor of John Dewey* (1929).
- ✓ CB *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha* [1955] (1982).
- ✓ CDT “The Core of Dewey’s Way of Thinking,” *The Journal of Philosophy* (1960).
- ✓ CEWM “How Can the Philosophies of East and West Meet?” (1948).
- CSNM “The Contemporary Significance of Newton’s Metaphysics,” (1927).
- DHUM “Does Humanism Understand Man?” *The Humanist* (1945).
- HDS “Humanism and the Doctrine of Sin,” *The Humanist* (1946).
- HEWP “Basic Problems of Method in Harmonizing Eastern and Western Philosophy,” in *Essays in East-West Philosophy* (1951).
- ✓ HJ *The Human Journey* (1981).
- ✓ ISPU *In Search of Philosophic Understanding* [1965] (1980 reprint cited herein).
- ✓ LLL *Light, Love, and Life* (1985).
- MEW “The Meeting of East and West,” *Philosophical Review* (1947).
- ✓ MF *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* [1924] (1932, rev. ed.; 1980 reprint of this ed. cited herein).
- ✓ MPP “My Path to Philosophy,” *Philosophy East and West* (1972).
- PMAP “The Philosophy of Man as All-Embracing Philosophy,” *The Philosophical Forum* (1970-1971).
- PPFE “Philosophy and Philosophers in the Far East,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1949).
- PWP “The Problem of a World Philosophy,” *Radhakrishnan* [1951] (1968).
- PYTT *Philosophy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (1987-1988).
- QUEW “A Basic Problem in the Quest for Understanding Between East and West,” in *Philosophy and Culture East and West* [1959] (1962).
- RAE “Real vs. Abstract Evolution,” *Sixth International Congress of Philosophy, 1926*, (Published in 1927).
- ✓ RAS *Religion in the Age of Science* (1929).
- ✓ RT *Right Thinking* [1928] (1931) (1946—edition cited herein unless noted otherwise).
- ✓ SD *Man Seeks the Divine* (1957).
- ✓ TRP *Types of Religious Philosophy* [1938] (1951).
- TUP “Truth, Understanding, & Philosophy,” (1964 APA address, published in 1965).
- WHP “What Happened to Philosophy from 1900-1950,” (1952).

¹ **Spelling and Punctuation:** Several of Burttt’s works have been published in England for distribution in English speaking nations (other than America), such as Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa, and, as a result, spelling and punctuation in these publications follows the English system. However, because Burttt naturally followed American customs when writing, I have adhered, in general, to the American system of spelling and punctuation (as per the *Webster Dictionary*) in order to achieve consistency. In the case of spelling, for example, the words “practice” (verb & noun)—not “practise,” “realized”—not “realised,” and “fulfill”—not “fulfil,” are used. In the case of punctuation, for instance, the American custom (but not the English) is to put a full-stop after abbreviations such as “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” and “Dr.” In any event, all quotations are faithful to the spelling and punctuation in the cited source.



Chapter 1

Introduction & Biographical Sketch

E. A. Burt: Philosopher of Science and Religion

Edwin Arthur Burt (1892-1989), who spent the majority of his teaching life at Cornell University, is widely known as the philosopher and author of *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* [1924] (1932) (hereafter *Metaphysical Foundations*), and *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha* [1955] (1982).¹ Their titles indicate his diverse philosophical interests, appealing as they do to two widely different areas of philosophy: the philosophy of science and the philosophy of religion. During his long life, which encompassed almost all of the twentieth century, he wrote numerous other books in the area of philosophy generally and the philosophy of both Eastern and Western religion. These include: *Principles and Problems of Right Thinking* [1928] (1931) (1946), *Religion in an Age of Science* (1929), *Types of Religious Philosophy* [1939] (1951), *Man Seeks the Divine* [1957] (1964), *In Search of Philosophic Understanding* [1965], and *The Human Journey* (1981).

Professor Burt also contributed numerous articles on philosophy and religion to various journals, edited the anthology *The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill* [1939] (1967), and published privately two booklets. The first of these booklets, *Together in Peril and Hope* (1959), addresses his deep concern in relation to the threat of nuclear annihilation. He wrote the second booklet, *Light, Love, and Life* (1985), when he was ninety-two years old. It describes a great transformation that had occurred in his personality in the preceding decade of his life. In 1988 he submitted the still unpublished manuscript *Philosophy: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*² to various publishers. This manuscript is a resolute restatement of many of his earlier ideas.

Burt's works are still often cited by various scholars. *Social Sciences Citation Index* (SSCI) carries 179 citations of *Metaphysical Foundations* from 1966 (the year SSCI was first published) to 1992 and 62 citations for his other works over the same period.³ By 1966, however, he had already been retired for several years. Prior to this date his work had been cited in numerous journals and works in the philosophy of science and the philosophy of religion. A study of these citations, however, reveals that they primarily have applied to *Metaphysical Foundations*, his first work, and treat Burt as a philosopher of science.⁴

Richard S. Westfall, Gary Hatfield, and David C. Lindberg, all contemporary

¹ These two books have achieved combined sales of over one million copies and both are still (1994) in print.

² Bibliography A provides a complete list of Burt's publications and this unpublished manuscript.

³ Appendix F details these citations.

⁴ A theme explored further in Chapter 3.

philosophers of science, typify scholars' treatment of Burt as an influential philosopher of science. Westfall, in *The Construction of Modern Science* (1977), claims that Burt's *Metaphysical Foundations* is very important "for comprehending the basic intellectual currents" that shaped the current understanding of science in the seventeenth century (Westfall, 1977, p. 160). Hatfield, in his essay "Metaphysics and the New Science" in *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (1990), asserts that during the present century philosophic thought concerning relationship between metaphysics and science "has been dominated by the work of Ernst Cassirer, E. A. Burt, A. N. Whitehead, and Alexandre Koyré" (Hatfield, 1990, p. 93). Furthermore, of these four thinkers, it is Burt whom Hatfield chooses to be spokesman.¹ Lindberg, in his essay "Conceptions of the Scientific Revolution from Bacon to Butterfield" also in *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (1990), asserts that Burt, Koyré,² and Herbert Butterfield (1900-1979) "profoundly shaped historical scholarship on the Scientific Revolution in the post [Second World] war decades. Their influence on A. R. Hall, I. Bernard Cohen, Thomas S. Kuhn, and Richard S. Westfall (to name four active historians [of science] who have contributed prominently to our modern understanding) is demonstrable" (Lindberg, 1990, p. 19).

These testaments to Burt's "profound" influence in the area of the philosophy of science, however, relate only to *Metaphysical Foundations*—and this was first published in 1924. There is no hint in the testaments to Burt's influence in the realm of the philosophy of science of the fact that, over time, he developed a deep interest in psychoanalytic theory and Eastern philosophy and religion. Nor is there any hint that these latter interests led him to propose a post-empiricist metaphysics with mystical overtones. The only reference in any of the above works to Burt's later interests is indirect. Lindberg, without elaboration, states that "Butterfield, like Burt and Koyré, underwent a complex process of intellectual development, and the briefest perusal of his works reveals strong eclectic tendencies" (Lindberg, 1990, p. 18). Lindberg is primarily referring to Butterfield, but he nevertheless is correct to make these same claims applicable to Burt. One wonders, however, if Lindberg was aware of the truly "complex process of intellectual development" that Burt underwent after he wrote *Metaphysical Foundations* and the true extent of his eclectic tendencies. Being fair to Lindberg, no study heretofore has been made of the whole of Burt's life's work.

Regeneration of Philosophy

With all the attention that has been given to *Metaphysical Foundations*, one might have expected that Burt's later works, particularly his *magnum opus*, *In Search of*

¹ Hatfield's reasons for choosing Burt to be "spokesman" are identified in Chapter 3.

² It would seem that Burt and Koyré corresponded. While exploring Burt's study in 1990 I came across a 1943 essay that Koyré had sent to Burt. It is signed "With my compliments, AK." This essay is entitled "Nicolas Copernicus." Koyré read this essay to the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America on May 3rd, 1943. No publication details appear on this essay. I deposited it with Burt's other papers in the Archives Section of the Olin Library, Cornell University.

Philosophic Understanding (1965) (hereafter *Philosophic Understanding*), would have received similar attention. This has not been the case—even though this latter work encompasses notions, primarily his theory of expanding awareness, which Burttt believed could assist in bringing about a regeneration of the philosophic enterprise in order to address the serious problem facing the human race in the middle to late twentieth century. It is difficult to account for this lack of attention. However, when it was published Burttt's speculative metaphysical interests were radically different from the interests of the analytic temper dominating American philosophy at that time.

In 1964, the year prior to *Philosophic Understanding* being published, Burttt was President of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association (APA) and used his Presidential address to urge his colleagues, the “goodly majority” among whom he believed would have “pejorative associations” with the notion of speculative philosophy, to reconsider their position (TUP, *passim*). In his view, the various movements of this majority of analytic philosophers in the twentieth century had made the area of their philosophical concern so narrow that they had lost sight of the deeper need for philosophy to develop a more inclusive orientation which could throw light on human experience in a dynamic universe (*ibid.*).

Nevertheless, *Philosophic Understanding* did receive some sympathetic reviews. For instance, John E. Smith (editor of *Contemporary American Philosophy* (1970)) wrote:

Burttt ... has as great a confidence as Hegel had in our ability to transcend particular points of view and arrive at mutual understanding. Because of this optimism, *he submerges his own view of reality, of freedom and creative selfhood*, in a dialectic aimed at overcoming philosophical antagonism. Important as this aim is at present, one is tempted to say that Burttt should have followed his own reading of the evolution of a philosophical position and stated his view in that bold form that marks the first stage of *a new outlook*. I would not urge the point were I not convinced that he had laid hold of such an outlook; moreover, it is an outlook which, if taken seriously by philosophers at present, could help rescue philosophy from the strife of systems and unproductive dualities. (Smith, 1969, p. 102; my italics)

To date, philosophers have not followed Smith's lead and investigated Burttt's “new outlook.” Nor has any attempt been made to discover if there is a central theme in Burttt's diverse works. Indeed, because scholars have referred to his works as isolated entities, a dichotomous situation has arisen. He is often treated either as a philosopher of science or as a philosopher of religion.¹

The Aim of this Thesis

This thesis aims to remedy this situation by treating Burttt's life's work as a whole. The challenge is to demonstrate that there is a connecting thread uniting his diverse

¹ His reputation as a philosopher of religion, besides his writings in this area, was built on his teaching a course on the history and comparison of religions at Cornell University from 1932 until his retirement in 1960. “The course, which had 12 students when he first taught it, regularly drew 300 by the time of his retirement” (From “Memorial Minutes,” by Nicholas M. Sturgeon and Stuart M. Brown, *Proceedings and Addresses of The American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 64, No. 5, 1990, p. 62).

works, namely, his determination to develop a post-empiricist metaphysics that would receive its political expression in a world community. However, identifying this theme is not a straightforward exercise. Burt, an eclectic thinker, had a penchant for incorporating ideas into Western philosophy from such diverse sources as psychoanalytic theory and Eastern philosophy. Moreover, he was a philosophic activist. He sought to address the serious problems of the twentieth century, in particular the experience of the two World Wars and the threat of annihilation posed by the development of nuclear weapons.

The key, however, to recognizing a unifying theme in Burt's philosophic diversity lies in an elusive notion, namely, his theory of expanding awareness, which gradually evolved to become the cornerstone of his mature thought. He believed this theory could be practiced and would lead to a philosophic regeneration giving rise to a post-scientific, or post-empiricist, metaphysics. Its ultimate aim was to restore humanity to an experience of "at-home-ness" in the universe of Divine Reality. He also believed this restoration could help resolve the critical problems facing humanity in the late twentieth century and in the future millennium by encouraging the formation of a world community. In this theory it becomes apparent that there is an intrinsic connection between Burt as philosopher of science, philosopher of religion, and philosophical activist.

Like so many philosophers before him, Burt gained his insights into contemporary, and possible future, problems by turning to the past. For instance, in his first major work, *Metaphysical Foundations*, he initially identifies, then analyzes, the changes that took place in the presuppositions of early modern thinkers during the transition from medieval science to that of modern science. The focus of his interest was the creation of a new world-view which displaced humanity from its central place and moral significance in the ancient and medieval universe. In later works, he seeks to identify the roots, that is, the presuppositions and valuations, of various belief systems and religions in search of a new set of values which could contribute to the development of a post-empiricist philosophy. As part of his vision of a new "all-embracing philosophy" to serve as a foundation for a post-empiricist metaphysics, he assumes the role of prophet and makes a series of prophecies concerning the future. In his essay, "The Philosophy of Man as All-Embracing Philosophy" (1971), for instance, he predicts that both the natural and social sciences in the future will undergo a radical transformation that will be "comparable to the historical transformation from ancient to modern science ... [and] will be so conceived that knowledge of it can serve whatever human value becomes dominant in that epoch which has not yet dawned" (PMAP, p. 169).

These claims, of course, immediately raise numerous questions. For instance, how intelligible is his theory of expanding awareness, the key to what he believed could bring about a philosophic regeneration and lead to the formation of a post-empiricist metaphysics? How did he believe that he could achieve this task, when so many before him had failed? What is the nature of this new value that will transform science? More

generally, what was Burt's philosophical orientation as a professional philosopher? These are among the major questions that we shall explore. This exploration will take us over some uncharted philosophical terrain and will perhaps give rise to more questions than answers. Burt's eclecticism means that we shall be referring to ideas that he has drawn from such diverse sources as the thought of Gautama the Buddha, the founders of Hinduism, Confucius, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the early Christians, the early modern philosopher-scientists, later moderns such as Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and contemporaries such as Sri Aurobindo, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and Teilhard de Chardin. Indeed, Burt's eclectic orientation is so profound that it is extremely difficult for us to reconcile his orientation to that of his contemporaries.

The primary aim of this dissertation, in sum, is to provide an intellectual biography of Burt's seventy year philosophic odyssey and, from our privileged vantage point of being able to view his life's work as a whole, gain an understanding of his philosophic thought in a manner that he himself never achieved. To facilitate our task we will break his thought into three periods: his "early thought" (1920-1928), his "middle thought" (1929-1945), and his "later (or mature) thought" (1946-1989). It is important to make these breaks because even though we shall strive to identify a consistent theme underlying his thought, Burt articulated this theme in different ways at successive stages of his career.

Our first task will be to trace Burt's personal life and career. Burt himself insisted that a philosopher's thought cannot be separated from personal life. To date no biography has been written of Burt's life. The following biographical sketch draws primarily on his personal correspondence, newspaper clippings,¹ and a short autobiographical article, entitled "My Path to Philosophy" (MPP), that Burt wrote to accompany a tribute by the journal, *Philosophy East and West*, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday in 1972 (Vol. 22, No. 4, October 1972, pp. 429-440). The tribute was arranged by Samuel Lindley² (*ibid.*, p. 428) of Hawaii, one of Burt's former students and also included an essay by Huston Smith "Man's Western Way: An Essay on Reason and the Given" (*ibid.*, pp. 441-459).³

¹ Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster of Seattle, Professor Burt's only surviving daughter, has been particularly helpful in providing me with private documents, biographical details, and personal reminiscences, both in person and by mail. In his later years, Burt was in constant contact with Winifred by mail (in addition to personal visits) and sent her draft copies of various works. In a letter to her dated July 22nd, 1987, he refers to her as "my philosophical daughter."

² I have been in correspondence (to which I refer below) with Dr. Lindley who is now retired and lives in Honolulu, Hawaii.

³ Professor Huston Smith, whose professional teaching career was beginning towards the end of Burt's teaching career, corresponded and met with Burt after the latter's retirement. He was Professor of Philosophy at Massachusetts Institute of Technology but now (1994) is Professor of Religion at the University of California, Berkeley. Smith's and Burt's interests coincide in many respects. Smith, like Burt, has a strong interest, as revealed in his works *The World's Religions* [1958] (1991) and *Forgotten Truth* [1976] (1992), in the philosophy of both Eastern and Western religion and, importantly, both are critical of the partial view of reality and partial truth offered by empiricism and modern science. Just as Burt was determined to develop a post-empiricist, or post-scientific, metaphysic which acknowledged that human beings have their being in a Divine Reality, so Smith, in his work *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*

Smith's essay is not a biographical account of Burt's life or thought. Rather, he seeks to build upon the cross-cultural philosophic orientation that was so important to Burt. As he states: "He who is privileged to write in tribute to Edwin Burt fortunately does not have to give justification for choosing a cross-cultural topic. ... It is because Burt has argued not just in asides but in the substance of his life's work that our new intercultural situation warrants some philosophic inquiry that I have drawn encouragement from him over the years" (*ibid.*, p. 441).

Childhood

Burt was born on October 11th, 1892 in Groton, Massachusetts. He was the second of four brothers, the youngest of whom died at the age eight. His father, Edwin Palmer Burt, was a New England Baptist minister—as were both his grandfathers. Burt volunteers a perspective on his father's religious life that in a general way discloses aspirations and forms of radical commitment that were, albeit in a totally different context, to typify his own life.

Our father was a zealous New England minister, who early in his adult career broke away from the half-heartedness and pussyfooting compromises of religion as he saw it practiced. More specifically, he took two steps beyond the prevailing religious orientation around him, conscious of the risks for his family in doing so. One of these steps he believed all Christians ought to take; it involved rejecting the use of drugs to cure illness and trusting in God not only as Savior but also as healer. The other he felt himself called to take although it was not a universal duty; it involved giving up dependence on a salaried income, and trusting God to provide for the family's material needs through whatever means He might use. In this way it would be possible, he believed, to demonstrate the reality of a God who providentially cares for those who have faith in Him. Committed to these two convictions, he went at the rather late age of forty-five as a missionary to South China and spent the rest of his life converting the "heathen" to evangelical Christianity. (MPP, p. 429)

His mother, Harriet Burt (née Jerome), who also was a missionary in China, was according to Burt, "a gentle and devout spirit, gifted with deep moral and spiritual understanding [and] from her I learned the important lesson that religious faith, in its best forms at least, is indispensable to the successful living of life" (*ibid.*). Burt lived with his parents in China from the age of thirteen until shortly before his seventeenth birthday. In that year, 1909, he rebelled against his father's theology—with, he claims, his mother's "tacit support"—and returned to America (MPP, p. 429). This is Burt's only mention in his autobiographical article of his time in China. From various other sources, however, the following details emerge concerning this period in his life.

While working in various Baptist parishes in America, Burt's father, the Reverend E. P. Burt, applied on many occasions to become a missionary in China. However, his

[1982] (1989), argues the need for the recognition of a universal truth, and Divine Reality, which transcends fragmented post-modern and scientific views of reality (*passim.*). In short, both are concerned to overcome the secularization of being and reality that has progressively occurred in the rise of modern science and both turn to Eastern and Western religions for insights to demonstrate that human beings, after all, do have their being in a Divine Reality. Interestingly, the parents of both Burt and Smith were Christian missionaries in China and both spent some of their childhood living there.

applications were rejected by the church authorities due to his poor health. Eventually, in 1901, he sold all his household goods and moved his family to Los Angeles where he made his own plans to go to China. In 1905 he travelled to Hong Kong by himself and “while he was there he had a very vivid dream in which a pagoda appeared before him on a river bank, with crowds of people around it asking that the gospel be preached to them.”¹ He then travelled up the West River and selected Shui Hing as the place to establish his mission, which he called the Evangel Mission, because he believed that the pagoda of his dream was a large pagoda that he saw on the Shui Hing river bank. Burt, his mother, and younger brother Robert joined the Reverend Burtt at Shui Hing in the winter of 1906. When Burtt’s mother arrived she was uncertain what contribution she could make to mission work. However, “soon she was deeply moved by the plight of the blind children, especially girls, and put her energy in the development of the orphanage and school which have remained ... vital parts of the mission enterprise.”²

Robert M. Burt, Edwin’s younger brother who went to China, has published an article entitled “The Faith of My Father” which gives further details of his parents’ missionary work. He notes that the Burt family were the only Americans in Shui Hing, although a few other foreign missionaries, including two French Jesuit priests, did live some miles away. Shui Hing, he explains, was situated on the “turbulent West River, 75 miles above Canton [and besides being one] of the most anti-foreign cities of South China, it had cradled the bloody Tai Ping rebellion of an earlier period.”³ From Robert Burt’s tone in this article it is apparent that he admired his father and mother for their dedication. There they lived a very spartan lifestyle and were constantly confronted with problems such as food shortages and illness. They both worked for the remainder of their lives at the mission and are now buried in the middle of what became an extensive compound. However, their mother Harriet died some years before their father and he subsequently re-married. His second wife Mary G. Burt (née Knap), while being blind herself, worked at the mission and continued to run it after Burt senior died at the age of eighty in 1937. In 1950, because of the Communist revolution, Mary Burt had to leave Shui Hing. Rather than retire she moved to Hong Kong and continued to work for the blind.⁴ Robert revisited Shui Hing in 1934, after an absence of twenty-three years, and

¹ These details are taken from a letter that Professor Burtt wrote to Miss Pearl Weeks, 618 South Olive St., St Louis, dated May 1st, 1944. (A copy of the letter has been given to me by Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster.)

² Ibid.; (Further details of the Rev. E. P. Burtt’s missionary work in China can be found in a full page story in the *Boston Evening Transcript*. Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster has supplied me with a photocopy of this story but unfortunately the date and page number are not on either Mrs. Burt-Brinster’s copy or mine. However, as the article refers to the Reverend Burtt as having started the mission seventeen years ago, we can assume that it was published in 1922 or 1923. The article notes that by this time the mission had four to five hundred members, conducted seven schools in surrounding villages and had built an orphanage containing thirty-three blind girls.)

³ Robert M. Burt, “The Faith of My Father,” *The American Mercury*, p. 27; (No publication date, but if we add 50 years to 1906 this makes it 1956. My photo-copy was supplied by Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster.)

⁴ These details are gleaned from the article in *The American Mercury*, op. cit., and from a photocopy of a short type-written article by Robert M. Burtt entitled “The Miracle of Faith.” (My photocopy of this

saw his father then aged seventy-seven years. Edwin never returned to Shui Hing. However, he did correspond regularly with his mother and his parents visited America several times before their deaths in China.¹

In contrast to Robert Burt's admiration for their father, Edwin's relationship with him appears to have always been troubled. The first evidence that we have of this conflict is when he rebelled against his father's theology, leaving China to return to America by himself. Edwin's critical attitude is evident even in the above quotation. The reference to his father's work in China as "converting 'the heathen' to evangelical Christianity" scornfully implies that in Burt's view the Chinese were not heathens who needed converting. Indeed, one of Burt's main tasks later in his career was to examine the philosophy of all the major religions, including Chinese Taoism and Confucianism, with the object of finding compatible aspects in each so that a synthesis could be achieved which would form the basis of a single world philosophy. The roots of this vision seem to have formed in his childhood as he rebelled against his father's dogmatic insistence on the exclusive truth of evangelical Christianity. As Burt notes, my father "had, so it seemed, direct access to God and I could not challenge him in such a role. The only way [for me to proceed] in my relation to him was to work out slowly an independent position that I could confidently hold" (MPP, p. 429).

As we follow the development of Burt's thought during his philosophic odyssey we will see a continuation of his youthful determination to develop a philosophical position that he could confidently hold, not only in opposition to his father's ideas, but also in opposition to all the mainstream philosophical schools of his era. Burt consistently challenged dogmatic truth claims and pleaded with philosophers to be open to knowledge from any quarter. In adopting this challenging role one can hear Burt pleading with his father to be less dogmatic and more open to other beliefs. Burt's conflict with his father was never resolved. As he matured his ideas grew ever further away from the Christian fundamentalism of his father. Indeed, so much so that, in time, his father came to regard him as a heretic.²

University Education

Returning from China in 1909, Burt attended the Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts for two years. The financial support for this journey and his time at Mount

article is from a copy supplied by Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster).

¹ This information is derived from letters written from Shui Hing to Edwin (whom she and friends call "Ned") by Burt's mother. (My copies are from originals held by Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster.)

² Burt's daughter, Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster, confirms this point in a letter to me dated Oct. 21, 1991. The letter states in part: "My mother said that Grandpa [Burt's father] was very upset with Ned [Professor Burt] because of his heretical religious ideas and it caused a real rift between them that was very hard for Ned to cope with. I'm sure Ned very much wanted his father's approval but there was doubtless some rebelliousness there too. Ned occasionally referred to this tension but never in detail. ... Anyway, I think that you are certainly right in your statement that he never resolved the conflict."

Hermon came from an inheritance that his mother received at this time.¹ His daughter Winifred has written the following about this period in Burt's life.

As for it being hard, making his own way in America, I never got that impression. There was an older brother [Jerome] still here [in America] and a number of relatives. There were scholarships at Mt Hermon school. There was apparently a pretty good support system established through the church-mission network. After graduating from Hermon Ned [Professor Burt] and his brother Jerome were packed off to a small [fundamentalist] religious college [Meridian College]² in Mississippi. They soon found it to be a quasi-fascist institution and decided to escape.³

Following their "escape" from Meridian College (they stayed for only one night), Burt and his brother Jerome travelled to the northeast with the intention of enrolling in one of the established universities.

By this time, the fall of 1911, all of the major universities except Yale had closed their enrolments. Hence, the two brothers travelled to New Haven, Connecticut, but on arrival were confronted with a serious problem. Neither had taken the entrance examination. However, as they were walking across the campus, by complete coincidence, they met the principal of Mt Hermon who was visiting Yale. They told him of their predicament. Thereupon, he agreed to go with them to the registry office and attempt to secure their enrolment. In this he was successful, although the registry office imposed the condition that the Burt brothers undertake and pass the entrance examination during the first semester—which they both did.⁴

At Yale Edwin Burt majored in philosophy. He claims, however, that he did not find his teachers very inspiring except for one, Charles A. Bennett (1855-1930).⁵ Bennett's major philosophical interests seem to have been in the philosophy of religion, specifically in understanding the nature of mysticism. Evidence of this can be found in the title of one of Bennett's major works, *A Philosophical Study of Mysticism* (1923). It also can be found in a critical review that he wrote of Rudolf Otto's book *The Idea of the Holy* (1925)⁶ and an essay entitled "The Paradox of Mysticism" that he read to the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy in 1926.⁷ The significance of Bennett's

¹ See following footnote.

² The college named in a letter dated September 1st, 1992, by Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster to myself. Mrs. Burt-Brinster has also provided me with a copy of a tape recording that Professor Burt made in 1980. In this tape he reminisces about personal details in his early life—he makes no mention of his philosophical colleagues or his philosophical ideas—and describes Meridian College as being a fundamentalist religious college that he and Jerome attended due to the urging of their father. He also explains about a bequest that his mother received which financed his journey back to America and his time at Mt Hermon.

³ This quote is taken from a letter (to myself) dated October 21st, 1991 by Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster of Seattle. (This letter states that it was Burt's brother Bob (Robert) who attended this course of education with Edwin ("Ned"). However, in another letter dated September 1st, 1992, she clarifies that it was in fact his brother Jerome (Jerry). Robert was still in China.)

⁴ This information is from Burt's 1980 "Reminiscences tape."

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Charles A. Bennett, "Religion and the Idea of the Holy," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 23, No. 17, 1926, pp. 460-469.

⁷ In *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy*, (Edgar Sheffield Brightman, edit., Longmans, Green, New York and London, 1927), pp. 108-113.

philosophical interests for our purposes, at least, is that Burtt, in time, also developed an interest in the philosophy of religion and, some forty years after attending Yale, propounded his theory of expanding awareness which has many of the characteristics Bennett associates with mysticism. In general terms, Bennett argues that philosophers ought to treat seriously the claims of mystics that the material or physical world is permeated by a divine reality which, in turn, can be known or experienced by individuals (1923, *passim*).

Other than the above brief reference to Bennett (which occurs in a tape recording of him reminiscing with family members in 1980), Burtt nowhere discusses his Yale days. However, a biography by Scott Donaldson of the poet Archibald MacLeish (1892-1982), one of Burtt's classmates—the class of 1915—at Yale and with whom Burtt was to maintain a life-long friendship,¹ throws light on this period in his life. Donaldson claims, in a reference to Burtt, that he ranked second in the class (behind MacLeish) of 1915 in grade point average “but did not otherwise distinguish himself” (Donaldson, 1992, p. 58). Taken in the context of other comments by Donaldson, we can assume he means that Burtt did not distinguish himself in other areas of university life such as sport. Donaldson also notes that in 1914 MacLeish and Burtt, among others, were chosen to join the most secret, and most elite, senior students' society at the University, namely, Skull and Bones (*ibid.*, p. 56). This society was formed in the early nineteenth century and wielded great influence on the campus. It operated behind a “shroud of mystery” and its members were obliged to lobby for each other in the future to ensure the advancement of their careers (*ibid.*).

Donaldson describes the teaching and curriculum at Yale in 1911 as being “still anchored in the complacency of the nineteenth century” (*ibid.*, p. 52). Students were encouraged not “to think for themselves” but instead to conform and accept that it was Plato, Hegel, or their professor who had the truth (*ibid.*). This may be the reason that Burtt, about to set out on a lifetime of challenging philosophical claims to truth, was not impressed with most of his teachers at Yale. In any event, Burtt graduated from Yale with an A.B. degree in 1915. He then moved to New York City and, while a Ph.D. student in philosophy at Columbia University, studied theology at the Union Theological Seminary.² In 1916 Burtt married his first wife, Mildred Camp (1890-1985), and, in time, they had four daughters.³

¹ Martin B. Stiles from the *Cornell Chronicle* interviewed Burtt in 1982 and wrote, in part: “On the walls of his second-floor study are pictures of friends and thinkers he has admired through the years. These include Gandhi with whom he spoke the year [Gandhi] died, Dag Hammarskjold, Bertrand Russell, and Archibald MacLeish, a classmate at Yale and a life-long friend” (*Cornell Chronicle*, Thursday November 11th, 1982, p. 7).

² In his 1980 “Reminiscences tape” Burtt reveals that he “got credit” at Union for some of the courses that he took at Columbia and vice versa.

³ Edith, Dorothy, Virginia, and Winifred—Mrs. Winifred Burtt-Brinster of Seattle. (Winifred is the only surviving daughter following the death of Virginia in 1991).

Columbia University and Burt's Doctorate

Burt's doctoral supervisor was the Dean of the Philosophy Department, F. J. E. Woodbridge, who had a long and distinguished career as a teacher at Columbia. Burt was also assisted in his thesis by John Herman Randall, Jr. (1899-1980)—a philosopher who had a similar life-span to Burt and whose interests often coincided with those of Burt—and Morris R. Cohen (1880-1947) who was teaching at the College of the City of New York.¹ Studying at this College at this time was Sidney Hook (1902-1989) another philosopher whose path in life often crossed with Burt's.² During Burt's time in the Philosophy Department at Columbia, John Dewey (1859-1952) was on the faculty and at the height of his career as America's most influential philosopher of this period. His notion of pragmatism, or instrumentalism as it is sometimes called, dominated philosophical and educational debates. Burt acknowledges that he, for a time at least like so many other American philosophers of the period, came under the spell of Dewey's thought (MPP, p. 430).

As a result of his studies at both Union and Columbia, Burt was awarded several degrees. From Union he received his B.D. in 1920 and a Masters Degree in Theology in 1922. He received his Ph.D. from Columbia in 1925. Burt, in fact, finished his doctoral thesis in 1923 but, due to the (then) requirement that students submit one hundred copies to the University library before they were officially awarded their degree, he had to wait until he could afford the printing costs. As it happened, his thesis was accepted for publication in England in 1924 and the publisher printed a special run of one hundred copies under the title of Burt's dissertation, *The Metaphysics of Sir Isaac Newton; an Essay on the Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*. At the same time they printed the dissertation under the shorter title *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science*.³ The first American edition was not printed until 1925.

Burt, while writing his doctoral thesis, also started teaching philosophy at Columbia University full-time in 1921 (MPP, p. 430). Prior to this, as a graduate student, he had been supporting himself and his family (two daughters were born prior to 1920) by teaching regular seminars at Union.⁴ One of Burt's students at Columbia during this period was Howard Thurman (1901-1981), an African American who subsequently became well-known as an opponent of racial discrimination and as an influential minister, teacher, and author. In his autobiography, *With Head and Heart* (1979), Thurman provides a valuable insight into a course that Burt taught at Columbia in the early 1920s.

¹ See Burt's Preface to *Metaphysical Foundations*.

² Hook, who for a limited time in the early 1930s had Communist sympathies, was, along with John Dewey, one of the founders of the Committee for Cultural Freedom. It was formed in the 1930s to combat any possible "totalitarian influences" of both Communism and Fascism in the arts and education in democracies such as America. Burt was one of ninety-six prominent liberals who signed the Manifesto of this Committee in 1939 (Hook, 1986, p. 273).

³ These details are from Burt's 1980 "Reminiscences tape."

⁴ Ibid.

Perhaps the most significant single course I ever took, certainly during this critical period in my life, was the course in reflective thinking, taught by a young Ph.D. graduate in philosophy, E. A. Burt. In later years he became one of the great teachers at Cornell University. ... We used two basic texts, John Dewey's *How We Think* (1910) and an anthology called *An Introduction to Reflective Thinking* (1923), which had been the formal outline for a course that had been given as a team-teaching experiment in the Columbia Colleges. It was an analysis of the structure of reflective thinking as process. It examined a basic methodological approach to problem-solving in all fields of investigation, from simple decision-making to the understanding and treatment of disease and the most confused patterns of human behavior. This course established for me a basic approach that I would use not only in my subsequent work as a counselor but also in thinking through complex and complicated problems I would encounter in my personal life and as a social being. As a tool of the mind, there is no way by which the value of this course [by Burt] can be measured or assessed. (Thurman, 1979, p. 44)

Burt taught philosophy at Columbia from 1921 until 1923. Having completed all the requirements for his doctorate (except the submission of his dissertation) he was then appointed as an assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago.

It may appear, from his majoring in philosophy at Yale to taking up the teaching post at Chicago, that Burt's early steps on the path to becoming a professional philosopher were relatively straightforward. However, this was not the case. As he states in his autobiographical article, he considered a career as a journalist and "for a longer time [a career] which would give scope for my strong religious concern" before deciding to pursue philosophy (MPP, p. 420). Although he does not clarify what career his "strong religious concern" would have led him to undertake, in light of his theological studies at Union, we can assume he had in mind being a pastor or a theologian.

Indeed, our foregoing assumption is given weight by an interesting episode that occurred in Burt's life in 1920 and which brought him into the public eye for the first time. This episode concerns a very forceful sermon that he delivered from the pulpit of St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church in New York City.

Burt's Sermon at St Paul's

Nowhere in his own writings does Burt refer to the fact that he preached at St Paul's. Nor do we not know the strength of his affiliation with this church. However, details of a sermon that he delivered on July 4th, 1920 were published in an extensive newspaper article in the New York *World* newspaper.¹ The article identifies Burt as an "associate pastor" at St Paul's and carries his sermon under the headline "Republican Divine Assails Party for Its League Stand." (In this sermon Burt strongly, indeed vehemently, attacks the Republican Presidential candidate Warren Harding and the Republican Party for their failure to endorse the creation of the League of Nations.) Noting that "a remarkable sermon on the League of Nations by the Rev. E. A. Burt has

¹ *The World's* publication of the sermon is reproduced, in full, in Appendix A because the published source is not readily available.

just become available for publication,” *The World* continues:

Explaining that he had been a Republican, the clergyman flayed the Republican Party for its platform plank and its general attitude toward the League of Nations, and stamped Harding as an exponent of “the reactionary, medieval creed of selfish, egoistic, jingoistic nationalism.”

Mr. Burttt declared that after the armistice America was seized with “moral cramps,” that we “turned traitor to mankind” and “broke the heart of the world.” “For a year and a half,” he said, “we have been wallowing in a moral slough.”

Mr. Burttt told a reporter for *The World* ... that ordinarily he does not believe in going outside of strictly religious topics for his sermons, but he thinks the League of Nations, with its programme [sic] for world peace, is distinctly a subject with which religion is vitally concerned. (*The World* [New York], July 12th, 1920, p. 5)

After further editorial comment, *The World*, a leading and influential newspaper in New York at the time,¹ published a significant part of the sermon.

In preaching the sermon Burttt reveals his very deep concern about the carnage caused by the First World War in Europe. He uses extreme, even inflammatory, language to argue that the Republican Party ought to assist in the establishment of the League of Nations in order to avoid more such conflicts. For our purposes, however, the sermon is of particular importance because it reveals the early foundations of a theme that Burttt was to build upon in the course of his philosophic career.

[America] took the lead in holding the vision up before the world ... as early as August, 1916, the United States Senate, by a resolution, urged President Wilson to seize the initiative in organizing a League of Nations to prevent future wars. ...

It remains true *the world must move toward international brotherhood—ruin is the only alternative.* ...

The world will move on, for God is moving on. The day will dawn upon this troubled globe, foretold by bards and prophets, pictured by artists, dreamed of by philosophers, sung by poets, prayed and laboured for by Christian hearts and hands, *when the peoples will be bound together by warm, pulsating bands of sympathy and co-operation*, when the reign of law and right shall cover the earth, when—

‘Nation shall not lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.’

Yes, that day is coming. So much is triumphantly settled for Christian faith. But the question is: Shall America move on to meet it? Or shall we be the dead, rotten, wasted vintage which God must trample under foot as He leads the peoples on toward the light of the brighter day? ...

This morning I find myself again and again looking forward over the ages to that time when this eventful twentieth century of ours shall be ancient history, and men look back to it as we to the far-off days of Greece and Rome. I glimpse in the distance the unrolling of the scroll and my eyes strain to see the final verdict of history on America. (*World* [New York], July 12th, 1920, p. 5; my italics)

In these visionary terms Burttt gives the first expression of a theme that was to

¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (Vol. 6, 15th Edition, p. 253) in an article on Walter Lippmann, describes the New York *World* as “a reformist newspaper” for which Lippmann started writing in 1921. The article also notes that Lippmann was a strong supporter of the League of Nations and influenced President Wilson in this regard. Thus, it seems that the ideas in Burttt’s sermon complied with the editorial policy of *The World*.

become a primary motivation behind his philosophic thought for the remainder of his life, namely, *either* a new international order is formed in which peoples of the world were united by “sympathy and co-operation” *or* there will be “ruin” and continued warfare. The strong Judeo-Christian overtones he expresses in the sermon, however, underwent many changes over the years. To develop a philosophical framework in support of this theme, he examined different ideas which led him away from any form of Christian fundamentalism and into the philosophy of science, Western philosophy generally, the philosophy of both Eastern and Western religion and psychoanalytic theory.

In 1920, when Burt delivered his sermon at St Paul’s, he was still studying and teaching at Union Theological Seminary and, as is evident in the sermon, he clearly adhered to a religious view of the world. This was the period in his life when he was contemplating several different careers. We can thus view his leaving New York to take up the teaching post at Chicago in 1923 as signifying a definite commitment on his part to pursue a career in philosophy.

The “Chicago School of Pragmatism” and Its Collapse

In 1923, when Burt took up his post at the Philosophy Department at the University of Chicago, it was under the stewardship of Professors James Hayden Tufts (1862-1942) and George Herbert Mead (1863-1931)—former colleagues of John Dewey. As Darnell Rucker explains in his book, *The Chicago Pragmatists* (1969), Dewey, Mead, and Tufts, had initially established the so-called “Chicago School of Pragmatism” during the period from 1894 to 1904. When Dewey moved to Columbia in 1904, Tufts and Mead carried on the pragmatist tradition. Thus, by the time Burt joined the Chicago faculty in 1923, Tufts and Mead had been teaching at Chicago for some thirty years and the pragmatist school was entrenched in the Philosophy Department. However, within a few years of Burt joining the Department, it was to undergo a huge upheaval which brought about the end of the Tufts-Mead era and also led Burt to resign. In his autobiographical article, Burt does not mention this upheaval or his reasons for leaving Chicago. However, we can gain an insight into this episode in his life by turning to various other sources.

Mortimer J. Adler (1902-) who was deeply involved in this episode and a long term friend and associate of Robert M. Hutchins, the celebrated and powerful Chancellor of Chicago University from 1929 until 1945, provides details of it in his autobiography. Adler, who began what was to be a controversial academic career at Columbia, claims that the “fight” in the Philosophy Department at Chicago was due to two reasons. Firstly, Hutchins interfered with academic appointments, overriding the normal procedure that appointments be made by the Department itself (Adler, 1977, 145f). Secondly, under his (Adler’s) instigation, Hutchins set out to produce a modern analogue of the medieval synthesis by having philosophy students study the ideas of past philosophers (ibid., p.

133). Sidney Hook, in his autobiography *Out of Step* (1986), confirms Adler's interpretation of this controversy. Hook notes that Hutchins, under the influence of Adler, wanted to bring about a revolution in American secular education by forcing it to focus on metaphysical and theological principles (Hook, 1986, p. 341). Discussing Hutchins' and Adler's activities in pursuit of this goal Hook claims: "[Adler] played a mischievous role in breaking up the Department of Philosophy ... when he appeared on the scene with President Hutchins to reorient the university in pursuit of the Platonic Form of the Good, which would not only reform the curriculum but society as well" (ibid., p. 339).

Burt, it seems, was in the middle of this controversy. Adler reveals that, in 1929 while still at Columbia, he had pressed his friend Hutchins to appoint him to the Chicago Philosophy Department. The Department initially resisted this pressure. However, they eventually relented and, Adler notes, it was "Professor Burt, whom I had known at Columbia before he went to Chicago, [who] wrote me that the Philosophy Department had accepted my proposal to teach ..." (1977, p. 130). But it would seem that Burt, whom Adler refers to as being a "newer member" of the "Chicago School" (ibid., p. 133), may have come to regret writing this letter. For in a letter addressed to President Hutchins dated April 6th, 1931, Burt is scathing in his criticism of Hutchins' attitude to various colleagues in the Philosophy Department, including Professors Tufts and Mead. In the letter Burt is adamant that he will leave Chicago and demands an apology from Hutchins "for the humiliating treatment to which you subjected us."¹

Although Burt does not elaborate on the issues behind this dispute Adler reveals that by 1931 the entire Department threatened to resign due, he claims, to Hutchins' continued interference in academic appointments (1977, p. 147f). Indeed, Burt, along with several other faculty members, did resign in 1931. As Darnell Rucker explains, Tufts, Mead and Burt, plus two other members of the faculty, Arthur E. Murphy and Everett Hall, all resigned in 1931 due to the intervention of Hutchins and Adler (Rucker, 1969, pp. 25-6). Rucker asserts that the Chicago School "one of the most significant and influential in the history of American ideas ... came to a definite end in 1931 ... marked by a flurry of resignations amidst considerable uproar, both in the university and in the city" (ibid., p. 26).

Ironically, Adler also was forced to resign as part of a compromise that was negotiated between Hutchins and the remaining members of the Department (Adler, 1977, p. 147). Adler, who then took up a post in the Law Department, went on to devote himself to, among other things, the development of the Great Books program with Encyclopædia Britannica. In Burt's case, after leaving Chicago in 1931, he taught briefly at Stanford University, California,² until he was appointed to a post at Cornell University in 1933.

¹ A copy of this single page letter has been given to me by Professor Burt's daughter, Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster of Seattle—who holds the original.

² This information is has been supplied to me by Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster.

Cornell and Teaching the Philosophy of Religion

When Burt took up his post at Cornell, he was required to teach not only philosophy, but also a course in the history and comparison of religions. This course, he states, “slowly brought about ... a radical difference in my philosophizing” (MPP, p. 431). Burt explains this evolution as a result of his approach to the subject. Rather than merely “teach” religious philosophy, he put himself inside each faith.¹ If a teacher can achieve this goal, he argues, he can sense “how the insistent problems of life are met in its perspective and what form the structure of the universe takes in such a perspective” (ibid.). Teaching religious philosophy in this manner had a twofold result. On one hand it fostered both his deepening interest in Eastern religion and a more profound understanding of his own Hebrew-Christian heritage. On the other, it resulted in his achieving a “clearer insight into the fundamental convictions that all faiths of civilized mankind share in common; it encouraged a sympathetic penetration of the distinctive genius of each faith with the human aspirations thus expressed” (ibid.). He found that when thinkers try to interpret their own faith solely through its traditional concepts and doctrines they restrict themselves to a narrow interpretation which, in turn, limits their understanding. Burt’s notion of putting himself “inside” different faiths in order to teach their beliefs in a meaningful manner implies that he nevertheless maintained some objective distance between himself and these beliefs. However, in several instances, he committed himself to a diverse range of “faiths” in a manner that would seem to go beyond the purpose of articulating a particular faith to students.

Burt became an active “religious humanist” during the late 1920s and was one of the original thirty-four signatories of *A Humanist Manifesto* when it was published in New York in 1933.² Other signatories include John Dewey and John H. Randall. This *Manifesto*, which describes its form of humanism as “religious humanism,” categorically rejects all existing forms of religious faiths, institutions, and worship of the Divine, and seeks to establish a new social and economic world order based on human power and intelligence. In general terms, its goals are to secularize human society by denying any notion of theism and to bring about social reforms and an equitable distribution of resources through the use of “human intelligence.” It calls itself “religious” humanism because human intelligence displaces the traditional religious notion of the Divine, or

¹ The following comments in Burt’s 1972 autobiographical article assist our understanding of what he means by this notion: “I came to realize that a teacher of ... a course [in the history and comparison of religions] is not filling his responsibility by merely acquainting the students with external facts about the great religions of the world—their doctrines, their rites, their historical development. Genuine understanding requires more than this. It requires a teacher to put himself as best he can inside each faith, sensing how the insistent problems of life are met in its perspective. That proved to be a very significant and fertile realization. It not only fostered a deepening interest in the Eastern religions which has continued through the years but also brought about a salutary enrichment of my whole experience” (MPP, p. 431).

² *A Humanist Manifesto, The New Humanist*, Vol. 6, No. 3, May/June 1933, pp. 1-5; Reproduced in full in Appendix D herein.

supernatural God, as a creative power in the universe. Indeed, this form of humanism proscribes any belief in the supernatural.¹

By subscribing to these beliefs Burttt totally rejected his earlier theism. However, his overt commitment to “religious humanism” did not last long. During the Second World War he rejected its reliance on human intelligence to resolve human problems and its denial of the Divine (his reasons for this rejection are explored in Chapter 4) and became a member of the Religious Society of Friends (the Quaker movement). He joined this movement in the early 1940s, he explains in his autobiographical article, because of its emphasis both “on serving human need in a world-wide arena and on the direct realization of the Divine Presence” (MPP, pp. 431-2). He remained a member of the Ithaca Friends until his death in 1989. Interestingly, Randall also rejected humanism after a few years and joined the Quaker movement. In an autobiographical essay in *Contemporary American Philosophy* (1970), Randall writes: “After passing through a negative and anti-theistic phase, which culminated in my signing of the original *Humanist Manifesto* ..., I changed about 1935 to a more positive attitude towards the Divine as a feature of the natural world” (Randall, 1970, p. 56). It was after this change that he joined the Wider Quaker Fellowship (*ibid.*, p. 57). Randall does not mention Burttt in this article, and because Burttt does not specifically discuss his humanist phase in his own autobiographical article, we may speculate that Randall’s description of this phase of his life could equally apply to the same phase in Burttt’s life.

Indeed, Burttt and Randall have more in common than their early connection at Columbia and their humanist phase. For both went on to develop an ever deeper interest in the great world religions.² But Burttt, unlike Randall, besides joining the Quaker movement also committed himself to Buddhism.³ This occurred in 1947 while he was undertaking a goodwill visit to India on behalf of the American Philosophical Association.⁴ He took the vows of a Buddhist layman, he explains, to signify publicly

¹ *The Manifesto*’s tenets state it thus: “*Ninth*: In place of the old attitudes [in traditional religion] involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being. *Tenth*: It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with their belief in the supernatural” (*The New Humanist*, Vol. 6, No. 3, May/June 1933, p. 3).

² Burttt’s interest in these religions is explored herein. In the case of J. H. Randall, Jr., see his essay entitled “Towards a Functional Naturalism,” *Contemporary American Philosophy* (1970, p. 57).

³ In his autobiographical article, Burttt does not clarify when he became a Quaker or a Buddhist. However, a “Proposed Minute on the Death of Edwin A. Burttt” prepared by Cecile Sieverts, Carol Kimball and Professor Thor Rhodin, states in relation to this matter: “While a member of the Society of Friends, he also took the vows as a Buddhist layman in India in 1947.” Thus we can deduce that he became a Quaker prior to becoming a Buddhist. His daughter, Mrs. Winifred Burttt-Brinster, believes he started attending the Ithaca Meeting of Friends (Quakers) in 1943 or 1944.

⁴ *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 56, 1947, carries the following notice from the “Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association”: “Application was ... made [in 1946] to the Rockefeller Foundation for a travel grant to enable E. A. Burttt to explore ways and means of establishing closer relations with philosophers of the Far East. A grant of \$5,000 was received for this purpose. Professor Burttt will no doubt present concrete proposals for following up this exploratory visit with cultural projects of a far-reaching nature” (p. 536).

that he “had found indispensable sources of spiritual nourishment in the East as well as in the West” (MPP, p. 432). On the testimony of his autobiographical essay in 1972, he thereafter remained a committed Buddhist. It could also be argued that he has played an important role in introducing Buddhist thought to the West by means of his book, *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*, which has been through numerous reprints since it was first published in 1955.

Psychoanalysis and Remarriage

In addition to Burt's involvement with various religious movements, another factor was equally important in the development of his philosophical views, namely, psychoanalysis. In his own words:

Near the end of my first decade at Cornell, personal problems induced me to undergo a lengthy period of psychoanalysis. This probing experience led in time to a resolution of the inner conflicts which had necessitated it. But over and above that happy outcome, it also led to *a transformation of my philosophical thinking and to further enlightenment* about the nature and history of philosophy. (MPP, pp. 433-4; my italics)

Burt does not reveal the nature of the “personal problems” that prompted him to undergo psychoanalysis. From other sources, however, we know that these problems were difficulties that he was experiencing in relation to his first marriage. The “lengthy period of psychoanalysis” that he refers to was a period of some four or five years from 1943.¹ His psychiatrist was Dr. Alva Gwin of Albany, N. Y.²

In 1943 Burt separated from his first wife³ and remained in this state until becoming officially divorced in 1950.⁴ He married again in June, 1951. This second marriage, to Marjorie F. Murray, an Associate Professor of Paediatrics at the Albany Medical School, by all reports was very successful. Following her marriage to Burt, Dr. Murray moved to Ithaca and they both lived at 227 Willard Way, which was within walking distance of the Cornell campus. In Ithaca Dr. Murray decided to pursue the practice of psychotherapy, her specialty, at first with children and later with adults as well. She was active in this practice until just before her death in 1982 at the age of ninety-two years.⁵

Burt, in his autobiographical essay, details three ways that the experience of analysis transformed his philosophy. Firstly, he became convinced that the universe was a very

¹ Burt's daughter Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster has informed me by letter (April 26th, 1991) that these problems were emotional conflicts related to difficulties with his first marriage. His separation from his first wife and the beginning of analysis were simultaneous. This occurred in the period April/May 1943. His major period of analysis continued until 1947 or 1948, after which time he occasionally consulted with his analyst for several more years.

² Dr. Gwin was a protégé (and wife) of Dr. Clinton P. McCord, Burt's second wife's (Dr. Marjorie F. Murray) analyst. Hearsay has it that Burt and Dr. Murray met through their analysts.

³ Who moved to Seattle to live near Winifred.

⁴ This date has been given to me in conversation with Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster in Seattle in June 1990. She also stated that Burt seemed much happier following his separation and his subsequent remarriage. Burt's first wife died in Seattle on October 25th, 1985.

⁵ Some of these details were taken from a one page “Proposed Minute on the Death of Marjorie Burt.” The minute was prepared by Professor Thor Rhodin, Celia Sieverts and Carol Kimball—all of Ithaca.

insecure place and so revised his earlier idealism which was a reflection of his “craving for ultimate security” and belief that human destiny was guided by an ideal goal. In place of this belief came the realization that “the goal is simply a greater humanity” which has the potential to achieve a better future (MPP, p. 434).

Secondly, he considered that the influence of Dewey’s thought earlier in his career was due, in part, to an emotion, namely, his admiration for Dewey and his followers. As a result of this consideration, he felt able to free his thought, as he puts it, “from some of the limitations of early twentieth century philosophizing in America, and leading it toward ... a more inclusive humanism—a humanism alert to important truths in Eastern ways of thinking and in Western philosophies that seem ... opposed to a humanist point of view” (MPP, p. 435). His inference seems to be that he felt not only constricted by Dewey’s thought, but also by the emotional basis of that influence.

Thirdly, after undergoing psychoanalysis, he came to the realization that a philosopher’s true role ought to be the pioneering of new perspectives on the universe. In his own words:

[Before] the experience of psychoanalysis, with its uncovering of subconscious motives, ... I had almost forgotten the vital pioneering function of philosophy—the function of envisioning a new perspective on the universe which, if it is wisely envisioned, can guide all quests for knowledge and understanding through the epoch then opening up. This function has been performed by the greatest philosophers; in the West it is most clearly exemplified by Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant. (MPP, p. 435)

Because he had these insights while undergoing psychoanalysis, he came to believe that psychoanalytic theory ought to be integrated into philosophy. His daughter Winifred recalls: “I remember the psychoanalytic movement at that time as being imbued with the most fanatical idealism—they really believed that if they could persuade the human race to work out its Oedipus complex that it would have clear sailing from then to eternity. Ned [Professor Burt] was very much swept along by this tide.”¹

While undergoing psychoanalysis in the 1940s, Burt continued with his normal academic duties at Cornell and, besides drawing upon psychoanalytic theory in his philosophical reflections, deepened his interest in Eastern religion and philosophy.

The East

In pursuit of his goal to develop a world philosophy and achieve a mutual understanding between the East and the West, Burt became involved in the Second East-West Philosophers’ Conference held at the University of Hawaii in 1949. The title of his paper, “Basic Problems of Method in Harmonizing Eastern and Western Philosophy,” presented to the conference expresses his philosophical concerns at the time (HEWP). The idea of harmonizing Eastern and Western philosophy and developing a “world philosophy,” at least along the lines that Burt espoused, seems to have had its genesis in

¹ This quote is taken from a letter dated April 26th, 1991 (to myself) from Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster of Seattle (p. 2).

the work of Charles A. Moore. Moore, a philosopher at the University of Hawaii (and formerly at Yale), organized the East-West Philosophers' Conferences at Hawaii over several decades. The first such conference was held in Hawaii in 1939 with, as Moore explains, the underlying purpose of determining "the possibility of [developing] a world philosophy through the synthesis of the ideas and ideals of East and West" (Moore, 1944, p. vii). Burt, while not attending this particular conference, first visited the University of Hawaii in 1941 and again in 1945 as a visiting professor in philosophy.¹ It would seem that Burt's association with Moore on the faculty in Hawaii generated his initial interest in Eastern philosophy and religion.

It was in pursuit of this interest that he undertook an extensive trip, as an official representative of the American Philosophical Association, through India, Ceylon, and Asia in 1946-47. On the trip he visited many universities and met with Mahatma Gandhi (PPFE, *passim*). (It was on this trip that he took the vows of a Buddhist layman.) Arriving back in America, he was convinced that "the days of American philosophical provincialism will soon be over" (*ibid.*, p. 387). This would come about, he believed, as American philosophers and universities progressively realised the value in studying Eastern philosophy and religions. In particular, Burt refers to two notions that came to assume an important place in his middle and later thought, namely, the promise of a "single world" and the threat of "common annihilation" posed by nuclear weapons.

Happily, a less provincial mentality seems to be emerging in our midst. There are two very vigorous forces, among others, working in this direction. One is the increasing realization on the part of intelligent persons in the West as elsewhere that if human life is to continue on the surface of this planet at a civilized level, it must be the life of a *single world*, united in peaceful cooperation by mutual understanding; if men remain spiritually segmented, they will perforce find union but in the form of *common annihilation*. Philosophers are coming to see that the mutual understanding that is essential must be in part a philosophical achievement. (PPFE, p. 386; my italics)

An insight into the expansion of Burt's philosophical interests, which until the early 1940s had been solely influenced by the Western tradition, to include Eastern notions is provided by Samuel Lindley—who organized the tribute to Burt in *Philosophy East and West* on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. Lindley met Burt when the latter first visited the University of Hawaii in the early 1940s and gave a seminar on Samuel Alexander's (1859-1938) *Space, Time, and Deity* (1920). Burt so impressed Lindley, an undergraduate student at the University at that time, "both as person and as a teacher," that he resolved to go to Cornell when he finished his undergraduate degree and study under Burt as a graduate student in philosophy. The Second World War, however, intervened and Lindley was not able to attend Cornell until 1946. When he arrived at Cornell he found that Burt was conducting a seminar on the two volume work, *The Life*

¹ These dates are given by his daughter Winifred in a letter to me dated September 1st, 1992. Winifred, her mother and another sister travelled with Burt on the 1941 visit to Hawaii.

Divine (1939-40), by the Hindu philosopher Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950).¹

Burt returned to India and Ceylon for several months in 1953-54 as a visitor at several universities.² In 1956 the Indian Government invited him to give a paper at a Symposium which was part of the Buddha Jayanti Celebration—a celebration of the 2500th anniversary of Buddha's "illumination," or enlightenment, under the sacred Bodhi tree.³ During the 1950s he also maintained contact with the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii and in 1959 assisted in the organization of the Third East-West Philosophers' Conference.⁴

However, from personal letters exchanged between Burt and the University of Hawaii at the time, it appears that difficulties arose between Burt and the administration. Burt refused to sign "The Personal History Statement" that, in the wake of McCarthyite anti-Communist policies, was mandatory for all potential employees of the University of Hawaii. Even though Burt was not strictly an employee of the University, he was still required to sign the statement before he could receive an honorarium for his work at the Center (in the summer of 1959) in assisting to organize the conference. As a result of his refusal to sign, the University could not pay the official honorarium but, in a letter to Burt, University officials stated that they would try by other means to ensure that he was financially rewarded for his work.⁵ His reasons for refusing to sign the statement are expressed very forcefully in a Declaration that he released to his colleagues at the conference (see Appendix B).

Burt's main objection to signing the personal history statement at the University of Hawaii in 1959 related to questions that required him to disclose whether or not he had ever been a member of the Communist Party or had attended any meeting of a group connected in any way whatsoever with the Communist Party (Appendix B). Such questions, in his view, constituted an inquisition that was radically contrary to American ideals and, hence, he could not in conscience support or approve it (*ibid.*). Noting at the beginning of

¹ This information has been supplied to me in two letters (dated December 19th, 1991 and April 19th, 1993) by Dr. Samuel Lindley of 2115 Armstrong Street, Honolulu. Dr. Lindley attended Cornell from 1946-49 for graduate study and Burt was his major professor.

² This information is provided in a note entitled *VITA* from his daughter Winifred Burt-Brinster. It does not state which universities Burt visited. In relation to the 1953 visit, Mrs. Burt-Brinster has given me a copy of a document entitled "An Address Presented to Mr Burt, Professor at Cornell University, New York (USA) and Mrs. Burt MD by the students of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University, Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, Himalayas (India) on the occasion of a send-off gathering held in honour of Professor and Mrs. Burt, on the eve of their departure 17th October, 1953." In this one page address the students acknowledge both Burts "as honourable and worthy allies in this Divine work of bringing together all mankind with a golden link of love and inspiring them with aspiration for lofty, enduring ideals."

³ In relation to his 1956 visit to India, Burt read a paper entitled "The Contribution of Buddhism to Philosophic Thought" at a Symposium arranged by the Working Committee for the 2500th Buddha Jayanti, Government of India, in collaboration with UNESCO (See my Bibliography A, *Knowledge and Conduct*, THE WHEEL, Publication No. 50, Buddhist Publication Society, 1963, p. 55).

⁴ Charles A. Moore, (editor), *Philosophy and Culture East and West*, (Uni. of Hawaii Press, 1962), p. 8.

⁵ This is detailed in a letter addressed to Dr. E. A. Burt from the Office of the Vice-President of the University of Hawaii dated July 6th, 1959 and signed by Willard Wilson, Acting Executive Officer. The original of this letter is in the care of Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster, Seattle. The University gave a copy of the letter to Dr Charles A. Moore, convenor of the conference.

the Declaration that the requirement by the University to sign such a statement dated back to 1951, he concluded:

The America to which I am devoted and shall always be loyal is the America that trusts its citizens unless they act in ways justifying distrust, that secures their loyalty by giving them justice and freedom instead of trying to coerce it by threats of punishment or unemployment, and that steadfastly resists the temptation to combat totalitarianism by adopting some of the worst features of totalitarianism. I cannot be loyal to the forces in America that are reflected in this mistaken policy, which I am sure constitutes a betrayal of what is most precious in American democracy.¹

He went on to argue that, as a Quaker, he not only abhorred any form of violence practiced by revolutionary movements but also the overt coercion in him being required to sign the “Personal History Statement” (*ibid.*).

Burt and McCarthyism

His Declaration to colleagues at the 1959 East-West Philosophers’ Conference reveals that still fresh in Burt’s mind were the events of the early 1950s when many American academics were subjected to questioning by the “Un-American Activities Committee” in the House of Representatives (HUAC) inspired by Senator Joseph McCarthy.² Burt’s concern was undoubtedly related to the fact that he was named by this Committee in 1951. However, *The Cornell Daily Sun* defended him and another colleague, Frank S. Freeman, in an editorial:

Incrimination by the House Un-American Activities Committee of Cornell Professors Edwin A. Burt and Frank S. Freeman as participants in Communist “peace” campaigns raises a rather important question for all those who are even mildly acquainted with the political and philosophical ideas of the two men: is the fact that an individual who lends his support to a conference designed at [sic] bringing about a peaceful settlement of world conflicts today adequate evidence by which to taint that individual’s name, implicitly or not, with communism?

Anyone who has taken a course from Professor Burt knows him as a man who dislikes the use of violence as a means for settling our differences, no matter what their nature. The very theme of his own personal philosophy, as expressed in lectures given in his courses on religion tells us that much: “Overcome evil with good.” (*The Cornell Daily Sun*, April 9th, 1951, p. 4; For the full editorial see Appendix C)

The Cornell Daily Sun editorial, after further argument, concludes with the claim that the Committee itself is un-American because it defames citizens who desire to bring about peace between the United States and Russia.

In his autobiographical essay, Burt does not mention this episode. The April 9th, 1951 editorial of *The Cornell Daily Sun* explains that Burt’s name appeared on one of HUAC’s “gigantic lists of names labelling a person as a sponsor of, or participant in, a peace campaign which they label as Communist-sponsored” but it does not identify on which of HUAC’s “gigantic lists” his name appeared. It would seem, however, to be the

¹ The two page declaration (full copy in Appendix B herein) is headed “Honolulu, June 1959” and finishes with the name “E. A. Burt.” The original is in the care of Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster, Seattle.

² For further details concerning this Committee and McCarthy’s connection with it, refer to: M. J. Heale, *American AntiCommunism* (1990), p. 149ff.

HUAC report entitled “The Communist ‘Peace’ Offensive” and subtitled “A Campaign to Disarm and Defeat the United States” which was released in early April 1951.¹ *The New York Times* of April 5th, 1951 carries a front page story in relation to the report headlined “House Unit Scores Reds ‘Peace’ Drive.” In part the story states:

The [HUAC] report ... includes exhaustive evidence to support the committee’s principal claim that the peace offensive “has been designated a major effort of every Communist party on the face of the globe,” including the United States.

The committee named more than 350 widely known Americans as sponsors of one of the principal “peace” groups, the Scientific and Cultural Conference for World Peace. It named 245 [of the 350] as affiliated with from five to ten Communist front groups. (*The New York Times*, N. Y., Thursday, April 5th, 1951, pp. 1&2)

Although *The New York Times’* story does not mention Burt by name, his name (and Professor Freeman’s) appears in the HUAC Report as one of the sponsors of the “Scientific and Cultural Conference for World Peace”—the so-called “Waldorf Conference” because it was held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City in March, 1949 (House Report No. 378, pp. 104-5). Burt’s name (but not Freeman’s) is also included in the list of 245 people who are accused of having affiliations with from five to ten Communist-front organizations (*ibid.*, p. 108). Neither *The New York Times* nor the HUAC report gives any further details on the so-called “Communist-front Organizations” to which Burt is supposed to have belonged.

It would appear, however, that Burt, as one of the “350 widely known Americans,” is in interesting company. The list includes the names of several prominent motion picture stars, such as Judy Holliday, Jose Ferrer, and Marlon Brando, prominent scientists including Albert Einstein, the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, and several philosophers who were colleagues of Burt, such as W. E. Hocking and Gardner Murphy. Professor Milton Konvitz, Emeritus Professor at the Cornell Law School, has written in relation to this matter: “Professor Burt and I were warm, close friends for at least a half-century” and that as “Burt was very much involved with the peace movement, ... that was sufficient warrant for the [HUAC] Committee to want to harass, to embarrass him.”² M. J. Heale, in *American Anticommunism* (1990), describes the McCarthy era in America in the 1950s as an “open season for the hunting of subversives, loosely defined,” in all areas of American life (Heale, 1990, p. 158).

However, Sidney Hook discusses the “Waldorf Conference” at length in his autobiography and is adamant that it was a Communist-front organization (Hook, 1987, p. 382). Hook, who had been a Marxist in the 1920s but did an about-face in the 1930s to become a strong critic, asserts that “the [Waldorf] conference was to be a family affair

¹ Committee on Un-American Activities, U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., 82nd Congress, 1st Session, House Report No. 378 (Union Calendar No. 98, Ordered to be printed on April 25th, 1951).

² Milton R. Konvitz wrote this in a letter to me dated August 18th, 1992 in response to a letter from me inquiring as to why Burt was named by the HUAC. Several other sources confirm Burt was an active pacifist.

among Communists and ‘honest liberals,’ the quaint expression used by the Communist Party to designate formally unaffiliated individuals who were willing to echo the party line or go along with it in uncritical complicity” (ibid., p. 384).

By this time, of course, Burt was an acknowledged Quaker and a Buddhist and no doubt was imbued with the ethos of pacifism which is an important element of both movements. It is idle to speculate whether this “honest liberal” was unwittingly influenced by the so-called “Communist Peace Offensive.” Certainly the religious elements in both the Quakers and Buddhism were incompatible with the avowed atheism of Communism. In any event, Burt was not intimidated in any way by the HUAC publicity as indicated by his refusal to sign the “Personal History Statement” at the University of Hawaii in 1959.

Retirement, Final Works, and Death

In 1960, when aged sixty-seven years, Burt retired from active teaching at Cornell and assumed the post of Emeritus Professor in the Sage School of Philosophy. Over the next thirty years, until his death in 1989, he continued to develop his thought. In 1965 he published his *magnum opus*, *In Search of Philosophic Understanding* (ISPU). This work contains, by Burt’s own account, the “provocative” implications psychoanalytic theory presents to philosophy (ISPU, p. xiv). Also it is primarily in this work that he puts forward the method which he believed held the key to bringing about a desperately needed philosophic rebirth. He subsequently published the book, *The Human Journey* (1981), which had its genesis in a series of lectures on Comparative Religion Burt delivered at the University of Calcutta, India, in 1968.¹ In 1988, in his mid-nineties and only a year prior to his death, he submitted the manuscript entitled *Philosophy: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* to various publishers. In general this latter work restates and only marginally develops ideas that Burt raises in *Philosophic Understanding* and *The Human Journey*.

In the foreword of a booklet entitled *Light, Love, and Life* (1985) (LLL), which Burt published when he was aged ninety-two years, (that is, some twelve years after he had published the autobiographical article to which we have referred) he reveals that he was still pursuing the quest of self-realization in his final decades. As he explains:

Soon after I reached the age of eighty I made a provocative discovery about myself. ... I had learned through the years many things that people count as important—in philosophy, science, history, theology, and social problems. I could answer questions about Plato and Kant, I could explain some scientific and social theories ... But I had not learned how to live. (LLL, p. 5)

This realization was a shock for Burt and he began what he describes as a “strenuous searching” to learn how to live. In pursuit of this goal, he discovered that he was haunted

¹ During the period from 1968 until 1981 when Burt was revising these lectures he anticipated that their title in book form would be *Toward and Beyond the Community of Man*. However, he eventually adopted the title *The Human Journey*.

by “a smoldering inner tension” as he came to face “subterranean forces” that were active inside him (*ibid.*, p. 8).

Thus Burt set out, during what he calls his “turbulent ... eighties,” to undertake “a thoroughgoing revolution” (*LLL*, p. 9). This revolution resulted in the new insight that his whole person needed to undergo a transformation.

I had to see that it is unrealistic to think that the world around me might change very much in my lifetime, but that I could be changed without limit. The realization meant descending to my emotional depths, and shaking them with no restraint. In that upheaval, I began to perceive the compulsive fears, blind urges, and unreal hopes that had kept me in captivity so many years. As awareness of those potent forces grew, I step by step became freed from many unwelcome emotions, and the ones that I could happily live with grew stronger. Thus partially liberated, I have some appreciation of the frailties and frustrations of those still captive as would never have been possible otherwise. So I harbor no enfeebling regrets about my vagrant wanderings in the past. Quite the contrary—I see them now as a necessary means toward the incomparable good of oneness in spirit with humans everywhere. Without those wanderings that oneness could not have been realized. (*LLL*, p. 10)

Some six years after writing about the oneness, or reconciliation, that he achieved with all humanity, Burt died peacefully at his home in Ithaca aged ninety-six years.¹

At the time of his death his house was home to several refugees from central America. This situation came about due to his support for The Sanctuary Movement, founded in the mid-1980s to assist refugees who were seeking to escape from the U.S.-backed forces in El Salvador. For some years Burt had been shielding these “illegal immigrants” from the United States Government agents who were determined to arrest and deport them. Indeed, Burt himself was under the threat of arrest at the time of his death for contravening U.S. immigration law by harboring these refugees.² Thus, Burt was a philosopher/activist who challenged various United States Government policies from his sermon in 1920 at St Paul’s until his death in 1989.

Personal Characteristics and Academic Honours

Burt was of average height for his generation, about five feet eight and half inches tall with a wiry frame. He had been a cross country runner at Yale. People who knew

¹ His death occurred just before noon on Wednesday, September 6th, 1989.

² Information concerning Burt’s involvement in The Sanctuary Movement has come to me from several sources: His daughter Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster has given me a photocopy (undated) of a statement entitled “Interview with Ned” that Burt prepared for the media. In this interview Burt states that he is 93 years old (which means that it occurred sometime between October 1985 and October 1986) and that he had made his house a sanctuary for the refugees because he was upset with the American Government’s refusal to help them. In his view, this was wrong because “the kind of thing America has stood for in the past ... [was to be] a haven of refuge for people oppressed and persecuted elsewhere in the world.” He admitted that due to his age it was difficult to live with so many people in the house, but that it was nevertheless rewarding. He also acknowledged the legal risks and was prepared for any consequences. After some time, however, the City of Ithaca declared itself a “Sanctuary City” in support of the Sanctuary Movement and this took a lot of pressure off Burt.

I also have a letter dated August 13th, 1991 from Peggy Walbridge of Ithaca who, along with other Friends, cared for Burt in his final years. She clarifies that the presence of the refugees in Burt’s house was initially kept secret from the authorities and that Burt was very worried that he could be arrested if their whereabouts were discovered.

Burt attests that he was very intense but had a good sense of humor, and was very warm-hearted. Samuel Lindley, for instance, writes:

It is true that [Burt] was intense in his relationships to other people. It was as if he held them at arm's length while at the same time drawing them closer. He could laugh heartily with people and his eyes twinkled.

As a lecturer he was always precise and impartial, soliciting ideas from his students. ... He had a broad mind that encompassed the philosophies of both the East and the West He was never boring and his lectures were always extremely well prepared.¹

His daughter Winifred believes her father "may have related far more 'intensely' with colleagues than he did socially or in the family."² She also remembers him as being quite shy and introverted, until his later years. She also writes: "He moved and spoke slowly, with deliberation. [He] could sit quietly for hours thinking, reading or meditating. [However], I'm not sure he was really optimistic. When he looked at the present reality he was definitely not. But when he looked to the future he was a visionary and idealistic which is not quite the same thing as optimistic."³ He was not especially ascetic in his personal habits and enjoyed a glass of wine with the evening meal.

In general, he enjoyed good health and did not become bed-ridden until a few months prior to his death. In his latter years he also became quite deaf. His mind, however, was active and vital until the end. In the last few months of his life he was nursed by members of the Ithaca Society of Friends (assisted by the refugees who lived in his house). One of Burt's former colleagues⁴ whom I interviewed in Ithaca in 1990 believed that the Friends regarded Burt as some sort of "saint." In my own discussions, however, with members of this community I did not get this impression. During the latter half of his life, that is, after he became a Buddhist, Burt meditated regularly and urged other philosophers to do the same in order to expand their awareness of an ever deeper reality (ISPU, pp. 276-7). Burt's house, where a group of Friends now live, at 227 Willard Way, Ithaca, is at the end of the street. A path leads from the house to a covered wooden bench that he built especially for meditation on the top of very high cliffs that overlook the rapids of Fall Creek.

Burt's lifetime commitment to philosophy can be measured by its breadth as well as its length. In addition to the various teaching posts that we have already noted, he was a visiting professor at Harvard University from 1927-28. He was a long-term member of the American Theological Society and was its president in 1949-50. Similarly he was a long term member of the American Philosophical Association (APA). He was elected to

¹ Taken from a letter dated April 19th, 1993 by Dr. Lindley to myself. (I never met Burt, and so have relied on other sources for this information.)

² Quote from her letter to the author dated May 1st, 1993.

³ Ibid.

⁴ This colleague was a graduate student of Burt's in the 1930s but went on to become a philosopher in the analytic tradition. He did not approve of the direction that Burt's thought had taken from the mid 1940s onwards.

the positions of Vice President and President of its Eastern division, the former in 1952 and the latter in 1964. For much of his tenure on the faculty at Cornell he was on the editorial team of *The Philosophical Review*¹ and was on the publication committee of the APA.² Amongst his diverse activities, Burt travelled to Africa for two months in 1962, visiting centers of higher education in Nigeria³ and, in the late 1960s, was president of a Symposium of Religions organized by The Vivekananda Vedanta Society⁴ of Chicago in 1968.⁵

His academic honors included his appointment to the position of Susan Linn Sage Professor of Philosophy at Cornell in 1941, the award of the L.H.D. degree by the University of Chicago in 1951 and the Nicholas Murray Butler Silver Medal by Columbia University in 1958. Finally, on May 25th, 1966 he was elected to membership in the Laureate Chapter of *Phi Sigma Tau*, a national honor society in philosophy. Other members of the chapter include Alfred J. Ayer, Etienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, and Paul Ricouer. The seal of the *Phi Sigma Tau*, which appears on the certificate awarded to Burt, incorporates an owl—perhaps signifying Hegel's famous owl of Minerva which flies only at dusk. It is now our task to follow the flight of the owl as it guides us across the philosophical landscape of the twentieth century in which E. A. Burt not only pursued his thought but also, in his unique way, contributed to its formation. This account of the circuitous path of his thought offers an understanding that Burt himself never achieved, and locates his gradually evolving theory of expanding awareness as the cornerstone of his mature thought.

¹ My source for this information is from *Contemporary Authors*, (Vol. 5-8, p. 178), and from information contained in copies of various hand-written and typed notes that have been given to me by Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster.

² See "Notes and News," *Journal of Philosophy*, (Vol. 21, No. 12, June 1934, p. 336). The publication committee, in 1934 at least, was made up as follows: A. O. Lovejoy, *Chairman*, E. A. Burt, W. A. Hammond, D. H. Parker, and S. P. Lamprecht.

³ My only source for this particular piece of information is an undated copy of a hand-written note by Burt to the editor of the *Dictionary of International Biography* for use in the 1976 edition.

⁴ The Vivekananda Vedanta Society is part of the Ramakrishna Order which has its roots in the teachings of the Hindu spiritual leader Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886). His teachings focused on the truth taught in the ancient Indian *Vedas*, namely, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the works of Shankara, and Patanjali's *Yoga Aphorisms*. Vedanta, the name now given to the wisdom of these ancient writings, offers a nondualistic philosophy that teaches that there is an ultimate, or divine, Reality behind the phenomenal universe. After Ramakrishna's death, one of his disciples, Swami Vivekananda, visited the U. S. A. He opened the first American Vedanta society in New York in the 1890s. In time, many other centers for this society were opened including the one in Chicago. (*Vedanta for Modern Man*, edit. Christopher Isherwood, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1952, pp. ix & 405-6.)

⁵ This information is derived from an undated pamphlet published by the Vedanta Society of Chicago. It refers to a conference concerning "A Symposium of Religions" to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the World Parliament of Religions that was held in Chicago in 1893. The Symposium was held by the Vedanta Society in Chicago on September 15th, 1968. This Society is still (1994) active.

Chapter 2

The Philosophical Milieu: Burt's Early Thought

The Early Twentieth Century: The Reaction Against Idealism

The formation and significance of Burt's early thought is not only best appreciated in the context of his philosophical milieu, but also in his independence of it. This is particularly important with respect to his first work, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* (1924) (hereafter *Metaphysical Foundations*). His task in this work, to discover the hidden presuppositions which underpinned the development of early modern science, led him to focus on the thought of the philosopher/scientists of the seventeenth century rather than on the thought of his contemporaries. Thus, a study of this work throws little, or no, light on contemporary philosophical debates surrounding Burt's own philosophical training at Yale and Columbia and in the ensuing years of his early academic career.

Paul Kurtz's *American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (1966) identifies the approximate period 1880 to 1940 as being the so-called "The Golden Age of American Philosophy" and notes that its outstanding figures were Peirce, James, Dewey, Royce, Santayana and Whitehead. The most significant movements he associates with this period are pragmatism, realism and naturalism (Kurtz, 1966, p. 18). These movements, he claims, can be seen as a rebellion against "the idealism which dominated much of American thought in the second half of the 19th century and which was still very influential in the opening years of the 20th century" (*ibid.*). He acknowledges, however, that "although it is unquestionably true that idealists have generally been on the defensive since the beginning of the century and that their numbers have been constantly diminishing, it must also be pointed out that philosophers of considerable standing have continued until the present day to advocate one or another of the basic theories associated with idealism" (*ibid.*).

What is crucial for our purposes in relation to Kurtz's comments is that when Burt wrote *Metaphysical Foundations* in the early 1920s we have it on his own account in his 1972 autobiographical article that he was one of the "diminishing" number of American idealists who were on the defensive against pragmatism, realism and naturalism. Burt claims in his autobiographical article to have taken account of some aspects of pragmatism, but this refers to his pragmatist/humanist stage which was from the late 1920s until the mid 1940s, well after his work on *Metaphysical Foundations*.

Kurtz traces three main features of philosophical idealism in the American academy.

(1) Mind is in some sense the fundamental reality—everything that exists can on analysis be seen to be mental or, if not itself mental, at any rate dependent upon the

mind; (2) Reality is an organic whole in which everything is logically or internally connected with everything else; (3) Value and purpose are not merely features of the human scene, but are of cosmic significance. (Kurtz, 1966, p. 18)

In addition to these propositions, he notes: "Most, though not all, idealists were defenders of some form of traditional religion, and even those who were not nevertheless had obvious affinities with the outlook of rationalist theology" (*ibid.*). If we take Kurtz's comments as an apt description of philosophical idealism, we may expect to find the "early" Burt adopting similar notions. Indeed, we shall find that even the "later" Burt espoused such notions. With his humanist/pragmatist stage a special exception, idealism never lost its grip on him. In relation to Kurtz's latter point concerning religion, of course, the "early" Burt, as his sermon at St Paul's in 1920 epitomizes, was a supporter of religion and remained so until he went through an anti-theistic period as a committed humanist in the period from the late 1920s until the mid 1940s.

Idealism

To throw more light on the nature of American idealism we can take account of comments by two other historians of American philosophy, Herbert W. Schneider and Joseph Blau. Schneider, in *A History of American Philosophy* (1946), explains that there were several varieties, or schools, of idealism that formed in America during the latter half of the nineteenth century. These schools had their roots in German idealism, a combination of Kantian and Hegelian philosophy and various theological doctrines which he traces all the way back to the so-called "frontier faiths" of the New England Puritans and Pennsylvania Quakers (Schneider, 1946, p. 147). The theological content was central because, until the late nineteenth century, philosophy was treated as an adjunct to theology or divinity in American universities (*ibid.*, p. 442). The German influence came about for two reasons. There was a tendency for American professors in the late nineteenth century to spend a year at German universities (*ibid.*), an influence that was strengthened by German philosophers emigrating to America to escape political persecution (*ibid.*, p. 333). Secondly, American philosophers "had turned to German idealism in the hope of finding comfort against English positivism and empiricism" (*ibid.*, p. 442).

Joseph Blau, in *Men and Movements in American Philosophy* (1952), traces the roots of the conflict between idealism and positivism back to the dualism between mind and matter that was established in early modern thought. This dualism meant that "mind and matter had become separated by the widely-accepted division of all substances into two classes, one called, broadly, thinking substance, mind, soul or spirit; the other called extended substance, body or matter. Important as it may have been to make this distinction in its day, it soon became evident that it led to the posing of a significant problem of knowledge, which has become the central problem of modern philosophy"

(p. 187). Blau is referring, of course, to the epistemological problems that have been at issue since Descartes—problems which Burt, in his later thought, approached in a novel way in his theory of expanding awareness in yet another effort to resolve them.

Attempts to solve these epistemological problems have given rise to what critics have called materialistic reductionism and mentalistic reductionism. Materialistic reductionists argued that, in the final analysis, mind is matter and involves some form of material action. That is, mind is reduced to matter (*ibid.*, p. 187f). The mentalist reductionists argued the opposite. They, Blau notes, “asserted that what we call matter is merely our own states of consciousness or mental states, and thus matter is reduced to a state of mind. ... [But it] should be pointed out this type of idealism does not deny that the world as we experience it really exists; it maintains only that everything that really exists is a mind or a state of mind” (*ibid.*, p. 188).

The mentalistic orientation has come to be known in the history of modern philosophy as a form of idealism. But it is an epistemological form of idealism, that is, it seeks to resolve a problem concerning knowledge. By contrast, other forms of idealism, which have a long history in Western thought, have metaphysical implications, that is, they are concerned with questions about the “fundamental nature of existence” (*ibid.*). This latter type of idealism also has ontological implications, because it often involves hypotheses concerning the nature of “being.” But this is not to say that epistemological and metaphysical idealism are incompatible. As Blau clarifies: “It is as a metaphysical position that idealism has made its greatest impression upon philosophic thought. In part we must assign this prominence of idealism to the similarity between its world-view and that of religion” (*ibid.*). It is this kind of metaphysical idealism that best describes Burt's philosophy during his early and later years.

Metaphysical Idealism

Until this point we have taken metaphysics as a self-evident philosophical term. Blau offers a helpful explanation of the crucial notions and philosophical positions in a way that renders the term applicable to an analysis of Burt's thought.

[T]here are many varieties of metaphysical idealism, and any attempt to characterize them in a blanket fashion is bound to overlook important differences. ... [It] is perhaps enough to say that the metaphysical idealisms agree in the belief that what men experience, the constant flux of becoming, the confusion of sensation, instability, and change, is not real existence, not Reality. These are but appearance, the shadow of the real. A knowledge of Reality cannot be derived from consideration of its counterpart in experience. Our only instrument for gaining a knowledge of Reality is the mind, man's spiritual part, for Reality is spiritual in its fundamental character. The real universe is rational; it has an orderly, stable, permanent nature. Ultimately, in the real universe, existence, meaning, truth and value are one. To the idealist, Reality is intelligible and valuable through and through, and it is man's system of meanings and man's system of values with which Reality is imbued. Undoubtedly much of the appeal of idealism lies in the fact that it assigns so important a place to man. (Blau, 1952, p. 188)

Indeed, Blau's summation of the metaphysical idealist world-view will be seen to be directly pertinent to an understanding of Burt's philosophical orientation. For, other than his brief reference in his autobiographical article to being an idealist, he is elusive and ambiguous concerning his relationship to the major contemporary philosophical movements.

Blau identifies the idealism of the German philosophers, Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, combined with Platonic, Aristotelian and the several strands of Christian idealism, as being important in the formation of American philosophical thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (*ibid.*, p. 189f). In other words, the major American thinkers of this period, such as James, Dewey and Royce, were, so to speak, naturally influenced by metaphysical idealism. Josiah Royce remained a committed idealist while Dewey, in time, moved away from idealism to become a pragmatist—as he explains in his essay, “From Absolutism to Experimentalism” in *American Contemporary Philosophy* (1930). The “Absolutism” he refers to here is Hegelian idealism, that is, the notion that a thinker, by dialectical reasoning, could arrive at Absolute truth.

From this brief sketch of metaphysical idealism, we now turn to an equally brief sketch of the other philosophical movements of this period. Pragmatism, realism, and naturalism—all of which Paul Kurtz asserts were the most significant movements in American philosophy in the early twentieth century (Kurtz, *op. cit.*, p. 18)—were the other important paths of Burt's philosophical milieu.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism, in its early formulations, “was primarily a method of clarifying ideas and concepts by clearing away metaphysical and other confusion” (Kurtz, 1966, p. 19). Charles Peirce (1839-1914), who had been working on the notion of pragmatism since the 1870s, argued that ideas, or more particularly, intellectual concepts, have meanings, the validity of which can be tested by experiment. “To say something is ‘brittle’ means that ‘if we were to strike it, it would shatter’” (*ibid.*). Kurtz points out that “Peirce's theory here clearly foreshadows the later Verification Principle of logical positivism ...” (*ibid.*). William James (1842-1910) took Peirce's notions a step further. When he “spoke of pragmatism, he meant *both* the pragmatic method as advocated by Peirce *and* a new theory about the nature of truth which he thought to be implicit in the pragmatic method” (*ibid.*; Kurtz's italics). The core of this new theory was to hold that the test of the truth of a statement was dependent upon whether or not the outcome verified the initial claim. For instance, James wrote, the “true ... is only the *expedient* in the way of our thinking, just as ‘the right’ is only the expedient in our way of behaving. ... [and the expressions] ‘It is useful because it is true’ and ‘It is true because it is useful’ ... mean exactly the same thing” (*ibid.*; Kurtz's italics). In relation to religion he claimed: “On

pragmatic principles ... we cannot reject any hypothesis if concepts useful to life flow from it If the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest possible sense of the word, it is true. Now ... experience shows that it certainly does work" (ibid., p. 20).

Dewey, in turn, found aspects of James' approach too subjective and sought to make it more objective. He called his own orientation "instrumentalism" to distinguish it from the connotations of pragmatism that he did not endorse. Since Burt, for a time at least, was deeply influenced by Dewey's instrumentalism, we shall follow Kurtz's explanation of it closely.

Dewey developed views on both "meaning" and "truth." The key point of his theory of meaning is that *language is an instrument which transforms raw experience in accordance with the purposes of human beings*. The meaning of an idea refers to a "set of operations" to be performed, the "consequences" produced by a thing or event. Dewey recognized different functions of language—scientific language focuses on prediction and control, and aesthetic language is expressive and consummatory—but he claimed that all language is prescriptive, in that it is related to problems of conduct. (Kurtz, 1966, pp. 20-1; my italics)

Central to pragmatism, therefore, is the category of "experience" because it held that "ideas must be related to practical consequences and be responsive to the broader problems of civilization" (ibid., p. 22).

Realism

Realism had its American origins in two schools that started in the early twentieth century, the "New" and the "Critical" Realists (Kurtz, 1966, p. 22). Although these schools differed on some issues, they were united in their opposition to idealism on important epistemological grounds: "They all denied the idealistic premise that physical objects are reducible to 'ideas' and denied equally that the objects of experience exist only when we experience them. The fact that we know something [the realists insist] makes no difference to the object known. In more technical language: the relation between knowing and the object known is an 'external' and not an "internal" relation" (ibid., pp. 22-3). Among the philosophers whom Kurtz lists as being sympathetic to the realist outlook was F. J. E. Woodbridge and M. R. Cohen (ibid., p. 23)—both of whom assisted Burt in his doctoral research at Columbia. But they did not convert Burt to the realist orientation. He took an extreme idealist position in his doctoral treatise, *Metaphysical Foundations*.

The "realistic revolt" against idealism in the early decades of this century was by no means confined to America. In England, the leaders of the rebellion were Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore. In Germany, realistic doctrines were advocated by Husserl and the phenomenologists, and in Belgium and elsewhere the Neo-Thomists propagated a realist theory of knowledge (Kurtz, 1966, p. 22). It was in America, however, that realism was most influential and widespread—until the 1930s, after which time, Kurtz claims, "few philosophers ... were in the least inclined to doubt or deny independent reality of physical objects, and in that regard at least, realism may be said to have triumphed

[over idealism]" (ibid., p. 26).

Naturalism

Naturalism is a very broad term. In a general sense it can apply to any philosophy, including the materialist conviction that, in the final analysis, "all phenomena can in principle be explained in terms of natural causes or principles" (Kurtz, 1966, p. 26). Thus naturalism rejected any notion of theism or a divine agency at work in human affairs. Kurtz offers this succinct statement of the naturalist perspective.

American naturalism regards the logico-empirical method of science as the only proper procedure for establishing cognitive claims. Knowledge in any area, it is emphasized, does not depend on any esoteric capacity for discovering "higher truths." Nor is there anything mysterious about the scientific method itself; it is continuous with the same operations of thought used in ordinary affairs of life. Intuitions and mystical experiences, whatever their moral or aesthetic value, are not means of arriving at any kind of truth. The scientific method is adequate to the study of everything there is, including human consciousness and social phenomena. It is clear that naturalists are opposed not only to transcendent metaphysics, but also to the widespread opinion, shared by such diverse thinkers as Dilthey and contemporary existentialists, that a special method is required to deal with human, as opposed to other kinds of phenomena. (Kurtz, 1966, p. 27)

The naturalism which took root in America in the twentieth century influenced some prominent pragmatists and realists—although this was somewhat one-sided for not all naturalists endorsed pragmatism. As an example of these cross-currents of philosophic interest, Kurtz notes that realists such as Woodbridge and Cohen, were, at the same time, naturalists. In 1944, "leading naturalists" published a collection of essays entitled *Naturalism and Human Spirit*. The names of the contributors included: John Dewey, Ernest Nagel, Sidney Hook, H. W. Schneider and John H. Randall (ibid., pp. 26-7), all important contemporaries of Burt. Dewey, especially due to his book *Experience and Nature* (1925), was responsible for bringing naturalism's main theories to prominence. But prior to this time, the naturalistic outlook had been gaining ground and could be found in such works as George Santayana's *The Life of Reason* (1905-06) (ibid., p. 26).

The naturalists, therefore, joined a long line of modern philosophers who have sought to integrate the empirical method of modern science with philosophic thought and, at the same time, sought to eliminate the conviction that higher spiritual powers are at work in human affairs. This basic presupposition which unites naturalists, the rejection of any notion that there is a Divine or supernatural agency, was not unqualified. Kurtz clarifies that while naturalists would not endorse traditional theology, they might nevertheless be sympathetic to religions and judge them, "not by their alleged truth claims, but by their functions, whether moral or social (Dewey) or aesthetic and expressive (Santayana)" (ibid., p. 29). Naturalists, who are sympathetic to religion on this qualified basis, "would describe themselves as 'humanists,' in the sense that the center of value is man and the things that he cherishes and prizes. ... [In their

view a] religion is naturalistic and humanistic if it concentrates upon empirically ascertainable goals, and if it uses a scientific approach to knowledge" (ibid.).

To demonstrate this link between naturalism and humanism, Kurtz points to the list of philosophers who signed *The Humanist Manifesto* in 1933 (which he reprints; ibid., pp. 368-371). Of the thirty-four people who signed the manifesto, Kurtz mentions only five in his introductory comments. Among these five names are John Dewey, John H. Randall and Edwin A. Burt (ibid., p. 368). Kurtz's discussion implies that Burt had remained a committed humanist and, by inference, a naturalist. Yet, in fact, he was only a "religious humanist" for a relatively short stage in his long career and rejected it in the mid 1940s.

The naturalist orientation comes into clearer focus when we establish the epistemological differences between idealism, realism, pragmatism, and naturalism. In the simplest terms, (1) the idealist maintains reality is part of mind, (2) the realist maintains that reality is independent of the mind, and (3) the pragmatist recognizes the circularity of such arguments and conflates both into reality—and prefers the category "experience" in preference to the category of reality. Finally, naturalists (4) (assuming they do not espouse pragmatist or realist views), maintain that there is no privileged context (eg, the realist's "reality" and the pragmatist's "experience") in which relations in events or qualities can be differentiated from the immediate context. Kurtz quotes Nagel, an acknowledged naturalist (from an article the latter published in 1947), as follows: "There is 'no absolutely privileged context ... Every quality and event is a genuine occurrence in some complex process or context, and possesses ascertainable relations and functions in that context.' A quality, say, like sweetness, which depends for its occurrence upon certain physiological conditions, is in this context no less a constituent of nature than the qualities with which physical science concerns itself" (ibid., p. 28). That is, the naturalist side-steps the epistemological divisions of the idealist, realist and pragmatist by focusing on the "context" in which any quality or event is perceived or occurs without making it a closed context. Kurtz, writing in 1966, observes that, while pragmatism and realism had ceased to be influential, naturalism remained as "one of the most influential philosophies on the American scene today" (ibid., p. 27).

Intimate Connection Between Pragmatism and Naturalism

Another viewpoint which reveals the intimate connection between pragmatism and naturalism is offered by S. Morris Eames in his book, *Pragmatic Naturalism* (1977). Eames notes that this movement has philosophical and scientific roots that "go deep into the past" (Eames, 1977, p. xi). For instance, Charles Peirce read Hobbes and Kant in his childhood, James studied extensively in England and Europe, George Mead taught the classics in the original Greek and Latin and was interested in the poets from Wordsworth to Milton, and John Dewey insisted that students understand *why* Plato and

Aristotle philosophized in the manner in which they did (*ibid.*, *passim.*). Eames chooses the term "pragmatic naturalism," to encompass the varied writings of Peirce, James, Mead and Dewey. He derives the term "pragmatism" from Peirce and the term "naturalism" from Dewey (*ibid.*, p. xii).

"Pragmatism" is taken by Eames to mean a way of thinking about human "experience": how humans, by the instrument of intelligence, can *accommodate*, *adapt*, and *adjust* their life in accordance with nature (*ibid.*, p. 9f). In following this way of thinking, the pragmatic naturalists reject the dualism, so common in the modern scientific world-view, that separates "experience" from what is called "nature." Instead, the pragmatic naturalists maintain that "experience and nature are correlative" (*ibid.*, p. 22). The word "naturalist," therefore identifies a major plank in the pragmatic doctrine. As Eames states: "'Nature' is a word for all that is, has been, and may be experienced" (*ibid.*). So, while generally either the word "pragmatist" or the word "naturalist" could describe the pragmatist position, Eames chooses the term "pragmatic naturalist."

The "naturalist" factor in pragmatic naturalist thought, Eames explains, has its roots in Darwin's theory of evolution of natural species. This evolutionary theory had a "profound influence" on this new movement and presented the challenge of developing a new view of nature and of human life, a new theory of knowledge, and a general theory of value (*ibid.*, p. 3). For instance, contrary to older notions, stretching back to ancient and medieval times, which maintained that there are permanent laws, stability and purpose or telos in nature, the pragmatic naturalists, under the influence of Darwin's theory, viewed nature as unstable and precarious. They argued that the human species are but one species among many and only through a new application of human intelligence and the development of new values appropriate for survival will humans avoid becoming extinct (*ibid.*, p. 8f).

A particularly important post-Darwinian theme to influence the pragmatic naturalists was the notion of "emergent evolution" which held as a general hypothesis that new, more complex species or forms emerge out of the older, lower forms (Eames, 1977, 17f). Indeed, a critique that Burt made of this particular influence epitomizes the independence of his early thought from that of most of his contemporaries. He made this critique in a paper that he delivered to the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy held at Harvard University in September 1926.

Nothing illustrates so well the increasing grip of naturalism ... on our thinking than the way in which philosophers from all schools vie with each other in their haste to accept the general hypothesis of emergent evolution and their eagerness to make contributions to its detailed development. Pragmatists and even idealists are joining the band-wagon along with their realist foes. Indeed, when we add the fact that those who try to stem the current do so on quite antiquated grounds, it seems as though no hope would be left in our day for the establishment of metaphysics on an empirical and verifiable foundation. ... [It] must be frankly faced that the form in which the doctrine [of emergent evolution] is currently conceived is essentially unverifiable and self-contradictory. The complete arbitrariness of naturalism, when

considered in the light of an empirical standard, and the impossibility of either refuting or verifying the order into which it throws events, appear very quickly when the notion of emergent evolution is examined. (RAE, p. 170)

At this point in his odyssey, as noted earlier, Burt was an idealist. Hence, we can take it that he laments the fact that "even idealists" had succumbed to the doctrine of emergent evolution. We can also note the desire, which we explore in Chapter 3, he expresses to develop a new metaphysics. Even though he was an idealist, however, his independence of the contemporary movements of naturalism, pragmatism, and realism, is demonstrated by his adoption of a standpoint that is critical of their acceptance of the general hypothesis of emergent evolution. In short, he adopts a standpoint which enables him, at least so he presupposes, to observe "philosophers from all schools vie with each other" over the latest idea, in this case "emergent evolution," to enter the philosophic arena.

Any critique by Burt of the doctrines of naturalism, pragmatism, and realism, however, is moderate by comparison with his critiques of another important movement at work in his early philosophical milieu, namely, positivism. This movement was crucial for Burt, and *Metaphysical Foundations* can be seen as a strong reaction against its doctrines.

Positivism

Positivism had become an important philosophic movement by the beginning of the twentieth century. Its orientation had first found expression in the thought of Frenchman Auguste Comte (1798-1857). As John Passmore notes in *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* [1957] (1986), positivism emerged from Comte's law of the three stages of knowledge.

Comte's "positivism," his thesis that all knowledge consists in a description of the coexistence and succession of phenomena, ... [was novel due to] Comte's historical hypothesis that positivism is the last stage in the development of inquiry, preceded first by theology and then by metaphysics. In the theological stage, Comte argued, men explain phenomena by referring them to the arbitrary acts of spiritual beings; in the metaphysical stage, they substitute "powers" or "faculties" or "essences" for spirits; only in the third, positive, stage do they come to see that to "explain" is simply to describe the relations between phenomena. (Passmore, 1986, p. 16)

Comte goes on to argue that this third stage encompasses scientific knowledge (*ibid.*).

Comte's hierarchical scheme, therefore, was a direct challenge to philosophers who continued to derive knowledge from theological or metaphysical premises. The "knowledge" of these two realms, primitive and superstitious, was simply inferior to the knowledge of science. In short, knowledge for positivism is scientific, or empirical, knowledge, derived from experimentation and sense-perception. It dismisses as irrelevant or meaningless any knowledge that is regarded as "theological" or "metaphysical." In taking this approach to knowledge, moreover, positivism is inherently materialistic. The only knowledge it considers worthy of the name in the

final analysis has to have some basis in the material realm to be accessible to sense-perception. It is precisely for this reason that Burt, the idealist, strongly attacks it in *Metaphysical Foundations* by demonstrating that so-called "scientific knowledge" itself has metaphysical foundations.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, positivism found an extreme voice in Ernst Mach (1838-1916). Mach, as Passmore observes, was determined to dismiss as "idle metaphysics" various categories that had metaphysical overtones, such as absolute space, absolute time, and even causality (Passmore, 1986, p. 321). There could be no conceptions of reality over and above what is available from experience. In Passmore's words:

In Nature, there is neither cause nor effect; Nature merely "goes on." A developed science will express its conclusions as functional relationships; aseptic formulae replace the "causal links" of metaphysics. As for absolute space and absolute time, these concepts, according to Mach, are medieval remnants. It is meaningless, he protests, to talk of a body's spatial or temporal position except in relation to some other body. The physicist can compare the movements of a pendulum with the revolution of hands on a clock-face, but never with the progress of absolute time. (Passmore, 1986, p. 321)

Mach's thought also influenced Einstein and the logical positivists (*ibid.*, p. 322), a school that Burt strongly opposed after its emergence in the 1930s.

"Recalcitrant Metaphysicians"

With the rise in the twentieth century of the several philosophical movements opposed to metaphysics, it is important to emphasize that idealism and metaphysics were never entirely without support. Indeed, John Passmore devotes an entire chapter of *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* [1957] (1966) to the "Recalcitrant Metaphysicians" of the twentieth century. In this chapter he groups together a series of philosophers, including the British philosopher R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943), the German Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945), and the Americans W. M. Urban (1873-1952), W. E. Hocking (1873-1966), Brand Blanshard (1892-1989)—all contemporaries of Burt—whom he regards as metaphysicians. Interestingly, while writing *In Search of Philosophic Understanding* (1965) in the 1960s, Burt sent Hocking and Blanshard¹ various chapters to review before submitting the book for publication.² Clearly, Burt valued their opinion. Thus we shall follow Passmore's brief summary of their particular standpoints within the idealist movement. This summary also refers to Urban who died in 1952.

¹ Of these philosophers, only Brand Blanshard published a review entitled "A Remarkable Thesis," (*Humanist*, Vol. 25, Sept/Oct 1966, p. 167). In part, Blanshard writes: "Dr. Burt ... is versed in depth psychology as well as in philosophy and religion, and the three strains meet and fertilize each other [in the pages of *In Search of Philosophic Understanding*]."

² Burt also sent chapters for review to Reinhold Niebuhr, Aldous Huxley, Arnold Toynbee, Sidney Hook, and Archibald MacLeish. Burt's original letters to these thinkers, which I found in his study in 1990, are now stored, along with his other papers, in the Archive Section of the Olin Library at Cornell University. I have copies of this correspondence. Burt's daughter, Winifred Burt-Brinster, has copies of some of this correspondence. The correspondence indicates that Burt maintained close contact with these philosophers and the poet Archibald MacLeish.

Passmore contends that Urban, Hocking, and Blanshard exemplify different types of American Idealism, behind which lies an “ethico-religious impulse” (ibid., p. 312). Hocking’s idealism, according to Passmore, is revealed in his insistence that the universe, and everything in it, has an intrinsic meaning. “There are for Hocking, no ‘brute facts;’ everything has a ‘meaning’ or, as he otherwise puts it, a ‘value.’ The ‘meaning,’ he grants, is not always obvious; experience shows us, however, that if we enlarge our vision of things, as the poet and mystic help us to do, values emerge which we had previously overlooked” (Passmore, 1966, p. 312). Blanshard’s idealism is different from Hocking’s because, unlike Hocking, he insists that psychology has a role to play in guiding human thinking towards “the ideal which all human thinking strives—as a system in which the constituent members are necessarily connected with one another” (ibid., p. 313). Blanshard emphasized the importance of logical and psychological factors in achieving a vision of unity, or wholeness. The thrust of Urban’s work was to transcend, as the title of his book, *Beyond Realism and Idealism* (1949), indicates, the conflict between epistemological idealists and epistemological realists (ibid., p. 314). In place of these battles Urban wants to reinstitute the notion of “perennial philosophy.”¹

Such a philosophy, Urban argues, will accord with ‘the natural metaphysics of the mind;’ it will be a contribution to the ‘perennial philosophy’ exemplified in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, (the scholastics) Anselm and Aquinas, Spinoza and Leibniz, and opposed only by extreme naturalists who, he agrees with Hocking, do not deserve to be called philosophers. This struggle between naturalism—with its divorce between facts and values—and the perennial philosophy, not the futile battles between epistemological idealists and epistemological realists, is, he argues, the crucial controversy in modern thought. (Passmore, 1966, p. 314)

This was a theme that Urban pursued throughout his career. He first discussed it in the journal article, “Beyond Realism and Idealism,” in 1917 (*Philosophical Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1917).

Against this background the “early” Burt can be located in the American idealist tradition and, indeed, one of Passmore’s “recalcitrant metaphysicians.”² After all, Burt

¹ In his book *The Perennial Philosophy* [1944] (1970), Aldous Huxley explains that “the phrase *Philosophia perennis*, was coined by Leibniz to identify the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being—the thing is immemorial and universal. Rudiments of the Perennial Philosophy may be found among the traditionary lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions” (p. vii). Herbert Schneider has written that idealism to many American philosophers means “something at least as old and catholic as Platonism, and to some of them (notably Urban and recently the Californian neo-orientalist Aldous Huxley) an Anglo-Catholic synthesis of Platonism and Aristotelianism, called *philosophia perennis*. Regardless of the particular controversy over the historical reality of a *philosophia perennis*, there is a widespread attempt to conceive idealism as more than a school of modern philosophy and to regard it as a variant form of the age-old search for objective mind” (Schneider, 1946, pp. 491-2).

² Interestingly, in the same year, 1941, that Urban retired from his Chair at Yale University, Ernst Cassirer (who had recently immigrated to America) was appointed as Visiting Professor of Philosophy. This appointment leads Passmore to make a connection between Cassirer and Burt. He notes that Burt’s *Metaphysical Foundations* built on the work that Cassirer had done in the area of the philosophy of science prior to 1920 (Passmore, 1966, p. 573n). Indeed Burt does contend in *Metaphysical Foundations*

himself acknowledges that he was an idealist in his early career (MPP, p. 429). However, his philosophic odyssey was to take him on a circuitous route away from idealism before returning to it in his later thought. That is, under the influence of humanism and pragmatism during his middle thought, he came to reject idealism and theism but, in time, he rejected humanism and pragmatism and returned to the idealist fold, albeit his own unique kind of idealism which drew on ideas from both the East and the West.

Conclusion

While the movements of idealism, positivism, realism, pragmatism, and naturalism were active during the formation of Burt's early thought, many other intellectual tendencies were to enter the philosophical milieu of his middle and later thought. Not least among these was the existentialist thought of Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, and the reception of Eastern ideas by a very small number of American philosophers. These thinkers will be examined in relation to Burt's intellectual development in the following chapters. Although these three areas of philosophic interest were only on the fringe of American philosophy, they were to have a significant impact on Burt's thought. Indeed, Burt himself became a medium through which ideas from each of these three movements were introduced into American philosophic thought.

By turning to existentialism, psychoanalytic theory, and the East for philosophic insights in his later thought, however, Burt set himself apart from mainstream of American philosophy. The only period of his philosophic odyssey in which he could be considered to be part of the mainstream was during his pragmatist/humanist period from the late 1920s until the mid 1940s, which is here called his "middle thought." For even during his early thought, when he wrote *Metaphysical Foundations*, he was out of step with his contemporaries. Rather than enter into the epistemological debates which were so important to his contemporaries, he set out to discover *why* they argued thus and sought to bring to their attention the limitations of their "faith" in science.

that his purpose (in that work) is to extend the contributions of Cassirer (as well as of C. D. Broad and A. N. Whitehead) concerning the foundations of modern scientific thinking (MF, p. 28). Passmore also claims that it was anticipated that Cassirer would carry on the idealist tradition that Urban had established (Passmore, 1966, p. 314). However, Professor John E. Smith, who himself was later to become Professor of Philosophy at Yale, disputes this claim. He notes (in his examiner's report dated August 26th, 1994, concerning this dissertation) that "Cassirer's extension of Kantianism through his theory of symbolic forms is not a continuation of the "perennial" philosophy Urban espoused" and, moreover, there was never any intention that Cassirer be regarded as Urban's "successor." As Smith clarifies: "Although I was not at Yale when Cassirer was appointed, some years later I was Professor Charles Hendel's successor as Chairman of the Department of Philosophy and Hendel was the one responsible for Cassirer's appointment. In *Mein Leben mit Ernst Cassirer* (Hildesheim, Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981) Toni Cassirer (pp. 291ff.) describes how Professor Hendel arranged the appointment of Cassirer as Visiting Professor of Philosophy at Yale in 1941. As in most institutions, Visiting appointments at Yale are temporary and those appointed are not regarded as succeeding someone who has retired. Hendel had long been interested in the work of Cassirer—he was co-translator of Vol. 4 of *Symbolic Forms*—and he was instrumental in bringing Cassirer to America from Sweden. Soon afterward, Hendel arranged through the Dean of the Graduate School to appoint him. Cassirer was not regarded as the "successor" of Urban [as Passmore contends], and indeed he would have been appointed even if Urban had not retired."

Just how persuasive this faith was, and the extent to which Burt was acting against the trends of his day in *Metaphysical Foundations*, can be confirmed by turning to comments made in an essay entitled "Contemporary American Philosophy" that the Cornell philosopher, Frank Thilly (1865-1934), delivered to the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy in 1926.

What characterizes the most popular American philosophies of the day is their faith in the methods and conclusions of natural science, and their consequent interest in the problem of knowledge—which is often reduced to a problem of practical human values—and their antagonism to the [Continental] idealistic systems which flourished in England and America long after their eclipse in the land of their birth. Mind or consciousness, which played a leading role in the past, now takes a minor part; indeed, we find it stripped of its former functions and glory until nothing is left of it but a name. Its requiem is sung by behaviorism; and materialism, the laughing heir, finally gives it a decent burial. (Thilly, 1927, p. 642)

Thilly's comments echo two crucial arguments that Burt made in *Metaphysical Foundations* in the early 1920s. Burt's purpose in this work was to demonstrate to his contemporaries not only how the empirical method of natural science had a metaphysics at its foundations, but also how the behaviorist and materialist theories of mind encounter a major contradiction: these theories deny any significant role to the mind or consciousness but, in the final analysis, have arisen from the mind. In short, Burt finds it strange that science places such little importance on the mind when, after all, "the whole vast realm which science reveals finds its rational order and meaning in the knowing activity of mind" (MF, p. 323).

Chapter 3

Metaphysics and Burt's Early Thought, 1920 -1928

Metaphysical Foundations: A Metaphysical Treatise

In the "Introduction" to his final, but unpublished, treatise, *Philosophy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (1988), Burt states:

Sixty years ago I wrote a book on a hitherto rather neglected lesson in the history of Western thinking about the world. It was entitled: *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*. I was concerned then for the many persons who were perplexed about the role of modern science and were looking for what a historical understanding of its work might provide. They sensed that along with the obvious achievements of science it has serious limitations which pose a challenge with all persons who are interested in the role of science. (PYTT, p. 1)

The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science (hereafter *Metaphysical Foundations*), was first published in England 1924 and America in 1925 and has remained in print ever since.

Indeed, it is solely¹ *Metaphysical Foundations* that has earned Burt a reputation as an influential philosopher of science, particularly in respect to his addressing the relationship between metaphysics and early modern science. As Gary Hatfield notes in his essay, "Metaphysics and New Science" in the recent work *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (1990), during the twentieth century the work of four philosophers has "dominated" studies of the relationship between metaphysics, or philosophy, and the "new science"—or, as we now call it, modern science—during its rise in the seventeenth century: Ernst Cassirer [1874-1945], E. A. Burt [1892-1989], A. N. Whitehead [1861-1947], and Alexandre Koyré [1892-1964] (*ibid.*, p. 93).

However, it is Burt whom Hatfield chooses to be the major "spokesman" for the common theme which unites the work of these four thinkers.

These four authors found a common metaphysical core shared by adherents of the new science: the doctrine that the material world consists of bodies having only mathematical properties and that it therefore must be comprehended and described in mathematical terms. According to this interpretation—for which I treat Burt as spokesman—the "mathematization of nature" was induced by a common "Platonic" or "Pythagorean" metaphysical presupposition, on the part of such figures as Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Descartes, that "the book of nature is written in mathematical characters." The shared acceptance of this presupposition is credited to the influence of Renaissance Neoplatonism. (Hatfield, 1990, p. 93)

This succinct statement by Hatfield² both introduces and summarizes a central argument in *Metaphysical Foundations*. In its "Conclusion" Burt describes the "mathematization

¹ My research reveals that scholars who refer to Burt as a philosopher of science rely solely upon his ideas as expressed in *Metaphysical Foundations*. Thus, although Burt, along with Herbert Butterfield and Alexandre Koyré, is given recognition for having "profoundly shaped historical scholarship on the Scientific Revolution" (Lindberg, 1990, p. 19) such recognition is based on a truncated view of Burt.

² Hatfield, however, proceeds to criticize Burt's philosophical approach "of treating metaphysics as presupposition" (Hatfield, 1990, p. 147)—a point we return to in this chapter.

of nature" presupposition that Hatfield refers to as follows: "the heart of the new scientific metaphysics is to be found in the ascription of ultimate reality and causal efficacy to the world of mathematics, which world is identified with the realm of material bodies moving in space and time" (MF, p. 303).

The tendency to treat Burt as a philosopher of science and *Metaphysical Foundations* as an important work in the history of science, however, overlooks a crucial issue. *Metaphysical Foundations* is itself a metaphysical treatise which lays the groundwork for several themes that were to pervade Burt's life's work. One theme concerns the precarious limitations of Western rationalism. A second theme concerns Burt's desire to develop what we might call a post-scientific, or post-empiricist, metaphysics. Inherent in both these themes lies his more comprehensive life-long goal to bring about a reconciliation between religion and science.¹

It is our purpose in this chapter to examine how the foundations for these themes were laid, rather than to carry out a detailed analysis of Burt's arguments in *Metaphysical Foundations* concerning the relationship between metaphysics and the rise of modern science. After all, Burt's ideas in this regard have been noted and analyzed by numerous scholars.² Indeed, due to Burt's "profound influence" (Lindberg, 1990, p. 19) upon scholarship, many of his ideas concerning the beginnings of modern science have now been disseminated and are commonplace. Hence, we shall focus on only those aspects of the treatise which demonstrate how it laid the foundations for his future life's work. In maintaining this particular focus it serves no purpose, for instance, to compare Burt's arguments concerning the rise of early modern science with those of, say Cassirer, Whitehead, and Koyré—although we shall turn to the work of other philosophers when it throws light on our particular task.

Metaphysical Foundations: Pioneering Project

The critical philosophical research project Burt set himself in *Metaphysical Foundations* in the early 1920s was, in his own view, a pioneering undertaking. As he

¹ In a letter dated November 4th, 1967 to his daughter Winifred, Burt states emphatically: "Yes, my role is to bring science and religion together in my own mind and heart—not in conflict (I insist) but in the profound harmony I see between them."

² References to *Metaphysical Foundations* can be found in Bertrand Russell's *The History of Western Philosophy* (1946, 1982, p. 514f), Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962, 1970, p. 153), Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980, 1986, p. 65), Imre Lakatos' article in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (1970, 1982, pp. 92 & 183), Richard Westfall's *The Construction of Modern Science* (1971, 1977, p. 160), Harry Redner's *The Ends of Philosophy*, (1986, p. 63), to name only a few. In addition, *Metaphysical Foundations* has been made the subject of two extended critiques. The first was in 1936 by Edward W. Strong and entitled *Procedures and Metaphysics: A Study in the Philosophy of Mathematical-Physical Science in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. (Strong's work was undertaken initially as a doctoral thesis at Columbia under the supervision of Professor F. J. E. Woodbridge, who also supervised Burt when he wrote *Metaphysical Foundations* as his doctoral dissertation. Strong was also assisted by Ernest Nagel (Strong, 1936, p. vii). The second critique comprised the essays referred to in the main text: David C. Lindberg's "Conceptions of the Scientific Revolution" and Gary Hatfield's "Metaphysics and the New Science" published in the recent and valuable series of essays entitled *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (1990).

states, "the precise nature and assumptions [presuppositions] of modern scientific thinking itself have not as yet been made the object of really disinterested, critical research" (MF, p. 17). He does acknowledge, however, that K. Pearson, E. Mach, and H. Poincaré had, in the generation prior to him, subjected the ideas of science to 'vigorous analysis and criticism' and that in his own time Whitehead, C. D. Broad, and Cassirer had also challenged scientific thinking (MF, p. 27f). The problem, however, is that the latter three thinkers had investigated the rise of modern science from *within* the presuppositions which underlie the new view of the world as depicted by science. Hence their writings show the continued uncritical use of "traditional ideas like that of the 'the external world' [and] the dichotomy assumed between the world of the physicist and the world of sense" (ibid., p. 28).

Burt's youthful determination to undertake a more radical enquiry is explicit: "Our questions must go much deeper, and bring into clear focus a more fundamental and more popularly significant problem than any of these men are glimpsing" (MF, p. 29). The questions that need to be addressed are these:

Just how did it come about that men began to think about the universe in terms of atoms of matter in space and time instead of the scholastic categories? Just when did the *teleological explanations*, accounts in terms of use and the Good, become definitively abandoned in favour of the notion that true explanations, of man and his mind as well as of other things, must be in terms of their *simplest parts*? What was happening between the years 1500 and 1700 to accomplish this *revolution*? And then, what ultimate metaphysical implications were carried over into general philosophy in the course of the transformation? Who stated these implications in the form which gave them currency and conviction? How did they lead men to undertake such inquiries as that of modern epistemology? What effects did they have upon the intelligent modern man's ideas about his world? (MF, p. 29; my italics)

While all these questions are important for our purposes, Burt's main concern is with how teleological explanations of reality—accounts of human experience and the wider world of nature in terms of a human "end" or "purpose"—were "abandoned in favour of the notion that true explanations, of man and his mind as well as of other things, must be in terms of their simplest parts." This is a crucial point. The balance of his life's work can be seen in terms of Burt attempting to re-instate a teleological view of the world—a view which is all-embracing and which takes account of the *whole* of human experience, rather than attempting to break it into isolated parts.

Having thus raised these questions, Burt proceeds to answer them by examining the thought of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Henry More, Gilbert Boyle, and particularly of Isaac Newton. It does not serve our purpose to study Burt's examination of the works of these early philosopher/scientists in detail. Indeed, his style in *Metaphysical Foundations* precludes us doing justice to his arguments. For, as he himself explains, he allows the above thinkers to "speak for themselves" (MF, p. 35). He quotes extensively from their writings in order to demonstrate that Neo-Platonic and Pythagorean influences were at work in the thought of each of these men. From these

sources were laid the (mathematical) metaphysical foundations of modern science. In addition to Burt's notion of the "mathematization of nature," two further interconnected themes run throughout this treatise. In this regard, he discusses the changes that occurred in relation to the concept of causality and the concept of God during the transition from the medieval world-view¹ to the world-view of modern science. His treatment of these concepts enables him to conclude that these changes were sufficiently radical to result in a shift of world-views.

Metaphysics vs. Positivism

Burt was in his theistic/idealist phase when he wrote *Metaphysical Foundations*. He was thus one of those whom Kurtz calls "the diminishing number" of idealists who were strongly opposed to a rising tide of positivism that sought to derogate theology and metaphysics. Positivism was, in Burt's view, the root of the problem. He cast the whole of modern science in the die of positivism—with the intention of demonstrating that positivism itself, for all its anti-metaphysical arguments, has metaphysical foundations. Indeed, so strong was his attack on positivism, that Imre Lakatos in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* [1970] (1982), credits Burt (along with Karl Popper and Koyré) for playing a significant role in attempting to "reverse the anti-metaphysical tide in the philosophy and historiography of science" (p. 183).

In *Metaphysical Foundations* Burt traces the roots of positivism beyond Auguste Comte to Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). In Burt's own words, Newton was "the first great positivist.² ... With his work the era of great speculative systems ended and a new day of exactitude and promise for man's intellectual conquest of nature dawned" (MF, p. 227). But Newton was deceived into thinking of himself as a scientist, rather than a metaphysician. He presented "a metaphysical groundwork for the mathematical march of mind ... [by assuming to give] definite answers to such fundamental questions as the nature of space, time, and matter [and] the relations of man with the objects of his knowledge" (ibid., p. 33). Burt insists that "such answers ... constitute metaphysics [and the] fact that his treatment of these great themes ... was covered over by [a] ... cloak of positivism ... helped ... to insinuate a set of uncritically held ideas about the world into the common intellectual background of the modern man" (ibid., pp. 33-4).

To begin with, there is no escape from metaphysics, that is, for the final implications of any proposition or set of propositions. *The only way to avoid becoming a metaphysician is to say nothing*. This can be illustrated by analysing ... the central position of positivism itself This [position] can perhaps be fairly stated ... as the following: It is possible to acquire truths about things without presupposing any theory of their *ultimate nature*; or more simply, it is possible to

¹ In his early writings Burt uses the hyphenated form of this term whereas in his later writings he often omits the hyphen. For consistency, and rather than be pedantic, we shall follow Burt. At times the term will be hyphenated. At other times it will not have a hyphen.

² Burt cites the following source for this claim: Brewster, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton*, Edinburgh, 1855, Vol. 2, p. 532.

have a *correct knowledge* of the part without knowing the *nature of the whole*. (MF, pp. 227-8; my italics)

Burt insists that if this statement is subjected to a searching analysis, it will be found to "swarm with metaphysical assumptions" (*ibid.*, p. 228).

In the first place it bristles with phrases which lack precise definition, such as "ultimate nature," "correct knowledge," "nature of the whole," ... In the second place ... does not the statement reveal highly interesting and exceedingly important implications about the universe? ... [D]oes it not imply, for example, that the universe is essentially pluralistic (except, of course, for thought and language), that is, that some things happen without any genuine dependence on other happenings; and can therefore be described in universal terms without reference to anything else? Scientific positivists testify in various ways to this pluralistic metaphysic; as when they insist that there are isolable systems in nature, whose [prominent] behaviour ... can be reduced to law ... (MF, p. 228)

In other words, when positivism views the universe it sees only isolated pieces of matter whose relationship can be described by, and conforms to, mathematical laws. But, as Burt points out, this can lead to ludicrous scenarios. If the stars in our solar system are treated as isolated pieces of matter and their movements reduced to mathematical laws, the stars could disappear and not upset the positivist's laws (*ibid.*). In short, positivism's laws have an inherent metaphysical implication: they fill the vacuum created by its denial of an ultimate truth concerning the nature of the whole of reality.

This being so, Burt believes that it is futile to take positivism seriously.

[T]here is an exceedingly subtle and insidious danger in positivism. If you cannot avoid metaphysics, what kind of metaphysics are you likely to cherish when you sturdily suppose yourself to be free from the abomination? Of course it goes without saying that in this case your metaphysics will be held uncritically because it is *unconscious*; moreover, it will be passed on to others far more readily than your other notions inasmuch as it will be propagated by insinuation rather than by direct argument. (MF, p. 229; my italics)

Clearly one *cannot* escape metaphysics in Burt's view. If one's metaphysics is not held consciously then it is held unconsciously. Indeed, he maintains, "since human nature demands metaphysics for its full intellectual satisfaction, no great mind can wholly avoid playing with ultimate questions," be they related to science or religion. Positivist beliefs, on the other hand, having avoided this attention to metaphysics, "will be apt to appear pitiful, inadequate, or even fantastic" (*ibid.*).

In the above passages, "metaphysics" for Burt encompasses such notions as "ultimate nature," "correct knowledge," "nature of the whole," and notions which have "important implications about the universe." Each of these phrases has implications which transcend the isolated physical matter supposed to be the subject of exactitude, mathematical measurement, or quantification by modern science. In addition, physical concepts such as "force," "mass," "inertia," "space," "time," "matter," and "motion," are metaphysical categories because they are the "ultimate" concepts which organize

reality (ibid., p. 33).¹ At the time of writing *Metaphysical Foundations*, therefore, metaphysics for Burt is a net which catches the whole of reality, including the positivist's laws, by way of a series of categories.²

Two Major Themes in Burt's Thought

Besides being an attack on positivism, *Metaphysical Foundations* contains the roots of two major themes which were to pervade his later thought. Burt repeatedly attacked philosophers for failing to recognize that reason is always tainted with *unconscious* factors. The consequence of that view was the need to construct a post-scientific, or post-empiricist, metaphysics which took account of these unconscious factors. These themes, which were not to become dominant until his later thought, are signalled in the "Introduction" to *Metaphysical Foundations*:

The cosmology underlying our mental processes is but three centuries old—a mere infant in the history of thought ... [And, even though] we are ignorant enough of its precise nature ... we nevertheless take it piously to be ours and allow it a subtly pervasive and unhindered control over our thinking. ... [A]ll of us tend easily to be caught in the point of view of our age and to accept unquestioningly its main presuppositions (MF, pp. 15 & 17)

In other words, so long as we are unconscious of the presuppositions underlying the scientific cosmology, "rational thought" is not really rational at all. This was, of course, a radical assertion in the early twentieth century. Philosophers in the history of the Western tradition generally have believed (as most still do) that, "in the final analysis," rationality presides and logic is compelling. Certainly thinkers before Burt, such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, David Hume, and Friedrich Nietzsche, in varying ways criticised the rule of reason, but they have been in the minority, and have in any case (with the possible exception of Nietzsche) made "reasoned" attacks upon rationalism.

Burt uses two philosophical concepts, "cosmology" and "presupposition," as self-evident, though in need of clarification because they assume an increasingly important role in his thought. He tends to use the word "cosmology" as an alternative to "world-view," or "mind-set," to describe the framework of beliefs and meanings which underlie an understanding of one's personal or cultural place in nature and the wider universe. In asserting that "our cosmology [which has its roots in the rise of modern science]" is but "three centuries old," and hence is an "infant" in relation to other cosmologies, Burt locates the core of his notion of a post-empiricist metaphysics. If cosmologies have a history, they have beginnings and endings. Thus it ought to be possible for thinkers,

¹ As Burt states, Newton "not only found a precise mathematical use for concepts like force, mass, inertia; he gave new meanings to the old terms space, time, and motion, which had hitherto been unimportant but were now becoming the fundamental [metaphysical] categories of ... [the new science]" (MF, p. 33).

² Burt, therefore, does not simply treat "metaphysics as presupposition," as Hatfield would have it (Hatfield, 1990, p. 147). Instead, he identifies presuppositions in order to uncover the metaphysical implications pertaining to various world-views. In other words, a presupposition is, if you like, the tip of a metaphysical iceberg. Hatfield, it seems, is only seeing the tips of the icebergs.

consciously and deliberately, to create a new metaphysics to be the basis of a new cosmology.

The concept of “presupposition,” although present implicitly in even his earliest works, receives its first explicit treatment in his 1972 autobiographical article,¹ where he defines it as “a hidden or tacit premise underlying any statement or question or piece of reasoning. And besides specific presuppositions implied in any particular statement there are basic presuppositions, revealed (when one looks for them) in all statements which express this or that way of thinking” (MPP, p. 432). This definition, however, belies the much deeper technical meaning (which we examine in Chapter 6) the term is accorded in his later thought. However, the 1972 definition will suffice for our task at this juncture.

It may seem to the reader of *Metaphysical Foundations*, as it does Hatfield (1990, p. 147), that Burt conflates the meaning he gives to the concepts of presupposition and metaphysics. However, Burt insists upon a distinct difference between these concepts.

It is evident ... that modern [Enlightenment] philosophers have been endeavouring to follow the ontological quest in terms of a relatively new background of language and a new undercurrent of ideas. ... It might be that under cover of this change of ideas modern philosophy had accepted uncritically certain important presuppositions, either in the form of meanings carried by these new terms or in the form of doctrines about man and his knowledge subtly insinuated with them—presuppositions which by their own nature negated [sic] a successful attempt to reanalyze, through their means, man's true relation to his envioning world. (MF, p. 27)

A “presupposition” therefore, as its name implies, is what thinkers *presuppose*, albeit “uncritically,” in accepting an idea concerning reality. “Metaphysics,” however, for Burt carries connotations about the nature of this reality, of the universe generally. Put another way, a presupposition, often held unconsciously, is inherent in ideas that seek to *explain* reality whereas metaphysics makes *claims* about reality. Therefore, a metaphysics, or cosmology, makes claims, using a series of categories such as “force,” “space,” “time,” and “matter,” about the nature of reality or the universe, and has its foundations in the presuppositions inherent in the ideas expressed in such claims.² Or, again, if metaphysics for Burt is a net which catches the whole of reality by way of series of categories, presuppositions are inherent in the ideas which comprise such categories. Presuppositions, therefore, are present in a metaphysics but are not themselves a metaphysics.

Yet another issue arises in Burt's insistence upon the “infancy” of the scientific cosmology, which was to have implications for his later thought. If we are ignorant of,

¹ Even though he had been using this concept extensively in his philosophic reflections, as late as 1965 when he wrote *In Search of Philosophic Understanding* (1965)—again in which it figures prominently—he declined to define it. In this work he states that a “formal definition [of the concept presupposition] would have little value and will not be offered ...” (ISPU, p. 129).

² Thus Burt's *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* could have the convoluted title *The Presuppositions which Comprise the Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science*.

or caught up in, the web of presuppositions which underlie our world-view, just how *do* we (or Burt) transcend them in order to avoid the "pervasive and unhindered control" they exert over our thinking? How do we gain a perspective, or an objective vantage-point, outside our own particular cosmology in order to become aware of its hidden presuppositions? The fact that he continually addresses this problem in his work no doubt indicates both the magnitude of the problem and his dissatisfaction (or lack of confidence) in his own point of view.

Gaining a Perspective on One's Own World-view

When confronted with the problem of gaining a perspective on the presuppositions underlying his own world-view, Burt allows that philosophers can never entirely disentangle their thinking from presuppositions. Hence, he argues, one way to discover the presuppositions underlying the world-view of any age is to observe the central philosophical problems that have dominated philosophical discussion (MF, p. 15). In the case of our own world-view, the world-view of modern science, he maintains, it has been epistemological problems, or problems concerning theories of knowledge, which have dominated philosophical thought from René Descartes (1596-1650) onwards (*ibid.*). But why did these "epistemological ponderings," which some contemporary philosophers have called "the study of unreal puzzles," become so dominant? "Does the problem of knowledge lead to thinking in false directions, and nullify its conclusions by unsound premises?" (MF, p. 16). In other words, is there a vicious circularity in the whole epistemological debate which inherently negates any claims to knowledge? Or again, how can knowledge claims be sound when the very premises, the presuppositions that arbitrate knowledge claims, may be unsound?

Hence, Burt, following his own dictum concerning the best way to discover the foundations of one's own world-view, set out to discover *why* the early modern philosopher/scientists made epistemology such a central concern.¹ He anticipates that

¹ Bertrand Russell, in his *History of Western Philosophy* [1946] (1982), is critical of Burt's *Metaphysical Foundations*. Russell states:

The general purpose of the book [*Metaphysical Foundations*] is to discredit modern science by suggesting that its discoveries were lucky accidents springing by chance from superstitions as gross as those of the Middle ages. I think this shows a misconception of the scientific attitude: it is not *what* the man of science believes that distinguishes him, but *how* and *why* he believes it. His beliefs are tentative, not dogmatic; they are based on evidence, not on authority or intuition. (Russell, 1982, p. 514; Russell's italics)

Russell, however, seems not to have grasped that Burt's concern in *Metaphysical Foundations*, in fact, is to discover *how* and *why* the early modern scientists came to believe that their knowledge claims were superior to the knowledge claims of the Middle Ages. The "evidence" on which science's knowledge claims are based and which Russell takes to be so definitive, is only "evidence" within the narrow confines of the presuppositions which underlie the scientific world-view. In short, if the "evidence" complies with a mathematical view of the world, it is valid. If not, it is invalid. Burt set out to discover *why* the early modern scientists came to adopt the fundamental belief that knowledge claims could be tested in this manner. In any event, Russell, captured by his own basic presuppositions, seems oblivious to the fact that the empiricist and scientist *are* dogmatic in their belief in the veracity of their method. In their view, the empirical method is the altar which *only* accepts as truth those knowledge claims that can be verified or falsified by observation and experimentation.

this will lead him to the presuppositions which form the foundation of the scientific world-view. He intends to not only discover the metaphysical foundations, that is, the basic presuppositions, underlying modern science, but also to challenge the implications and validity of the knowledge-claims of modern science. He asks, "What business have we to take [modern scientific knowledge] ... for sound doctrine? Can we justify it? Do we know clearly what it means?" (MF, p. 17).

In taking this critical approach in the early 1920s toward epistemology and modern science, Burt was going against, and setting himself apart from, the main philosophical tendencies of his contemporaries—a stance, which in one way or another, he was to maintain throughout his career. But, having taken this approach, he then treats the "scientific world-view" as a construct, or settled world-view, and, in order to discover its hidden presuppositions, he draws a comparison between its presuppositions and those of the medieval world-view. Once again, aspects of the medieval world-view were to have a lasting impact on his thought.

The Dominant Trend in Medieval Thought

The hierarchical "dominant trend in medieval thought," Burt argues, ensured that "man [was elevated to] ... a more significant and determinative place in the universe than the realm of physical nature, while for the main current of modern thought, nature holds a more independent, more determinative, and more permanent place than man" (MF, pp. 17-18). An analysis of this disjunction, he notes, reveals that, in the medieval period, Greek philosophy and Judeo-Christian theology achieved a synthesis which ensured that humanity was the centre of moral and philosophical inquiry. Essentially, "the prevailing world-view of the period was marked by a deep and persistent assurance that man, with his hopes and ideals, was the all-important, even controlling fact in the universe" (*ibid.*, p. 18). Burt, alerts us to two crucial factors, the "metaphysical categories" such as space, mass, and energy, and the medieval attitude to knowledge.

This view underlay medieval physics. The entire world of nature was held not only to exist for man's sake, but to be likewise immediately present and fully intelligible to his mind. Hence the categories in terms of which it was interpreted were not those of time, space, mass, energy, and the like: but substance, essence, matter, form, quality, quantity—categories developed in the attempt to throw into scientific form the facts and relations observed in man's unaided sense-experience of the world and the main uses which he made it serve. Man was believed to be active in his acquisition of knowledge—nature passive. (MF, p. 18)

For instance, in observing a distant object, the medieval person believed that some aspect of it proceeded from the eye to the object rather than proceeding from the object to the eye. The human senses established what was real about objects. Thus, "things that appeared different *were* different substances, such as ice, water, and steam" (*ibid.*; Burt's italics). This resulted in a famous puzzle for medieval physics. If I put one hand in cold water and the other in hot water I am forced to ask how water, a distinct substance, can possess both heat and cold as these, in turn, are also "distinct substances."

Similarly, the differences between light and heavy also presented a puzzle (*ibid.*).

Another important factor in the medieval cosmology was the notion of teleology, that is, the notion that there is a purpose, or "end" (*telos*) related to every action. As Burt explains, "an explanation in terms of the relation of things to human purpose was accounted just as real as, and often more important than, an explanation in terms of efficient causality, which expressed their relations to each other" (MF, p. 18). For example, "Rain fell because it nourished man's crops as truly as because it was expelled from the clouds" (*ibid.*, pp. 18-19). Furthermore, "it was taken for granted that this terrestrial habitat of man was at the centre of the astronomical realm" (*ibid.*, p. 19).

[The] whole universe was a small, finite place, and it was man's place. He occupied the centre; his good was the controlling end of the natural creation.

Finally, the visible universe itself was infinitely smaller than the realm of man. The medieval thinker never forgot that his philosophy was a religious philosophy, with a firm persuasion of man's immortal destiny. The Unmoved Mover of Aristotle and the Personal Father of the Christian had become one. There was eternal Reason and Love, at once Creator and End of the whole cosmic scheme, with whom man as a reasoning and loving being was essentially akin. (MF, p. 19)

This kinship, which Burt supports with quotations from Dante's (1265-1321) *Divine Comedy*, was revealed in the religious experience that a medieval philosopher strived for and understood as "the crowning scientific fact."

Reason had become married to mystic inwardness and entrancement: the crowning moment of the one, that transitory but inexpressibly ravishing vision of God, was likewise the moment in which the whole realm of man's knowledge gained final significance. ... In this ... kinship of man with an eternal Reason and Love lay, for medieval philosophy, a guarantee that the whole natural world in its present form was but a moment in a great divine drama which reached over countless aeons past and present and in which man's place was quite indestructible. (MF, P. 21)

Having depicted the medieval world-view in this manner, Burt turns his attention to the modern scientific world-view in order to establish the disjunction between them.

The Futility of Human Existence in the Age of Science

To characterize the modern world-view, Burt turns to an essay by Bertrand Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*, (*Mysticism and Logic*) (1918). He believes that Russell's view is representative, albeit extreme, of contemporary philosophers at that time. In a long quotation from this essay, Burt concentrates on Russell's sense of the futility of human existence. He notes that Russell launched himself into this tract by "quoting from the Mephistophelian account of creation as the performance of a quite heartless and capricious being" (MF, pp. 22-3).

[Even] more purposeless, more void of meaning, is the world which Science presents for our belief. Amid such a world, if anywhere, our ideals henceforward must find a home. That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes, his fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the

inspirations, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that *the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins ...* Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundations of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built. ...

Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned ... to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish ... the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day (MF, p. 23¹; my italics)

Here human beings have no high place in a cosmic teleology. All their ideals, hopes and "mystic raptures are but the creations of [their] ... own errant and enthusiastic imagination, without standing or application to a real world interpreted mechanically in terms of space, time, and unconscious, though eternal, atoms" (MF, p. 24). Both human existence, insignificant and precarious as it is in an indifferent cosmos, and the earth, now but a speck in boundless space, will one day be "snuffed out like a candle" and "buried in a universe of ruins" (ibid.).

This gloomy prophecy, for Burt, exemplifies the significant disjunction between the medieval and modern cosmologies. The relationship between humanity and nature has been turned upside down. Human beings, who once occupied a high place within the cosmic teleological scheme and to whom nature was intelligible, now have to relate to nature that is "without." Nature, indeed the cosmos, is now an wholly independent "other" which inherently excludes humans from any higher purpose and, moreover, will collapse one day in the future and bring universal extinction. Having characterized the disjunction between the medieval and modern world-views in this extreme manner, his task in the balance of *Metaphysical Foundations* is to investigate the question of how this disjunction came about. This is necessary, he argues, because one cannot truly pursue philosophic enquiry today "unless one understands how it was that this veritable upheaval in the main current of intelligent thought has historically come about" (MF, p. 25). We can thus view *Metaphysical Foundations* as Burt's first critique of humanity's ontological status in the age of science.

Epistemology, Burt argues in *Metaphysical Foundations*, has been a central issue in modern philosophy due to the "radical shift" that occurred in the relationship between humans and the balance of nature during the rise of modern science (MF, pp. 25-6). Moreover, if we grasp that the very notion of a relationship between humanity and nature is inherently metaphysical, we can understand that the metaphysical project of many modern philosophers (Burt mentions, among others, Berkeley, Leibniz, Fichte, Kant, Hegel, James, and Bergson) has been to recapture the harmony that existed

¹ Burt has taken this quote from Bertrand Russell, *A Free Man's Worship (Mysticism and Logic)*, (New York, 1918, p. 46ff); see also Russell, Bertrand, *Mysticism and Logic including a Free Man's Worship*, (Unwin Paperbacks, London, 1986, pp. 10 & 18).

between humans and nature in the medieval cosmos¹ (MF, p. 25). Despite these constant attempts to recapture the tenor of the medieval cosmos, however, Burt insists that they all failed to achieve their goal (ibid.). He acknowledges that the work of the above philosophers is of epistemological interest, but nevertheless they failed to achieve their metaphysical goal. Hence, for Burt, the important question is: What is the reason for the failure of these attempts to reinstate humanity to a place of importance in the cosmic scheme of things? He speculates that one possible answer is that Russell's characterization of the scientific world-view is correct and that the notion that there was "something embedded in the eternal structure of things" was simply a mirror of human desires and self-flattery (MF, p. 26). The roots of the mistaken importance could be "based in the last analysis on the unwarranted assumption that because man ... can know and use portions of his world, some ultimate and permanent difference is thereby made in that world" (ibid.).

Burt, however, does not pursue the possibility that Russell's depiction of the ontological status of human beings in the scientific world-view is valid. That is, he does not pursue the notion that, after living in an "exalted" sense of false importance throughout the ancient and medieval periods, human beings have, so to speak, finally come down to earth. Instead, he sets out to establish that the scientific world-view itself is seriously flawed and not only does not, but cannot, make valid truth claims about the ontological status of human beings in the cosmos. The historical reasons for this flaw, in his view, have their source in the "radical shift" that occurred in metaphysical categories that occurred between the medieval and modern periods. Or, more specifically, the flaw lies in the changes that occurred in presuppositions applicable to

¹ The terms "cosmos," "cosmology" or "cosmological," appear frequently in Burt's thought. The significance of this term, which in the late twentieth century is not commonly used by philosophers (it is still used by physicists), is that it played an important role in the American philosophical tradition in the later half of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century. As Herbert W. Schneider explains in the chapter entitled "Cosmic Philosophies" in *A History of American Philosophy* (1946), the "demand for cosmic philosophy was insistent and general at that time in America, as well as in Europe" (p. 321). The goal of the cosmic philosophies was to treat the cosmos as a whole and to posit laws of the universe applicable to both natural science and the realm of human action or morals. In other words, they attempted to unify the realms of fact and value which had maintained a tenuous relationship ever since the rise of modern science. Schneider identifies, among others, John Fiske (1842-1901) and Charles Sanders Peirce as being influential in this area of thought in America. John Fiske's *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy* (1874), which shows the influence of Darwin's evolutionary theory, presents the cosmos as "a moving order, temporal, phenomenal, and progressive" (Schneider, 1946, p. 322). Gone is any notion of a static, eternal order. Instead, the "world itself now appeared as an organism, whose career in time can be observed even though its origin and substance must remain forever unknowable" (ibid.). In his later thought Fiske came to argue that, if human beings were seen as being at the pinnacle of evolution in the cosmos, "the doctrine of evolution had worked a counter-Copernican revolution and had restored man to "his old position of headship in the universe, even as in the days of Dante and Aquinas" (ibid., p. 323). In other words, in Fiske's view, evolutionary theory reinstates human beings to the important place they held in the medieval cosmology. The importance of Fiske's thought in relation to Burt is that, while he does not refer to Fiske, two of his major concerns in *Metaphysical Foundations* are (1) to explain how the rise of modern science caused a division between the realms of fact and value and (2) to argue the need for a new cosmology which will reinstate human beings to the meaningful place they occupied in the medieval hierarchical scheme.

the terminology underlying these categories.

“Radical Shift” in Metaphysical Categories

The ancient and medieval philosophers, Burt insisted, used metaphysical categories such as “substance, accident, and causality, essence and idea, matter and form, potentiality and actuality” whereas the moderns refer to things “in terms of forces, motions, and laws, changes of mass in space and time, and the like” (MF, p. 26). In the ancient and medieval periods “Spatial and temporal relations were accidental, not essential characteristics. Instead of spatial connexions of things, men were seeking their logical connexions: instead of the onward march of time, men thought of the eternal passage of potentiality into actuality” (ibid., pp. 26-7). By contrast, in the modern period, “space” and “time” became the major “puzzles” that occupied thinkers such as Hume, Kant, Hegel, Henri Bergson, and Samuel Alexander.

Hume wonders how it is possible to know the future, Kant resolves by a *coup de force* the antinomies of space and time, Hegel invents a new logic in order to make the adventures of being [i.e., the ontological adventure] a developing romance, James proclaims an empiricism of the “flux,” Bergson bids us intuitively plunge into that stream of duration which in itself is the essence of reality, and Alexander writes a metaphysical treatise on space, time, and deity. (MF, p. 27)

Thus, Burt insists, “it is evident ... that modern philosophers have been endeavouring to follow the ontological quest in terms of a relatively new background of language and a new undercurrent of ideas” (ibid.).

He suggests that it is these differences in terminology between the two periods which may be the reason modern philosophy has failed to reinstate humanity to an important place in the cosmos. For, during this change in terminology it may be that modern philosophy “had accepted uncritically certain important presuppositions, either in the form of meanings carried by these new terms or in the form of doctrines about man and his knowledge subtly insinuated with them” (MF, p. 27). If this is so, Burt contends, then these hidden presuppositions could be responsible for negating modern attempts to successfully analyse the relationship between humans and nature. We can assume that in the above quotation Burt’s reference to “the form of doctrines about man and his knowledge” is to the epistemological problems of modern philosophy. If this assumption is correct, then he is contending that these hidden presuppositions would also account for the inability of moderns to reach any universal agreement concerning the validity of truth or knowledge-claims.

Burt’s thesis, in short, is that modern metaphysicians could not successfully achieve their goal of reinstating humans to a meaningful place in the cosmos because any analysis they carried out utilized hidden presuppositions which inherently negated the project. He is thus able to sweep aside contemporary epistemological debates because, in his view, they are also dependent upon these same hidden presuppositions. On the other hand, if the hidden presuppositions which form the metaphysical

foundations of the scientific world-view can be uncovered, then the epistemological problems may also be resolved. That is, he is taking the metaphysical road in search of knowledge and leaving the epistemological road to be rejoined at a latter juncture. His approach can be summarized thus: "What mental processes are at work in moderns that *make* us think the way we do *about* knowledge?" rather than "*How* do we have knowledge?" (my words). Or, again, his concern is not with *how* moderns can make valid knowledge or truth claims, but *why* did modern philosophers come to think this way *about* knowledge? That is, what hidden mental processes, or unconscious presuppositions, were at work in modern philosophers which led them to construct various theories of knowledge? It is as if Burt is attempting a psychoanalysis of modern philosophy, with the implication that uncovering what is hidden will, of itself, resolve the dilemmas that led to the original suppression.

The Scientific Metaphysic: Its Negative Implications

In the "Conclusion" to *Metaphysical Foundations* Burt summarizes his analysis of the works of early modern philosopher-scientists as follows:

We have observed that the heart of the new scientific metaphysics is to be found in the ascription of ultimate reality and causal efficacy to the world of mathematics, which world is identified with the realm of material bodies moving in space and time. Expressed somewhat more fully, three essential points are to be distinguished in the transformation which issued in the victory of this metaphysical view: there is a change in the prevailing conception (1) of reality, (2) of causality, and (3) of the human mind. (MF, p. 303)

Medieval human beings experienced reality as "a world of substances possessed of as many ultimate qualities" (ibid.). By contrast, moderns experience reality as "a world of atoms (now electrons) [and now quarks], equipped with none but mathematical characteristics and moving according to laws fully statable in mathematical form" (ibid.).

In the medieval period the category of causality posited "explanations in terms of forms and final causes of events, both in this world and in the less independent realm of mind" (MF, p. 303). Modern science instead views "explanations in terms of their simplest elements, the latter related temporally as efficient causes, and being mechanically treatable motions of bodies wherever it is possible so to regard them" (ibid.). For the medieval thinker, God was either regarded as the "Supreme Final Cause," or the "First Efficient Cause" of events and the world and human beings had a high position in the teleological hierarchy of nature. For modern science neither these causal explanations, nor the teleological hierarchy, are held to be valid. As part of these changes, the human mind "came to be described as a combination of sensations (now reactions) instead of in terms of the [medieval] scholastic faculties" (ibid.). Due to Cartesian dualism, with its doctrine of primary and secondary qualities, modern science located the mind in a corner of the brain, from which it gave "its account of the mechanical genesis of sensation and idea" (ibid., pp. 303-304). These changes, altogether, came to form the

metaphysical foundations of modern science which, Burt observes, "have conditioned practically the whole of modern exact thinking" (MF, p. 304).

The significance of Burt's identification of the metaphysical foundations of modern science is succinctly summarized by Stephen Straker, in his recent (1985) essay entitled "History of Theories of Perception."

Modern science, [following Burt], presents for our belief a world split in two, a conception of the "real world," composed of dead, "mechanical" matter, a world in which human beings, as we experience ourselves, cannot be located, for it is a world in which persons are wholly "other." As Burt argues in the eloquent and strangely neglected "Conclusion" to his great work [*Metaphysical Foundations*], when such a science turns to the question of understanding persons, it opines that "man is a machine," leaving the intractable riddle of giving an account of "mind," consciousness, awareness, perception, intentionality, and "meaning" solely in terms of "matter in motion" (in whichever one of its modern physical guises).

The irony of this situation has not ... been sufficiently appreciated. To put it simply and tendentiously, modern empirical science is unable to say anything coherent about its own empiricalness, for the attempt to give an objective account of the "subject" seems irretrievably flawed. Not only is there no persuasive account of how the world (as science understands it) gives rise to "observations" and the observer's awareness of them, there is not even a plausible plot-line for such a story. (Straker, 1985, pp. 248-9; Straker's italics)

Straker's point is that Burt, in the early 1920s, identified a problem which, to this day, cognitive theorists have not been able to resolve.

Burt's "Idealist" Philosophy of Mind

In his critique of modern science, Burt does clarify that he would not deny the actual useful results which can be attributed to modern scientific inquiry. However, he contends, when, "in the interest of clearing the field for exact mathematical analysis, men sweep out of the temporal and spatial realm all non-mathematical characteristics, concentrate them in a lobe of the brain, and pronounce them the semi-real effects of atomic motions outside, they have performed a rather radical piece of cosmic surgery which deserves to be carefully examined" (MF, p. 305). Furthermore, "If we are right in judging that wishful thinking in the interest of religious salvation played a strong part in the construction of the medieval hierarchy of reality, is it not an equally plausible hypothesis to suppose that wishful thinking of another sort underlay this extreme [positivist] doctrine of modern physics—that because it was easier to get ahead in the reductions of nature to a system of mathematical equations by supposing that nothing existed outside the human mind that was not so reducible, naturalists proceeded at once to make this convenient assumption?" (ibid.). One of Burt's objections to the scientific world-view, therefore, is that science relegates the human mind to some very minor role in the scheme of things.

Revealing his own idealist presuppositions, he proceeds to argue that it is strange for science to place such little importance on the mind when, after all, "the whole vast realm which science reveals finds its rational order and meaning in the knowing activity

of mind" (MF, p. 323).

So far from being a curious sensitive substance present in a small corner of the brain, or even an activity of the nervous system, mind seems to be a unique something to which the spatio-temporal realm, including the brain and the body, is or can be present. Or if objecting realists plead that the structure of meaning is as external to mind as physical nature, at least it must be admitted that mind is that something in the existential world most capable of actively participating in this realm of meaning. ... The so-called higher mental powers of human persons seem to be the completest [sic] perspectives of reality so far as revealed in our experience; as Aristotle insisted, they include all that the other orders do and more besides. (MF, p. 323)

Continuing his case, he asks, "as for purpose, do we not empirically note that every object of mind is likewise a *means* for the realization of further *ends*?" (ibid., p. 234). Also, "among the irreducible relations of a thing known, is there not its relation to a more valuable end which it may be made to serve?" (ibid.). If this be the case:

[T]hen purpose is an even more ultimate function than knowledge and feeling, and mind, embracing by this term such knowing, appreciating, and purposive activity, must find its total explanation beyond the material world. Mind appears to be an irreducible something that can know the world of extended matter, love ardently its order and beauty, and transform it continually in the light of a still more attractive and commanding good. Mind has the power to feel, to idealize, to recreate its world into something significantly better, as well as to know it. (ibid.)

Thus Burt eulogises the human mind: a eulogy which situates his early thought in the realm of metaphysical idealism.

The Need for a New, Post-Scientific, Metaphysics

A solution to the negative problems arising from the scientific world-view, Burt believes, would be the development of what we have called a post-scientific, or post-empiricist, metaphysics—Burt simply calls it a "new metaphysic"—which would underlie a new cosmology (MF, p. 304f). Such a metaphysics, or cosmology, would have the goal of returning human beings to a meaningful role in the universe and enable individuals to experience themselves as beings who express the functions of both reason and spirit. A crucial point arising from Burt's approach in *Metaphysical Foundations* is his notion that the thought and practice of modern science is a "cosmology" which has a definite beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and brought an "end" to the medieval "cosmology." In other words, his approach enables him to assign a history, with beginnings and ends, to cosmologies. This being so, and observing that for Burt it is humans who create and destroy cosmologies (the early modern philosopher scientists destroyed the medieval cosmology and created "our" modern scientific cosmology), it is not a great leap for him to argue that a new cosmology or metaphysic ought to be created which ameliorates the negative aspects of the modern scientific cosmology.

Indeed, this notion of the creation of new metaphysics, or cosmology, is so important in Burt's thought it is worth quoting at length an insightful passage from

David Lindberg's recent (1990) essay, "Conceptions of the Scientific Revolution from Bacon to Butterfield." Lindberg discusses Burtt's thesis that Neoplatonic metaphysical influences were at work in the minds of the early philosopher/scientists and led them to ascribe mathematical meaning to nature, and so "transformed the natural philosophy of antiquity and the Middle Ages into modern science" (Lindberg, 1990, p. 16). But what is important is that, for Burtt:

Modern science definitely did not have medieval beginnings; on the contrary, it was precisely the medieval world view—with its metaphysics of substance and accident, matter and form, potentiality and actuality—that had to be overthrown before modern science could come into being.

We must consider Burtt's thesis carefully, lest we judge it merely a reassertion of the traditional interpretation of the revival of learning in the Renaissance. In fact it was much more. First, instead of finding the cause of the new science in the repudiation of metaphysics and the adoption of an empirical methodology (by which one may undertake an exploration of nature's surface with little or no concern for underlying reality), Burtt, under the influence of German neo-Kantianism, ... found it in the replacement of one metaphysical system by another. Second, it follows that there is no room in Burtt's scheme for scientific progress by steady accumulation. Third, Burtt's conception of the new science (at its fundamental level) as a new world-view rather than simply an accumulation of knowledge allowed him to assign it a conclusion. In science viewed as process, one naturally supposes that the process will continue indefinitely. On such a view, modern science is a continuum dating from the acquisition of the proper method, with no conclusion in sight. *The creation of a world-view, however, can be concluded: the moment may come when the critical assumptions are in hand and the new world they define is in place.* According to Burtt, the mathematization of nature, begun in the sixteenth century, was completed with the work of Isaac Newton in the seventeenth. (Lindberg, 1990, p. 16; my italics)

A crucial point, however, is that Lindberg does not take account of Burtt's "Conclusion" where he went on to argue the need for the creation of yet another cosmology, or world-view.

At the time of writing *Metaphysical Foundations*, however, Burtt believed that the creation of such a metaphysics was beyond him (MF, p. 325). Nevertheless, the balance of his life's work was devoted to precisely this task. In calling for the development of a post-scientific metaphysic which reconciles the conflicts that have arisen between reason and spirit, or between fact and value, or science and religion, of course, Burtt is joining a long line of Western thinkers. After all, in one way or another, this can be seen as precisely the project of, among others, thinkers such as Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, and Hegel. Burtt's acute point, however, is that all of these other thinkers were operating from and *within* the presuppositions and metaphysics of modern science and thus were inherently precluded from achieving such a reconciliation.

Toward a New Metaphysics

Although Burtt did not believe that he was capable of developing a post-scientific metaphysics when he wrote *Metaphysical Foundations* in the early 1920s, he took an initial step toward this goal in two essays that he wrote in the mid-1920s. By this time,

he had left Columbia and was teaching at the University of Chicago. One essay is a paper that he read at the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy which was held at Harvard University in 1926. In this paper, entitled "Real vs. Abstract Evolution" (RAE), he draws attention to the importance of the subjective factor in the empirical method, so central to modern science, and argues that "empirical" results, in the final analysis, are always tainted by the observer's beliefs and prejudices. In many respects he anticipates many later critics of the empirical method. At this point, however, his primary purpose in focusing on the subjective factor in empirical method is to open the door to metaphysics, that is, to demonstrate that the naturalists, who had made the theory of evolution central to their philosophic orientation, cannot avoid metaphysics. The other essay is a chapter that he contributed to a memorial volume, published in 1927, commemorating the passing of 200 years since Isaac Newton's death.

Burt entitled his chapter "The Contemporary Significance of Newton's Metaphysics" (CSNM) and again takes up questions concerning metaphysics and empiricism because, he explains in an echo of his arguments in *Metaphysical Foundations*, Newton's metaphysics had been discarded in favour of his mathematics. We shall follow Burt's arguments closely in both these essays for several reasons. Firstly, unlike *Metaphysical Foundations*, they provide an insight into the path that he was steering between the various contemporary philosophical movements, such as realism, naturalism, and pragmatism—but, at the same time, remaining an idealist. Secondly, they provide an important early critique of aspects of modern science, yet have been overlooked by other scholars. Finally, by exploring the notions Burt develops in these essays we can sharpen the distinction between what we have called his humanist/pragmatist phase and his early thought. That is, this latter phase represents, a sharp disjunction from his earlier thought which has metaphysics as its main focus.

"Real vs. Abstract Evolution"

In the paper, "Real vs. Abstract Evolution," Burt begins by noting that empiricism as a method insists that (a) "whatever appears" is to be accepted without discount for subjective bias and prejudice, while (b), recognizing that any categorisation can be changed should future appearances prove the first category to be inadequate (RAE, p. 168). This understanding of empiricism, however, overlooks an equally important third point.

[For] ... whatever is found is to be accepted with discount *as it is found*, that is, that we shall respect not only the content of what appears but also the *manner and order in which it appears*. To violate the way in which the world is found is surely as unempirical [sic] as to violate the content revealed in the finding. In fact when we reach the metaphysical issues involved, content and order cannot be abstracted from each other. This principle is exceedingly simple, but its consequences are far reaching. (RAE, p. 168; Burt's italics)

In other words, the empirical method cannot be divorced from metaphysics. Indeed,

Burt claims that the main errors of past and current metaphysical systems are probably due to this third principle being ignored. To support his contention of the importance of this principle, Burt puts forward a new theory concerning the nature of time which, he suggests, could lead to a new approach to metaphysics.

Initially, Burt emphasizes that philosophers should not only take account of what *is* observed, but also *the way* in which it is observed (RAE, p. 168). That is, the empirical method ought to take account of the subjective factors inherent in the observer. If this is not done, a contradictory situation may occur: several sets of conflicting and irreconcilable results may be produced which, in turn, can only be verified or refuted by the further application of the empirical method. This is a vicious circle. But, we may ask, how can this circle ever be broken? For even if such subjective factors are taken into account we are still caught in the same dilemma: the verification or refutation is again tainted by subjective interests. An example of this dilemma is "the feud reverberating throughout the history of metaphysics between idealism and naturalism" (*ibid.*, pp. 168-9). Following Burt, the idealist, particularly in the ancient and medieval periods, can be seen to revel in the contemplation of large and inclusive meanings which seek to unify human existence and explain its relationship to the wider universe. In God, for instance, the idealist "sees the entire panorama of existence encompassed and articulated according to patterns of beauty and reason" (*ibid.*, p. 169). However, if the idealists took account of the empirical order two factors would force them to modify their scheme. One factor is that many people "fail to grasp these harmonious meanings, for whose pilgrimage, therefore, the city of eternal peace provides no actual goal" (*ibid.*). The other is that, in the idealists' own experience, these "meanings did not mark a beginning but a culmination; they were that toward which the world as [the idealist] found it was moving, not that out of which it initially arose" (*ibid.*). If the idealists had taken account of the doubt, contradiction, perplexity, and evil unresolved in the earlier stages of human existence, they would have had to respect the empirical order. But, as they did not take account of these factors, their metaphysical systems could never be refuted or verified.

However, in the modern era it is not only empiricism which has called idealism to account, but also naturalism. That is, while idealism contemplates, and has a preference for, a "reverent absorption in a unifying perfection," naturalism's preference is "the practical ambition to master events" (RAE, p. 169).

[N]aturalism, which asserts an order in many respects diametrically opposed to that of idealism, [is] equally remote from the one which empirical considerations would suggest. Instead of viewing things in relation to an enveloping and harmonizing Whole, naturalism views them in relation to the smaller units out of which they can be regarded as formed; it substitutes for the empirical order an order of genesis or ... an order expressing the combination of simple elements in the production of the complex grosser bodies of experience. (RAE, p. 169)

From a metaphysical viewpoint, naturalism's preference leads to a cosmic scheme in

which simple elements, conceived to have existed with an inherent set of laws in abstraction, progressively evolve, or emerge, into more complex units. In other words, it draws on the theory of evolution. Moreover, in an example of Burt's tendency to differentiate his thought from all contemporary schools, he notes that philosophers from all contemporary schools, including pragmatists, realists, and "even" idealists, were vying "with each other in their haste to accept the general hypothesis of emergent evolution" (*ibid.*, p. 170).

The problem with this theory, which he also calls "the doctrine of emergence," is that it is self-contradictory. When it is considered in the light of an empirical standard it can be neither refuted nor verified. It is self-contradictory because, when it claims that a higher level of existence emerges out of a lower level:

[We] imply on the one hand that we are trying to explain the higher in terms of the lower, and on the other that such an explanation is impossible. Explanation of the simple in terms of the complex is always easy—we need merely tell what is left out in the process of abstraction—but it is admitted on all hands that the unique quality characterizing a complex level cannot at all be predicted from the simpler level out of which it emerges. Consequently the notion of emergence in this form is at best useless; it means the attempt to establish an explanatory relationship where we frankly confess that none is to be found. (RAE, p. 170)

Moreover, we are told that:

[All] arises out of a matrix or primary level which is called Space-Time, or a whirl of electrons, and while we are wondering how these things of their own power can produce anything resembling the observable world, we discover that our metaphysician has kept a hidden solvent of all puzzles up his sleeve. We learn that he means by Space-Time or electrons not what the physicist means by these things, but magic entities equipped from the start, like the scholastic occult causes, with the highly complex ability to do precisely what we need to have them do. Space-Time, for example, is not merely the space and time of mechanics, but is endowed with a *nisus* toward all the higher levels, even deity itself. Can such manipulation of language free us from the charge of self-contradiction? (RAE, pp. 170-1)

Burt replies in the negative to his rhetorical question and notes that such manipulations of language only yield "the satisfaction of extending to apparent universality a mode of explanation to which our prejudice naturally inclines us" (*ibid.*, p. 171).

Secondly, the doctrine of emergence is unverifiable, Burt explains, because "it seeks to account for the genesis of experience itself, whereas the only way in which any theory can be tested is by appeal within experience" (RAE, p. 171). The mistake arises when we confuse the assumption that we can observe "the genesis of any particular individual's experience" with the assumption that our observation of "the genesis of experience at large" are one and the same "experience" (*ibid.*).

It is ... essential to note that any theory which pretends to explain experience is shown by that very fact to be unempirical. It cannot be refuted, because the only facts which might refute it are facts of experience; it can only be verified, as in the case of idealism, by those subject to the same psychological peculiarities. (RAE, p. 171)

This critique by Burt goes to the heart of a core element of the pragmatist doctrine,

namely, that "experience" was, in the final analysis, the only valid ground on which to test knowledge-claims. Burt also criticises other philosophical movements. As Burt states, idealism and naturalism, while respecting the content of the world as it is found, "substitute another order for the order in which it is found" (*ibid.*). The result is that the ultimate picture of the world they each put forward is based on prejudice and hence is empirically unverifiable. Metaphysics in this scenario becomes a war between subjective tastes.

Contemporary Epistemological Arguments: "A Hopeless Fray"

Burt judges this state of affairs among his contemporaries to be "a hopeless fray" (RAE, p. 171). He argues that it can only be resolved by adhering to "the empirical order of appearance" and "insisting on the same scrupulous faithfulness to the world of fact *as* it is found" in the same way that we treat "the content that is found" (*ibid.*, pp. 171-2). In other words, we need to take account not only of what *is* observed, but also the subjective factors inherent in *the way* in which it is observed. The first step, Burt continues, is to grasp "the fact that *empirically the past always emerges out of the present rather than the present out of the past*. It can be laid down as a general principle that the world as empirically revealed always begins in the present, and remains within it while expanding into the past and the future" (*ibid.*, p. 172; Burt's italics). This may sound "startlingly paradoxical," Burt allows, but because the opposite view to this principle is "ingrained in our thought-habits we never dream of questioning it" (*ibid.*). Or, to put it in words that Burt would use later in his career, we unconsciously hold the presupposition that *the present emerges out of the past*. However, as long as this remains an unexamined presupposition, we never see that, in fact, *the past emerges out of the present*. As his entire argument here is original and sows the seeds to his future thought, a careful examination of his explanation of this principle is in order.

It is absurd, Burt contends, to hold that any world-process that is empirically revealed and verifiable could begin in the remote past or remote future. For, logically "it would have to be on its way long before or after it is empirically there" (RAE, p. 172). Furthermore, he reasons:

Appeal to fact on such a matter may be unconventional and embarrassing, yet I beg of you to consider whether the world as actually revealed to any of you began in a remote past with Space-Time electrons, or whether these things did not emerge after the world had gone through many adventures and taken many shapes. Should anyone come forward and honestly affirm that his experienced world did begin with such metaphysical abstractions I should either secure his admittance to an asylum or surrender my whole case. But so confident am I that no experience is of this sort, that I am willing to affirm that real evolution, that is, evolution as empirically discovered, is not a movement from past to future—such a process is itself an emergent abstraction from the course of real evolution—it is evolution from the present into both the past and the future. The present is always empirically given, not the remote past as hypothesized by the cosmic atomist, not the remote future as envisioned by the religious seer. Such things are reached from the present. The world always takes shape from the present outward. It expands into the past as

knowledge of the past is needed to satisfy present desires; it expands into the future as grasp of recurrent regularities permits anticipation, prediction, and intelligent purpose. But it remains within the present all the while, in fact it only *generates a vastly larger present*. (RAE, p. 172; my italics)

Burt's next step is to draw a clear distinction between real evolution and abstract evolution, that is, between real time and the time of science. Abstract evolution, or the time of science, is the most abstract "of all dynamic abstractions[: it] does not characterize the world at the beginning, it only emerges when the expanding process of real time has gone far enough for the meaning of a successive continuity to be clearly seized and the habit acquired of fitting events into it" (ibid., p. 173). Real evolution, or real time, by contrast, "is thus not a temporal process if we mean thereby the time of physics; it is a more inclusive movement in which physical time will appear, as interest in anticipation and control takes definite form" (ibid.). This being so:

The appearance of abstract [scientific] time in the process is ... a *momentous occurrence*. For *when it really comes it comes all at once*, that is, when its meaning is grasped it is grasped in its entirety. This *signifies that the world*, in one of its individual perspectives, *has expanded to infinity*; all possible events, past and future, have become co-present in it; and any new occurrence, however remote in time, is a concretion within, not something in any respect externally added. (RAE, p. 173; my italics)

The point that Burt is making here is crucial to prepare us for our analysis of his theory of expanding awareness.

To speak of this experience of time as a "momentous occurrence" which "when it really comes it comes all at once [and thus] signifies that the world has expanded to infinity" would seem to be describing a mystical experience, or at least some notion of an experience of Ultimate Reality. This follows, if we understand such an experience to occur when, for the person involved, time and space lose their boundaries and their consciousness expands into infinity. In this experience, linear time disappears, the past and the future dissolve into the present moment. The Japanese philosopher D. T. Suzuki¹ in the Chapter entitled "Living in the Light of Eternity," in his work, *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist* [1957] (1959), associates such an experience with the experience of eternity. It is a "now-moment" (ibid., p. 82) which enables a person to experience eternity as "the absolute present ... where life asserts itself in all its fullness" (ibid., p. 83). Suzuki also describes it as a moment when the veil between heaven and earth is lifted. In this experience the relativity of temporal life is incorporated into the infinity of Ultimate Reality or the Eternal (ibid., p. 70f).

Although Burt was not to pursue his theory of time for many years—he was yet to go through his pragmatist/humanist phase—his discussion of it at the International Congress of Philosophy in 1926 demonstrates his early penchant to speculate on such metaphysical issues.

¹ As noted in Chapter 5 Suzuki and Burt came to know each other in the 1940s.

“A Subjective Idealist”

In light of Burt's speculations concerning his theory of time, it is not surprising that one contemporary commentator referred to him as representing the viewpoint of “subjective idealism.”¹ Burt himself anticipates that he would be accused of this—or worse. As he states in his paper, his colleagues may argue: “You [Burt] are either foolishly trapped in the egocentric predicament, or are at heart an outright solipsist, making yourself identical with God, and fancying that the evolution of your meager experience is equivalent to the history of the whole universe. There is an objective time-order which includes your private experiences as well as those of your parents and all other people; once you have grasped the notion of this order there is no longer any excuse for confusing the succession of your personal discoveries with the order in which ... all events in the real and common world take place” (*ibid.*, p. 175).

However, this potential criticism does not deter Burt from presenting his theory as representing a new and alternative approach to metaphysics. In his view, it highlights the “arbitrary contradictions” pertaining to the “dogmas of naturalism” (RAE, p. 173).

[These dogmas] attempt to reduce real evolution to abstract evolution, a process already under way in a preexperimental past; the form in which the world actually begins becomes a late product and (because of the impossibility of forecasting the complex when only the simple has been given), indeed, an accidental product, of that remote past. The actual beginning of the world, in fact every datum that is most indubitably certain and real, thus appears to be something that might never have been, the contingent effect of a dubious cause. Is any philosophical viewpoint more unnatural than this? (RAE, p. 173)

Following this critique of naturalism, Burt turns to the alternative approach to metaphysics that he is putting forward.

Burt's “New Metaphysics” and Whitehead's Philosophy

A significant aspect of his “new metaphysics,” Burt claims, is that “it extends radically the doctrine of perspectives as offered in Whitehead's philosophy into a systematic metaphysic” (RAE, p. 173). Although Burt does not elaborate on A. N. Whitehead's speculative philosophy in this paper, it would seem that Burt is referring to ideas that Whitehead expressed, firstly, in an essay entitled “Time” (Whitehead, 1927, p. 59f) which he read to the 1927 Conference some three days prior to Burt giving his own paper and, secondly, in his Chapter entitled “Time” in *Concept of Nature* (1920). In any event, Whitehead's ideas were influential in America. He had moved from England to take up a post at the Harvard Philosophy Department in 1924 (Kuklick, 1977, p. 413). At this time, moreover, his thought was in a period of transition. As Ivor Leclerc explains in *Whitehead's Metaphysics* (1958), in the earlier part of the twentieth century Whitehead

¹ This reference can be found in Sterling P. Lamprecht's commentary on the 27th Annual Meeting of the APA (*Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 23, No. 11, May 1926, p. 290). Lamprecht is referring to a paper that Burt delivered to this 1926 Meeting. There is no published record of this paper, but from Lamprecht's comments, it would seem to have expressed the same ideas as the paper Burt delivered to the Sixth International Conference.

had been preoccupied with the philosophical problems of modern science but, by the mid 1920s, a "vital shift" occurred in his centre of interest as he sought to develop a systematic metaphysic which could take account of the new physical theories, including the theory of relativity, which were developed from the 1890s onwards and which brought about "the complete breakdown of the Newtonian cosmology" (pp. 3-5).

Newtonian cosmology, we may recall, maintained that the fundamental categories of matter, space, and time were subject to laws which could be described in exact mathematical terms. The "vital shift" that occurred in Whitehead's thought was that science, in light of the new physical theories, needed to take account of the notion of change and, when this is done, it would be seen that the universe, that is, reality, itself is an ever changing "process" (ibid., p. 7f). This notion, at first glance, may seem merely to echo the ancient Heraclitus' notions of change. However, G. H. Mead, Burt's colleague at Chicago, in his essay "The Objective Reality of Perspectives" (which he read to the 1926 Sixth International Philosophy Conference), reveals it has more ramifications than Heraclitus' notions.

In general terms, following Mead, Whitehead posits nature as being "stratified into perspectives, whose intersections [which create the notion of time] constitute the creative advance of nature" (Mead, 1927, p. 76).

[In] Whitehead's philosophy of nature is this conception of nature as an organization of perspectives, which are there in nature. The conception of the perspective as [situated] there in nature is in a sense an unexpected donation by physical science to philosophy. They are not distorted perspectives of some [Platonic] perfect patterns, nor do they lie in [human] consciousness as selections among things whose reality is to be found in a noumenal world [as in the Kantian tradition]. They are in their interrelationship the nature that science knows. Biology has dealt with them in terms of forms and their environments, and in ecology deals with the organizations of environments, but it has conceded a world of physical particles in absolute space and time that is there in independence of any environment of an organism, of any perspective. Professor Whitehead generalizes the conception of organism to include any unitary structure, whose nature demands a period within which to be itself, which is therefore not only spatial but also a temporal structure, or a process. Any such structure stratifies nature by its intersection into its perspective, and differentiates its own permanent space and time from the general passage of events. Thus the world of the physical sciences is swept into the domain of organic environments, and there is no world of independent physical entities out of which the perspectives are merely selections. (Mead, 1927, pp. 76-7)

However, the notions that Mead ascribes to Whitehead in the above quotation were still in their formative stages in the latter's thought in 1927. He did not express them systematically until he published *Process and Reality* in 1929 and *Adventures of Ideas* in 1933.

In 1926, therefore, Burt was attempting to pre-empt Whitehead's own development of a systematic metaphysic. There is, however, a crucial difference between the philosophical orientation of Burt and Whitehead. Whitehead sought to develop a metaphysic which underpinned the new physical theories of modern science

whereas Burt sought to develop a metaphysic which transcended the whole notion of modern scientific knowledge. In other words, Whitehead remained within the basic presuppositions of modern science, whereas Burt sought to identify these presuppositions. As Burt noted in *Metaphysical Foundations*, he was determined to "go deeper" than Whitehead (MF, pp. 28-9).

Burt's "Harmony of Perspectives"

At the core of the new approach to metaphysics that Burt sought to promote at the 1926 Sixth International Philosophy Conference lies his determination to reinstate human beings to a central role in nature and the cosmos. As he clarifies, Whitehead's scheme maintains that a "perspective" is an event in nature and, as such, not dependent upon an intelligent organism. However, Burt contends, this scheme cannot escape the hidden presupposition of the prior necessity for an intelligent organism to posit such a scheme. In other words, the scheme presupposes the intelligence of a human being. Burt, therefore, contends that Whitehead's scheme needs to be modified. Thus, he proposes, it is necessary to understand the world as

... a harmony of perspectives, each of which finds its focus in an intelligent organism. Whatever is found empirically to happen always involves the compresence of an intelligent organism, and (which is more important metaphysically) the way in which it happens is, in the last analysis, the way in which it comes to play the part that it does play in the development of the perspectives or centers of experience through which it gains its place in the objective order that we call world. (RAE, p. 174; Burt's italics).

Hence, the "*ultimate metaphysical laws—ultimate because including all others and included by none—are accordingly the laws by which the harmony of all perspectives gains form and order as such in the perspectives themselves* (ibid.; Burt's italics). That is, because our experience of the world, which at any moment of time includes the past and future, is a harmony of all perspectives, it follows that a metaphysic which describes or explains this harmony will be the "ultimate metaphysic." It follows also that the "experience" of this harmony is not limited to the rational grasp of this ultimate metaphysic. It is a "momentous occurrence," and an experience of "the world expanded to infinity."

The significance for Burt of this "ultimate metaphysic" and the connection between it and real and abstract time, is as follows. Take a past event or situation in our lives, such as our birth, and ponder the implication that this was only an empirical event in the experience of our parents. Such an event does not become an event in our own lives until we develop a coherent world in which to apply dates to events that we experience (RAE, p. 174). Or, "in other words, my birth in abstract time does not occur in the real evolution of my experience till much else has happened in it" (ibid.). Real time is only ever the present, which is the only time in which we make empirical observations, whereas abstract time is that time in which past events occur. However, abstract time

can come into the present when we consider that all past events become "concretions within the whole span of time over which my experience now reaches through having grasped its meaning" (*ibid.*, pp. 174-5). These concretions "emerge as my perspective expands; in no sense do I empirically emerge out of them" (*ibid.*, p. 175).

Burt attempts to rebut any criticisms that may be made by other philosophers in relation to his approach to metaphysics. In part, his rebuttal is as follows:

(1) As regards the criticism of empirical method, that we must not confuse the order of discovery with the order of reality, I maintain earnestly that *the order of discovery is the order of reality, if we mean by reality something that can be empirically denoted and verified.*¹ This is so because the order of discovery includes every other order, as something which appears and takes definite shape within it. Moreover, if theories as to the order of the reality are not to be tested by the order of discovery, I see no possible way by which conflicting [epistemological] theories can be brought to court and the internecine [epistemological] war of philosophy ended.

(2) *The fact that ... the order of reality always does take shape as such in the order of discovery, in your experience and every other, is a true fact which cannot in honesty be omitted.*

(3) *... no past event becomes an empirical reality until it has taken its place in the order of discovery. For that in the end is what empirical reality must mean.* (RAE, p. 176; Burt's italics)

The idealist orientation in Burt's approach is now clearly evident. His "new metaphysic" seeks to maintain the pre-eminence of the subjective factor, or "the order of discovery," in any empirical reality or knowledge.

The Conflict Between Metaphysics and Empiricism

For a further, important, insight into the importance of metaphysics in Burt's early thought we turn to his essay entitled "The Contemporary Significance of Newton's Metaphysics." Once again, we find Burt preoccupied with metaphysics. As he states, he approaches Newton from a metaphysical standpoint with the aim of clarifying "his significance for contemporary reconstruction in metaphysics" (CSNM, p. 137). But, having made this point, Burt immediately comments: "Of course Newton's conscious reaction to metaphysics was one of vigorous opposition, as to a collection of quite unverifiable "hypotheses," but since no one can avoid ultimate assumptions of some sort he was, like most scientists, a metaphysician against his will" (*ibid.*). In other words, using Burt's later terminology, Newton was unconscious of his metaphysics.

Importantly, it is at this point that Burt for the first time in his early thought offers a definition of his understanding of metaphysics. Indeed, he goes further than this: Not only is it a definition but he claims it to be original in modern philosophy. In his own words:

¹ Here Burt anticipates aspects of ideas that were put forward later by Michael Polanyi and M. Merleau-Ponty. See for instance, Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* [1958] (1983), p. 18ff and M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), *passim*.

The central problem of metaphysics in modern times may be formulated thus: *If we take the empirical point of view as seriously as it deserves, in what sense is it possible to work out a science of the ultimate structure of the universe?* For, amid many variations of metaphysics it has always been concerned with some form of ultimate and inclusive science. To be sure, no metaphysician, so far as I know, has stated the problem in just these terms (though Kant's abstruse phraseology is not far from this in its purport), but it is what in point of fact the situation reduces to when we get our larger bearings. (CSNM, p. 137)

Burt's intention, therefore, is to take seriously the knowledge that the empirical method offers and to build it into "a science of the ultimate structure of the universe." Why is this a different approach, leaving aside his qualification in relation to Kant, to that of other metaphysicians? His explanation of why this is so is important because it summarizes his understanding of the problems facing modern metaphysics.

The difference, according to Burt, is that modern metaphysicians have, in general, renounced empiricism. Instead, they have embraced "some set of principles or other as being absolute and beyond the possibility of change" (CSNM, p. 137). Moreover:

The only variation is in the set of principles thus chosen as final and in the reasons assigned for believing them eternally fixed. In this, they have but followed the first systematic metaphysician, Aristotle, whose ultimate principles seem to have been derived from Greek grammar, and who naively assumed that thought must always and everywhere follow the rules of syntax of his native language.

In modern times:

The way in which this metaphysical renunciation of empiricism has taken place ... is well illustrated by the procedure of Kant. Kant was familiar enough with empirical science to realize perfectly well that if what we know is dictated by the empirical object, there can be nothing absolute in it, for the object's self-revelation is never final. But the distinction between logical thought and empirical fact, which he inherited from his metaphysical and scientific predecessors, and whose implications he tried to follow up in his early essays, came to his rescue. (CSNM, p. 137)

Thus Kant was able to devise his so-called Copernican revolution in philosophy, namely, "if the object must in certain ways conform to thought, rather than thought in all ways conform to the object" (*ibid.*, p. 138). In turn, this led him to posit, albeit limited to the noumenal world, a metaphysics which purported to "chart the ultimate structure of thought and pronounce objects of experience necessarily endowed with the qualities thus implied" (*ibid.*).

But what if Kant's scheme is flawed at the outset? That is, what if Kant's "structure of logical thought itself should prove not to be so absolute or unchangeable as the scheme presupposes?" (*ibid.*). Or, using Burt's later terminology, what if Kant built this scheme on unconscious basic presuppositions which may negate it at the outset? Indeed, in Burt's view, this is precisely what did occur.

Kant seems never to have considered this possibility; he lived at a time when the main rules of logic had come down practically untransformed from the days of Aristotle, and found himself able, by a little dexterous manipulation, to correlate with the central assumptions of mathematico-experimental science, which also had remained almost constant from the time of Galileo. The last hundred and fifty years

[i.e., prior to 1926] have of course witnessed the complete undermining of his foundations. The old logic has been purged of error and subsumed under still more general deductive principles; and the concepts of space, time, causality, and the like, which furnished the foundations of science for Newton and Kant, have all been abandoned, at least in their traditional form, and *science is still wandering in the dark* in search of dependable successors. (CSNM, p. 138; my italics)

The result of this revolution, Burt explains, is that metaphysicians who had been loyal to empiricism, and the rationalism that underpinned metaphysics, have come to deny the possibility of developing a metaphysical understanding of the universe.

[This situation] has been hastened by the resurgence of cosmic evolutionism [i.e., cosmic notions arising from Darwin's theory of evolution] in our day and its pact of alliance with empirical science; all things whatsoever, according to this viewpoint, are subject to change, growth, and decay, including the most general categories as well as the most transitory events. The outcome is of course that metaphysics came to seem quite incompatible with faithfulness to empirical fact. There appears to be nothing in the universe protected from change; there *is* no eternal structure of reality, from whence it follows at once that there is no science of it. (CSNM, p. 138; Burt's italics)

Thus Burt offers his perception of the difficulties facing metaphysics in modern times.

Philosophers today are still concerned with the same problem. Alasdair MacIntyre, for instance, in his recent book entitled *After Virtue* (1985), hypothesizes that a complete breakdown in objective standards has left humanity without any firm or objective anchor on which to make moral judgements. He asserts that "we are in a condition which almost nobody recognizes and which perhaps nobody at all can fully recognise" (p. 4). Richard Bernstein, in his book *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (1983) echoes much the same notion in his observation that there is a "growing apprehension" among many philosophers that "there may be nothing—not God, reason, philosophy, science, or poetry—that answers to and satisfies our longing for ultimate constraints, for a stable and reliable rock upon which we can secure our thought and action" (p. 19).

Yet these are precisely the points that Burt was making some fifty-five years earlier. He subsequently made his philosophic goal to resolve the situation, that is, to find this elusive "stable and reliable rock" on which human beings can secure their thought and action. Moreover, to discover this "rock," at least in his early and later thought, Burt, unlike so many of his contemporaries, did not turn to science and the scientific method. For, as he had argued in *Metaphysical Foundations*, the knowledge gained by science was limited to the material realm. It could say nothing meaningful about the mind or the spirit and thus he argued the need for a post-scientific metaphysic. As he states, science itself "is still wandering in the dark" in search of a valid metaphysic to justify its claims to knowledge. It is this metaphysic which would be an "ultimate science," that is, provide "ultimate knowledge" of the universe.

In taking this approach, Bernstein perhaps may describe Burt, at least at this early stage of his thought, as an "objectivist" because "at the heart of the objectivist's vision, and what makes sense of his or her passion, is the belief that there are or must be some

fixed, permanent constraints to which we can appeal and which are secure and stable” (ibid.). By contrast, at “the most profound level the relativist’s message is that there are no such basic constraints except those that we invent or temporally (and temporarily) accept. Relativists are suspicious of their opponents because, the relativists claim, all species of objectivism almost inevitably turn into vulgar or sophisticated forms of ethnocentrism in which some privileged understanding of rationality is falsely legitimated by claiming for it an unwarranted universality” (ibid.).

The Search for an Ultimate Metaphysical Principle

Burt’s ongoing concern to discover an ultimate metaphysical principle is evident in his essay concerning Newton’s metaphysics. He is adamant that we should not be content to accept the result, namely, that if everything in the universe is in a state of change, there is no eternal structure of reality. For, he argues, “if everything changes, then in the concept of change, at least, we have an ultimate metaphysical category which can be confidently affirmed of the universe, and all the consequences involved in the meaning of change can be developed by deductive logic and also applied with assurance to reality” (CSNM, p. 138). This approach, of course, is another way of turning the relativist’s argument back onto itself. It is another way of stating that, if *all* thought, action, and morality are relative to a particular age and culture, then relativism itself is, at its heart, an objective standard. But at this point in his career Burt’s concern is not with the notion of relativism *per se*. Rather he is concerned with the conflict between metaphysics and empiricism and the possibility that an emphasis on the category of change could bring about its resolution. He observes, in a reiteration of his approach in *Metaphysical Foundations*, that “any systematic defence of an ultimately empirical and practical point of view” ultimately reveals a hidden metaphysic “if we are willing to penetrate to the assumptions that form its core” (CSNM, p. 138). This being so, and “granted the validity, in the main, of the empirical point of view, in what sense is it possible to work out a science of the ultimate structure of the universe?” (ibid.).

In quest of this goal, Burt turns to Newton for help. He observes that Newton, as a scientist, is concerned with two factors: “(1) the relation between the empirical and the mathematical assumptions in science, and (2) the relation between the scientific categories and those of extra-scientific beliefs, such as religion” (ibid.). To support the first point, Burt refers to Newton’s *Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy* as follows:

The necessary rationalistic assumption of all thought, which opens the door to metaphysics if it is granted, is stated after Newton’s fashion in the first rule. “We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances.”¹ That is, we must assume that appearances form an ordered, intelligible system, and must not assume anything more. (CSNM, p. 138)

¹ As the source of his quote from Newton, Burt cites the following: *Principia*, Motte translation, 1803, ed., Vol. 2, p. 160f.

This being Newton's first rule, Burt proceeds to discuss the second, third and fourth rules and summarises the meaning of all the rules as follows:

The testimony of experiment is the ultimate criterion of truth, but experiment itself is impossible unless we assume that Nature is an intelligible order, that is, that its baffling complexity can be reduced to the simplicity of law. This assumption is therefore final and absolute. (CSNM, p. 139)

In words that would be familiar to Burt in later years, we could summarise Newton's rules thus: we must maintain as a basic presupposition the belief that there *is* an order in the universe which is intelligible to the human intellect by way of experiment and is able to be reduced to a law.

The universal qualities that interested Newton, however, are "those in virtue of which bodies become mathematically treatable" (*ibid.*). Yet, Burt notes, the problem for Newton is that he could not quantify all the qualities in such bodies. Hence, the "very quality of intelligible order itself, which points toward divine authorship, and the aesthetic and moral effects which flow from it, are not quantitative in nature; and [in addition] there are for Newton incorporeal realities, such as God and soul, whose behaviour is quite beyond the reach of mathematical formulation" (*ibid.*).

It is apparent, in Burt's view, therefore that Newton has opened the door to a metaphysics which takes account of the empirical point of view. In his own words:

Is it not apparent, not merely that there is one category which for every thinker must be absolutely final and unchangeable (that of intelligible order as above expressed) [sic], but also that other categories vary, so to speak, in the degree of their proximity to it; those nearest partaking most of its stability, those farther away more liable to change by the gnawing tooth of time. This may be illustrated by any category you choose, simply by following up its relations from this point of view. (CSNM, p. 139)

To exemplify this assertion Burt turns to the category of space. Scientific history discloses that, since the category of space was raised in Euclidean geometry, developments in mathematics have seen different meanings being attributed to it. For instance, "as soon as mathematics develops the notion of non-Euclidean spaces, and physicists discover facts that resist construction in terms of Euclidean space, the latter category tends to be supplanted by another (that of space in general), of which Euclidean is one species, constructed by adding further postulates" (*ibid.*).

The more specific these postulates, Burt reasons, so the core meaning of any category becomes ever more general and less liable to change. This follows if we understand that, each time a specific postulate is developed, it has thus differentiated itself from the core category and the more often this occurs, so more and more of the core category is stripped of meaning. Finally only the core category exists. Once this core category, in this case "space," is exposed in this manner, we are more likely to regard geometry as an unsatisfactory method of describing and explaining "space" rather than giving up the category itself. That is, in this event we would seek another method of describing "in quantitative ways that which possesses extension" (CSNM, p.

140). Also, the notion of “extensive quantity is more liable to change than quantity in general ... [and] finally the category of quantity would sooner change than the category of intelligible order or continuity” (ibid.). For, he elaborates, if the former category were to be no longer utilized,

... our interest in securing exact explanations would have to cease in favour of some alternative inconsistent with it—a possibility so remote as to seem practically impossible—while the latter category is absolute and unchangeable as a character of what presents itself as the world to anybody who wishes to think. For *it to change we should have had to cease thinking entirely, and therefore our world as an experienced object would no longer exist*. And we know nothing beyond experience. (CSNM, p. 140; my italics)

Thus, at this stage of his philosophical journey, metaphysics is “the science which reveals the nature and place of the intermediate categories between the absolute category reflected by the postulate which all thinkers have to make and the categories of the other sciences” (ibid.).

The Metaphysical Category of “Intelligible Order”

Because such a metaphysics affirms the notion of an ultimate postulate which is final and unchangeable, namely, the category of intelligible order, it will be the most stable science by comparison with other sciences. By analogy, the “part of the wheel nearest the hub moves less rapidly than the rim” (CSNM, p. 140). Importantly, he acknowledges that his definition restricts “metaphysics to ontology, or the ultimate theory of being” (ibid.). While he does not elaborate precisely why this is so, in light of his ideas expressed thus far and those in his later thought we can take it that he is relating its ontological character to meaning the branch of philosophy that deals (1) with the order and structure of reality in the broadest sense possible, using categories such as being/becoming, actuality/potentiality, real/apparent, change, time, existence/non-existence, essence, necessity, self-dependency, self-sufficiency, ultimate, and ground and (2) the study of the essential characteristics of being in itself, apart from the study of particular existing things. This latter point is born out by his own explanation that by ontology he means an “ultimate theory of being.”

Yet besides its ontological character, Burtt does not preclude another way to understand his approach to metaphysics, namely, that the absolute category itself is not, after all, ultimate in an absolute sense. It can change and grow as a thinker “continues to expand his experience and clarify his thought” (CSNM, p. 140). Nevertheless, “its basic meaning as logical continuity remains unchangeable through this enlargement, and that fact makes possible a science of metaphysics” (CSNM, p. 140). In other words, Burtt is positing an ultimate metaphysical category which, while maintaining a logical continuity, is inherently dynamic because it has its roots in the experience and thought of a thinker.

This approach to metaphysics is indeed new. Burtt has overthrown the previous

attempts by the ancient and modern metaphysicians to establish the validity of some absolute, immutable, metaphysical principle or principles on which they can ground being or claims to truth. In taking this approach he is also attempting to bridge the abyss between objectivism and relativism. His ultimate category is objective and, at the same time, relative and open to change because it has its roots in the subjective thought and experience of a thinker. At this point, however, we need not pursue an analysis of this notion of a dynamic metaphysic. We shall discuss it in further detail in relation to Burtt's later thought. Indeed, at this point in his thought Burtt himself does not pursue it further. It suffices therefore merely to observe it as revealing Burtt's early determination to re-establish a concrete foundation for metaphysics.

What *is* immediately important is that the essay on Newton's metaphysics represents the end of Burtt's early thought. It is a definitive end. For Burtt's attempt to reconcile the empirical method and metaphysics created a significant tension in his thought. To complicate matters, he also was struggling with another issue, theism. He was to resolve this conflict, albeit for some fifteen years only, by committing himself to pragmatism and humanism.

Chapter 4

Burt's Humanism and Pragmatism, 1929-1945

A Humanist Manifesto

The first public demonstration of Burt's commitment to humanism occurred in 1933 when he joined with a group of prominent American intellectuals, including John Dewey and John Herman Randall, to become a signatory on *A Humanist Manifesto*. The introductory comments in the *Manifesto* state:

The time has come for widespread recognition of the radical changes in religious beliefs throughout the modern world. The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. Science and economic change have disrupted the old beliefs. Religions the world over are under the necessity of coming to terms with new conditions created by a vastly increased knowledge and experience. In every field of human activity, the vital movement is now in the direction of a candid and explicit humanism. (*The New Humanist*, Vol. 6, May-June 1933, p. 1; reproduced in full Appendix D herein.)

After proceeding to make a trenchant case against traditional religious belief in the supernatural, the *Manifesto* lists fifteen tenets which make up its own creed. The crucial fifth tenet states:

Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values. ... [The] way to determine the existence and value of any and all realities is by means of intelligent inquiry and by the assessment of their relation to human needs. Religion must formulate its hopes and plans in the light of scientific spirit and method. (*ibid.*, p. 2)

Corliss Lamont, a leading humanist philosopher of this period, describes twentieth-century humanism as "a philosophy which rejects belief in the supernatural and which sets up as its supreme aim the happiness, freedom and progress of all humanity in this one and only life" (Lamont, 1974, p. 3).

Lamont, who studied for his doctorate (awarded in 1932) at Columbia under the supervision of F. J. E. Woodbridge some years after Burt, claims that his studies and research at Columbia led him "to adopt the general position of naturalistic Humanism" (*ibid.*, p. xi). He further asserts: "Humanism is simply another and more appealing name for the naturalism of Dewey, Woodbridge and others" (*ibid.*).

An interesting point, however, is that when Burt wrote *Metaphysical Foundations* as his doctoral thesis in the early 1920s under Woodbridge's supervision he did not adopt Dewey's and Woodbridge's naturalism. Indeed, Burt's idealist orientation in the early 1920s was diametrically opposed to the convictions of naturalism, particularly to naturalism's identification with the method and spirit of modern science. At this time, he was a strong theist, as his sermon at St Paul's reveals, and *Metaphysical Foundations* can be seen as a critique of science and a defence of theism. In this work he contends that modern science destroyed the meaningful place that humans had held in the

hierarchy of the ancient and medieval cosmos and laments that modern science had eliminated God from the universe (MF, p. 300). By the late 1920s, however, Burt was to succumb to the lure of Dewey's and Woodbridge's naturalism which, as Lamont notes, appeared in the guise of the "appealing" name "religious humanism."

Indeed, in light of his earlier critique of science in *Metaphysical Foundations*, we are faced with the enigma that Burt became a signatory to the *Humanist Manifesto* and thus affirmed its strong anti-theistic stance. This surely reveals a radical change had taken place in his thought. The roots of this change can be found in his book, *Religion in the Age of Science* (RAS), which Burt published in 1929 while teaching at the "Chicago School of Pragmatism." This work, which has been mostly ignored by scholarship, involves an examination of the possibility of achieving a reconciliation between science and religion. It is carried out, however, almost entirely from a humanist and pragmatist orientation. That is, he seeks to make religion subject to the values and ideals of science. This work heralds the beginning of his humanist phase, which lasted for some fifteen years, from the late 1920s until the mid 1940s. Evidence of Burt's close collaboration with other signatories of the *Manifesto* during this period can be found in the fact that John Herman Randall wrote the Foreword to Burt's *Religion in the Age of Science* and Lamont, while reflecting on the history of humanism, refers to Burt, along with others such as Sidney Hook, as being Dewey's "most brilliant" followers (Lamont, 1974, p. 25). However, although Randall wrote this Foreword in 1929, when Burt became a critic of humanism in the mid 1940s, Randall was to refer to him as a "Socratic gadfly" (Randall, 1946, p. 20f).

In this chapter we follow Burt's philosophic odyssey through this humanist/pragmatist phase. We call it alternatively his humanist or his pragmatist phase because to a greater or lesser extent humanist convictions, as Lamont notes, were also those of Deweyan pragmatism. Important also is the fact that the twentieth-century humanism to which Burt committed himself often called itself "religious humanism." This may seem a contradiction in terms in light of its anti-theistic stance, but as the philosopher Edwin H. Wilson, one of the signatories of the *Manifesto*, explains:

Religious Humanism, a term used in the *A Humanist Manifesto* of 1933, was based on the assumption that Humanism in a naturalistic frame is validly a religion; that all religions have been the pursuit of the ideal or the quest for the good life. The religions—natural and supernatural—are the efforts of men to be better than they are. They variously involve faith, aspiration, commitment, loyalty, hope and, sometimes, love. (Wilson, 1973, p. 15)

To achieve this task, religious humanism sought to limit the validation of values to the sphere of human experience. As the tenets of *Manifesto* declare, any notion of a supernatural or divine agency at work in human affairs is an erroneous belief. Any authority which claims to have a supernatural or divine mandate to establish values is a human institution claiming false authority (*The New Humanist*, Vol. 6, May-June 1933, pp. 2-3).

Indeed, the *Manifesto* not only eliminates “the distinction between the sacred and secular” but prescribes dogmatically that “there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural” (*ibid.*, p. 3). As Lamont contends, since for humanists “body and personality, including the mind, form an inseparable unity, there can be no conscious, personal immortality” (Lamont, 1973, p. 15).

Religion’s Contradictions

Religion in the Age of Science (1929) heralds Burt’s commitment to religious humanism. But if we were to expect a balanced discussion of religion and science in this work we would be disappointed. He confines his initial discussion of religion to notions such as Tertullian’s *credo quia absurdum* with its demand of “blind faith” and the inconsistency of mysticism (RAS, pp. 18-21). Indeed, keeping in mind that Burt had studied theology for many years, this narrow choice of religious issues—the question of faith—points to the radical change that occurred in his thought during the period between 1927 and 1929. We find, for instance, no mention in *Religion in the Age of Science* of metaphysics or his criticism that modern science had eliminated God from the cosmos. Both issues were important in his earlier works until 1927.

We now find Burt declaring that, as the age of reason progressed and human reason sought to understand the claims of religion, such attempts “oozed with contradiction” (RAS, p. 22). The source of this contradiction, according to Burt, is not related to the limitations of reason. Instead, it lies in the nature of religion’s claims to truth. As he states, human reason leads to “critical questioning as to the very nature of proof and the ultimate criterion of truth, and once such a basic question as this is clearly raised no answer in terms of [an appeal to] faith in external authority can possibly command assent” (*ibid.*, p. 23). Indeed, he seems to have decided the case for religion to be lost at the outset: “our concern is simply to establish the fact that because of the fundamental conditions under which human existence must be carried on, the ideal of flight into another world of values than those of ordinary sense-experience cannot really maintain itself unpoisoned” (*ibid.*, p. 21). With religion dispensed with in this brusque manner, he turns his attention to science and does not return to religion again until the final chapter—and then it is only to examine if any religious values can be salvaged by reconciling them with scientific values he holds to be non-negotiable.

Burt clarifies at the outset of *Religion in the Age of Science* that his project is not to defend the validity of religion. Rather his project is to understand why it is that both science and religion serve human needs and yet are in conflict. He also ponders if this conflict can be reconciled. It is “astonishing” in his view that some scientists can justify their religious faith by arguing that “the island of assured knowledge possessed by science is ever surrounded by an ocean of mystery” (RAS, p. 8). How can these scientists resolve the contradictions that inevitably arise?

Every generation sees some religious dogma surrendered because it conflicts with scientific truth. But no such retreat brings about a transformation in the relations of science and religion thoroughgoing enough to make future surrenders no longer necessary. And it is surely clear that until such a situation is reached religion and science have not been fully reconciled. (RAS, p. 6)

Addressing this problem Burttt firstly seeks to establish what science means and how it affects human life. If scientists are questioned about their understanding of science, he argues, they “will almost certainly point not to its results but to its method” (ibid.). They will attest that the essential characteristics of this method have been built up over the centuries and involve such matters as observation, experiments, verification, and the formation of hypotheses. In other words, they invoke the empirical method as a substitute for faith as a path to knowledge.

Science is Based on a Value

The “human importance of science,” Burttt declares, does not lie in either its specific discoveries or its method (RAS, p. 10). Instead, because science is a way of satisfying human need it has a value. This unique, or controlling, value is due to the nature and importance of the human needs that it satisfies. That is, it establishes “dependable knowledge of the relations of things, and such dependable knowledge is needed in the effort to satisfy any other [human] need” (ibid., p. 24). To establish these dependable relations, science posits the notion of “universal law.” By this he means “the notion that Professor Whitehead calls the instinctive faith of science ..., namely, the notion of the world as a system of *universal law*, which means ... that it is pictured as intrinsically responsive to the effort of intelligence, impartially exerted in the interest of social control” (RAS, p. 40). Burttt traces the development of this notion from the ancient Greeks, through the medieval era of Anselm and Aquinas and its association with the Hebrew notion of divine law, to its understanding in early modern science. At that point, the early scientific pioneers, while still believing in God, attempted to move their notion of God to the background in order to avoid the complicating issue of “final causes” in the field of physics (ibid., p. 42). This latter issue, central to ancient and medieval thought, sought to explain “the good ends for the sake of which events were supposed to take place and in terms of which they were in part to be explained” (ibid.).

The culmination of this historical development forms the basis for the *faith* of modern science. Indeed, the “boldness of the faith of modern science lies precisely in the fact that it insists on an ideal of intelligibility that spurns all limitations; for its implicit conviction [is that] there is nothing in nature, however capricious to ordinary observation, that is not at bottom reducible to the universality of law” (RAS, p. 46).¹

The ideal of science is to establish what is needed for the successful attainment of

¹ It could be argued that it is this same “faith” that underlies the contemporary effort, and remarkable popularity, of “chaos theory.” See, for instance, Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos* (1984).

any other ideal. ... [We] may put it in this form: the purpose of science is nothing other than human purpose itself become conscious of its universal needs. It is an interest in all other interests realizing itself as such and developing its appropriate feeling and technique. ... In particular, the unique conviction of modern times that the accidental is not ultimate in the structure of things, means in terms of our controlling valuations the feeling that this completely universalized purpose is under all circumstances, without exception, ... supremely important ... (RAS, pp. 48-9)

Having thus opened his position in relation to science—a position that is in stark contrast to his arguments in *Metaphysical Foundations*—Burt turns to a more detailed discussion of specific scientific values.

Tentativeness and Empiricism

An important value, in Burt's view, is science's notion of "tentativeness." To understand this notion it is necessary to understand empiricism and the importance of differentiating between "facts" and "preconceived opinions." As he explains, what "we call fact is always a selection among preconceived opinions. Fundamentally, we can no more disentangle ourselves from this necessity than could the most conservative of medieval students; what then does it really mean to speak of science as empirical and of an age vitally affected by science as an empirical age?" (RAS, p. 71). By way of answering this rhetorical question, he argues that, as a first step, we need to recognize as many of our own prejudices as is possible to minimize their interference with our judgement. The second step is to be open to new, creative ideas rather than maintain unquestioning loyalty to an inherited system of ideas.

To demonstrate these steps Burt refers to the experience of Galileo and early modern science. As is well known, when Galileo built his first telescope and discovered the satellites of Jupiter, he upset the authorities of his day because he went against what they regarded to be a "fact." However, Burt continues:

[Galileo's] observation was free, creative, and moved by an interest which found greater satisfaction in discovering something new and formulating its laws than in maintaining the revered authority of tradition. But the fundamentalist professors of his day who screwed up enough courage to come and peer through his machine—did they *see* the motions of these satellites in the same sense in which Galileo saw them? When we note how they return to their academic halls and continue to teach the now exploded astronomical ideas we can hardly say that they did. Their observation was so fully immersed in the attitude of loyalty to tradition that their sense organs could not attain to the wit of recognizing novelty. The thing seen *must* be something else than what it appeared to be, perhaps even a prank of the devil embarked upon to deceive them, if they could not justify their rejection to it in any more edifying and plausible fashion. Whatever they saw they saw through the kaleidoscope of ideas collected in the commentaries of Aristotle and the treatises of the church fathers, and any unexpected interloper simply could not register its existence. (RAS, p. 75; Burt's italics)

In other words, "facts" are never more than "preconceived opinion" (or, as he would say in his later thought, "unconscious basic presuppositions,") unless a thinker is prepared to criticize and go beyond "the traditional ideas with which all observation must begin" (*ibid.*, p. 74). Having thus differentiated between fact and preconceived

opinion, he returns to the notion of the tentativeness of scientific thinking.

A “baffling” difficulty facing thinkers prior to the advent of modern science was the problem of innovation or originality: “how anybody could have found anything out in the first place” (RAS, p. 76). This perplexity facing ancient and medieval thinkers, Burt contends, led them to situate the original source of knowledge either “in a previous state of existence or in the assumption of an omniscient God, from whom, either directly or indirectly, all human knowledge was derived” (*ibid.*). However, since the beginning of the scientific age, “the modern world has gradually been coming to a momentous self-revelation” (*ibid.*, p. 80). It is discovering its uncertainty about many matters and is giving up the desire for infallibility and finality. That is, the notion of scientific “hypotheses” enables scientists to acknowledge that they are uncertain of some question while they proceed to verify the truth or otherwise of an hypothesis. In other words, their hypotheses are tentative. It is “on this general point of tentativeness that the human meaning of empiricism and that of hypothesis entirely coincide” (*ibid.*, p. 89). Empiricism, Burt explains, “means tentativeness expressed in the specific activity of observation; hypothesis means precisely the same attitude expressed in the use of ideas drawn from the past to guide observation. They are the same purposes realized in two different ways” (*ibid.*).

A core difficulty for human beings, however, is that they find it difficult to surrender the idea of certainty (RAS, p. 89). To overcome this difficulty, Burt argues that the scientific method be applied to human thinking and thus bring about a universal “psychological transformation” (*ibid.*, p. 88). Because our preconceived opinions, or “ideas drawn from the past,” are always part of any knowledge claims, it is important to adopt an attitude of tentativeness towards these past ideas (*ibid.*, p. 89f). He contends that, in general, this has been the attitude of many modern scientists (but not people generally) and that the theory of evolution itself could not have been developed if this were not the case.

[Do] we ever consider the fact that our very readiness to explain things so universally in evolutionary terms reflects a psychological attitude that would have been quite impossible before the advent of modern science ...? The age of science is the age of conscious intellectual discovery, that is, the age in which it is realized that what was not known before can come to be known and how the miracle is to be performed. The ancient and mediæval world furnished by contrast an age in which nobody saw how it could be possible for anything which ... was not already known, by someone, at some time, to become known. (RAS, pp. 90-1)

Moreover, a presupposition these thinkers brought to knowledge claims was that there was, somewhere, a definite theory of reality: “If knowledge is somewhere finished and complete then reality must be finished also” (*ibid.*, p. 91). But once the method of modern science was developed, and particularly since the theory of evolution arose, the “suspicion gradually comes to prevail that reality itself is not finished” (*ibid.*, p. 93). In other words, reality is evolving, and at the same time our perceptions of it change.

Burt's proposal, therefore, is to focus on thinking, or human psychology, by applying science's notion of tentativeness to all the preconceived opinions that are brought to any knowledge claims. This is a tenuous proposal and would seem to lead to extreme scepticism. How does the notion of a dynamic reality support at least some objective and universal values which can guide human affairs? If all human thinking and all reality are treated tentatively then how is any knowledge ever arrived at? Although Burt does not raise these questions in this precise manner at this point of his career, they nevertheless are questions that he addressed in several ways during the remainder of his philosophic journey. Prior to *Religion in the Age of Science*, Burt swept this whole epistemological puzzle to one side and sought to understand, from a metaphysical viewpoint, *why* the puzzle arose in the first place. But here he enters the epistemological debate from a pragmatist viewpoint. In total contrast to his earlier orientation of metaphysical idealism, he is looking at the problem through the eyes of empiricism and modern science.

Science, for Burt, not only affected modern philosophy through its notion of tentativeness but also through its use of mathematics to achieve exactitude. The need, which he calls a "virtue," "to apply mathematics everywhere in science is ... an aspect of the desire to secure results that transcend individual biases ...; it is that desire expressing itself in the form of utter candor and strict intellectual integrity" (RAS, p. 89). But how can we be confident that the scientific values of tentativeness and exactitude do in fact reflect and serve important human needs? The answer to this question, Burt contends, can be found in the impact that modern science has had on philosophy. Philosophers throughout the ages have shown the propensity to grasp the deep issues of their age and, furthermore, can influence and foresee future developments.

The essence of mediæval life was prophesied by the increasing tendency in the later ancient philosophy to appeal to a divine being as the source of all good and the standard of all truth. Likewise the chief tendencies of the modern period to date are clearly glimpsed in the Renaissance philosophers whose visions came to full clarity in men like Bacon and Descartes. Accordingly it ought to be possible by examining the trend of contemporary philosophy to test the power and promise of science; is philosophy more and more emphasizing the characteristics we have been expounding, or is it passing them by as transitory and superficial? (RAS, p. 100)

To test the truth of this question he examines the philosophical movements of pragmatism and realism, the most influential contemporary movements in America. Before this examination, however, he undertakes a discussion of idealism because, although no longer influential, it is the movement which both pragmatism and realism oppose. This discussion is important for two reasons. This is the first of Burt's writings in which he enters directly into the epistemological debates that occupied his contemporaries. Previously, he had attempted to remain above the "hopeless fray"—as he called these debates (RAE, p. 171). Secondly, it reveals not only the extent to which he had become critical of idealism but also how committed he had become to pragmatism.

Critique of Idealism

Burttt notes that it is important to understand *why* philosophers disagree in their fundamental understanding of the universe. This arises, in his view, because their “explanatory activity is necessarily affected by dominant interests which differ in different individuals” (RAS, p. 101). As expressed in his later terminology, their thinking is a reflection of their unconscious presuppositions, valuations, and motivations. Thus, to understand their different interpretations of the universe, it is necessary to “penetrate the motives ruling their thinking” (*ibid.*). Turning to the philosophy of idealism, whose notions had been very influential in the Western world (including, he neglects to mention, in his own thought), he selects the ideas of a “well-known idealist,” Professor R. F. Hoernlé (1880-1943), as exemplifying the contemporary idealist standpoint (*ibid.*, p. 102).¹

Burttt quotes the following passage from Hoernlé’s *Idealism* (1926) as being expressive of the idealist standpoint.

There is a deep-seated need in the human mind, the roots of which strike far beneath all other needs and interests. This is *the need to feel at home in the universe*. From this source spring all philosophies and all religions, though it is only in the most highly developed philosophies and religions that we have become reflectively conscious of this need and of what it demands for its satisfaction. It is a need which at once demands to understand the universe and to approve,—nay, to love it. It wants at once truth and perfection. It wants what men mean when they say ‘God.’ (RAS, p. 102; my italics)

Hoernlé’s statement, of course, succinctly describes Burttt’s orientation when he wrote *Metaphysical Foundations*. One of his central arguments in that treatise, as summarized in its Conclusion, is that the modern scientific world-view no longer permits human beings “to feel at home in the universe” and he thus calls for a new post-scientific metaphysic which achieves this goal.

However, by the time he wrote *Religion in the Age of Science* in 1929 Burttt was to argue quite differently. In this work he argues that it would be “superfluous to point out the violent contradiction” between the tentativeness of the modern scientific mind and the pre-scientific assumption that the human mind can establish with “unshakeable certainty” a set of ideas “so firmly grounded in the structure of things that we need never fear their loss of validity” (RAS, p. 103). He also understands why Hoernlé (and we assume Burttt’s own earlier idealism) conflates the source of both religion and philosophy and their coming together in idealism. “Religion seeks salvation, by which it

¹Hoernlé studied at Oxford before going to Harvard to teach philosophy when Josiah Royce was still influential. During this period he was influenced by Royce’s Absolute Idealism and thereafter remained a committed idealist (Hoernlé, 1932, p. 301). Writing in 1932, Hoernlé, who by then had taken the chair in Philosophy at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, observed that only “a mere handful” of American philosophers would consider themselves to be an “Idealist” (*ibid.*, p. 301). Hoernlé makes this claim in the book *Contemporary Idealism in America* (1932), and is no doubt referring to its other ten contributors, a list of whose names includes Edgar S. Brightman, Wilbur M. Urban, and William E. Hocking. In South Africa, Hoernlé attempted to solve South Africa’s race problem and served as President of the South African Institute of Race Relations (Hoernlé, 1932, p. xiii).

has meant an eternal at-homeness in the world in indissoluble union with God, who ultimately controls all things in the interest of a loving plan. So ... a given type [idealism] of philosophy means by philosophical understanding the winning of such an assurance, the type in question is thereby revealed as the metaphysic of religion" (ibid.). This interpretation of the nature of the universe, however, means that philosophy is subservient to the religious world-view.

[Thus it] is no mere coincidence—the fact on the one hand that the prescientific era was the era in which religious motives were almost universally uppermost in men's thinking, and the fact that the same era was characterized by the clear dominance of idealism in philosophical circles. From this standpoint all reality is explained as ultimately caught up in a single purposive unity, embracing the harmony of our highest ideals of perfection in a single existent being, who is on that account either personal or superpersonal and becomes an object of worship as well as a final principle of explanation. Philosophizing culminates in the faith that reality can only exist and only be known through God. (RAS, p. 104)

Moreover, he continues, the fact that religion endures in the era of science may explain why idealism continued to exercise influence until the early twentieth century.

Due to the vigorous growth of pragmatism and realism, however, Burt claims that there now "is hardly an idealist to be found" in America (RAS, p. 104). In his view, pragmatism and realism owed their influence to their unbounded faith in the efficacy of the scientific method to understand the world. By contrast, idealism was hampered in this quest due to its basic presupposition that any true understanding of the world must find it "a scene of perfection and consequently render it an object of love or worship" (ibid., p. 105). Yet, while pragmatism and realism maintain a common opposition towards idealism on these points, they diverge on other points. That Burt was heavily influenced by pragmatism is shown in the following passage.

The fundamental motive of pragmatism is to universalize the tentativeness, the readiness for continued change and growth, which ... is one of the pervasive qualities of scientific thinking. For pragmatism the realm of knowledge as well as the world of reality is always and essentially incomplete. Time is strenuously real, in its obvious and universal character of creation, of the ceaseless production of novelty. Nothing is fixed, all is process. ... The pragmatist distrusts any distinction between the world of human experience and any supposed world beyond it. If experience is eternally changing, then reality is changing, for reality is experience. (RAS, p. 107)

Human knowledge, therefore, can never be final. It is always inherently in the process of change and correction. This being so, how can the existence of an omniscient being, such as an all-knowing God, or an eternal realm of meaning, be postulated? (RAS, pp. 107-8). The pragmatist surrenders any "craving for certainty," is open to the discoveries of science, and constantly gives up old ideas while seeking the new. For Burt the works of pragmatists William James and John Dewey exemplify this attitude.

Why Realism Diverges from Pragmatism

Realism diverges from pragmatism, in Burt's view, due to its insistence on the exactitude of science and, in particular, its use of mathematical articulation to express

its values (RAS, p. 111). The importance of mathematics for philosophical realism has its roots in the change that occurred in world-views during the rise of modern science. In the medieval period the world-view was dominated by the teleological notion of a final purpose to life whereas in the modern era no such final purpose was posited. The future became open and dynamic, limited only by the new knowledge that could be gained of the physical universe. As a consequence:

Disputes arose as to the meaning of explanatory concepts about which nobody had previously raised critical question. Modern science met this situation by abjuring purposive explanations in favor of empirical observation and exact experiment; realism tries to secure the same precise, objective result by renouncing the consideration of concepts in their relation to some overarching totality like the Absolute or God and dissolving them into the more elementary meanings of which their total meaning is composed. It is from this procedure that the phrase *logical atomism* had been used to describe the philosophy of the school. (RAS, p. 115; Burt's italics)

The British thinkers, G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, in Burt's view, are examples of the realist, or logical atomist, philosophy (*ibid.*, p. 116f).

Burt's foregoing arguments affirming the validity of pragmatism—for that is what they are—could be seen as a justification by him of his adoption of the pragmatist and humanist orientation. However, he seems to have remained ambivalent concerning his abandonment of theism. Why otherwise does he continue to emphasize the conflict between science and religion other than to justify pragmatism and humanism, albeit in the guise of science, unless he is insecure about their adequacy?

The Root of the Conflict between Science and Religion

After reviewing the various movements within contemporary philosophy, Burt identifies two critical historical periods which, in his view, lie at the root of the conflict between science and religion. "One was the overthrow, by Copernican astronomy, of the whole mediæval cosmology which at the beginning of modern times comprised the set of ideas about the world in terms of which men's religious experience developed, and which produced an intellectual and emotional struggle of centuries before men learned to be religious again in the face of an infinite universe in which our earth is but a speck of cosmic dust. The second was the downfall of man's supposedly privileged position in the biological world by the Darwinian theory of evolution whose later stages are present to our very eyes" (RAS, pp. 121-2). Furthermore, due to "the application of scientific canons of historical research to the study of the Bible" believers (which includes some scientists) are striving to reconcile their faith with developments in science. Thus the question "pathetically asked" by "religious folk" in their "feverish eagerness to remain loyal to as much of the ancient faith" is "How much can I still believe?" (*ibid.*, p. 122).

Burt argues, however, that any attempt to achieve this reconciliation will be fruitless unless fundamental attitudes concerning ideals and values, or as he would put it

later in his career, basic presuppositions, valuations, and motivations, are uncovered. As he explains, the “ideal of science is that of intellectual honesty and social verifiability, pursued in an atmosphere of complete tentativeness and mutual cooperation” (RAS, p. 123). By contrast, the “ideal of religion has been that of personal salvation, attained by inflexible loyalty to some revered leader, institution, or doctrine” (ibid.). The challenge therefore, is to reconcile these two opposing ideals. This is especially difficult because he is adamant that the ideals of science cannot be surrendered. As he states, “reconciliation cannot be secured by abandoning science in favor of religion” (ibid., p. 123). Also unacceptable is the facile rationale of dichotomising experience—in which science and religion are held to express wholly separate spheres of experience. This is merely a detour, and never truly resolves the conflict (ibid., p. 125). Hence, we “must either dichotomize experience and accept the sway of science over some matters while adopting a contrary attitude in dealing with others, or else we must find some way of remoulding religion into harmony with the interests of science” (ibid., p. 124).

The only alternative, in Burt's view, is for religion to undergo a fundamental change and to become more “harmonious with the spirit of science” (RAS, p. 125). He expresses some skepticism that this can be done. If so, will anything remain that is normally identified with religion? To answer this question he undertakes a brief historical survey of what he considers to be the core aspects of religion. This being his first systematic statement on his understanding of religion, it offers an interesting comparison to the importance of religion in his later thought. We need to keep in mind, moreover, that he is writing this survey in 1929 while still in the “Chicago School of Pragmatism,” some years prior to his move to Cornell in 1933 where he first began teaching a course in the philosophy of religion.

Religion: The Worship of an Object of Power

Religion, for Burt, often has its beginning “with an object of worship characterized mainly by power, its development is marked by the will to characterize that object more and more by goodness and to surrender whatever elements in the conception are found inconsistent with the ideal of goodness” (RAS, p. 125). In the early stages of this development, prior to the establishment of an intellectual and moral culture, the gods are “primarily invisible beings who are feared and placated because it is on their power that the welfare of the community depends” (RAS, p. 125-6). It is this fear which, in turn, becomes the source of wisdom.

[For as] intelligence grows and moral consciousness becomes more live and active, ... fear inevitably becomes transcended as the central motive in man's relation to the gods. To become intelligent and morally self-conscious means that one can no longer bow down in abject fear, terrified by external power. For such realization of individual selfhood spells emancipation from the control of mere force; as the Stoics so vigorously insisted, the man who has attained this realization can be mastered by nothing outside of him except so far as he is willing to yield to its sway. ... Such a man is free, superior to the whole world of external power. He has

discovered something of ultimate value within, attested by his sense of self-respect and dignity ... The consequence for religion of this emancipation is momentous. (RAS, p. 126)

This follows because the relationship based on the power of the deity, or the human fear of retribution by the deity, is broken.

Once this fear is broken people may thereafter worship only what their own moral consciousness dictates is good. Along with this change in the relationship between humans and the god or the gods is the gradual development of a moral self-consciousness which ascribes to the deity "ideal qualities in addition to those of power, and the equally gradual elimination of elements hopelessly warring with these ideal qualities" (RAS, p. 127). The deity "becomes more and more essentially the ideal of human character" (*ibid.*). This follows (a) because humans who have gained freedom from the fear of power discover that their moral self-hood becomes the thing of ultimate worth and so (b) they then can experience the emotions of reverence, awe, and worship before only that which enshrines such an ideal of goodness.

The process of the moral redefining of deities, Burt holds, is a central element in the history of religions. The great spiritual leaders, to whom we refer as prophets, are examples of this moralizing process. To give a specific example of this process at work in the history of the Judeo-Christian religion he turns to the book of Job:

[A] piece of spiritual writing like the book of Job is of intense interest as revealing a temporary insistence on full moral selfhood in a man's relation to God. Through most of the drama Job refuses to surrender his immediate consciousness of integrity in face of the pain and haunting fear that preyed upon him. In the end, of course, he gave way and succumbed to the display of divine power magnificently paraded before him; he did what many pious souls have done in similar straits in all ages. On pleas of finite ignorance of many things he surrendered the one item of certain knowledge of which one would think he must have been master, namely his own consciousness of what was morally good and hence alone worthy of worship. (RAS, pp. 127-8)

In other words, Job's story is an attempt by a human being to assert his own moral self-hood in a struggle with a deity but, in the end, succumbs to the divine power.

Power and Love Combine in the Early Christian Era

The Jewish people have continued to maintain a belief in Yahweh as God of power and might. The early Christians, however, as part of their breaking away from the mainstream of Judaism, introduced a new understanding of this deity, the notion that Yahweh was also a *loving* God. Due to this change, the relationship between the deity and human beings was at least ameliorated (RAS, p. 128). That is, although full emancipation was not achieved from the fear that human beings were subject and dependent upon an all-powerful God, this was a significant change (*ibid.*). But its legacy is that even today there is a tendency for some Christians to insist that their deity is a God of love and goodness while, at the same time, playing it safe by worshipping a God of power and might so as to avoid the possibility of divine punishment.

The shape in which this has usually been justified by theologians takes its cue from the argument of the book of Job. In order to save the belief that a good God ultimately controls the entire creation and thus excuses the frequent displays of immoral energy in nature, it is maintained that God's goodness is different from that of men and of a higher sort, unintelligible to human minds. It is right to worship him, though we should be careful about imitating him. The hideous consequence of this hypocritical makeshift on religious practice and character is too evident ... to need comment. (RAS, p. 131)

John Stuart Mill and Bertrand Russell are Burt's examples of two human beings who have let go of the fear of divine power.

In the case of Russell, Burt turns to his essay entitled *A Free Man's Worship*:¹

When we have realized that Power is largely bad, that man, with his knowledge of good and evil, is but a helpless atom in a world which has no such knowledge, the choice is again presented to us: Shall we worship Force, or shall we worship Goodness? Shall our God exist and be evil, or shall he be recognized as the creation of our own conscience? (RAS, p. 130-1)

In the case of Mill, "a man fully conscious of his moral selfhood," Burt turns to Mill's assertion that he would prefer to go to hell rather than worship and call a being "good" if, by this term good, he did not apply it to his fellow human beings (RAS, pp. 131-2).² Mill, unlike Job, will not allow his moral self-hood to succumb to a divine power. In his view, any deity is only as "good" as a good human being.

For Burt, therefore, conceptions of an object of divine worship change with the understanding of the universe. Moreover, he asserts, people come to the notion that their "object of worship should be identical with ... the supreme ideal of goodness which that age has been able to conceive" (RAS, p. 132). For: "Whatever else God is, he must be good; in Platonic language, he must be the Good. He must embody moral perfection. Anything short of this will in the nature of the case be inadequate and transitory" (ibid.). While this conception of God may be important in religion, Burt notes however that it still does not assist in achieving a reconciliation between religion and science. The problem is that, at a very deep level, the religious person is inflexible and does not have an attitude of tentativeness towards the deity or certain tenets of their faith (RAS, pp. 133-7).

Why Liberal Christianity Fails to Resolve the Conflict

In an important digression, Burt explains why "liberal Christianity" cannot provide an answer for this problem. From his undergraduate days onward, through his time at Union Theological Seminary, and into the early 1920s, Burt was a liberal Christian (MPP, p. 430). His "digression" in *Religion in the Age of Science*, therefore, allows us an insight into why he no longer maintained this religious orientation.

Liberal Christianity, in Burt's view, failed to achieve a reconciliation between

¹ Burt cites as his source for this reference: Bertrand Russell, *A Free Man's Worship (Mysticism and Logic)*, (New York, 1918), p. 48ff. The text giving Burt's quote can also be found in Bertrand Russell's *Mysticism and Logic, including a Free Man's Worship*, (Unwin Paperbacks, London, 1986), pp. 11-12.

² Burt cites as his source for this reference: J. S. Mill: *Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 102.

science and religion because it remained captive to the long Christian tradition and an ongoing commitment to a powerful deity who rules the cosmos.

The vigor of our attachment to this tradition, the loneliness and cosmic weakness which even the most daring souls appear to feel when withdrawn from its support, furnish the most astounding testimony both to the might of the human craving for an absolute focus of certainty and to the real grandeur of the ideas achieved in that prophetic past ... But the free soul must emancipate itself from worship of the past, however great its contribution to our moral life, just as it must rise beyond the worship of any other external power. (RAS, p. 133)

In many respects Burt's comments here echo his theory of time as expressed in his early thought. Because we always construct the past in the present, the past is part of the present. "An ideal of perfection can never reside in the past, it can never be embodied in anything already achieved. A moral self can never worship any merely past revelation of divinity" (*ibid.*). Thus we can speculate that Burt's break with liberal Christianity, in part, has its roots in his theory of time. He could no longer worship a deity, however good, who was embodied in the past: "there can never be anything absolute in past tradition; that which has already been realized in the way of spiritual attainment exists for it as a means in the pursuit of the good, it can never be itself identified with that good" (RAS, p. 133).

Burt's "moral self" must discover and identify with whatever human goodness pertains in the present. This orientation, of course, echoes the standpoint of religious humanism. Because liberal Christianity has failed to make the "ultimate sacrifice" by letting go of its belief in a divinity who lived in the past, it is incapable of achieving a reconciliation with science (*ibid.*). Clearly, by this time, Burt himself has made the "ultimate sacrifice." Due to his commitment to humanism he has let go of his belief in a divine power at work in human affairs.

Religion in Conflict with Itself

In any event, for Burt religion conflicts not only with science but with itself (RAS, p. 136.). If religious people seriously accept that love is the greatest thing in the world, then their inflexibility in maintaining religious beliefs precludes them from truly loving their neighbour (*ibid.*, p. 137). This is nowhere more evident than when religious people attempt to convert their neighbour to a particular dogma rather than simply accepting and assisting their neighbour without qualification.

If my love is sincere ... my attitude must be one of entire tentativeness toward even the noblest ideas and the most appealing emotions that come to me from my own particular heritage, for only so can I be entirely ready ... to appreciate the real nature of the religious puzzles that disturb my neighbour

If it be really true ... that he that abideth in love abideth in God and God in him, [then] the gospels wrestle with inner conflict; it can hardly also be insisted upon that God is uniquely revealed in any particular historic individual. How far he is so can only be discovered in the pilgrimage of a given soul by the extent to which reference to that individual actually proves of spiritual illumination. (RAS, p. 138)

If this notion of tentativeness in respect to their beliefs was adopted by the world's religions, Burttt believes that it would open the door to some form of a world unity among religions—a goal that became an important element in his later thought.

Hence, a resolution of the conflicts that exist within religion itself is necessarily prior to its reconciliation with science. The path to this reconciliation, in Burttt's view, requires religion to forego its inflexible insistence on the truth of a particular dogma and instead to adopt an attitude of tentativeness to its own and all other dogmas. If it succeeded in this goal it then would be truly practicing what it preaches, that is, it would be putting love into practice. As he states: "In our discovery of that element in religion which keeps it in perennial conflict with science and in contradiction to its own deepest insights we have at the same time laid bare the separative poison that has made religion a source of war, persecution, and racial antagonism around the world" (RAS, p. 139). Then, in a statement that reveals for the first time Burttt's appreciation of Eastern religions, he states:

This poison is especially virulent in the Western world, where concern for one's own salvation ... has been a far stronger motive than concern to appreciate the spiritual needs of other peoples and to cooperate unselfishly in their satisfaction. Though Eastern religions have not nourished the latter they have been less apt to become a nuisance on account of the former. (RAS, pp. 139-140)

Burttt also makes a personally revealing observation concerning the activity of Western missionaries preaching the Christian gospel of love to foreign peoples: "There is indeed something uncanny about a missionary sallying forth to persuade foreign peoples to believe some historic doctrine about love, when if he vibrated with the higher music of his own gospel his activity would be something quite different and far more humane" (RAS, p. 140).

This criticism of missionary activity is especially interesting when it is recalled that his father was a Christian missionary in China for many decades and was still there at the time Burttt published *Religion in the Age of Science*. Burttt, the humanist, does not approve of his father's missionary activity. It is noteworthy that Burttt has made this criticism of missionaries immediately following his mention of Eastern religions. Although he gives no reason for making this connection, it demonstrates that the two matters are intertwined in his thought.

Religion Must Learn what Love Means from Science

Having thus established his case for the obstacles to a reconciliation between religion and science, Burttt proposes a provocative way to overcome it. Indeed, his surprising proposal to resolve the conflict between science and religion is diametrically opposed to the critical notions he expresses in relation to science in his earlier thought. Instead, he now argues that religion needs to transform itself by learning from science, of all things, how to practice *love*. In his own words, religion must learn from science "the fundamental lesson of what sincere and intelligent love means" (RAS, p. 140). By the

practice of “intelligent love,” he means that religion needs to practice the orientation of tentativeness and flexibility, central to the scientific method, in respect to its claims concerning religious truth.

After tracing the source “intelligent love” that he ascribes to modern science back to the early Christian era, Burt contends:

Science ... proves itself in the modern world the true, if unconscious, heir of the best deposit of early Western religion. It is at this central point that religion as it might be and science as it already is converge into one, namely at the point of their brooding ideal and informing love. Love in religion is but the extension to the whole of life in all its phases and moods of the zeal for social universality and the attitude of live freedom and unflinching honesty that characterize science in its search for a dependable explanation of things. Religion will find itself in the modern world when it envisions its object of worship in terms that square with the human values for which science stands. (RAS, pp. 140-1)

Such a reconciliation between religion and science would satisfy “the deepest need of the modern world” (*ibid.*, p. 141). On one hand, science fulfills the human need to discover laws which can be applied to problems in experience. On the other hand, religion is necessary to fulfill the human need “to feel the glory of the world in the order it reveals as a system of means through which shines the ideal of good” which gives meaning to human experience (RAS, p. 141). In other words, the religious experience of feeling “the glory of the world” brings an important *emotional* element to science.

Scientific research, in Burt’s view, is “cold and impartial” and needs to be “suffused with emotion” (which is a religious experience) to give it “the warmth and beauty without which it could gain no deeper hold upon our deeper selves” (*ibid.*).

[Scientific research] must not merely form an intellectually justified object of worship but actually attract to itself our feelings of reverence and awe. Otherwise personality in its wholeness cannot be unified without it. That love may furnish such an object is amply attested by literature and art as well as religion. Or, putting the matter another way, it is that conception of supreme value as surrounding itself with the thrill of romantic attachment instead of merely guiding scientific research, that constitutes religious experience as opposed to the experience of cold enquiry. (RAS, p. 141)

Followers of traditional religion, Burt concedes, may reject his notion of turning the ideal of science into an object of worship, perhaps largely because it is not possible to personify this ideal in the same heroic, reverential or supramundane manner as religious people in the past have done (*ibid.*, p. 142).

Although belief in Jesus of Nazareth has long been a source of solace and joy for many “weak and troubled souls” in the Western world, such belief, in Burt’s view, must be given up whenever it conflicts with a “greater love” as exemplified by the ideal of science (RAS, p. 142). The worship of this ideal does not, however, lack personality. For the “good that can be worshipped by an intelligent moral self” is personified in that existent self, and allows that person to realize an ever deeper development of their character “toward its perfection” (RAS, p. 142). In the now commonplace psychological vocabularies of self-development or actualization, this moral self would pursue a path

of self-realization.

To resolve the conflict between science and religion, therefore, Burt has centered the human religious impulse in the emotions. He seeks to transfer a person's emotional focus away from a historical personality that has been deified and onto the ideal of science. The person who achieves such a transfer will thus internalize the object of worship within the moral self. Burt also notes that, although the exercise of reason has in many respects been the source of the conflict between science and religion, this process of transference requires the ongoing work and discipline of reason. For it is reason that compels, albeit slowly, "our feelings to grow, and to attach themselves to more adequate objects" (RAS, p. 143). In other words, this process takes place in a dialectic between reason and the emotions. As reason is brought to bear on an object that is the focus of a religious emotion, so its inadequacies to serve present human needs become apparent and we abandon this object in favor of one that provides richer goods. This process "must continue till we come deeply and habitually to prize readiness to transcend any previous emotional absorption more than the most stirring emotional experience itself" (ibid., p. 144). Religious people will forego any dogmatic assumptions concerning the existence or reality of God and, moreover, will forego even the concept of a universal God. Any claim concerning the reality of a universal God is self-refuting: it inherently makes God less than universal (RAS, p. 152). Hence, it is better "to be like God than to insist verbally on his reality" and "to love [rather] than to fulminate some dogma about love" (ibid., p. 147). Or, as he also puts it: "Better a church of atheists ... than a church of theistic obscurantists or hypocrites" (ibid., p. 145).

Clearly Burt has undergone a radical change in his orientation since his sermon at St Paul's church in New York in 1920. But it is a change which carries its own contradictions. The "tentativeness" of the scientific method upon which he places such emphasis is contradictory. One cannot, in the final analysis, be tentative about tentativeness. For where does one stop being tentative about tentativeness? One becomes lost in a vicious circle and, paradoxically, this entrapment is itself not tentative. The only escape is, at some point, to cease being tentative.

Secondly, his assertion that "love" can be experienced in the practice of the scientific ideal under the discipline of reason is also open to serious question. There would seem to be overwhelming evidence that the powerful emotion of love will not allow itself to be subject to reason—a fact that Burt acknowledges in his later thought. Thirdly, on Burt's own account in *Metaphysical Foundations*, the empirical method, on which modern science makes its claims to truth, has its source in human consciousness—a realm that is beyond the reach of this method. Science can thus only refer to partial realities and partial truths. This follows because human consciousness is part of reality and yet science can say nothing meaningful about it. This being so, how can science be a substitute for God, as an "ideal," when it can say nothing meaningful

about its own ultimate source? Science, when it is clothed in this humanist garb of an “ideal,” would seem little more than a false god uttering partial truths about partial realities with no insight into its own origins or source. Drawing on *Metaphysical Foundations*, such utterances would always be in mathematical terms that seek to quantify reality. It thus focuses on quantity rather than quality. It is difficult to comprehend how such an impersonal ideal, limited to utterances that quantify, could be a solace for “weak and troubled souls.”

Religion in the Age of Science can be seen, therefore, as an attempt by Burt to provide a philosophical background for many of the notions that were later expressed in the tenets of “religious humanism.” It strives to put human beings, rather than God, at the center of the universe and to clothe science, whose method is somehow going to resolve all human problems, in the garb of religion—after religion has been reduced to merely an emotion which experiences the awe and majesty of the universe.

The Influence of Dewey’s Pragmatism

While *Religion in the Age of Science* can be viewed as a treatise supporting religious humanism, many of its ideas are derived from pragmatism, particularly from John Dewey’s form of pragmatism. Indeed, in some respects, the treatise is an extension of Dewey’s ideas. During this period, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Burt was heavily influenced by Dewey. Dewey held that the future of religion, rather than being centered on the worship of deity, would center on, and have faith in, human intelligence, particularly through the practice of science, to improve human interests and goods and to bring these into reality.¹ A distinct difference between their thought, however, was that Dewey, in general, was highly critical of traditional religion,² whereas Burt sought a reconciliation between religion and science.

This important difference aside, however, we require an insight into factors in Dewey’s thought that influenced Burt because, although he later left the pragmatist camp, they were to exercise a subtle effect on his later thought. For this insight we can turn, firstly, to an essay, entitled “Two Basic Issues in the Problem of Meaning and Truth” (BPMT), that Burt contributed to a volume of essays published in 1929 on the occasion of John Dewey’s seventieth birthday. Twenty-nine other philosophers

¹ See for example a series of essays that John Dewey wrote around the same period in *John Dewey, The Later Works, Volume 5: 1929-1930 Essays*, Edit. by Jo Ann Boydston, Intr. by Paul Kurtz, Southern Illinois University Press, 1988. See particularly: “What Humanism Means to Me,” “What I Believe,” and “Social Change and its Human Direction” and Kurtz’s Introduction pp. xxxi-xxxii.

² In Dewey’s view, as Burt explains, religion had failed to fulfil its social responsibility by providing more social goods. Instead: “It has protected its ideas against criticism and reconstruction in man’s growing experience by demanding adherence to dogmatic creeds; it has set up its own social institutions exercising coercive authority and perpetuating outworn traditions. By losing its living sense of the religious, and becoming thus an aggregate of religions, it has engendered a harrowing conflict — between superstitious beliefs handed down from the past and the growing knowledge of science, between the moral rules proper to search for justice and charity in an ancient social order and the need for a new vision of the moral possibilities of man in the radically changed world of today” (CDT, p. 412).

contributed to this volume, including Sidney Hook, John H. Randall, F. J. E. Woodbridge, George Mead, and James Tufts, all of whom were close associates of Burt. Secondly, we can turn to the only other article that Burt wrote specifically on Dewey's thought, namely, "The Core of Dewey's Way of Thinking" (CDT), which he contributed to a symposium which re-assessed Dewey's thought at the annual meeting of the APA in 1959. Although Burt wrote this latter article some thirty years after the first, it is to our advantage to view his two specific statements on Dewey in one reading.

In the first of these articles, Burt examines "two questions which must be answered clearly in any tenable theory of the nature of meaning, with particular reference to the meaning of the very important concept of truth" (BPMT, p. 66). His purpose is to determine "the essential epistemological difference between realism and pragmatism ... [and] between the Jamesian and Deweyan types of pragmatism" (*ibid.*). Thus this essay, like *Religion in the Age of Science* is one of the few occasions in Burt's thought where he directly enters into, as he called them in *Metaphysical Foundations*, the "epistemological puzzles" that occupied his contemporaries. He initiates his discussion by observing that there are basic differences of conviction between philosophers in relation to questions concerning meaning. But, he questions, does not the history of philosophy disclose that the most basic difference relates to "the view on one hand that our appeal is to an external structure involving no reference to the mind or organism interested in determining the meaning, and the view, on the other hand, that the meaning cannot be determined without such a reference?" (*ibid.*). He expands this question to suggest that "the issue is whether the meaning is to be construed in terms of the properties or structure of the object whose meaning is in question, or whether it should be expressed in terms of what is done about the object by the observer who is interested in discovering the meaning" (*ibid.*, pp. 66-7). Philosophy, he notes, has traditionally followed the former procedure in two prominent forms.

Realism and Logical Atomism

The first form owes its influence to Aristotelian logic. Aristotle's influence found expression in the theory of definition which holds that the meaning of a substance, and differences of properties, are stated in the form of a hierarchical structure of genera and species. This structure, Burt states, was an extension of our common-sense way of analysing the relations of objects (BPMT, p. 67). In the early modern period the Aristotelian form was supplanted by a second form, the notion of mathematical order. Mathematical rationalism would give the meaning of anything by determining "its location and motion in the geometrical field in terms of which God created the world" (*ibid.*). Moreover, the realistic school "in general adheres to the same essential assumption, though with a broader and more critically developed notion of the mathematical or logical order, and with sparse references to divine creation" (*ibid.*). As

he elaborates, for realists:

[To] state the meaning of anything is to analyze it into its logical simples, whose relations are determined in terms of logical presupposition. If *a* presupposes *d*, while *d* does not presuppose *a*, then *d* is a more ultimate and elementary concept than *a*. By pursuing the analysis in the direction of logical simplicity we sooner or later reach elements whose concepts resist further analysis, and the structure revealed by these elements furnishes the ultimate meaning of the concept analyzed. The realists follow the main trend of modern science in characterizing this ultimate structure as a mathematico-logical order. All other things presuppose mathematical simples, while the latter presuppose nothing beyond themselves. In all of this *there is no appeal to the interests or actions of the person engaged in carrying out the analysis, these being supposed quite irrelevant to the structure in terms of which meaning is to be found.* (BPMT, p. 67; my italics)

A comment on the foregoing passage is in order. While the realists utilise the concept “presupposition” to pursue an analysis in the direction of logical simplicity, in his later thought Burt develops a different approach, particularly in his theory of expanding awareness. In this theory he utilises the concept presupposition to pursue an analysis of the beliefs, or assumptions, of various philosophical movements and religions with the purpose, unlike the realist, of demonstrating that the interests or actions of a person carrying out an analysis *are* relevant to any analysis. That is, Burt’s starting point for analysis is where the realist finishes. The realist stops at “mathematical simples” whereas Burt starts by asking what basic presuppositions are at work in a philosopher’s belief system which make him or her believe that knowledge gained in this manner is true knowledge. He started this approach in *Metaphysical Foundations* by identifying the presuppositions underlying the scientific world-view and arguing that, while they could explain *how* things acted in the spatio-temporal realm, they could not adequately explain the nature of human meaning and consciousness. In his humanist phase, however, he joins with the pragmatists to maintain that the method of science can, after all, provide a full, rather than a partial, truth. At this juncture though, it is enough for us to note that, at this stage of his development, Burt was fully aware of the realist method of analysis.

Burt’s next step is to claim that the type of doctrine encompassed in the realist world-view is supported by two forces. The first is the habit of common-sense. For the sake of survival we begin our mental life by being preoccupied with outward, rather than inward, needs (BPMT, pp. 67-8). The second is that modern science has built on this foundation of common-sense and considerably extended its scope. Realism thus turned to science as a source of truth and, in doing so, broke away from the medieval world-view with its teleological emphasis on Aristotelian “final causes” and human destiny. This emphasis, the realists believe, tended to distort efforts to understand and predict occurrences in nature because such occurrences somehow had to comply with subjective human factors. Hence, because the scientific method has “attained approximate success in uncovering systems of occurrences that can be exactly

formulated without any appeal to any subjective factor, we may easily understand why realistic philosophers distrust the introduction of references to anything smacking of subjectivism, feeling that it is ... an unscientific retrogression and likely [to be a] ... harmful reading of the universe in terms congenial to human interest" (*ibid.*, p. 68). Indeed, for the realist, "the important thing ... is to extend this scientific hatred of final causes to philosophic discussions" in order to eliminate, what was in their view, any notion of subjectivism.

Idols of the Mind

The roots of the position contrary to that of the realists may be expressed in Protagoras' saying: "Man is the measure of all things". In early modern philosophy, Francis Bacon expanded this notion by drawing attention to "the idols of the mind" whose effect on human thinking could be minimized but not eliminated entirely (BPMT, p. 68). In Bacon's own words, these "idols and false notions" are "inherent in human nature" and hence "all perceptions both of the senses and the mind bear reference to man and not to the universe ... [which means that] the human mind resembles those uneven mirrors which impart their own properties to different objects, from which rays are emitted and distort and disfigure them" (Bacon, *Novum Organum* [1620] (1952), p. 109). Interestingly, Bacon's "idols of the mind" bear a close resemblance to the meaning that Burt gives to basic presuppositions, valuations, and motivations in his later thought.

Burt does acknowledge that it is far from original to note that "man is the measure of all things" or that thinking is affected by subjective interests or the interests of various groups. However, he does claim that:

It is a novel and important thing, so far as my reading of the history of philosophy goes, to affirm that this effect is sufficiently central to demand recognition in our interpretation of the very foundation processes of logic, to hold that thus objective universality of meaning and truth becomes an ideal of logical value to be approximated rather than a factual structure to be claimed, and to interpret the ultimate meaning of all methodological tools in the light of the ethical principle which thus determines the difference between sound and unsound logic. (BPMT, pp. 78-9)

This is an important claim by Burt and one that, in one way or another and particularly through his theory of expanding awareness, he made for the remainder of his career. One of his important philosophical goals is to demonstrate that any claims to objectivity made by reason or logic are inevitably flawed by subjective factors.

At this point in his philosophic journey, however, Burt is concerned primarily to refute realism's claim that logic is able to achieve objective truth. In pursuit of this goal he refers to the realist's respect for the scientific method, not for purposes of criticism, but to make an important distinction between realism and pragmatism. As he explains, the pragmatist agrees with the realist in affirming the achievements of science and in seeking to avoid teleological beliefs concerning human destiny (BPMT, p. 69). But, while the realists may attempt to eliminate teleology, they unconsciously maintain a

“teleological belief that the pragmatist deeply distrusts” (ibid.). As he explains:

Let us revert to the realist’s procedure of determining the meaning of a concept by analyzing it into simple constituents fixed by the relation of presupposition. What right have we to assume, asks the pragmatist [i.e., Burt], that such notions as this procedure involves are as unambiguous and self-justifying as the method of logical atomism assumes? Do the facts of the history of philosophy show that we can really transcend our variable biases at will and lay hold of an external structure of meaning that is common to all of us? The answer candor compels him to make is “No.” (BPMT, p. 69)

That is, the realist is maintaining as a teleological belief the notion that there is a final explanation for things and that the human mind can achieve access to a universal “external structure of meaning” (ibid.). By contrast, the pragmatist maintains that the realist’s method cannot really transcend subjective biases and achieve access to a universal and external structure of meaning.

How Pragmatism Diverges from Realism

The pragmatist therefore surrenders the teleological faith of realism and affirms that the choice of presuppositions that a realist brings to the analytic method is subjective. This criticism Burt was to maintain throughout his later career as various other analytic movements rose and fell, especially logical positivism and the school of ordinary language.¹ In other words, for the pragmatist the meaning of a concept is dependent upon internal, rather than external, factors. Burt gives the following explanation for the issues raised here.

God was a simple being for the medieval and early modern rationalists, whereas for contemporary realists the concept of such an entity presents itself as highly complex, far indeed from an ultimate product of analysis. Indeed, many members of the [realist] school would be inclined to question whether such an inclusive notion is a legitimate concept at all. If we conceive the nature of explanation in the terms expressed by the scholastic dictum that the cause must be equal to the effect, “*aut formaliter aut eminenter*,” then the relation of presupposition will lead in exactly the opposite direction to that assumed by the present-day realist—it will mean that every other concept presupposes that of God, while the latter presupposes nothing further. This conception seemed so natural to Descartes that after reaching the most thoroughgoing state of scepticism possible he made use of it without critical question as directly known “by natural light”; it is an essential principle in Spinoza’s theory of explanation if we interpret “*eminenter*” in terms of the idea of perfection; ... But it is rejected by all who ... follow without reservation the trend of modern science in rejecting final causality as a tool of explanation. (BPMT, pp. 69-70)

Realism’s contradiction, therefore, is that it professes to adopt and support the method of science, which rejects any notion of final causes, and yet its analytic method presupposes some final concept, for instance “God,” which is beyond analysis.

Subjective Factors Crucial

This contradiction leads Burt to elaborate on the reasons why we cannot discount the influence and reaction of the observer when we seek to understand the differences

¹ See particularly his essay, “The Philosophy of Man as All-Embracing Philosophy,” *The Philosophical Forum*, (Volume 11, No. 2, Winter 1970-1971).

between the meaning of things.

How else can the difference be objectively accounted for? They cannot be stated in terms of the external structure of the object, for it is precisely differences in that external structure that they affirm. They must point to differences in the organism dealing with the object, and ... the meaning of the object itself involves in part the behavior of the organism whose attention is focused upon it. For in that case a statement of meaning in terms of external structure alone will not be complete; by recognizing that it means what it is taken to mean because of some characteristic of the observer we accept the obligation to call attention to that characteristic of the observer in order to render the statement objective. Otherwise we are leaving it a matter of personal idiosyncrasy, partially camouflaged by dogmatic claims to universality. (BPMT, p. 70)

In other words, the final source of knowledge claims lies in the experience and thinking of the person making the claim.

If the differences between meaning can be accounted for by the subjective experience of individuals, then, in Burt's view, "the truth of an idea becomes identical with its [verification] in the experience of those for whom the idea had been problematic" (BPMT, p. 70). Hence, even though there may be "some structure of reality entirely external to our individual thinking" and into which we may seek an insight, we must never assume that we have attained an absolute insight (*ibid.*). For any vision of reality that we may achieve is still seriously limited by subjective factors in our individual thinking. That is: "Our notion of a world transcending our own perspective is still a notion rooted to that perspective and no other. To suppose otherwise is to suppose that we can jump out of our skins and entirely swallow up the experience of others by a magic and omnivorous gulp" (*ibid.*).

It may seem that Burt, in his critique of realism, is adopting the standpoint of subjective idealism by maintaining that reality is dependent upon subjective factors in an individual's thinking. However, while it may have this implication, this is not his intention. Instead, he is preparing the ground for a discussion concerning a split in pragmatism that had arisen due to the differences between William James and John Dewey in relation to truth claims. For James, "when anyone faces a live, forced, and momentous option between two hypotheses that cannot be decided on intellectual grounds (by which James means, it cannot be decided by appeal to overt physical data) he is justified in believing the hypothesis that is most satisfying to his emotions" (*ibid.*, p. 73). Thus, when confronted with a question such as the existence or non-existence of God, if it is emotionally satisfying to believe in such a divine being then this is a correct belief. The problem with this approach, Burt points out, is that the meanings of terms and claims to truth will be varied depending upon an individual's emotions at a given time, and science will not tolerate such a situation (*ibid.*, p. 74). But, for James, the meaning of any concept is always subjective and so there can be inconsistent elements in the meaning of the same term. Yet, as Burt observes, "if we erect a theory of meaning or truth which simply justifies this individualism ... we can make no social

progress in our thinking” (ibid.) Indeed, James’ notions bring about “the complete negation of the scientific spirit” (ibid., p. 71). If we ask why this is so, Burttt declares that:

the answer must be given in ethical terms. We feel that meaning and truth carry the implication of universality, that a certain social responsibility is bound up with them, that, in short, concepts *ought* to mean the same thing to all minds, and that if any statement is to be called true it *ought* to be possible for any interested person to verify it as such. A concept may, at present, take some assertion to be true that I take to be false, but if so, we *ought* to devise a technique of verification that will determine ... [questions concerning] these conflicting claims and definitely refute one or the other of them. It is perhaps the very essence of the scientific attitude to make this ethical postulate. (BPMT, p. 75; Burttt’s italics)

Once this view is accepted Burttt holds that ethical considerations will always restrict claims to the meaning or truth of concepts. Or, to put this another way, any claim concerning the truth or meaning of a concept which does not take account of this ethical consideration “cannot be regarded as having any relation to meaning or truth” (ibid.).

An Ethical Postulate at the Root of Science

This is a significant claim by Burttt. He is claiming that, at the root of science, an ethical postulate arises from the fact that it subjects truth claims to universal verification or falsification. That is, science anticipates that minds everywhere *ought* to be able to verify or falsify its claims. However, it seems to be a contentious notion to clothe science in the garb of ethics merely because it has this universal implication. Science may develop a sophisticated gas oven to be used for genocide, and the effectiveness of its operations may be able to be universally verified or falsified. Is the construction and use of this oven ethical? No. Science and ethics, therefore, cannot be conflated as Burttt would have it. While science relies on universal verification or falsification for its claims to truth, ethical claims must look to considerations other than this for justification.

In any event, Burttt’s argument is that science, in the use of its empirical method, uses mathematics and appeals to external data to support or refute hypotheses which, in turn, “give meaning and truth social universality” (BPMT, p. 76). He contends that he is applying Dewey’s doctrine that “scientific method [of empiricism] is the method of all right thinking and that philosophies claiming either private or super-scientific access to the truth are misusing the latter term” (ibid., p. 77). However, he takes issue with Dewey’s use of the term “empiricism:”

Professor Dewey is an empiricist, but he is not merely what that word means in the histories of modern philosophy and science. He is an empiricist because, and in so far as, the empirical method is instrumental to the realization of co-operative ends in the work of science and philosophy. He is a rationalist too in so far as the procedures congenial to rationalism are indispensable aids in the same reflective process as socially used. But this is to affirm that the essence of [Dewey’s method] ... is neither empiricism or rationalism, nor any other traditional *ism*—it is the functioning consciously within a method of co-operative ends. (BPMT, p. 78)

Thus, as part of his conclusion to his 1929 essay, Burttt coins a new term, namely *co-*

operationists, which he suggests may be more appropriate to describe Dewey's method. In his view, this term would carry a social implication over and above the meaning commonly attributed to empiricism by philosophers and scientists (*ibid.*).¹

Burt's 1959 Essay on Dewey

Burt, of course, was under Dewey's spell (MPP, p. 430) when he wrote his 1929 essay. However, by the time he wrote the essay, "The Core of Dewey's Way of Thinking" (CDT), in 1959 this spell was broken. Thus, this essay offers a different perspective on Burt's perception of Dewey's pragmatism. He opens his discussion by claiming that Dewey's thought, early in his career, underwent a drastic revolution. Dewey abandoned his neo-Hegelian philosophical viewpoint in the 1890s and spent "the greater part of a decade before his mind worked its way to a new unity" (CDT, p. 401). In much the same way, we have seen that Burt also underwent a "drastic revolution" in the late 1920s as his early idealist orientation gave way to Deweyan pragmatism. In any event, Dewey's revolution resulted in a commitment to the democratic ideal and to ensuring that philosophy assisted all people to achieve equal access to social goods. Burt claims that Dewey gave his viewpoint its most trenchant expression in *Experience and Nature* (1925): "Nothing but the best ... is good enough for man."² In Dewey's mind this expression had a universal connotation. He believed that all humanity ought to have access to a "democratic education and the freedom it can bring" (*ibid.*, p. 402).

This commitment soon proved to be inconsistent with Dewey's Hegelianism. The conflict was particularly evident in the case of Hegelian ethical theory as interpreted by

¹ This notion is closely linked to Burt's notion of "co-operative philosophy," or "theory of democratic co-operation," which occupied his thought during the 1930s and 1940s. These notions obliged a thinker to be open to competing ideas from various philosophies and to endeavor to synthesize them into some new coherent form (MPP, pp. 430 & 435). This theory evolved in his three editions (each significantly rewritten and, in total, involving over two thousand pages) of *Principles and Problems of Right Thinking* (1928, 1931, 1946). However, the only place where Burt expresses it in a definite form is in the Chapter entitled "Cooperative Evaluation" in the 1946 edition. I have included a brief exposition of these ideas in Appendix E. Many of the ideas that Burt expresses in his theory of democratic cooperation may be seen to anticipate John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* [1971] (1978). As it is not our immediate purpose to investigate *all* of Burt's ideas, investigation of the possible connection between Burt's theory of democratic cooperation and the thought of other thinkers can be left for future scholarship. In Burt's case, after discovering the difficulty in synthesizing contradictory ideas, he did not persevere with his theory of democratic cooperation (MPP, p. 430). Although he does not state it explicitly (nowhere does he refer to his "theory" of democratic cooperation or his "theory" of expanding awareness) the reason that he did not persevere is because, drawing on psychoanalytic theory, he slowly came to the realization during the 1940s and 1950s that ideas (basic presuppositions) have their roots in a thinker's, usually unconscious, emotions. Hence, the key to achieving a synthesis between ideas lay in thinkers becoming aware of these emotions and the influence they exert on their basic presuppositions. It is this notion, combined with ideas from the East, which led him to develop his theory of expanding awareness. Importantly, however, both theories (i.e., the theory of democratic cooperation and the theory of expanding awareness) had the same goal: the development of philosophy which could lead to the formation of a world community. Thus, this notion was his driving motivation throughout his life, beginning with his sermon at St Paul's ("the world must move toward international brotherhood"), through his humanist phase ("The goal of humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good. Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world" (14th Tenet)), and, as we shall see, into his later and final thought.

² Burt gives the following reference for this citation: First edition (Chicago, 1925, p. 412).

idealist philosophers such as Green, Bradley, and Samuel Alexander. According to these philosophers the central task of ethical theory was “to determine the nature of the supreme end, the true ideal of human perfection” (CDT, p. 402). The difficulty was that such a perspective turned attention away from, rather than toward, “the concrete problems of moral experience” (ibid.). In his view, moral philosophy ought to address these more immediate problems and thus offer individuals and society a way of deciding between right and wrong when confronted with choice between different modes of action. As he saw it, “human experience is a progressive reconstruction of ends as well as a selection of means for the realization of ends already accepted, and the vital task of moral philosophy is to provide a method by which men may guide their reflection in performing this two-fold task” (ibid., p. 403). Referring to Dewey’s *The Study of Ethics* (1897), Burt states that “the general criterion of rightness and wrongness which applies to any moral situation is ‘found in the fact that some acts tend to narrow the self, to introduce friction into it, to weaken its power, and in various ways to *disintegrate* it, while other acts tend to expand, invigorate, harmonize, and in general to organize the self’” (ibid., p. 404).¹

Due to the emphasis that Dewey placed on moral issues, Burt believes Dewey can be situated in the Western philosophic moral tradition (CDT, p. 405). This “vigorous tradition” began with Socrates and Plato and includes other great thinkers such as Spinoza and Kant: “One must never forget ... that Spinoza’s comprehensive work was written as a system of *Ethics*, and that Kant wrote his *Critique of Pure Reason* to clear the metaphysical and epistemological ground for his moral and social philosophy” (ibid., pp. 405-6). When Dewey’s philosophy is approached from this viewpoint, Burt argues, it reveals that a central principle is at work in it, namely, the notion of *responsibility*. He emphasizes that the meaning he gives to the term “responsibility” is not the limited one that it has in the philosophy of law or even traditional moral philosophy. His intention is to give it a far broader meaning. As he explains, sometime around 1890 the idea must have dawned on Dewey that “*all human action, including thinking as an important part of action, has consequences; and that the vital difference which men in general and philosophers especially are concerned about is whether responsibility for those consequences is accepted or not*” (ibid., p. 406; Burt’s italics).

The earlier Utilitarians, such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, Burt notes, had also emphasized the importance of responsibility. However, for them it only “played a derivative and limited role: Moral thinkers are primarily responsible for guiding the reform of social institutions so that men and women who are missing their opportunity for happiness will no longer do so. ... [The] Utilitarian viewpoint also implied that everyone is responsible for acting in such a way as to serve the greatest

¹ Burt cites Dewey thus: *The Study of Ethics* (Ann Arbor, 1897, p. 22).

number, but this responsibility never occupied for long the center of the stage nor were its perplexing implications and problems systematically faced” (CDT, p. 407). Dewey, on the other hand, made the notion of responsibility central to human life and human action. Once Dewey had this insight concerning the principle of responsibility, he applied it to problems in the areas of ethics, social philosophy and logic. Burt notes that the general thrust of Dewey’s approach in the first two areas was to develop a moral philosophy which served the interests of common men and women rather than the interests of an aristocratic class (CDT, p. 407).

Another important element in Dewey’s approach, Burt contends, was his emphasis on human intelligence and its role as an “instrument” in human action. It is for this reason that Dewey’s orientation is often referred to as “instrumentalism.” For Dewey, the “major task of human life is to develop the power of intelligent foresight of consequences in every kind of situation; the essential task of philosophy is to clarify the conditions that such foresight involves, so that men will understand what it means to be responsible in every phase of life and how that responsibility must be carried out” (ibid., p. 407). Thus, the role of moral philosophy is to discriminate intelligently between diverse ends in order that people may pursue those which can be achieved and thus secure the enjoyment of all people in society. However, to carry out this task requires the “intelligent attention to the conditions and consequences of human acts in all areas of practice” (ibid., p. 408).

In relation to logic, Dewey had the notion that its task “is concerned with the difference between right and wrong thinking” (ibid., p. 408).

Now all real thinking, for Dewey, plays an instrumental function in man’s experience; it is part of a course of action. Each piece of thinking is an “inquiry,” motivated by the tension of doubt, and aimed at solving the problem with which the doubt is concerned. ... Thinking is responsible when it avoids succumbing to loose and wishful associations and seeks to reach conclusions that are trustworthy. A logical theory is responsible when it seeks to meet the human need of clarifying the conditions of successful thinking—of distinguishing between methods of thinking that lead to reliable conclusions and those that do not. If it fails in this regard it is irresponsible. (CDT, pp. 408-9)

The importance of this comment by Burt in respect to Dewey’s attitude toward right and wrong thinking is that during Burt’s pragmatist phase he wrote and published several editions of his book *Right Thinking* [1928] (1931) (1946), the content of which, in many respects, can be seen as giving substance to Dewey’s notion of “right thinking.”¹ As Burt himself states in the Foreword to the 1928 edition—which he wrote at the

¹ Arthur L. Rubin from the University of Chicago notes in a review of Burt’s *Right Thinking*, that this work is a successor to the “reflective thinking” courses of James and Dewey (*American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 39, January, 1934 p. 545). Also Corliss Lamont (who we noted earlier holds that religious humanism is another name for Dewey’s pragmatism) contends that Burt’s “authoritative *Right Thinking*” is an example of the humanist viewpoint being applied to the rules and discipline of formal logic and reason (Lamont, 1965, p. 207). In short, *Right Thinking* develops Dewey’s pragmatist viewpoint in relation to logic and reason.

beginning of his pragmatist phase—of *Right Thinking* : “In the general plan of the book the writings of Professor Dewey and the Columbia Associates’ *Introduction to Reflective Thinking* (1923) have been leaned upon heavily” (1928, p. xi).

Diverging From Pragmatism

The intimate connection between Dewey’s and Burt’s thought, however, came to an end during the mid 1940s. The philosophic issues that prompted Burt to diverge from Dewey’s form of pragmatism can be found by again turning to his 1959 essay, “The Core of Dewey’s Way of Thinking.” By the time Burt wrote this essay he had long since abandoned pragmatism. This abandonment came about because Burt came to see difficulties in Dewey’s notion of reflective method (a notion that Burt expanded upon in *Right Thinking*) that is, the notion that thought should follow the method of science in dealing with any problem (CDT, p. 417). Just as intelligence seeks explanations of facts, so also does it appraise moral values. In Burt’s later view, this method is not satisfactory. He came to believe that Dewey blurred an important and necessary distinction that does exist between the critical inquiries of science and inquiries concerning moral values. Burt points out that there is a distinct difference between science’s inquiry concerning the effectiveness of *botulinus* toxin in killing humans and the inquiry concerning whether or not it is moral to disseminate the toxin as a weapon of war (*ibid.*).

He also came to doubt Dewey’s conception of human nature and, in particular, the power of human intelligence. He notes that Dewey’s entire “orientation is grounded in a very optimistic view of human nature, and it is an optimism of a certain kind” (CDT, p. 418). Dewey “has unqualified trust in intelligence as the power in man which can guide him toward the resolution of any problem, in a way which will take sympathetic account of the interests of every other person affected by his action. Where the wise solution fails to be achieved by employing it, all that is needed is the fuller ‘liberation of intelligence’” (*ibid.*). In Burt’s view, Dewey’s optimism fails on three counts. Firstly, not all humans exhibit intelligence in the manner that Dewey ascribes to them. Secondly, his use of the term “intelligence” is too general for such a complex area of human activity. Thirdly, it overlooks the important question of what he calls “deepened emotional understanding” (*ibid.*).

Burt’s critique of Dewey reveals two factors which, by 1959, had come to influence his thought. By this time he had become influenced by psychoanalytic theory, in its focus upon hidden and irrational dimensions of human consciousness, and its emphasis on the power of the emotions to control intelligence or reason. Secondly, writing at the height of the Cold War, Burt reveals the divergence between his thought and Dewey’s in a statement expressing his deep concern with the nuclear weapons policy of both Russia and America.



An individual may rebel against the dictates of prudence and of consideration for others; he may blind himself to the consequences of his conduct; he may in effect defy what he knows to be true and right and good. The policy of a nation, as we have sadly seen in our own case and in that of Russia, may express such self-deception and defiance on the part of its citizens or leaders. And if you say that this is not being intelligent, I would agree; but the difficulty is that those who act this way are sure that they are intelligent. Nothing is easier than to rationalize submission to one's darker emotions and pugnacious demands, using one's intellectual powers to justify the acts expressing them. This is why one may not trust intelligence alone. ... [For] man's subconscious emotional drives may distort and even master the use of his rational powers. (CDT, p. 418)

Burttt notes in fairness to Dewey, however, that the latter had observed on occasion that human thinking is affected by subconscious emotional drives. Yet, Dewey "never realized the imperative need and peculiar difficulty of bringing them to light where philosophic insight can deal with the evils they engender [and it] is more and more clear that only through such a realization can the world be hopefully guided toward the high goals that he [Dewey] envisioned" (*ibid.*, p. 419).

By 1959, however, Burttt had become aware of the "imperative need" to bring these subconscious emotional drives to conscious awareness. As a result he made it his task in his later thought to develop a philosophical approach, expressed in his theory of expanding awareness, which could challenge, uncover, and channel in a creative, rather than destructive, manner the subconscious emotional forces in all human beings.

Burttt's Desire to Reform Humanism

Burttt's philosophic divergence from pragmatism in the mid 1940s occurred concurrently with a strong desire to reform "religious humanism." This is to be expected given the overlapping interests we have earlier noted between these two movements. Three important factors influence this divergence in Burttt's thinking. As already mentioned, the change occurred at approximately the same time that Burttt began his lengthy period of psychoanalysis. Secondly, the horror of the Second World War reinforced his doubt in the power of reason to resolve human problems. Thirdly, in the mid 1940s his spiritual life was re-awakened through his contact with, and adherence to, the Quaker movement¹ and also his newly found interest in Eastern religions.² Finally, he had been teaching a course in the philosophy of religion at Cornell since 1933 and thus theological doctrine and religious experience were topics that remained at the forefront of his thinking. In short, once again (the first time being

¹ As Burttt states in his autobiographical article, he joined the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) because of "its emphasis on serving human need in a world-wide arena and on direct realization of the Divine Presence" (MPP, p. 432).

² Beginning in 1946 (or a little earlier) Burttt conducted seminars at Cornell in his philosophy of religion course on the Hindu philosopher Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* (1939-40). Dr. Samuel Lindley, one of Burttt's graduate students of this period, recalls: "In this seminar [Burttt] led the students to understand the divine as an evolutionary process by which the Divine works through man to higher and higher levels of consciousness. I would suggest that it was his contact with Indian philosophy that made him aware of the divine spirit working through man." (From a letter dated April 19th, 1993 by Dr Lindley to myself.)

in his theistic period prior to his becoming a humanist) Burt became convinced that a divine agency was at work in human affairs.¹ This notion, of course, is in direct conflict with the tenets of religious humanism.

This development in Burt's thought led him to argue the need for a reform of the beliefs of religious humanism. This goal found expression in two essays that he contributed to *The Humanist* journal in 1945 and 1946. The first essay has the provocative and paradoxical title, "Does Humanism Understand Man?" (DHUM). It begins:

It may seem presumptuous, if not paradoxical, to suggest that a movement claiming the name "humanism," and emphasizing rational comprehension as the foundation for every good achievement, might fail lamentably in its understanding of man. After having followed religious humanism sympathetically for fifteen years, I cannot avoid a deep and increasing fear that precisely this is the case.

If this fear is justified, and if the failure cannot be rapidly ended, the chance that humanism will survive as a vital form of religion is slim indeed. Whatever else any religion accomplishes or does not accomplish, it must achieve a profound and accurate understanding of man—an understanding of what he actually is in his basic and perennial needs ... (DHUM, p. 108)

Clearly these comments regarding the failure of humanism reveal that, once again, a radical change has taken place in Burt's thought.

When he wrote *Religion in the Age of Science* in 1929, a book which we have identified as standing at the beginning of his humanist phase, Burt was determined that religion should comply with the scientific method. However, by 1945 when he wrote this article for *The Humanist*, the scientific method and human intelligence or reason, are no longer the most reliable paths to truth and to resolving human problems. Instead, the path is to be "found in the rapidly spreading influence of psychoanalysis, and of religious movements calling us back to the traditional emphasis on the 'sick soul' and its desperate need for redemption—movements vigorously encouraged but not created by the present world tragedy [of the Second World War]" (ibid., p. 109).

The West, in Burt's view, had become preoccupied with the knowledge of external facts yielded by the scientific method and had neglected the deeper self-knowledge and self-understanding. Indeed, when behaviorism, and even behavioral psychology, seek to explain human action and understand the human psyche they do so by means of a scientific model. In short, they believe that the application of the scientific method in its attempts to control physical matter can also be applied to self-understanding. But at this "turning point in history," he contends:

It would appear exceedingly likely that after another world war or two—perhaps earlier—the Western world will be swept by a wholesale revulsion against the physical knowledge which we now seem able to use only as a tool of ruthless destruction, and by a sober eagerness to comprehend the blind forces in ourselves that have led to this terrible use of what might be a wholly constructive servant. ...

¹ Ibid.

One of the ghastly lessons taught by the present war is that all people have a far vaster capacity for hatred and ferocious bitterness than had ever been suspected before; real hope for the future can only be justified by such comprehension of ourselves as enables us both to face honestly the power of these dark forces, with no deceitful illusions, and also to discover some dependable way by which they can be gradually mastered. Surely it will not require much more of the incredible suffering ... before this truth is generally seen. (DHUM, p. 109)

The knowledge delivered by science, therefore, has become so destructive that only increased self-knowledge—which is different to the knowledge “modelled after the form revealed in our apprehension of material objects”—will resolve human problems (ibid.).

Thus Burt's notion is not merely that more self-knowledge is necessary to counter the negative implications flowing from scientific knowledge, but that some new model, form, or framework of knowledge is necessary in which to situate this self-knowledge. This is a notion that came to occupy him, in one way or another, throughout his later thought and reached its culmination in his theory of expanding awareness. But at the end of the Second World War, he was in many respects “floundering” in search of a philosophical framework that could adequately take account of the moral conditions of human life in the light of the horror of this war. At this point Burt had no ready answer and instead turned to traditional religious concepts such as “sin,” psychoanalytic theory, and existentialism in order to come to terms with the “blind forces in our selves” which led to this war.

The “Sin” of Humanism

Burt's first essay in *The Humanist*, “Does Humanism Understand Man?,” however, is restrained in its tone when compared with his second essay, “Humanism and the Doctrine of Sin” (1946) (HDS)—which he wrote a few months later. He begins the second essay by arguing that humanists had committed a “blunder” and “fallen into a quite deceitful rationalistic optimism” in their efforts to downplay the significance of the concept sin (HDS, p. 173). In his view, humanists had fallen into a deep confusion by arguing that “man's real self may be properly identified with his ideal self” (ibid.). The problem with this approach was that it established a dichotomy between an ideal self, able to think and act intelligently in the world, and a real self, which often thinks and acts in ways which would be disapproved of by the ideal self. Hence, when the real self is driven by “dark forces” to act impulsively in evil ways, the ideal self has to deceive itself that the action is not really happening or that it is not responsible for such an action (ibid., p. 175-6). As Burt insists, “there is in man a demonic, rebellious, essentially evil force, and no portrayal of the unsavory side of his nature merely in terms of impulses not yet become instruments of social intelligence can possibly be adequate” (ibid., p. 178).

Thus humanists ought to recognize the power of these dark forces. Indeed, Burt

follows traditional theology by ascribing the term “original sin” to these forces. He acknowledges that the term “sin” historically has been loaded with “hopeless irrationalities” that need to be examined, but nevertheless it conceptualizes a crucial element of human nature (HDS, p. 179). Humanists, rather than rejecting the concept “sin” as being part of the old baggage of traditional religion, ought to view it as a term which describes the evil that can overtake human beings in war.

Do humanists understand sin? Or, if not, can the defects in their understanding be remedied quickly enough for them to be able to meet the needs of suffering, inwardly torn, guilt-harassed men and women today? ...

The experience of war has shown all of us still believe in sin. When looking at ourselves we may not do so ... but the belief is irresistible when we look at our enemies, and they at us. I mean that, under control of the attitudes that war fosters, we believe in force of evil which can seize people and to whose malignant solicitations they consent. (DHUM, pp. 110-111)

Burt's use of “sin” follows the meaning given it by Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)—then teaching theology at the Union Theological Seminary—as expressed in *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation* (1941).

Niebuhr, with whom Burt was associated in the American Theological Society in New York (along with theologian Paul Tillich who also, after fleeing Nazi persecution in 1933, taught at Union) for many years from the 1940s onwards,¹ had expressed his concern for the “easy conscience” of modern Western society and its reluctance to take evil seriously (*ibid.*). In another work, *Types of Religious Philosophy* [1938] (1951) (hereafter *Religious Philosophy*), Burt acknowledges Niebuhr's influence and devotes considerable attention to him (pp. 369-396). Niebuhr's concern with evil, he explains, extended to a critique of “the shallow optimism” and complacency of religious liberals (many of whom were signatories of the 1933 *Humanist Manifesto* (TRP, p. 324fn.)) who believed that human beings were “steadily progressing toward a wise solution” of various social injustices (TRP, p. 381). Instead Burt advocates a return to traditional religious notions such as “original sin” and the need for human beings to acknowledge their need for salvation from a power beyond themselves, namely, “the forgiving grace of God” (*ibid.*). We do not have to dwell long on the extent to which this notion is removed from the tenets of the *Humanist Manifesto*.

Psychoanalysis and the Reform of Humanism

By including the principles of psychoanalysis in his critique of humanism in 1945, Burt reveals how disenchanted he had become with Dewey's notion of social intelligence. After reiterating that Dewey's optimism in the power of intelligence is seriously misplaced in light of the “irrational forces” at work in human beings, Burt

¹ An instance of this association can be found in two papers that Burt and Tillich gave concerning theological method to the American Theological Society at their spring 1946 meeting in New York. See *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 1947.

states:

There was more than enough social intelligence available, and sincere social purpose, to avert the horror of the world-wide catastrophe that for six years has engulfed us. But it was blocked from becoming effective, and not merely by the tremendous power of the primitive antisocial impulses that can seize men. What paralyzed it even more was the clever power of these impulses to concoct self-justifying reasons, so that they can appear in the guise of pseudo-social intelligence themselves. Only the few who have learned how to penetrate to the heart of such disguises can distinguish the genuine article from the diabolically skillful imitation. So far as I can see, no influential humanists are among these few. (DHUM, p. 113)

The “few” who can penetrate the disguises of pseudo-social intelligence, in Burt’s view, are psychoanalysts.

Psychoanalytic theories of human nature reveal how and why rationalistic optimism “is a deceitful delusion” (DHUM, p. 114). These theories demonstrate “definitely and incontrovertibly” that our “blind emotions and antisocial desires” are “deeprooted” forces which control our feelings and actions. (ibid.). These forces are so powerful, indeed “devastating,” that reason itself is ensnared and thus becomes their “unconscious prey” (ibid.). Psychoanalysis, however, teaches us how we may gain control of “these destructive potencies instead of remaining their slaves” (ibid.). It “endeavors to deal with the deep emotional problems which traditional theologies handled in terms of the concepts of sin, guilt, grace, and forgiveness” (TRP, p. 370).¹

In the second edition of *Religious Philosophy* (1951), Burt identifies the ideas of psychoanalyst and social philosopher, Erich Fromm (1900-1980) (who fled Nazi Germany in 1934 and settled in New York), as being specifically directed toward reforming humanism. Fromm’s *Man For Himself* (1947) and *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950) (which appeared a few years after Burt wrote his articles in *The New Humanist* urging humanists to take account of psychoanalytic theory), according to Burt, are a “conscious application” by Fromm to apply psychoanalytic theory to “the development of new religious humanism” (TRP, p. 370).

Fromm, drawing on the thought of both Freud and Carl Jung, observes that psychoanalysis was initially developed to treat neurosis and obsessions in the individual by bringing unconscious motivations to consciousness. However, he believes that it has a much broader social application, particularly in the area of improving interpersonal relations (Fromm, [1950], 1978, p. 79). As Fromm explains, psychoanalytic therapy which focuses only on curing an individual’s neuroses may only “adjust” that individual to the relative norms of a given society which may, in fact, accept various neurotic behaviors as normal (ibid., p. 74). To achieve an optimal cure it will thus be necessary to take account of “universal human norms” which are applicable to human nature in every culture and across all historic epochs.

¹ In Chapter 6 we undertake a more detailed study of the implications of psychoanalytic theory. It is interesting to observe Fromm’s influence on Burt, because both thinkers later investigated the relationship between psychoanalysis and Buddhism.

[Thus]... the psychoanalyst is not an "adjustment counselor" but, to use Plato's expression, "the physician of the soul." This view is based on the premise that there are immutable laws inherent in human nature and human functioning which operate in any given culture. These laws cannot be violated without serious damage to the personality. If someone violates his moral and intellectual integrity he weakens or even paralyzes his total personality. He is unhappy and suffers. If his way of living is approved by his culture the suffering may not be conscious or it may be felt as being related to things entirely separate from his real problem. But in spite of what he thinks, the problem of mental health cannot be separated from the basic human problem, that of achieving the aims of human life: independence, integrity, and the ability to love. (ibid., p. 74)

Fromm, in Burt's view, is arguing for a religious humanism which has at its core the notion of a society of individuals who place importance on self-understanding, through psychoanalysis, in order to develop constructive interpersonal relations (TRP, p. 371).

Turns to Existentialism

Burt also turned to existentialism for further insights that may assist the reform of humanism. Although he nowhere identifies himself as an "existentialist," his thought from the mid 1940s onwards reveals many of the characteristics that he ascribed to existentialist thinking in his essay "What Happened to Philosophy from 1900-1950" (1952) (WHP). In this essay he firstly draws attention to "the increasingly obvious failure of the optimistic liberal hopes which pervaded the Western world with such seeming justification at the close of the First World War" (WHP, p. 22). In contrast to those who believed it possible for human intelligence to create the "Kingdom of God" on earth, in the mid-twentieth century people are "haunted by a deepening sense of insecurity and disillusionment, which constantly feeds the emotions of fear, anxiety, distrust, and despair" (ibid.). In an echo of his St Paul's sermon, Burt laments that, following the First World War, the victors did not have enough foresight to establish a new liberal democratic political order and so avoid a Second World War. Moreover, due to the advent of atomic weapons there is a serious danger of a third world war. People everywhere, but "especially in the Western world, feel themselves swept toward tragedy by forces entirely beyond their control" (ibid.).

Concomitant with the failure of political leaders to ensure a secure future for humanity, Burt observes, the Second World War "was a clear historical demonstration of the failure of reason to function successfully in the way liberal optimism had assumed that it always could, and a failure under circumstances providing a crucial test of its pretensions" (WHP, pp. 22-3). Thus, in the midst of "a desperate anxiety," Westerners have lost faith in human intelligence and there has been an almost "complete collapse" in their confidence in reason. In this "tragic situation," where everyone is confronted with ultimate issues of survival and "an unimaginably horrible nightmare," there is no such thing as dispassionate philosophical thinking. For any such "thinking" is "unqualifiedly 'existential' in the sense that it does not deal with the essences abstracted from their living embodiments; it deals with the world of a thinker who exists as a

threatened individual” (ibid.). To an existentialist truth “does not correspond to any objective reality but reflects ... [thinkers’] subjective demands and especially their dominant emotions” (WHP, p. 21). That is, whenever reasoning takes place it occurs within the context of a person’s complete existence, “with all its emotional involvements and its practical stakes of life and death” (WHP, p. 18).

This argument, of course, directly contradicts the traditional view, that the faculty of reason, when exercised in philosophic reflection, is able to achieve objectivity and transcend any distortions arising from emotional concerns. Indeed, as Burttt notes, the rationalist tradition held that “objectivity would have been thought to be required by the very nature of reason; if our cognitive faculty is incapable of impartiality—of attaining impersonal truth—it is not what we mean by reason at all” (ibid.). However:

Within certain limited areas, such as mathematics and the exact sciences, the ideal of objectivity can be closely approximated, but as we approach the subject matter in which our deeper values are vitally involved, the more does such impartiality become impossible and undesirable. Here one’s thinking is inevitably existential. It does not mean, also, that individuals may not try to escape from this painful plight; in fact, this is just what many people, especially academic philosophers, are prone to do. But they do not succeed in escaping, however confidently they may suppose that they do; it only means that their thinking will be, in various subtle or devious ways, controlled by this desperate need to escape itself. (WHP, pp. 18-19)

Contemporary philosophical thinkers that Burttt identifies as forming the existentialist tradition, which has its roots in the thought of Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), are Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) and Jean-Paul Sartre¹ (1905-1980).

Burttt also notes how this tradition has influenced contemporary theology. As he explains, its presence in America “is evident from start to finish in the so-called ‘dialectical’ theology of Barth and Brunner on the Continent, and in the theological systems of Niebuhr and Tillich” (WHP, p. 19). Of these thinkers, however, it is the theologian Tillich whom Paul Kurtz, in *American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (1966), selects as the most influential exponent of existentialism in America (Kurtz, 1966, p. 38).² But, while Tillich was a theologian, Burttt was a pioneer among contemporary American-born philosophers to be sympathetic towards existentialist thought. He was responsive to existentialist thought and sought to integrate its ideas into his thought from the mid-1940s onwards. William Barrett’s widely influential *Irrational Man, A Study in Existentialist Philosophy* (1958), was not to appear until a decade later.

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre wrote the famous essay, *Existentialism and Humanism*, in 1948—some two years after Burttt fell out with the humanist movement. In any event, in Burttt’s new role as a critic of humanism he would find no solace in Sartre’s insistence that his humanism is atheist (*Existentialism and Humanism*, [1948] (1989), p. 26. In Chapter 7 we take account of Burttt’s reading of the aspects of the thought of Heidegger, Jasper, Sartre, and Marcel.

² As we note in Chapter 5, Kurtz identifies Burttt as having played an important role in bringing Eastern ideas to bear on American thought but seems unaware of his interest in existentialist thought from the 1940s onwards.

Moreover, as Paul Kurtz notes, while the works of Kierkegaard, Sartre, Camus, Heidegger and Jaspers received a wide circulation amongst the public following the Second World War, professional philosophers were not so receptive: “Many American philosophers are repelled by what they take to be the irrationalism implicit in certain existentialist doctrines, especially Kierkegaard’s view that ‘truth is subjectivity’ ... [and] they believe that the existentialists are reviving all kinds of doctrines that were exploded long ago by critical philosophers” (Kurtz, 1966, p. 37). William Barrett also notes in his autobiography that, although existentialist thought was introduced to the American public soon after the Second World War, “the immediate response among intellectuals here was lukewarm” (Barrett, 1982, p. 124). An exception to this “lukewarm” response was, of course, Burt.

It is thus a temptation to add Burt’s name to the above list of existentialists—at least at this point in his career. However, although his later thought will be seen to be deeply influenced by existentialism, it would be wrong to classify him simply as an existentialist. His later thought was also deeply influenced by idealist and ultimately mystic notions from Eastern philosophy concerning the human potential to transcend contemporary experience and achieve a “union” with Ultimate Reality. By contrast, existentialism insists on confronting the despair and accepting the difficulties of human existence. It is this acceptance which provides the basis for individual autonomy and freedom.

Burt: “Socratic Gadfly”

In his two essays in *The Humanist*, Burt reveals just how disenchanted he had become with both Dewey’s notion of social intelligence and with humanism. But the extent to which Burt had strayed from the humanist orientation can be found in a rejoinder to his two articles by his long-term associate, John Herman Randall. The editors of *The Humanist* chose Randall for this task because he was “another well-known humanist” (*The Humanist*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1946, p. 173fn.).

In his rejoinder, Randall refers to Burt as a “Socratic gadfly” and takes issue with his recourse to the “romantic mythologies of the psychoanalysts” and “enthusiastic embracing” of the “magic charms of Sin” (Randall, 1946, p. 20). What particularly “disturbs” Randall in relation to Burt’s two articles is an:

... assumption which he [Burt] seems to make without question and which in my judgement has no basis in fact. It is the doctrine that in all ages “man” has certain “fundamental and perennial needs.” It is all the more surprising, in that this is an assumption shared by such varied thinkers as Chancellor Hutchins [of Chicago University], M. Maritain and the Neo-Thomists, Reinhold Niebuhr and Protestant Orthodoxy, and the assorted brands of psychoanalysis ... —[with all of] ... whom Mr. Burt has little else in common. It is, in fact, an assumption common to all those who have lost faith in the power of social intelligence to reconstruct human life, and who have fallen back on some other faith as the one thing needful. What is Mr. Burt doing in this galley? (Randall, 1946, p. 21).

Randall's comment and question, concerning Burt being in this "galley," need further explanation.

Randall's reference to Chancellor Hutchins and Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) relates to Hutchins' and Mortimer Adler's program at the University of Chicago to produce a "modern analogue of the medieval synthesis that had been provided by [St Thomas'] 'Summa Theologica'" and to bring some notion of God back into consideration by, what was in their view, a secular Philosophy Department (Adler, 1977, p. 133; see also pp. 189f & 305f). It was this notion of turning back to St Thomas that earned Maritain in particular the label of "Neo-Thomist." Adler subsequently received considerable support for this project from Maritain, who, to escape Nazi persecution, taught at Columbia, Toronto, and Princeton Universities for various periods in the 1930s and 1940s (*ibid.*, p. 298f). It was Adler's and Hutchins' insistence on this program, together with their interference in the appointment of staff to the Philosophy Department, which led Burt, who was then at the height of his humanist phase and thus opposed to deistic notions, to resign from Chicago in 1931. In relation to Randall's comment concerning "Reinhold Niebuhr and Protestant Orthodoxy," we have already noted that, in his critique of humanism, Burt had indeed begun to take Niebuhr's ideas seriously, especially his treatment of "sin." The belief that dark, demonic forces were at work in human lives could be associated with Protestant Orthodoxy. But most importantly Burt was, by 1946, taking the psychoanalytic conception of human nature seriously.

However, what Randall objects to most about the Neo-Thomists, Neo-orthodoxy, and psychoanalysts, is that they all have in common, along with Burt, the "doctrine" that in all ages human beings have certain "fundamental and perennial needs." In Randall's view, the only basic needs that humans have are for food, clothing and shelter, and all other needs over and above these are dependent upon a given culture and historical epoch (Randall, 1946, p. 22f). These needs aside, there is no "universal, immutable and unvarying 'human nature'" (*ibid.*, p. 23). Thus there is no human nature, as Burt would have it, that requires humans to be saved, be it by religion or psychoanalysis, from their "original sin" or an evil side of their nature. For the humanist, of course, such a view of human nature is outworn and part of traditional religious beliefs which need to be overthrown.

Conclusion

Yet Randall's question remains: What is Burt "doing in this galley?" The simple answer is that he has undergone a radical change in thought. Randall, his colleague, does not seem to have recognized the full extent of it. The fact is that Burt by this time *had* lost the humanists' "faith in the power of social intelligence to reconstruct human life." This does not mean that he had joined Hutchins, Maritain and the Neo-Thomists.

Instead, at this particular time (1945-46), he adopted psychoanalytic theory and, to a lesser extent, Niebuhr's doctrine of original sin, which he believed could explain in part the horror of the Second World War and offer hope for the reconstruction of human life in the future. The point is, of course, that these insights did not comply with, as Randall makes clear, the doctrine of humanism.

Yet an even more important factor, a major influence for the remainder of Burt's career, would be Eastern religion. At the very time Burt lost faith in religious humanism, he was moving toward his own new synthesis of ideas, bringing together insights from psychoanalytic theory, and Eastern and Western religion, and incorporating these ideas into the Western philosophical heritage. By drawing on these diverse sources, Burt was pioneering a path that no other Western, or for that matter Eastern, philosopher had so far taken. Prior to Burt, other Western philosophers had turned to the East for insight. Still others had turned to psychoanalytic theory for insight. None, however, had set out to incorporate ideas from *all* these varied sources into the Western philosophical heritage.

Chapter 5

“World Philosophy” and the Influence of the East

Burt's First Journey to the East

In the fall of 1946, at a time when he was deeply pessimistic about the capacity of humanism, reason, and science to govern the “dark forces” at work in human nature, Burt travelled to Ceylon, India and China. He undertook this “exploratory visit” on behalf of the American Philosophical Association (APA) (*Philosophical Review*, Vol. 56, p. 536). We do not know precisely why the APA chose Burt for this “exploratory visit,” but it may have been due to the interest that he had begun to show in Eastern thought at this time. Beginning in 1946 (or a little earlier) he conducted seminars at Cornell in his philosophy of religion course on the Hindu philosopher Sri Aurobindo's (1872-1950) *The Life Divine* (1940).¹ One of Burt's students, Samuel Lindley, recalls: “In this seminar [Burt] led the students to understand the Divine as an evolutionary process by which the Divine works through man to higher and higher levels of consciousness. I would suggest that it was his contact with Indian philosophy that made him aware of the divine spirit working through man.”² In other words, Burt was teaching the notion of a divine, or supernatural, agency at work in human affairs. Clearly, by this time he was no longer committed to humanism, at least as it was defined in the *Humanist Manifesto*, the tenets of which denied the existence of a divine or supernatural agency at work in human affairs.

Burt was the first American philosopher to be sent as an official emissary to the East by the APA with the specific purpose of exploring “ways and means of establishing closer relations with philosophers of the Far East” (*Philosophical Review*, op. cit., p. 536). Prior to this time, of course, there had been occasional contacts between American and Eastern philosophers. Eastern philosophers had attended International Congresses of Philosophy, including the Sixth Congress which was held in 1926 at Harvard University and at which Burt gave his paper on the metaphysics of time. The Hindu philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), from the University of Calcutta, later to become the President of India for the period 1962-67, was one of several Eastern philosophers to contribute a paper to this Congress.³

Radhakrishnan delivered a paper entitled “The Role of Philosophy in the History of Civilization” to a seminar at the 1926 Congress. Interestingly, John Dewey contributed

¹ This information has been supplied to me in two letters (dated December 19th, 1991 and April 19th, 1993) by Dr. Samuel Lindley of Honolulu. Dr. Lindley attended Cornell from 1946-49 for graduate study and Burt was his major professor. It was Dr. Lindley who subsequently organized the tribute for Burt in *Philosophy East and West* in 1972 on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.

² This quote is taken from Dr. Lindley's letter to myself dated April 19th, 1993, p. 1.

³ “The Doctrine of Maya: some problems,” *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy*, (Edgar Sheffield Brightman, edit., Longmans, Green, New York and London, 1927), pp. 683-8.

an essay of the same title to this seminar immediately prior to Radhakrishnan.¹ We have no evidence that Burttt attended this particular seminar, although given his growing interest in Dewey's thought at this time, one might speculate that he would, at the very least, be familiar with the published proceedings. Of course, Burttt's humanist/pragmatist phase, when he would have been inherently opposed to notions such as Eastern mysticism, intervened before he was to take an interest in Eastern thought in the mid 1940s. However, when this did occur he took an interest in Radhakrishnan's thought and contributed an essay, "The Problem of a World Philosophy" (PWP), for a volume that was published on the occasion of the latter's sixtieth birthday.² Interestingly, Burttt's mentor from his undergraduate days at Yale, Charles A. Bennett, contributed a paper entitled "The Paradox of Mysticism" to another seminar at the 1926 International Conference which had as its topic "The Philosophy of Religion, with Special Reference to Mysticism in East and West."³ Again, we have no evidence that Burttt attended this seminar, but it does reveal that American philosophers were taking an interest in Eastern thought, and indeed its mysticism, in the 1920s.

Besides the sporadic contacts at international conferences, the first East-West Philosophy Conference was organized by Charles A. Moore (1901-1967) and held in Hawaii in 1939. Again, this was prior to Burttt taking an interest in Eastern thought. The only American (indeed the only Western) philosophers to give papers at this conference, in addition to Charles Moore, were W. E. Hocking (Harvard), F. S. C. Northrop (Yale), and G. P. Conger (Minnesota) (Moore, 1944, *passim*). It was at this conference that Charles Moore first proposed the development of a "world philosophy through the synthesis of the ideas and ideals of East and West" (*ibid.*, p. vii) which was later to capture Burttt's attention. The Japanese philosopher D. T. Suzuki (Kyoto), whose particular philosophic interest was Zen Buddhism, was one of the Eastern philosophers to contribute a paper. His thought was later to influence both Erich Fromm and Burttt.

In 1949, at the second East-West Philosophers' Conference in Hawaii, Burttt attended and contributed a paper entitled "Basic Problems of Method in Harmonizing Eastern and Western Philosophy" (HEWP). The purpose of the 1949 conference, as was the case with the one in 1939, according to its convenor Charles Moore, "was to study the possibility of a world philosophy through a synthesis of the ideas and ideals of the East and the West" (Moore, 1951, pp. 10). After all, Moore notes, for philosophy "to be philosophy, [it] must be universal. It must be the study of all time and all existence, and its data must include the experiences and the insights of all mankind. The total truth is

¹ *Ibid.*, p. xii. This seminar was held on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 15th, (p. 621).

² Radhakrishnan, *Comparative Studies in Philosophy*, [1951] (George Allen & Unwin, London; Humanities Press, New York, 1968). Burttt was on the editorial board which selected essays for this volume.

³ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

the very lifeblood of philosophy as well as the essential need of the world” (ibid., p. 1). At the 1949 conference ten Western (all American) philosophers contributed papers, among whom were F. S. C. Northrop (1893-1992), John Wild (1902-1972), W. H. Sheldon (1875-1980), and Burt. Ten Eastern thinkers also contributed papers, among whom were D. T. Suzuki, P. T. Raju, and D. M. Datta.¹ All these thinkers were to influence Burt’s later thought. A Third East-West Philosophers’ Conference was held in 1959 in Hawaii with a much larger number of participants. Burt contributed a paper to this conference and also assisted in its organization. (This was the conference at which he issued the declaration to his colleagues giving his reasons for not signing the “Personal History Statement” required by the University.)

By drawing attention to these contacts between Eastern and American philosophers, is not to suggest that Eastern thought was an important influence in America, or the West generally. Indeed, the reverse was true. Paul Kurtz, in *American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (1966), lists only five American philosophers whose work shows the influence of Eastern thought: W. T. Stace (1886-1967), F. S. C. Northrop, J. B. Pratt (1875-1945), E. A. Burt, and Charles Moore (Kurtz, 1966, p. 41). Indeed, in 1952 in a review of changes that had occurred in philosophy since 1900, Burt noted that, although the thought of such Eastern thinkers as Radhakrishnan, Gandhi (whom we may recall Burt met on his first trip to India), Nehru, and Sri Aurobindo, had begun to be noticed, Western thinkers still believed that Eastern philosophy could “be safely neglected” (WHP, pp. 5-7). Their reasoning for this prejudice was justified, he asserts, “by reasoning similar to that of Omar when he destroyed the Alexandrian Library: if Oriental philosophy exhibits the same problems and solutions as Western philosophy it is superfluous, while if it does not do so it is superstitious; in neither case will we gain any light from its study” (ibid.). But this attitude of benign neglect in the mid-twentieth century, he argues, is at least an improvement on the Western attitude toward the East in 1900. At this time it was generally assumed that “speculative thought in the East could be nothing more than mystic or moral theology, having barely outgrown primitive superstition” (ibid.).

But if Western philosophers generally have treated Eastern ideas with condescension or complacency, Burt could not be included in their number from the mid 1940s onwards. From this point onwards he was determined to convince the West to treat Eastern notions seriously.

Radical Change in His Thought

For an insight into how these Eastern notions began to influence Burt’s thought we turn to comments that he made on his return to Cornell in 1947 from this first trip to

¹ See, for instance, Burt’s “A Problem in Comparative Philosophy,” in *World Perspectives in Philosophy, Religion and Culture: Essays presented to Professor Dharendra Mohan Datta*, Ram Jee Singh, edit., (Bharati Bhawan, Patna, India, 1968).

the East. He describes it as having “harmoniously combined two purposes—the personal concern to widen and deepen my acquaintance with Eastern culture, especially in philosophy and religion, and the quasi-official enterprise of doing what I could to pave the way for fuller cooperation between American and Eastern philosophers” (PPFE, p. 377). But the term “acquaintance” understates the effect of this journey on his thought. For it had a profound influence on his thinking and his world-view. This influence was so important that it marks the beginning of what I have called his later thought. We may recall from our biographical sketch that it was on this 1946-47 journey that Burt took the vows of Buddhism as a public symbol of the spiritual nourishment that he received from the East.

During this journey, as Burt later reported in the essay “Philosophy and Philosophers in the Far East” (1949) (PPFE), he came to an important realization. His previous conception of the “universe,” and his metaphysical and cosmological speculation about it, had been constrained within a narrow Western framework.

[The journey provided] the opportunity to begin exploring a vaster universe than any I had glimpsed before. I had supposed in my more naive days that I knew what I meant when I used the word “universe,” and that when I thought about it I was in intellectual touch with something that justified the term. I now see that when I employed the word in my previous speculating, the universe which I had in mind was a very limited and provincial affair; it reflected from first to last all the narrow and special quirks that have characterized our Western mentality in its approach to cosmology and metaphysics. What we have called *the* universe is just *our* little Occidental universe, walled in by our geographical and cultural boundaries. The real universe is a far vaster affair; it waits to be discovered as we and thinkers from other cultural traditions openmindedly share our several insights, and allow them to become gradually more integrated in the most inclusive vision of cosmic reality that the human mind can consistently attain. (PPFE, p. 387; Burt's italics)

This entire passage is important for an understanding of Burt's later thought but two particular points need comment. Firstly, from 1947 onwards Burt made it his mission to discover an intellectual path to gain this “most inclusive vision of cosmic reality.” Secondly, he believed that the human mind could grasp this vision and it was for this purpose that he came, in time, to develop his theory of expanding awareness.

In the report concerning his 1946-47 journey Burt also reveals that he perceived a bewildering paradox. Although it takes only hours to travel around the world, a “spiritual interchange essential for laying the foundations for peace and amity between nations is desperately slow and tortuous” (PPFE, p. 379). He also witnessed “the spectacle of an entire world in revolution—the most radical and thoroughgoing revolution since ancient times, because it is not merely political, military, economic, and educational, but also moral and religious” (*ibid.*). He thus called on American philosophers, through the use of “their powers of systematic analysis” (which is one of the few occasions where Burt affirms the analytic trend in American philosophy) to provide a constructive remedy for this situation. Thus he draws a similarly revolutionary conclusion based on “the realization that the *only kind of philosophy* which can make

any relevant contribution in this situation is philosophy developed and written from a *world perspective*; philosophies which express nothing more than the *partisan bias of some school or the myopic orientation of some limited cultural tradition are entirely inadequate* to the needs of the current age” (ibid., p. 380). Furthermore:

Philosophers who pursue their work behind such narrow walls are a luxury that their fellows can no longer afford; speculative minds, like those of other people, are challenged now to live and think as world citizens, responsive to all human needs and aspirations and fully open to the light that could be thrown on their problems from any quarter, however distant. In case Western thinkers find themselves sluggish in the face of this challenge, I would remind them that the East may well escape the full force of *the atomic catastrophe* that America and Russia seem bent on bringing to the Occident; in which case *the philosophy of the future on our planet* will grow out of the present philosophies of the Orient, together with such scattered strands of Western thought as Eastern thinkers find it worthwhile to preserve. Surely they will be more likely in such a convulsive event to preserve something substantial if we contribute toward *a world philosophy* consciously, rather than allowing mere accident to save what bits of speculative reflections it may. (PPFE, pp. 380-1; my italics)

Burt's insistence on the imperative need to develop world philosophy can thus be seen as the driving force behind his determination to draw upon and incorporate Eastern thought in his subsequent philosophical efforts.

Atomic Weapons and the Need for a “World Philosophy”

It was imperative, in Burt's view, that a “world philosophy”¹ be developed to address global problems. Not least of these was the threat of annihilation posed by atomic weapons. As he emphasized in 1947, “if human life is to continue on the surface of this planet at a civilized level, it must be a single world, united in peaceful cooperation by mutual understanding; if ... [human beings] remain spiritually segmented, they will perforce find union but in the form of a common annihilation” (PPFE, p. 386). Much later he continued to urge this view in *Philosophic Understanding* in the mid 1960s at the height of the Cold War thus: “Humanity is no longer an aggregate

¹ Besides Charles Moore's interest in developing a world philosophy, a debate (in which Burt was involved) concerning this notion had been occupying several American philosophers during the 1940s. In 1942 Stephen C. Pepper published his book *World Hypotheses*, which Burt reviewed. Pepper's central argument is that there is a “root-metaphor” at the core of all world metaphysical theories which, once identified, could open the path to a new understanding of metaphysical knowledge. However, Burt is critical of Pepper's approach because it is limited to Western metaphysical theories and ignores Eastern ideas. As Burt states, “Reflection of this inadequacy brings to light, I think, the major defect in root-metaphor theory ... the fundamental differences between Eastern and Western thought intimate the main supplement which needs to be introduced” (E. A. Burt, “The Status of “World Hypotheses,” *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 52, 1943, p. 591). At this point in his odyssey, Burt was still in his humanist phase and development of his theory of expanding awareness was still in the future. But, nevertheless, his review of Pepper's work indicates that by 1943 Burt was arguing the need for Eastern ideas to be taken seriously, especially in any philosophical discussion concerning a new world metaphysics. In 1946 Burt was to again address Pepper's ideas, along with those of the philosophers R. G. Collingwood, Felix S. Cohen, R. C. Lodge, W. H. Sheldon, and A. E. Murphy, in an essay entitled “The Problem of Philosophic Method” (*The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 55, 1946, pp. 505-533). Burt wrote this essay (prior to his first trip to the East) and reveals the extent to which he had become disillusioned with American philosophic debate generally. In his view, “dogmatic browbeating ... has characterized much philosophical discussion” (p. 510). To overcome this problem, he argues the need for a “cooperative philosophy” (p. 511) by which he also means his notion of “democratic cooperation” (see Appendix E).

of separate cultures; it has become a single organism, moving either toward more abundant life as a viable world community or toward early death" (ISPU, p. 252).

Also important was his belief that the threat from nuclear annihilation was not posed singularly by the confrontation between the two major protagonists, Communist Russia and China and the West. In the late 1950s, again at the height of the Cold War, Burttt notes in *Together in Peril and Hope* (1959) that the knowledge to build atomic weapons "once gained, cannot be forgotten; nor can it be kept secret" (p. 9). Assuming that the crisis between Communism and the West did not end in nuclear conflagration, "the most serious danger" could arise from the deployment of atomic weapons by the smaller sovereign states that have achieved independence since World War II (*ibid.*). Of course, recalling Burttt's sermon at St Paul's in 1921, we know that he was consistently concerned about war and its effect on the future of humanity. By the late 1940s, however, atomic weapons clearly added a new dimension to this concern. The human species could make itself extinct by the knowledge it had gained through modern science. Thus, from 1947 onwards Burttt dedicated himself to the task of developing a world philosophy to bring about a positive union of humanity and so avoid a common annihilation.

Burttt's Understanding of a "World Philosophy"

The first definition Burttt gives for "world philosophy" can be found in the paper he contributed to the 1949 East-West Philosophers' Conference in Hawaii. It attempted to answer

the serious misinterpretations to which the phrase "world philosophy" is subject. Many people seem to think that such a perspective would necessarily take the form of a single philosophic system, driving all rivals from the field and reigning in uncontested splendor. That idea is as far as it could be from my conception of world philosophy. There is need of philosophic progress as well as philosophic harmony, of the constant challenge of new perspectives as well as a dependable method of reconciling those which have already appeared.

World philosophy is not a system; it is a cooperative enterprise, always in the process of seeking the wisest balance between the conditions which make for peaceful unity in the realm of speculative ideas and the conditions which make for creative freedom. ... *[T]he greatest philosophy* would not be one which seeks to monopolize the speculative field but rather one whose critical and creative challenge elicits from all other philosophies, so far as they are not prevented by narrow partisanship, the richest wisdom that [they] ... permit. (HEWP, p. 115; my italics)

The purpose of a world philosophy, therefore, is to bring about "world understanding."

The Role of Philosophers in the Creation of a World Philosophy

To gain "world understanding," philosophers from each culture need to gain a "mutual understanding" of the political, economic, religious, and sociological diversity which pertains to other cultures (see ISPU, p. 253). Having achieved this task, they then "can do something which no one else can do and which is very important" (HEWP, p. 106). That is, philosophers can make it their special task to discern the particular logical and

metaphysical “categories” which form the foundations of every culture’s world-view. This will serve as a prerequisite to bringing about a synthesis of categories that is compatible across cultures and so form a world philosophy (HEWP, pp. 106-8). Crucially, it is *philosophers* who, in the first place, *create* the logical and metaphysical categories which form the foundations of a culture’s world-view or cosmology. Burttt argued in *Metaphysical Foundations*, we may recall, that the early modern philosopher/scientists created new metaphysical categories which subsequently formed the foundation of the modern scientific world-view. Now it is time for philosophers to be critical of that outcome. It follows that philosophers in the twentieth century must create new categories as the foundations for a post-scientific metaphysic.

It may be taken for granted that human beings demonstrate particular universal physiological needs such as demands for food and shelter. But they also have universal moral and intellectual demands “for order, for responsibility, for growth, for freedom, for unity with the whole” (HEWP, p. 108). However, “only persons of philosophic caliber” have the “power” to deal with these demands and “not get lost in them when they are handled in abstraction from the concrete material in which they are culturally embodied” (ibid.).

From this point of view the unique contribution of philosophy toward world harmony consists in its ability to realize a comprehensive unity [of universal moral and intellectual demands] ... and to break down the barriers to the mutual comprehension among peoples which exist at this level. If it is the case that what philosophers call “categories” constitute the form in which each major epoch in the history of each culture-area has expressed its over-arching ideas and ideals, then it is clear that an inclusive harmonization of these ideas requires a philosophical synthesis, responsibly worked out by philosophic minds. (HEWP, p. 108)

Thus Burttt outlines his perception of a philosopher’s role (inherently applicable to himself) in the development of a world philosophy by proposing a synthesis of the various categories of different philosophies.

To demonstrate the influence that philosophical ideas have on wider perceptions of the world, Burttt turns to the categories of “causality” and “substance” and traces their historical variations of meaning in Western thought and their relevance in Eastern thought.

Consider, for example, the historical variations of meaning in the category of “causality” in Western thought. Throughout the ancient and medieval periods this category gave clear intellectual expression to the mystic idea that all things come into being from a source which imparts to them something of the perfection which it eternally possesses. In the modern period this category is abandoned by all Occidental thinkers except steadfast adherents to the so-called “great tradition;” in its place a new concept of causality appears, expressing the idea that all events can be so understood that through knowledge of the past and present their future occurrence can be exactly predicted and effectively controlled. In both Indian and Chinese thought there is a category somewhat similar to, though not identical with, the first of these concepts; in neither, so far as I am aware, has any category closely analogous to the second been seriously employed, for while the ideal of careful prediction has played a vital role in Eastern thought, that of external, manipulative

control of nature has remained essentially foreign to dominant Indian and Chinese ways of philosophizing. The same is the case with other philosophic categories.

To take a second example, the category of “substance” in the ancient West expresses both the individualism and the static orientation which were characteristic of the Greek mind in its approach to nature; in modern thought it is more and more boldly replaced by some concept which retains the individualism while abandoning the static ideal. I refer, for example, to Whitehead’s category of “event.” India has had no synonymous concept because to the most influential strain in her history the separate individual is ultimately illusory rather than real; and China likewise had none because Chinese philosophy from the very beginning has assumed a dynamic rather than a static cosmology. (HEWP, p. 107)

In general terms, therefore, Burt’s point is that people’s perception of their place in the cosmos—that is, their world view—is dependent upon a particular structure, or framework, of philosophic categories. This being so, philosophers, who are trained for the task, can identify, synthesize, or even change, these categories in order to develop a world philosophy.

In Burt’s view, the contribution of Eastern philosophers toward the creation of a world philosophy is just as important as that of Western philosophers (HEWP, p. 381). To understand this claim, we firstly need to examine what attracted Burt to the East and, particularly, to Buddhism. After all, his “conversion” to Buddhism in 1947 was a radical step for a prominent American philosopher at the prestigious Cornell University. Indeed, it seems to have been without precedent for an American philosopher to have demonstrated such a *public* commitment to Buddhism. As he states in his autobiographical article, he took the vows of Buddhism “to *signify publicly* that I had found indispensable sources of spiritual nourishment in the East as well as in the West” (MPP, p. 432; my italics). This is more than a shallow gesture—it is a public signification that he had found *indispensable* spiritual nourishment in the East. Although a few other philosophers, such as Charles Moore and F. S. C. Northrop, were taking an interest in Eastern philosophy at this time and religion, there is no record of any of them making a commitment to follow the precepts—we can take this to be the implication of taking “public vows”—of an Eastern religion. We now examine what attracted Burt to Buddhism and the nature of the “indispensable spiritual nourishment.”

Burt’s Attraction to Buddhism

Gautama Buddha, Burt explains in *Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha* [1955] (1982), (hereafter *Compassionate Buddha*), lived in the sixth century B.C. and is credited with bringing a new spirit to Indian religion. Buddha is said to have discerned that the religion of his day was not leading people “toward true fulfillment and more dependable happiness” because “it was mired in obstructive tradition, repetitious rite, and dead and cantankerous dogma. He conceived it as his task to break through ... these obstructive tangles, to find an enduring solution [which would] ... bring to India and the world a saving message of light and love” (CB, p. 20).

Gautama the Buddha seems to have combined in high degree two qualities that are rarely found together and each of which is rarely exemplified in high degree. On the one hand he was a man of rich and responsive human sympathy, of unflinching patience, strength, gentleness, and good will. ... On the other hand, he was a thinker, of unexcelled philosophic power. His was one of the giant intellects of human history, exhibiting a keenness of analytic understanding that has rarely been equalled. He probed through the virtues and the deceptions of his day, adopting it where it seemed to him clearly sound and abandoning or radically revising it when he saw that it was missing the true and the good. It is in virtue of this characteristic of the Master that Buddhism is the only one of the great religions of the world that is consciously and frankly based on a systematic rational analysis of the problem of life, and of the way to its solution. (CB, p. 22)

However, Burt was not only attracted to Buddha's intellectual achievements. He also wanted to discover what knowledge or truth was revealed by Buddha's meditation under the sacred Bodhi tree.

Buddha, whose childhood name was Siddhartha, was born into a wealthy family. But, when still a young man, he became dissatisfied with his life of luxury and so renounced it to set off in search of some deep truth that could explain the perplexities of life.

[Buddha's] purpose was to discover the truth—the essential and saving truth—about life and death, about sorrow and happiness. For seven years he sought and struggled, in relentless, torturing self-experiment. He inquired of renowned hermit sages. ... Gradually he found more successful clues to the understanding and liberation he sought. After being persistently tempted by the clever demon Mara, his quest reached its culmination in a long period of meditation under a spreading tree, which became for the Buddhists the sacred Bodhi tree, not far from the present city of Gaya in northeastern India. ... In the joy of assured enlightenment he rose and ... wandered slowly toward the sacred city of Benares, two hundred miles to the East. (CB, pp. 21-2)

As he undertook this journey in 544 B.C., Buddha, which means the “enlightened one,” preached to people in an effort to communicate the spiritual insight that he experienced under the sacred Bodhi tree. His “enlightenment” experience could be understood as the grasping of a deep spiritual truth, or super-rational knowledge, which explained, or at least threw light upon, the vicissitudes of human experience. As part of the celebrations in 1956 of 2500th anniversary of Buddha's enlightenment, this journey was retraced by many Buddhist devotees and Burt was invited by the Indian Government to take part in an official group.¹

To explain his understanding of the “basic truth about life,” that even Buddha found difficult to express “in the halting, inadequate medium of human speech,” Burt turns back to the *Upanishads*, written some three hundred years prior to Buddha's birth. At the core of these writings is the mystical insight that “one's salvation consists in leaving behind the separate, fearful, self-centered individual that in his finitude he now finds himself to be, and becoming one with the universal and absolute reality—leaving

¹ Professors Nicholas L. Sturgeon and Stuart M. Brown (Cornell) refer to this event in Burt's life in the “Memorial Minutes” for Burt (*Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 64, No 5, 1990) and have this date as 1966 (perhaps a typographical error) but it should be 1956.

behind the realm of the unstable, transitory, and illusory, and becoming identified with the ultimate and eternal ground of all that exists” (CB, p. 18). A popular prayer of the *Upanishads* reads:

From the unreal lead me to the real;
From darkness lead me to light;
From death lead me to deathlessness. (CB, p. 16; SD, 204)

This prayer, in Burt's view, summarizes the spirit of Indian religion. It portrays human life as a limitless journey. The individual proceeds on it by constantly leaving behind illusory present, for this is unreality, darkness, and death, while all the time seeking the real, the light, and deathlessness.

At the core of the religions of India, including both Buddhism and Hinduism, Burt contends, there is “a mystical philosophy of the universe and of human nature” which has “profound implications” for the path humans “must follow to find salvation” (CB, p. 16). Its “mystical way of thinking” means that “one’s salvation consists in leaving behind the separate, fearful, self-centered individual that in his finitude he now finds himself to be, and becoming one with the universal and absolute reality—leaving behind the realm of the unstable, transitory, and illusory, and becoming ... one with transcendent reality—with the divine source of all that is great and good and true” (ibid., pp. 16-17).

If these affirmations of Indian religion constitute a “mystical philosophy,” then Burt's later thought is also has mystical overtones. He frequently refers to the need of the “separate, fearful, self-centered individual” to leave behind the “cramped” realm of “the unstable, transitory, and illusory” in order that he or she may identify with “transcendent reality”—which in Burt's understanding is “the divine source of all that is great and good and true.”

It is this notion in Indian philosophy and religion which seems to have most appealed to Burt. The titles (and contents) of his later works, *Man Seeks the Divine* (1957) (SD) (hereafter *Seeks the Divine*) and *Light, Love, and Life* (1985), perhaps best summarize it. Burt does acknowledge that the West also has a mystical tradition¹(SD, p. 392f) but, unlike the East, it has not been the core of its religion. Nevertheless, in *Seeks the Divine*, Burt turns to Plato to explain the Indian tradition.

Plato's famous allegory of the cave² presents in poetic and philosophic form the Indian concept of the way to salvation—as a tortuous passage from the darkness of unreality to the brilliant light of the truly real. But a reader of Plato might be left with the impression that this process of emancipation is a purely intellectual one, and that it can be accomplished only by those endowed with high philosophic gifts. To the Indian theologians an intellectual insight is indeed necessary, but the realization as a whole is by no means merely intellectual. It is a remolding of the

¹ In *Forgotten Truth* [1976] (1992), Huston Smith presents a summary of the mystical insights that have played an important role in the religions of both the East and the West (p. 110f).

² Plato's *Republic*, Book 7.

whole personality—a genuinely new birth, except that it cannot be achieved suddenly but only as a result of long and patient discipline. Its essence is liberation from attachment to the demands and longings that now hold us captive, and to the shrinking self that erects a protective wall of separation between itself and all other forms of life; for it is these that pose the formidable obstructions that stand in the way of our realizing the Infinite and Eternal Being that we truly are. What the world thinks of as life is really death; our task is to escape from it to that which is truly life—the kind of life of which man is intrinsically capable and for which he is divinely destined. (SD, p. 205)

Although Burt does not pursue this comparison between Plato and Indian religion, his point is that the journey from the cave and into the light is not purely an intellectual pursuit. It involves a transformation of the whole personality. That is, we need to seek “liberation from the shrinking self that erects a protective wall of separation between itself and all other forms of life” and poses obstacles to our realizing our universal self.

The importance of this theme in Burt's later thought justifies a brief exposition of his understanding of the central doctrines of Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Confucianism.

The Roots of Indian Religion

In *Seeks the Divine*, Burt explains that both Hinduism and Buddhism, the two major Indian religions, have their roots in the *Vedas*, ancient writings which appeared over the period from 1500 to 600 B.C.¹ (SD, p. 208). The oldest of these is the *Rig-Veda*. The last is the *Upanishads*, written some three hundred years prior to Buddha's birth. Six major concepts, *Brahman*, *Atman*, *moksha*, *samsara*, *karma*, and *dharma*, lie at the core of the *Vedas*. Their “comprehension” Burt insists, “is essential to the understanding of Hinduism and also of Buddha's doctrines” (*ibid.*, p. 209).

First and foremost is the concept of Brahman, the metaphysical absolute. Out of Brahman come all things; to Brahman all things return. In himself, Brahman is unknown and unknowable, but as taking form for human experience he is *Sat-shit-ananda*—the source and embodiment of reality, knowledge and bliss. Second, the concept of *atman*, the soul or self. And the very meaning of this concept is determined by the essential Hindu conviction that the true self of each human being is identical with Brahman, and when that identity is realized the quest for salvation is fulfilled. ... The crucial stage in the process of gaining this realization is *moksha*, by which means “release” or “liberation.” (SD, p. 209)

To achieve *moksha*, however, it is necessary that an individual be purged of all self-centered desires or cravings. As this is usually not achieved in one lifetime, the soul will survive the death of the body and transmigrate to other bodies for a new existence until it is fully purged. The transmigration, or reincarnation, of the soul through various bodies is called *samsara*.

But, importantly, it is the law of *karma* which dictates the form that the soul will take in each new existence. *Karma* is the Indian notion of “the principle of causality” which operates in an individual's moral and spiritual life (SD, p. 209). The moral state of

¹ These dates are in scholarly dispute.

the soul at the end of one existence is the “cause whose effect” will dictate its form in the next existence (*ibid.*, p. 210). In general terms, “*the law of karma is the principle that wise choices, earnest efforts, good deeds build good character, while bad choices, inertia, and evil deeds build bad character*” (*ibid.*; Burt’s italics). An aspect of this law that appeals to Burt is that it encourages human beings to act in a virtuous way. As he observes, “virtue is its own reward and its own effect. The proper consequence of a virtuous deed is no externally bestowed blessing; it is simply greater virtue—i.e., a stronger aspiration toward the spiritual ideal and a greater power to practice it” (*ibid.*).

Dharma is the sixth of these key concepts.

This is as difficult to translate into a Western term as the Chinese concept of *tao*. Indeed one of its ranges of meaning is the Sanskrit correlate of *tao*, in the sense in which the Chinese speak of the *tao* of man alongside the *Tao* of Heaven. It is the way that a man should travel in order to fulfill his nature and carry out his social responsibilities. (*SD*, p. 210)

If a single English word had to be chosen to convey the meaning of *dharma*, the word “duty” would suffice (*ibid.*). One has a duty to live a certain type of life in order to build good character.

Buddha’s Central Teachings

These six concepts have a long history in ancient Indian religion, but Buddha brought about changes to them and thus Buddhism was founded. As Burt explains, Buddha was, above all else, practically minded and placed emphasis on the power of the rational mind, on reason, to discern basic truths concerning human existence and the ultimate goal of achieving an enduring happiness. Buddha’s message is that, “it takes the clearest exercise of our cognitive powers, playing on all the lessons of life, to distinguish between apparent happiness and true happiness—[between] the happiness that weakens those qualities of the soul which make for well-being in oneself and others, and the happiness that strengthens them” (*SD*, p. 222). Burt exclaims: “What a confidence, here, in the power of experience and reason to learn the major lessons of life, to discriminate the way that leads to the highest values man is capable of attaining!” (*ibid.*, p. 223). But due to this emphasis, Buddha rejected the important concepts *Brahman* and *atman*. In his view, reason and experience could not justify the belief that there was an eternal reality from which finite beings came and to which they returned (*ibid.*, p. 224). Nor could it be justified that there was a soul which transmigrates between bodies. It is not a soul that transmigrates, according to Buddha, “but the moral and spiritual achievement of an individual at the moment of his death, so that another individual can begin with that achievement (that is, his *karma*) and build upon it ... in the course of his own existence” (*ibid.*, p. 225).

What Buddha introduced to Indian religion, Burt contends, was the idea that reason and experience teach us that everything in the “universe of our experience is not a static affair but a dynamic process” (*SD*, p. 224). Decay, dissolution, and death, all of

which bring unhappiness, are inevitable. We thus have to start our quest for happiness by accepting the reality of unhappiness. Once we accept this truth, we are led to Buddha's "four noble truths:"

1. Existence is unhappiness.
2. Unhappiness is caused by selfish craving [*tanha*].
3. Selfish craving [*tanha*] can be destroyed.
4. It can be destroyed by following the eightfold path. (SD, pp. 225-6)

Burt's acceptance of Buddhism (there is no reason to assume that he did not take them sincerely) would also seem to indicate that he accepted these "four noble truths" and to follow the "eightfold path." Its precepts are as follows:

1. Right understanding
2. Right purpose (aspiration)
3. Right speech
4. Right conduct
5. Right vocation
6. Right effort
7. Right alertness
8. Right concentration (SD, p. 232)

Burt holds that Buddha, in teaching these truths and precepts to his followers, provided a "systematic dissection of the problem of life in such terms as will ... give men and women dependable guidance in finding their way from the confused mixture of misery and unstable happiness in which they now exist to a state of true and secure well-being" (ibid., p. 226).

A crucial factor in this scheme, in Burt's view, is Buddha's location of the basic *cause* of unhappiness *within* an individual's personality, rather than in some external factor. This is important because: "(1) it is a real cause; (2) it is within our control, something effective can be done about it; (3) everyone must do something about it in his own case if it is to be controlled; (4) control of it is sufficient to destroy unhappiness, irrespective of how much or how little one succeeds in doing about other causes" (SD, p. 229). Yet the question may remain, why would the eradication of *tanha* in itself end unhappiness, when other conditions which cause human suffering remain? Because even *if* all other external causes were removed a person would still be confronted with *tanha* and with the inevitable reality of one's own decay and death. Thus, the only solution is to "transcend to a state" where our selfish cravings have been eliminated and in which "we find a happiness unaffected by death" (SD, p. 230).

This is the state of *Nirvana*. The full meaning of this concept, Burt explains, is extremely difficult to translate into English but what "the Master," Buddha, seems to mean by *Nirvana* is the state of consciousness that is reached after all selfish desire, or *tanha*, is eradicated from the personality (SD, p. 237). The state of *Nirvana* "does not mean the extinction of the essential personality" (ibid.). An aspect of its meaning is conveyed in this quotation attributed to Buddha:

When the fire of lust is extinct, that is *Nirvana*; When the fires of hatred and infatuation are extinct that is *Nirvana*; When pride and all other passions and

torments are extinct, that is Nirvana ... There is only one thing I preach now as before—suffering the extinction of suffering. (SD, pp. 237-8)

Burt notes that this quotation, on its own, could be taken to impute a negative quality to the state of Nirvana whereas for Buddha it implies a positive quality. When Nirvana is achieved by following the “eightfold path,” a person experiences “liberation, peace, joy, insight, and love” (ibid., p. 238).

In these “four noble truths” and the “eightfold path” Buddha could be interpreted as either a pragmatist, rationalist, or existentialist. Burt’s emphasis on Buddha’s belief in the ability of human cognitive powers to test beliefs in the light of human experience is a central notion of pragmatism. But, of course, pragmatists insisted that the empirical method of modern science be employed to test these beliefs, whereas Buddha relied on super-rational insight. Again, Burt’s emphasis on Buddha’s rationalist tendencies must be qualified by the fact that Buddha is promoting a scheme founded on super-rational insight. We may also have a tendency to view Buddha as an existentialist due to his insistence, just as in the case of modern existentialists, that we accept and face that, at root, life is miserable and death inevitable. But to place Buddha in the existentialist movement also would be wrong. The existentialist contemplates the abyss of death to give meaning to life. By contrast, Buddha believes such contemplation will lead to a super-rational understanding which allows a person to proceed in a state of Nirvana.

Central Doctrines of Hinduism

Although Burt affirmed Buddhist teachings, aspects of Hindu thought also exerted an influence on his thought. Indeed, we may recall, he was teaching a seminar on the thought of the Hindu philosopher, Sri Aurobindo, prior to his first trip to India. He also refers to Radhakrishnan and Gandhi as “two great Hindu saints” (SD, p. 277). This may seem confusing: How can Burt adopt Buddhism and yet be influenced by Hindu thought—as well as Confucianism and Taoism? A decisive answer to this question will be deferred until we examine his theory of expanding awareness. But, in general, it is clear that Burt is drawing freely from various intellectual and spiritual sources that will lend substance to his conviction that the major problems afflicting human life, such as war and the threat of thermonuclear extinction, could be resolved if a new form of knowledge could be formed on the foundations of a universal metaphysic, or world philosophy, one which allowed peoples universally to transcend their limited world-views. Thus, while Burt may appear to be an extreme eclectic, he has a purpose to which he directs the diverse knowledge that he gathers from various sources.

Both Hinduism and Buddhism have their roots in the ancient Vedic and Upanishadic thought that formed the foundation of Indian religion. However, while Buddha rejected the concepts of Brahman and *atman*, Hinduism adhered to them, but at the same time learned tolerance from Buddhism. That is, Hinduism remained grounded in the mystical philosophy of the *Vedas* and, at the same time, came “to recognize the

legitimacy of varied conceptions of ultimate reality” (ibid., p. 214). Hindu thinkers also came to accept the importance of *tanha* and the need to overcome it (ibid., p. 270). For the Hindu *tanha* prevented a soul from “realizing its oneness with Brahman and achieving unity of love with other living beings” (ibid.). Indeed, Buddha’s influence on Hinduism was so profound that some Hindus believed him to be the eighth incarnation of their god, Vishnu (ibid., p. 271).

This latter point is important for Burt. He emphasizes that Hinduism, in contrast to Western religion, practices an “hospitable tolerance” toward other beliefs and claims to religious truth (SD, p. 276). Christianity, for instance, makes the claim that there has been only one incarnation of God, in Jesus Christ (ibid., p. 279). Burt also notes a major difference between Christian and Indian ideas on conversion and the transformation of a personality that follows. The Christian belief “holds that rebirth is brought about by divine grace and often ... takes the form of a sudden conversion while the Indian ... holds that man should be an effective agent in the process himself and that it is usually a slow and gradual growth” (ibid., p. 206).

In *Seeks the Divine*, Burt explores several aspects pertaining to the development of Hinduism, particularly the ongoing influence of the ancient scriptures, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. He also explores the work of the Hindu thinker Sankara¹ (ca. A.D. 788-820) who was the “universally respected teacher of the system of Advaita Vedanta” (SD, p. 280). The importance of Sankara’s thought in relation to our analysis of Burt’s philosophic odyssey is that Sri Aurobindo, whose thought influenced Burt from the mid 1940s onwards, followed Sankara’s orientation in many respects. Indeed, for evidence of Burt’s ongoing close affiliation with Hinduism generally, we may recall that in 1968 he was president of a Symposium of Religions that was organized by The Vedanta Society of Chicago.² This Society is devoted to the propagation of Hindu thought in the West.³

The term “Vedanta” is derived from the word *Veda* which means “knowledge,” especially “sacred knowledge,” while the full term “Vedanta” literally means the group of scriptures at “end of the Veda” namely, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and the *Vedanta Sutra* (SD, p. 301). But it has other meanings, including that given it by Sankara. He took it to mean that the goal of all Vedic searching and thinking was for thinkers to bring together the various strands of the *Vedas*, particularly from the “end” writings and to synthesize their ideas into a harmonious whole. According to Burt, Sankara’s historical influence is largely due to the fact that subsequent thinkers believe he was uniquely successful in achieving this goal (ibid.). The term *Advaita Vedanta* is applied to describe his thought because he argued that Brahman ought to be understood as not just

¹ In *Advaita Vedanta* [1969] (1973), Eliot Deutsch uses the spelling “Samkara.”

² See the concluding comments of Chapter 1.

³ See *Vedanta for Modern Man*, Christopher Isherwood, edit., (1952), p. 405f.

a unity, because this logically implies a duality exists prior to unity, but as a “nonduality” (*advaita*) (*ibid.*, p. 307).

A helpful analogy to this situation is found in our experience of day and night in their relation to the sun. Each of these experiences acquires its meaning in its contrast to the other, and it is the light of day rather than the darkness of night that provides our clue to the nature of the sun; yet ... the sun knows nothing of this contrast, [in its case] there is neither day nor night in our sense of the terms. (SD, pp. 307-8)

Sankara’s thought, therefore, focuses on a method by which human beings can come to the realization, or the experience, of Brahman as a nonduality, and in achieving this goal, they also become immersed in Brahman, or Absolute Reality, a divine reality that is beyond distinction and dualities (*ibid.*, p. 306f).

To achieve this goal Sankara retained all the major concepts of ancient Indian religion, including Brahman and *atman*. However, to understand Sankara’s philosophy is difficult. One must maintain two different standpoints *and* accept that there is no logical continuity between them.

On one side there is the standpoint of the Absolute; this standpoint is that of ultimate truth and reality. On the other side there is the standpoint of finite experience and man’s logical reason—the indispensable tool for understanding its distinctions and relations. This standpoint is relative rather than absolute, but it is the standpoint with which we must all begin our quest for truth and happiness. Realization of the spiritual goal is thus in its intellectual aspect a passage from the relative and therefore false standpoint to the absolute one. ... What this means, more concretely, is that everything must be explained as grounded in Brahman-Atman which is the sole and eternal reality ... In short, one must maintain that the world of finite objects and the human soul depends on Brahman, but no true and intelligible way of expressing that dependence ... is available. Strictly speaking, the task is logically impossible ... (SD, p. 309)

In other words, Sankara, like Buddha, argues that there is a form of knowledge, that is, spiritual knowledge of ultimate truth and reality. It is beyond logical reason but on it all finite knowledge is dependent. A difference between the two figures, however, is that Sankara holds that the ultimate reality beyond reason is a divinity, Brahman, whereas Buddha holds that there is no divinity, there is simply the experience of Nirvana.

Burttt Notes a Similarity between Sankara and Descartes

Burttt believes that the three basic steps that Sankara proposed to arrive at the knowledge that is beyond logical expression anticipates some elements of the basic steps that Descartes adopted in his “analysis eight hundred years later in the West” (SD, p. 304). Sankara concluded that “the reality and essential nature of the inner self cannot be doubted, whereas with everything in the changing world outside us this is not the case” (*ibid.*). This follows because the “very experience of doubting proves [the self’s] reality; it is just the self of the doubter” (*ibid.*, p. 305). This self is “simply consciousness—the common, universal, ever-continuing character that is present in every cognitive experience. It is present in every awareness of the self; it is present in every awareness of objects” (*ibid.*). Secondly, for Sankara:

[T]his consciousness in its pure, essential nature is nontemporal and changeless. Our experience of change reveals that which is identical and permanent throughout the experience. The objects and events come and go; the content and quality of each arise and disappear before the mind; ... but all through this experience there is something in us that remains constant, something that is steady and continuing witness to these variations and transformations. ... [S]omething in the experiencing is immutable. (SD, p. 305)

This being so, Sankara's third basic step is that because we will never find permanent happiness in the transitory objects that occupy our consciousness, we must turn our attention away from these things and focus it on consciousness itself. That is, "we must identify with the pure consciousness that we truly are, realizing to the full its essential nature. Then we shall find the lasting and perfect bliss that we have missed" (ibid., pp. 305-6). It is at this point that our consciousness culminates in the experience of Brahman, the source and essence of pure bliss and pure consciousness (ibid., p. 307).

Although in *Seeks the Divine*, Burttt does not relate this experience to the culmination of Descartes' practice of his method of doubt, we know that Descartes also ultimately arrives at an experience of a Supreme God upon whom his own consciousness depends. As he states in his *Fifth Meditation*: "Thus I see plainly that the certainty and truth of all knowledge depends entirely on my awareness of the true God; before knowing him I could have no perfect knowledge of anything" (Descartes, Anscombe & Gaech transl., 1977, p. 108). However, whereas Sankara was content to reside beyond logical reason in the mystical experience of bliss, Descartes needed to find a logical expression for his "perfect knowledge of anything" and turned to the notion of pure mathematics as a way to express it and, in doing so, made an important philosophic contribution to the formation of the metaphysical foundations of modern science.

In *Metaphysical Foundations* Burttt writes, in terms reminiscent of Buddha's experience under the Bodhi tree, of a "mystical" moment that Descartes experienced.

On the night of November 10th, 1619, [Descartes] had a remarkable experience ... [that] gave the inspiration and the guiding principle for his whole life-work. The experience can only be compared to the ecstatic illumination of the mystic; in it the Angel of Truth appeared to him and seemed to justify, through added supernatural insight, the conviction which had already been deepening in his mind, that mathematics was the sole key needed to unlock the secrets of nature.¹ (MF, p. 105)

This latter point, however, highlights a crucial difference between the orientation of Descartes and Buddha. Descartes was determined to discover a form of knowledge which unlocked "the secrets of nature" whereas Buddha was determined to discover a form of knowledge which threw light on the meaning of human life including such deep questions as suffering and death. Furthermore, Descartes' "knowledge," as Burttt argues so strongly in *Metaphysical Foundations*, led to the split world, the dualistic empirical world, of modern science where fact and value, mind and body, reside in different realms and, in the final analysis, say nothing meaningful about the deeper questions of

¹ Details of this dream can be found in John Cottingham's *Descartes*, (1986), p. 9f.

human life or about human consciousness itself. The knowledge of science may be able to answer *how* things occur. It cannot answer *why* things occur. It is this latter kind of knowledge that Buddha sort to discover and communicate.

Sankara's Understanding of the Term "Consciousness"

Burt's elaboration of Sankara's understanding of the term "consciousness" prepares us for Burt's own understanding of consciousness as expressed in his theory of expanding awareness.

Ordinarily, when we think of consciousness, we think of a subject which is aware of this or that object as distinguished from and related to other objects. But on consideration it is clear that this is the empirical self that reflects our finite limitations; it is not the [pure indivisible] consciousness [in Hindu thought] ... The mere perception of this or that changing object partakes of the distinctions and vicissitudes of the temporal realm; it is not the pure indivisible consciousness implied by the continuity of our experience as a whole, and attested by the saints of all ages who have achieved the insight and joy that the rest of us seek but have thus far missed. (SD, p. 306)

For Burt, the Hindu understanding of consciousness represents consciousness in its "ultimate nature" (ibid.).

In analyzing Burt's theory of expanding awareness, we need to understand that he also is seeking a notion of "consciousness in its ultimate nature" that has given "insight and joy" to saints, sages, and seers, throughout the ages. Moreover, bearing in mind Burt's association with the Quaker movement, the suggestion of a connection between his theory of expanding awareness and Vedanta wisdom is intriguing in light of a comment by Christopher Isherwood in *Vedanta for Modern Man* (1952).

As far as organized Christianity is concerned, Vedanta would seem to have very little chance of a hearing. ... Vedanta ... teaches the practice of mysticism; it claims, that is to say, that man may directly know and be united with his eternal Nature, the Atman, through meditation and spiritual discipline, without the aid of any church or delegated minister. Organized Christianity has long since condemned this idea as Gnosticism, and has been inclined to question the insights of the mystic, even when he or she has remained an obedient member of the congregation. ...

I see only one little door through which Vedanta might squeeze into Christendom, and that is the Society of Friends. The Quaker doctrine of the Inward Light is in general agreement with the principles of the Vedanta. (Isherwood, 1952, pp. xii-xiii)

Although Isherwood made these comments some years before Burt formulated his theory of expanding awareness, interestingly, this theory represents the "squeezing," albeit thus far in small measure, of Vedic wisdom not only into Christendom but also into Western philosophy. In other words, one "little door" through which it has "squeezed" into Christendom is the philosopher E. A. Burt, onetime associate pastor at St Paul's in New York and a member of the Society of Friends.

The intimate connection between Burt as "pastor of religion" (taking into account that his religious convictions had undergone radical changes since his sermon at St Paul's) and as "philosopher," however, is in accord with the Indian tradition. As Eliot

Deutsch¹ emphasizes in *Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophical Reconstruction* [1969] (1973):

Advaita Vedanta is a religion as much as it is a technical philosophy; it is a way of spiritual realization as well as a system of thought. ... [T]here is a great deal of rigorous thought in Vedanta which is not simply added to its religious aspects. ... Systematic Vedanta was ... formulated in terms of scriptural exegesis as much as it was formulated in terms of philosophical analysis. (Deutsch, 1973, pp. 4-5)

Deutsch also notes that the “central concern of Advaita Vedanta is to establish the oneness of Reality and to lead the human being to a realization of it. Any difference in essence between man and Reality must be erroneous, for one who knows himself knows Reality, and this *self-knowledge* is a ‘saving’ knowledge; it enables the knower to overcome all pain, misery, ignorance, and bondage” (*ibid.*, p. 47; my italics). A crucial point, for our purposes at least, in relation to Deutsch’s comments is that Burt’s theory of expanding awareness also has as its central concern the notion that “self-knowledge,” especially as gained by psychoanalysis, is a “saving” knowledge which enables the knower to experience union with Ultimate Reality.²

Central Doctrines of Taoism and Confucianism

Although Taoism and Confucianism, the major Chinese religions, exerted a lesser influence on Burt’s thought than did the Indian religions, they nevertheless are important. Burt’s father and mother, of course, were Christian missionaries who lived in China for many decades and took Burt there as a youth. This connection no doubt fueled his life-long interest in Chinese culture and politics. For instance, in one of his final works, *The Human Journey* (1981), he argues that it is inevitable that there will be a “Chinese century” (HJ, p. 102) in which Chinese will offer a “gift to the humanity of the future,” a deeper and “a more promising form of socialism than the West has known” (*ibid.*, p. 105).

This will come about because socialism in the West focuses solely on improving the material benefits of people, whereas the Chinese people possess a “moral wisdom” which transcends this focus. “Chinese thinkers have realized through the centuries that ‘Man does not live by bread alone;’ far more important is the humane sensitivity without which material possessions lose their value Their way of life and thought has been permeated by the awareness that only through a deepening accord with Heaven, with nature, and with his fellows, can man truly fulfill himself” (*ibid.*). Burt, adamant that he is not “idealizing Communist China,” saw many problems associated with its political structure which he believes will only be resolved when ordinary people are more involved in democratic processes (*ibid.*, p. 104 & 106). In any event, in 1957, only eight years after the Communists came to power, he predicted: “One who takes a long-

¹Currently Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hawaii.

² Burt sometimes uses lower case and, at other times, capitals for the first letters of this term. In an attempt to achieve consistency, and to give the appropriate meaning that this term denotes, I shall use capitals but remain faithful to Burt’s usage in quotations.

range view of human history ... will be assured that the philosophies of the past [Taoism and Confucianism] will not disappear; China will modify communism far more than communism modifies China” (SD, p. 151).

What then is Burt's understanding of the core elements of these “philosophies of the past” which, in his view, are central to the Chinese way of thinking? There are six important conceptions which both Confucianism and Taoism incorporated into their thought from even more ancient Chinese religions.

One is the conception of Heaven as the creative and protecting power in the universe and the model of good order. ... Another was the belief in *yang* and *yin*, providing a major clue to Chinese cosmology ... *Yang* and *yin* are two basic forces through whose interaction things are produced and natural processes go on. Generally speaking, *yang* is the positive force and *yin* the negative—except that, while *yang* is akin to “love” in Greek cosmology and to “attraction” in later [modern] physical science, *yin* is not akin to “hate” or “repulsion.” *Yang* is the active, initiating, creative factor of the pair; *yin* is the passive, receptive, diversely responsive factor. In the cosmological relation between heaven and earth, for example, heaven is *yang* and earth is *yin*. (SD, pp. 132-3)

A third conception “is the emphasis on the family as the essential social institution. It provides meaning and motivation for the basic social virtues, and serves as a working model for all social institutions” (ibid., p. 133). The fourth is the notion of “ancestral reverence,” or ancestor worship, which maintains a continuity between the living and the dead (ibid., p. 134). Fifth is an emphasis on the practice of ritual which dictates the “correctness of conduct” in daily and political life. The sixth is “the distinctive place in morals and religion of the political ruler or emperor. He is not only the administrative head of the Chinese state ...; [but] since he stands in the position of the father to the larger family of his people and is the Son of Heaven, he is also the prime exemplar on earth of the moral order of the universe” (ibid.). The Son of Heaven is obliged to act in a way that supports the social order. If he does not then “the flow of cosmic forces will be distorted; drought, storm, famine, and other calamitous tokens of Heaven’s displeasure are likely to befall his people” (ibid., p. 135).

In addition to these ancient cosmological and social conceptions which underlie both Confucianism and Taoism, Burt contends that, if one had to pick a single concept which encapsulated the spirit of Chinese religion and philosophy, it would be the notion of *tao*. It is difficult to express the meaning of this term. However, we can take it to mean that there is a correct “way” for human beings to conduct their lives in a manner that will accord with the Way, or *tao*, of Heaven (SD, pp. 142-3). The goal for wise human beings is to discern and accept the *Tao* of Heaven and thus bring the moral order of human life into harmony with the moral order of Heaven. For, in this scheme, Heaven “is the great cosmic exemplar of *tao*” and the “supreme example of the moral ideal” (ibid., p. 143). *Tao* can therefore be seen as a metaphysical, or even mystical, reality which permeates human life, nature, and Heaven. As Burt explains, *tao* is “immanent, in nature and in man, but it is also transcendent; that is it embodies more reality, value,

and meaning than any man, or all men at any given time, can apprehend. In identifying himself with it, man becomes one with a source and ideal of rightness lying beyond the definite forms of good order that he can experience and cognize" (ibid.).

It is not necessary to pursue further how these six conceptions and the notion of *tao* were developed in Confucian and Taoist thought—except for the following brief comments. In the case of Confucius (551-479), it is important that we take account of a notion, derived from the *Golden Mean*, that was influential in Burt's later thought.

Our central self or moral being is the great basis of existence, and harmony or moral order is the universal order of the world. When our true central self and harmony are realized, the universe then becomes a cosmos and all things attain their full growth and development. (SD, 173)

Burt acknowledges that the modern Westerner may be perplexed by these assertions. This is because modern science has split the realm of fact and nature from the realm of moral order and value. On the other hand: "No such perplexity would have been felt by a Westerner of several centuries ago, who would have approached the study of Confucianism from the perspective of Stoic and Aristotelian thought. These ancient philosophies did not sharply separate nature as fact from nature as norm of moral order and moral value; any value that man is moved to seek—so they believed—is shown thereby to be a natural cause of the changes that the seeking brings about" (ibid.).

In the case of Taoism, which Burt refers to as "one of the most provocative and profoundly instructive among civilized religions of the world," (SD, p. 185) two of its central notions also were to influence Burt's later thought. One notion centers around the Taoist belief, as expressed in the *Tao Teh Ching*, that "nonaction" in social matters is preferable to action because action may do more harm than good. (Confucians, by contrast, believed strongly in the need to act in a socially and politically responsible manner and perceived Taoism to be an "anarchical doctrine" (ibid., p. 196).) The second Taoist notion is that one ought not make any dogmatic knowledge or truth claims, as Confucians were prone to do, but rather recognize the relativity of all knowledge. In a famous critique of Confucian claims to truth, the Taoist thinker Chuang Chou (ca. 360-280 B.C.) argues that he could dream that he was "a butterfly fluttering among the flowers" but on awaking would have to ask himself: "Now am I Chuang Chou who has dreamed of being a butterfly, or am I a butterfly dreaming of being Chuang Chou?" (ibid., p. 198). In other words, Chuang Chou questioned the locus of reality.¹

Modern Western critics, however, would ask the Taoist several questions.

Does not commitment to a way of nonaction mean the abandonment of all effort to fulfill our social responsibilities? ... If we recognize the relativity of all ... knowledge, happiness, and virtue, by what standard can we tell the true meaning and value of what we seek? How will we know when we find it? Will we not be lost

¹As C. G. Jung, in *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* [1961] (1993), contends, this experience breaks down the boundaries between the conscious and unconscious and there is a serious question as to where the locus of reality lies (p. 356; see also p. 256f).

in a hopeless skepticism?

The Taoist, following Burt, would reply:

What is responsibility? If it is what people who have not found accord with the *tao* take it to be, then the less we have of it the better. In that case ... [it] is a blind attempt to force ourselves and the rest of the world into a pattern determined by our confused and distorted ideas of wisdom, rectitude, duty, and action. ... This is what the Confucian sages are zealously trying to do; but the result is only to increase the moral deformity of the world. (SD, p. 199)

In other words, it is crucial that people are not forced into being “something other than they would become by their spontaneous, original nature” (ibid.).

In the Taoist view, no external authority ought to impose its claims to knowledge and truth on an individual. Each individual has access to the same truth, *tao*. Its knowledge cannot be imposed. It must be discerned by each individual. Thus a Taoist will adopt a standpoint in relation to the judgement of knowledge claims which is not absolute, but relative to one's own perspective and limited experience (ibid., p. 201). This is not to say, however, that the Taoist does not experience absolute happiness and know absolute truth. This experience and knowledge are gained when an individual has achieved oneness with the *tao* but, due to its nature it cannot be expressed in words. In short, we again have the notion of a mystical experience of reality that is beyond the explanation of logical reason, that is, a super-rational intuition.

The Concept of “Context” and the Meeting of the Philosophies of East and West

In a 1948 Burt contributed a paper, “How Can the Philosophies of East and West Meet?” to a Symposium on Oriental Philosophy organized by *The Philosophical Review*. In this paper he states:

In my own attempt to understand the philosophies of the East I found myself making little headway until a key idea which I had hitherto failed to appreciate dawned in my mind. Most Westerners who have seriously inquired into Oriental thought have the puzzling experience of discovering that while there appears to be an essential equivalence of meaning between certain of their traditional [Western] categories and corresponding Indian or Chinese concepts, in the presence of others [i.e., Eastern categories] they seem to confront something quite alien and opaque. (CEWM, p. 590)

For instance, while both Western and Eastern philosophies may be able to draw the same distinction between the particular and the universal, the dilemma is that the Western tradition lacks appropriate concepts to translate the Indian concept of *karma* or the Chinese *tao*.

A key idea which Burt believed could resolve this dilemma is the notion of “context” (CEWM, p. 591). Burt does not give a precise definition for this term but we can take it to be a technical term for the notion of a world-view or cosmology of people of a particular culture, be it the East or the West. As an initial step to resolve this dilemma, Burt suggests that thinkers from one culture adopt an attitude of sensitive understanding of the “context” in which thinkers of another culture adopt and use

various categories. In doing this they can become aware (1) of any linguistic equivalents which may assist understanding between languages and (2) of the core themes and categories of the world-view or cosmology of the other culture in order to grasp the “context” in which its categories relate to its cosmology. According to Burttt this approach has two benefits. One, it assists philosophers to understand foreign categories and ways of thinking. Second, philosophers are thus able to gain a different perspective and understanding of their own categories and way of thinking.

In general terms, Burttt is arguing the need for philosophers to cross between cultures in their thinking in order to gain “a more impartial and inclusive perspective” which, in turn, brings them to a realization of the relativity of their own way of thinking (*ibid.*, p. 592). Burttt’s acceptance of Buddhism was perhaps part of his goal of putting this notion into practice—although his adherence was clearly more than a rational experience because, as we noted above, he derived “spiritual nourishment” from it. Indeed, the notion of “cross-cultural” thinking became central to Burttt’s later thought. When Huston Smith was asked to write a tribute for *Philosophy East and West* on the occasion of Burttt’s eightieth birthday in 1972, he was able to state: “He who is privileged to write a tribute to Edwin Burttt fortunately does not have to give justification for choosing a cross-cultural topic. ... It is because Burttt has argued not just in asides but in the substance of his life’s work that our new intercultural situation warrants some philosophic priority that I have drawn encouragement from him over the years” (Smith, 1972, p. 441). In light of our study of Burttt’s thought thus far, Smith’s reference to “the substance of Burttt’s life’s work” would be better phrased “the substance of Burttt’s *later* work” because in his early and middle thought Burttt took no account of Eastern thought.

In any event, by way of an elaboration of the meaning that he gives to the term “context,” Burttt turns to an explanation of what he calls the “basic context” which underlies Indian, Chinese, and Western philosophies.

The Context of Indian Philosophy

Indian philosophy, Burttt contends, maintains as its central theme “the quest of each individual for ultimate self-realization, which it interprets as consisting in the discovery of the oneness of his soul with the universal soul or Absolute” (*CEWM*, p. 592). While this quest involves the intellect and logical understanding it is an affair of the whole personality.

[It] requires, besides logical understanding, a persistent moral discipline focused on the conquest of the *self-seeking cravings* which divide an individual from his fellows and from the all-inclusive harmony of the universe. And the work of the logical understanding itself *needs to be completed by a superrational intuition* which is both the intellectual guide to, and the intellectual aspect of, the goal of ultimate oneness with Brahman. All phases of the Indian thinker’s experience, including of course his commerce with the physical world, have their reality for him *in terms of their role in this context*, and all the philosophic categories which he

employs gain their meaning in relation to it. (CEWM, p. 592; my italics)

In sum, the “basic context” in which Indian thinkers have their being requires of them, firstly, to exercise moral discipline in order to conquer their “self-seeking cravings,” and, secondly, to take account of a “superrational intuition” which completes logical understanding, in order to achieve the goal of oneness with the universal soul or Brahman.

It is only in this context, Burt emphasizes, that the Indian idea of *karma* can be understood. It cannot be understood, for instance, if it is associated with the Western category of “causality.”

The Western idea of causality, as employed in modern science and philosophy, expresses the quest for a regularity connecting two events such that the latter can be accurately predicted and controlled when the former is given. And two considerations regarding this circumstance must be emphasized. While the events need not be physical ones, the meaning of the idea [of causality] has been profoundly affected by the fact that the dominant interest of the West has been to achieve mastery of external things; further, when the word “control” is used the West takes it for granted that the control will be exercised in satisfying what it assumes to be the normal present desires of men. The Indian idea of *karma*, by contrast, expresses the quest for a regularity connecting events such that, through a clear understanding of their relation, progress can be made by an individual in passing from the stage where he is lost in the conflicts of selfish craving toward liberation in the harmonious unity of the Absolute. (CEWM, p. 593)

The notion of “control,” therefore, in the Indian context has a totally different meaning to the one that it has assumed in the West. The West understands it primarily in relation to the control of external factors and, hence, the appeal of the mechanistic ideal of causal knowledge. The Indian understands it to be “an essential part of the process of self-realization to overcome our present desires and replace them by a quite different kind of motivation” (ibid.).

The Context of Chinese Philosophy

Chinese philosophy has its own central theme and its own context in which this theme is expressed. As Burt explains, its “practical orientation toward the problem of harmonious adjustment to an inclusive whole [i.e., the whole of reality which includes human beings, nature, and Heaven] is just as definite as is that of Indian philosophy ... [B]ut on the one hand it tends to avoid claims of metaphysical insight into the nature of that inclusive totality, and on the other it emphasizes the fact that the individual who seeks such an adjustment is essentially a social being” (CEWM, p. 594). Central to this context is the role of the family and responsibilities associated with family relationships. Whatever self-realization a person attains is through a deepening and correct adjustment of those relations. Commitment to this goal means that individuals ought to transcend their own desires in order to realize their “social nature” which is one with nature and Heaven (ibid.). Hence, a “fundamental continuity is taken for granted between microcosm and macrocosm” (ibid.). That is, individuals seek to attain a correct

adjustment between each other to ensure that their society, as a moral order, is adjusted, in turn, to “the cosmic order in terms of which ... right adjustment to the entire universe must be controlled” (ibid.).

It is only through an understanding of this “context” that the “untranslatable” concept of *tao* takes on a more intelligible meaning for Western thinkers.

Since in this [Chinese] context there is no separation between ethical and metaphysical reality, nor between man and environing nature, it is evident that a basic category will be needed which unites [a] the idea of a normative with that of a factual order, and [b] also the postulate of a social regularity in the here and now with that of a more ultimate but not radically different regularity in which all processes of the universe find their place. (CEWM, p. 595)

Burt takes it that *tao* is this basic category which, for the Chinese, unites, or which makes continuous, the human realm, the realm of nature, and the metaphysical realm.

The Western Context

Just as the Indian and Chinese have their own contexts which give meaning to their important categories and concepts, so also does the West. Burt identifies four characteristics which, for the West, distinguish the context in which its categories and concepts take on their own unique meaning. We need to keep in mind that when Burt was writing this in 1948, analytic philosophy dominated Anglo/American philosophy.

(1) Central to Western thought is a focus on analysis *in its own right*. Analysis is an end in itself. While both Chinese and Indian philosophy also engage in analysis, they usually carry it out with some deeper end, or purpose, in mind.

(2) The Western focus on analysis relies on the belief that “theory” can be distinguished from “practice.” Ever since Plato posited the notion that humans have a faculty of “reason,” it has been assumed that they can engage in “a purely intellectual activity of the mind which is uncontaminated by other forces in the make-up of the personality” (CEWM, p. 596). This assumption, however, has been challenged by many modern thinkers—Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, *inter alia*—but it still dominates Western science and philosophy. By contrast, Eastern philosophy makes no such assumption.

(3) Individualism also derives from the West’s confidence in analysis. This is implicit in the aim of analysis to break up a whole into irreducible units. That is, if “society is regarded as a whole” it is seen to be made up of individuals who, in turn, are seen as discrete building blocks or separate, atomistic entities. This picture assumes that individuals have their own nature independent of social relations. By contrast, in India “the true self of each individual is believed to be the *universal self*” and, in China, individuals are “nothing real or determinate” apart from their social functions (ibid., p. 597; my italics).

(4) The West tends to focus on the external physical world with a view to bringing it under human control in order to serve human needs. Even the West’s approach to

“problems of mind and society is in terms of a conception of knowledge and of explanation borrowed from successful analysis of the physical world” (ibid.). By contrast, in the East both India and China focus on systematic reflection. In India the interest is on the internal world to ensure that the self grows “toward cosmic maturity.” In China, regulative norms are directed to ensure “harmonious group relations.” (ibid.)

Different Conceptions of the Category of Experience between East and West

Having identified these four characteristics which underlie Western thinking, Burt proposes that a crucial problem arises from the differences between the two cultures. The East and the West have different conceptions of what constitutes a “fact” and also of “the relation between mind and fact” (CEWM, p. 599). He argues that the West cannot impose its own criterion of what constitutes a “fact” onto Eastern minds and believes that the heart of the problem lies in the different understandings that the East and the West have of the category of “experience.”

In India the closest category to “experience” is “the category of *avastha*, whose primary meaning is ‘mental state,’ by which is intended to include whatever is disclosed in any state under consideration” (ibid., p. 601). *Avastha* is a generic term which refers to experience derived from other sources, namely, waking experience, dreams, dreamless sleep, and *turiya* (mystical experience), each of which is given equal weight in knowledge claims. Burt derives these four notions of experience¹ from the thought of B. L. Atreya a philosopher at the Benares Hindu University.² The first notion is not contentious in either the East or the West. The waking state is the source of “facts” derived from sense experience and reason in both the East and the West. The other three states, dreams, dreamless sleep (i.e., the period of sleep without dreams), and *turiya*, however, are contentious as a source of knowledge in the West. Atreya’s own account provides a more detailed understanding of their meaning.

An ideal philosophical hypothesis must ... take note of all types of experience—waking, dream, sleep [i.e., a period of sleep without dreams], and [*turiya*] those moments of conscious forgetfulness [sic] which are experienced when we are merged in the contemplation of the beautiful, the true and the good; no less than these, of the mystic experience which has always been reported by some throughout the history of the world. ... [Some] such aspects of the Reality as cannot be denied

¹ In Advaita *Vedanta* [1969] (1973) Eliot Deutsch provides a reconstruction and analysis of these four sources of experience (p. 55f). Deutsch explains that there is no discontinuity between these four states of consciousness, they are but “stages in the development of one’s powers of awareness and are brought into correspondence with the ontological levels recognized by Advaita. The waking and dream states ... correspond to the phenomenal world of gross and subtle bodies ...; the state of deep [dreamless] sleep ... to the qualified Brahman ... or the Divine ...; and transcendental consciousness (*turiya* ...), to ... Brahman or Reality” (ibid., p. 63).

² Burt in fact does not cite Atreya directly as his source for these notions. Instead he refers to an essay, entitled “How Far to the Land of Yoga? An Experiment in Understanding,” that G. Watts Cunningham (who was on the faculty at Cornell) contributed to the Symposium (Philosophical Review, Vol. 57, 1948, p. 579). Cunningham, in turn, derives these notions from Atreya’s work *Yogavistha and Its Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Adyar Library Association, Madras India, 1939). These notions are also to be found in an essay by Atreya entitled “Philosophy and Theosophy” in *Where Theosophy and Science Meet*, Vol. 2, [1938] (D. D. Kanga, edit., Adyar Library, Madras, India, 1951, pp. 111-148).

to belong to it, and so should not be denied in the ideal philosophy, no matter if they are transcended and transmuted in the Reality as a whole. Philosophy, thus according to us, is the most comprehensive scheme of concepts, prepared under the guidance of reason, in which all the contents of the actual and possible experience must fit ... (Atreya, [1938] 1951, p. 117).

Mystic phenomena—experiences of beings or realities through some other means than the ordinary perceptive processes or the reason—like others are also facts of experience, and philosophy as a comprehensive and rational interpretation of the entire [realm of] experience cannot afford to neglect them” (ibid., p. 115).

In general, therefore, Atreya’s notion is that dreams and mystical experiences must be taken into account when any interpretation of “facts” are made.

In the West, of course, as Burt points out, Freudian psychology takes note of dreams, but the notion of experience is, in general, restricted to only the first of these four categories. Thus the category of *avastha*, Burt observes, is “clearly far from being identical in meaning with the Western idea of experience” (CEWM, p. 601). For the Indian thinker, an issue will be interpreted not just in relation to “waking experience.” It will also, in order to ensure a maximum understanding, be interpreted in relation to the other states of experience. Hence, what the West perceives as a “fact” may be very different to what the Indian mind perceives as a “fact” (ibid., p. 601-2).

The explanation for this difference in meaning that the East and the West give to the category of experience, in Burt’s view, can be accounted for by the different “contexts” in which they have developed.

The West has presupposed a situation in which the center of attention is occupied by external objects, confronted by individual minds, whose waking “experience” is expected to provide true knowledge of their nature when guided by adequate theoretical safeguards. India has presupposed a persistent quest for oneness with the Absolute, on the part of selves each of whose main “states” may be revelatory of truths vital for piloting that quest toward a successful outcome. Hence in terms of the Western context many Indian “facts” are at best irrelevant and highly doubtful; in terms of the Indian context the West confines itself to a narrow selection from the factual realm, capable of satisfying the needs of physical science, perhaps, but quite incapable of providing the material required for meeting the most urgent problems in life. (CEWM, p. 9)

From an “impartial perspective” Burt can see no “a priori reason why either the Western or the Indian context should be regarded as more valid than the other” (ibid.). From this perspective both contexts have their limitations and virtues.

Indeed, in the Western context, due to the influence of mathematics and formal logic on the Western notion of “experience,” “an important field” that once was taken seriously has been “split from experience” (CEWM, p. 602). Burt does not explain what he means by “an important field” but we can assume that he means “the wide field of experience that the East takes seriously.” If he does not mean this, then at the very least he means that the notion of “super-rational intuition” ought to be taken seriously. No doubt he is also drawing on his arguments in *Metaphysical Foundations* where he laments the passing of the medieval teleological cosmology in which human beings

have an important role to play in a hierarchy stretching up to God. This cosmology would have “included in it an important field of human experience” that modern science denies, namely, the notion of a metaphysical reality which transcends human experience.

“Baffling Dilemma” of Different Contexts

Yet for Burttt the dilemma remains: How could the philosophies of the East and West meet in the light of such fundamentally different contexts? After all, the Western thinker will insist on remaining faithful to empirical knowledge and the Eastern thinker to a multi-layered perception of experience. The solution, according to Burttt, is to develop a “context” which transcends both the Indian and Western contexts and yet can be accepted by thinkers from each. If we understand the term “context” to mean a “world-view” or “cosmology,” we can see that Burttt is arguing for the development of a new cosmology which transcends both the Eastern and Western cosmologies. In many respects, this notion echoes his call in the Conclusion to *Metaphysical Foundations* for the development of a post-scientific, or post-Cartesian, metaphysic. It also, of course, reinforces his desire to develop a world philosophy, a project to develop categories which would form the metaphysical foundations for a world community.

How does Burttt propose this task be accomplished? How will Eastern and Western thinkers overcome the limitations, and indeed the virtues, of their own understanding of experience in order to develop a “transcendent context”? According to Burttt, “such transcendence becomes feasible if we [in the West] realize fully that our present idea of experience, and how to respect it, expresses a culturally limited slant on the universe rather than an absolute one” (CEWM, p. 603). If we do accept this, and while it is important not to violate “the logical and factual conscience that we now possess,” we shall see that it is “imperative” to move toward a more “inclusive and discriminating standard” in order to resolve conflicting knowledge claims (*ibid.*). In short, the West can maintain its reliance on empirical knowledge but, at the same time, take Eastern notions of experience seriously.

This approach, Burttt acknowledges, presents a “baffling dilemma” but he believes that if this path is followed a new universal “context” may be developed—although at that point in his career he offered no insight as to what form it would take. “No present thinker, Western or Eastern, can anticipate with any assurance what form that notion will take, but when it appears it will present itself as a fulfillment of the partial standards which on both sides now obtain” (CEWM, p. 604). It will incorporate a universal standard for assessing the validity of the “partial” truth claims currently pertaining to the East and the West. However, while Burttt in 1948 believed that “no present thinker” could anticipate what form or method for assessing truth claims from a universal standpoint would take, the development of a method to achieve this task, his theory of

expanding awareness, became a central project in his later thought. This theory took shape in his mind from the late 1950s onwards.

The Difference between Eastern and Western “Knowledge”

Before examining this theory we need to turn to the paper Burt contributed to the 1949 East-West Philosophers' Conference in which he continues to pursue the “baffling dilemma” confronting philosophers seeking to develop a universal philosophy by synthesizing insights from the East and the West. Although he pursues similar lines of argument as he did at the 1948 Oriental Symposium, an important aspect of his argument is new. He begins to focus more strongly on the different notions of “knowledge” that apply to the East and West. This important development indicates that he is beginning to advocate more clearly the notion that there is a form of knowledge which the East takes seriously and which constitutes an important challenge to the empirical and logical knowledge taken seriously by the West. As Burt stated to the 1949 Conference, the different contexts in which the East and West formulate their notions of “knowledge” present major epistemological implications.

In my judgement they affect the very meaning of “knowledge” as philosophers and scientists seek it. Both Eastern and Western thinkers aim at the acquisition of knowledge, and both are aware that in view of the many forces that can lead our reasoning astray this aim must be guided by a responsible method. But the West takes it for granted that knowledge is essentially and merely *information about* something, and every feature of its logic and methodology is affected by this circumstance. To the East, mere information, by itself, is of minor import and hardly deserves to be called knowledge. Knowledge is the *intellectual aspect of the process of self-realization*, as pursued by one's whole personality. In India this process is a quest for identity with the Absolute Whole; in China, among Confucianists at least, it is a quest for fulfillment of one's social relationships. But in each of these two countries the methodology practiced is likewise profoundly determined by the accepted idea of what knowledge is. (HEWP, p. 111; Burt's italics)

Burt seems, however, to understand that the Western logician may not be convinced that other forms of knowledge are as valid as logic and the inductive method.

Burt stresses that “logic and the scientific method, even in the West, have no absolute status” (ibid., p. 110). He cautions that Western philosophy must not maintain a false loyalty to the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of empirical verifiability. Just as scientists do not violate the principle of non-contradiction when they hold many different potentially conflicting hypotheses in their minds, so also philosophers do not violate it when they hold several potentially conflicting postulates about the nature of knowledge and the structure of the universe in their minds at the one time. To hold several different hypotheses in one's mind does not violate the principle of consistency as the scientist or philosopher is endeavoring by systematic inquiry to clarify the truth or falsity of hypotheses (HEWP, p. 109). Furthermore, the fact that logic and empiricism have a history demonstrates their inherent relativity. Their principles have not always and everywhere been accepted and in the future they may be replaced

by other principles which provide a more inclusive and, at the same time, discriminating standard to decide what is truth (*ibid.*, p. 110). Of course, Burt wrote this essay in 1949 but to the contemporary thinker the future has clearly arrived. Under continual pressure from existentialists, post-modernist, and feminist theorists, particularly since the 1960s, very few philosophers would now claim an absolute status for logic and empiricism.

In 1949 Burt seemed to have little hope that Western logicians would be easily convinced to renounce their reliance on logic as the only source of valid knowledge. In his own words:

[It] seems clear that any real step toward an East-West synthesis would require them to place in jeopardy the standards of consistency and of empirical responsibility that have taken form through long centuries of intellectual struggle and to plunge into the dark and wild sea that lies beyond. "How can we do this," they ask, "without losing the only stable footing that we now have? The quest for a world philosophy seems to place us in an intolerable dilemma: If we are to think in ways that our minds can accept as clear and valid, we must adhere rigorously to our present Western logical principles; but the quest for a world philosophy demands that we throw these in the melting pot with no assurance that any part of them will be left intact when the new method has taken form. (HEWP, p. 109)

He adds that it is fortunate that most logicians are not acquainted with the "distinctive methods of Zen Buddhism; if they were their fears would be greatly intensified" (*ibid.*).

Zen Buddhism

Zen Buddhism developed in Japan after Buddhism had firstly spread from India across China and then to Japan during the first millennium A.D. One of the world's foremost scholars of Zen Buddhism, D. T. Suzuki, contributed a paper at the 1949 East-West Conference entitled "Reason and Intuition in Buddhist Philosophy" (1951). In this paper he attempts to explain the Zen position in relation to reason and intuition. The word "attempts" is appropriate. As Suzuki explains, Zen philosophy attributes a meaning to the notions of reason and intuition that differs markedly from the meaning of these notions in Western thought. Reason in the West, by its very nature, indicates a logical process at work; intuition refers to insight that comes from imagination, reflection or some other cognitive source that will only be accepted as valid once it submits to the tests of reason. In Zen Buddhism, by contrast, intuition and reason always work in conjunction. Intuition (*prajna*) is the faculty which perceives the whole while reason (*vijnana*) works with the parts. Thus *prajna* is "an integrating principle while *vijnana* always analyzes. *Vijnana* cannot work without having *prajna* behind it; parts are parts of the whole; parts can never exist by themselves, for if they did they would not be parts—they would even cease to exist" (Suzuki, 1951, p. 17).

We can understand *prajna* (intuition), therefore, as a mystical insight which grasps the nature of the whole of reality—an insight which is the goal of Zen Buddhists. Suzuki describes it thus:

Prajna's vision ... knows no bounds; it includes the totality of things, not as a limited continuum, but as going beyond the boundlessness of space and endlessness of time. *Prajna* is a unifying principle. It does this not by going over each individual unit as belonging to an integrated whole but by apprehending the latter at one glance, as it were. While the whole is thus apprehended, the parts do not escape from entering into this vision by *prajna* whereby the whole [of reality] is conceived dynamically and not statically.

[*Prajna's* vision] is, as the Zen Buddhist philosophers would say, "an iron bar of ten thousand miles; it has no "hole" by which it can be grasped. It is "dark;" no colours are discernible here. It is like a bottomless abyss where there is nothing discriminable [sic] as subject and object. (ibid., p. 44)

In sum, *prajna* is a form of intuitive or superrational knowledge beyond verbal articulation, that is, beyond logical reason.

It is clear that at the 1949 East-West Conference Burttt took particular account of the East's notion of a "higher" knowledge beyond reason. At the end of the Conference, Burttt, along with several other philosophers including Suzuki,¹ led a seminar to analyze its results. Burttt's contribution, in part, was as follows:

The West, generally speaking, is convinced that the result of any knowledge-seeking enterprise is fully expressible in verbal symbols, whose relations are subject to the ordinary logical rules; for the East the intuitive "higher" knowledge is not capable of verbal expression and communication, at least to those who have not attained it. ("Reports of the Conference Seminars," Moore (edit.), 1951, p. 427)

In this passage Burttt focuses on the basic conflict between Western and Eastern attitudes towards knowledge, and thus identifies the core issue he was to address in his theory of expanding awareness.

Conclusion

Our exposition of Burttt's understanding of Eastern religion reveals his concerted attempt to convince the Western philosopher of the merits and validity of the Eastern notion of "higher" or superrational knowledge. Though it may appear that superrational knowledge requires the repudiation of logic, Burttt insists that this is not the case. Even logic depends upon the context of larger meanings. As Burttt points out by quoting Radhakrishnan:

[For the East the] highest knowledge transcends the distinction of subject and object. Even logical knowledge is [only] possible because this highest knowledge is ever present. ... We use the direct mode of apprehension which is deeper than logical understanding when we contemplate a work of art, when we enjoy great music, when we acquire an understanding of another human being in the supreme achievement of love. In this kind of knowledge the subject is not opposed to the object but is intimately united with it. By calling this kind of knowledge integral insight, we bring out that it does not contradict logical reason, though insight exceeds the reason. (ISPU, p. 266-7)²

Burttt reminds his reader that, for the Eastern thinker, gaining this higher knowledge is

¹ The other seminar leaders were Professors D. M. Datta, F. S. C. Northrop, W. R. Dennes, and E. R. Hughes (Moore, 1951, p. 439).

² Burttt cites the following source for this quote: *This is My Philosophy*, ed. by Whit Burnett (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp. 345f.

not an end in itself in the same way that the West makes scientific knowledge an end in itself. Its purpose for the East is self-realization, that is, a person's whole personality is transformed. The aim is to experience the universal self—the divine within.

Chapter 6

Burt's Theory of Expanding Awareness

If we were to follow Burt's later thought in strict chronological order we would discover increasing references to "the capacity of expanding awareness" or simply, "expanding awareness." While this notion is central to his later thought and represents his most original contribution to philosophy, nowhere does Burt bring all its aspects together and present it as an integrated theory. Indeed, nowhere does he refer to it as his "theory" of expanding awareness. Nevertheless, this notion, which became the cornerstone of his later thought, begins to make its appearance in his works from the late 1950s onwards and may leave a reader puzzled by the extensive claims Burt makes for it. Take, for instance, this claim:

Is there a faculty beyond reason, which includes its ways of operating while not being limited by them? Yes, every person has the power of expanding awareness. Reasoning is one—but only one—form of expanding awareness. That power [of expanding awareness] seems quite unlimited (PYTT, "C", 1987, p. 65)

This passage, taken from his final work, *Philosophy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (PYTT) (hereafter *Philosophy*), clearly reveals the importance Burt places on this notion: its "power is unlimited."

Our task in this chapter is to bring together Burt's unsystematic references to this notion and thus throw light upon its elusive aspects—not the least being the idea that it is a faculty with unlimited power. This task requires us to limit our discussion to gaining an overview of its most salient features. We leave until later chapters an examination of the implications that Burt believes this notion entails for philosophy generally. The aim here will be to introduce us to what may seem to be a puzzling notion and to provide the textual basis for the claims that Burt makes for it in his later thought. Indeed, it may be that, besides it being a speculative notion introduced into an analytic era, the lack of serious scholarly attention¹ paid to Burt's later thought, at least

¹ The attention paid to Burt's later thought was limited, for the most part, to reviews of his *magnum opus*, *In Search of Philosophic Understanding* (1965). We have already noted comments by John E. Smith in our Introduction in relation to this work. The journal *The Philosophy Forum* (Vol. 8, No. 2, 1969) also carried two reviews—and Burt's reply—of *Philosophic Understanding*. One review is by Gardner Murphy (1895-1979), formerly a professor of psychology at Columbia University. Murphy, who notes that he had known Burt since they were both undergraduate students at Yale, is sympathetic to the ideas Burt expresses in this work. He contends that the work is that of a "modern, scholarly, humane, world-minded, era-minded philosopher at his best" (*ibid.*, p. 79).

The other review, by Henry W. Johnstone of Pennsylvania State University, is unsympathetic. His main concern is that Burt is inattentive in respect to methodology and has a tendency to "fudge."

The methodological difficulty is that any method of dealing with a problem seems acceptable to Professor Burt so long as it enables us to extricate ourselves from the problem. The reader has no clear sense of what holds are barred and what permitted; he misses the guidance that would be supplied by a distinctive philosophical orientation. There is no way in which he can anticipate or verify the conclusions reached anywhere in the book. (*Philosophy Forum*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1969, pp. 83-4)

In reply to Johnstone, Burt, in general terms, claims that he deliberately does not commit himself to a

by comparison to that paid to his early thought, is due to its elusive nature.

First Reference to “Expanding Awareness”

The first reference that Burt makes to the notion of “expanding awareness” appears in a paper entitled “A Basic Problem in the Quest for Understanding between East and West” (QUEW) that he delivered to the 1959 East-West Philosophers’ Conference in Hawaii. Burt served on the Steering Committee¹ for this Conference which was held over a six week period in the summer vacation at the University of Hawaii. Its attendance by some one hundred philosophers from the East and the West was considerably higher than the two earlier Conferences held in 1939 and 1949 (Moore, 1962, p. 7). Among the Western philosophers who contributed papers, besides Burt, were Charles Moore, Sidney Hook, W. T. Stace, Herbert Schneider, and F. S. C. Northrop. Among the Eastern philosophers who contributed papers were D. T. Suzuki, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, D. M. Datta, and P. T. Raju. The purpose of the 1959 Conference was to gain, through an insight of the basic philosophical attitudes, ideas, and methods, a mutual understanding of the various cultures of Asia and the West (*ibid.*, p. 3).

In his paper to the 1959 Conference, Burt does not pursue his notion, as put forward at the 1949 Conference, of discovering a “context” which transcends both the Eastern and Western “contexts.” Instead, he develops a new approach and, in doing so, makes his first reference to the notion of expanding awareness.

The primary questions regarding the philosophical orientation of the East are these: What is the liberated person liberated from and what is he liberated to? I believe that the concepts by which its answer to these questions can be best translated into terms familiar to the West are those of the psychoanalytic approach to the nature of man. ... Expressed in these terms, the Eastern answer is: The liberated person is liberated from inner conflict and all that goes with it; he is liberated to the realization of an open, alert, and united selfhood from which this conflict has blocked him. To the individual not yet liberated the conflict is largely unconscious, but through the anxiety and tension generated it ever and anon breaks into conscious awareness; the achievement of liberation is essentially a process of hastening and *expanding this awareness*. In this situation, as elsewhere, it is realization of the truth that makes one free. (QUEW, p. 682; *my italics*)

The significance of the East-West Philosophers’ Conference as a forum for Burt’s first reference to the notion of expanding awareness is of manifold importance.

given method because this would exclude alternative methods which, in turn, offer other visions of truth (*ibid.*, p. 88f). No doubt Burt’s reply left Johnstone even more confused. However, this confusion may have been ameliorated had Burt explicated his theory of expanding awareness more succinctly—as attempted in this chapter. Thus, when Johnstone states that “There is no way in which he can anticipate or verify the conclusions reached anywhere in the book” he has no way of knowing that Burt, in fact, is verifying philosophic conclusions against the standpoint of Ultimate Reality. By contrast to Johnstone, Professor S. K. Saksena from the University of Hawaii in a review of *Philosophic Understanding for Philosophy East & West* declares it “a magnificent piece of work on philosophic understanding” (Vol. 16, 1966, p. 94). Saksena, who has a wide knowledge of both Eastern and Western thought, believes that Burt “has astute observations to make on the relation of philosophy and religion in East and West” (*ibid.*, p. 96).

¹ The Steering Committee consisted of: Burt, Wing-tsit Chan (Dartmouth College), Abraham Kaplan (Uni. of Calif., LA), Cornelius Krusé (Wesleyan University), Charles A. Moore (Uni. of Hawaii), F. S. C. Northrop, (Yale) (Moore, 1962, p. 11).

Firstly, this notion cannot be separated from his goal to develop the metaphysical foundations of a world philosophy or cosmology which could provide the categories, drawn from both the East and the West, to form the foundations of a future world community. That is, a major expectation he has for it is that it would provide a *method* by which philosophers could formulate these metaphysical foundations. Secondly, as intimated in the previous chapter, the notion reveals the influence of Eastern notions on Burt's thought. In the above passage, for instance, Burt posits that the primary human problem from the Eastern viewpoint is the need of individuals "to be liberated from inner conflict and all that goes with it" in order to achieve "the realization of an open, alert, and united selfhood"—by which, as we now know, he also means the individual has achieved union with the divine. Thirdly, to express this notion in terms that are meaningful to the West, he has turned to psychoanalytic theory. In his view, psychoanalytic concepts form a bridge of understanding between the Eastern and Western cultures. In fact psychoanalytic theory plays a far more important role than this—it is integral to the theory of expanding awareness. Burt, we may recall, began psychoanalysis some years prior to (and continued it for some years after) taking his first trip to the East in 1946-47. Thus, the psychoanalytic approach to human nature was prominent in his thinking at the same time that he took a serious interest in Eastern thought. Finally, it was due to Burt's attempt to understand the Eastern way of thinking that he came to place increasing importance on two important concepts in his theory of expanding awareness, namely, the concepts of presupposition and valuation.

Burt's theory, in fact, has not two, but three basic concepts: "presupposition," "valuation," and "motivation," to all of which Burt gave increasing importance as he developed the theory. We shall examine firstly the more technical meaning that he gives to each of these concepts, secondly, their relationship within his theory, and thirdly, having gained these insights turn to a deeper examination of the theory as a whole. We shall begin with the concept "presupposition" because it is the core concept.

The Concept of Presupposition

Although Burt refers to the concept "presupposition" from his earliest work, *Metaphysical Foundations*, onwards and although it takes on an important technical meaning in his theory of expanding awareness, he was reluctant to define its meaning. Even as late as 1965 he states: "It is obvious that this word [presupposition] has a unique meaning [i.e., in his thought]; although it has something in common with such familiar terms as axiom, or postulate, or principle, or suppressed premise, it is not identical with any of them. A formal definition would have little value and will not be offered, but ... when we are looking for a presupposition we are looking for a belief which in some sense underlies an utterance that has attracted our attention" (ISPU, pp. 129-130). Burt makes this statement in his treatise, *Philosophic Understanding*.

In this treatise he also acknowledges R. G. Collingwood's work on the concept of presupposition in the latter's *Essay on Metaphysics* (1940). However, Burttt clarifies that he does not accept Collingwood's attempt to construct a metaphysical theory around a science of presuppositions (*ibid.*, p. 130fn.). In any event, in *Metaphysical Foundations* (1924), Burttt anticipated Collingwood's emphasis on this concept. In *Metaphysical Foundations* Burttt makes an intimate connection between the concept of presupposition and metaphysics by drawing attention to the presuppositions underlying the thinking of the early modern philosopher/scientists which led them to create new metaphysical categories underlying the scientific world view. Collingwood, who nowhere refers to Burttt in his *Essay on Metaphysics*, also makes an intimate connection between the concept of presupposition and metaphysics by arguing that presuppositions are the logical signifier of a metaphysic. However, while Burttt is adamant that metaphysics cannot be divorced from ontology, that is, a theory of being, Collingwood's aim is to establish that metaphysics can be divorced from ontology by developing a "science of metaphysics" (Collingwood, 1940, p. 11f). Yet we know that, other than during his humanist period, Burttt could not endorse Collingwood's approach. In Burttt's view, it would be contradictory for Collingwood to develop a science of presuppositions. For such a science would still be a theory *within*¹ the scientific world-view—a world-view that can say nothing meaningful about human consciousness and presents humans with a split, or partial view, of reality.

It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that Burttt overcame his reluctance to define the concept of presupposition. In his 1972 autobiographical article he states that his interest in the concept was stimulated by his interest in comparing Eastern and Western philosophies. In his own words the "most important outcome of that comparison was that the concept of 'presupposition' assumed an increasingly central role in my developing point of view" (MPP, p. 432). Expounding upon this concept in his autobiographical article, he clarifies:

A presupposition is a hidden or tacit premise underlying any statement or question or piece of reasoning. ... [Besides] specific presuppositions implied by any particular statement there are basic presuppositions, revealed (when one looks for them) in all statements which express this or that way of thinking. Before long I

¹ Take for instance his statement: "Only by a kind of analysis, ... do I come to see ... a presupposition I was making, however little I was aware of it at the time. Here lies the difference between the desultory and casual thinking of our unscientific consciousness and the orderly and systematic thinking we call science. In unscientific thinking our thoughts are coagulated into knots and tangles ... Thinking scientifically means disentangling all this mess, and reducing the knots of thoughts in which everything sticks together anyhow to a system of thoughts in which thinking the thoughts is at the same time thinking the connexions between them" (Collingwood, 1940, pp. 22-3). Burttt would argue (in his theory of expanding awareness) that Collingwood's feat of "disentangling all this mess" itself is based on the presupposition that there is a vantage point beyond reason (the faculty of expanding awareness) which can carry out this feat of "disentangling" and, moreover, it is impossible, as Collingwood would have it, to maintain that our mental activity can be divorced from ontological considerations. (For a discussion of Collingwood's treatment of presuppositions see John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, [1957], (Penguin Books, 1986, p. 302-308).

realized that, just as each philosophical school in the West was grounded in the basic presuppositions which distinguish it from other schools, so there are more general presuppositions reflected in the orientation of all Western philosophies and exhibiting, when brought to light, their difference from typical ways of thinking in India or China. (MPP, p. 432)

Although this passage begins to throw light on Burt's understanding of the concept of presupposition, it is not until his final works, *The Human Journey* (1981) (hereafter *Human Journey*) and *Philosophy* (1988) that we find a succinct definition.

In *Human Journey* Burt differentiates between "particular" and "general" presuppositions (which elsewhere he describes respectively as "specific" or "non-ultimate" and "basic" or "ultimate" presuppositions (MPP, p. 432 & ISPU, p. 130)) and ascribes an active power to basic, or general, presuppositions. In his own words, the "vital role" that presuppositions play in human experience and thought is evident when we

observe that besides ... particular [specific, non-ultimate] presuppositions there are the more general [basic, ultimate,] ones, expressed in a whole cluster of ideas and even in the entire way of thinking characteristic of an individual or group. Those presuppositions are the ones that concern us. They are the *mental spectacles through which everything is seen and explained*. Hence in our perceiving and interpreting we never begin "from scratch"—i.e., from an empty receptivity to anything that might enter our experience. We always begin with our present [basic] presuppositions, which are *actively at work*. Thus any view of life and the world is grounded in and held together by a set of quite general presuppositions which provide its framework. (HJ, p. 113; my italics)

Thus, for Burt, our *basic presuppositions* are active, rather than passive "mental spectacles." They are the active power which (a) processes perceptions and interpretations, (b) forms the foundation and framework of our world-view, and (c) holds it together.

In *Philosophy* Burt explains that the "*idea* expressed in [the concept of presupposition] is well known to philosophers; Kant's transcendental apparatus of forms and categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason* can be described as a set of presuppositions underlying human experience and knowledge. The central meaning conveyed by the word has something in common with what thinkers have meant by "premise," "axiom," "postulate," or "first principle," but is not identical with any of them" (PYTT, "C," pp. 67-8; Burt's italics). We can thus understand that a basic presupposition is an essential logical building block in any belief system which seeks to explain human experience and knowledge.

The Unconscious Role of Basic Presuppositions

Another important, and contentious, qualification that Burt makes in relation to basic presuppositions is that they usually perform their function *unconsciously* (HJ, p. 112).¹ This follows, he claims, because the very act of thinking requires us to think *with*

¹ Burt was to admit in his final, unpublished, treatise, *Philosophy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*:

our presuppositions. Hence, logically, we cannot think *about*, or be conscious of, the presuppositions that we are thinking *with* (*ibid.*). The first instance of this notion can be found in the paper he delivered to the 1959 East-West Philosophers' Conference. Burt begins this paper by noting that he had spent the previous five weeks listening to the debates between philosophers from both the East and the West, but, in his view, there still seemed to be some crucial factor which obstructed understanding between the East and the West. Therefore, he questions:

What is it that obstructs us in seeking this kind of intercultural understanding? I believe that to this question there is a simple answer ... It is our underlying philosophical presuppositions—not the ones that we easily become conscious of but the ones providing the implicit framework of our whole way of thinking. It is vital to remind ourselves that there are presuppositions that we think *with* so naturally and constantly that it requires a “severe wrench” for us “to free ourselves from their clutches” sufficiently to think *about* them.

Such presuppositions differ between the competing schools in Western thought and those in Eastern thought; that is why the issues between these schools are often hard to resolve. But the most intractable differences arise from the fact that there are more general presuppositions typical of the West as a whole and others typical of the East as a whole; in their case we confront contrasting ways of thinking about everything that philosophers try to interpret. To get past this barrier and achieve mutual comprehension at this level requires a sensitive flexibility that is very difficult to achieve. (QUEW, p. 674; Burt's italics; my parentheses)

This passage, besides being Burt's “simple answer” to the problem of intercultural understanding, represents one of the most important statements of his mature philosophical position.

He is no longer satisfied to identify and criticise the content of presuppositions which form the basis of our conscious thinking processes and which comprise our world-view—as he did in *Metaphysical Foundations*. Instead he now emphasizes that, assuming we have a certain “sensitive flexibility,” we need to give a “severe wrench” to the presuppositions that we think *with*, that is, the basic presuppositions which form the foundations of our cognitive activity. We need to achieve this task so that we can think *about*, that is, analyze or reflect upon, these basic presuppositions. This notion is crucial to Burt's theory of expanding awareness. For it has the hidden presupposition that there is some vantage point in the human personality which enables an individual to stand outside his or her thinking, indeed their entire intellect, and from which they can give a

I found that I had to confront the sobering fact that through most of my career I was as obtuse as my fellow philosophers were. I was unready to detect errors in my own present way of thinking and to realize that an opponent might be more nearly right than I. But the time came when I had to meet the challenge. When I did so I perceived where the root of my failure lay. It was quite simple. I had been pretending to be a pure intellect in my philosophizing, free from contamination by anything that would sully my pursuit of knowledge. ... I was egregiously deceiving myself. When I faced the challenge frankly, I realized that whether I was philosophizing or doing something else I was a *person*, subject to the forces that are at work in a person—the variable fears and hopes, loves and hates, demands for my personal satisfaction, impatient foibles and aspiring ideals. When I concentrated on a philosophical problem these forces did not disappear—they were present, beneath the surface if not consciously recognized. And I suspected that other philosophers are not very different in this crucial respect. (PYTT, “C,” p. 46)

“severe wrench” to the presuppositions that form, not only the foundation of, but also the function of reasoning. That is, if the process of thinking is taken to mean the processes of reason, or rational thinking, then this notion presupposes that the human personality has a capacity, or a vantage point, which is *beyond reason*. It is this capacity which, in time, Burt came to call “the capacity of expanding awareness.” It enables an individual to gain a vantage point to review, not just their presuppositions, but also their valuations and motivations.

The Concept of Valuation

The concept of valuation became important for Burt because it assisted his attempt to understand *why* people in particular cultures maintain certain basic presuppositions. As he explains in his autobiographical article, when he tried to comprehend the “deep-seated philosophical differences” between the East and the West, he was led to place increasing emphasis on the concept of “valuation.” In his own words: “More and more it seemed clear [to me] that the set of [basic or ultimate] presuppositions which ground a given point of view always rests on some underlying valuation, and that, when that valuation has been detected and described, one understands ... why the champions of the view in question had come to adopt it” (MPP, p. 432). In India, for example, its people and thinkers maintain as a “supreme value” the “persistent mystic quest” for human beings to achieve union with the Infinite. This valuation, in turn, leads them to hold particular basic presuppositions, that is, “mental spectacles,” which enable them to perceive a particular view of the nature of reality and the cosmos generally.

When Burt turned from his study of Eastern philosophies and reexamined differences between Western “schools of thought” it gradually seemed evident to him that “the presuppositions which constitute the distinctive point of view of a given school, in any field, also express an underlying valuation and can be fruitfully understood when that valuation is grasped” (MPP, p. 432). Why, for instance, have the presuppositions of behaviorism come to dominate the orientation of thinkers in the field of psychology? In his view, this is due to the “high value” that thinkers in this field place on the empirical methods that are central to investigations in the physical sciences. “If those methods are valued so highly that no alternative is regarded as genuinely scientific, a student of human nature will naturally find the behavioristic presuppositions very persuasive. Traits in man that fail to fit them can be ignored or pushed aside as of minor consequence” (MPP, pp. 432-3). Or, expounding upon insights gained from Burt’s definition of presuppositions, we could state that, due to the “supreme value” that the behaviorist places in the scientific method, so his or her “mental spectacles” will enable them to perceive a particular view of human nature. Simply stated, these mental spectacles exclude any activity of the mind that does not reveal itself in an external behavior. The behaviorist, therefore, on their own terms can

never appreciate beauty—for beauty only has its meaning in the eye, the mental spectacles, of the beholder.

In relation to the field of philosophy, Burt maintains that his “guiding maxim,” that valuations always underlie a basic presupposition, also explains why philosophers maintain a particular orientation. As an example of this maxim at work in philosophy Burt turns to the analytic movement. We shall quote his explanation at length because this movement dominated American philosophy from the 1950s onwards—at the very time Burt was pursuing a speculative orientation, as expressed in his theory of expanding awareness, which was diametrically opposed to that of the analytic movement.

[Why, Burt questions] are many philosophers nowadays strongly tempted by the analytic orientation? And how can one understand the differences between the analytic schools that have succeeded each other in the present century—realism, positivism, and the ordinary language philosophy, to mention the most prominent among them? I have discovered no promising alternative to an answer [other than] in terms of their underlying valuations. A philosopher becomes an analyst if he is persuaded that the analytic method enables him to reach a solution of many puzzling questions on which competent thinkers can agree, while other ways of philosophizing, so far as he can see, lead to no reliable outcome. He highly values a method that makes such solutions possible. As for the difference between the various analytic schools, it appeared quite obvious on reflection that they rest on divergent valuations which are revealed in the criteria each school has consciously or unconsciously chosen by which to tell when an analysis is acceptable. For positivism, any acceptable analysis presupposes an ultimate value in the “language of science,” which from its point of view provides a reliable model for correcting errors in nonscientific ways of speaking or writing. The ordinary language philosophy rejects this presupposition, placing its ultimate value in current stock ways of using words when they are philosophically clarified. (MPP, p. 433)

Thus, the analytic movement, which Burt describes elsewhere as a “succession of analytic fads” (PMAP, p. 167), “values” a particular approach because they presuppose it will lead to philosophic truth. In his view, the, literally, *exclusive* nature of analytic valuations and presuppositions inherently delivers only a partial philosophic truth (*ibid.*, p. 166f). Put simply, their *exclusiveness* inherently excludes the full truth.

To understand more deeply the meaning Burt attributes to the concept of valuation, we need to take account of the role that emotions play in a psychological scheme that he posits in relation to this concept.

The word “emotion” ... is sometimes simply a synonym for feeling; more often it means an especially intense feeling, which absorbs the mind and exerts a potent force. Happily, in the present context this ambiguity [between “emotion” and “feeling”] need give no concern. Our basic presuppositions, especially those functioning as ultimate [i.e., those regarded by the holder as being beyond doubt], constitute the core of our very selves, hence the feelings involved in their adoption, preservation, and abandonment are intense ones. Any [of these emotions or feelings] that are not at first intense come to be so if they prove able in the course of time to dominate our thinking. We can therefore freely speak of “emotion” as well as of “feeling” when referring to them. (ISPU, p. 132)

An important qualification of Burt’s scheme, therefore, is that a valuation does not

have a *direct* relationship with a basic presupposition. It has a direct relationship with an *emotion*—which, in turn, is expressed through, and provides the potent force behind, a basic presupposition. That is, our *direct* attachment to basic presuppositions is due to our emotions—not to our valuations.

Perhaps the most succinct explanation of his understanding of the relationship between emotions and the concept of valuation is the following passage.

The primary truth about [the concept of valuation] ... seems to be that anything acquires value when it becomes the object of emotion. If the emotion is love, the object acquires the positive value of a loved person; if it is fear, the object acquires the negative value of something to be escaped from or destroyed. Value is always involved in perception, since without it an object would attract no attention and would remain unperceived. (HJ, p. 47)

Therefore, while basic presuppositions are the “mental spectacles” which process our perceptions of reality, perception cannot occur unless some valuation is present.

Furthermore, following Burt, a person’s valuations are inherently selective and dependent at any one time on a “dominant,” “controlling,” or “ultimate” valuation. This being so, the person “fails to see many features that are unimportant to, or conflict with, that valuation. Consider a simple example, namely, a meadow as observed by a farmer, by an artist, and by a real estate dealer from the same spot. It is the same meadow, but the parts that catch the observer’s attention are not the same, and they are perceived by each of the three in a different set of relations, thus exhibiting the different values dominating their perception” (HJ, p. 48). Hence, the very act of perception, or thinking, inherently involves valuations. Extending Burt’s analogy of the “mental spectacles” being the framework of presuppositions which form the core of our thinking, our valuations then are the “perceptive lenses” of these “mental spectacles.” Thus he is able to assert the maxim that: “Our criteria of form and fact depend on our ultimate values, and on the way they evolve from time to time under growing awareness” (ISPU, p. 142).

Summarizing Burt’s scheme thus far we can build the following model. At the core of the cognitive processes of each individual is a set of basic presuppositions which form the framework of our view of reality, or our world-view. Our emotions are the source of energy, or force, which maintain this framework of presuppositions. In turn, it is our values that orient and relate each individual to the balance of reality. For without valuations we would not be able to perceive reality, let alone think about it and be related to it.

Having thus outlined this epistemological model, there is one further, crucial, concept which Burt adds to his scheme: motivation—particularly his notion of unconscious motivations.

The Concept of Motivation

In his 1972 autobiographical article, entitled *My Path to Philosophy*, Burt traces his concern with “unconscious motivations” to his own experience of psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis, according to Burt, transformed his philosophical thinking and led him to see that, besides our conscious motives, there are always unconscious motives at work in each individual (MPP, p. 434). Even though the concept of motivation is crucial to his later thought and his theory of expanding awareness, however, he nowhere gives it a succinct definition. In *Philosophic Understanding* (1965), for instance, he declines to give it a formal definition and argues instead that “it will gain clarity as we use it” (ISPU, p. 131). In his view, the concept is so widely employed by psychologists and philosophers that its meaning has become vague and ambiguous. Hence, it is preferable to leave it undefined (*ibid.*).

For our critical purposes, however, this vagueness is not satisfactory. We need to gain a basic understanding of the concept within psychoanalytic theory by at least reviewing Freud’s use of it. After all, it was Freud’s theory that most influenced Burt.¹ To do this we will turn to a succinct passage in psychoanalyst Jay Greenberg’s book entitled *Oedipus and Beyond* (1991).

Freud’s psychoanalytic theory of motivation ... addresses the “why” of behavior and experience By almost all accounts, psychoanalysis works through some version of making the unconscious conscious

Psychoanalysis began as a radical theory of motivation: Freud claimed to cure the incurable by explaining the inexplicable. Over the course of several decades he laid down four motivational principles, each of which powerfully challenged conventional wisdom. First, all mental activity is motivated (the principle of psychic determinism). Second, motives can and generally do operate outside of conscious awareness. Third, no mental event has a unitary motive; human experience is inevitably the product of conflicting tendencies and compromises. Finally, all motivation is traceable ultimately to the operation of biologically rooted, phylogenetically determined sexual and destructive needs. These needs are experienced as urges or impulses and reflect the working of elementary human instincts, or drives. (pp. 2-3)

Applying Freud’s “four motivational principles” to Burt’s model that we have built thus far, we can posit the following. If we understand “mental activity” as the work of active basic presuppositions which, due to their nature, “operate outside conscious awareness,” then this “mental event” takes place on a foundation of conflicting motives which, in turn, have their source in “elementary human instincts, or drives.” Put simply, our mental activity is always motivated by, and taking place on, the shifting sand of our primary instincts and drives.

We can note also that both Burt and Greenberg use the term “conscious awareness” to describe the state of consciousness that is achieved when unconscious factors are made conscious. This term may appear to be a tautology. To be aware of some thing or factor, we assume, is to be conscious of it. But it seems (neither thinker

¹ Burt’s daughter Winifred recalls : “I remember the psychoanalytic movement at that time [in the 1940s and 1950s] as being imbued with the most fanatical idealism—they really believed that if they could persuade the human race to work out its Oedipus complex that it would have clear sailing from then to eternity. Ned [Professor Burt] was very much swept along by this tide.” This quote is taken from a letter dated April 26th, 1991 (to myself) from Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster of Seattle (p. 2).

defines their meaning of it) that the term “conscious awareness” is used generally within psychoanalytic theory to distinguish between the awareness, gained through the senses, of objects in the material realm, and the awareness one can gain of factors at work in the unconscious realm. In the latter process Burt and Greenberg refer these factors as having reached “conscious awareness” or consciousness. In any event, we can take it that the meaning Burt intends for the term “conscious awareness” is the state of consciousness that one achieves when things or factors that have been previously hidden in the unconscious realm are brought to consciousness. Furthermore, later in the chapter, we draw a clear distinction between this term and the notion of “expanding awareness” as an active “capacity” which oversees the bringing of unconscious factors to conscious awareness.

While Greenberg throws light on the meaning of the concept of motivation within psychoanalytic theory, Burt’s use of the concept can be confusing. He interchanges terms such as “emotionally potent,” “emotional motivation,” “unconscious emotions,” “unconscious motivations,” “motivating interest,” or even an “unconscious force.” In all instances, however, we can take it that he is referring to “unconscious motivations” with the meaning ascribed to it by Greenberg.

At the core of Burt’s argument of the need for philosophers to take account of their unconscious motivations are the following passages from *Philosophic Understanding*.

The traditional assumption has been that the psychology of philosophers is entirely irrelevant to the quest for truth—that a philosophical position can be judged without attending to its motivating sources. (ISPU, p. 110)

The temptation to avoid the challenge is very strong. But the crucial fact is that in all action and all thought some motive is being expressed, and that *every motive has an emotional dimension*. Indeed, emotion seems to be the driving energy behind whatever we do; without it our minds as well as our bodies would be completely torpid. (ISPU, p. 111; my italics)

To support his contention that emotions play an important role in philosophical thinking, Burt claims to be following Nietzsche’s belief that emotions are the dominant factor in the human personality (*ibid.*, p. 116). Indeed, he believes that his insight has as much importance for philosophy in the twentieth century as Benedict Spinoza’s (1632-1677) thought did in the seventeenth. Spinoza,¹ in Burt’s view, correctly focused on the need to gain knowledge of one’s emotions and feelings in order to achieve a stable relationship with reason. However, had he “realized the powerful role of *unconscious* emotion he would belong to the twentieth century as well as the seventeenth” (ISPU, p. 126; my italics). We can take “unconscious emotion” here to mean “unconscious emotional motivation” or “unconscious motivation.” Whatever term is used, the crucial factor for

¹ Burt does not cite a source for his reference to Spinoza but we can take it that he is referring to Spinoza’s *Ethics*, particularly Parts 3, 4, and 5. Take, for instance, this passage from Part 5: “Therefore the more an emotion becomes known to us, the more it is within our power and the less the mind is passive in regard to it” (Spinoza, *Ethics*, transl. G. H. R. Parkinson, (1989), p. 202.

Burt, of course, is that Spinoza did not take *unconscious* motivations into account.

If some ambiguity still remains following our attempt to clarify Burt's use of the concept of motivation, it is compounded when we try to understand the relationship he seeks to establish between motivations, presuppositions, and valuations. The reason for this ambiguity perhaps is due to the fact that, in general, Burt is concerned to identify a relationship that occurs in the nebulous region of the human *unconscious* mind. That is, he is concerned primarily with *unconscious* motivations, presuppositions, and valuations and the relationship between them. In the next section, we attempt to disentangle and restate what may seem, at this juncture, to be a confusing relationship between these concepts.

The Relationship between Presuppositions, Valuations, and Motivations

Firstly, we shall examine the relationship between presuppositions and motives and, only after doing this, integrate valuations into the discussion. To begin, we need to clarify what may seem to be a fudging of the relationship between the concepts, motivation and presupposition. For instance, in his 1972 autobiographical article, Burt maintains that a person's unconscious motives "drive" a person to act and "to think" in a particular pattern (MPP, p. 439). If we understand "drive" as "an active power" and "thinking in a particular pattern" as being a person's "world-view," then Burt's point here is that *unconscious motivations* are the *power* which underpins a person's world-view. Yet what is confusing is his claim, that we noted earlier, that it is our *basic presuppositions*, our "mental spectacles," which are the active *power* maintaining the foundation and framework of our world-view. This confusion, however, is clarified by turning to the following passage from *Philosophic Understanding*.

A basic presupposition may be quite simple or it may be rather complex. When it is complex there are likely to be features of it which do not specifically reflect the motive that led to its adoption. By careful analysis, however, it is possible to disentangle these features, and what will then be left is a presuppositional content wholly generated by that motive. ... [Moreover] ...*the two are so intimately connected* that it is often natural to refer to both by the same phrase. Expressed in psychological terms it is the motive; expressed in logical terms it is the content of the presupposition. In the idealist position, for instance, the controlling motive is that of seeking an inclusive synthesis; the presuppositional content is the belief that such a synthesis can always be found, and that it provides the explanatory reality needed. (ISPU, p. 141; my italics)

In other words, the relationship between a presupposition and a motive is so intimate that they can be seen as two sides of the same coin. On one side is the logical element and, on the other side, the psychological element. However, Burt is adamant that "the decisive role in the dynamic relation between motive and presupposition is always played by the motive [and] ... any change in the presupposition would be preceded by a change in motive" (*ibid.*, p. 140).

But we may now pose this question: If (emotional) motivations and basic presuppositions are related in this intimate manner, what role do *valuations* play in this

whole scheme? The problem in posing this question, however, is that nowhere does Burt give a succinct reply to it. Hence, we need to construct our own reply from the exposition thus far.

The starting point of Burt's epistemological scheme is that human beings have psychic, or unconscious, *motivations* which have an emotional dimension. However, as an individual is motivated to undertake a particular course of action or thinking, *valuations* inherently need to be made. That is, a person perceives that a certain course of action, or a certain statement, has a particular value depending on their unconscious motivations. But, and this is crucial, valuations are always made in the light of, and grounded, in a framework of *basic presuppositions* which dictate the nature of reality.

In summary, the relationship between these three concepts is that basic presuppositions, in effect, are the logical channel through which emotional motivations can be articulated and, at the same time, inherently reflect whatever valuations are being held by the person. At the same time, valuations filter the perceptions that are acted upon by basic presuppositions. An important aspect of this whole process, moreover, is that it is taking place, in general, in the realm of the unconscious mind—the realm of personality that is the focus of psychoanalytic theory. It is crucial, therefore, that we gain a deeper insight into Burt's understanding of this theory. Its notions, along with various Eastern notions, are central to his theory of expanding awareness which, in turn, is central to his later thought.

Psychoanalytic Theory and the Growth to Emotional Maturity

Burt's most comprehensive discussion of psychoanalytic theory appears in *Seeks the Divine* (1957), where he quotes Freud's description of the function of psychoanalysis thus: "our therapy does it work by transforming something unconscious into something conscious, and only succeeds in its work so far as it is able to effect this transformation"¹ (SD, p. 511). Burt examines the central notions of this theory in a section which has the heading "Religion and Psychotherapy" (SD, p. 499). The importance of this heading is that, in his view, the goal of psychoanalytic theory and religion is synonymous: the primary goal of both is "the healing of troubled souls" by assisting them "to become fully and happily adjusted to the realities of the universe" by liberating them from "childish self-centeredness" and releasing a "hitherto obstructed power to love—whose free and full expression is the distinctive mark of human maturity" (SD, pp. 499-500). The significance of psychotherapy, however, is that it broke with the traditional religious approach and, primarily due to the work of Freud, developed "an entirely novel set of concepts" along with a new view of human nature, to achieve this goal (ibid., p. 501).

¹ Burt cites the following source for this quote: S. Freud, *General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, (transl. J. Rivière, Garden City Publishing Company, New York, 1943), p. 248.

In the development of psychoanalytic theory, Burt explains, Freud initially drew on the concepts and assumptions of modern Western science. After various clinical studies, however, he found that these concepts and assumptions could not explain the workings of the human mind or psyche. Rather than try and make the human mind and behavior comply with these assumptions, he rejected them and developed a whole new set of concepts—besides the crucial concepts of “conscious” and “unconscious,” the other major concepts are the “pleasure principle,” the “reality principle,” the “id,” the “superego,” the “ego,” “object-love,” “narcissism,” “repression,” and “conflict.” Burt takes the concepts of “conscious” and “unconscious,” to be different “fields,” or “realms,” of the human psyche in which the id, superego, and ego play various functions.

Although Freud diverged from science in time (as he had done from religion) by developing this new set of concepts to explain the function of the human psyche, he retained an important postulate from modern science, namely, that every effect has a cause. Freud “had no doubt about the validity of the postulate; psychoanalysis can achieve its results only by assuming that there is an antecedent determining cause for everything that happens in the mental and emotional life of man, including even the dreams, fantasies, and casual associations that are ordinarily taken as entirely accidental” (SD, p. 503). He also discovered that when these “causes” are located in the unconscious and made “the objects of conscious awareness” the individual undergoing psychoanalysis experiences a new-found freedom, namely, they find that they are liberated from an internal conflict which has its roots in a lack of emotional maturity (*ibid.*). As Burt explains:

The process of growth to emotional maturity is a passage from domination by the “pleasure principle” to full control by the “reality principle.” What this means is very simple. Each human being begins life as a baby, demanding immediate satisfaction of his needs when and as they arise, and unable to understand, accept, or tolerate the painful tension which is experienced when they remain unappeased. Emotional maturity requires he fully and unqualifiably accept reality—that is, he become able without repining to postpone pleasurable satisfactions as he gains power to judge distant consequences in comparison with immediate pleasures and to choose the larger good.

One whose emotions have thus been adjusted to reality can endure what would otherwise be painful frustration in the interest of the more mature enjoyments that are only possible in this way. Since they reflect a growing understanding and acceptance of reality, these enjoyments are richer in quality than the immediate gratifications of the child; they constitute “happiness” or “bliss” rather than “pleasure.” (SD, p. 505)

Importantly, for Burt, this growth in emotional maturity is not a selfish journey on the part of the individual undertaking it. It inherently means that society is improved. This follows because the reality that the emotionally mature person comes to accept inherently requires him or her to adopt an attitude of “loving understanding” to “the needs and interests of other members of society” (*ibid.*). Thus, the “larger good,” that is

“the inclusive physical and social environment in which all men and women move toward the fulfillment of their varied potentialities,” is improved by the psychic and emotional change in one individual (*ibid.*, p. 506).

The Role of the Concepts “Id,” “Superego,” and “Ego”

The concepts of “id,” “superego,” and “ego” play the following roles in this process of growth to emotional maturity. The “id” is the “factor in human nature which drives [motivates] toward the immediate gratification of a felt demand, and which opposes any attempt to control it in the interest of the larger good” (SD, p. 506). The “superego” is the “factor which comes to operate within each person as the surrogate of society’s standards of right conduct” (*ibid.*). Freud’s notion of “ego,” however, Burt acknowledges, is more difficult to define.

Generally speaking the ego is that part of one’s make-up which can serve the well-being of the whole self through the use of prudential reason and the lessons of enlarging experience. It can refuse to submit to the imperious demands of the id, and it can criticize the voice of the superego—not merely in justifying rebellion, but in growing wisdom. Thus it can use and rechannel the energy of both these forces toward its own fulfillment. (SD, p. 506)

Importantly, when we examine the specific attributes that Burt ascribes to his capacity of expanding awareness, it may seem at first sight that this capacity or faculty is performing the same function as Freud’s ego—particularly the notion that the ego serves “the well-being of the whole self through the use of prudential reason and the lessons of enlarging experience.”

However, while this function could be attributed to the faculty of expanding awareness, it does not do justice to the full meaning Burt came to ascribe to it. At the time of writing the above passage in *Seeks the Divine* in 1957, Burt still had not fully formulated his theory of expanding awareness. Nor had he arrived at the notion that “expanding awareness” itself is a “faculty” in the human personality—just as is reason—that it is superior to, and operates beyond, reason. The faculty of expanding awareness, therefore, incorporates all the above characteristics that Burt ascribes to Freud’s concept of ego—but the ego would be functioning *within* this faculty. Put another way, the faculty of expanding awareness functions beyond the ego just as it functions beyond reason.

The Concept of “Object-Love”

While the concepts of id, superego, and ego, play an important role in Freud’s theory, the concept of “object-love” also has an important role to play. Moreover, an understanding of this concept prepares us for an assertion that Burt frequently alludes to in his later thought, namely, that humans need to express “mature love.” So, following Burt, when a baby is born it is completely absorbed in love of itself—the stage of “narcissism”—and is immersed in the id, which means that its self-centered

demands must be immediately gratified. In time, however, the baby “awakens” to the experience of “object-love” (SD, p. 506). This means that it begins to project or focus its love onto another person, usually its mother. But this process, which continues throughout childhood, is difficult. The id does not lightly cease its call for an immediate gratification of its demands, as called for in the developing love-relation with another person, and the baby, or growing child thus experiences frustration. In turn, this frustration breeds hostility towards the very person or persons who have also been the object of love.

The problem for the child, therefore, is how to express this hostility once he or she ceases being a small child—especially when punishment is often introduced, by parents or by society, to curb the demands of the id. Hence, Burtt explains, “the hostility, with the persistent demands [of the id] accompanying it, must seek compensatory expressions that are safer—and not only safer but more acceptable to the conscious self, since the latter includes the superego and is strongly moved by the need for social approval” (ibid., pp. 506-7). The solution for this problem at the adult stage requires the development of what Burtt calls a mature “love relation” to another person or persons. If this process does not take place in a progressive manner as the child matures and he or she does not gain sufficient maturity to establish such a relationship, then, even though being an adult, the person will continue to attempt to gratify the demands of the id. Simply stated, the fully physically developed adult, will thus remain at the narcissistic emotional stage (ibid., p. 507).

An extreme case of this latter situation, turning to Fromm, can have dangerous implications, especially if the person attains a position of political power. As Fromm observes in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* [1973] (1987), Adolf Hitler is an example of a person whose emotions remained at the narcissistic stage. In his view:

[Hitler's] *narcissism* is [his] most easily recognizable trait. He shows all the typical symptoms of an extremely narcissistic person: he is interested only in himself, *his* desires, *his* thought, *his* wishes; he talked endlessly about his ideas, his past, his plans; the world is real only as far as it is the object of his schemes and desires; other people matter only as far as they serve him or can be used; he always knows everything better than anyone else. This certainty in one's own ideas and schemes is a typical characteristic of intense narcissism. (Fromm, 1987, p. 540).

The importance of this example is that it throws light on the psychoanalytic presupposition, namely, that “love” is not something “found” at the core of each individual. Instead, it has many stages from the first narcissistic stage to the final stage of “mature love” and requires the active work of an individual to reach this final stage. Thus, when a person undergoes psychoanalysis it is *not* that somewhere inside their psyche they find a hidden core of “pure” love. Rather they find different expressions of the emotion of love with the earliest being narcissistic self-love. Thus, from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, it would not be appropriate to posit that there is no point in delving into one's unconscious because one may find a hidden dictator rather than an

experience of pure love. Indeed, from this viewpoint, one may indeed find a hidden dictator if one has not emotionally matured past the narcissistic stage. The challenge for a person in this situation is to enter into psychoanalysis and progressively develop a more mature love relationship.

Thus the problem, again following Burt, is not the adult who develops an emotionally mature love relation with another person, a relation that Burt expands in his later thought to include *all* humanity, but the situation where an adult has not progressed from, or has regressed to, the narcissistic emotional level. This latter situation

engenders "conflict," and the individual feels the deep anxiety of a threatened split of his ego into two irreconcilable parts. For one who is physically adult moves in a society which expects of him a minimum degree of emotional maturity, and one who is intellectually adult will consciously accept [i.e., the "conscious self" will accept] moral and social ideals which narcissistic behaviour flouts. The only way in which he can live with himself in this situation is either to accept an actual split, which is then likely to be incurable, or else to exclude from awareness the part of himself that is unacceptable to his conscious self. The latter process is called "repression." It is a canny device of self-deception. However, the part thus excluded does not pass out of existence; the urges and emotions which compose it continue to operate at the unconscious level. (SD, p. 507)

The problem with this situation is that these urges and emotions continue to influence a person's thinking and prompt compulsive behavior in ways "which the conscious self can neither control nor wholly accept" (*ibid.*).

When (or if) this person undergoes psychoanalysis, however, the analyst (who has also previously undergone analysis) exercises his or her skill to draw up to conscious awareness "the hidden processes" of the unconscious.

Once such awareness has been gained, the patient can relive the earlier traumatic experience [which blocked the normal development of "object love" into a mature love relation] under the guidance of a conscious and fully accepted ideal of himself; he will no longer need the compulsive behavior that has resulted from the repression, and is freed from bondage to the disturbing symptoms of conflict. So far as concerns that anxious and enslaving situation, he has been cured. (SD, p. 508)

This, then, is Burt's understanding of psychoanalytic theory. He acknowledges that many aspects of it are in dispute by various practitioners and theorists, but nevertheless he believes that most would agree with the above general principles.

One of the major areas of dispute concerns the question of "drive," or "motivation." In Freud's scheme a "monolithic drive," which he calls the "libido" and which has its source in an individual's sexual energy, is responsible for all human activity (SD, p. 513). By contrast, Freud's one time colleague, Carl Jung (1875-1961) "appeals to a dynamic expression in each person of the life energy which is channelled variously at different stages of growth" (*ibid.*, p. 514fn.). Yet another of Freud's early collaborators, Alfred Adler (1870-1937) "holds that the 'will to power' or 'striving for superiority' is the basic

drive” (ibid.).¹

Psychoanalytic Theory and Philosophy

In the foregoing exposition of psychoanalytic theory, Burt relates its principles to individuals who have not developed into emotionally mature adults. However, in his theory of expanding awareness he gives these principles a different focus, namely, the need for philosophers to become aware that their thinking, or reasoning, is always and inherently influenced by unconscious emotions. The problem, in Burt’s view, is that because philosophers in the West have traditionally assumed that “consciousness is the defining characteristic of ‘mind’ or ‘self’ ... they have found it very difficult to accept the idea that there are unconscious mental processes” (SD, p. 508). In their view, whatever “is not immediately available to conscious introspection cannot be a part of the mind” (ibid.). But he believes that, if they accepted a dynamic and development concept of human nature, as the ancient Greeks, along with Confucian and Buddhist thinkers have done, then they would accept that psychoanalysis is “a process which begins in the conscious self and ends in the conscious self; its unconscious part is reflected in emotional disturbances of the conscious self which disappear when that hidden segment is brought into conscious awareness” (ibid., pp. 503 & 508).

Burt’s purpose, therefore, in expounding the relationship between the concepts of presupposition, valuation, and motivation, which form the framework of this theory of expanding awareness, is to challenge philosophers to accept not only the limits of their reason, but more importantly the effect that *unconscious factors* have on it. According to Burt, this notion has “drastic implications” for philosophy (ISPU, p. 112):

[The] most drastic for a philosopher is that ... unconscious motivations inevitably influence his reasoning about philosophical problems. ... In the pre-psychoanalytic era it was plausible to assume that even though some motivation may influence a philosopher’s adoption of this or that ultimate belief, its content is fully subject to his conscious control. Under this assumption a basic presupposition could be regarded as a purely cognitive entity, capable of being dealt with as such. ...

In the psychoanalytic era every thinker must ask, in his own case as in that of others, whether an ultimate [basic] presupposition is not in essence an emotionally buttressed and molded conviction that, while it dominates a person’s thinking, is but *half-conscious* at best; only when he suspects that it is inadequate and begins to envision alternatives is it likely to be clearly recognized. (ISPU, pp. 112-113; my italics)

The “decisive consequence” of this realization, Burt states, in clear revelation of the existentialist influence on his thought, “is that where such a presupposition is concerned the existentialists are right; our conscious intellect, however sincerely truth-seeking, cannot alone fill the role that philosophers have expected it to fill” (ibid.).

The resolution of this problem, in Burt’s view, is that philosophers ought to undergo the “painful and arduous” process of psychoanalysis and thus bring their

¹ A comprehensive discussion of the different thought of these psychoanalysts can be found in Liliane Frey-Rohn’s *From Freud to Jung, A Comparative Study of the Unconscious* (1990), passim.

unconscious motivations into conscious awareness (MPP, p. 434). He holds that if philosophers underwent psychoanalysis they would transform their philosophy (*ibid.*). The problem with unconscious motives is that, as long as they remain in an individual's unconscious, the individual "is propelled by them blindly" and they have a hidden affect on his or her ability to reason (*ibid.*). Indeed, according to Burt, so-called "logical reasoning" is merely a rationalization which seeks to justify actions or statements that, in fact, have their roots in some unconscious motive (*ibid.*). For example, although the positivists were not conscious of it, their demand for "excessive simplification" was an emotional demand (ISPU, p. 112). Positivism's "champions insisted that any verbal expression must either be meaningful or not, with no third possibility admitted, and that in the former case the meaning must be one or the other of two definite kinds—a formal tautology or an empirically verifiable statement" (*ibid.*, p. 109). What unconscious motive was at work in positivism's epistemological orientation? In Burt's view, the motive for their "impatient demand for prompt and definite solutions to all problems" has its roots in a "longing for certainty" in relation to knowledge and represents an attempt to overcome the feeling of anxiety engendered by doubt (*ibid.*, p. 108). If, on the other hand, the positivist became aware (through psychoanalysis) of this unconscious motive, or emotion, at work in his or her reasoning, then he or she may include third possibilities when confronted with a problem.

Although Burt does not apply specific psychoanalytic concepts to positivism, he nevertheless considers a positivist to be still at an early stage of emotional development. The positivist, in other words, is still immersed in his or her id with all its narcissistic implications. By contrast, if he or she became emotionally mature by undergoing psychoanalysis then one may expect their reasoning to accept the insecurity of a third possibility.

In short, Burt insists, the important maxim, "Keep your emotions out of your reasoning" is contradictory. This maxim presupposes that a man¹ can "split off the cognitive function" from the balance of his being and, moreover, that he can somehow mysteriously identify only with this "split off" section of his being (ISPU, p. 113). But this "splitting" is only ever partially successful. While a man may believe that he has become "a pure and dispassionate intellect," in fact the "springs of emotion" are still present. If they were not then the thinker "would be sunk in lethargy" (*ibid.*). Hence, this split is a delusion because a philosopher's emotions ensure a hidden "seductive bias" and give "illicit support" to certain basic presuppositions which form the core of one's thinking (*ibid.*). For, if "psychoanalytic theory is sound, a philosophy cannot help expressing the philosopher's whole personality" (*ibid.*, p. 114). Inherently a philosopher's "whole personality" must include his or her "unconscious emotions." So long as these

¹ In light of the recent work of many feminist thinkers it is perhaps suggestive here to retain the gender-specific word "man."

are not “lifted to awareness” and made the subject of rational control, a thinker’s basic presuppositions are being decided by her or his “pre-rational self” (*ibid.*, p. 112 & 114). We take this to mean that a thinker’s basic presuppositions are being decided by his or her id—the irrational stage of a child prior to the so-called age of reason. Indeed, Burt specifically states that unless these presuppositions are lifted to conscious awareness, one’s reasoning is founded on an “irrational” base (*ibid.*, pp. 114 & 142-3).

However, this situation, Burt emphasizes, can be remedied if philosophers take account of the insights offered by psychoanalytic theory. For: “What is beneath the surface [of the mind] does not need to remain so, and the psychoanalytic conception of the human mind shows how this *expanded awareness of the forces within ourselves* can be gained. When thinkers master the art of probing beneath the surface, bringing previously hidden presuppositions and their motivations to full consciousness, ... those forces become subject to intelligent guidance” (ISPU, p. 114; *my italics*). Philosophers, Burt allows, in general seek the truth, but in his view they have permitted this search to be blocked due to their reluctance to investigate the unconscious factors at work in their psyche (*ibid.*). But, because “no progress toward truth is ever made by evading truth” and because the “psychoanalytic approach to the dynamics of the mind” is now available, it is time they took account of the relationship between these unconscious factors and their cognitive activities (*ibid.*). For:

As the existentialists have realized, a crucial part of the philosophic quest—indeed the foundation of every other part—is the quest for truth about oneself. The resources now available enable us to return in a new and fruitful perspective to the Socratic maxim that has only haltingly influenced philosophy in the past: Know thyself! (ISPU, p. 114)

Furthermore, in pursuing the path of self-knowledge they will come to appreciate a statement by Aristotle, namely, “that everything known is known ‘after the mode of the knower’ [which implies] ... the inevitable and pervasive relativity of knowledge” (ISPU, p. 114).

Philosophical “truth,” for Burt, therefore is dependent upon the extent to which thinkers have become aware, or conscious, of their unconscious emotional motivations. It follows, therefore, that “truth” is always relative to the extent of awareness of these unconscious factors that has been achieved by the knower. Hence, the first knowledge we need to acquire is self-knowledge. Only after achieving this can we progress to objective truth and become liberated from self-centered desires. But this raises the question: Is it in fact necessary for each philosopher to undergo the process of psychoanalysis in order to gain knowledge of his or her unconscious motivations and thus resolve the problem of relativity? Burt’s answer would be in the affirmative. Although he also contends that the practice of meditation, as taught in the East, will bring about the same result as psychoanalysis (ISPU, p. 274f). As he explains, from the Eastern viewpoint:

In meditation the feelings at work when a thinker is unable to concentrate are progressively revealed to him. And he sees them clearly for what they are, those feelings gradually weaken and fade away; their place is taken by other motives that are acceptable because they harmonize with his aspiration for truth. ... And once significant progress in this direction has been made, one realizes for the first time how large a part of his time and energy has been wasted on objects that he knows are not worth bothering about. He also realizes that what made possible the degree of concentration he has been capable of in the past was not a pure desire for truth. ... The price of this freedom—and it is a price he is then most happy to pay—is he will exercise his realized power of concentration on themes chosen by his liberated self If he is a philosopher, the distinctive reward of winning this freedom is that he finds his philosophical energies heightened from more to more, so that instead of being weakened by hidden [emotional] conflicts they function with all the vigor and efficiency that at their best they can command. (ISPU, pp. 276-7)

It seems therefore that for Burt both the practice of meditation and the process of psychoanalysis exercise the capacity of expanding awareness. Thus, we can assume, individual philosophers could pursue either meditation or psychoanalysis in the course of their search for philosophic truth

To throw further light on the claims that Burt makes in relation to the capacity of expanding awareness, we can begin with the historical context in which he situates it.

The Capacity of Expanding Awareness

Since the rise of modern science, according to Burt, human beings have succeeded, in general, to control and discipline the forces of physical nature to satisfy their needs (ISPU, p. 282). However, at the same time, they have failed to achieve any significant progress in the area of individual psychology and inter-human relationships (*ibid.*). Dark emotions still surface from within civilized society and in “the increasingly intimate interaction of people throughout the whole planet” these emotions have ever greater impact (*ibid.*). A case in point are the two World Wars of the twentieth century and the development of nuclear weapons (*ibid.*). But the nuclear age is now compelling people to face the reality that “not only is the good of others [inherently] one’s own good but also their evil and peril is one’s own evil and peril” (*ibid.*, p. 290). Thus, he argues, the “form of awareness that urgently needs to expand is awareness of the deep-seated [unconscious] motivations active in one’s relation to other people,” for they are the decisive forces at work in human affairs (*ibid.*, p. 291).

Hence, the challenge of this era is to explore the “mysterious psychology” of human beings and to study their “capacity for demandingness and acceptance, fear and hope, suspicion and trust, hate and love, despair and joy, and [learn] how to achieve the freedom, vitality, and assurance that integration around the constructive emotion in each of these contrasting pairs can bring” (ISPU, p. 290). This was the goal, Burt claims, of various religious seers in the past who had a vision of the future in which the constructive emotions would be harnessed and an “ideal community” formed “embracing all the inhabitants of this planet” and in which each person would find “true harmony” in their “own soul and satisfying union with ultimate reality” (*ibid.*). This goal,

of course, is also Burt's.

The revolution to bring about this state of affairs, moreover, is dependent upon a revolution occurring within each individual. For, "no social revolution, no matter how thoroughgoing, and no process of conditioning [by social engineering] no matter how persistent, can itself change human beings in the way Marxism [for instance] has assumed. Even after such a drastic experience people and their rulers can still be moved by obstreperous urges and narrow loyalties" (ISPU, p. 309; see also p. 230). Burt's vision, however, was that, if only people could exercise their capacity of expanding awareness to bring their unconscious emotions and motivations to their consciousness, then they would change and live in peace with other human beings. But, we may ask, how can this capacity achieve this task?

To achieve this task, we need to understand that, for Burt, expanding awareness is an "innate power" in human beings (ISPU, p. 155). It derives its "innateness" from the inherent human propensity to "know the truth and to realize the conditions of dependable well-being in reality" (*ibid.*). If an intense unconscious motive locks us into a set of appealing presuppositions, in the long-run we will be challenged to change them if they are incompatible, or conflict, with truth (*ibid.*). Thus our capacity for expanding awareness and desire for truth are synonymous. Or, to put it another way, it is this capacity, rather than say reason, which is the source of truthfulness—it is *the* capacity which decides between competing claims to truth.¹ Reason itself cannot be the arbiter between different claims to truth because, historically, philosophers themselves have not been able to agree on the nature of reason (PYTT, "C", p. 65). Put another way we have the question: If different theories of reason have rested on different sets of presuppositions, how can reason arbitrate in relation to truth claims? In this case, "truth" will always be relative to the set of presuppositions assessing it (ISPU, pp. 191-2).

To establish the difference between the faculty of reason and the capacity of expanding awareness, Burt introduces the concept of "insight" and associates it with the latter capacity. The faculty of reason, he claims, is at work whenever "a thinker is exploring *within* the framework of a given set of presuppositions" (ISPU, p. 191). By contrast, when a thinker is exploring for a new set of presuppositions *for reason itself*, then "insight" is involved. In his own words:

[A]mong the insights that should, and do, dawn from time to time are clearer *insights into the nature of reason*, revealing inadequacies in whatever conception of it has previously been dominant.

But we cannot get along without reason and insight. Reason saves us now and again from the seductive strategy of trusting in some sectarian faith, or of turning to some rebellious cult of unreason. Insight saves us from permanent bondage to some limited framework of presuppositions—presuppositions about reason as about everything else. And as these two cognitive faculties continue to fill their function,

¹ See for instance, ISPU, p. 138f, p. 155, pp. 191-2 and PYTT, "C," pp. 66-7.

it is clear that there must be both continuity and discontinuity between them. Continuity is necessary because no trustworthy insight can be achieved by flouting the standards of meticulous reasoning thus far won; moreover, the capacity of any insight to win objectivity can only be tested by the systematic development, through reason, of its implications. But *discontinuity is unavoidable* too—the discontinuity that arises from placing in jeopardy our present presuppositions about reason, with no assurance in advance as to what will replace them. (ISPU, pp. 191-2; my italics)

Thus in Burt's scheme both reason and insight have an important role to play *within* the capacity of expanding awareness.

Expanding Awareness Transcends the Relativity of Reason

Expanding awareness, put yet another way, is the *unlimited power* which underlies all human cognitive activities and which *guides* a philosopher's "thinking both in its adherence to any given framework of presuppositions and in its adventurous quest for a wiser framework" (ISPU, p. 192). In short, it is a capacity which allows thinkers to transcend the inherent relativity of reason. In Burt's own words:

Taken in abstraction from all possible objects, ... [the capacity of expanding awareness] seems to be the one assured factor in our experience that transcends relativity. We cannot conceive or imagine what any universe would be like, or any entity within it, of which no one is aware. It is equally present in any perceived fact and in any imagined possibility. But more remarkable still is our capacity to stretch and thereby expand our awareness. ... [T]here is no such thing as *bare* awareness—awareness separated from all striving, all interest, all interaction with the surrounding world. It naturally reaches out toward *full* awareness. ... And because this is true in some degree of every normal individual, it is also true of every living society and of the course of human history at large, which is just the evolving experience of all individuals.

Expanding awareness acknowledges no limits; it is bound by no rules. Yet in virtue of the open and alert sensitivity intrinsic to it, it can give us the guidance we need. This capacity is most vividly revealed in its power to uncover defects in any previous insight and in any presupposition about reason thus pointing their way toward a constructive replacement. (ISPU, pp. 192-3; Burt's italics)

Underlying all these assertions concerning the capacity of expanding awareness, of course, is the presupposition that *it* can somehow evaluate presuppositions underlying theories of reason. This hidden presupposition is also inherent in the notion, first expressed by Burt at the 1959 East-West Philosophers' Conference, that a thinker has the capacity, or the vantage point beyond reason, to give "a severe wrench" to the presuppositions that she or he is thinking *with*.

By 1965, however, Burt himself had become aware of this hidden presupposition. For, in the following passage in *Philosophic Understanding* he posits, and replies to, a question that may be raised by hypothetical logicians troubled by his thesis that there is a vantage point beyond reason.

"You just can't have it this way," ... [Burt has the logicians] say, "for a reason you have not yet mentioned. Any consistent course of thought implies some presuppositions that for it are beyond question. You cannot avoid committing yourself to the presuppositions of your own conception of philosophy. Some of these are quite obvious. Your position presupposes, for example, that the whole

framework of a person's thinking can be discovered to stand in a definite relation to something *beyond it ...*." (ISPU, p. 155; my italics)

The hypothetical logicians argue that the "something beyond" by necessity has to be, on Burt's own terms, a "describable motive" in the thinker's own mind. Thus, confronting Burt, they would argue: "Would not any such presupposition have to be accepted, on your own showing, as absolute?" (ibid.).

Burt's reply to the logicians' critique would be as follows:

The answer to this objection is simple. There are two ways of "committing oneself" to an ultimate presupposition. One is the way of making it an absolute dogma. The other is the way of taking it as a relative guide, at present superior to any available alternative. ... Looking over the moving horizon of our experience, can we find any wiser guiding maxim than this: If under stress of searching criticism by oneself and others a given presupposition succeeds in maintaining itself, well and good, continue to hold it. But do not insist that even the most obviously acceptable axiom must remain so forever. The expectation should rather be that a more adequate replacement will be found for it, later if not now. (ISPU, pp. 155-6)

He adds that he did not perceive the necessity to change any of his existing presuppositions, at least those of which he was aware, but that in the future it may be necessary to do so. "The one thing to avoid" he states, "is an imprisoning attachment to any presupposition and the motive behind it, lest growth in philosophic understanding come to an end" (ibid., p. 156).

Reason Not Suspended by the Exercise of the Capacity of Expanding Awareness

This hypothetical "question and reply" session between Burt and logicians reveals an important aspect of his theory, namely, while the capacity of expanding awareness is at work, at no time is reason suspended. This follows when we observe that at any one time Burt has at least one ultimate presupposition acting as a "relative guide" to assist in processing the presuppositions that are brought to it by the insight inherent in the capacity of expanding awareness.

We can perhaps understand this whole process by an analogy. Consider this process as acting in a dynamic manner in much the same way that surface currents, undercurrents, and eddies in a stream flow at different speeds and interact in various ways and yet are contained within the banks of the stream. In this analogy, the philosopher is carried along in the stream but, from time to time, climbs onto the bank to gain an objective vantage point, albeit temporarily, of the whole picture. But, in fact, the stream, the bank, and the philosopher are all aspects of the philosopher's whole being. The stream and its currents are the philosopher's presuppositions, motivations, and valuations. Its banks are an ultimate presupposition which contain, literally, the movement at any given time of the other factors. The philosopher climbing onto the bank is the exercising of the philosopher's capacity of expanding awareness.

However, we may now raise this question: While this capacity submits the results of its insights to reason for evaluation does not this submission presuppose that an

evaluation has already taken place *within* the capacity of expanding awareness? That is, for this capacity to have become *aware* of a presupposition, on Burt's own terms, it must be that some perceptions, or valuations, have already been made. In turn, such valuations, again on Burt's terms, signify a presupposition at work. It must be that such a selection process has occurred because the insight does not see "all sets" of presuppositions, or motivations. It sees *one* presupposition, or a specific *set* of presuppositions, which it submits to reason for evaluation.

But, if foregoing analogy and observations are correct, it seems that there may be a serious problem in relation to Burt's scheme. If someone does not agree with Burt's notions he always has the option of turning to them and stating: "You do not agree with my viewpoint because you have not examined and become aware of your unconscious motivations." This would seem, at first sight, to be an impossible situation. A dialogue taking place under these terms would have participants claiming that the content of other thinker's arguments was not valid because each lacked knowledge of their respective unconscious motivations. But, rather than being an impossible situation, this is precisely the type of dialogue that Burt encourages philosophers to undertake. It would be putting psychoanalytic theory into practice within philosophy. If such a dialogue took place the participants would be expanding their awareness of their unconscious presuppositions, valuations, and motivations. They would thus be putting into practice the Socratic maxim, "Know Thyself," and making it the first step along the path of expanding awareness to an ever deeper truth both about themselves and about the wider universe.

If contemporary philosophers exercised their capacity of expanding awareness, according to Burt, then philosophers of the future would look back and state:

In the past, philosophy could progress rationally only within the framework of some set of presuppositions, expressing whatever motives were dominant. When a transition from one set to another occurred it appeared to be a nonrational accident—a sheer leap from the cognitive framework previously taken for granted to a different one. Now, through *expanding awareness* of our motivations, we have learned how to include these periodic revolutions in a wider philosophical perspective, and thus to make each of them a constructive step toward the larger truth that lies ahead. (ISPU, p. 127; my italics)

In other words, using our above analogy, philosophers are either swept along by the force of whatever basic presuppositions form the powerful undercurrent of contemporary philosophy, or they can become aware of the source of these presuppositions, namely, the unconscious emotional motivations of philosophers of any given historical epoch, and thus make a constructive step toward a larger truth. Using this analogy, the philosopher gaining "the larger truth" would, by the capacity of expanding awareness, pulled herself or himself from the stream, albeit temporarily, and from the vantage point of the bank have taken account of all the factors in the stream flowing past.

It would seem, therefore, that Burt's elucidation of the role that unconscious motivations exert on our reasoning is so compelling that the influence of this factor on human thinking, or reasoning, cannot be ignored. No theory of reason, or world-view, can claim to be objective. This follows because every theory of reason, or world-view, is a construction of the human mind and, as such, is influenced by the unconscious motivations at work in the human psyche. No human being can claim to be totally conscious of their motivations and, as long as they are not, then these motivations *are* influencing their thinking and reasoning. As Burt maintains, we delude ourselves if we believe we can achieve the feat of "splitting-off" our reason from the balance of our being—which includes our emotions. But if one wishes to maintain that this feat is possible then the following questions are raised. Where does the split occur in the personality? What capacity of our being oversees the splitting and how does it exclude our unconscious motivations? After the split, how can "reason" be sure that there is no "leakage" of motivation from the unconscious? Unless a satisfactory answer is able to be given to these questions, we have to conclude that all human knowledge is inherently subjective and relative because presuppositions and valuations are necessarily subjective and relative. That is, *unless* one takes account of, as Burt does due to the influence of Eastern thought, a form of knowledge which is superior to and which transcends *all* our cognitive processes.

This latter point is crucial to understanding Burt's theory of expanding awareness. Although he draws on psychoanalytic theory to argue his case that philosophers ought to expand their awareness of unconscious motivations at work behind their reason, throughout he is holding to the notion that there is a superrational form of knowledge which is objective, and at the same time is beyond reason. It is this form of knowledge, which Burt has gained from the East, that is not merely revealed, but *experienced*, by the exercise of the capacity of expanding awareness. It is important, therefore, that we gain a deeper understanding of the connection between this Eastern notion and the role it plays in his theory of expanding awareness. To undertake this task we can again turn to his address to the 1959 East-West Philosophers' Conference.

Expanding Awareness : "Unified Apprehension of Reality"

In Burt's address to the 1959 East-West Philosophers' Conference he argues that the idea of "liberation" is the central philosophical concept of the East. Its meaning, he explains, is related to the notion of emancipation from all that obstructs people from the goal of self-realization and leads towards "the apprehension of truth in its wholeness that such realization brings" (QUEW, p. 676).

The major role of philosophy ... is to interpret and guide this process. Now, if we tried to state the characteristic orientation of Western philosophy in terms of this idea, a significant difference would at once emerge, and at two points. First, the natural form of the word in the West is not "liberation" but "liberty" or "freedom," by which the West means control by an individual or society over external

obstructions to the satisfaction of its desires. Second, and more important, the range of problems with which one is concerned when using these concepts is limited to a narrow area in ethical and social philosophy; the major philosophical problems of the West are dealt with in quite different terms.

The central philosophical concept of the West is not freedom but an idea so universally presupposed that ordinarily no one is conscious of it. I shall refer to it by the phrase "*rational understanding*." (QUEW, pp. 676-7; Burt's italics)

By this phrase Burt means that the West seeks "the intellectual mastery of the world, of human social structures, and of people themselves when conceived as being striving individuals confronting both world and society" (*ibid.*, p. 677).

Burt explains that he does not mean to use the term "rational" in the sense that the eighteenth-century Enlightenment understood it. Rather he understands it to be the "common feature of the Western attitude in science, philosophy, and all other intellectual pursuits that has been dominant ever since the [ancient] Greeks discovered the delights of the exercise of reason" (*ibid.*). In contrast, the East places value on rational powers only in so far as these powers assist in the quest to transcend the limits of reason "through a *super-rational insight which builds upon the work of reason but ultimately leaves it behind in a unified apprehension of reality*" (*ibid.*; my italics). In other words, when the individual arrives at a "unified apprehension of reality" he or she *experiences* a new kind of knowledge. It is this notion which precisely describes the goal of Burt's theory of expanding awareness. That is, it has the goal of "transcending the limits of reason and gaining a unified apprehension of reality." For, inherent in the notion of expanding one's awareness is that, given sufficient expansion, one would eventually apprehend the unity of the whole of reality.

Burt anticipates that some Western philosophers may resist this notion, but he insists that attitudes towards reason are the nexus which divides philosophical thought between the East and West. Hence, he questions:

Is it the case that human reason meets a limit beyond which it cannot pass in its search for understanding, and, if so, how are we to conceive this limit and its possible transcendence? Each side confidently gives its own answer, and envisions our main goal as men and our task as philosophers accordingly.

The crucial issue between the two viewpoints thus stands sharp and clear. Is there a flat contradiction between them? Or can we find the key to a solution by drawing a distinction which both West and East will recognize as valid?

I believe there is such a key, in the light of which the two perspectives can appear as complementary instead of contradictory. ... Both sides agree that there is no limit beyond which reason is unable to go *in knowledge of objects and whatever can become an object*. The difference is that the Westerner stops here, seeing nothing beyond or other than this realm of objects to investigate ... (QUEW, p. 678; Burt's italics)

Burt emphasizes that the assumed Western definition of "knowledge" not only limits investigations of the realm of objects, it also means that the investigations are being carried out by people who are, inherently, unaware of the serious restrictions that their definition imposes. By contrast, the Easterner "sees something of crucial importance

beyond and underlying all objects, the self which apprehends them, the knower which by its very nature is the subject of consciousness and always eludes us when we try to make it an object” (ibid.).

When the true nature of this “something of crucial importance” is “fully realized— and “realization” rather than “knowledge” is the appropriate word in this situation—the separation between subject and object, which is indispensable for all rational knowledge, is transcended, the self is aware of itself as a unity in which that separation has been overcome” (QUEW, p. 678). In arguing thus, and indeed in many instances above, Burttt seems to be drawing heavily on aspects of Advaita Vedanta philosophy. As Eliot Deutsch explains:

Atman (or *paramatman*, the highest self), for Advaita Vedanta ... is a supreme power of awareness, transcendent to ordinary sense-mental consciousness, aware only of the Oneness of being. Atman is that state of conscious human being wherein the divisions of subject and object, which characterize ordinary consciousness, are overcome. (Deutsch, 1973, p. 48)

In the depth of my being, then, I am not different from Reality: the depth of my being, which is not “mine,” is Reality. Man, according to Advaita, is not just a conditioned being, so that if you were to strip away his desires, his mental activities, his emotions, and his ego, you would find a mere nothing; he is spirit, he is consciousness, he is free and timeless being. (Deutsch, 1973, p. 50)

The notions expressed in these quotations would seem yet another way to understand the goal of Burttt’s theory of expanding awareness. That is, by exercising the capacity of expanding awareness and bringing unconscious motivations, presuppositions, and valuations, to conscious awareness a philosopher achieves a unique form of understanding where the word “realization” rather than “knowledge” more appropriately describes the situation. This situation is one in which “the separation between subject and object, which is indispensable for all rational knowledge, is transcended, [and] the self is aware of itself as a unity in which that separation has been overcome.”

Expanding Awareness to Experience Ultimate Reality

By the time Burttt wrote *Philosophic Understanding* in the mid 1960s he had become increasingly aware of the difficulties in convincing Western philosophers to take seriously the Eastern notion of a superrational form of knowledge that is beyond reason and which was central to his theory of expanding awareness. Western philosophers, he acknowledges, are familiar with intuition, faith, and authority of tradition, but have, in general, maintained that all these guides to truth are less trustworthy than reason. However, they fear that any appeal to these guides undermines their hard won gains in reason. In their view it is allowing the nonrational to rule. In short, it is a surrender to a “cult of unreason” (ISPU, p. 256). In an attempt to overcome this problem, Burttt proposes an “experiment.” The experiment involves Burttt adopting the persona of, firstly, an Eastern philosopher and, secondly, of a Western philosopher—both of whom are

required to argue on whether or not reason is competent to grasp all truth.

The Eastern philosopher argues that, in the growth of the inner self to wholeness, there is a fundamental axiom: “To cognize anything is always, in one way or another, to grasp a stable unity in the midst of changing diversity” (ISPU, p. 256).

[An] ... example of this axiom is the perception of an enduring object as it unites its manifold and fluctuating qualities—e.g., a distant mountain with its shape, height, color, light, and shadow. In scientific discovery it is the apprehension of a constant law which reveals its presence under varying circumstances. Now the same axiom holds in coming to know a person in ... [their] full self-hood, and also in apprehending the total reality in which the growing experience of all persons finds its unity. (ISPU, p. 256)

The special problem that we are seeking to understand about unity in diversity is “not that which binds together a limited whole, but that which unites an unlimited whole” (ibid.).

To demonstrate this situation Burt (assuming the persona of an Eastern philosopher) asks us to envisage a very large mural on a wall in a museum and to work out what the numerous activities on it depict. The viewer, after progressively studying it in sections, suddenly perceives the meaning and unity of the entire mural. Until this moment the viewer’s perception was limited to the meaning and spatial relations of distinct parts of the mural. But this stage of perception, although limited,

is essential, because apprehension of the nature of the whole depends on it—it is the whole *of* the parts. But everything in the mural is now seen in its relation to the unifying insight ... Nothing that has been perceived before is lost; but over and above the relations that separated one part from another, a concept that transcends these separations and binds all into a single entity is now grasped. That entity constitutes the “reality” of the mural ... Moreover, unless the observer has made an unusual mistake, the inclusive meaning ... is not subjective; a similar insight attained by others will confirm its truth.

Suppose now that in the presence of this mural someone who has seen the parts but has not yet grasped the unifying whole were to demand of one who has: What evidence have you that this unity you talk about is really there? Prove to me that it is there, and that it gives the correct meaning of the scene. What can be the reply? One who has caught the entire panorama can only wait until the sceptical questioner had done the same ... (ISPU, p. 257)

This analogy, Burt argues, demonstrates why the East generally insists that reason must be transcended in the quest for the vision of ultimate truth. When a person is on this quest, reason is indispensable to perceive and catalogue distinctions in and between parts of the truth. But, at some point, if the quest is to be successful, the person must “realize” that these are only parts of a comprehensive unity or totality. It is this “realization” which transcends reason and which Burt claims, “once gained, cannot be lost” (ibid.).¹

¹ This notion echoes the Advaita conviction that once this “realization” is achieved it is beyond the concept of time and therefore cannot, so to speak, pass away. As Deutsch explains, “Nothing can condition this transcendental state of consciousness: among those who have realized it, no doubts about it can arise. ... It cannot be said to have arisen in time, to be subject to a “present,” or to have an end in

Burt qualifies this analogy concerning the mural by noting that it applies only to a limited, rather than an infinite, whole. When an observer undergoes the experience of realizing the meaning of the limited whole, there is still a subject and an object. But, when the same process occurs in relation to an infinite whole, this distinction will have disappeared. Hence, the subject and the object experience unity; duality is transcended and the experiencer and the experienced achieve consummation. The path to this experience with the infinite, in the tradition of Buddhist and Hindu thought, is to let go, aided by the practice of meditation, of our fears and self-centered desires because, by their very nature, they are walls which separate us from such an experience. Burt observes, however, that it is very difficult to conceptualize this type of experience because any explanation makes “use of all the rational distinctions available and carries to completion the quest that they have served, but the final step is beyond conceptualization” (ibid.). Indeed, in Burt’s opinion, conceptualization of this experience is impossible. This is the reason that mystic theology is always negative theology and utilizes negative concepts such as: “*ineffable, indescribable, incomprehensible, beyond* what rational thought can grasp” (ibid; Burt’s italics). By contrast, an experience of a limited whole, such as the meaning of a mural, can be readily explained by rational concepts.

Summarizing the East’s position in relation to the issue of the limits of reason, Burt states that for the East, while reason has an important role in its capacity for “discriminating analysis,” it cannot conceptualize the mystical experience which occurs when knowledge of Ultimate Reality is grasped (ISPU, p. 260).¹ This experience is “the realization of a unity within the self, and a merging of the self with the universe, that transcends all rational distinctions. And it transcends them, not by blotting them out ... but by grasping the whole within which these separations are overcome” (ibid.). The Eastern philosophical approach, moreover, unites two metaphysical meanings of “reality” which the West has typically treated separately, or at least in parallel. “One is the approach by way of the historical quest for more adequate criteria of fact, form, and value; the other is the approach by way of the individual’s quest for self-fulfillment. From the viewpoint typical of the East these are two sides of the same approach, for only the self that is achieving inner integrity is able to apprehend outer reality in its wholeness” (ibid.).

All of these claims in relation to the Eastern thought can be applied to Burt’s theory of expanding awareness—although it is important to acknowledge that Burt himself does not do it in this specific manner. In general, as we noted earlier, Burt is

time—for all such sayings apply only to what is relative and conditioned. Time, according to Advaita, is a category of the empirical and phenomenal world only. Time, with its before and after, can make no claim on the “eternal Now” which is the state of Atman realization (Deutsch, 1973, p. 48).

¹ See also Burt’s *Compassionate Buddha*: “Ultimate Reality Transcends What can be Expressed in Words” (pp. 194f).

elusive in the sources of this theory. One finds references to this notion of expanding awareness scattered throughout his works from 1959 onwards but nowhere does he bring all its characteristics together in the manner in which we have done here nor does he make our specific associations. But, from our standpoint we can observe that Burt's belief for the exercise of the capacity of expanding awareness is that it starts the thinker on the "quest for ultimate truth" and moves him or her beyond conceptualization, beyond reason, in order to experience Ultimate Reality—an experience in which the quest for "more adequate criteria of fact, form, and value" and for "self-fulfillment" converge. Indeed, Burt claims that "the experience of the Ultimate," which he has already acknowledged is beyond conceptualization, is an "inexhaustible flood tide of awareness" (ISPU, pp. 259-260). In short, an "inexhaustible flood tide of awareness" which leads to the apprehension of Ultimate Reality, is precisely the experience that awaits the philosopher who sets out on the journey of expanding awareness.

Further Insights into the Concept of Awareness

Burt's theory of expanding awareness, to date, has received no attention, serious or otherwise, from scholarship. There has been no trend on the part of Western philosophers to undergo psychoanalysis, or practicing meditation, before making claims to knowledge. Nor has there been any serious attention paid to his notion of a different type of knowing, which he calls "realization," that transcends reason. In itself, this lack of attention is not surprising. After all, the speculative notions expressed in his theory of expanding awareness could not be considered to be in the mainstream of Anglo/American philosophy (which was at the height of an analytic trend and thus opposed to speculative philosophy) when he was first putting them forward in the 1960s—especially in *Philosophic Understanding* (1965). Ironically, however, Burt was President of the Eastern Division of the APA during this same period and took the occasion of his Presidential address to the Sixty-First Annual Meeting of the APA in 1964 to argue the case for American philosophers to take a greater interest in speculative philosophy. As he stated in his address, speculative philosophy was "dormant" in America and he understood that a "goodly majority" of philosophers present at the Annual Meeting were adamantly opposed to it (TUP, p. 5).

But while philosophers may, in general, not have taken seriously the notions that Burt expresses in his theory of expanding awareness, we can turn to the works of two psychoanalysts, Erich Fromm and Arthur Deikman, who also combined notions from psychoanalytic theory and the East in order to posit theories concerning the "self." The relevance of their theories for our purposes is that, even though Burt's express interest was the application of these notions to philosophy, a core element of these notions concerns the need for the West to develop a new understanding of the "self." We shall refer to Fromm's *Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism* which was first published in

1960—some twelve months after Burt first introduced the central notions of his theory of expanding awareness at the 1959 East-West Philosophers' Conference and Deikman's *The Observing Self: Mysticism and Psychotherapy* which was first published in 1982. Even though Burt anticipated the work of both these authors, their thought bears a close affinity to Burt's arguments concerning the self that he promulgates in his theory of expanding awareness. We know, of course, that Burt was familiar with the thought, dating from the 1940s, of both Fromm and D. T. Suzuki—whom Fromm turns to for an understanding of Zen Buddhism. Thus there is a tight nexus between Fromm, Suzuki, and Burt. Deikman, on the other hand, does not refer to any of these three figures and instead draws from Eastern sources to propose a notion that bears significant similarities to Burt's treatment of the concept of awareness. While Burt anticipated Deikman by some twenty years, the latter proffers a succinct analysis of, what may still seem to be, problematic aspects of Burt's positing the notion of "a self that is aware of itself as a unity" and which is capable of achieving a different knowledge that transcends reason.

In Fromm's case, we can firstly observe the close connection he establishes between psychoanalytic theory and Zen Buddhism. In Fromm's view, Freud was not only concerned with the treatment of individuals, but also with philosophical and ethical issues (Fromm, 1960, p. 22). He believed psychoanalysis transcended the traditional medical notion of illness and cure and instead promoted the principle that "*knowledge leads to transformation*, that theory and practice must not be separated, that in the very act of *knowing* oneself, one *transforms* oneself" (ibid., p. 23; Fromm's italics). Thus Fromm asserts, Freud's orientation, even though he did not make such an association himself, has a close affinity with Eastern thought and especially Zen Buddhism.¹ However, he clarifies, it would be a "fundamental error" to believe that the goal of Zen, namely, *satori* or enlightenment, "can be achieved without achieving humility, love, and compassion. It would be equally a mistake to assume that the aim of psychoanalysis is achieved unless a similar transformation in the person's character occurs" (ibid., p. 84). Using Burt's words, we can understand the experience of *satori* or enlightenment as being an "inexhaustible flood tide of awareness" which is also nothing less than awareness of Ultimate Reality.

Fromm believes, however, that the major difficulty in understanding the connection between psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism is terminological. In his view, this lies in the use of the terms "*the* conscious and *the* unconscious, instead of the functional term of greater or lesser awareness of experience in the total man" (ibid., pp. 93-4). Fromm here

¹ Fromm notes that this does not mean that Freud himself made this connection to Zen Buddhism. As he comments, Freud was too much "a son of Western civilization, and especially of eighteenth and nineteenth century thought to be close to Eastern thought as expressed in Zen Buddhism" (Fromm 1960, p. 25).

is referring to problems with the principle of becoming “conscious of the unconscious,” which operates during the process of psychoanalysis and in Zen during meditation. Quoting from Suzuki, Fromm observes that the Zen orientation “is to enter right into the object itself and to see it, as it were, from the inside”¹ (*ibid.*, p. 94). This is an immediate experience of reality and according to Suzuki means the person is immersed in “Zen’s unconscious.”

However, Fromm would prefer to describe this situation in these terms: The person is “aware” of his or her “own reality and of the reality of the world in its full depth and without veils” (*ibid.*, pp. 94-5). Burt also would describe this experience in these terms but adds another dimension to this scheme. He introduces the “capacity of expanding awareness” as *the active faculty* which lifts the veils from the unconscious and brings its secrets up to consciousness. Put simply, this capacity, if exercised, expands its realm of influence by progressively gaining knowledge, or awareness, of factors at work in the unconscious. It is the *gaining* of such awareness by this capacity that is the *act* which inherently lifts these factors from the unconscious realm to the conscious realm. It is an “act” because clearly some change occurs when an unconscious factor, such as a basic presupposition, valuation, or emotional motivation, is *brought to* consciousness. This change may not be able to be quantified (except by observing changes in behavior or attitude), but nevertheless has occurred. For Burt, the capacity of expanding awareness is not itself consciousness, or “conscious awareness” (as noted earlier in the chapter we take the latter term to mean “consciousness”). Instead, this capacity maintains a relation between both the unconscious and conscious realms. In Burt’s scheme, therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between “expanding awareness” as an active capacity and “consciousness.” To throw further light on, what may still be, this problematic notion we can turn to Deikman.

Deikman, in *The Observing Self*, emphasizes that “awareness” is “the primary source of self-experience” and (writing in 1982) believes that this notion has not, in general, been treated seriously by scholars (p. 101). This point, in itself, demonstrates Burt’s pioneering work in this area.

Awareness is a phenomenon in its own right; the contents are secondary. For this reason it is a crucial error to regard the observing self, which is the center and source of our personal existence, as “a content of the mental apparatus” because it transcends all content. Western psychology has yet to cope with this fact and the psychiatric literature, with rare exceptions, simply ignores it. ... When we consider the radically different nature of the observing self, it is apparent that some mode of knowing other than the senses or intellect is involved in that phenomenon. The senses and intellect provide content: sounds, vision, touch, ideas, memories, fantasies. But the observing self is outside content and thus outside intellect and sensation. It follows that a different type of knowing is involved, one we must designate as intuitive, or direct, knowing—knowing by being that which is known. We *are* awareness, and that is why we cannot observe it; we cannot detach

¹ Fromm is referring to D. T. Suzuki’s *Studies in Zen* [1960], (Unwin Paperbacks, London), p. 11.

ourselves from it because it is the core experience of self.

I will use an analogy to illustrate how direct knowing might take place and what its relationship to ordinary thought could be. Consider a pond that borders on and is continuous with the ocean. Our awareness, the observing self, is the surface of the pond. Thoughts, feelings, and other mental activities are like splashes and ripples in the water, as if small stones were being tossed in from the shore. When such activity subsides, the pond is smooth, still, and reflective; at such times the observing self is enhanced, becomes prominent, and is the major dimension of consciousness. At other times, when thought has transformed the surface into a mass of waves and ripples, awareness seems to have vanished and consciousness contains only the patterns of disturbance in the water. In such a situation there is no need to postulate an outside observer to experience the stillness and the ripples. There need be no experiencing agency because the experience is the state of stillness or ripples, as the case may be.

We can then address the question, "Why are thoughts and feelings observed but awareness not known directly? The answer is that the ripples are local phenomena but water per se is not. The activity occurs against the background of stillness and through the medium of water. (Deikman, 1982, pp. 101-104; Deikman's italics)

We could also understand Burt's capacity of expanding awareness as Deikman's "primary source of self-experience" which transcends all content of the mind and thus is "outside intellect and sensation." Indeed, it is precisely this characteristic which enables it to review the presuppositions of any theory of reason and is able to achieve, what Deikman calls, "intuitive, or direct, knowing by being that which is known."

However, Burt's capacity of expanding awareness plays a more active role than Deikman attributes to the concept of awareness in his analogy of the pond. Deikman posits the surface of pond as being the "observing self"—our awareness—which is enhanced when the ripples and splashes (thoughts and sensations) subside. By contrast, Burt would posit the capacity of expanding awareness as a capacity of the observing self which, through the process of psychoanalysis or meditation, actively subdues these ripples and splashes which have their source, not in a stone tossed from shore, but in the motivations, presuppositions, and valuations that lie in the depths (the unconscious) of the pond. Thus to Deikman's question: "Why are thoughts and feelings observed but awareness not known directly?" Burt would answer that, because it is the capacity of expanding awareness which identifies the unconscious motivations, presuppositions, and valuations and lifts them to the surface of the pond (to consciousness), it cannot be made the focus of itself. But, if this process of dredging the unconscious factors to the surface continues long enough, it follows that the water in the pond will become crystal clear from the bottom to the surface. It is at this moment that the experience of direct knowing occurs, the Zen experience of *satori*, or enlightenment, or Burt's "inexhaustible flood tide of awareness." At this moment the surface is still—the intellect and sensations are at rest—and awareness and consciousness, which now includes knowledge of all motivations, presuppositions, and valuations, merge. The surface is no longer simply awareness—it has merged into a knowing of Ultimate

Reality or the universal self. This is “knowledge” which transcends the very definition of knowledge—at least as the West generally posits its limited notion of empirical knowledge.

The “knowing,” therefore, that Burt is attempting to communicate in his theory of expanding awareness is a different kind of knowing from that which can be achieved by logical reason. Borrowing from Suzuki’s *Studies in Zen*, we can understand it as dealing with knowledge “beyond the logicalness of things” (Suzuki, 1960, p. 50). Zen, Suzuki points out, is not an intellectual or dialectical game but instead requires a leap “beyond.” We must refrain from questioning what is “beyond” for this is an experience which can never be accurately communicated by the intellect. As Suzuki explains, the “intellect serves varied purposes in our daily living, even to the point of annihilating humanity, individually or en masse” but it has limits beyond which it cannot pass (*ibid.*). These intellectual limits, such as being confronted with the meaning of life and death, require a new understanding.

It is, the Zen master would tell us, like climbing up to the end of a pole one hundred feet long and yet being urged to climb on and on until you have to execute a desperate leap, utterly disregarding your existential safety. The moment this is executed you find yourself safely on the “full-blown lotus pedestal.” The kind of leap can never be attempted by intellection [the processes of thought] or by logicalness of things. The latter espouses only continuity and never a leap over the gaping chasm. (Suzuki, 1960, pp. 50-1)

Nowhere does Burt describe his theory of expanding awareness precisely in the above terms. Nevertheless, we have sufficient insight into his claims for it that, at a particular point, it will lead a practitioner to make a leap beyond reason which, when executed, finds him or her falling safely onto the “full-blown lotus pedestal.” Put another way, in Burt’s own terms, this leap would lead the practitioner to experience “an inexhaustible flood tide of awareness.”

Conclusion

Western philosophers have traditionally assumed that the power of reason can resolve external problems. However, Burt insists that reason breaks down when confronted with resolving the problems of the inner self. He first made this point in *Metaphysical Foundations*. Moreover, it is in relation to problems of the inner self that differences concerning reason between the West and East are most apparent. Thus, if the goal of true inner freedom is to be achieved, the limits of reason must be transcended. If reason is to operate effectively, it needs a subject and an object. But the self as knower cannot itself be known as an object. Instead, when this point is reached the person has the realization that at the deepest level of the inner self there is a unity between subject and object. It is at this point that a person’s consciousness has transcended the limits of reason and, in doing so, “becomes freed from its prison and fulfills its intrinsic nature” (ISPU, p. 265). Hence, it is precisely due to the limitation of

reason to gain knowledge of the knower's inner self that prompted Burt to develop his theory of expanding awareness.

This theory represents, among other goals, Burt's desire to overcome the different attitudes towards reason that exist in the East and the West. In his view, these attitudes play an important role in the philosophic division between East and West. His resolution of this problem is to posit the notion of a human capacity, namely, expanding awareness, which both utilizes and transcends reason. The expansion in awareness that takes place in the practice of this theory, i.e., the bringing of unconscious motivations, presupposition, and valuations to conscious awareness, must inherently occur in the realm of the self. This self is "the elusive knower," (Deikman's "observing self") which Western philosophy has consistently sought but been unable to find—it is not simply the realm of the conscious mind in which our thinking and reasoning occurs. This follows because reason, or rational thinking, inherently requires a subject *and* object—if these were to be transcended or dissolved into a unity, reason would no longer be the faculty in operation. Why? Because the "knower" by its very nature is the subject of consciousness and hence cannot be an object. The knower, as the subject of consciousness, cannot be conflated into the knower as an object of consciousness. In the Western dualistic orientation, it must be one or the other. It cannot be both at the same time.

Moreover, in the West for any "knowledge" of the knower to be considered rational, it (that is, the knowledge of the knower) must be one or the other—subject or object. Rational knowledge inherently requires that there must be a separation between subject and object. But, when it is fully realized—and "realization" rather than "knowledge" is the appropriate word for this situation—that the knower can never be the other (object), then rational knowledge has been transcended. The self, having achieved this realization of unity, has transcended the limits of reason or rationality. As Burt states, it is "the self" which is aware of itself as a unity when separation between subject and object has been overcome. In other words, it is this self which has the capacity of expanding awareness.

Simply put, Burt's theory of expanding awareness postulates a capacity which subsumes the capacity of rational thinking, or reason—it is a superrational capacity. It is a capacity of the self which apprehends one's unconscious presuppositions, valuations and motivations. However, while Burt initially put this theory forward as a method which could achieve mutual understanding between the East and West, his longer term goal for it was his belief that its practice by philosophers could lay the philosophic groundwork for a universal, or world, philosophy.

In the development of this theory it is evident that Burt believes that the West had more to learn from the East rather than vice versa. This follows from his own presupposition that the starting place for change is *within* the personality of each

individual—which is the focus of the East rather than the West. But he is not totally biased against the West. His major criticism of the West is that, with the rise of modern science, it has restricted knowledge to matters that can be quantified or measured. In taking this path, it denies the existence of a deeper, spiritual reality which transcends the fragmented, dualistic, world-view of science. Further, Burt does not believe that the West is without the resources to gain knowledge of human inner self—clearly he believes psychoanalytic theory to be a step in this direction.

His chief concern is that philosophers, in the search for truth, ought to utilize this resource in order to gain a deeper knowledge of their own unconscious motivations, valuations, and presuppositions.

Unbounded possibilities of discovery and creation would seem to lie before this way of philosophizing when its champions not only share the aspirations of every people, race, and religion, but have also overcome all bondage to their present presuppositions. The search for true selfhood calls for unending growth in an infinitely evolving universe, and this means openness to change at the deepest levels of thought and insight. (ISPU, p. 92)

Thus Burt urges philosophers to begin their quest for truth by undertaking “the quest for truth about oneself.” This notion is encompassed in the Socratic maxim engraved on Apollo’s temple at Delphi but which in his view has had little genuine influence on Western philosophers: “Know thyself!” This is the true *source* of knowledge. It is situated at the beginning of the path of expanding awareness which leads to knowledge of Ultimate Reality—that “inexhaustible flood tide of awareness.”

Chapter 7

The Regeneration of Philosophy

Its Necessity

Any sceptical fears that Burttt developed his theory of expanding awareness in order to leave philosophers immersed in an “inexhaustible flood tide of awareness” are banished in light of his application of this theory to philosophy. The primary source of this application can be found in the treatise *In Search of Philosophic Understanding* (ISPU) (hereafter *Philosophic Understanding*), which was first published in 1965, some five years after he retired from full time work at Cornell. In the Foreword to this work, which Burttt describes as an “essay in the philosophy of philosophy” (ISPU, p. xiv), he warns the reader that the “most provocative note ... I want to share is the conviction that philosophy must come fully to terms with the psychoanalytic conception of the human mind” (ibid.). This notion, of course, is central to Burttt’s theory of expanding awareness—although it is important to clarify again that nowhere does Burttt express this theory in an explicit and methodical manner as we have done in the previous chapter. Instead, throughout his later works, particularly in *Philosophic Understanding*, there are scattered references to this notion of “expanding awareness.” It is only because we have extrapolated these references from his various later works and formulated them as “a theory” that we can now portray these references as his “application” of this theory to philosophy.

Thus, taking our above qualification into account, Burttt’s project in *Philosophic Understanding* is the application of the theory of expanding awareness to philosophy with the major goal of bringing about a “philosophical rebirth” (ISPU, p. xiv). In his view, this philosophic regeneration was needed for two reasons. Firstly, because an impasse had arisen among academic philosophers and they were unsure what direction to take,¹

¹ This seems to be a consistent theme in the Presidential Addresses delivered to the Annual Meetings of the American Philosophical Association (APA) over the past decades. See for example: Maurice Mandelbaum’s 1962 Presidential Address (Proceedings and Addresses of The APA, Vol. 36, October 1963, pp. 5-20); Alan Donagan’s 1981 Presidential Address (Proceedings and Addresses of The APA Vol. 55, Sept. 1981, pp. 25-52); John E. Smith’s Presidential Address (Proceedings and Addresses of The APA, Vol. 56, September 1982, pp. 5-18).

John E. Smith entitled his Address “The New Need for a Recovery of Philosophy” and among the points that he makes he states:

It seems to me that a major factor leading to the reduction in communication among philosophers has been the loss of a faith in reason as a synoptic, generalizing and unifying power. The more narrowly reason is conceived, the less possibility there is that we can achieve a comprehensive understanding of the interconnections between the many facets of experience articulated in the different philosophical standpoints that now exist. ... The decline of philosophy as an influential voice in the intellectual exchange within our culture has been the result of several questionable conceptions of philosophy that have dominated much of modern philosophy since the seventeenth century. Not least among the consequences of this loss of an audible voice has been the migration to other fields of study of many questions upon which philosophers used to concentrate—the place of man in the cosmic order, the status of human purpose in a seemingly mechanical universe, the basic

there was a need for a new philosophic path (*ibid.*). Secondly, it was needed to challenge “one of the most salutary discoveries and at the same time one of the most malignant diseases of our century [which] goes by the name of ‘moral relativism’” (*ibid.*, p. xv). Moral relativism, he acknowledges, may have been beneficial in bringing about the recognition of the diverse moral values that have pertained, and do pertain, to various cultures and peoples in history. However, so far as moral relativism “has led to the idea that one pattern of cultural life is as good as another, and that intelligent discrimination between values can fill no positive role, it is one of the saddest superstitions that have found currency among educated people” (*ibid.*). This “saddest [of] superstitions” had led to “moral nihilism” (*ibid.*). To resolve this dilemma, Burttt declares that it is his intention to open a philosophic “path from moral relativism beyond moral nihilism, guided by the vision of a truly ultimate value—a value that is universal while making full room for

categories and modes of being, the problem of God and what an ancient philosopher called “the things that matter most.” (John E. Smith, 1982, pp. 6-8)

While Smith uses the past-tense term, “philosophers used to concentrate” on these latter areas of interest, Burttt, of course, made them the focus of his life’s work. Thus we again have a clear insight into his independence of contemporary philosophy. Burttt, of course, would also concur with Smith’s comments concerning the narrow focus of reason.

Huston Smith has also addressed the issue of an impasse among academic philosophers. In the chapter entitled “The Crisis in Philosophy” in *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind* [1982] (1989), he traces the core of the problem to the crucial role that reason has played in modern philosophy thus:

The deepest reason for the current crisis in philosophy is its realization that autonomous reason—reason without infusions that both power and vector it—is helpless. By itself, reason can deliver nothing apodictic. Working (as it necessarily must) with variables, variables are all it can up with. The Enlightenment’s “natural light of reason” turns out to have been a myth. Reason is not itself a light. It is more like a transformer that does useful things but on condition that it is hitched to a generator. (Huston Smith, 1989, p. 137)

What Smith means by a “generator” seems to be some type of noumenal source that allows reason to transcend its contingency. As he explains, Plato “accepted reason’s contingency and grounded his philosophy in intuitions that are discernible by the ‘eye of the soul’ and medieval philosophy attached itself to theology as its handmaiden” (*ibid.*).

However, he continues, in the seventeenth century with the rise of modern science and new and efficacious methods of gaining knowledge, following Smith, philosophers “unplugged” reason from the generator, theology. Various philosophers, such as Francis Bacon and Auguste Comte, attempted to “replug” it into science, but failed to make an adequate connection. But philosophers also thought:

Why suppose that reason requires support? If we liken reason to a lever, philosophy as deployed in the modern age has been philosophy as conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that reason possesses its own Archimedean point. There are debates as to what this point is—Descartes’ innate ideas? Kant’s categories of reason? The positivists’ sense data? But that reason *has* a fixed point of reference from which to proceed was not, for the three centuries during which modernity was in place, seriously doubted. (Smith, 1989, pp. 137-8; Smith’s italics)

Belief in the existence of this “Archimedean point of reference” has now collapsed and thus philosophy is in a serious crisis. In Smith’s view, the crisis has come about because the positivist and analytic schools, along with the existentialists and postmodernists, during this century have either ignored or attempted to destroy metaphysics (*ibid. passim*).

Interestingly, Huston Smith’s notion of the need for a “generator” (something that has the “power” to generate) that allows reason to transcend its contingency, is precisely the task that Burttt claims for the capacity of expanding awareness. This capacity has the “power” to drive reason through the presuppositions, valuations, and motivations, which always underlie any theory of reason. Furthermore, it eventually leads the person beyond reason and into the experience of Ultimate Reality which, in turn, we can take to be the noumenal source behind the capacity of expanding awareness. Using Smith’s metaphor, Burttt is “plugging” reason into the capacity of expanding awareness in order to lead it to its noumenal source.

variety, all-encompassing and yet dynamic, free from dogmatic pretensions and thus ever open to revision" (ibid.). His intention, in other words, is to apply his theory of expanding awareness in order to discover the nature of some truly objective or ultimate value in order to overcome the "pernicious effects" of moral relativism. Thus, the relativity inherent in diverse cultural norms and values does not mean for Burt that there *is* no ultimate, universal, or "one" value in which the "many" values of diverse cultures could find a unity. Indeed, his use of the term "superstition," which we can take to mean an "irrational belief," signifies that, in his view, it is irrational to believe that there is *not* a universal or ultimate moral framework which transcends the diverse cultural norms and values. Also we need to keep in mind two important factors which Burt does not disclose, at this point at least, to his readers. Firstly, throughout this project he is maintaining the notion of an Ultimate Reality. Secondly, his project both to bring about philosophic regeneration and to discover a universal value is motivated by his overriding goal, namely, the development of a world philosophy.

Burt's goal in *Philosophic Understanding*, therefore, is two-fold. Its first aspect involves the regeneration of philosophy. The second aspect involves the overcoming of moral relativism—with its implications for establishing a world philosophy which could, in turn, form the metaphysical foundations for a world community. Although these two aspects are intertwined we shall concentrate on the first aspect in this chapter and the second aspect in the following chapter. In general terms, the first aspect is epistemological, that is, Burt seeks to establish the validity of the notion of the "new" kind of knowledge that is central to his theory of expanding awareness whereas the second aspect involves moral and political issues.

Burt and the Postmodernist Movement

When arguing the need for a philosophic regeneration in the 1960s, Burt was writing in the midst of what has come to be often identified as the "postmodernist" movement—although nowhere does he specifically use this term. The term "postmodernism," in fact, is surrounded by ambiguity. As Richard Tarnas in *The Passion of the Western Mind* (1993) explains: "What is called postmodern varies considerably according to context, but in its most general and widespread form the postmodern mind may be viewed as an open-ended, indeterminate set of attitudes that has been shaped by a great diversity of intellectual and cultural currents, these range from pragmatism, existentialism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis to feminism, hermeneutics, deconstruction, and postempiricist philosophy of science" (Tarnas, 1993, p. 395). Moreover, as pragmatism, existentialism, and psychoanalytic theory (besides Eastern notions) influenced Burt's thought—and because the thrust of *Metaphysical Foundations*, with its critique of empiricism, could be seen as standing at the beginning of the postempiricist philosophy of science—there may be a tendency to identify him

with this movement. This tendency may be further strengthened by Tarnas' claim that one of "few widely shared working principles" which identify the postmodernist movement is "an appreciation of the plasticity and constant change of reality and knowledge" and that the "quest for knowledge must be endlessly self-revising" (*ibid.* p. 395-6). This is also a core theme in Burt's *Philosophic Understanding*. He seeks to establish that reality and knowledge are social constructions which are "intrinsically pliable" (ISPU, p. 232).

However, any tendency to identify Burt's project with the postmodernist movement will be seen to be premature if we accept Tarnas' view that the goal of this movement is to demonstrate the social, linguistic, and cultural relativism of any claims to values, truth, meaning, or knowledge. For the postmodernist, "all meaning is ultimately undecidable, and there is no 'true' meaning. No underlying primal reality can be said to provide the foundation for human attempts to represent truth. ... The multiplicity of incommensurable human truths exposes and defeats the conventional assumption that the mind can progress ever forward to a nearer grasp of reality" (Tarnas, *op. cit.*, p. 399). To underline this point Tarnas quotes Richard Rorty's comment that there is nothing certain about truth except perhaps "what our peers will let us get away with saying" (*ibid.*).

Rorty's statement, in Tarnas' view, epitomizes the postmodernist movement. In his own words:

Here in a sense the Cartesian critical intellect has reached its fullest point of development, doubting all, applying a systematic skepticism to every possible meaning. With no divine foundation to certify the Word, language possesses no privileged connection to truth. The fate of human consciousness is ineluctably nomadic, a self-aware wandering through error. The history of human thought is a history of idiosyncratic metaphorical schemes, ambiguous interpretative vocabularies having no ground beyond what is already saturated by their own metaphorical and interpretative categories. Postmodern philosophers can compare and contrast, analyze and discuss the many sets of perspectives human beings have expressed, the diverse symbol systems, the various ways of making things hang together, but they cannot pretend to possess an extrahistorical Archimedean point from which to judge whether a given perspective validly represents "Truth." (Tarnas, 1993, pp. 399-400)

This follows because, for the postmodernist "there are no indubitable foundations for human knowledge" and the "postmodernist human exists in a universe whose significance is at once utterly open and without warrantable foundation" (*ibid.*, pp. 398 & 400). In other words, using Burt's terms, the postmodern Western human exists in a world of moral nihilism.

Moreover, because Burt maintains that there *is* an underlying primal, or ultimate, reality which can be experienced, we can see why it would be incorrect to identify him with the postmodernist movement. Burt would agree with the postmodernist that knowledge-claims and constructions of reality, being always based on particular presuppositions, valuations, and motivations, are relative to a particular social and

cultural context. However, his project of seeking a philosophic regeneration in order to discover an ultimate or universal value which can underpin the moral foundations of a universal, or world, philosophy would be anathema to the postmodernist. For the postmodernist, as Tarnas explains, the term universal is viewed as a totalizing concept and, as such, is inherently contradictory because it represents yet another attempt to elevate a subjective value to a status it cannot sustain (Tarnas, 1993, p. 401).

Thus, in several respects, Burt's orientation is not compatible with postmodernism. In short, postmodernists are opposed to the very endeavor of metaphysics¹ which has as its basic presupposition the notion that reality is to be treated as a whole. The postmodernists would recoil from the very notion of the universalizing concept "the whole of humanity," let alone Burt's goal to develop an "*all-embracing* philosophy" of humanity (PMAP, *passim*).

Three Ways to Revise Common Sense: Intuitionism, Rationalism, Empiricism

Now, as a starting point for the epistemological project that he hopes will lead to a philosophic regeneration, Burt turns to the notion of common sense. In his view, although common sense is always relative to a particular culture and time, it is the pivotal source of knowledge for both science and philosophy (ISPU, p. 9). Indeed, the world of common sense is the starting point for every human being as mental powers begin to awaken. Philosophy and science enter the picture as ways to resolve problems and contradictions that arise within the common sense view of reality. To achieve this end Western thought has developed three ways to revise common sense, namely, intuitionism, rationalism, and empiricism (*ibid.*, p. 11).

Intuitionism, following Burt, is an ancient source of knowledge generally associated with divine revelation. Intellectual leaders, the shamans, seers, and prophets, when confronted with a perplexing problem turned to such sources as oracles, which carried the authenticity of the divine, for an idea which could provide an answer. But such bits of knowledge or ideas, being an "aggregate of intuitions," lacked rational order and often conflicted with each other (ISPU, p. 11). With no method available to resolve such conflicts an arbitrary decision had to be made to reject one—which, in turn, led to further conflict (*ibid.*). In time, particularly due to the genius of the ancient Greeks, mathematics and systematic, logical reason were brought to bear on any claims to knowledge. Thus discursive reason—or rationalism, a system of truths—was born and its authority as the source of reliable knowledge replaced, although not entirely, the knowledge claims of intuition.

¹ As Richard Bernstein argues in an address to the Metaphysical Society of America in 1988, the postmodernists maintain their "deep suspicion, hostility and ridicule of any aspiration to unity, reconciliation, harmony, totality, the whole, the one ... [because of their] widespread bias that these [unifying] signifiers mask repression and violence; that there is an inevitable slippage from totality to totalitarianism and terror" (Quoted by Huston Smith, 1989, p. 43).

The problem with rationalism, however, was that it, like intuitionism, had no ultimate court of appeal to settle disputes between competing claims to knowledge. That is, rationalism, which started with axiomatic foundations and applied rigorous logic to truth claims, found that there could be two or more equally justifiable answers. To resolve this dilemma thinkers in the seventeenth century turned to observable facts in order to test which of their answers was more reliable. Thus empiricism, with its appeal to systematic observation and experiments of “facts” was born and formed a crucial foundation of modern science which, of course, is another way of saying modern “knowledge.” As Burt explains:

When Galileo realized that the truth about falling bodies could not be unambiguously anticipated by deductions accepted from accepted rational principles he turned to meticulous observation. When, a few centuries later, non-Euclidean geometries were conceived, it could no longer be taken for granted that the spatial structure of the physical world must be Euclidean; whether it is or is not had to be decided by appeal to facts of perception. So arose in the Western world the novel conception of knowledge and method that goes by the name “empiricism.” (ISPU, p. 14)

Burt acknowledges that in ancient times such thinkers as Hippocrates and Archimedes had also turned to observation of facts. However, it was only in modern times that “the empirical sciences assumed a dominant role and provided in their own fashion a respectable method for revising common sense” (ibid.).

During the rise of empiricism, rationalism saw a role for itself by assuming that logical consistency, or discursive reason, “somehow controls the world of sense-perception—that facts must behave just as our rational explanations of them would require” (ISPU, p. 15). But all these rationalistic assumptions have since been “dashed beyond repair” because “a system of propositions unable to square itself with the relevant observable facts is no longer quite respectable” (ibid.). Knowledge in the twentieth century is regarded as dynamic. At any one time, it is the “sum total ... of verified hypotheses whose claim to truth [moreover] is relative rather than absolute, since new facts of observation may at any time compel their revision” (ibid.).

This also applies to common sense because the knowledge claims that empiricism may make inevitably reflect and have a bearing upon those of common sense. A prime example of empiricism leading to a revision of the knowledge claims of common sense occurred in the seventeenth century. It seemed common sense to ancient and medieval observers that the sun revolved around the earth. However, Galileo’s observations through a telescope revealed the reverse was true and thus common sense was revised (ibid., p. 18).

A Fourth Way to Revise Common Sense: The Analysis of Presuppositions

Burt’s purpose in outlining the historical development of the above three different approaches to knowledge in the West is to establish the groundwork for a fourth way to revise common sense, namely, to bring into focus the crucial role that basic

presuppositions play in any knowledge or truth claims—particularly in the case of empiricism. For, in its claims to knowledge, “empiricism suffers in its own fashion from the same defect as its predecessors” (ISPU, p. 16). That is, when facts of observation are the final court of appeal in any dispute between empiricists, agreement cannot always be reached.

[T]here are times when inquirers are forced to realize that the questions: What is and what is not a fact? Which facts are and which are not relevant to a given problem? are questions whose answers are not simple and obvious. The answer depends on the criteria taken for granted by whoever happens to be observing the facts involved. An event that is one kind of fact in terms of certain presuppositions may become a very different fact—indeed may lose its factual character entirely—in terms of a different set of presuppositions. (ISPU, p. 16)

In the final analysis “facts” rest on a specific set of basic presuppositions. Thus it is the content of these presuppositions that will dictate what is and what is not admissible as evidence in a dispute concerning a fact and also the judgement reached.

Moreover, any presuppositions which form the foundation of a theory, constructed to explain or make judgement upon a fact, are always relative to a particular social milieu. As Burttt insists, it is “inescapable” that presuppositions “dominate thought at any given time” and “what people confidently take to be fact varies enormously from age to age and culture to culture” (ISPU, p. 17). For example, besides the case of Galileo changing “facts” that had been believed in for thousands of years, snow “is just snow to the south European; to the Eskimo it is an exceedingly complex affair, revealing manifold distinctions” (*ibid.*, p. 18). This means that, in the final analysis, empiricism’s claims to objective knowledge, which facts purport to be, are not directly related to objects in the world. Instead they are related to the particular presuppositions, the mental spectacles, which dictate perceptions of these objects (ISPU, p. 18f).

Hence, for Burttt, empirical observations cannot be the final court of appeal for knowledge claims. Instead it is basic presuppositions that are pivotal to knowledge and truth claims and any conflicts between these claims point to a conflict between presuppositions. Evidence of such conflicts, moreover, are not confined to observations concerning the physical world. They are also present in debates concerning different social theories. For instance, “the same facts may be radically different when seen from the perspective of two different economic or political systems—such as Marxism and way of ‘free enterprise’” (ISPU, p. 17). This conflict arises because the thinkers are bringing different presuppositions to bear on social problems that have themselves been constructed in a particular way from a particular set of presuppositions. In short, both the solution and the problem are constructions of the mind resting on a particular set of presuppositions.

The focus for knowledge or truth claims, therefore, ought to be concentrated on the content of basic presuppositions with the view to challenging their status as the arbiters of true and false knowledge. In moving the focus for knowledge claims to their

presuppositional basis, moreover, Burt opens the door for a fourth way to revise common sense. That is, instead of turning to intuition, rationalism, or empiricism, to revise the knowledge claims of common sense one turns to an analysis of the presuppositions at work in any knowledge claim. However, Burt's purpose in focusing on the pivotal role that presuppositions play in knowledge claims involves more than simply putting forward another way to revise common sense—it opens the door to a philosophic regeneration. This follows because rather than focus on the presuppositions brought to any knowledge claim, he focuses on the presuppositions underlying different philosophical movements. In his view, “the alternative criteria [used to make knowledge claims] that have been seriously championed in the history of thought appear most obviously in the various sets of basic presuppositions that distinguish one philosopher from another, and especially one philosophical school from another” (*ibid.*, p. 19).

Philosophy: The History of Presuppositions

Presuppositions are so pivotal to Burt's scheme that he casts them in a central role in the history of philosophy. Indeed, in his view, philosophy can be seen as a “history of presuppositions.”

Any theory of being, or of method, or of anything else, inevitably rests on certain presuppositions, which for a time are taken by many, or perhaps even all, philosophers to be justified. Subsequently, however, history shows that these presuppositions are not in fact as indubitable as they seemed to be, and when their inadequacy is recognized, philosophy advances in a new direction that leaves behind some of the errors of previous presuppositions and leads to constructive results that had not previously been possible. (ISPU, p. 5)

For example, two thousand years ago Aristotle's theory of Being resulted in previously accepted presuppositions being replaced by new presuppositions. These are articulated in the categories of substance, potentiality and Aristotle's understanding of logic. Over time this process has been repeated many times. In relation to theories of truth philosophers “came to doubt certain presuppositions about the nature of knowledge and the ideal of truth” (*ibid.*, p. 6). Hence, there are now distinctions made “between necessary and contingent truth, and between truth as confirmable by scientific techniques and truth that only can be won in other ways” (*ibid.*).

But if it is philosophers who develop new theories of being, or ontologies, this raises an “inescapable” question for Burt: How can we identify the presuppositions, which the adherents of different ontologies usually hold unconsciously, and which result in their believing and insisting that something based on their own set of criteria is a “fact”? (ISPU., pp. 18-20). That is, just as a conflict between claims to knowledge signifies a conflict between presuppositions, so also a conflict between philosophical movements signifies a conflict between the sets of presuppositions underlying particular movements.

At the core of philosophic regeneration that Burt seeks to bring about, therefore, lies the notion that philosophers ought to focus on the basic presuppositions underlying their particular orientation. To demonstrate the implications of this notion Burt critically examines the presuppositions underlying several major contemporary Western "schools" of philosophy: the analysis of ordinary language movement, existentialism, and Marxism.

The Analytic Movement

In his study of the analytic movement Burt firstly turns to the earlier analytic movements in the twentieth century, the realists and positivists, before concentrating on, as he calls it, "the analytic school of ordinary language." This latter movement was dominant in America in the 1950s and 1960s and, generally speaking, Burt's later thought can be seen to be a reaction against, what he perceived to be, its narrow focus of philosophic concern.¹ The former movement was dominant when Burt wrote *Metaphysical Foundations*, in which he seeks to demonstrate, among other things, that modern science, which is so important for realist and positivist because it offers objective knowledge and is not tainted with metaphysical overtones, does in fact have metaphysical foundations. Thus Burt, in one way or another, was consistently opposed to the analytic orientation. For this reason alone it is important to examine his understanding of this orientation. His study of the analytic movement is also especially valuable because it throws further light on the meaning he gives to the concept "basic presupposition." Indeed, even though this concept has assumed a central role in his thought by this point in time, he declined to give it an explicit definition (ISPU, p. 129). The definition which we have taken account of in our examination of his theory of expanding awareness was not to appear until he published *Human Journey* some fifteen years later.

In general terms, Burt describes analytic orientation as "a way of thinking that emphasizes the logical dissection of concepts and statements to reveal their precise meaning, and tries to draw all the distinctions required if this process is to be carried out with scrupulous thoroughness" (ISPU, p. 26). Thus analytic philosophy "does for our responsible thinking in general what mathematics does for the sciences; it secures clarity, precision, and rigor in whatever we choose to think about" (*ibid.*). In itself, this description of the role of analytic philosophy is not contentious and, indeed, is affirmative. As an example of analytic philosophy at work he refers to an analysis by

¹ Burt puts this most trenchantly in his essay "The Philosophy of Man as All-Embracing Philosophy," *The Philosophical Forum*, (Vol. 2, No. 2, Winter 1970-71). In this essay he states that his notion of a "philosophy of man" is "vehemently rejected as a sad perversion of philosophy by all analysts with whom I am acquainted. They insist that every taint of what they would call 'subjectivity' should be left behind, not explicitly stated" (p. 164). Burt, however, criticizes the analysts for ignoring the subjective factors at work in any human thinking, particularly emotional motivations and valuations (p. 167).

Arne Naess concerning Gandhi's ethics¹ but notes that while this may be a logical exposition of the latter's ethics, it is not able to comment on Gandhi's deeper purpose and meaning in formulating these ethics (*ibid.*).

While logical analysis remained central to the analytic movement, following Burt, each of its successive orientations "has its own distinctive presuppositions that constitute its answer to such important questions as: What analyses are worth undertaking? What conditions must be met by an acceptable analysis?" (ISPU, p. 27). He begins with the analytic realists such as Bertrand Russell, C. D. Broad, Samuel Alexander, and John Laird, all of whom were important thinkers in the early twentieth century. Burt claims that they had as a basic presupposition the tenet that "the external world exists independent of the mind, and hence that, when the latter becomes acquainted with an object, it simply apprehends the character already possessed by that object" (*ibid.*, p. 26). In arguing thus the analysts were objecting to a basic presupposition of idealism which "denied this independence and held that the world owes to mind the character apprehended in it" (*ibid.*, p. 27). The analytic realists also maintained as a presupposition that philosophy, by employing the analytic method to organize and clarify logical principles for science to use, must itself become scientific.

The realists, however, after the first two decades of the twentieth century ceased to dominate philosophy. They were superseded by the logical positivists who were coming to prominence when Burt wrote *Metaphysical Foundations*.

The positivists took over the theory of logic handed on by the realists, except for a different interpretation of the nature of logical form. That theory diverged from earlier tradition by developing a new and more general theory of relations; before it appeared, a special emphasis had been given to the grammatical relation between subject and predicate. The most important departure of the positivists from the presuppositions of the realists was an uncompromising rejection of metaphysics. The realists had believed it possible to replace the speculative cosmologies of an earlier day by a scientific metaphysic, but to the positivists this enterprise appeared illegitimate. (ISPU, p. 27)

In their view metaphysical schemes and assertions, unlike those of science, could not be tested for truth or falsity and hence are nonsense. Thus the only task for philosophy, in the positivist view, is "the clarification, by logical analysis, of the concepts and statements employed by science" (*ibid.*, p. 28).

It is the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) which Burt selects as being exemplary of both the logical positivism and its successor, the philosophy of ordinary language movement.

The basic presuppositions held in common by [the logical positivists] and by the philosophers of ordinary language—as well as the crucial difference between them—can best be understood by turning to ... [Wittgenstein's] *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (whose first English translation appeared in 1922), and *Philosophical*

¹ Burt cites this reference: Arne Naess, "A Systematization of Gandhian Ethics of Conflict Resolution," in *Conflict Resolution*, (Vol. 11, No. 2, June, 1958).

Investigations published in 1953. The former inspired the rise of logical positivism and the latter set forth the distinctive ideas of ... [the philosophy of ordinary language] school in its original form. Both these books proceed on the *conviction* that philosophy's business is not to offer a comprehensive theory of the universe; its proper concern is with such questions as how words mean what they mean and what we need to do in order to use them correctly [and so avoid confusion concerning meaning]. (ISPU, p. 28; my italics)

This latter "conviction," or fundamental belief, is a "basic presupposition" of logical positivism and the ordinary language movement.

The notion that a basic presupposition is a fundamental belief, or conviction, is central, of course, in Burt's later thought. By positing this notion he is able to maintain that, contrary to the claims of analysts that their orientation is sound and untainted by subjectivity,¹ their philosophy, in the final analysis, rests on beliefs which they do not, or cannot, question or validate. For example, the basic presupposition, namely, "the conviction that philosophy's business is not to offer a comprehensive theory of the universe; its proper concern is with such questions as how words mean what they mean and what we need to do in order to use them correctly" was so fundamental to the analytic movement that when Wittgenstein himself came to question the solutions produced by logical positivism, he did not question its validity. Instead, he believed the problem lay in the *focus* of analysis, that is, the use of scientific language.

Hence, instead of questioning the above presupposition, Wittgenstein simply changed its focus: it was "ordinary" language, rather than scientific language which held to the key to understanding meaning of words. Burt explains how this change in focus occurred:

In the *Tractatus* [Wittgenstein's solution to grasping the meaning of words] ... consists in laying bare the skeleton of the ideal language through which the structure of any fact that we might talk about can be accurately revealed. In this language alone, which is the proper language of science, can one intelligibly speak, and when one violates its logical syntax the only possible outcome is nonsense. In the *Investigations* this solution is renounced. So far as concerns the words in which philosophical questions are stated, *the way men naturally express themselves in the varied circumstances of life is the right way and does not need to be improved*. What is needed is simply a perceptive grasp of these current [i.e., ordinary] uses, and Wittgenstein's main aim [in his later thought] is to show how such a grasp can be gained. (ISPU, p. 29; my italics).

This latter notion, expressed in italics, became a basic presupposition of the philosophy of ordinary language movement which dominated American philosophy at the time Burt was writing *Philosophic Understanding*.

Three Further Presuppositions of the Ordinary Language Movement

Having thus identified the basic presupposition of the ordinary language movement, Burt identifies further presuppositions that flow from it and appraises their implications. He claims that he does not pretend that he "can stand outside such a living

¹ See previous footnote.

movement and pronounce judgement on it from the vantage point of a superior set of presuppositions” (ISPU, p. 39; see also p. 70). Rather, he aims to grasp “its positive insight as fully as possible and try to see where, if anywhere, its limitations become too cramping” (ibid.). Despite this disclaimer, of course, Burt is, in fact, pronouncing judgement from the vantage point of his own set of presuppositions. The whole thrust of his work, particularly in *Philosophic Understanding*, is to establish the validity of his theory of expanding awareness which inherently includes his own set of presuppositions. His claim that he can identify the unconscious presuppositions of the adherents of various movements or “schools,” his choices of philosophic movements that need examination and his judgement as to what constitutes a “positive” or “cramping” insight in another philosophical position, all demonstrate that he does indeed adhere to a vantage point, with its own set of presuppositions, outside these philosophies. From at least 1959 onwards he maintained, as a basic presupposition, the notion of an ultimate reality that is beyond reason and which, given sufficient expansion of the capacity of awareness, can be experienced by philosophers. Indeed, it is from the vantage point of this presupposition and its implications that he *is* appraising the presuppositions of the ordinary language movement, existentialism, and Marxism.

In spite of his criticism of the analytic orientation, Burt does allow that the ordinary language philosophers¹ have made important contributions in the fields of ethics, logic, theory of knowledge, and legal philosophy. They have been able to this because of three main presuppositions. The first presupposition is that all discourse, in the final analysis, is carried out by humans as part of a society which attributes particular meanings to the language used. This “ordinary language,” therefore, is correct and *must* become central to philosophical analysis. The second presupposition is that such analysis may reveal contradictions that occur within philosophy when it takes over terms and concepts that are used in ordinary language. That is, philosophers tend to give ever more particular or concise meanings to words and concepts which in their everyday use by ordinary people have a quite different meaning (ISPU, p. 40).

Thirdly, it is presupposed that a variety of meanings is attributed to a given word and that it is naive to believe that there is one correct meaning for a each word. There is a special importance attached to this third presupposition. For, in practice, it corrects the widespread “reductionism” into which many thinkers have fallen. For example, philosophers tend towards the “reduction of a moral concept to a psychological one—e.g., of ‘good’ to ‘pleasant’—or of the theoretical ideal of ‘truth’ to the practical one of ‘usefulness,’ or of an inductive problem to a deductive one” (ibid., p. 41). The ordinary language philosophers, in short, invert reductionism which in practice “is the perversion

¹ Besides Wittgenstein, Burt mentions G. E. Moore as being instrumental in initiating this movement (ISPU, p. 29; see also p. 56). He also refers to Stephen Toulmin, Stuart Hampshire, and P. F. Strawson as being philosophers who, in the late 1950s, attempted to change the focus of this movement (ibid., p. 38).

of a salutary principle—namely, that it is worthwhile to seek unity in diversity and to render the complex simple” (ibid., p. 41).

Burt's Critique of the Ordinary Language Orientation

Following this affirmative appraisal of the ordinary language school, Burt launches into his critique of its major weaknesses and limitations. Firstly, he argues that the movement's central presupposition, namely, the maxim that ordinary, or common, language *is* correct language, is seriously flawed (ISPU, p. 43f). This flaw becomes evident in light of the demand of this movement that any departure from ordinary use of a word or concept must be justified and explained. For example, if “one extends the meaning of a word to cover a wider field that it has covered in the past, he is responsible to explain the extension; if he gives it a metaphorical meaning, the relation between the metaphorical and the literal meaning must be made clear” (ibid., p. 43). The flaw in this demand, however, is that in the “ordinary use” of language people *are* able to successfully communicate without resorting to such an elaborate procedure. In short, the “ordinary use” philosopher is imposing *extraordinary* rules on the ordinary use of language and thus has deviated from ordinary language.

Secondly, what exactly is “correct” ordinary language—especially when all language is dynamic and constantly undergoing change? Indeed, Wittgenstein himself, in his teaching about ordinary language philosophy, “departed rather drastically from established ways of speaking—and some of the extraordinary uses he introduced have already become current coin in philosophical discussion” (ISPU, p. 48).¹ Thirdly, the ordinary language school philosophers are on precarious ground by presupposing that they can meaningfully analyze sentences that have been divorced from the social context in which they originated. Writing at the height of the Cold War, Burt points out that “delicate and dangerous” situations in international politics require philosophers to “combine their analytic skill with perceptive understanding of the human issues at stake” (ibid., p. 47). In other words, philosophers cannot divorce their philosophical concerns, in this case the analysis of words and concepts as used in ordinary language, from the wider and pressing political issues in which these words and concepts are used. Burt, of course, had always made it his own concern not to lose sight of political issues.

¹ As Burt explains:

In certain cases the words themselves are new; notice the tendency among philosophers to talk about a significant step in an argument as a “move,” thus reflecting the Wittgensteinian view of language as a game. Other key terms are “family of meanings” and “paradigm.” ... Consider the crucial words “logic,” “rule,” and even “philosophy” itself. Thinkers who were trained in an earlier era did not learn to use these words in the novel senses they have now acquired, largely through Wittgenstein's use. The idea that “logic” is concerned with the grammar of discourse in all the varied situations in which it is employed would have appeared an incredible idea till the linguistic philosophers of today made it a plausible one. Similarly with the other two words. In earlier days it would have seemed very strange to call “philosophy” an analysis of ordinary language to discover the “rules governing its use.” (ISPU, p. 48)

Another significant problem for the ordinary language movement, in Burt's view, is that so-called "ordinary language is always the language of a particular and limited culture" (*ibid.*, p. 51). How therefore, can it address the more universal issues which have traditionally been the concern of philosophers? For, to do so requires philosophers "to transcend the limitations" of ordinary language. As an illustration he suggests we

take the concept of logical necessity—the necessity exhibited in the structure of any valid inference. Philosophers have perennially meant by this phrase a reality which is *a priori* and therefore independent of all empirical facts, including the variations of linguistic habit between one society and another. They have taken for granted that logical necessity is a universal norm, standing above the customary uses of "necessity" and its synonyms in any particular tongue, and providing a criterion for judging them. But the ordinary language philosophers are naturally tempted to suppose that the phrase means what it does because it has acquired its established use in whatever tongue happens to be employed. (ISPU, pp. 51-2; my italics)

Yet, in Burt's view, this is not an acceptable defence—even if ordinary language philosophers shift the ground and defend their stance by sheltering behind the argument that some phrases are related to universal concepts. For, while mathematics may have universally recognized concepts, philosophy does not. The West, the East, and the Communist world all attribute different meanings to such concepts as "freedom," "democracy," and "individual rights" (*ibid.*, p. 53).

The presuppositions of the ordinary language school, therefore, confine its application to very limited areas of human concern. It overlooks the possibility that language, be it used in an ordinary or extraordinary manner, can introduce people to a "new universe" (ISPU, p. 50). By this Burt means that people, depending upon the language used, can gain new insights and experience into "a new dimension of reality." (*ibid.*). In his view, of course, perceptions of reality are always based on a set of presuppositions which, in turn, language articulates by way of various terms and categories. If these terms and categories change, as for instance during the transition from the medieval world view to that of modern science—a central theme in Burt's *Metaphysical Foundations*—so does reality. Thus, by confining itself to the analysis of ordinary language, the movement inherently limits its area of analysis to understanding existing words and concepts that describe human experiences within a particular cultural reality in the temporal world. It cannot extend itself beyond its self-imposed presuppositional limits to understand terms that by their very use stretch the boundaries of any particular construction of reality.¹

¹ Writing in the early 1970s, Burt not only predicted the demise of the analysis of ordinary language school, but also that there would be a "succession of analytic fads" until philosophers realize the limitations of the analytic orientation (PMAP, p. 167). In general terms, his reasons for this prediction are as follows. Analytic schools only select factors for analysis which confirm, under analysis, the analytic method which they value so highly. They exclude or ignore any factors which do not support their particular method or theory of logic. Hence, the analytic method has a vicious circularity which, in time, collapses in on itself.

Indeed, just as Burt predicted, by the 1980s the analysis of ordinary language movement was in serious trouble. Huston Smith, in the chapter entitled "The Crisis in Philosophy" in *Beyond the*

In giving an example of how the ordinary language orientation restricts its area of analytic concern, and to conclude his critique of the analytic orientation, Burt turns to what is clearly a provocative notion (due to its inherent subjectivity) for the analytic philosopher, namely, the mystic's view of reality. As Burt explains the ordinary language orientation cannot adequately seek to explain a notion of a reality that is beyond time and which may be experienced by a mystic. This mystical type of experience stretches meaning beyond logical articulation. Yet for the mystic this wider reality *is* nevertheless "reality" (ISPU, pp. 56-7). In defence of mysticism, Burt contends that "the mystic vision is not as esoteric as it sometimes seems" because an "insight that transcends the view of time may contain truth" (*ibid.*, p. 57).¹ Indeed, in turning to mysticism to critique the limitations of the analytic orientation, Burt may seem unduly provocative. After all, those of his contemporaries who adhered to the analytic orientation, in general, were opposed to metaphysics let alone mysticism. However, his purpose in referring to mysticism in this manner would seem to be that his is preparing his readers for the notion of ultimate reality (see ISPU, p. 259) and his theory of expanding awareness. Indeed, by resorting to the mystical view of reality to demonstrate the limitations, or narrow confines, of the analytic orientation, Burt clearly reveals one of his own presuppositions at work. Besides choosing the notion of mysticism, he presupposes that its view of reality is at least, if not more, valid than the narrow, or partial, view of reality offered by Western philosophical analysts. But, if this example reveals Burt's own presuppositions at work, they are even more evident in his appraisal of existentialism.

Existentialism

In his appraisal of existentialist philosophy Burt surveys the works of Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, and Gabriel Marcel. At

Postmodern Mind [1982] (1989) throws light on how this came to pass. The significant thrust of Anglo/American philosophy in the twentieth century, he explains, had been to ally itself with science. This had given rise to the analytic movements of positivism and logical empiricism in the earlier part of the century. These movements held that, on one hand, the role of the experimental scientist was to be concerned with the realm of synthetic truths. On the other hand, the role of the philosopher was to develop a logic which monitored analytic truths and to theorize the distinction between facts and meaning. However in 1951, the philosopher W. V. O. Quine "demolished the analytic/synthetic, fact/meaning distinction with his [essay] *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* [Philosophical Review, Vol. 60, 1951, pp. 20-43]. With the analytic rug thus pulled out from under them, philosophers retreated to ordinary language for a preserve of meaning that did not depend on logic, yet needed attention" (Smith, 1989, p. 136). But in the 1980s even that "refuge" was "dismantled" primarily by the work of the philosopher Donald Davidson who seeks to eliminate any categories, such as "meaning," from philosophical discourse and which may assist philosophers in identifying a body of rules for language. Instead, Davidson reduces language to the status of being "simply another way of coping with the world" (*ibid.* p. 137).

¹ In support of this defence of mysticism, Burt turns to a description of the mystic orientation in Henri Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (tr. by R. Ashley Audra, Doubleday & Co., Inc. New York, 1956, p. 228): In the mystic "There is an exceptional, deeprooted mental healthiness which is readily recognizable. It is expressed in the bent for action, the faculty of adapting and readapting oneself to circumstances, in firmness combined with suppleness, in the prophetic discernment of what is possible and what is not, ... in a word, supreme good sense."

the outset he clarifies, however, that he does not believe it appropriate to engage in “a critical examination of the distrust of reason which has haunted existentialism ever since the time of Kierkegaard. The main lesson that would almost surely emerge is that it is one thing to be aware that reason has its limits: it is another to treat it as an enemy of truth” (ibid., p. 89). Burt, of course, would identify with the former finding but not the latter. Reason, for Burt, is a necessary stepping stone on the path to gaining knowledge of ultimate reality even though there is a point at which one must progress beyond reason. Burt aims to reveal “an existentialism that on the one hand would be *universal* and on the other unqualifiedly *dynamic*” (ISPU, p. 89). This aim, of course, reveals his own motivations at work, namely, his goal to develop a world philosophy which is universal and yet dynamic. Indeed, the existentialist orientation, more than any other modern Western philosophical approach, had a crucial impact on Burt’s later thought.

As a starting point Burt identifies the basic presupposition of existentialism: Sartre’s maxim: “Existence precedes essence” (ibid., p. 59).¹ Even though Heidegger rejected this maxim, Burt explains, “if it is carefully construed it does express in succinct form the core of the existentialist position” (ibid., p. 60). At the core of this maxim is the notion, also central to Burt’s later thought, that to understand the essence of a human being an awareness is required of *all* that person’s existence. That is, it is necessary to accept that humans are more than just a cognitive mind—a mind that in modern philosophy became the center of attention for both empiricists and rationalists. A “full” person is always enmeshed in emotional involvements and the “weal and woe” of all human experience (ibid.). Thus, the first step on the path to knowledge requires a thinker to turn and face all the facts of one’s own experience, not least being the inevitable fact of death.

Kierkegaard: The Fountain Head of Existentialism

Kierkegaard’s “provocative” works,² according to Burt, “have been the fountain head of both philosophical and theological existentialism during this century since his day” (ISPU, p. 61). His writings were a reaction against philosophical rationalism (in much the same way we can say that Burt’s writings are a reaction against the analytic and positivist orientation of the twentieth century) which, following the transcendental rationalism of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), reached its peak in the work of G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831). However, an “essential continuity” still existed between the work of Hegel and that of Kierkegaard: both maintained as a dominant concern the notion that human beings have a “capacity” to leave behind the limitations of their “present

¹ This maxim appears in Jean-Paul Sartre’s essay *Existentialism is a Humanism*, (reproduced in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Walter Kaufmann, transl. & edit., New American Library, 1975, p. 348).

² Burt’s cites the following sources for Kierkegaard’s works: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, transl. by David Swenson, (Princeton, N.J., Princeton Univ. Press, 1944); *Philosophical Fragments*, tr. by David Swenson, op. cit., 1936).

experience and to grow toward the realization of truth in its wholeness" (*ibid.*). Burt's use of the word "capacity" here is crucial. The qualities he ascribes to it bear a close resemblance to those he ascribes to his "capacity" of expanding awareness.

Both Hegel and Kierkegaard, in Burt's view, envisaged a person's growth toward wholeness as a "dialectical" process, that is, one proceeds in stages by overcoming contradictions and achieving reconciliations until a higher synthesis is reached (ISPU, p. 61). For both philosophers the thinker reaches ever higher "stages" of illumination on the path to final truth. A "crucial difference" between the two philosophers, however, is that:

[For] Hegel this growth is a rational process, revealing a logical necessity throughout; for Kierkegaard it is an existential deepening, which involves the reconstruction of one's entire self, including one's way of reasoning along with everything else. Hence Hegel's dialectic is "abstract" while Kierkegaard's is "concrete;" Hegel's "moments" are logically determined steps in the dialectic while Kierkegaard's are moments of "decision" by one's growing personality as a whole; Hegel's synthesis is a systematic self-disclosure of the Absolute while Kierkegaard's is the intuitive realization that can only take place in the mind and heart of each individual. (ISPU, p. 61).

In other words, Hegel has "split-off" the mind and reason from the balance of his being to achieve, what he believes to be, "knowledge" of the Absolute. By contrast, Kierkegaard, like Burt, believes the path to ultimate truth is achieved only by gaining knowledge of one's whole self. Such knowledge, for Burt, is inherently beyond reason because as long as knowledge is limited to logical reason, even if it is knowledge of Hegel's Absolute, it will be limited knowledge.

Hegel's "root error," in this whole scheme, Burt contends, is that he adhered to the "presupposition that human existence can be contained in a logical concept" (ISPU, p. 62). This makes Hegel's scheme too abstract, that is, a logical abstract construction, and lacking in the concrete reality of existence. Instead Kierkegaard put forward the notion that "reality is essentially 'ethical reality'" (*ibid.*, p. 62). In this notion, reality is a "living process" intimately bound up with an individual's growth toward "moral selfhood." Reality changes as an individual progresses in moral growth which, in turn, is bound up with all aspects of his or her existence. This change in reality, moreover, is another way of understanding the theological notion of "salvation"—salvation is the experience of another reality.

Burt observes that a philosopher with "a social conscience" need not be "appalled" with, what at first sight may seem to be, the "intolerably self-centered" orientation of Kierkegaard's scheme (ISPU, p. 62). In what could be a justification for the self-examination intrinsic in his own theory of expanding awareness, Burt explains that when an individual undertakes the path of self-examination, as called for by Kierkegaard, one becomes aware of a "deep-seated self-centeredness" residing within one's own personality. It is this self-centeredness, which the "rational faculty has been

sedulously concealing,” that enslaves the individual into pursuing egoistic ends and is responsible for keeping one separated from other individuals and from God (*ibid.*). But when it is discovered and acknowledged the individual achieves salvation, that is, they begin to live in an “ethical reality” and experience their “authentic selfhood” (*ibid.*). Indeed, Kierkegaard “insists again and again that if one rejects the transcendent claim of this interest, one does not thereby become free from bondage; instead, one’s sinful egoism and incapacity for love are buried in the dark recesses of the soul, where liberation becomes more difficult” (*ibid.*).

An important question, however, for Kierkegaard was how to communicate this vision. But he decided to do this in an “indirect” manner as this would avoid the trap of appealing to thinkers’ reason (ISPU, p. 63). Only in this manner, Kierkegaard believed, would it be possible for people to find enough courage to “take a leap from the fragmented selves they now are to the new and unified selves they can become” (*ibid.*). Burttt observes that Kierkegaard’s “profound insight” is the notion that “life is basically a process of choosing and deciding, and that underlying all other choices is the choice of self” (*ibid.*, p. 64). Again we can draw parallels between Burttt’s reading of Kierkegaard and his own thought. He also seems to have found it difficult to communicate his vision of a universal and yet dynamic value, his notion of ultimate reality hidden in the mist on the horizon of human thought, and his notion of a human capacity of expanding awareness which could grasp ultimate reality.

In sum, Kierkegaard’s most significant contribution to philosophy involved “a set of keen analyses in the area of depth psychology, which became indispensable to later philosophical existentialism; and a restatement of Christian theology, which became an inspiring and fertile source of later theological existentialism” (ISPU, p. 63). Both these areas, again, were a focus of Burttt’s philosophical attention—although, rather than attempt a restatement of Western Christian theology, he attempts in his later thought, particularly in *Seeks the Divine*, to integrate both Eastern and Western notions of the divine.¹ His thought is thus a more general restatement of theology than is Kierkegaard’s.

Kierkegaard’s work, Burttt notes, was almost forgotten for two-thirds of a century. By the time he was rediscovered the ideas of Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and modern anthropologists, among others, were taken into account in restatements of the existentialist position. All of these offered a different perspective. Marx offered a

¹ Burttt explains in *Seeks the Divine* that he prefers to use the term “divine power” to describe the diverse people’s religious beliefs concerning God and the divine (*SD*, p. 28). After exploring these diverse beliefs in both the East and the West, he asks: “Do the variability and relativity of men’s ideas about the divine ... show that there is nothing *really* divine in the universe—that what we call ‘God’ is merely a projection onto the cosmos at large of our diverse subjective hopes and dreams? No, this conclusion does not follow; what does follow is that the reality of the divine is a far richer reality and its truth a far more inclusive truth than would be the case if man’s religious experience were limited to some single sectarian view” (*ibid.*, p. 523; Burttt’s italics).

“disconcerting historical analysis” which sought to demonstrate that economic interests dictated the way people think and the formation of social theories. Nietzsche’s “explosive” philosophy challenged “with devastating sarcasm, some of the rationalizations of previous philosophers and drawing the conclusion that what these thinkers announce as a quest for objective truth is a more or less disguised will-to-power” (ISPU, p. 65). Freud’s “revolutionary psychology,” brought about the development of an “intimate relationship between psychotherapy and existentialism” and introduced the notion that there are forces at work which determine human beliefs and which operate “below the level of the conscious mind” (*ibid.*). In addition, while generally known as the so-called “sociology of knowledge,” modern anthropology has sought to demonstrate that truth claims and values are relative to a particular culture (*ibid.*). The culmination of all these factors, Burt holds, can be found in the existentialist thought of Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre, and Marcel.

The Demarcation between Existentialism and Other Western Philosophies

There is a sharp demarcation, Burt contends, between existentialism and other Western philosophies, in particular the analytic movement.

[Existentialism] is not only intellectually unacceptable to opposing [Western] schools; it confounds and disturbs them. With each other, they can argue on some common ground; with the existentialist, no common ground seems available. We may think here especially of the analytic philosophers, who are on the whole more disturbed than others by the existentialist’s drastic departures from what they have confidently taken for granted. They feel nothing less than that the existentialist way of thinking corrupts philosophy—that by its very nature it exhibits a hopeless aberration from standards essential to all rational thought. (ISPU, p. 66)

Here Burt could be arguing for the demarcation that clearly separates his own orientation from that of analytic philosophers. As he states in his essay “The Philosophy of Man as All-Embracing Philosophy” (1971), his orientation is “vehemently rejected as a sad perversion of philosophy by all analysts with whom I am acquainted. They insist that every taint of what they would call ‘subjectivity’ should be left behind, not explicitly stated” (PMAP, p. 164). Indeed, in his entire discussion concerning the conflict between existentialism and the analytic orientation we can take it that Burt is speaking from, and defending, characteristics of his own presuppositions.

When confronted with criticism from the analysts, Burt notes that existentialists may base a defence of their orientation on the notion that their presuppositions are *existential* and that their arguments may only seem illogical because they are being judged by the presuppositions of other schools. He suggests that the existentialist thinker ought not be embarrassed in light of the analyst’s condemnation. Instead, “it is the analyst who ought to be embarrassed, because the existentialist is ... dealing with philosophical problems in a more inclusive perspective—a perspective which allows for everything that other philosophers are concerned about but gives it its truthful place in a

larger whole” (ISPU, p. 67). However, Burt identifies three “especially provocative” presuppositions of existentialism that, when explained, may render its orientation more understandable to analytic opponents.

Kierkegaard’s “shocking assertion” that “truth is subjectivity”¹ is a concise expression of the first presupposition. This does not mean that truth is being abandoned completely. It means that “the realm of objective truth falls within the dynamic totality of subjective truth, not vice versa” (ISPU, p. 67). That is, for the existentialist the source of objective truth claims, such as those made in science and mathematics, resides the deepest regions of the human self. “Here one’s thinking is completely existential; here truth must be individually realized” (ibid.). It follows that this subjective grasp of truth is inclusive of all other truths— otherwise how can it be explained why, as history shows, different so-called “objective” truth claims are made and then discarded in favor of a successor. The objective order has not changed. What has changed are the valuations that are ultimately responsible for these claims. Or, put another way, “objective” truth claims are merely a reflection of deeper subjective valuations (ibid.).

The Second Existentialist Presupposition and the Paradox of Conflicting Selves

The second presupposition, which we shall dwell on at length, is that no issue, no matter how subjective, in the experience of a person can be excluded from serious consideration. That is, when a thinker’s “logical net” fails to be able to explain inconsistencies in an individual’s experience, and which occur deep in the person’s self, these inconsistencies cannot simply be excluded from serious consideration (ISPU, pp. 67-8). This requirement, however, presents a dilemma. For a “human self ... proves to be a very complicated and paradoxical affair; [thus] perhaps we cannot avoid saying that each person is a single self and is also a plurality of more or less conflicting selves” (ibid., p. 68).

Burt’s purpose in raising this paradox, which we can call “the existentialist paradox of conflicting selves,” is to make existentialism intelligible to non-existentialist philosophers. In other words, he is attempting to explain what, on his own account, is beyond logical explanation. To assist this end he turns to the notion of “self-deception”² which we quote at length because it provides a succinct, and indeed dramatic, insight into his perception of the diverse selves at work in a human being.

How does ... self-deception take place? A philosopher is tempted to insist that the deceiving self and the deceived self cannot be identical, but it is very difficult to carry this explanation through successfully. Were it correct, there would be nothing that could naturally be described as *self*-deception. Moreover, when such instances are carefully observed, it seems obvious that in some sense the deceiving and the

¹ This assertion appears in Kierkegaard’s: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, (reproduced in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Walter Kaufmann, transl. & edit., op. cit., p. 110).

² Burt believes that Sartre’s chapter on “Bad Faith” in his book *Being and Nothingness* is valuable in gaining an understanding of this notion. He cites as his source: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, transl. by Hazel E. Barnes, (Philosophical Library, New York, 1956).

deceived self *are* the same. ...

I am far from claiming an adequate grasp of this puzzling phenomenon. However, we must try to draw the distinctions needed for an acceptable explanation, and something like the following picture might provide them:

In each of us there are many emotionally potent urges which may dominate thought and action. They often conflict with each other. But besides these there is a more or less effective striving toward a coherent unity of these clashing parts. This is the mature self in the process of becoming, but if it has not yet won a position of stable control it too may be in conflict with any of the lesser selves that have not accepted defeat. They are not in complete mastery, but whenever in the turbulent jockeying of our mental life one of them gains the upper hand, all clear vision of consequences which otherwise would stand out sharply fades away. What that dominant urge wants to see is seen, and what it does not want to see is brushed aside—although awareness of it is not entirely lost. One thus deceives himself; seduced by the prospect of an appealing good that can only be pursued by refusing to see the consequences, he wilfully turns his mind from them.

In the case of a philosopher the temptation to self-deception takes a special form, very hard to resist. This is to refuse to acknowledge the continued presence within him of selves that do not conform to the standards of his logical self, and their distorting influence on his ways of thinking. His image of himself is the image of a wholly rational mind—or a least of a mind able to become wholly rational at a moment's notice. Hence these irrational but potent pieces of himself are a serious threat to his self-esteem; the ever appealing way to meet the threat is to deny their presence, obvious though it is. (ISPU, pp. 68-9; Burt's italics)

While Burt strives to render existentialism intelligible to thinkers of other orientations, we may observe that many of the notions expressed above also permeate his theory of expanding awareness.

The paradox of conflicting selves is present as a psychological model in the whole of Burt's later thought. Scattered throughout, although the above quotation is its most succinct expression, are references to the "single self" and other selves such as the higher and lower self, the mature and immature self, the logical and illogical self, the universal and self-centered self. Secondly, although Burt does not reveal it, his notion of the capacity of expanding awareness is playing an important role in the above quotation. By its very nature this capacity stands outside human thinking and reason and acts to gain awareness of one's presuppositions, values, and emotional motivations. In the above passage it would be a capacity of the "mature self" and have the function of gaining knowledge of one's "emotionally potent urges" which are responsible for the "clashes" between "conflicting selves." For instance, where he argues, "What that dominant urge wants to see is seen, and what it does not want to see is brushed aside—although awareness of it is not entirely lost," it is the capacity of "awareness" which is overseeing the emotional fray. It is this capacity which is "striving" to integrate, or bring "a coherent unity," to the "clashing parts," or "lesser selves." Of course, put in the terms of his theory of expanding awareness, Burt would argue that philosophers could overcome the problem of self-deception through the practice of this theory. They would come to experience ultimate reality where, inherently, there could be no self-deception

because all aspects of the self would have merged and be one with Ultimate Reality.

Burt's solution to the existentialist paradox of conflicting selves, therefore, is to bring aspects of Eastern thought to bear. His notions of an Ultimate Reality and a universal self¹ in which diverse selves find unity, or self-realization, of course, are derived from the East.

The Third Existentialist Presupposition: Life a Process of Choices

Flowing from the second existentialist presupposition—and its paradox—is a third. Every individual in his or her daily experience of life makes a series of choices, but in doing so, Burt explains, one is “choosing between one self and another, each choice either leading or failing to lead toward true integrity” (ISPU, p. 69). This means that an existentialist author, recognizing this process of choice, will not aim “simply to clarify the ultimate choice that everyone is making but to entice each reader to make a wiser choice” (ibid.). That is, the existentialist writer encourages the reader to leave behind an “unauthentic mode of existence” in order that the “authentic self” may be realized (ibid.). This does not mean, however, that the existentialist has degraded philosophy into propaganda. Until readers break from the bondage that is inherent in a divided self, they cannot begin to appreciate the “dynamic universe” that the “quest for full selfhood will open” (ibid.).

In his raising this point we seem to have an explanation for Burt's own penchant to appeal to his readers to change. Indeed, immediately after raising it, he contends that the existentialist challenge for philosophers is: “Realize, now, that your future self may be different from your present self so far as concerns the ultimate presuppositions that constitute your philosophic mind; advance then toward that future self, in alert awareness of this process of living growth and of the momentous choice you are making!” (ISPU, p. 70). In fact, this is Burt's challenge to philosophers. It is another form of his urging philosophers to put into practice his theory of expanding awareness.

Burt's “Existential Dialectic”

Having identified the three important presuppositions of existentialism, Burt undertakes an appraisal of this philosophy to see if it is possible “to go beyond the horizon set by its presuppositions” (ISPU, p. 70). However, contrary to his approach in his critique of the analytic movement, in his view existentialism cannot be appraised in a purely critical manner. As he explains, when one attempts to grasp its “innate dialectic”—the stages of growth one experiences when one accepts the existential orientation—and, “since the dialectic is existential, the validity of any proposed description of its course cannot be tested by viewing it from outside, but only by living through it” (ISPU, pp. 70-71). (He may make this same claim, of course, in relation to any

¹ This is most clearly expressed in his concluding comments in *Philosophic Understanding* (ISPU, p. 314).

critique of his theory of expanding awareness: Other philosophers cannot test its validity by viewing it from outside. Instead, they must put it into practice in their own lives and then judge it.)

To begin, Burttt turns to Heidegger's conviction that we must face the void, the meaningless of life posed by death and renounce all our demands on the universe.¹ Heidegger, "absorbed in the ancient problem of the nature of Being," is sure that authentic selfhood, or the experience of true Being, can only be experienced after one recognizes and lives through the nothingness, the emptiness, encompassed in the certainty of one's death that "looms starkly ahead" (ISPU, p. 72). Burttt, noting that non-existentialist philosophers² have chided existentialists for their focus on death, observes that Heidegger's notion of "nothingness" has similarities to both Buddhism and Western mysticism. In the case of Buddhism there is the "void" and the entrance into "nirvana;" for the medieval mystic there is the "dark night" of the soul (*ibid.*, p. 73).

In an elaboration of the need for philosophers to face the inevitability of death, and making one of his many scattered assertions to his notion of expanding awareness, he argues:

The void in general and death in particular cannot be taken casually by a being with power of unlimited awareness. Indeed, a merely superficial acknowledgment that they are inevitable may betoken a strenuous need, which cannot succeed, to dodge their emotional impact. Death does pose the ultimate challenge to man. When it comes, will we still be attached to the things that it inevitably brings to an end? Or will we, by fully accepting the fact that our present ego must perish, have taken the first step toward another and wiser solution? (ISPU, p. 74)

In other words, as beings with the *unlimited*, or infinite, "power of awareness," we can expand our awareness past death itself—for death is but the perishing of the ego.

Burttt also reveals that in his scheme human beings may achieve immortality if, during this life, they make the transition from an egocentric personality to a self that identifies with the universal, that is, a self which identifies its ends and desires with those of all other human beings (ISPU, p. 314).³ Thus we can take it that "the first step toward another and wiser solution" is to begin to make this transition, that is, let go of egocentric attachments, before death. In Burttt's scheme, therefore, the capacity of expanding awareness, unlike we assume the faculty of reason to be, is an aspect of the human personality which transcends death and achieves immortality.

To throw light on the experience that occurs when one consciously makes the choice to face the dark abyss of death that "looms starkly ahead," Burttt turns to Sartre. In Burttt's view, Sartre has "astonishing skill at revealing the abysses of human emotion" that open when one "accepts the emptiness of death and the apparent

¹ Burttt refers his readers to Heidegger's *Was Ist Metaphysik?* (Frankfurt am Main, 1943). Also see Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, (transl. by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, Basil Blackwell ed., London, 1983)—particularly the section 53 "Existential Projection and Authentic Being-towards-Death," p. 304f.

² Burttt cites a critique by George Boas, *Journal of Philosophy*, (Vol. 53, November 8, 1956).

³ This notion is also central to Buddhism.

senselessness of life” (ISPU, p. 74). Sartre was convinced that self-deception was at the core of each person’s fear of death and the threat of meaningless that haunts human beings. Hence, individuals need to “penetrate to bedrock” the dark abysses of their self in order to remove any deception (ibid., p. 76). This journey to the depths of one’s being requires individuals to face their worst fears, vices, and character traits. If an individual makes the choice to undertake the journey of becoming free from self-deception, they eventually discover their authentic selfhood. The individual also discovers that the freedom thus won brings an insight into the social injustices which restrain the freedom of other individuals to set out on the same journey of self-realization. For in Sartre’s scheme we “achieve authentic selfhood in society, not in isolation” (ISPU, p. 78). Hence there is a responsibility on the part of those who have achieved this privileged insight to change the social structure and so “create a human community” that accords “independence and dignity” to each person (ISPU, p. 77).¹

However, there is a serious problem with Sartre’s notion of freedom and the responsibility that it entails. Contrary to how it may appear on the surface, there is a “less sociable note in [Sartre’s] conception of freedom, which reflects the long evolution of that conception in the West, with its emphasis on freedom *from* whatever blocks the satisfaction of an individual’s natural desires and aspirations. This emphasis accords with Sartre’s notion of absolute freedom and the way it inevitably finds expression” (ISPU, p. 78; Burt’s italics). Both the ontological and the moral meanings of freedom “converge in Sartre’s doctrine that man, as being for-himself, is not passive but has a capacity for active effort” (ibid.). The contradiction that arises with this notion, is that each individual is inherently driven to compete “aggressively” with other human beings in order to overcome the lack of absolute freedom (ibid.). Put another way, how can an individual ever achieve absolute freedom if they are always locked into a cycle of mutual rivalry with others striving for the same goal? To resolve this problem Burt introduces the notion of compassionate love.

Compassionate Love: The Key to Achieving the Wholeness of Selfhood

A serious defect in Sartre’s scheme, according to Burt, is that it denies any real power or value to the notion of “love.” In Sartre’s scheme, which holds that there is mutual rivalry between individuals, the experience of love is interpreted as a subtle form of control (ISPU, pp. 78-9). But, Burt asks, surely love can “transcend the attempt to possess and control others, [thus] becoming the true gift of self?” (ibid., p. 79). He finds support for an affirmative reply to this question in Gabriel Marcel’s argument that individuals can only experience fulfillment when they give themselves freely to all

¹ Burt clarifies that he is referring to themes that Sartre pursues in his earlier works, e.g., *Being and Nothingness*, (transl. by Hazel E. Barnes, op. cit.), and *Existentialism is a Humanism*, op. cit. (ISPU, p. 75fn.). The difference between his “earlier” works and “later” works Burt points out revolves around the contentious question of the influence of Marxism on Sartre’s later thought (ISPU, p. 74).

other individuals—a giving which Burt interprets as an exercise in compassionate love. In his view, it is Marcel's "genius as an existentialist to envision an ideal of freedom through which ... emotional isolation and anxious rivalry are overcome; this ideal reveals with simple clarity a quite different value [in human relationships] ... that can be realized without waiting for any large-scale social transformation" (*ibid.*). Marcel has thus captured the spirit of religious pioneers: He holds that a "compassionate love" for all human beings must be the key for moral perfection and the achieving of wholeness of selfhood (*ibid.*). Moreover, in this "creative experience Marcel has found the clue to a deeper existential understanding than Sartre seems to have envisioned" (*ibid.*, p. 80). The "dark passions" are not denied, but a person who gives fully of the self to others "discovers in doing so that the positive emotions of love, hope, fidelity, and joy are not crushed but rather awakened into full expression" (*ibid.*).

In his emphasis on Marcel's notion of love, we have a clear insight into Burt's own presuppositions at work. For, having introduced this notion of love, he digresses from his appraisal of the existential presuppositions and instead makes a series of assertions concerning "the redeeming power of love." This digression, it should be noted, throws important light on the notion of love as expressed in his theory of expanding awareness. As he explains:

We shall explore the experience that opens up when one follows [Marcel]. If he is right, one who enters that experience has accepted a world in which any imaginable wickedness can appear, but he has found in that world a freer and more hopeful relation to his fellows and a serener relation to ultimate reality than Sartre could discover. [Marcel] sees that world as part of a greater whole in which the otherwise appalling evil is overcome by good [and] ... intimates that our key to understanding here is the experience of love. (ISPU, pp. 80-81).

Burt contends that Mahatma Gandhi understood the nature of this "key" when he said that "true love present in a single person could neutralize the hate of millions. His meaning was that it is the very nature of love to accept a world in which all the forces of hate are at work and, just by being itself, to transform that world" (*ibid.*, p. 81).

This notion of true love in the West, says Burt, lies buried in the early Christian experience of love—an experience that has since been covered in layers of sectarian and theological dogma. In particular, these roots can be found in the Gospel of John, rather than in the three Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

The Synoptic Gospels, in their conception of God and his relation to man, belong with the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. God, besides being the creator of all things, is for them essentially the moral governor of the universe and the good Father in relation to men as His children. John's insight was that this conception is far from adequate; rather, what Jesus has disclosed at the Last Supper is the clue to the nature of God. And Jesus himself must have caught the essence of that vision, although its verbal expression, with him, probably remained in the form of parable and practical counsel. God is really a redeeming power, radiating everywhere in the universe and through all time the transforming love and sustaining hope that Jesus radiated in the limited temporal and geographical setting of his career. When this new insight was fully developed in the form of Christian doctrine it was no longer

necessary of think of Jesus as the promised Messiah. He must be the incarnation in human form of the infinite spirit of God, who has chosen to share the limitations and sufferings of men in order to awaken in them a responsive union with His boundless love. The celestial majesty and absolute self-sufficiency that were essential in the earlier idea of God are now implicitly renounced; God becomes one with man in order that man may become one with God. (ISPU, pp. 85-6)

In John's vision, love is freed from all restrictions; it becomes an unqualified openness to and compassionate concern for all persons without limit. In its restricted forms love for one person often spells hate toward another. This new insight brings the realization that if love fails to embrace all men it is not quite love in its full meaning. In the Johannine conception of God this insight takes dramatic and appealing form. (ISPU, p. 86)

Burttt observes that while John's insight was unique for the West, the East was "gaining the same insight at the same time in the Buddhist ideal of Bodhisattva" (*ibid.*, p. 86). This ideal holds that a worthy person ought to renounce their right to enter nirvana and instead continue to share in the suffering of other human beings for "the sake of the ultimate salvation of all" (*ibid.*).

"True love" for Burttt, therefore, is a boundless love which practices an unqualified openness toward, and compassionate concern for, all persons. Moreover, he asserts, love as thus defined and "expanding awareness intrinsically belong together" (ISPU, p. 86). This follows because the practice of both requires the acknowledgment and overcoming of "dark emotions" such as hate, fear, greed, and bitterness. In Burttt's view, just as for John in his Gospel, the "redeeming power of love is at work everywhere" bringing about the transformation of destructive passions (*ibid.*). He does allow, however, that even though the creative force of love is at work:

Evil and suffering do not disappear—in fact, they may take more appalling forms than before, and in our day we are grimly aware of this peril. But if *an orgy of nuclear devastation* should come, such a catastrophe would prove more vividly than ever where the path of *true existential realization* lies, and would reveal to all survivors the suicidal ruin that is the doom of those who forsake that path. In any case, whatever may befall, love is always absorbed, not in the dire occurrence of evil but in the creation of good in the midst of evil. (ISPU, p. 87; my italics)

Love in Burttt's scheme, therefore, is a creative force at work in human affairs which absorbs and transforms evil—even the evil arising from "an orgy of nuclear destruction." To encapsulate his meaning on this point, Burttt reveals the Quaker influence on his thought by quoting George Fox (1624-1691), the founder of this movement, thus: "The heart of this whole existential realization is stated very simply by George Fox, at the time when his youthful struggles were resolved and his searching became a finding: 'I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that I saw the infinite love of God'" (ISPU, pp. 87-8).¹

¹ Burttt cites the following source for this quote: Rufus M. Jones, *The Story of George Fox*, (Macmillan Company, New York, 1919, p. 17).

Love, Expanding Awareness, and Existential Realization

In Burt's mind, therefore, there is an intimate connection between "compassion," "expanding awareness," and "true existential realization." Thus, we can draw the conclusion that existential realization can be achieved by the exercise of the capacity of expanding awareness—although we can make this connection only due to our earlier examination of this theory. In the above connection that he makes between expanding awareness and love, Burt simply refers to the term "expanding awareness" and assumes its implications are known. But love is the force at work motivating human beings to undertake the journey toward the self-realization—a journey that is at the heart of both existentialist thought and his theory of expanding awareness. Put another way, expanding awareness is the human capacity which has the propensity to gain knowledge of unconscious presuppositions, valuations, and emotional motivations and love is a redeeming power, or metaphysical force, in the universe which prompts human beings to exercise this capacity.

Burt's expectation for this journey of self-realization, for philosophers at least, is that it not stop at the individual but that a world philosophy will develop from it. In his understanding such a philosophy would be a form of "universal existentialism." As he states, "my aim will be to clarify an existentialism that on the one hand would be *universal* and on the other unqualifiedly *dynamic*" (ISPU, p. 89; Burt's italics). By "universality" he means an existential perspective that is free from "encumbrances" such as "partisan obstructions and sectarian dogmas" (*ibid.*). These encumbrances are both religious and political. But, in his view, "the most obvious block [i.e., in 1965] to universality is an aggressive ideological commitment. The Marxist cannot see the values in free enterprise, which the course of history would be unwilling to surrender; the anti-Marxist cannot see the values that a socialist organization of society makes possible" (*ibid.*).

But even if such encumbrances are overcome, another obstacle may prevent it from becoming a fully dynamic existentialism. By "dynamic" he means that there would be a need for existentialist philosophers continually to question the validity of their basic presuppositions. As he explains, "An existential philosopher readily perceives the forces that entice other thinkers to regard their present presuppositions as assured dogmas, but ... finds it hard to recognize that the foundations of his own way of thinking are not absolute and will almost surely need revision" (ISPU, p. 92). For instance, religious dogmatism is still very pervasive, and ... would need to be overcome. ... Its characteristic form is familiar. Christian existentialists ... have almost unanimously maintained the traditional claim of their religion to exclusive truth. And when we place ourselves in the environment of early Christianity this conviction that only through Christ can men be saved is quite understandable. It did not express any animosity toward the religions of the East; it was a natural expression of the fact that spiritual rebirth was experienced by Christians through their whole-souled commitment to Christ, and in no other way. The religious cults with which they

were acquainted lacked something that seemed vital to this rebirth; and they were unaware of the way in which a similar spiritual renewal can and does take place in other religions. (ISPU, p. 89)

Before it can become fully dynamic, therefore, existentialism, like other philosophical orientations, must leave behind any of its own presuppositions that it takes to be absolute.

In sum, in his appraisal of the existentialist movement, Burt has found support for his own presuppositions but, at the same time, is concerned that existentialists do not question their existential basic presuppositions. That is, they presuppose that their orientation is correct in much the same way that analytic philosophers maintain that their analytic presuppositions are the path to truth. As a final example of his contention that different philosophies can be viewed as different sets of presuppositions, Burt turns to Marxism.

Marxism and Its Presuppositions

When one views Marxism “as a set of presuppositions generated in large measure by ... zealous motivation, both its grave weaknesses and its constructive promise come vividly into view” (ISPU, p. 96). Burt asserts that “Marxism itself has not escaped the unconscious process, exemplified in other philosophies, of disguising [the true implications of] its ideas” (ISPU, p. 96). For instance, one weakness in Marxism is that its doctrine gives rise to millenarian expectations on the part of its believers. The Marxist believes that people, through radical social change, will in the future be animated by an entirely “different cluster of motivations” (*ibid.*, p. 97). They hold as a presupposition that this change within a society would eliminate both the “urge for power” in its citizens and the exploitation of workers (*ibid.*). However, these problems do inevitably appear in a Marxist society and when they do, rather than question the presupposition underlying the issue, the Marxist is “driven either to deny them or to explain them in terms that obscure their persistent and perilous reality” (*ibid.*).

A second weakness, but by no means peculiar to Marxism, is its adherents’ “blithe and dogmatic self-righteousness” (ISPU, p. 97). The Marxist claims to have insight into “the self-deceptions and unconscious rationalizations of the defenders of capitalism, but finds it almost impossible to recognize his own” (*ibid.*). Marxists presuppose that only others, never themselves, can be deluded by their ideology; only Marxists know what is good for others. Once in power, and following “without scruple the maxim that the end justifies the means,” their “fanatical assurance” can result in the Marxist “being quite ruthless in sacrificing others as well as himself to the Communist cause” (*ibid.*). A third weakness is “directly caused by the intensity of the Marxist’s social passion” (*ibid.*). The Marxist, driven by “ardent emotion” attempts to fit “the vast tide of social evolution” into a conceptual framework that is limited by the problems of a particular culture and particular historical period. This framework is too narrow “an interpretative structure to

serve as a universal key to historical understanding” (ibid.). In short, when the tenets of Marxist doctrine are applied to “the kaleidoscope and rapidly changing facts of social life ... it quickly proves to be distorting simplification” (ibid.).

In light of these “grave weaknesses,” Burt argues that Marxism can only be taken seriously if it changes its core presuppositions. He offers the following suggestions for a new set of presuppositions for Marxism:

1. There is a dialectic of history, which works through dynamic social forces as well as through the forces in the individual recognized by existentialism. It is a dialectical movement because it inevitably involves conflict as well as collaboration, conflict being a necessary generator of the tension whose resolution spells progress.
2. The laws according to which these forces operate can be understood by the human mind, which thus puts itself in a position to direct them toward desirable ends. Indeed, understanding and action are not separable, as most theories of knowledge have assumed. ... The philosopher as well as the scientist not only interprets the world; in doing so he changes the world.
3. In the interplay of forces, which constitute the dialectical process, economic forces play a special role so long as man has to live in a scarcity economy. ... The economic relations thus arising profoundly influence all other phases of culture, including the moral, political and social ideals that at any time prevail. ...
4. The ideal goal toward which this historical process is moving, and which we can realize by intelligent action, is [a new society in which] class distinctions will have disappeared ... [and] by bold changes in our social institutions ... economic security can be assured for all, [and] equality between the sexes [and] races [can be achieved] ... (ISPU, p. 98-9)

If these four new presuppositions were adopted by Marxism, and they adopted a policy of non-violence, he contends, it would present “a view of human history that sees its dynamic panorama as essentially a gradual progress from the unjust evil of the past and present *toward the freely cooperative world community of the future*—a progress guided by the growing knowledge expressed in increasingly effective social action” (ISPU, pp. 97-8; my italics). In other words, Burt has fashioned the presuppositions of Marxism to suit his own vision of a future world community.

Psychological Causation and Claims to Truth

In thus appraising the presuppositions of the analytic, existentialist and Marxist philosophies, Burt clarifies that his choice of these three movements does not preclude other philosophies from consideration (ISPU, p. 93). He has chosen these three particular philosophies to demonstrate that the history of philosophy can be viewed as the history of presuppositions. Put another way, rather than view the history of philosophy as the history of ideas or of knowledge, Burt is viewing philosophy in terms of the presuppositions that are at work when philosophers make particular claims to knowledge. In taking this approach his goal is to establish the groundwork for a regeneration of philosophy which, in turn, would resolve the “malignant disease” of moral relativism.

In pursuit of this goal he is led to question *why* philosophers hold particular philosophical presuppositions. That is, why do some philosophers maintain that it is only the analytic orientation which permits valid truth-claims? After all, their particular presuppositions which, for example, preclude metaphysical or mystical knowledge claims from being taken seriously, are only part of long list of different presuppositions in the history of philosophy. Why does a Christian existentialist maintain as a fundamental presupposition the traditional claim of their religion to exclusive spiritual truth? Why do Marxists maintain that their “universal” understanding of history is the correct understanding when, in fact, it is based on a particular set of presuppositions that are relative to a particular culture and historical period?

Burt's answer to these questions is that philosophers always have an emotional motivation for maintaining particular presuppositions. Thus his focus of concern is

that of the relation between the cognitive adequacy of a basic presupposition and the motivating cause of its adoption. Neither ... can be neglected by a seeker for understanding. Now it is obvious that the two are not in intrinsic harmony; were that the case, all basic presuppositions, adopted by anyone at any time, would be true. On the other hand, they cannot be intrinsically divorced from each other. Were that the case, we would be condemned to perpetual falsehood in our ultimate convictions. How, then, do psychological causation [i.e., emotional motivations] and truth come harmoniously together when these convictions are concerned? (ISPU, p. 111)

This latter point, of course, is a core element in Burt's theory of expanding awareness in which he seeks to demonstrate, drawing on insights from psychoanalytic theory, that there is always a psychological causation behind claims to truth. But although we previously gained an overview of this theory, we can now observe in further detail how Burt applies its insights to specific philosophies and why he believes its application could lead to the regeneration of philosophy.

Presuppositions and Successive Philosophic Movements

The key to understanding the connection between basic presuppositions and the motivations that philosophers have for holding them, in Burt's view, lies in understanding why, historically, changes have occurred in relation to philosophical movements. As he explains, when one philosophical movement, or school, is succeeded by another, a process occurs whereby “certain presuppositions are preserved through the change while others are abandoned and replaced by different ones. Such a pattern of continuity and difference is clearly revealed by a formal comparison of the earlier and later sets of presuppositions (ISPU, p. 100). For example, the history of analytic philosophy reveals that four important presuppositions remained unchanged, as it progressed from the early realists, through positivism to the philosophy of ordinary language.

One is the conviction that the major task of philosophy is the analysis of propositions or statements to discover what they mean. Another is the assumption that the purpose behind this analysis is to replace confusing or misleading statements by ones that are clear and communicate successfully. A third is the

insistence that any such analysis is a “logical” achievement. All these schools held that their analyses are valid independently of any appeal to the observable facts to which the statements analyzed appeal; and this makes them logical analyses. A fourth is the acceptance of a thoroughgoing pluralism in their view of the world and of statements about it; all reject that it is the duty of philosophy to erect a monistic [metaphysical] system. (ISPU, p. 100)

The presuppositions that were abandoned and replaced in the course of the succession of analytic schools are those that we identified in Burt's earlier appraisal.

These changes occur, in Burt's view, because a philosopher is never a “mere intellect” (ISPU, p. 102). Instead a thinker always undertakes a philosophical enquiry as a “full person” which means that emotional motivations are at work when the thinker moves from one set of presuppositions to another. To support this contention, he turns to the changes in that have occurred in the analytic movement during the twentieth century and identifies three stages in its “peculiar evolutionary pattern” (ibid., p. 103).

The Three Stages in the Evolution of a New Philosophic Orientation

The first stage¹ involves adherents of a new philosophical orientation making “bold assertions of the position they have adopted without realizing its limitations or embarrassments” (ISPU, p. 103). Any criticism of their new insight is rejected out of hand. The positivists, inspired by Wittgenstein, provide an illustration of such rejection.

At first, in the mid nineteen-twenties [at the same time Burt published *Metaphysical Foundations* as a critique of positivism], its basic doctrine was unhesitatingly stated by the leaders of the Vienna Circle in essentially this form: The meaning of a proposition consists in the experiences by which it can be verified or disproved. Critics soon pounced on the crucial phrase at the end of this slogan; certain natural ways of construing it, they pointed out, would make the doctrine quite unacceptable. Is any proposition verifiable, in strict accuracy, except one describing a presently observable fact? For if time is needed for the verification, how be sure that during that time no change has taken place in the fact? If this is the case, far too many propositions that seriously concern thinkers become meaningless. (ISPU, p. 103)

However, the positivists for some time chose to ignore such criticisms. They believed that the validity of their doctrine was self-evident (ibid.). In other words, they were maintaining a doctrine which discounted any knowledge that could not be falsified or verified and yet their doctrine itself had to be taken as a belief that it was beyond question and criticism.

The second stage arises when adherents of a new philosophical orientation do begin to take account of criticism. In the case of positivism, its adherents began to accept the need to clarify and defend its basic doctrine. For if opponents took this doctrine to mean something which was not originally intended, then its meaning needed further clarification. For instance, the positivists attempted to justify their position by distinguishing “between ‘direct verifiability and ‘verifiability in principle,’ between

¹Burt also addresses this issue in his essay entitled “World Perspectives in Philosophy, Religion, and Culture, “ (1968, see Bibliography A).

verifiability in the present and verifiability in the future through techniques not now available, and finally between 'empirical' and 'logical' verifiability' (ISPU, pp. 103-4).

The third and final stage is reached when, in the light of continuing criticism, the defenders of the new orientation attempt to reconcile their justifications with their original doctrine. However, when this occurs the original doctrine may itself be changed to such an extent that it loses its coherence to sustain the focus of the new movement. In the case of positivism, Wittgenstein himself lost faith with its initial claims and turned his attention to the philosophy of ordinary language viewpoint. Thus, positivism was "jostled off the center of the stage in Britain and America" and the ordinary language movement rose to prominence (ISPU, p. 104).

Powerful Emotional Forces Resist Changes in Presuppositions

Given the rise and fall of philosophical movements, Burt asks why it takes philosophers so long to change their initial presuppositions in the face of valid criticism from opponents. The reason for such resistance, he contends, must lie in a strong emotional "longing and demand" for security that is found in familiar ideas, habits, and institutions (ibid., pp. 105-6).¹ However, the hold that this emotion has over basic presuppositions is weakened in the face of valid criticism and, only then, are alternative ideas taken seriously (ISPU, p. 105; see also p. 109). The outcome is a shift in basic presuppositions.

Look again at the rapid shifts in the present century from one set of presuppositions to another. Not only have British and American philosophers watched two instances of this kind of revolution in their lifetime; many of them have also participated in at least one of those shifts themselves. Some who began their career as realists became positivists after a few years, and a larger number who began as positivists became ordinary language philosophers. (ISPU, p. 107)

Thus, despite typical disclaimers by philosophers who insist that reasoning must not be influenced by personal emotions and predilections, there is an intrinsic connection between a presupposition we hold and an emotion. This usually unconscious, emotional factor can be seen whenever we seek to defend, or cling to, a familiar idea that is under threat.

To throw further light on the interaction between emotional motivations and presuppositions, Burt proffers two illustrations. Firstly, if one maintains as a "dominant" motive the "longing that the universe fulfil our moral aspirations," then a thinker will presuppose, or believe, the universe to be "a teleological order—of which philosophy and theology have seen many examples" (ISPU, p. 137). On the other hand, if one maintains as a dominant motive "the desire to anticipate and control future events" then the thinker will presuppose, or believe in, "a predictive order of causal conditions

¹ As an illustration of this factor at work in philosophy Burt cites F. H. Bradley's (1846-1924) *Appearance and Reality*, (London, 1899), pp. 518f.; Bertrand Russell's *Scientific Method in Philosophy*, (Oxford Univ. Press, New York, 1914) p. 54; Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, op. cit., p. 29.

and consequences like that of modern science” (ibid.). In both cases an emotional motivation is at work leading thinkers to defend their belief, or presupposition, while, all along, they may be unconscious of the motivation. Of course, a prime example of this factor at work, as Burttt details in *Metaphysical Foundations*, was the reluctance on the part of many early moderns to let go of the security of the ancient and medieval hierarchical world view. Unfortunately, however, in the nuclear age the defence of ideas or ideologies has been carried to the extreme. As Burttt argues, again revealing the extent to which the threat of nuclear annihilation influenced his later thought, the “essential reason for the ominous peril of the fierce international conflicts today [1965] is that ... [the] extreme partisans in both East and West” are driven by unconscious motives which, in turn, underlie the presuppositions of their ideologies (ISPU, p. 133).

The Reconstruction of Presuppositions to Become a Conscious Quest

Given the undoubted fact that philosophers have moved from one set of presuppositions to another, Burttt’s project for a philosophic regeneration is to ensure “the reconstruction of basic presuppositions becomes a conscious and systematic quest” for philosophers—in preference to the shifts that have occurred from time to time due to external factors (ISPU, p. 137). This process could occur consciously, Burttt asserts, if philosophers periodically questioned the content of their presuppositions and also located the “motives expressed in their adoption” (ibid., p. 138). Or, put another way, philosophers would to “seek to uncover any motives ... that conflict with truthfulness; in that case they will become the objects of awareness first” (ibid.). If this motive is changed, “the reconstruction of the presuppositional content will follow and be guided by new emotional awareness” (ibid.).

Furthermore, it is precisely because of the immediate foregoing assertions, and other similar ones scattered throughout Burttt’s late thought, that we undertook our prior examination of his theory of expanding awareness. For such assertions may leave a reader puzzled because he gives no indication what criterion would be utilized to judge whether or not a presupposition or motive conflicts with “truthfulness.” He defines “truthfulness” as “the aspiration for cognitive integrity” (ibid., p. 134). Yet this definition again begs the question. What criterion is the court of appeal for “cognitive integrity?” On Burttt’s own account all thinking and theories of reason are inherently relative. However, because we have pieced together his theory of expanding awareness, we know that he brings to this discussion his own important presupposition, namely, that humans have an innate power by exercising their faculty of expanding awareness to judge the validity of presuppositions and motives. In this scheme, such judging is being carried out in the light of ultimate reality. Because Burttt does not definitively reveal at this point that this presupposition is at work in his own thinking we can only assume that he himself was unconscious of the full extent of its influence. In any event, we shall

continue to pursue in greater detail how, in Burt's view, philosophers could use their capacity of expanding awareness to reconstruct their basic presuppositions and identify their motives.

Two Philosophic Controversies and the Role of Unconscious Motivations

Due to the important role that the unconscious mind plays in his scheme of reconstruction of presuppositions, Burt elaborates upon the difficulty that philosophers have in coming to terms with their unconscious motivations. To demonstrate how these motivations dominate and restrict their thinking he turns to two philosophical controversies. The first is an argument that was "hotly debated" between analytic realists and idealists in the early part of the twentieth century over the meaning of the concept "relation."

What is a "relation"? ... Here is an important relation—say, between root and the trunk of a living tree. There is sharp disagreement as to what its essence is. The idealist is impressed by the fact that the two entities are conjoined in a single organism, which as such possesses a distinctive character. He holds that the relation "synthesizes" them into that organic totality; it is therefore a "unifying ground" in virtue of which they constitute a systematic whole. The realist notices these same things, but he interprets them otherwise. His basic concern is an accurate analysis of the complex situation thus presented—that is, a careful description of each of the elements and connections involved. When that is accomplished, he regards his job as done. He means by "relation" merely a distinguishable link of some kind disclosed by descriptive analysis of the facts. (ISPU, p. 138)

Moreover, if we take it that Burt's above description of the idealist orientation, particularly concerning the notion of an "organic totality," is accurate, then on his own account he is an idealist. For, in the conclusion to *Philosophic Understanding*, he posits the notion that "it might appear that the entire career of man on this planet is the life of a cell in some larger organic whole, giving its unique bit ... toward the fulfillment of that whole" (ibid., p. 314).

The second controversy concerns the conflict between thinkers, such as James B. Pratt (1875-1945), who maintain that consciousness exists and those, such as J. B. Watson (1878-1958), who maintain a behavioristic orientation. The latter orientation, Burt points out, has had several different interpretations. However, its central thrust is the notion that the mental life of humans can be analyzed by observing the "facts" arising from the behavior of individuals. By contrast, thinkers—such as Burt himself—opposed to this view maintain that behaviorism is "palpably inadequate" to explain the facts of mental life. An adequate explanation will, in their view, require the notion of consciousness (ISPU, p. 139). Burt's own opposition to behaviorism can be traced to his Conclusion in *Metaphysical Foundations* where he argues that the "facts" taken seriously by behaviorism and science generally only take on their meaning as "facts" due to the prior existence of the "knowing activity of the mind," that is, prior existence of consciousness (MF, pp. 322-3). Both these controversies, however, reached an impasse and were never resolved. To this day there is an ongoing controversy as to whether or

not “consciousness exists.”¹

Philosophical Conflicts and Different Perceptions of “Facts”

One reason for the failure to resolve the above and other philosophical conflicts, in Burt's view, lies in the different criteria that are used for “deciding what is a fact and what is not” (ISPU, p. 139). This occurs because opposing philosophies are inherently driven by a “distinctive controlling motive or [dominant] interest” and hence their basic presuppositions, their mental spectacles, will perceive “facts” differently.

In the first controversy the idealist is saying in effect: Look for an inclusive synthesis; that is what is important. The realist [or analyst] is saying: Engage in a thorough dissecting analysis; that is always worth accomplishing. And nothing stands in the way of following either proposal. The realist's aggregate of terms and their linkages can always assume some sort of organic unity for the idealist. The latter's systematic whole never forbids the detailed dissection of the realist, and under it becomes a pattern of elements in whatever specific connections are found. ... As a result, the realist's atomic entities have no factual character for the idealist, since they are absent from his universe, nor do the idealist's unifying syntheses seem to be facts to the realist. Unless something happens to modify their dominant interest, neither will perceive the distinctive realities perceived by the other. (ISPU, p. 139)

In the second controversy, behaviorists will treat seriously only those “facts about mind” which can be explored in the “publicly observable realm” (*ibid.*, p. 140).

This being so, behaviorists ignore the truism that these “public facts” only take on meaning in secret in the private space of the mind. That is, they are oblivious to the existence of the basic presuppositions and motives which reside in the mind and are secretly at work judging what “facts” are permitted to constitute reality. Hence, behaviorists will not, or more appropriately inherently cannot, permit their basic presuppositions to be contested—they are inaccessible behind a veil that separates the public observable realm from the subjective, private realm of the mind (ISPU, p. 140). On the other hand, an opponent to behaviorism, such as a subjective idealist, may treat behavior seriously and, at the same time, argue that the private realm of consciousness, which is open only to subjective observation, plays a crucial role in any decision concerning the facts which constitute reality (*ibid.*). But so long as both opponents implacably maintain their orientation the impasse will persist. The opponents will continue to hold motives and presuppositions that are never open to “defeat”, that is, are never open to question and possible replacement (*ibid.*; also p. 141).

To break this impasse, Burt proffers a “twofold thesis:”

(1) Each of the contending [above four philosophies, idealism, realism, behaviorism, subjective idealism], has already committed itself to a distinctive controlling motive or interest, and (2) in all cases that interest is such that it can never be defeated by any observable fact. Hence its champions always find what they are looking for; and their dominant interest can be permanently maintained.

¹ See for instance: Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, (Penguin Books, London, New York, Melbourne, 1991); Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, [1988] (M.I.T. Press, Mass. & London, 1990).

(ISPU, p. 139)

Secondly, in support of this thesis, we need to take into account that:

[1] the decisive role in the dynamic relation between motive and presupposition is always played by the [emotional] motive.

[2] Adoption of ... a presupposition is the effect of the rise to a dominant position of the appropriate motive; and any change in the presupposition would be preceded by a change in the motive.

[3] If [2] ... is true without qualification, then even when awareness of alternatives to a presupposition previously taken for granted appears to come first, a shift in the underlying valuation has already taken place and could be detected were one consciously alert to the occurrence of such a shift.

[4] Each ... [contending philosophy] is convinced that its criterion [for deciding what is a fact] is universally applicable ... (ISPU, p. 140; my brackets)

This “twofold thesis,” of course, includes central elements of Burt’s theory of expanding awareness, such as the relationship between presuppositions, emotional motivations, and valuations, and represents an example of his application of this theory to philosophy. At this point, however, he gives no hint that he is preparing philosophers to be open to an “inexhaustible flood tide of awareness.” Instead, he is preparing philosophers to be open to reconstructing their presuppositions—which, of course, we know is the first step along the path leading to the “inexhaustible flood tide of awareness.”

In sum, at the core of ongoing conflicts between philosophers, in Burt’s view, are the different presuppositions, motivations, and valuations, usually held unconsciously, that they bring to any interpretation of facts. As a result, they cannot agree on what is and what is not a fact. The dilemma is that, so long as this situation continues, philosophers can see no reason to instigate a “shift” in their basic presuppositions or, in other words, reconstruct their presuppositions (ISPU, p. 143).

The Reconstruction of Presuppositions

Burt is striving to prepare philosophers to adopt an attitude of “unqualified readiness to make the most of every available set of presuppositions while never allowing oneself to be imprisoned ... [by any one set]” (ibid., p. 144). He asks: “Why not welcome continuing revolution in our philosophical presuppositions as a natural and normal process, to be fostered under conscious guidance—taking it for granted that no matter how satisfying or successful our present presuppositions seem to be, they are always capable of being replaced by a more adequate conceptual scheme?” (ibid., p. 145). In short, if this process of reconstruction of presuppositions could be achieved it would ensure, not just a regeneration of philosophy, but a continuous philosophic revolution.

However, Burt himself asks, what indication do we have that the outcome of the process of reconstructing presuppositions would lead to the development of “a better, not just another, set of presuppositions?” (ISPU, p. 145). That is, in what sense would it be

philosophic “progress?” He defines his meaning of the concept “progress” thus:

Progress, at the deep level with which are concerned, does not consist in gradually coming closer to a defined goal, but rather in continued improvement at whatever stage and in whatever setting is now present. But faith in it and commitment to its achievement imply an unqualifiedly dynamic orientation toward the universe and everything in it—an orientation that acknowledges the ubiquity of change and is always ready to make constructive use of the opportunities change brings. (ISPU, p. 150)

Put another way, philosophic progress is achieved by the extent to which a set of presuppositions is responsive to the changes that inevitably do occur in reality. Moreover, for this notion of progress to occur, the philosopher’s “mind becomes an *active crucible* in which all conceivable ways of interpreting the universe can be envisioned, articulated, and compared” (ibid., p. 152; my italics).

These assertions, of course, raise several questions. For instance, by what process does the mind, this “active crucible,” distil its knowledge? How does it “know” what is, and what is not, truth? How does the goal of “an unqualifiedly dynamic orientation,” an amorphous and nebulous orientation, sustain any meaningful knowledge claims?

But these are precisely the questions that Burttt wants us to raise. He himself observes that thinkers may argue that it is “quite fantastic to suppose that people can achieve such flexibility” (ibid.). Thinkers may argue that the tentacles of habit, tradition and reliance on an external authority, would keep all but a few adventurous intellectuals locked into a set of presuppositions which, for them, represent security. Indeed, he asserts, “most intellectuals have succumbed to this tendency along with others” and persist in clinging to their “present presuppositions and to the self of which they form the core” (ibid.). Clearly, he adds, the “forces of lethargy, tradition, and conservatism are very powerful” (ibid.).

But how to break this nexus of restrictive forces? Burttt’s solution is to make another series of assertions—which, again, if we had not taken prior account of his theory of expanding awareness would perhaps leave us no further enlightened on how this nexus of forces could be overcome.

Innate in man is a power of expanding awareness, of himself and his world; he has a wish to know the truth and to realize the conditions of dependable well-being in reality as it is. His fear of losing the cozy moorings of his present presuppositions, and his longings of his present presuppositions, and his longing for the transitory satisfactions they assure despite their conflict with reality, are not the whole of his makeup. Because of this innate power, the long-run advantage is on the side of truth. No matter how intense any given motive may be, or how appealing the presuppositions that express it [logically], if they are incompatible with reality man can become aware of that fact and revise them accordingly. (ISPU, p. 155)

In short, Burttt’s solution is that the *innate power of expanding awareness*, in the long-run, is weighing motives and presuppositions against the truth that is encompassed in reality. This assertion may remind us of Socrates’ conviction expressed at the conclusion of Plato’s *Gorgias*: “Let us then allow ourselves to be led by the truth ... let

us follow that way and urge others to follow it” (Plato, *Gorgias*, Penguin, (1981), p. 149).

An immediate objection to Burt’s approach may be that he cannot have it both ways. If reality itself is never more than a construction of “facts” based on particular presuppositions and motives, surely it cannot be the criterion which decides the compatibility or otherwise of presuppositions and motives? Surely his scheme involves a vicious circularity? But, again, Burt has anticipated this objection and introduces the notion of a “human growth-point” to resolve it.

Dynamic Reality and the “Human Growth-Point”

Firstly, Burt clarifies: “Viewed as a whole, reality cannot be less than the all-inclusive process in which new criteria of fact—and of form and value as well—arise, remold our experience, and pass away in favor of their successors” (ISPU, p. 232). Thus,

reality is always reality from the human standpoint, or rather to invent a word that accentuates its dynamic character—reality from the human “growth-point.” When we seek to know what is real we are seeking nothing that can be separated from the dynamic experience of man—from the widening sphere in which perception by human faculties, articulation by human thought, and communication by human speech are possible. If one allows himself to suppose the contrary, what actually happens is that he erects some limited human perspective into an illegitimate and illusory absolute. (ISPU, p. 232)

Moreover, Burt states adamantly, this “human growth-point” inherently presents reality as a “moving horizon” (*ibid.*, p. 233). Indeed, the category of reality “is unique in that it is never definitely clarified in the sense in which other criteria can be; *it is always emerging from the mist and never fully emerges*. It has no distinct form itself, for it is that in relation to which other basic concepts take form, gain definition, and in course of time are revised” (*ibid.*, p. 247; my italics).

Once again, however, these assertions may appear to beg the initial question. The notion of reality as a “moving horizon” and “always emerging from the mist but never fully emerging,” would seem to preclude it from pausing long enough, or gaining sufficient form, to enable the evaluation of the presuppositions and motives which, according to Burt’s scheme, constitute it. However, what he does not reveal, but of which we have prior knowledge due our study of his theory of expanding awareness, is that Burt himself is maintaining an “absolute,” or “ultimate,” presupposition, namely, the notion of an Ultimate Reality. This is a crucial point. He is presupposing the notion of an Ultimate Reality, gained from the East, which, by its very nature, *is* an objective, non-moving, vantage point against which the presuppositions on the moving horizon of human experience can be weighed. It is also a superrational form of knowledge that is beyond reason and beyond logical expression. Moreover, it is by maintaining this ultimate presupposition that Burt’s dynamic orientation does not fall into the very moral relativism and nihilism from which he is trying to escape.

In his quest to bring about a regeneration of philosophy, Burt has brought psychoanalytic theory to bear by arguing the need for thinkers to take account of their

unconscious presuppositions and emotional motives. If this approach is taken, Burt states emphatically:

It may be that a generation of philosophers in the not too distant future will say: "What a tragically impoverishing mistake it was to try to shut out from philosophic awareness—as we did for so long—the stupendous currents of emotional energy flowing in each of us, inevitably present in all our thinking and especially in our basic presuppositions! We saw in them only a sinister threat to our pursuit of truth, so we desperately avoided looking at them; we did not see that they can and must become its effective servant." (ISPU, p. 127)

This passage encapsulates the heart of Burt's mature philosophical position. He is urging philosophers to apply his theory of expanding awareness in the pursuit of philosophic truth and the regeneration of philosophy.

Burt's goal is for philosophers to adopt a "radically dynamic orientation" and become "active crucibles" to pioneer new ways of perceiving reality. The driving motivation behind his later thought is to encourage philosophers to develop the metaphysical foundations for a world philosophy which would, in turn, underpin a world community and so avert nuclear annihilation.

Chapter 8

Metaphysics, Love, and the Future World Community

The Task of Metaphysics

The task of metaphysics, Burttt argues in *Philosophic Understanding* (1965), is to interpret reality in order to ensure the continued progress in “all the varied aspects of human culture and to enlighten it by achieving the most comprehensive attainable vision ... to the end that ... may make the maximum contribution ... to the enrichment of human experience” (ISPU, p. 248). Metaphysics thus represents “the supreme exercise of our power of adventurous [philosophic] searching. It fills the unique role of bringing the wholeness [of reality that is] beyond the horizon within the horizon” (ibid., p. 249). This “adventurous searching” requires the metaphysician “to capture with systematic understanding what [a poetic or religious] seer leaves as inspired intuition” (ibid., p. 233). That is, while the seer intuitively glimpses new visions of reality that fleetingly emerge from the mists on the horizon of human experience, the metaphysician’s task is to attempt to interpret and give rational meaning to such visions. Burttt uses the term “vision” to identify the stage at which a *possible*, and hence “visionary,” new universe is glimpsed by a metaphysician but has not yet become an objective or actual reality (ibid.).

The role of the metaphysician is thus to provide a rational “map” which others can follow both as a guide on their journey through their present reality and to prepare them for other realities appearing on the horizon of human experience (ISPU, p. 233). This role, moreover, is “intrinsically continuous;” “before any given map of reality has fully served its purpose, thinkers will be venturing beyond its confines, guided by some new insight. The moving horizon thus revealed is the growing-point of human experience as it seeks rational interpretation; for that reason the category of reality can never be wholly freed from vagueness and ambiguity” (ibid.). Huston Smith, writing some years after Burttt, gives the following definition of “metaphysics” in *Beyond the Postmodern Mind* [1982] (1989) which would seem to convey succinctly what Burttt means by this notion of metaphysics providing a “rational map.”

By “metaphysics” I mean a worldview that provides a sense of orientation. The word “world” denotes inclusiveness: the view in question purports to embrace everything, including regions of being that are presumed to exist without their nature being known. The word “view” establishes an intentional analogy with eyesight: the landscape that metaphysics opens onto and spreads before the mind’s eye is a topography, a lay of the land. If we shift our attention from the topography itself to the map of it, we see it as a “mattering map,” a map that shows what matters [T]he third pivotal word in our definition, namely orientation ... always includes a sense of what is important and what is not [on the map]: what we should emphasize and move towards and what we should avoid. The analogy with sight also notes that metaphysics is important. If it is difficult to walk the physical world

while blindfolded, it is equally difficult to walk through life if “the eye of the soul” is closed. (Huston Smith, [1982] 1989, pp. 18-19)

Smith comments that modern philosophers have lost their orientation because they have closed their “eye of the soul” in renouncing “what historically had been philosophy’s central citadel, metaphysics” (ibid., p. 136). Burt, of course, would strongly endorse this comment by Smith.

In any event, Burt, in advancing such an argument in the mid 1960s, is advocating a speculative metaphysics at a time when the majority of his contemporaries were adherents of the analytic movement and strongly opposed to such notions.¹ At this time Burt was president of the Eastern Division of the APA and, being acutely aware of such opposition, took the occasion of his Presidential Address in 1964 to address the issue.

Is there any place today for speculative philosophy ...? In [past eras] the word “speculative” had no such pejorative associations as it has now gathered The Latin root of the word carries the innocent and instructive meaning of “watching affairs from a high distance or from a protected location.” ... Nonetheless, the pejorative associations have come, and I should not be surprised if a goodly majority of those present have already answered my question with an emphatic “No! There is no place any more for speculative philosophy.” Behind that emphatic “No!,” [which is a valuation] if I am not mistaken, there would not only be the belief [i.e., the basic presupposition] that speculation as practiced in the past is dormant in our part of the world, and should be; there would also, I suspect, be the confident feeling [i.e., the emotional factor associated with the presupposition and valuation] that any way of thinking that could be called “speculative” must in the nature of the case fail to measure up to standards essential to responsible philosophizing. (TUP, p. 5)

In this speech Burt goes on to raise briefly some of the issues that he treats at length in *Philosophic Understanding*—which was to be published only a few months later. In general terms, he asks his analytic colleagues to identify the underlying presuppositions and valuations at work in their rejection of speculative philosophy with the expectation that, if they did so, they would perhaps broaden their narrow perspective and thus take account of a wider reality than their present presuppositions allow. In thus addressing his colleagues we are reminded of Burt giving a sermon in the pulpit at St Paul’s and it may well be that he irritated his colleagues by his suggestions on how they could reform their method of philosophic enquiry.

There is, however, more than a passing connection between the Reverend Burt’s St Paul’s sermon in 1920 and Professor Burt’s Presidential Address in 1964. In both situations he is concerned with the problem of how to respond to the realities of war. In

¹ As W. H. Werkmeister, in his 1964 Presidential Address to the Pacific Division of The American Philosophical Association (APA), observes: “Admittedly ours is not an age of metaphysics. It is not a period when philosophy is dominated by the system-builder and the speculative constructionist. ... Metaphysical statements ... are [taken to be] but expressions of feelings, of wishful thinking, of unconscious needs, desires, and fantasies, and therefore not true of Reality. The statements may be profoundly important to the individual who makes them and believes them, but they have no objective reference. They are not knowledge.” (Werkmeister, W. H., *Proceedings and Addresses of The American Philosophical Association*, 1964-65, Vol. 38, October, 1965, p. 37).

the 1920 he was concerned with the aftermath of the First World War. In 1964 he was concerned with the Cold War. Moreover, in both occasions he was concerned with the notion of a transnational community juxtaposed against the potential ruin of civilization. To grasp the significance of this issue we can turn to a question he asks in his sermon at St Paul's:

[Does] the truth change because we have changed? No, not in a world which is held in the hands of a just, righteous and loving God. It remains true that the world must move toward international brotherhood—ruin is the only alternative. It remains true that there can be no reign of law throughout the earth without some sacrifice of national independence, much empty chattering to the contrary notwithstanding. (See Appendix A for Burt's full sermon as published in *The World*)

This quotation comes from the section of the sermon that *The World* put under the heading "The Truth Cannot Change"—which is significant given Burt's commitment in his later thought to the notion of Ultimate Reality. This latter notion inherently encompasses an understanding of truth or knowledge that is beyond change. We can hear Burt preaching in 1920 of the need for an "international brotherhood" with "ruin the only alternative" and in 1964 arguing the need for a world community with nuclear annihilation the only alternative.

The Cold War and the Need for a World Community

When Burt was writing *Philosophic Understanding* in the mid 1960s one of the emerging realities on the horizon of human experience that deeply troubled him was the possible extinction¹ of the human species in a worldwide nuclear conflagration arising from the tense Cold War situation. As he comments, while World Wars are "the sobering destiny of our century," so long as nuclear weapons of "more and more lethal power are invented and used" human beings have the potential to bring about the destruction of "the whole of civilization and even of the human race" (ISPU, p. 282).² Faced with this historically "unprecedented scene" and "momentous stakes," he asks, "can a philosophic orientation contribute to our understanding, helping people to learn how to live in this era?" (ISPU, p. 279). Without pausing to ponder various possible answers, he adds: "Can it play a part in guiding *the creation of the world community*?" (ibid.; my italics). Clearly, Burt presupposes that the creation of a world community is the only possible solution to this "unprecedented" potential reality.³

Lying at the core of this "unprecedented" problem, in Burt's view, is the fact that

¹ In *The Human Journey* (1981) Burt specifically uses the term "extinction" in reference to the notion of nuclear annihilation (HJ, pp. 174-5).

² Physicist Freeman Dyson in *Weapons and Hope* (1984), argues that it is possible that the human species could become extinct if several nuclear wars are fought (p. 22f). Jonathon Schell in *Fate of the Earth* (1982), argues that: "Strange as it may seem, we may have to teach ourselves to think about extinction in a meaningful way" (p. 139). Both of these works, of course, were published some twenty years after Burt's *Philosophic Understanding*.

³ Burt points out that it is not only the threat of nuclear annihilation that needs to be countered by the formation of a world community. Other problems such as the population explosion and the increased tensions between the developed and undeveloped world are looming on the horizon (ISPU, p. 293).

modern human beings have not come to terms with their own deep turbulent and destructive emotions. As he states, contemporary human beings may yearn “for some cosmic guarantee that the human race will avoid the threatened catastrophe. But how can there be any such guarantee? Man is always hurtling forward into the unknown; and the unknown includes the outcome generated by his turbulent and frustrated emotions as well as the destiny to which the generative processes of physical nature are leading” (ISPU, p. 295). In earlier epochs, he explains, human beings may have experienced insecurity in their relations both with physical nature and with surrounding tribes. Modern humans, however, may have learnt to feel secure, and even to control, their relations with physical nature but they still maintain a tribal warfare mentality, it has global implications (*ibid.*, p. 282f). The development of nuclear weapons epitomizes the human control of physical nature: it harnesses the energy *within* an atom. The political implication of this development is that “in the nuclear age the unit of survival is no longer the nation, nor even a limited alliance of nations; it is the human race as a whole, which will now either live or die together” (*ibid.*, p. 292).

The “ominous threat to survival” presented by nuclear weapons, in Burt’s view, “is only the negative side to the challenge” (ISPU, p. 282). The positive side is that, if human beings in both the East and the West turn inward, by which we assume he means that they exercise their capacity of expanding awareness, and examine their own “frustrated emotions,” they will become aware how these affect their relations with each other and, having gained this insight, many new possibilities are opened. People will discover that they are “capable of a will to justice and to friendship that is not confined to ... clan, race, creed, or nation, and of finding joy in the creative relation with others ...” (*ibid.*, p. 283). They will also discover that aggressive behavior blocks their achieving their “true good.” In their relations with others comes the possibility to achieve “the realization of a unity with them in virtue of which the good of each person becomes for that reason the good of all, and the good of all becomes the freely accepted good of each. We now begin to see that once the pattern of existence in separated tribes is left behind there can be no stopping place short of a world community” (*ibid.*, p. 283).

In arguing thus, Burt, of course, is pursuing what we have called the role of a philosophic activist. However, his pursuit of this role manifests itself most conspicuously in his 1969 essay entitled “Philosophers as Warriors” which was published as a chapter in the book *The Critique of War* (Robert Ginsberg, edit., 1969). Burt argues in this essay that philosophers have a significant role to play in bringing about peace in the international political arena. Quoting from the preamble to the UNESCO Constitution, he states “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed” (*ibid.*, p. 37). To which he adds:

Western thinkers need to remember that the word “mind” here includes “heart” as well as “intellect;” this would be taken for granted in the East, where it has

perennially been realized that a person's intellect is never separated from his resources of feeling or his orientation of will. The [UNESCO] preamble implies, then, a radical idea. For war to be renounced it must be renounced within as well as in action without. Peace in the minds and hearts of people needs to be widely won before world peace can be securely established. ("Philosophers as Warriors," 1969, p. 37)

But, in yet another application of his theory of expanding awareness to philosophy, Burt emphasizes that the starting point on the path to achieving world peace is the requirement for philosophers to become aware of the unconscious factors at work in their philosophic activity. For it is only when this process of "metamorphosis" becomes established practice in the philosophic arena will philosophy "have set its own house in order for the nuclear age" (*ibid.*, p. 42). Only then will philosophers "have a magnificent opportunity to lead the way toward a non violent creative [world] community in all fields of thought and experience. Then their own practice will provide an inspiring model of the method of truth-seeking that intrinsically fosters such a community" (*ibid.*).

Burt's World Community: A Utopian Vision?

Burt's references to a world community are scattered throughout his later works. He believes establishment of such a community would be the outcome of human history due to a perennial aspiration on the part of humans "to realize harmony with an Ultimate Reality" (HJ, p. 20; Burt's capitals). He describes this "perennial aspiration" as a "force" that is "growing in strength" which not only creates and fosters unity among all people but also satisfies the "equally insistent [human] need for contact with Divine Reality" (*ibid.*, p. 32). In other words, he presupposes the notion of Divine agency, or God, as a creative force at work in human affairs and which will bring about a world community. He claims to be drawing insight for this notion, not from philosophers, but from religious pioneers who started religions such as Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism (*ibid.*; see also ISPU, p. 289).¹ He also seeks support for his vision in the work of Teilhard de Chardin. Chardin's ideas, as expressed in *The Phenomenon of Man* [1955] (1977), in Burt's view, point to a world community that has as its "essential foundation" a cooperative quest to gain knowledge "to serve the well-being of all in freedom and equality" (*ibid.*; see also p. 314).²

¹ Professor Emeritus John E. Smith of Yale University knew Burt and corresponded with him. In a letter dated June 8th, 1993 to myself, Professor Smith notes that "The interesting thing ... is that [Burt's] idea of a community of human beings encompassed by a divine reality has strong affinities with [Josiah] Royce's view set forth in *The Problem of Christianity*." When Smith brought this to Burt's attention in 1968, Burt claimed [in a letter to John E. Smith dated September 2nd, 1968] that he had not taken account of this idea in his earlier study of Royce. John E. Smith also observes in *America's Philosophical Vision* (1992), that the notion of community is a central theme in American philosophy. Burt's contribution to this theme, therefore, was to turn to both the East and the West for insights which could assist in the creation of his notion of a world community.

² In the *Phenomenon of Man* [1955] (1977), Chardin presents love as a creative energy, or cosmic force, at work in the universe which is drawing all human beings on an inward journey to discover what is "deepest in themselves" with the expectation that they will discover it is love at their core (p. 290ff). In Chardin's scheme: "Mankind, the spirit of the earth, the synthesis of individuals and peoples, the paradoxical conciliation of the element with the whole, and of unity with multitude—all these are called Utopian and yet they are biologically necessary. And for them to be incarnated in the world all we may

In expounding upon what we can call his “Utopian” vision of an “ideal world community,” Burttt believes that he is assisting humanity’s participation in the “cosmic adventure” (ISPU, p. 305). He believes that the way is open for “an unprecedented flowering” of “intellectual, artistic, and spiritual life, fed by the emotional energy that has in the past been weakened by isolation and fragmented by destructive conflict but that in the setting of an ideal community could be enhanced without limit” (ibid.). Indeed, in arguing thus, Burttt’s thought seems to have millenarian overtones.¹ Kenelm Burridge, who makes a study of millenarian movements in his work *New Heaven and New Earth* (1969), argues that historically such visions often arise in the midst of significant social strife and political convulsions which, in turn, may lead people to believe that the end of the world is imminent (p. 126f).

In Burttt’s case, of course, he was deeply concerned about the political convulsions and moral dilemmas arising from the First and Second World Wars and, during the Cold War, about the potential end of human civilization in a nuclear conflagration. It is against this background that he envisions his “ideal” world community. This vision is his “hope” for the future: an optimistic alternative to the pessimistic possibility of the end of the world.

Burttt’s Notion of “Hope” and “Self-Fulfilling Prophecies”

Burttt himself uses the term “hope” to describe his vision of a future ideal world community and acknowledges that it may appear to be “sheer faith” (ISPU, p. 298). Nevertheless, he contends that there are increasing signs that the constructive forces, the forces that have always triumphed in human history, are still strong enough to overcome the destructive forces operating in human society (ISPU, p. 296). To support this contention Burttt points to the expanding awareness of people all over the world. That is, people everywhere are becoming better educated and there is growth in mutual understanding between different peoples. There is also a growing tendency to identify and remove all forms of exploitation. This is apparent in the ideal of equality between the genders and the growing awareness that men need to change the way they relate to women so that the relationship is not exploitative (ibid., p. 299).

He also contends that the practice of the virtue of hope can harness the “power of self-fulfilling prophecy” (ibid., p. 295). One way that individuals can practice this virtue is to adopt an optimistic, rather than a pessimistic, attitude in relation to the future and, in particular, towards the threat of nuclear annihilation. If enough people remain hopeful,

well need is to imagine our power of loving developing until it embraces the total of men and of the earth. ... [The] most fundamental form of passion ... precipitates the elements one upon the other in the Whole—cosmic affinity and hence cosmic sense. A universal love is not only psychologically possible; it is the only complete and final way in which we are able to love” (pp. 292-3).

¹ It is appropriate to use the term “millenarian overtones” because in *The Human Journey* (1981) Burttt himself uses the term “millennial” to describe his overall vision of human evolution and the future of humanity (p. 189).

and act on this hope, he reasons, then it opens the possibility for a constructive outcome. In other words, the prophecy of a constructive outcome would have become self-fulfilling.

Some years later the physicist Freeman Dyson was to argue in *Weapons and Hope* (1984) that the practice of “hope,” that is adopting an optimistic view of the world, is a way of changing people’s thinking along constructive, rather than destructive, avenues and so assisting in avoiding nuclear annihilation. Moreover, keeping in mind Burt’s commitment to the Quaker movement, it is the Quaker ethic that Dyson holds as being an example of the practice of hope in difficult situations. Dyson contends:

Is there no other tradition for our young men to follow than the tradition of warriors marching into battle to defend the honour of their tribe? Indeed there is another tradition, the tradition of pacifism ... For hundreds of years there have been religious sects [such as the Quakers] which held warfare to be contrary to the will of God. ... The Quakers allowed no authority to come between the individual conscience and God. ... The Quaker ethic has always encouraged its adherents to concern themselves with other people’s sufferings. “Concern” in the Quaker vocabulary means more than sympathy, it means practical help for people in need and practical intervention against injustice. Large numbers of Quakers, following the example of their founder, George Fox, express their concern by campaigning in the political arena for humanitarian and pacifist ideals. But they act as individuals, not as an organized movement. (Dyson, *Weapons and Hope*, 1984, pp. 199-200)

Dyson points to the Quakers’ involvement in helping bringing about the abolition of slavery and argues that the same ethic could perhaps be mobilized to bring about the abolition of nuclear weapons (*ibid.*, p. 202). To achieve this end, however, he believes that the political skills of someone such as Mahatma Gandhi, another great pacifist, would need to be learned in order to bring the movement from the level of the individual and into the main political arena (*ibid.*). But, although Dyson points to this possibility of overcoming the threat of annihilation, he is very skeptical that the majority of people in the United States will adopt a policy of non violence (*ibid.*, p. 211).

Dyson’s skepticism aside, the Quaker influence is apparent in Burt’s call for a world community: he envisions a community in which people practice the virtues of hope and sympathy and concern towards others in order that “the good of all becomes the freely accepted good of each” (ISPU, p. 283).

Ideology and the World Community

No particular ideology, according to Burt, will dominate in his ideal world community. Rather, just as in the case of religion, there will be a “free clash of ideas in the open market” (ISPU, p. 307). As a result of this clash between ideas, however, he believes that a wise balance will eventually be achieved between competing ideologies. Furthermore, in the midst of this clash, he insists that an ideal at the heart of Western democracy, namely, the notion that the individual person must be treated with reverence, will never be abandoned. This ideal is based on the understanding that each person can pursue their own goals as long as they respect the equal right of others and

that each person has the freedom to take part in the political process to ensure a constant improvement in policies. These aspects of Western democracy cannot be abandoned for they provide “the *sole way* of organizing political and social life that accepts human experience as having the radically dynamic character that in fact it does have” (ISPU, p. 306; my italics).

Thus Burt discloses another of his own presuppositions, namely, that an ideal which forms the heart of the ideology of liberal democracy is the “sole way” around which the political and social life of the world community will be organized.¹ This is necessary because:

Other forms of government assume that certain presuppositions are absolute and therefore must never be abandoned; the consequence is that when (as sooner or later always happens) they have to be abandoned, this can usually only occur through a violent revolution, with its accompanying chaos and destruction. By protecting individual liberties and minority rights [however,] democracy provides a method of passing peacefully from the control of a country’s policies by one set of presuppositions to control by another set, and encourages the emergence of new parties and policies to meet the needs of a new day. It places its trust in the greater truth that always lies ahead and is sought through the free clash of ideas in the open market. It thus implicitly accepts the arduous task of maintaining the political, industrial, legal, and educational conditions necessary for such a peaceful passage—conditions exceedingly difficult to maintain. (ISPU, p. 307)

In arguing thus Burt may seem to be contradicting himself. His own presupposition in support of liberal democracy is so fundamental that it could be, using his own terms, an “absolute presupposition.” However, he may counter such criticism by noting that his “absolute” presupposition by its very nature permits clashes to occur between other presuppositions and thus is dynamic. It is only absolute in its claim that a conflict between ideas must be “the sole way of organizing political and social life.” It thus allows even its own claim to be contested.

Indeed, he contends that the democratic ideal is essentially right because the practice of democracy—the dynamic, free clash of ideas and reverence for the rights of the individual—enables political and social policies to keep pace with dynamic reality.

Consider the serious weakness of totalitarian communism in its contrast with the basic method of democracy. Two ultimate presuppositions of the former are [1] the essential validity of the Marx-Leninist dialectic and [2] the sacredness of the “party line” once it has been determined. Consequently, when practical necessities require the revision of that dialectic, or new contingencies force a drastic change in the party line, elaborate manoeuvres of rationalization are needed; inconsistency cannot quite be hidden, nor bewilderment in the minds of many followers avoided. Moreover, different interpretations of the dialectic inevitably appear, and different party lines are adopted in the various Communist countries; in the combative atmosphere engendered ... we witness the very revealing phenomenon of the heretic being hated with greater virulence than the infidel. (ISPU, p. 308)

¹ In arguing that his notion of world community, “the outcome of human history,” will practice liberal democracy, Burt anticipates the central theme in Francis Fukuyama’s work entitled *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). Fukuyama, drawing on Hegel, argues that liberal democracies are the ideal form of government, that it is inevitable that they will be established universally, and because they are open to change, they stand at the end of history.

The problem is that zealous Communists “have found it easy to forget two basic truths” (*ibid.*, p. 309). Firstly, “any social order grounded in a set of rigid dogmas is doomed” because it cannot adapt to changing reality (*ibid.*). On the other hand, societies that are open to new ideas which inherently encourage the blossoming of imagination and initiative will be able to adapt to dynamic reality. Secondly, “no social revolution, no matter how thoroughgoing, and no process of conditioning, no matter how persistent, can itself change human beings in the way Marxism has assumed. Even after such a drastic experience people and their rulers can still be moved by obstreperous urges and narrow loyalties” (ISPU, p. 309).

Thus Burttt rejects the notion that governments, or any external authority, can transform the inner psychological realm of individuals by imposing social change from above. The loci of change for Burttt is at the level of the individual. Change must come from an internal transformation in each individual’s emotions and thinking. His belief is that this transformation, this personal growth or self-realization, will inherently cause the individual to become more sensitive to, and understanding of, other people.

The maxim that exemplifies his ultimate vision—and incorporates the universal ideal and value which could both overcome the “malignant disease” of moral relativism and underpin a world community—is that every individual ought to become the “medium” through which other individuals are encouraged to “grow toward the richest fulfillment possible”—an attitude that will reflect back on the initiating medium and thus ensure the medium’s own growth toward self-realization (ISPU, p. 311). As a “valid ideal” this holds both “for an individual and for every social group” (*ibid.*). Indeed:

Nothing less is the valid ideal for every nation in relation to other nations, every race in relation to other races, ... every economic system in relation to others, every religion in relation to other religions. In the case of these larger social units, as in the case of the individual, the energy of narrow self-centered demandingness can become the energy of all-encompassing sensitivity and unlimited creation. However, far the world be may from the goal thus envisioned—and the distance is surely great—we may have faith that it is moving in this direction. (ISPU, p. 311)

In short, the goal of Burttt’s “ideal world community,” is the “appealing” possibility that each individual, after resolving emotional conflict both within their own selfhood and with other individuals, will discover both internal harmony and “satisfying union with ultimate reality” (ISPU, p. 290).

In general terms, therefore, he is applying his theory of expanding awareness, not just to philosophers, but to human beings on a global scale. As he states, the “crucial and increasingly insistent problem ... of [modern] civilized life has become ... the problem of achieving the *sensitive awareness* required on a wide enough scale so that the threat of universal catastrophe can be averted and these appealing possibilities realized” (ISPU, p. 283; *my italics*). He believes, of course, that this “problem of achieving the sensitive awareness” could be achieved by the development of a post-scientific metaphysic which could underpin a world community.

The Metaphysic for a World Community: Its Roots Lie in Burttt's Early Thought

The roots of the notion of developing a post-scientific metaphysic can be found in Burttt's *Metaphysical Foundations* (1924). In this work, we may recall, he came to the conclusion that the metaphysic underlying modern science precluded it from making any meaningful statement on human consciousness, spiritual aspirations, or meaning in the universe, and thus argued the need for a new post-scientific, or post-empiricist, metaphysic which could support such meaningful statements. But this was before the advent of nuclear weapons—the development of which gave added urgency to develop a post-scientific metaphysic which also could underpin a world community—as he was to emphasize some forty years later in *Philosophic Understanding*.

To observe how this notion of a post-scientific metaphysic provides a continuity between Burttt's early and later thought we can turn to his observation in *Philosophic Understanding* that, besides the nuclear threat, another change in this century presents serious problems, namely, “the tearing of people away from their traditional roots, so that they are groping in anxiety, frustration, and confused uncertainty for *a new and dependable foundation*” (ISPU, p. 293). That is, the patterns of living, social controls and institutions, along with the metaphysical foundations that previously guided and gave meaning to human affairs, have progressively been broken down, without adequate replacement, in the modern era. Previously people were able to satisfy their deep longing for “unified expression” with the cosmos but in the twentieth century this is no longer possible. Echoing an argument he made in *Metaphysical Foundations* some forty years prior, he states:

Our medieval ancestors looked out on a *cosy cosmos* with the earth at its center and the sphere of the fixed stars not far away; all was embraced by the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, whose presence assured them that everything that happens has its place within the eternal Divine plan. Modern man looks out upon a stupendous immensity of material existence; he peers into the unending vastness of the nebular universe in which his solar system is *an insignificant speck*, with distances of space and epochs of time that baffle his imagination. This is an exhilarating scene to all who are open to its breathtaking possibilities, but to those who hanker after the protecting cosmos of the past it is very frightening. Yet even they dimly realize that the comforting assurances of the past are now gone and that they must somehow find their home in this awful immensity. (ISPU, pp. 293-4; my italics)

Indeed, this statement provides an explicit connection between Burttt's early and later thought.

In *Metaphysical Foundations* Burttt explains how the “cosy cosmos” inherent in medieval world-view had given way to the scientific world-view. To exemplify this latter world-view, he refers to Bertrand Russell's notion that human existence is insignificant and precarious and the earth is but a speck in boundless space which one day will be “snuffed out like a candle” and “buried in a universe of ruins.”¹ Of course,

¹ *Supra.*, 47f.

Russell's sentimental verse was written prior to the development of nuclear weapons and we have to assume that both Russell and Burttt did not expect that, within a few decades, humans themselves would have the power to "snuff out the human race like a candle" and "bury it in a universe of ruins." We may also recall that, in his conclusion to *Metaphysical Foundations*, Burttt argues that there was a need to establish a new cosmology and metaphysical framework that could take account of the scientific world-view and somehow make human existence meaningful once again, although at that time he could not see how it could be done. But, as we have observed, this is precisely the project that he has sought to achieve in *Philosophic Understanding*. However, by the time Burttt wrote *Philosophic Understanding*, the "age of science" had given way to the "nuclear age" thus providing him with an added urgency to a post-scientific metaphysic which would achieve its political expression in a world community and thus avert annihilation.

Although Burttt does not state it explicitly, it may be that in his mind the potential of nuclear annihilation became possible due to the split world-view of modern science and its lack of a metaphysic to give a meaningful place for human consciousness and spirituality in the cosmos. Indeed, in *Philosophic Understanding* (1965) he does argue that scientists often adopt the attitude that their work is "pure science" and, in doing this, avoid taking account of the social consequences of their activity (ISPU, p. 186). An example of this attitude in practice, he holds, is the development of nuclear weapons which are "a peril to all people everywhere" (*ibid.*, p. 187).¹ He thus argues for an ethical conception of science which does not evade "responsibility for its larger human effects" (*ibid.*). To ensure that scientists do not evade this ethical responsibility in *Philosophic Understanding* he would have science subsumed into his notion of a new metaphysic (*ibid.*, p. 175)—which, of course, in many respects reiterates the argument he put forward for a new metaphysic in *Metaphysical Foundations*.

Another crucial notion which demonstrates a continuity between Burttt's early and later thought is his insistence that, contrary to what positivists or some scientists may maintain, there is no escape from metaphysics. As he states, in *Metaphysical Foundations*, the only way we avoid metaphysics is to say nothing (MF, p. 229). The moment we say anything, or posit any theory, which in one way or another means talking about reality, we inherently make a whole series of presuppositions, the most basic of which cannot be verified in the physical realm and hence have *metaphysical*

¹ In support of Burttt's assertion we can turn to a statement by Robert Oppenheimer, widely known as the "father" of the atomic bomb: "[T]he reason that we did this job [of developing the atomic bomb] is because it was an organic necessity. If you are a scientist you cannot stop such a thing. If you are a scientist you believe that it is good to find out how the world works ..." (Quoted by Brian Easlea, *Fathering the Unthinkable* (1983), p. 90. Another illustration is provided by James D. Watson in *Double Helix* (1968), concerning the discovery of human DNA structure in the 1950s and which has led to the issue of genetic engineering. Watson reveals the intense rivalry between the scientists involved to be the first to publish and thus win fame. There is no reference to the social consequences of their activity.

implications. Put another way, the concept “reality” is only always a conceptual framework constructed by human beings to explain and interpret the cosmos. But the framework itself, even if it takes the positivist orientation and denies such things as the spiritual realm, the existence of consciousness, or the notion of a divine agency at work in human affairs, is never, so to speak, suspended in mid-air. Its foundations, being a series of presuppositions that cannot be verified or falsified, *are* metaphysical, that is, in the realm of the mind, or consciousness, that is beyond the material, physical or phenomenal realm. In short, as Burt puts it in *Philosophic Understanding*, the concept “reality” has an “essential metaphysical meaning, whether we approach it on the scale of history at large as it guides philosophical insight through the centuries, or on the less conspicuous scale of each person’s quest for self-realization” (ISPU, p. 247).

But while the roots of Burt’s goal to develop a post-scientific metaphysic lie in his early thought, when he wrote *Metaphysical Foundations* he did not believe that he was capable of developing such a metaphysic (MF, p. 325). By the time he came to write the *Philosophic Understanding*, however, the theory of expanding awareness was being formed in his mind. He believed that its practice by philosophers, or at least by metaphysicians, would lead to the development of this new metaphysic.

A New Metaphysic Requires the Revision of the Criteria of Fact, Form and Value

The project of developing a new metaphysic, following Burt, requires the revision of the criteria applicable to the realms of logical form, fact, and value which together contribute to an existing perception of reality. As he explains, some metaphysicians may limit their project to revising the realm of fact whereas others are “often more ambitious than this, projecting a revision of our criteria of form and value as well as fact” (*ibid.*, p. 234). It is this latter “ambitious” project in which the criteria of all three realms are revised which also brings about a revision of reality. Burt provides two examples of these processes at work.

The first example relates to the revision of the presuppositions of logical form that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Prior to this time logical form had continued to follow the Aristotelian method of ordering facts, that is, “facts” concerning events and objects were conceived in terms of their *qualitative* distinctions (categories such as hot and cold, light and heavy, colour and shape were used—as Burt drew attention to in *Metaphysical Foundations* (MF, p. 18)) (ISPU, p. 239). However, primarily due to A. N. Whitehead’s and Bertrand Russell’s *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13), a union occurred between logic and mathematics in the early twentieth century. Modern science, with its “insistent demand that the empirical realm be described mathematically,” thus finally breached the citadel of ancient logic; *quantitative* relations, such as the categories of distance, time, motion, and predictive causality became the crucial criteria in ordering facts. This “epoch-making revision of logical

presuppositions and a more general conception of form was gained as a result of persistent concentration on a range of factual material that could not be handled in terms of the formal framework [of logic] previously taken for granted” (ibid., pp. 239-240).

Another example, the ideas of which Burttt again had developed in earlier works¹, is “an instance in which a change of dominant values led to a new way of interpreting facts, and to a new definition of a vital category used in explaining them” (ISPU, p. 240). The “vital category” in question is the ancient and medieval concept of causality which, he explains, has had its meaning “radically” changed by modern thinkers from David Hume onwards—without their being conscious of this change (ibid.).

Hume finds three necessary and sufficient conditions for applying the category of causality: (1) the cause and its effect are closely connected in time, (2) the cause precedes the effect, and (3) the cause has in the past been regularly followed by the effect. But turn back to Aristotle’s conception of causality, the most influential earlier conception. What he calls “efficient causality” is the closest analogue to Hume’s concept, and his definition of an efficient cause reads: “That from which the immediate origination of movement or a state of rest comes.”² He typically illustrates the relation by such situations as that in which the cause is the activity of an artist and the effect the work of art he produces, or where the cause is the labor of a builder and the effect is the building he constructs. (ISPU, p. 240)

However, he notes, there is no correlation between Aristotle’s examples and Hume’s “three necessary and sufficient conditions” (ibid.).

In Hume’s first two conditions time has been introduced in the relation between the cause and effect—both of which are observable and separate occurrences, that is, a “cause” and an “effect” are (1) “closely *connected* in time” and (2) the cause *precedes* the effect, i.e., time elapses between the two relations (ISPU, p. 240). In the third condition *repetition* of the cause and effect relation is necessary. However, from the Aristotelian viewpoint “there is no dividing line in time between the occurrence of the cause and the occurrence of the effect, which is vital to Hume’s conception” (ibid.). An Aristotelian “thinker would never refuse to apply the category of causality where an agent is creating something for the first time” (ibid.). For the Aristotelian, no “repetition of what has happened in the past is essential; one can see a new product taking shape under the activity of its maker just as easily as he can see something produced that has been produced before” (ibid., pp. 240-1).

This shift in conceptions of causality, according to Burttt, is the result of a shift in dominant values (ISPU, p. 241). The dominant value expressed in the Aristotelian conception was the notion that all secondary and finite causes could be traced back to a final cosmic explanation and an absolute cause (ibid., pp. 168-9). By contrast, the “dominant value expressed in the Humean notion is the one that is central in science

¹ The earlier works are as follows: “Value and Existence,” *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 44, No. 7, March 1947, pp. 169-179; and *Types of Religious Philosophy* [1939] (rev. ed., Harper & Bros., New York, 1951), pp. 220f, 208-212, 425-429.

² Burttt cites as his source for this quote: Ross, W. D., *Aristotle*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 72. This is Aristotle's definition in *Physics*, 194b.

today—the value of successful prediction” (ibid., p. 241). That is, if “causal explanation is to serve this value a temporal line is required between cause and effect, for only then can the latter be predicted on the occurrence of the former; and if the prediction is to be a confident one, the effect must have been regularly observed to follow the cause in the past” (ibid.).

Therefore, Burttt declares, it is evident from Hume’s revision of the concept of causality that there is an interdependence between the three different realms of form, fact and value (ISPU, p. 241). The definition of the category of causality, a logical form, has been revised due to a change of dominant values which, in turn, contributed to the insistence of modern science to interpret facts in the light of empirical criteria. However, in any such revision there is a fourth realm, namely, the realm of reality, which plays the ultimate role (ibid., p. 234).

The Crucial Role of the Realm of Reality in the Revision of Form, Fact, and Value

It is from the vantage point of reality, Burttt explains, that a metaphysician can view the “total arena” in which interaction between the realms of form, fact, and value occurs (ibid., p. 235). Moreover, any changes in the meaning or interpretation of the latter three realms will also affect perceptions of reality. Thus, either for a revision, or as a result of a revision, of form, fact, and value, reality is a core category. Burttt turns to the persistent theological problem of conflict between moral ideals and fundamentalist interpretations of Scripture for an example of how the category of reality plays this crucial role.

A conflict between ideals, following Burttt, can arise whenever a human moral ideal may be at variance with what is demanded in scripture. The presupposition at work here is that “scripture” is the revelation of God and its moral ideals therefore are not “human” moral ideals (ISPU, p. 242). Thus, whenever a conflict arises between “God’s ideals” and “human ideals,” the fundamentalists’ principle is that humans cannot judge or question God’s ideals. Moreover, if human ideals are in conflict with God’s ideals then it is clear that the human ideals are “fallacious and the ideals envisioned delusive” (ibid.). Opposed to this principle is the principle first expressed by ancient Greek philosophers and dramatists, and exemplified by Euripides: “If the gods do aught that is base, they are not gods” (ibid.). But, Burttt asks, are human moral ideals “really,” that is, in “reality,” subordinate to God’s moral ideals? From the vantage point of today’s “reality” it may be that the human conception of God needs to be revised, and hence God’s moral ideals. It may also be that human moral ideals need revision to accord with today’s reality. In both instances, reality is playing the ultimate role.

Reality and Appearance and the Conflict between Science and Religion

Yet another example that Burttt contends reveals the centrality of the concept reality in the metaphysician’s project to revise form, fact, and value—although this time it also

involves the use of the concept “appearance”—relates to the conflict between science and religion. As he explains:

Is the world disclosed by scientific investigation unqualifiedly real as it stands, or is it a world of appearance—a “phenomenal” realm merely—in contrast with a more ultimate and comprehensive reality grasped by religious insight? In terms of the major distinctions we have kept in mind, how can one bring together coherently the realm of facts this side of the horizon, structured by our present scientific presuppositions, and the realm beyond the horizon? Since the latter is usually conceived in some sense to embody supreme perfection, the problem intrinsically involves both fact and value. And again, is not the essential meaning of the categories of reality and appearance clear in this situation? (ISPU, p. 243)

When the conflict is described in this manner, the metaphysician resides in the realm of reality and appeals to alternative categories from the other realms of fact and value in an attempt to resolve it.

Historically, Burt points out, there is evidence that the revision of reality has, at times, been due to changes that first occurred in the presuppositions of theology and then affected science.

In early modern times thinkers rejected the prevailing presupposition that the celestial region is a complex hierarchy of degrees of perfection as one ascends from the earth toward the empyrean, and adopted the contrary presupposition that it is an order of uniform law. The former idea rested essentially on Aristotelian metaphysics, whereas a major source of the latter—as is evident in such pioneers as Copernicus, Kepler, and Bruno—lay in the religious conviction that God is omnipresent and unvarying in His action, so the entire universe created by Him must conform to the same general laws. (ISPU, p. 243)

Thus, Burt contends, these examples demonstrate that when philosophers are confronted by problems in the three realms of form, fact, and value, “the category of reality gains a distinctive meaning ... [and] serves our need for an adequate criterion that embraces and transcends the criteria now accepted within each of the realms involved” (ibid., p. 244).

Reality: Inherently Part of the Dynamic World of Human Experience

Having thus established the case for the importance of the realm of “reality,” Burt again insists that our understanding of reality can never be separated from the total, dynamic world of human experience. Put another way, when metaphysicians seek to understand reality they are always seeking to understand, or make knowledge-claims about, human experience. Hence, the category of reality is naturally utilized when we seek to understand human experience. Evidence of this utilization can be seen in a claim such as: “each of us is an evolving individual with many potentialities pressing toward *realization*” (ISPU, p. 245; my italics). He acknowledges that philosophers may be puzzled by his use of cognate terms for “reality,” such as “realization,” and the word “real,” but he believes it is acceptable as most people use these terms to refer to “reality.” For instance, he explains, if a person undergoes a “religious awakening,” or achieves a deeper insight into their own psyche, they may claim that what was “real” to

them prior to the such an occurrence is no longer so and instead they now experience a new reality (ISPU, p. 246).

However, any discussion of the realization of these subjective potentialities also involves issues concerned with the realms of form, fact, and value. That is, the larger universe, or “macrocosm”, about which form, fact and value make statements cannot be separated from subjective human experience. It is human thought which is concerned with logical form. It is human curiosity about facts which finds expression in science. It is human ideals and virtues that take shape in the form of a value. This being so, we can perceive the individual, who “is *one* person, or a unity of selfhood,” to be a microcosm in which these three realms find expression in, and are applicable to, the *reality* of each person’s experience. (ISPU, p. 246).

The metaphysical category of reality, therefore, along with the categories of form, fact, and value, is equally applicable to the macrocosm and the microcosm. Or, put another way, these categories are equally applicable to the subjective and objective realms. This is no more clearly evident, according to Burt, than in one of the basic principles of psychoanalytic theory. For Freud “saw that the overcoming of inner conflict in the search for health and integrity is a process of passing from domination by the ‘pleasure’ principle to unqualified acceptance of the ‘reality’ principle” (ISPU, p. 246). That is, Freud maintained that an individual’s psychological growth would remain incomplete so long as he or she, due to some childhood trauma, had not progressed from the “pleasure” principle, or narcissistic urge (which dominates childhood), to an acceptance of the “reality” of adult life (*ibid.*). However, for Burt the notion of “coming to terms with reality” has far more to it than the liberation of the individual from the demands of the pleasure principle (*ibid.*, *passim.*). It also means constantly coming to terms with the totality of human experience in the wider reality of the universe.

In short, for Burt there is no fundamental division between the microcosm and macrocosm, or the subjective and objective realms. They merge into one realm, one reality, which is anchored at any point in time in dynamic human experience.

How Can Dynamic Reality be a “Standpoint”?

The objection may be raised, however, that if reality, as Burt would have it, is itself dynamic then how can it act as a “standpoint,” or vantage point, from which form, fact, and value are judged? In confronting such an objection Burt is elusive. He claims that, however tempting it may be, a precise definition of reality is not possible. As he explains:

It has no distinct form itself, for it is that in relation to which other basic concepts take form, gain definition, and in the course of time are revised. ... How then are we to talk about the unmapped realm into which [adventurous] thinkers are constantly advancing? When exploring under its [reality’s] guidance we do not know just what should be meant by the words we have to use, and are *fumbling* for an appropriate meaning; we are not sure just what should be taken as given fact or valid reasoning

or controlling value and are seeking a better criterion for one or more of these; we have recognized as inadequate the cognitive methods applied before and are trying to find wiser ones—in short, this is the kind of adventure in which our very foundations are undergoing revision. The category of reality in this role cannot lose the character for horizon-transcendence; its function is to lead us from where we are toward the uncharted infinite. (ISPU, p. 248; *my italics*)

If we take at face value Burt's claim that he is "fumbling" for an appropriate meaning for the category of reality, knowing as we do that he also is maintaining a notion of Ultimate Reality, then we have an insight into his own struggle to come to terms with the implications of his theory of expanding awareness. It would seem, using his own terms, that he has transcended the horizon of dynamic reality and glimpsed the wholeness of Ultimate Reality beyond the horizon. If this is so, then he appears to be struggling to bring this vision, which he acknowledges is beyond logical articulation, within the horizon of human experience.

In sum, if we take Burt's clarification of the role and project of a metaphysician to be valid then he clearly sees himself first and foremost as a metaphysician. Indeed, he himself contends that part of his task is to ensure that "a promising foundation may be laid for the metaphysical enterprise today" (ISPU, p. 237). His project is to sketch a "map" which will point in the direction of a new metaphysic, that is, a new view of reality, that will guide human beings past the threat of nuclear annihilation and into a world community. In pursuing this project he maintains that reality is dynamic—but only in so far as it gains partial glimpses of Ultimate Reality. It would be a contradiction in terms to maintain that Ultimate Reality is itself dynamic. Thus, we can refer to both the vantage point of dynamic reality and the vantage point of Ultimate Reality. The latter, being beyond the reach of reason, is a type of "knowledge" that is beyond logical description, beyond valuations, and beyond facts. In our overview of his theory of expanding awareness we gained an insight into his understanding of this special type of knowledge but we can follow him in closer detail as he attempts to make it acceptable to his contemporaries.

Knowledge about Knowledge: A "Mysterious Region"

Burt describes the philosophic territory into which we now follow him as a "mysterious region" because it is beyond the point where thinkers, be they rationalists, mathematicians, or empiricists, can agree about what is and what is not knowledge (ISPU, p. 237). In the spectrum of knowledge, there are many ways that its claims can be classified. There is the "most exact, dependable, and certain knowledge at one end to that which is most deficient in these respects at the other" (*ibid.*, p. 211). At the other end of the spectrum is subjective knowledge, that is, knowledge that is only available to the individual and not able to be tested in an exact manner. This hierarchical way of describing knowledge "encourages the idea that the most exact knowledge provides a model to be imitated by all other kinds, and that its virtues can be realized in each of

them if the right method for applying the model can be discovered” (ibid.).

But, however tempting this hierarchical approach may be, Burttt warns that it is deceptive (ISPU, p. 211). For, at the most exact, abstract level, mathematics provides an ideal model of knowledge. But this does not mean that this knowledge is superior to subjective knowledge. Indeed, Burttt asserts, this latter knowledge is more concrete and more inclusive than so-called exact knowledge. This follows, because in the final analysis all knowledge claims have their origin in the particular presuppositions and valuations, which are never identical between individuals, of an individual. In other words, there is a quality of uniqueness about each individual which will lead them to interpret knowledge claims, including abstract knowledge, in various ways. Thus, an individual may include in his or her framework an understanding of mathematical knowledge and even empiricism but, in this event, the individual’s own concrete experience is inclusive of this abstract knowledge—not the reverse. As Burttt puts it, “thinking at the most abstract level [i.e., formal logic and mathematics] depends in a particular and inescapable way on [the presuppositions, motivations, and valuations which govern] thinking at the most concrete level” (ibid., p. 213).

Continuing this theme, Burttt makes a significant claim, namely, that if the foregoing arguments are valid, it follows that an individual is always “the center of the universe” due to his or her uniqueness (ISPU, p. 213). Put another way, because each individual may interpret reality, or the universe, in a different manner, due to the particular “mental spectacles” and valuations through which they experience it, it follows that it is *their* universe and at which they are the center. It is not someone else’s universe. In arguing thus, Burttt is overcoming the problem that he first identified in *Metaphysical Foundations*, namely, that modern science had alienated human beings from the meaningful place they had occupied at the center of the ancient and medieval cosmos. Instead he is developing an ontology and metaphysic which places each individual back at the center of the universe—albeit, their own universe. An objection may be raised, of course, that in taking this approach Burttt is developing an extremely subjective and egocentric ontology in which each person is immersed in his or her own world. Such an objection, however, could not be sustained in light of his ongoing argument.

If the source and interpretation of knowledge is situated first and foremost *within* an individual, Burttt argues, then it follows that the first and foremost kind of knowledge that human beings ought to achieve is a deeper knowledge of themselves and of other individuals. Taking this approach to knowledge requires mutual understanding, that is, individuals need to open themselves to the “unknown universe” of each other (ibid., p. 213). As this exploration proceeds they discover that their own experience is enriched and that “the unlimited realm” of the other is “full, expansive, and pregnant with infinite possibility” (ibid.). In Burttt’s view:

To seek truth in this region is by far the most difficult but also the most rewarding of cognitive outreach. It is difficult because really to open oneself to another person is an adventurous and humbling matter. It means laying aside one's protective cloak ... It is uniquely rewarding because the path toward knowledge of other people as persons is the path toward the fullest realization of oneself as a person. (ISPU, p. 213)

Although Burt does not use the term "relatedness," we could understand his notion expressed above as a call for the development of a deep relatedness between individuals in anticipation that it will lead to a new type of knowledge and truth. For he contends that "the most inclusive and full-bodied" kind of knowledge of which human beings are capable, is "knowledge of persons" (ISPU, p. 214). Indeed:

The quest for such knowledge is the quest for truth in its richest possible form. *The universe that comes into being through the growth of persons toward mutual understanding is the all-encompassing universe; nothing can be conceived that falls outside it.* And any less extensive cosmos leaves out a part of reality; it is a truncated universe—the present world of some individual or limited group. (ISPU, p. 214; my italics)

In other words, as individuals enter into a deep relationship and gain knowledge of each other they are creating a new universe. This follows because, as individuals gain knowledge one of the other, so they are necessarily are creating new knowledge, and if *all* knowledge of the universe is ultimately grounded in human beings, this new knowledge amounts to the creation of new universe.

Burt's "New Type of Knowledge": A New Dimension to Modern Epistemology

In arguing for a new type of knowledge Burt is adding a radical new dimension to modern epistemology, or theories of knowledge. Modern epistemology from Descartes onwards has taken various turns. As Burt has noted on numerous occasions, modern theories of knowledge, having overthrown divine revelation as a source of knowledge, have held that truth or knowledge can be found, for instance, in the application of the principles of mathematics, rationalism, empiricism, Kant's *a priori* structures in the mind, or Hegel's reason. Burt, however, argues that "richest" source of knowledge can be found in the knowledge created in the practice of mutual understanding, or deep relatedness, between one or more human beings. That is, each individual may be the center of their own universe because they have their own unique perception of reality, but when two or more individuals join together to seek knowledge, or mutual understanding, of each other, the knowledge thus gained creates a new universe that is greater than the universe of any single individual. As Burt states: "The universe that comes into being through the growth of persons toward mutual understanding is the all-encompassing universe; nothing can be conceived that falls outside it" (ISPU, p. 214). Moreover, the reality "to which a metaphysician or growing individual responds in this pioneering process is reality as *creator*—the dynamic source of each new vision and each new universe that emerges through it; that which is deposited as a result of this process is reality as *created*—the novel structure of experience as it takes form from

time to time in the course of history or of personal fulfillment” (ibid., p. 248).

Thus Burt articulates a metaphysic that overcomes the negative implications of the universe that modern science has bequeathed to human beings. No longer are human beings but specks of dust lost in an impersonal universe—a “universe” which has only ever been but a particular construction of reality. Human beings now can discover a new, personal, universe in which new meaning and value is created by the practice of mutual understanding—by which we know Burt inherently means the practice of his theory of expanding awareness.

To throw further light on these points, we can understand—as Burt argues in *Metaphysical Foundations*—that the early modern philosopher/scientists “created” a new universe which overthrew the ancient and medieval “universe.” Physical factors in the cosmos did not change. What changed were human perceptions of these factors, brought about by a new kind of “knowledge”, the empirical knowledge of modern science. This being so, Burt’s argument is that it is possible that the scientific perception of the universe, with its reliance on empiricism, could also pass away in favor of yet another a new kind of knowledge.

Indeed, as Burt points out in *Metaphysical Foundations*, “it is well to remind ourselves” that: “Contemporary empiricists, had they lived in the sixteenth century, would have been the first to scoff out of court the new [Copernican] philosophy of the universe” (MF, p. 38). For, in the sixteenth century “sensible men all over Europe, especially the most empirically minded, would have pronounced [Copernican astronomy] a wild appeal to accept the premature fruits of an uncontrolled imagination, in preference to the solid inductions, built up gradually through the ages, of men’s confirmed sense experience” (ibid.). In the same context, Burt’s notions of a new metaphysic may also be regarded by contemporary empiricists as “the premature fruits of an uncontrolled imagination” and “scoff out of court” his various claims to a new kind of knowledge which leads to a post-empiricist perception of the universe. Burt’s reply, however, could be that the empiricist cannot make such a judgement for their own type of knowledge can only perceive a “truncated universe” and, as such, always “leaves out a part of reality.” Burt’s new type of “all-inclusive” knowledge, on the other hand, has as its starting point knowledge of oneself and of other human beings and from this truth proceeds at further truths about the universe.

Burt’s epistemological and ontological scheme, therefore, can be understood as an interactive and dynamic process. Both the person about whom knowledge is being gained, and the person gaining the knowledge are changing in light of the experience. As he explains, any “cognitive acquaintance ... becomes a cause that has its effects in the subsequent experience of the person known” (ISPU, p. 215). Burt himself refers to it as an “interactive conception of knowledge,” that is, “everything is known in the character that it acquires through its interaction with the knower” (ibid.). As an example of his

meaning, he asks us to consider the difference between negative and positive relations between people.

In the case of the negative approach, hostile or suspicious feelings will block the path to gaining mutual understanding. In the case of the positive approach, however, the understanding can become “true understanding” because there is a responsiveness, a willingness, to be open to the other (*ibid.*, p. 217). In the former case, the character of the knowledge acquired is obviously different to the latter. Or to put this another way, the knowledge gained in any interaction is always dependent upon the attitude prevalent at the time that it is acquired. “Only the positive approach fosters the emergence of the full self that we wish to know; the negative hampers that process. Fear, suspicion, and similar emotions obstruct the vision of the would-be knower and obstruct fulfillment in the person known” (*ibid.*, p. 218). It is not possible, Burttt asserts, to adopt a neutral position in any interaction—as psychologists and social scientists may assume is possible. For neutrality, like hostility, by its very nature “erects a wall of protectiveness ... and the supposedly neutral observer thus blocks the potential self that is there from being realized” (*ibid.*, p. 219). Thus, every interaction between persons involves either a positive or negative effect “on the one who is known” (*ibid.*, p. 221). The “causal action and the quest for understanding are intrinsically bound together” (*ibid.*). If the “seeker for knowledge” exhibits a negative attitude in the course of an interaction it will ensure conflict and the full self of the known will not emerge. On the other hand, if “the seeker for knowledge exemplifies a *positive response* to the other’s presence, the causal action and the quest for understanding are in harmony with each other; action is eliciting the emergence of the self to be known” (*ibid.*; my italics).

Burttt stridently asserts that, if any psychologists, particularly behaviorists, and social scientists believe that they can understand human beings by studying their behavior, then such a belief is misplaced. It does not take account of the inner forces at work in individuals and is only concerned with an individual’s observable, or external, behavior. The “reality slowly coming to light” as the individual grows into a full self is ignored (ISPU, p. 220). It is both “false and hostile” for one human being to implicitly say to another: “So far as I am concerned, your behavior as I can now observe it is all that you are” (*ibid.*). In effect, this is to say: “I do not care whether or not you fill your capacities as a person; I am only interested in watching how you tick” (*ibid.*). To adopt this attitude is to reduce a human being to a thing. It means that a wall is erected “between the observer and the observed, with only a narrow window through which the latter can be examined as an external object” (*ibid.*). Thus, he insists, psychology and social science need to let go of the “unfortunate presupposition” that human beings are no more than “just an aggregate of activities” (*ibid.*, p. 221).

However, in arguing for an interactive conception of knowledge Burttt is setting the stage for another, deeper, meaning that he intends to give to the term “positive

response,” namely, by this term he means some notion of “love” which, in turn, he intends to argue is the source of “true knowledge” (ibid.).

Love: The Source of “True Knowledge”

Burt is reticent to use the term “love” in his epistemological scheme, he explains, “because of its deep-rooted and pervasive popular connotations” (ibid.). In view of these connotations, he does not want the term associated with meanings such as romantic and sentimental attachment, or the love of a parent for a child. Instead, terms such as “sensitivity,” “openness,” or “responsiveness” may be more appropriate (ISPU., p. 222). These terms, however, do not convey the fullest meaning that he would like.

Love is freedom from self-centeredness, and hence from the demands and limitations that self-centeredness involves. ... [L]ove ... has the seed of unlimited expansion. ... [L]ove by its very nature embraces unconditionally In its true meaning, love is ... free and open responsiveness ... suggested by the all-embracing character of love. ... [L]ove ... [involves] by its very nature an outreaching sensitivity In short, love for a person and openness to all ... [that person’s] actualities and potentialities are one and the same thing. And in virtue of this openness love is intrinsically universal; it will express itself in respect for and responsiveness to every person (ISPU, pp. 222-3)

Qualifying this description of love, he argues that while love “has its inherent implications for the guidance of action” a person “who loves universally” will still find it an act of love to take action against a perpetrator of injustice: “To love is thus to seek wisely the ‘common good;’ indeed, it may be that this concept, so indispensable in legal and political thought, gains its meaning through existence and intrinsic universality of love. A common good can hardly arise except where concern for the well-being of every person in the community is effectively present” (ibid. p. 223).

This qualification aside, at the core of the meaning that Burt attributes to the term “love” lies the notion that its practice is indispensable if “true knowledge” is to be discovered about human beings (ISPU, p. 223). Indeed, he contends, love and true knowledge are inseparable. To support this contention he appeals to a statement, which we quote in part, by Erich Fromm in *The Art of Loving*: “Love is the only way of knowledge, which in the act of union [with another person] answers my quest”¹ (ibid., p. 226). This understanding of love, moreover, gives added meaning to other concepts that he utilizes—concepts such as “sensitivity,” “truthfulness” and “mutual understanding.” As he explains, to be “sensitive to another’s point of view is to love, to have a truthful communication is to love, and the very word love implies ‘mutual understanding’” (ibid., p. 222).

Burt allows that, irrespective of the foregoing arguments (or assertions), some philosophers may not accept that love *is* a source of true knowledge. Therefore, he sets out to further defend his case. Firstly, while science and common sense both can

¹ Burt quotes Fromm at length in the passage from which we have taken this quote. He cites this reference: Fromm, Erich, *The Art of Loving*, (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1956), p. 229ff.

maintain an openness to truth and claim, albeit a questionable claim, to have “true knowledge,” love is caught in a paradox. Love epitomizes openness but can never claim to *be* true knowledge. The moment it makes such a claim, it loses its openness and hence its claim to true knowledge. In making such a claim it inherently excludes itself from any further knowledge that may present itself in the interactive and dynamic process of a person’s growth toward fuller selfhood (ISPU, p. 227).

This paradox aside, he argues that love can be identified as the major “interest” motivating a seeker of knowledge—if that person genuinely adopts a “universal sensitivity and full responsiveness to other persons” (ISPU, p. 227). In this event, love has “no special interest of its own” and “serves as the mainspring of action” (*ibid.*). Indeed, if love *is* this type of motivation, it inherently identifies itself with all human interests and aspirations that “do not annul each other” (*ibid.*, p. 228). That is, “these varied interests, with the values they project, can avoid suicidal conflict¹ and achieve enduring fulfillment only as they accept the place that love gradually discovers for them in the totality of man’s aspirations. Viewed thus, *love is the energy ever organizing that totality into a stable, freely shared, and effective whole*” (*ibid.*; my italics). In other words, for Burt love can be understood as a metaphysical energy, or force, constantly at work in human affairs organizing its disparate interests into an ordered whole.

The Mystical Overtones of Burt’s Notion of Love

It is in Burt’s discussion of love, perhaps more than any other, that we have a clear insight into what we can call the mystical aspect of his later thought. The sentiments he expresses in relation to love bear a close affinity with, for instance, Saint Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (Corinthians 1, Ch. 13, vs. 7-8). Paul expresses such notions, for example, as love never fails, love is not self-seeking, love and truth are synonymous and human knowledge, but not love, will pass away. In other words, love is at the nexus of human contact with the divine. It is a “knowing” which transcends knowledge of the phenomenal world and allows the knower to experience unity with the divine. In Burt’s view, the spirit of this type of knowing is captured by George Fox’s (founder of the Quaker movement) statement: “I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that I saw the infinite love of God” (ISPU, p. 87-8).

William Johnston (1924-),² who has made a study of the mystical tradition in both the East and the West, states in *The Inner Eye of Love* (1978) that the early Christians used the term *agape* to describe a type of “knowing” in which the knower experiences union with the divine (p. 135). As he explains, it can also be described as a “mystical”

¹ Burt does not explain here what he means by “suicidal conflict” but in other similar references he associates this notion with “nuclear annihilation.” (See, for instance, ISPU pp. 295-7, particularly p. 296).

² William Johnston for many years was the Director of the Institute of Oriental Religions at the Sophia University in Tokyo.

love because it represents an experience of love that is different from erotic or romantic love—although Johnston emphasizes that the mystics often resort to erotic or romantic terms to describe it (*ibid.*, p. 139f). The difference between mystical love and these other types of love is that it has an orientation towards the divine and also reaches out as a universal love of all human beings (*ibid.*). It is for this reason that we can understand Burt's notion of love also as "mystical."¹ For instance, Burt observes that many religious pioneers, including Buddha and Jesus Christ, motivated by an "all-embracing love," "discovered that union with the divine and oneness in spirit with other men are the same experience" (ISPU, p. 289).

Johnston also uses other terms, such as "a love which has no reservations or restrictions" (*ibid.*), and "mystical love ... is intensely creative" (*ibid.*, p. 142), which echo Burt's terms. Johnston notes that the search for the experience of this kind of love has been kept alive in the Western mystical tradition and that, although the Buddhist mystics in the East do not use the term love, "*agape* exists in Buddhism and in Buddhist hearts" (*ibid.*, p. 135). In his view, Buddha's enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree can be described in terms of mystical love. For Buddha's experience represents a deep change in consciousness from which came a deep humility and compassion for other human beings (*ibid.*, p. 143). In short, Johnston could be referring to Burt's own understanding of love—an understanding which reflects the influence, not only of Buddhism, but also of the Quaker movement and early Christianity on his thought.

Love: The Creative Force in the Universe

To deepen our understanding of the notion of love that he is attempting to convey, Burt puts forward the following speculative metaphysical scheme. We call it a "speculative metaphysical scheme" because he refers to "forces," clearly of a kind that are beyond verification in the physical realm, which are the cause of effects in the latter realm. He takes these forces to be a given, that is, without question, and thus reveals another of his own basic presuppositions at work behind his later thought. In his own words:

There is an instructive relation that can be seen between love and forces perennially at work in the sub-human world. At each stage in the vast process of cosmic evolution there are forces that maintain whatever unifying order has been achieved at that stage, and there are forces that create novelty and diversity. But besides these there are also forces that *make for unity in diversity, seeking the maximum of individual freedom that is possible consistent with the stability essential to continued existence*. All these forces reveal their presence in the inorganic world; they are likewise at work in the biological realm out of which man has developed. (ISPU, p. 228; my italics).

It is the third kind of force, namely, the force that "makes for unity in diversity, and which seeks the maximum of individual freedom that is possible consistent with the

¹ In an unpublished essay entitled *The Cross of Calvary* (see Bibliography A) that Burt wrote in 1988, only a year prior to his death, he uses the term *agape* to describe the notion of love that he has in mind.

stability essential to continued existence,” which can be identified with Burt’s notion of love. For, as he states, love “at the stage of evolution marked by interaction between persons ... is the power that realizes the maximum of freedom consistent with stable order at this stage; that is its very nature. Did it fail to respect individual freedom it would not be love; did it not fail to reach out to unity with all men and thus toward an *inclusive world order* it would also not be love” (ibid., pp. 228-9; my italics).

Thus Burt explicitly makes love the driving force behind, not only evolutions, but also his vision of an *inclusive world order*. In other words, it is love that forms the metaphysical foundations of a future world community. This community will come about due to love’s active power to create new values. As Burt explains:

If coming to know another person is a dynamic interaction in which the one known is energized to reach out toward a greater and fuller life, the process is not merely action but *creation*. Love as an active power creates.

What does it create?

Primarily a new value; and then everything that naturally grows from that value—the aspirations, hopes, and imaginative insights that are thus awakened, and all the manifold modes of fulfillment that are fostered. (ISPU, p. 229)

The creation of new values occurs when an individual becomes aware that he or she is loved. For, the realization comes that he or she has a *value* that was not previously known to exist. The loved person realizes: “I have a value that I didn’t know I had before—and a value not as an instrument for someone else’s ends but to discover and seek my own ends” (ibid.).

This experience enhances the loved person’s self-esteem and “it is vital to note that it is esteem for the self that is evolving in the medium love has created” (ISPU, p. 229). Love, therefore, as a creative medium endows individuals with a new value. As part of this experience individuals discover a new self which becomes “the potential center of a vaster universe” than was previously experienced. Hence, in the individual “a responsive love is born, with the greater freedom to reach out and explore and create than had been present before” (ibid.).

Physicists and the Notion of Love as the Creative Force in the Universe

The notion of a mystical love being a creative force in the cosmos may seem at odds with the physicist’s notions of forces at work in the creation of the cosmos, such as, the Big Bang, gravitational fields, or the Second Law of Thermodynamics.¹ However, while physicists may not use the term “love” to describe forces at work in the cosmos, some, such as Ilya Prigogine, do hold that a force is at work in the cosmos creating order out of chaos. Prigogine, writing in conjunction with philosopher Isabelle

¹ Physicist Ilya Prigogine and philosopher Isabelle Stengers discuss these various theories in *Order Out of Chaos* (1984). The Second Law of Thermodynamics holds that there is an “inescapable loss of energy in the universe” and thus “the world machine is really running down” or “aging” (pp. xix-xx). An implication of this theory is that “time is a one-way street,” hence “irreversible” (p. xx). Entropy is a concept which quantifies the loss or dissipation of energy (p. 117f).

Stengers in *Order Out of Chaos* (1984), argues that

while some parts of the universe may operate like machines, these are closed systems, and closed systems, at best, form only a small part of the physical universe. Most phenomena of interest to us are, in fact, *open* systems, exchanging energy for matter ... with their environment. Surely biological and social systems are open, which means that the attempt to understand them in mechanistic terms is doomed to failure. This suggests, moreover, that most of reality, instead of being orderly, stable, and equilibrated, is seething and bubbling with change, disorder, and process. (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984, p. xv; italics in original)

Prigogine's thesis is that it is precisely due to this "seething and bubbling" disorder, or chaos, that new order, or organization—and hence life—is created spontaneously. The cycle repeats itself as this new order, in time, dissipates into chaos (*ibid.*, p. xv-xxi).

The notions that Prigogine is expressing here, in many respects, seem compatible with, or compliment, some of Burt's notions. For instance, for both Prigogine and Burt reality is not stable and orderly, it is dynamic; Burt's notion of "unity being created out of diversity" seems to echo Prigogine's notion of "order being created out of chaos;" and Burt's expectation that an "inclusive world order" will be created out of the dynamic interaction between individuals, is not untoward in the light of Prigogine's notion that human social systems, as with other biological systems, are open, given sufficient chaos, to spontaneous change and the creation of a new order. It is possible this new order will be some form of world community.

In any event, many of the notions expressed by Burt in his later thought, *do* find firm support in the thought of physicist Paul Davies. In his work *The Mind of God* (1992), Davies, after discussing all the contemporary theories concerning the creation of the cosmos, observes that:

There is no doubt that many scientists are opposed temperamentally to any form of metaphysical, let alone mystical arguments. They are scornful of the notion that there might exist a God, or even an impersonal creative principle or ground of being that would underpin reality and render its contingent aspects less starkly arbitrary. ... It seems at least worth trying to construct a metaphysical theory that reduces some of the arbitrariness of the world. But in the end a rational explanation for the world in the sense of a closed and complete system of logical truths is almost certainly impossible. We are barred from ultimate knowledge, from ultimate explanation, by the very rules of reasoning that prompt us to seek such an explanation in the first place. If we wish to progress beyond, we have to embrace a different concept of "understanding" from that of rational explanation. Possibly the mystical path is a way to such an understanding. ... Maybe ... [mystical experiences] provide the only route beyond the limits to which science and philosophy can take us, the only possible path to the Ultimate. (Davies, 1992, pp. 231-2).

Davies is arguing precisely along the lines that Burt did some thirty years prior—except that Burt goes a step further than Davies. Burt attempts to construct a metaphysical scheme that reduces at least some of the arbitrariness of the world by developing the notion of a world community.

Burt also believes that his theory of expanding awareness holds the key not only to developing a route beyond the current limits imposed by the presuppositions of science

and philosophy but also is a “mystical” path to the Ultimate. In addition, Burt holds, using Davies’ terms, that the “creative principle or ground of being that would underpin reality and render its contingent aspects less starkly arbitrary” can be found in his notion of “love.”

Love as a “Basic Law”

Not content to assert that love is a “creative force” at work in the cosmos and in human relations, Burt also holds that there is a “basic law” in relation to love (ISPU, p. 229). This law, in his view, holds that a love that is directed to narrower individualistic ends, will eventually lead to disillusionment (*ibid.*). By contrast, a “fearless love,” which has the qualities of universal and all-inclusive sensitivity, will elicit a response in kind and exemplifies the power of creativity. Indeed, the “joy of loving is the joy of creating, in the most expansive realm in which creation is possible—as Plato discovered long ago in his *Symposium*” (*ibid.*, pp. 229-230).

Although Burt does not quote Plato, we assume that he is referring to the speech in which Socrates declares:

He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty He who ... ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive that beauty is not far from the end. And the true order of going ... to the things of love, is to begin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards ... until he arrives at the absolute beauty [In] that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be able to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities ... and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of god and be immortal, if mortal man may. (Plato, *The Symposium*, transl. by Benjamin Jowett, 1963, pp. 80-1)

Socrates thus leads the seeker of love, or truth, into a mystical contemplation of beauty which brings forth, or creates, not merely “images of beauty,” but “realities” which, in turn, nourish “true virtue.” This notion resonates with Burt’s notion that love creates new realities, or new perceptions of the universe, along with new values.

“The Inflow Within Our Present Horizon of a More Perfect Love Beyond”

Clearly captured by his own presuppositions, that is, he believes that his foregoing arguments represent, in his own words, “persuasive evidence,” Burt is led to make further claims concerning an ever more mystical notion of love.

[A] more venturesome insight [concerning love] looms ahead than any that would earlier have seemed plausible. Already we have seen *persuasive evidence* that, ultimately, growth in each individual and in the human race is growth in unobstructed sensitivity and alert responsiveness—that is, in love. The essence of the cosmic evolution at the human level would seem to be unending progress from the greatest love yet realized toward the greater love that always lies ahead.

Dare we envisage the possibility that this progress may be—as the seers of religion have also held—the inflow within our present horizon of a more perfect love beyond, which is slowly creating us in its image and at the same time re-creating our universe? (ISPU, p. 230; my italics)

Irrespective of how we understand the ultimate of source of love, in Burt's view, its creative inflow is always bringing new meaning to value-concepts, or ideals, which, in turn, are re-creating the human universe.

This process begins when a spiritual pioneer gains a new insight into the ideal of love. The problem, however, is how to communicate its meaning in a contemporary situation. Existing words and the habits of tradition will, by their very nature, inhibit the recognition of a novel idea. The solution to this dilemma is that the pioneer imparts the meaning of a new ideal by exemplifying a new way of action and demonstration. The Gospel of St John, for example, "describes Jesus at the Last Supper as teaching his disciples such a new ideal. He led them beyond the [narrow] meaning of love rooted in their experience of family life and in their concept of the kindly but stern God of the prophets" and introduced instead a notion of universal love (ISPU, p. 230). "How was this achieved if not by his exemplification of the new ideal in the loving acts that accompanied his words?" (ibid.).

Philosophers, or more particularly metaphysicians, also have a role to play in bringing about new understandings of love. When they reconstruct a prevailing framework of presuppositions, they create "a new conceptual framework, which, if it succeeds, will guide thought in the centuries that follow and give a new unity to the experience of those thus guided" (ibid., pp. 231-3). Of course, this statement could also be applied to Burt's own project to reconstruct the philosophical presuppositions of both the East and West in order to develop the metaphysical foundations of a future world community. In short, for Burt the role of a philosophical pioneer is not only to understand, but also to "create reality" (ibid., p. 231). By this notion, of course, he does not mean that metaphysicians create the physical universe. Instead, because any perception of "reality" is, in the final analysis, a set of particular basic presuppositions, underpinned by particular valuations, he means that philosophical (and religious) pioneers create new presuppositions and valuations and hence a new reality. Put another way, every person has a set of "mental spectacles" which dictate their world view, their perception of reality, and if the lenses on these spectacles are changed so will be their world view or their view of reality.

A prime example of this notion at work is the change that occurred in Western people's perception of reality that occurred during the transition from the medieval world-view to the world-view of modern science. The view through their medieval "mental spectacles" posited the earth at the center of the universe with the sun and stars revolving around it. This was their reality. Once the lens on the mental spectacles was changed by the early modern philosopher/scientists, this view of reality also changed.

Burt's project, as by now is evident, is to encourage metaphysicians in the late twentieth century era to practice his theory of expanding awareness in order to bring about a similar change in people's view of reality. After all, who can claim the modern

scientific view of reality is any more “correct,” or sound, than the medieval view? Indeed, as Burt points out in *Metaphysical Foundations*, modern science, which places such importance on empirical knowledge, ironically cannot empirically support its own claims to have the “correct” view of reality. That is, it cannot verify or falsify that its view of reality is sound—and this is no more evident than in the controversies among contemporary physicists concerning the beginning of the cosmos. In the final analysis, modern science simply presupposes that its view of reality *is* sound. It is this “simple” belief, or presupposition, at the foundation of modern science which means that science, after all, has a *metaphysical* foundation—that is, a foundation *beyond* the physical realm.

The Moral Bankruptcy of the West and the Need for World Community

Central to the new “reality” that Burt the metaphysician wants to “map” for future human beings, of course, is the notion of a world community founded on the virtue of love. This virtue, in his view, is needed to overcome the moral relativism and confusion that now permeates, in particular, the West. For, as he notes, while some traditional religious beliefs were carried over from the ancient and medieval world into the modern world, the inherent metaphysical foundations of these beliefs have now collapsed (ISPU, p. 293). Contemporary human beings are thus without the moral foundations which previously guided a whole realm of human affairs. In place of the old traditional order only moral confusion now reigns. The “fundamental questions—*Are there any moral laws? On what are they grounded?*—have not been convincingly answered” (ISPU, p. 294; Burt’s italics).

Alasdair MacIntyre, writing some years later, was to make this same point the central focus of his arguments in *After Virtue* (1982). He argues that “we [in the West] have—very largely, if not entirely—lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality” (MacIntyre, 1982, p. 2). In MacIntyre’s view, the roots of the contemporary “grave disorder” in the realm of morality or virtue, lie in the early modern era when moral philosophers first began to discredit the Aristotelian teleology which, until then, had provided a rational framework for the virtues which underpinned medieval society (MacIntyre, 1982, p. 256f). But, he believes that this problem is now so acute that all the major contemporary schools of philosophy, the analytic, phenomenological, and existentialist schools, not only do not have the resources to resolve the problem, but also they cannot even recognize the problem (*ibid.*, p. 2).

Burt, of course, did recognize this problem and also—as early as the 1920s—traces its source to the collapse of the medieval world-view. In *Metaphysical Foundations* he argues that attempts by modern philosophers “to reinstate man with his high spiritual claims in a place of importance in the cosmic scheme” have constantly failed (MF, p. 25). He argues that the reason for this failure is that the modern

philosophers are arguing from *within* the presuppositions of modern science which inherently preclude a resolution of the problem (*ibid.*, p. 17). Having grasped this insight in the 1920s, Burt made it his life's task to develop the philosophical resources to resolve the problem. Unlike MacIntyre who drew on the Western tradition only, Burt searched for insights in both the East and the West.

It is interesting to note that MacIntyre seeks to resolve the disarray that he has perceived in the area of morality by the concept of community. However, MacIntyre's concept of community bears little similarity to Burt's concept of a world community. MacIntyre seeks to situate morality at the heart of community based on some form of a teleological Aristotelian tradition, that is, a community founded on virtues which were practiced in, and found their end, or *telos*, within the community (MacIntyre, 1982, pp. 254f & 277f). In short, MacIntyre wants to reinstate the Aristotelian teleological moral regime which reigned in the medieval era and proposes a form of community that operates within the confines of a nation-state. Burt, by contrast, has in mind a world community which supersedes nation-states and which is composed of individuals who are growing on the path of self-realization. He believes that "the dominant urge of most people" to identify with "the power and prestige of their nation" is a subterfuge to avoid facing their "galling sense of personal weakness" (ISPU, p. 292).

Thus, while MacIntyre is looking back to the medieval community, Burt is looking forward to a community that has not yet become a reality. Indeed, in his view, in the long term, the breakdown in the ancient and medieval metaphysical structures "is not only inevitable but good; it will lead to a more dynamic orientation, which can adapt itself to all evolving realities and be fully open to new possibilities" (ISPU, p. 294).

Conclusion

Burt suggests a picture of modern humanity struggling in a confused manner down a road. Looking behind, they see a bridge, an analogy for the old metaphysics and moral order. But the bridge has collapsed and the road beyond it has become impassable. Moreover, there is no will to rebuild it. Hence, humanity cannot retreat. In this situation there is great danger and great hope. On one hand, humanity, due to its moral and metaphysical confusion and driven by destructive emotions, could fall into the abyss of nuclear annihilation. On the other hand, there is the possibility of "mapping" new metaphysical roads, including new ways of understanding reality and the Divine.

This possibility is itself a dynamic orientation which exemplifies the evolving nature of reality. It is the role of metaphysicians to "map" these future possibilities and future realities by revising the criteria of prevailing notions of form, fact, and value in the light of, and motivated by, love. This process of revision, however, can be carried out only if the philosophers firstly subject their own presuppositions and valuations to revision through the application of their capacity of expanding awareness.

Chapter 9

Burt as Prophet

“Magnificent Visions”

In his final years, from the late 1970s until his death aged ninety-seven years in 1989, Burt not only pursued the role of a speculative metaphysician but also consciously took on the role of prophet. Evidence for his adoption of this role of prophet can be found throughout his final works, namely, the books *The Human Journey* (1981) (HJ), *Light, Love, and Life* (1985) (LLL), and the unpublished manuscript, *Philosophy: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (1987-88) (PYTT).¹ We have already referred to aspects of these works, particularly to gain insight into his theory of expanding awareness. However, they also provide a medium for Burt to apply his previous philosophical insights in order to pursue the role of prophet. At this time, of course, the vast majority of his contemporaries were immersed in the analytic movement and the basic presuppositions they adhered to were strongly opposed to the notion of a philosopher as speculative metaphysician let alone a philosopher as prophet.

The division between Burt and the majority of his colleagues is nowhere more apparent than in his 1970 essay “The Philosophy of Man as an All-Embracing Philosophy.” This is the essay in which Burt describes the analytic movement in the twentieth century as “a succession of analytic fads” (PMAP, p. 167). For Burt, the presuppositions of the analytic movement provide too narrow a perspective of reality. Hence, he believes “the greatest challenge to philosophers today in our part of the world is the challenge to recover an inclusive view of life and the universe—an all-embracing orientation” (PMAP, p. 159). It was in pursuit of this notion that he retired to his study overlooking the rapids of Fall Creek in Ithaca² and pursued the role of prophet.

Burt pursued this role because he was “increasingly frustrated” and “deeply distressed” by the contemporary state of philosophy in America. As he states in the Preface to *Philosophy: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (hereafter *Philosophy*), in the sixty years since publishing *Metaphysical Foundations*:

I have become increasingly frustrated at the failure of my philosophical colleagues to follow up this quest for wider historical understanding. Indeed, many seem ready to respond to the lure of parochial issues that give no scope to their philosophical genius. But the whole course of growing human experience lies before us with its challenge to our understanding. I am deeply distressed as I look at the continually missed opportunity to roam over the all-encompassing arena of the vast universe we inhabit and to pioneer boldly toward what grasp of its mystery is possible.

¹ See Bibliography A.

² In 1982, after Burt had published *The Human Journey*, he was interviewed by Martin B. Stiles of the *Cornell Chronicle*. Stiles writes, in part: “Burt, the Susan Linn Sage Professor of Philosophy Emeritus ... still writes for several hours a day five-days a week at his home on Willard Way overlooking Ithaca Falls” (*Cornell Chronicle*, Thursday November 11th, 1982, p. 7).

In the past, religious seers have done what they could to meet this provocative need, but their doctrines no longer persuade intelligent minds. Magnificent visions must be possible that match [the seers'] boundless outreach while freeing the insights [the seers] have glimpsed from all sectarian doctrines. (PYTT, pp. 1-2)

Thus Burt in his final works set out to “roam over the all-encompassing arena of the vast universe” in order to achieve “magnificent visions” and inspire his colleagues to do likewise. Central to this goal, of course, is his theory of expanding awareness.

Prophecy and Prediction—Magic and Science

According to Burt, the “vertical” dimension of the capacity of expanding awareness, that is, that aspect which can understand the past in terms of changes in presuppositions, can also reach “out toward the future, striving to encompass it in its continuity with the present” (PYTT, p. 90). He acknowledges that this is a “very ambitious venture” because its nature makes it a prophetic quest. However, when we think of the adjective “prophetic” we also ought to think of the verb “to predict,” which is so central to modern science (*ibid.*). That is, the notion of prophecy can be understood as a prediction concerning future matters in the realm of human affairs in a similar way to which modern scientists seek to predict occurrences in nature. To elaborate on this connection between the terms prophecy and prediction, Burt draws a connection between the notion of prediction in both science and primitive magic.

[C]onsider the magical orientation of primitive thinking. The magician sought to explain nature in terms that assure predictive knowledge, but his success was meager and we can see why. The forces he believed responsible for the way things happen could be induced—so he confidently believed—to make their happening favorable to man’s needs by performing an appropriate rite. ... The major difference between the primitive magician and the modern scientist is that the scientist has learned important lessons about the forces at work [in nature] that the magician had not learned.

Ancient science among the Greeks largely freed itself from the deceptive associations of primitive magic, but at the cost of replacing the quest for predictive knowledge by a search for comprehensive and supposedly final explanations. Modern science explicitly returned to the aggressive quest for predictive knowledge, this time in an orientation that distinguishes reliable causal relations from vivid mental associations projected on the powers supposed to operate in nature. What modern scientists conceive as natural laws are temporal regularities that permit confident prediction of effects through observing and experimenting with their causes. (PYTT, p. 93-4)

Thus the role of the scientist is to discover more reliable causal relations than the primitive magician is able to achieve. Having ascertained reliable causal relations, the scientist therefore becomes more successful at prediction than the primitive magician.

However, setting the stage for the notion of prophecy in the realm of human affairs, Burt argues that, irrespective of how successful the scientist may become at prediction, there are always subjective factors at work in making such predictions. Any predictions that a scientist makes are always conceived within an existing conceptual framework, or set of presuppositions, and always tested for veracity within a conceptual framework.

But, in the case of long term predictions, it is possible that by the time the prediction is tested, the conceptual framework in which it was originally made will have been superseded (PYTT p. 99).

Thus, Burt contends, while modern science is occupied with making predictions about future relations in physical nature, which may or may not be valid depending upon the presuppositions that will test the outcome, a rewarding task would be to predict the composition of future sets of presuppositions which may test the current predictions of science. As he explains, suppose "one could predict, say for the year 2500 A.D., whatever changes will occur between now and then in the concepts and presuppositions that dominate scientific ways of thinking and in the conceptual framework expressing them" then, what may now seem a reasonable scientific prediction, may not be so in light of another set of presuppositions (*ibid.*).¹ He acknowledges that this notion may seem "incredible" but points out that if ancient thinkers had been perceptive enough they may have prophesied that the presuppositions underlying the claims to knowledge by intuitionism and rationalism would one day be

¹ In short, Burt is arguing the need, that he first raised in *Metaphysical Foundations*, for a reconstruction of the presuppositions underlying modern science and its method. His own perception of his role in this project is illuminating. Writing in 1965, shortly after Thomas Kuhn published his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [1962] (1970), Burt contends that he is concerned with "major revolutions" in the history of science, rather than the "minor revolutions" that occupy Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. While Burt acknowledges that Kuhn has valuable insights for understanding "minor" scientific revolutions, such insights do not take account of the major revolutions with which he, Burt, was concerned. Burt contends that Kuhn is only concerned with minor scientific revolutions because he limits his concern to changes that have occurred in modern science to the ideas expressed by thinkers such as Galileo, Newton, Lavoisier, and Einstein. Kuhn "portrays the history of science as a sequence of revolutions from the dominance of one major theory to that of another, interspersed by (often lengthy) periods in which 'normal science' is occupied in elaborating the then prevailing theory and achieving a closer fit between it and nature" (ISPU, p. 165). However, Burt asserts, these revolutions can be seen in "a long-run view of history, as minor rather than major transformations" (*ibid.*). For in the long-run view, "vaster upheavals are also visible, each of which takes centuries or even longer to be completed and in which no single thinker or group of thinkers plays more than a quite limited role" (*ibid.*). Kuhn's work, he argues, is only concerned with minor revolutions within the second of the two major upheavals that can be identified in the history of science (*ibid.*, pp. 165 & 171). One of the "two major upheavals" to which Burt is referring concerns the development of science by the ancient Greeks and its influence of medieval science. The other is the revolution that occurred when modern science displaced medieval science (*ibid.*, pp. 160-1). As Burt elaborates:

[The] essential difference between a major revolution, or upheaval, and ... minor transformations is that in the former the dominant interest governing the search for knowledge changes, and with it the whole conception of what scientific explanation requires; whereas in the latter the dominant interest and conception remain unchanged, and all that happens is that the theory which had served as a model in guiding the work of normal science under that conception is replaced by another. To call the latter "minor" transformations should not be taken to mean that they involve no significant changes in the scientists' methods and way of looking at the universe. It does mean that the major transformations involve far more drastic changes -- one might say that when such an upheaval has taken place scientists find themselves living in a different universe than they had lived in before, and picturing the truth they seek in different terms. The meaning of all their categories has been revised. (ISPU, pp. 165-6)

It is this latter task of revising the meaning of the categories of science that Burt wants to achieve as part of his development of a post-empiricist metaphysics.

Interestingly, Imre Lakatos, in the book *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* [1970] (1982), argues that Kuhn has an intellectual debt to Burt (and to Koyré and Karl R. Popper) (p. 92n).

surpassed by the presuppositions of empiricism (*ibid.*, pp. 99-100). He is not suggesting that ancient thinkers could have anticipated specific discoveries of modern science. Rather, that ancient thinkers, given a “prophetic glimpse”, might have realized that, because their knowledge and truth claims led to conflicting results, a future orientation may introduce a new criterion to decide between such claims (*ibid.*, p. 100).

In sum, Burt challenges thinkers to make predictions about the nature of the presuppositions that will underlie and dictate future thinkers’ epistemological concerns. In his own words, “the ultimate kind of prediction” thinkers are “challenged to make is not prediction of specific physical or social events, important though that often is, but a wise forecast as to how future thinkers will describe and explain the world. One who succeeds in this venture would live and think in a much broader time-span than is experienced otherwise; his or her universe is a vaster reality” (PYTT, p. 103).

Presuppositions, Prophecy and the Creation of New “Cosmic Visions”

In Burt’s view, because an “intrinsic relation” exists between “prophecy and creation,” there is an imperative need for philosophers to predict the nature of the presuppositions that will dictate the knowledge claims of the future (PYTT, p. 105). That is, a philosopher-prophet can assist in the creation of the future reality in which human beings will live by predicting the nature of future presuppositions which, in turn, may influence people’s decisions and thus become self-fulfilling prophecies (*ibid.*, p. 105-106). Such prediction, in his view, “acts as a causal force, so that the people in question are more likely to act as predicted than they would be otherwise” (*ibid.*, p. 106). An example of this factor at work in the area of human relations is the practice of a parent or teacher either criticising or praising their children or students. A prophecy such as “You’ll never be good for anything!” may become a self-fulfilling. By contrast, an affirmative comment may produce a different outcome. Thus, a “self-fulfilling prophecy illustrates clearly how the prophet of a hopeful future is also a creator of that future” (*ibid.*, p. 107). In Burt’s case, of course, his intention is to apply this notion in a universal sense: “The greater human good that thus comes to be realized would not have been realized in just that form had ... [the predictor] failed to envision and prophesy that possibility” (*ibid.*).

The problem, in Burt’s view, is that philosophers in the past have generally not consciously attempted to predict the future. “Their assumption was that they were superscientists, not prophetic sages” (PYTT, p. 108). However, he challenges this assumption and suggests that philosophers now abandon the presuppositions that underlie it. For “they have never been accepted as superscientists and it may well be that the most successful among them are best viewed as prophetic sages” due to their influence on the shaping of human thought over long period of time (*ibid.*). For instance, although they did not deliberately set out to be prophets, both Aristotle and Descartes, to name but two philosophers, have influenced human thinking and their place in the

cosmos for extended periods of time. However, consider the growth in “the sensitive awareness of thinking men and women” that might be attained if a philosophical pioneers deliberately set out to create the presuppositions and valuations that foster such growth (*ibid.*, p. 110).

If philosophers exercise their capacity for prediction and, if their ideas were able to satisfy the needs of successive generations, Burt believes that it would be seen that they had consciously assisted in the creation of new “cosmic visions” which underpin the world of human affairs (PYTT, p. 111). Indeed:

Cosmic creation was not finished in the past; the process ever continues, and it is visible in the achievement of the great spiritual leaders, philosophers, and theoretical scientists. As they from time to time *revise or replace basic presuppositions about the structure of the universe* and the course of history, they are engaging in the inspired task of cosmic creation. The task is never finished, for a cosmos superior to any thus far envisioned is always possible. (PYTT, p. 112; *my italics*)

In sum, Burt believes that this whole process of prediction and “cosmic creation” which we can take to mean the creation of sets of presuppositions that dictate the nature of reality, to date has generally been an unconscious one. Instead, he wants this process to be recognized for what it is, and to become a conscious project.

The major quality of the “pioneering philosophers” who attempt this task will be the quality of “sensitive empathy” for other people’s viewpoints. The very practice of this quality, which is central to his theory of expanding awareness, means that philosophers will be taking account of other people’s presuppositions and, hence, the process of presupposition revision can occur. However, Burt warns philosophers undertaking this task not to succumb to the temptation of making dogmatic or grandiose claims concerning their vision of the future. This must be avoided to ensure that the predictors’ successors are able to explore reality in their own way and in light of their own needs. This warning does not preclude a philosopher from putting forward a “universally persuasive” view (PYTT, p. 114). It means that the philosopher must avoid claiming that their vision *will* be the future. This warning would seem to apply, for instance, to Karl Marx’s prophecy that capitalism *would* collapse in the future and that a universal classless society *would* be established.

Physical Science Must be Subject to Social Science

Exercising his own capacity of prediction, one of the prophecies that Burt makes is the notion that while in the past the social sciences have followed the tendencies of the physical sciences, in the future this relationship will be reversed. That is, instead of the physical sciences leading the development of humanity, they will be made to serve a “science of man” (PYTT, p. 101). The “crucial consideration” supporting this “prophecy is ... that physical science is one of the varied things that men and women do; it is how they act when they seek knowledge of the physical environment” (*ibid.*, p. 102).

In short, for all its claims to objectivity, science (or empiricism) is the subjective

action of human beings who always bring to it a set of particular presuppositions. This being so, if social science and philosophy revise such presuppositions from time to time, physical science can be made to serve particular human ends, that is, it can be channelled to serve creative rather than destructive ends (*ibid.*, pp. 102-4). Burt no doubt has in mind the work of scientists who develop nuclear weapons,¹ but in the late twentieth century the development of genetic engineering, with its many possibilities including the development of human clones, has led to increasing calls for physical science to forgo the presupposition of “knowledge for knowledge’s sake.”² Instead, it is argued that science ought to become subject to ethical standards.³

One of the major problems with modern science, in Burt’s view, is that it maintains the notion of an external reality which can be discovered and manipulated. He does not deny that it can achieve this end, and achieve it well. His point is that any such discovery and manipulation always has a reciprocal influence on human beings. As he contends: “Men and women are ever interacting with each other and the world around them, and the ultimate questions inevitably raised when we try to understand that interaction lead for their answer to forces at work in man. Knowledge and realization of truth are always the outcome of an interaction between the human inquirer and his world, in which the former plays as vital a part as the latter” (PYTT, p. 116). Thus the pursuit of knowledge ought to cease being “a quest to find out what the world is, but instead what human beings are taking it to be or making it become” (*ibid.*).

Burt prophesies is that, in time, human beings will set limits on the amount of control they desire over nature, at which time “another transformation will take place

¹ In this same work Burt states: “When a thinker today surveys the evolution of the human race he easily assumes that the major part of history has already passed. The nuclear crisis strengthens that assumption. But let us be open to the optimistic faith that the opposite is the truth—that man as a species of life on this planet is still in his childhood; infinite possibilities may lie ahead. It is possible that thus far men and women have only begun to develop their marvellous powers of perception, comprehension, and realization. Philosophy then may also be in its childhood (PYTT, p. 115).

² For an insight into this debate see the essays published in *Science and Religion, Opposing Viewpoints*, (Greenhaven Press, San Diego, CA, 1988). Liebe F. Cavalieri, in the essay entitled “Ethical Values Should Limit Scientific Research,” argues that because scientists are ignoring the ethical implications of their work and pursuing knowledge for its own sake, humanity is headed for a “technological disaster” (p. 202). Interestingly, Huston Smith has also contributed an essay entitled “Science Has Corrupted Religious Values.” In part, Smith, argues that modern science is responsible for “ontological strip mining” and has required human beings to “sacrifice” the wider “reality of the world—its beauty, its holiness and crucial expanses of truth—in return for a mathematical scheme whose prime advantage was to help man manipulate matter on its own plane” (p. 213). Burt would agree wholeheartedly.

³ Burt contributed an essay devoted to the issue of ethics and science and entitled “The Value Presuppositions of Science” to *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (Vol. 13, No. 3, 1957). In this essay, he argues: “My contention is that it is one of the great tasks of scientists and philosophers of science—indeed, the most insistent task at the present moment in history—to distinguish between different sorts of order in the world, and to envision the type of order that is appropriate on the one hand to the scientists’ material and on the other to the valid human ends which that material should rightly serve. Any other order, whether we wish it so or not, will inevitably serve some less valid or even undesirable human end. ... The problem is not merely to establish a sound moral control over the application of scientific discoveries reached by our present techniques. The whole structure of the science of man, theoretical as well as practical, must be reconstructed so that it will harmonize with our moral and spiritual vision, and will become an effective instrument for its progressive realization” (p. 106).

comparable to the historical transformation from ancient to modern science, as a result of which thinkers will presuppose a new kind of orderly structure in nature. It will be so conceived that knowledge of it can serve whatever human value becomes dominant in that epoch which has not yet dawned” (PMAP, p. 169). He suggests that the “value of aesthetic and *mystic rapport with nature*”¹ may “replace the present zest [by science] for greater manipulative control”² (ISPU, p. 175; my italics). This is not to say that science will lose its insistence on “objectivity.” For the notion of “objectivity does not imply externality” (PMAP, p. 170). Certainly, “for truth to be objective requires it to be external to the individual mind” but when “thinkers transcend subjectivity ... they do not leave human ways of perceiving and explaining behind” (*ibid.*). That is: “The sciences do not tell us what the world is like apart from what man is like” (*ibid.*). Hence, the principles of science and “a philosophy of man” coincide.

Moreover, in Burt’s view, a “philosophy of man” which, he explains, is “a short equivalent for a ‘*philosophy of the universe in which man fills an inescapably central place*’—inescapably because our concern is always with what he actively experiences as he interacts with other realities” (PYTT, p. 116; my italics). Of course, in arguing for a “philosophy of the universe” in which human beings occupy “an inescapably central place” and achieve a “mystic rapport with nature,” Burt is again articulating the notion of a post-empiricist metaphysic which would enable human beings to experience a sense of “at-home-ness” in the universe. When he first speculated on the need for such a metaphysic in *Metaphysical Foundations* in the 1920s he believed that the task of developing it was beyond him (MF, p. 325). However, by the 1980s, some sixty years later, clearly his reticence had abated. By this time he felt confident enough to not only

¹ In short, Burt is calling for “the reenchantment of the world” as Morris Berman was to argue some years later in his book of the same title (Cornell University Press, 1981). Berman argues the need for a new metaphysics which establishes an intimate rapport between human beings and nature instead of the regime of modern science which posits human beings as isolated observers manipulating nature. Berman, in many respects echoing Burt’s call since 1924 for a post-scientific metaphysics, does acknowledge an intellectual debt to Burt—but like so many other scholars he only refers to Burt’s *Metaphysical Foundations*. He seems to be unaware of Burt’s later thought. Berman’s references to Burt’s *Metaphysical Foundations* appear on pages 51 and 183 of *The Enchantment of the World*, although he omits to mention these citations in his Index. Yet another scholar who pursues this theme is Warwick Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology, Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism* (1990).

² Burt suggests to his readers that they do “not miss a passage discussing from a psychoanalytic viewpoint the motivations behind physical science, and the ways in which they are likely to change with the growing maturity of man. See N. O. Brown, *Life Against Death*, (Modern Library Paperbacks, New York, 1959, p. 236)” (ISPU, p. 175n). In this passage Brown argues, in part, that:

There is a an attack on the great god Science in psychoanalysis What is being probed, and found to be in some sense morbid, is not knowledge as such, but the unconscious schemata governing the pursuit of knowledge in modern civilization—specifically the aim of possession or mastery over objects (Freud), and the principle of economizing in the means (Ferenczi). And the morbidity imputed into these schemata, if interpreted in the context of the whole libido theory, amounts to this: possessive mastery over nature and rigourously economical thinking are partial impulses of the human being (the human body) which in modern civilization have become tyrant organizers of the whole of human life; abstraction from the reality of the whole body and substitution of the abstracted impulse for the whole body are inherent in *Homo economicus*. In contrast, ... [the aim of] a nonmorbid science ... would not be mastery but union with nature. (Brown, Norman O., [1959] 1977, p. 236)

suggest the nature of the presuppositions that may form a post-empiricist metaphysic but also to offer prophecies concerning the future.

New Spiritual Awakening

The notion of “Burt as prophet” is encapsulated in the following passage. It is taken from a chapter appropriately entitled “Journeying Beyond the Horizon” in *The Human Journey* (1981):

It is not enough to peer into the future if one is cautiously fearful of prophesying anything that would not seem probable to a meticulous historian. In venturing another kind of prophecy, I am aware of the grave risk but also of the insistent call today for a prophetic vision. No such vision will be perfect, but to fill its valuable role it does not need to be. ... [O]ur prophesying will be confined to the semi-hidden area of man’s deepest experience—that is, the area of his spiritual growth. ...

I prophesy that a new surge of spiritual pioneering will come, possibly as momentous as the remarkable widespread surge in the sixth century B.C. It is needed now as much as it was then. But it will almost surely take a different form than such surges have taken in the past. Of course what has always been central to religion will not be lost—any new surge will provide a way of meeting the total challenge of life, and thus a sustaining at-home-ness in an all-encompassing universe will through it be realized. (HJ, p. 163)

Again, this latter notion of “sustaining at-home-ness in an all-encompassing universe,” echoes his consistent call for a post-empiricist metaphysic which restores human beings to a meaningful place in the cosmos.

Arguing the need for philosophers to interpret these new spiritual insights into a “coherent philosophy” (which we can take to mean a post-empiricist metaphysics), he forecasts the development of “a transformed cosmic perspective and a transformed ideal of spiritual progress” (HJ, p. 164). This notion, at first sight, may seem to evoke the millenarian vision of a “new heaven and new earth” as described in *The Book of Revelation*: “Then I saw new heavens and a new earth. The former heavens and the former earth had passed away ... I heard a loud voice ... cry out: ‘This is God’s dwelling among men. He shall dwell with them and they shall be his people and he shall be their God who is always with them’” (Ch. 21). However, Burt clarifies that such a vision is not to be taken as part of his prophecies for the future.

The teaching of the great [spiritual and philosophical] pioneers was naturally couched in the framework of ideas about the cosmic scene and human history that were plausible in their day but are no longer so. People then could believe that above the flat disc of the earth hangs the protecting canopy of the starry heavens where God eternally reigns, and that the flow of time is as finite as geographical space—it began with God’s creation of the world about 4000 years earlier and will end when His purpose is fulfilled in a new heaven and a new earth. (HJ, p. 164)

However, because the presuppositions that pertained to the cosmic experience of human beings in ancient times have now changed, the notion of a completely “new heaven and a new earth” would no longer be persuasive (*ibid.*). Thus there is a need for a new vision articulated in presuppositions that will be meaningful in the contemporary world.

This new vision, which first and foremost will be a spiritual awakening according

to Burt, will not be the vision of any one person but of many (HJ, p. 169). It will draw on insights from the East and the West which means the people in the future will be the “heirs of Confucius and Lao-tze as well as of Plato and Plotinus” (ibid., p. 168). It will also draw insights from both men and women because “future religion will leave behind the male supremacy that has been such a disgrace to the civilized faiths of the past” (ibid., p. 169). The leaders of any organization that springs from such a vision will inherently collaborate with all participants. As Burt states: “I prophesy that they will meet and converse, will learn from each other, and will experience the encouraging support such collaboration can bring” (ibid.). He adds: “I prophesy that the perceptive leaders of the future will avoid the mistake of wanting their disciples to be docile followers” (ibid.). They would not be docile because, “in their unqualified openness to truth and to truth-seekers everywhere,” they would be constantly drawing new insights from numerous sources rather than from merely those put forward by their leaders (ibid.).

An important moral implication of this prophecy, in Burt’s view, is that it “can only be wisely fulfilled as men and women become able to guide their conduct by moral principles freely and understandingly accepted instead of by rules laid down by some authority” (HJ, p. 170). To continue to follow rules laid down by an external authority, he argues, is to remain at the level of a child in early childhood who obeys the parents. An adult, by contrast, ought to follow moral precepts that have their source within their own being (ibid.). The moral ideal at the heart of Burt’s prophecies is to realize a time when each individual is able to expand their awareness to the extent that all their senses and their thinking achieve harmony and unity with whole of reality (ibid. p. 172f). He prophesies that this ideal will find its political expression in a “peaceful world community” (ibid., p. 172).

Extinction of the Human Race and Immortality

In the role of prophet, however, Burt looks beyond the notion of a world community as the inevitable outcome of human history. Instead, the final occurrence will be extinction of the whole human species. Even if this outcome is not self-inflicted through nuclear annihilation or “ecological suicide,” it will occur because “the physical conditions on which it depends will not last forever” (HJ, p. 173): “the life of the human race is finite in time [and hence it] ... will live henceforth with the stark possibility of expiring at any moment” (ibid.). In arguing thus, Burt is carrying the existentialist orientation to its extreme. No longer is it that each individual must come to terms with the inevitability of death; now it is the whole of the human race that must live with the inevitability of its extinction.

However, in Burt’s view, the threat of extinction of the human race is not a cause for pessimism. Indeed, the reverse is true. It carries the seed of “an unexpected challenge to spiritual understanding” and, moreover, offers the challenge of the notion

of immortality for each individual and the whole human race (HJ, p. 173 & 175). To understand this “challenge”, we firstly need to take account of an ancient notion, common to religion, namely, that the finite life of “individual” human beings is related, through the concept of a “soul,” to the Infinite whole of reality. However, if two presuppositions pertaining to the concepts of “soul” and “individuality” are revised this ancient notion takes on new significance. As Burt explains:

[The first presupposition] is expressed in the theological definition of “soul” as a metaphysical substance that at any given time is either wholly present or absent; the other [second presupposition] is expressed in the social and political notion of individuality—the notion that every person is a separate entity, intrinsically independent of all other persons. ...

As for the first, when a person examines the process of basic growth [of the personality], does not the ancient definition of soul lose all plausibility? He discovers that core of himself is not a fixed substance but an exuberant energy, ever leaving some of its elements behind and adding others through which greater selfhood is realized. But especially intriguing possibilities appear when the second presupposition is thoughtfully examined. Every person is an individual, and his individuality never needs to be lost. But no person is separated from other persons. The presupposition that individuality involves separate existence ... [overlooks] that person as [being] an energetic process of interaction with the world and especially with other people (HJ, p. 181)

Furthermore, when that person grows toward self-realization, which means a process of growth toward the “greater self,” there is an inevitable identification of this self with the self of others and with God, in short, with “the whole of encompassing reality” (*ibid.*, p. 182). Thus, if “one has given oneself to a larger whole before death, the giving that nature requires at death is easily accepted; he lives already beyond his body and his finite self” (*ibid.*). In other words, the self has become immortal.

In becoming immortal, the self, now as spirit, is liberated from one body but, Burt speculates, it “may be that the process of liberation is itself the acquisition of a larger and more enduring body” (HJ, p. 188). Indeed, it could be argued that the whole universe, at this point, has become one’s body insofar as one has embraced it in “outflowing sensitivity” (*ibid.*). This notion could also be “justified for the career of the entire human race as well as for the career of any individual” (*ibid.*). “The satellite of the sun that it has been our lot to inhabit is tiny, and occupies an inconspicuous spot in a ‘spiral arm’ of our galaxy, but it may be that man’s life on it is making a contribution to some vaster destiny than we have in the past dared to glimpse” (*ibid.*). However, a glimpse of this destiny suggests the notion once the individual self has identified with the universal self and, pursuing “unlimited growth,” it will discover that it lives in the “broader temporal span in which the greater reality lives” (ISPU, p. 314). “The ancient sages have spoken of a perspective in which a thousand years are but as a day; and we know that the universe has plenty of time” (*ibid.*).

Thus, although Burt does not subscribe to the millenarian vision of a “new heaven and new earth,” in the sense that physical reality will be completely transformed into a

spiritual reality where God will dwell among his people, he does ascribe to the notion of human beings living in another spiritual reality after death of the physical body. In his scheme, this mortal life is but one step on a journey without end. The only limiting factor on this journey into immortality is the extent to which people fail, by not using their capacity of expanding awareness, to identify with the universal self. The only imperative on this journey is the Socratic maxim, "Know thyself!" It is this knowledge which unlocks that "inexhaustible flood tide of awareness" and leads to the experience of Ultimate Reality.

Thus, having adopted the role of prophet in his final years, Burt has added yet another dimension to his thought, namely, the notion of how each individual and the whole human race can achieve immortality. As he declares, human beings, driven by the force of love, have the capacity to expand their awareness beyond the restrictive presuppositions of temporal reality and are thus able to achieve harmony with Divine Reality (HJ, p. 32).

Conclusion

There are two major themes which appear throughout Burt's philosophic odyssey. One theme is the notion of a "brotherhood of man" which, as Reverend Burt the theist, he first raised in his sermon at St Paul's in 1920 when addressing his deep concern about the political aftermath of the First World War. In time, he developed this notion into what we have called his Utopian notion of an "ideal world community." The second theme relates to his concern to develop a post-scientific, or post-empiricist, metaphysic which restored human beings to a meaningful place in the cosmos denied them by science. The roots of this theme can be found in *Metaphysical Foundations*. When he wrote this treatise in the early 1920s, however, he did not believe that he was capable of developing such a metaphysic. Indeed, by the late 1920s he had abdicated any notion of a post-empiricist metaphysic. This abdication became formalized when, in 1933, he became a signatory to the first *Humanist Manifesto* and, following its tenets, not only became an anti-theist but looked to modern science and human reason to solve human problems.

This humanist period in his life lasted until the mid 1940s. As the Second World War progressed its horrors led him to lose all faith in the power of human reason to overcome the "dark forces" at work in the depths of the human psyche. He also lost faith in science because its resources could be harnessed to develop ever more destructive weapons. In the midst of this crisis in confidence Burt began a long period of psychoanalysis. The psychoanalytic orientation appealed to him because he had come to the view that reason is powerless against the "dark emotional forces" at work in the unconscious. Thus the first step to resolving human problems was to bring these forces into conscious awareness.

At the same time that he was undergoing psychoanalysis during the 1940s, Burt's theism came alive once more. He joined the Quaker movement and also began to take an ever deeper interest in Eastern philosophy and religion. During his first major trip to the East in 1946-1947 he became a Buddhist—which even today would be seen as a radical step for a Cornell professor of philosophy to take. In his view, a philosopher ought to be genuinely in search for the truth from all sources and thus must take account of diverse perceptions of reality. To adhere to the analytic or empiricist orientation would in his view only ever reveal a narrow or partial view of reality.

By the late 1950s, by drawing insights from these diverse sources, Burt began to formulate his theory of expanding awareness. He believed that if philosophers would put this theory into practice a regeneration of philosophy could be achieved which would be expressed in a post-empiricist metaphysic. He thus was a speculative metaphysician at a time when the analytic movement, opposed to metaphysics, dominated American philosophy. By this time, in Burt's mind the notions of post-empiricist metaphysic and a world community had blended. The need for the latter became an imperative due to the threat of nuclear annihilation. The need for the former could bring this imperative into focus—by demonstrating that science could not divorce itself from the human consequences of its actions—and form the metaphysical foundations of a world community. Thus Burt's notion of a post-empiricist metaphysic became a philosophy which is “all-inclusive” or “all-embracing” in its approach to truth claims.

With the Eastern notion of Ultimate Reality as its cornerstone, a post-empiricist philosophy overcomes the conventional Western dualisms: objective and subjective, the internal and external worlds, and the separation between mind and body. In such a philosophy, reason can never be “split off” from the emotions and overcomes the fallacy that philosopher can be a “pure intellect.” This philosophy would hold that an emotional motivation is always at work behind any perception of reality and any philosophic enquiry—including logic. Thus a philosopher always undertakes philosophic enquiry as a “full person.” Any so-called objective claims to truth are saturated with the subjective; the mind and its knowledge claims cannot be separated from the emotions and the body. The starting point for knowledge claims, therefore, ought not to be the goal of possessing knowledge of some external thing. It ought to be, by the exercise of one's capacity of expanding awareness, the gaining of knowledge of one's self, particularly one's unconscious emotions, and of other persons. Achieving this knowledge inherently builds the notion of a community. For, in Burt's post-empiricist metaphysic, the cosmos is suffused with a mystical notion of love motivating individuals and humankind generally into ever deeper communion with each other. It was his expectation that such communion will bring about a world community. Insofar as individuals identify with this community, so they proceed on a journey into

immortality and union with Divine Reality.

It would seem, moreover, that Burt did not have to wait until death to enter this union with Divine Reality, which he apparently also understood as *nirvana* or “heaven.” For, not long before his death he had a “radically novel idea” about the nature of heaven. He believed that a “pathetic misunderstanding” was embodied in the doctrine that heaven is always in the future and can only be entered after death.

If there can be a heaven in the future it would seem that there must be a heaven in the present, to be entered by anyone who meets the necessary conditions. An obviously essential condition is that one has to become capable of living in heaven, and this is an arresting truth; it may demand that one go through hell first.

Such a conviction means that a radically novel idea of heaven will enter our minds and hearts. The picture of heaven that most people have cherished reflects childish longings—longings for protection from harm, for solace, for comfort, even for continuous pleasures. How unrealistic such a picture is in the teeming and tumultuous world we find ourselves in! The notion that human life might be possible with no pain, grief, or disappointment is surely a very deceptive notion—and would it not be woefully impoverished life? In my survey of the world around me I had to learn that the more fully I accepted and lived through the pains and sorrows that people have to meet, the greater and more lasting is the strength for living thus won. Joyful awareness of that increasing strength became heaven for me. (LLL, pp. 11-12)

Appendix A

Burt's Sermon at St. Paul's Church, New York, 1920

Edwin A. Burt's sermon at St Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church, West End Avenue and 86th Street, New York, Sunday morning July 4th, 1920.

The following is the full text of an article as published in *The World* (New York) on July 12th, 1920, p. 5. This reproduction is from a photo-copy of an old newspaper clipping and parts of it are unreadable. The bracket {...} signifies my interpretation of a partly readable word. Any use of the square bracket [...] represents my addition to the text to assist understanding. Otherwise phrases in a curved bracket (...) are also in these curved brackets in the original text. Spelling, punctuation and parentheses are an exact replication of those in the original text.

REPUBLICAN DIVINE ASSAILS PARTY FOR ITS LEAGUE STAND

**Harding Exponent of "Creed of Selfish, Jingoistic Nationalism," Says
the Rev. E. A. Burt**

DECLARES IN SERMON, "WE FAILED GOD AND THE WORLD"

**Twenty Months "Wallowing in Moral Slough," With All Nations
Watching, Betrayed.**

The World publishes herewith a remarkable sermon on the League of Nations which the Rev. Edwin A. Burt preached at St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church, West End Avenue and 86th Street, Sunday morning, July 4. It has just become available for publication. Mr. Burt is associate pastor of St Paul's and is in charge of the church during the vacation of the Rev. Raymond L. Forman, the senior pastor.

Explaining that he had been a Republican, the clergyman flayed the Republican Party for its platform plank and its general attitude toward the League of Nations, and stamped Harding as an exponent of "the reactionary, mediæval creed of selfish, egoistic, jingoistic nationalism."

Mr. Burt declared that after the armistice America was seized with "moral cramps," that we "turned traitor to mankind" and "broke the heart of the world." For a year and a half, he said, we have been wallowing in a moral slough!"

Sees Hope in Democracy.

He saw hope for a change for the better, however, because "already one of our great parties fearlessly reasserts its devotion to the precious hopes for which the war was

fought,” and said it was for the Christian people of America to make good on {the} League.

Mr. Burt told a reporter for *The World* yesterday that ordinarily he does not believe in going outside of strictly religious topics for his sermons, but he thinks the League of Nations, with its programme [sic] for world peace, is distinctly a subject with which religion is vitally concerned.

As many members of the congregation were away for the summer when the sermon was delivered, Mr. Burt had a relatively small audience. He said, however, that the majority of those present complimented him upon his opinions, while some said they did not agree with him, but admired the force and conviction with which he expressed his views. Others, he admitted, plainly showed by their silence and general attitude that they did not approve.

“Reaction or Decline?”

Mr. Burt's sermon bore the title, “Is It Reaction or Decline?” His text was Joshua, xxiv., 15, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve.” He said in part:

“Today is the first Fourth of July for many years that has seen America slipping so far down the moral stakes, and at times during the last year and a half she has been dropping with rather dizzy rapidity. You will hear no riotous flag waving harangue from our pulpit this morning. Any sort of jingoism to-day would be a sad betrayal of the spiritual quality of true patriotism.

“We've sunk too far in the dirt. Above the din of the crackers and the screaming of the eagle today I catch the still small voice of the Spirit summoning the Christian people of this land to fast and pray as they have never fasted and prayed before.

“Statesmen like McKinley, Hay, Burton and Taft were the pioneers in arousing the conscience of the nations, in stating America's readiness to play her part in the great work (for a League of Nations), in organizing the early Hague tribunals, in negotiating more and more comprehensive treaties of arbitration with our neighbors across the way. Then broke the great war.”

“We took the lead in holding the vision up before the world,” he [Burt] went on, “as early as August, 1916, the United States Senate, by a resolution, urged President Wilson to seize the initiative in organizing a League of Nations to prevent future wars. The President himself, in many wartime speeches, never failed to sound the same note, perhaps in none of them more clearly or convincingly than in his war message of April 2, three years ago.

“Right More Precious Than Peace”

“‘It is a fearful thing’ he [President Wilson] said, ‘to lead this great, peaceful Nation into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried near our hearts — for democracy, for the right of those

who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for the universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.'

"Such was the spirit in which we abandoned our impossible neutrality and entered the war. Such was the spirit which, in a few brief months, turned loose the weight of America from the peaceful ways of industry to an unconquerable armed camp. Such was the spirit which fired our warriors in the trenches of France to refuse to retreat and to march on from Chateau-Thierry through the {unspeakable} Argonne Forest till the last strongholds before Sedan were smashed and the pitiless Kaiser and his pitiful tools saw that the game was up. It was the glorious ideal of a world safe from the torment of any future war that won the victory in this.

World Waiting for Us.

"The climax of it all came with the signing of the armistice treaty twenty months ago, and the meeting of the Allied representatives in Paris to form a treaty of peace. Liberty and democracy had become the priceless and assured possession men the world over. But they knew that the tale was not ended. Their eyes were still on us. They were confidently waiting for us to lead them onward toward the necessary union which should crown their hard won freedom and make of it a secure basis for peace and happiness, through the unrolled scroll of future international life.

"Then we were standing on the peak. Then the promised land stretched before us in all its wonder and beauty. The nations were behind us ready to march in and possess it. But, God help us! God forgive us! We couldn't measure up. We were seized with moral cramps. We weren't ready to leave once and for all the dirt, the dark, the dismal, lonely trails of the wilderness. We failed God and the world. Selfish, discordant voices were raised among the other nations. We collapsed with them in the mud and the mire. Our ideals faded away. We turned traitor to the most precious hopes of mankind. We broke the heart of the world.

"Would to God that our multiplying degradation of the last twenty months could be expunged from the books of history. Would that we could stand back as we did on the day of the armistice, flushed not only with victory, but with pure and noble idealism, with our eyes on the vision of a better world, our hearts beating high with hope. But alas! the nasty, soiled, disgusting pages are there. What words shall I find to describe the moral slough in which we have been wallowing deeper and deeper for the past year and a half.

Refused to Be Moral Leader.

"Please don't misunderstand me. I am not ascribing blame in partisan fashion. President Wilson and his supporters must bear a share of it. Nor am I saying that just

because we refused the treaty and the League are we sunk in disgrace. No, there are honest differences of conviction on that. Had it been merely the rank injustices of the past that aroused our opposition — the Shantung award, the cessions to Italy, and our bandying about of peoples in direct opposition to the principles of democracy—had it been that, we would have had no cause to hide our heads in shame.

“No, it wasn't that! It was our selfish, cocky, impudent independence about it all that was the damnable thing. It was our refusal to be any longer the moral leader of the world. We insisted on reservations, not to make the League more effective and more righteous, but to shear off what little power it did have, to reduce it to an empty, pitiful, farce!

“We weren't anxious about Shangtung. It was our own rights that we were worried about, our right to sit in a comfortable rocking chair and watch Europe go to hell if we want to; our right to stick a sword into Mexico if we want to; our right to butt into the Irish question if we want to; our right to continue insulting peaceful Chinese and Japanese in California if we want to; our right to build up the biggest navy in the world while other nations are struggling to recover from financial collapse if we want to; our right to profiteer on the anguish of other peoples if we want to — in a word our right to be just as mean and heartless and exclusive and contemptible as we choose to be.

“Our Faces in the Mud.”

“That is the sum and substance of our sin and crime. This is an awful indictment to make against one's own beloved country on her Fourth of July, but it's the truth, the sad galling, heartbreaking truth.

“And we're down there still, our faces in the mud. Twenty-two months ago we were pouring forth blood and treasure in a mighty stream to save France and Belgium; to-day we abandon, without a qualm of conscience, the remnants of crucified Armenia to torture and massacre. Twenty-two months ago our navy and Britain's were united in one invincible fleet to protect the freedom and humanity of the seas; to-day we are spending hundreds of millions of the people's money in a wild programme [sic] to outstrip her in naval power, and her First Lord of the Admiralty states in the House of Commons that she accepts the issue, implying that she will build against us ship for ship if it takes the last shilling earned by the sweat of her people's brow.

“Twenty-two months ago our two great parties were earnestly and unselfishly cooperating to help win the war; to-day we are in the most shameless backwash of political muckraking that has ever disgraced the Nation. It used to be assumed that partisan politics ceased at the water's edge. But now the most delicate and momentous questions of international relationships are freely kicked about in the dirt by weasel-eyed, poison-tongued, jealous minded politicians.

G.O.P. Platform Jingoistic.

“Now the Republican Party, once the great party of Lincoln, Grant and Roosevelt,

dares to put before the people of this country a platform in which you will not find one frank, sincere or honest word in the commendation of or devotion to the glorious human hopes and noble Christian ideals for which 70,000 of your brothers and your sons sleep under the poppies in Flanders' fields this morning, and dares to name a candidate [ie. Warren Harding for the 1920 campaign for president] who, in a speech which is being phonographed all over the land on this Fourth of July, proclaims in no uncertain tones the reactionary, mediaeval creed of selfish, egoistic, jingoistic nationalism.

"I say this because I've been a Republican.

"Is it reaction or decline? It has gone rather far for reaction. It has had frightful consequences already for a world bled while in the crucible of war. Like that strange companion of Christian in "Pilgrim's Progress," we led humanity up to the very gates of heaven and then, with a horrible grin, plunged it, and ourselves with it, down the dark secret tunnel that leads straight to hell. It would seem to be only a joke that we saved democracy, just a momentarily good-humored piece of mischief. Like an incorrigible, overgrown boy we rescued the world and then kicked it naked into the snowstorm again.

Truth Cannot Change.

"Yet, does the truth change because we have changed? No, not in a world which is held in the hands of a just, righteous and loving God. It remains true that the world must move toward international brotherhood — ruin is the only alternative. It remains true that there can be no reign of law throughout the earth without some sacrifice of national independence, much empty chattering to the contrary notwithstanding.

"A League of Nations that hasn't the authority of law over its members is like a herd of gorillas leashed together by apron-strings. But what is the independence we must sacrifice? Just two kinds, the independence to wreak injury on others with possible impunity, and the independence to avoid our responsibility to help police the world and protect helpless people from wrong and disaster. Just those two kinds, that's all. Does Christian America want such independence?

World Will Move On.

"The world will move on, for God is moving on. The day will dawn upon this troubled globe, foretold by bards and prophets, pictured by artists, dreamed of by philosophers, sung by poets, prayed and laboured for by Christian hearts and hands, when the peoples will be bound together by warm, pulsating bands of sympathy and co-operation, when the reign of law and right shall cover the earth, when -

"Nation shall not lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, * * *. [sic] They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'

"Yes, that day is coming. So much is triumphantly settled for Christian faith. But the question is: Shall America move on to meet it? Or shall we be the dead, rotten, wasted vintage which God must trample under foot as He leads the peoples on toward the light

of the brighter day?

“Somehow I find it impossible to believe that our failure is permanent. Perhaps it’s because I love my country too well. I don’t know. We’re still a young Nation with all the vigor of youth. Ideals and noble purposes have found in us as nourishing soil as anywhere in the world. Normally we would have yet to reach our full stature in the story of the world’s life. Normally there would stretch before us a brilliant field of telling power in the councils of mankind. And I see signs here and there for a turn for the better. People are growing restive under the control of mediaevalism. It cannot represent the real depth of America’s heart. It’s too petty, too cowardly, too sneaky for the real bigness of us.

Sees Turn of the Tide.

“Already one of our great parties fearlessly reasserts its devotion to the precious hopes for which the war was fought, stands ready to champion the spiritual and moral force of America on this, the supreme issue of the century. Yes, the turn of the tide has come. It shall be reaction only and not decline, so help us God! Let the Christian people of America leap forward around the banner of the Cross and the Stars and Stripes with this cry bursting from every heart, ‘It shall be reaction only, and not decline, so help us God! We will not break faith! We will not be the miserable traitor of mankind! We will yet play the part of Christian manhood in the world! We will yet show ourselves worthy to take again the standard of moral leadership, beat back the grinning monsters of the forest, break through to the bright vision and at last the realized possession of the Holy Land of peace and brotherhood!’

“This morning I find myself again and again looking forward over the ages to that time when this eventful twentieth century of ours shall be ancient history, and men look back to it as we to the far-off days of Greece and Rome. I glimpse in the distance the unrolling of the scroll and my eyes strain to see the final verdict of history on America. The letters are there, but dim and blurred; its hard to make them out with any clearness. A few words and phrases here and there I catch and the surging hope of my heart is all too ready to fill in the gaps. I wonder — does it run something like this:

“‘Yes, America had her supreme testing, and for a time she drew tears of bitter disappointment from the eyes of the world; but when she came to face the last chance, she did not break faith. When the day came for her to choose at last whom she would serve, it was not the demon of selfish seclusion, pulling his mantle around his deformed limbs and peering maliciously through its folds at his disgusted neighbors, but the God of world brotherhood, who leads His people ever onward toward the happy, enduring peace born of freedom and union.’

“Is it just a fantasy, a mirage? Or do my eyes play me true? Well, it’s for the Christian people of the country, if they will, to make it true.”

Appendix B

Declaration by Edwin A. Burt to Colleagues at the East-West Philosophers Conference, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, June 1959.

I wish my colleagues at this conference to know that I have been unwilling, because of conscientious convictions as an American citizen, to answer the questions on the reverse side of the sheet entitled "Personal History Statement," signing of which is required of employees of the University of Hawaii in accordance with territorial legislation adopted in November, 1951. The questions on that sheet which I find most seriously objectionable are quoted below.

I have discussed this matter with officers of the University, whom I have found ready to understand my position. My only criticism of the University is that it failed to fulfill its obligation to let prospective employees know in advance that they will be required to sign this statement.

The questions are the four following:

1. Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party of the United States of America, or the Communist Party of any other country, or a member of the Communist Political Association?
2. Have you ever attended any meeting of a cell, faction, school, or other unit of either the Communist Party of the United States of America or the Communist Political Association, knowing it to be such?
3. Are you now or have you ever been a member of any fascist organization or association?
4. Have you ever been convicted of treason, sedition, criminal syndicalism, or of any other offence involving disloyalty to the United States of America?

I have never answered such questions, and my conscience forbids me to answer them now. I can fully understand the fears, anxieties, and frustrations generated by the spread of Communism which have led to the adoption of this requirement, but understanding them does not change my clear sense of duty as an American citizen.

I am a Quaker, and my abhorrence of any movement which seeks its ends by revolutionary violence, especially where the Constitution provides a peaceful way to justice, can well be imagined. But I find that inquisition exemplified in these questions equally abhorrent, and equally contrary to the basic principles of democracy. My reasons are:

1. (Referring particularly to questions 1, 2, and 3) To require of a prospective employee a signed answer, under oath, to these questions is futile, and disturbing because so clearly futile. A committed member of any traitorous organization would not hesitate to answer no, while a loyal American citizen, as in my own case, might refuse to answer because of his revulsion against being subjected to such an inquisition.

2. (Referring particularly to question 6) To require an answer to this question is not

merely disturbing; it is insulting. In confronting it I feel exactly as I would feel if I were asked: Have you ever committed murder, or incest, or arson, or rape? Surely it can be taken for granted that anyone who is a dangerous and ruthless criminal would not even be seriously considered for a university teaching post.

3. The policy expressed in this kind of inquisition seems to me so radically contrary to American ideals that I cannot in conscience support or approve it. The America to which I am devoted and shall always be loyal is the America that trusts its citizens unless they act in ways justifying distrust, that secures their loyalty by giving them justice and freedom instead of trying to coerce it by threats of punishment or unemployment, and that steadfastly resists the temptation to combat totalitarianism by adopting some of the worst features of totalitarianism. I cannot be loyal to the forces in America that are reflected in this mistaken policy, which I am sure constitutes a betrayal of what is most precious in American democracy.

E. A. Burt

Appendix C

Editorial in *The Cornell Daily Sun*, April 9th, 1951

Far From Un-American

Incrimination by the House Un-American Activities Committee of Cornell Professors Edwin A. Burt and Frank S. Freeman as participants in Communist "peace" campaigns raises a rather important question for all those who are even mildly acquainted with the political and philosophical ideas of the two men: is the fact that an individual lends his support to a conference designed at bringing about a peaceful settlement of world conflicts today adequate evidence by which to taint that individual's name, implicitly or not, with communism?

Anyone who has taken a course from Professor Burt knows him as a man who dislikes the use of violence as a means for settling our differences, no matter what their nature. The very theme of his own personal philosophy, as expressed in lectures given in his courses on religion tells us that much: "Overcome evil with good." Professor Freeman, in a statement released last week, similarly expressed his desire for finding a peaceful solution to world problems.

The scope of the Committee's investigation is so great that it often fails to realize the consequences of issuing gigantic lists of names labelling a person as a sponsor of, or participant in, a peace campaign which they label as Communist-sponsored. A normal reader will immediately associate the title of "Communist-sympathizer" or "Communist" with each and every name on the list, when actually, as was the case with the two Cornell professors, the listee was completely unaware of any Communist participation in the activity.

To wish for a peaceful settlement of the differences between the United States and Russia is not what we would call un-American; it is perhaps quite a bit more American than the practice of defaming another man's name through implication and association, without full investigation of that individual's purpose and point of view.¹

¹ *The Cornell Daily Sun*, Ithaca, N.Y., Monday, April 9th, 1951, p. 4.

Appendix D

*A Humanist Manifesto*¹

The time has come for widespread recognition of the radical changes in religious beliefs throughout the modern world. The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. Science and economic change have disrupted the old beliefs. Religions the world over are under the necessity of coming to terms with new conditions created by a vastly increased knowledge and experience. In every field of human activity, the vital movement is now in the direction of a candid and explicit humanism. In order that religious humanism may be better understood we, the undersigned, desire to make certain affirmations which we believe the facts of our contemporary life demonstrate.

There is great danger of a final, and we believe fatal, identification of the word *religion* with doctrines and methods which have lost their significance and which are powerless to solve the problem of human living in the Twentieth Century. Religions have always been means for realizing the highest values of life. Their end had been accomplished through the interpretation of the total enviroing situation (theology or world view), the sense of values resulting therefrom (goal or ideal), and the technique (cult), established for realizing the satisfactory life. A change in any of these factors results in alteration of the outward forms of religion. This fact explains the changefulness of religions through the centuries. But through all changes religion itself remains constant in its quest for abiding values, an inseparable feature of human life.

Today man's larger understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and his deeper appreciation of brotherhood, have created a situation which requires a new statement of the means and purposes of religion. Such a vital, fearless, and frank religion capable of furnishing adequate social goals and personal satisfactions may appear to many people as a complete break with the past. While this age does owe a vast debt to the traditional religions, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present. It is a responsibility which rests upon this generation. We therefore affirm the following:

First: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.

Second: Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process.

Third: Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.

¹Reproduced in full from *The New Humanist*, Vol. 6, No. 3, May-June, 1933, pp. 1-5. The *Manifesto* has also been reprinted in *The Humanist*, Vol. 33, No. 1, January/February 1973, pp. 13-14; all italics in the original.

Fourth: Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history, are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely molded by that culture.

Sixth: We are convinced that the time has passed for theism, deism, modernism, and several varieties of "new thought."

Seventh: Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant. Nothing human is alien to the religious. It includes labor, art, science, philosophy, love friendship, recreation—all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living. The distinction between sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained.

Eighth: Religious humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now. This is the explanation of the humanist's social passion.

Ninth: In place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being.

Tenth: It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.

Eleventh: Man will learn to face the crises of life in terms of his knowledge of their naturalness and probability. Reasonable and manly attitudes will be fostered by education and supported by custom. We assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene and discourage sentimental and unreal hopes and wishful thinking.

Twelfth: Believing that religion must work increasingly for joy in living, religious humanists aim to foster the creative in man and to encourage achievements that add to the satisfactions of life.

Thirteenth: Religious humanism maintains that all associations and institutions exist for the fulfillment of human life. The intelligent evaluation, transformation, control, and direction of such associations and institutions with a view to the enhancement of human life is the purpose and program of humanism. Certainly religious institutions, their ritualistic forms, ecclesiastical methods, and communal activities must be reconstituted as rapidly as experience allows, in order to function effectively in the modern world.

Fourteenth: The humanists are firmly convinced that existing acquisitive and profit-motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. A socialized and cooperative economic order must be established so that the equitable distribution of the means of life be possible. The goal of humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good. Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world.

Fifteenth and last. We assert that humanism will: (a) affirm life rather than deny it; (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from it; and (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few. By this positive *morale* and intention humanism will be guided, and from this perspective and alignment the techniques and efforts of humanism will flow.

So stand the theses of religious humanism. Though we consider the religious forms and ideas of our fathers no longer adequate, the quest for the good life is still the central task for mankind. Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement. He must set intelligence and will to the task.

[The *Manifesto* lists the names of the thirty four signatories, including E. A. Burt, John Dewey, and John Herman Randall.]

Appendix E

Burt's "Theory of Democratic Cooperation"

Burt refers to his theory of democratic cooperation in his autobiographical article as a "cooperative philosophy" (MPP, p. 435). He developed this theory during his humanist and pragmatist phase (the late 1920s through to the mid 1940s),¹ but eventually discarded it. The theory is primarily developed in the three editions of *Right Thinking* [1928] (1931) (1946). His most succinct exposition² of the theory can be found in the chapter entitled "Cooperative Evaluation" in the 1946 edition. In the Preface to this edition he notes that, over the years since writing the first edition in 1928, he had "became especially convinced that there is a serious need for the inclusion in such a volume of reasoning as evaluation" (RT, p. vii). Such reasoning could demonstrate that there is a "distinction between wise and unwise evaluation, particularly in choosing ends of conduct ... and on what rational ground that distinction rests" (ibid.).

In filling this need, Burt hopes to overcome the "sceptical relativism" which dominated the 1928 edition and which, he states, distressed him. In his own words:

[L]ike many others at that time, I found myself forced in honesty to such a relativism and saw no clear way of getting beyond it. But I believe now that it is possible to get beyond it, without forsaking either open-mindedness or intellectual integrity. In the present crisis in the Western World, with democracy struggling for its life ... our salvation depends in the long run on our being able to see that there are reasonable and unreasonable ways of determining ends, and that we are not deceived when we commit ourselves to the values of equality, freedom, and community as against their alternatives. Reason and love are ultimately one, the former being the pale refraction of the latter through the medium of abstract concepts. (RT, pp. vii-viii)

Turning to the chapter entitled "Cooperative Evaluation" in the 1946 edition, we need to keep in mind that when he prepared the 1946 edition of *Right Thinking* he was in the midst of a deep personal crisis. In the aftermath of the Second World War, and quickly losing faith in pragmatism and humanism, he had just begun psychoanalysis. He begins the chapter by observing that philosophers generally cannot reach agreement concerning values and ends (a problem that he identifies in the 1931 edition and in the preceding chapters of the 1946 edition). As he explains, different "schools of philosophers" put forward different, or competing, ends.

Each competing end implies, directly or indirectly, some definition of the most general concepts employed in whatever field of value is involved. Now different philosophies of value, championed by different schools of thinkers, adopt different persuasions as to how those ultimate concepts should be defined; thus each value-theory is committed to a distinctive set of criteria for resolving any problem about ends. Unless, therefore, we can see some way of rationally adjudicating between these theories, recognition of their competing claims leads inevitably to an unrelieved

¹ *Supra* Chapter 4.

² Burt's essay "The Problem of Philosophic Method" (*The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 55, 1946, pp. 505-533) also throws important light of this theory.

scepticism in the field of end-judgements, and to dependence on force rather than reason when conflicts must be resolved for the purposes of social action. In the past, this problem has appeared almost insoluble. (RT, p. 709)

With each “school of philosophers” being convinced of the correctness of its own criteria and viewpoint, Burt believes that the quest for reconciliation between schools is extremely difficult. Unless competing philosophers detach “themselves from their adopted theories sufficiently to view them tentatively rather than absolutely, this quest is hopeless” (ibid.).

This point is exemplified, he contends, in the conflict that exists in social philosophy between the champions of individualism and the champions “of more extensive social regulation” (RT, p. 710).

The former would solve the conflict by asking what form and degree of social control best promotes the richest and freest life for every individual member of society. But this is precisely his ultimate criterion, as a champion of freedom, for determining how the rights of individuals and the powers of society should be balanced. The latter would solve the issue by asking what kinds of freedom for members of the community best assure security, effective cooperation, and vigor in the social whole. But this is his ultimate criterion as a collectivist. As long as each sticks confidently to his own procedure for resolving whatever disputes about social policy arise, it is evident that a fundamental impasse is reached (RT, p. 710)

This impasse, in Burt's view, is intolerable and irrational. He claims, however, that such conflicts can be resolved by “the procedure of democratic cooperation” (RT, pp. 710-711).

As a starting point for this “procedure,” Burt, in some respects anticipating John Rawls' “original position” and “veil of ignorance”¹ in his *Theory of Justice* [1971] (1978), introduces several prerequisites that must be agreed to by all parties. The first is that it must be recognized that people do “differ in their ultimate convictions regarding values” (RT, p. 711). Hence, they need to adopt a tentative attitude in relation to their current belief system and renounce “all dictatorial dogmatism, all pretence of absolute assurance” (ibid.). This attitude is far beyond mere toleration. Instead, it must “find a positive good in the differing evaluations of others” (ibid., p. 712). The second is that it is essential that social conditions not obstruct members of a community from entering into open and free discussions in evaluational wisdom (ibid., pp. 713-714). Burt emphasizes that all “cooperative thinkers” have a responsibility in this social task and

acceptance of such a responsibility implies that all who do so, whatever form their present theories of value may take, have really agreed upon a certain supervalue as of transcendent worth—namely, the value of continued growth in insight into desirable ends through wider mutual understanding and the constructive criticism which makes it possible. All have tacitly accepted the principle that the ends which their several

¹ In his section entitled “The Veil of Ignorance” Rawls states these notions, in part, thus: “The idea of the original position is to set up a fair procedure so the any principles agreed will be just. ... Somehow we must nullify the effects of specific contingencies [In] order to do this I assume parties are situated behind a veil of ignorance. They do not know how the various alternatives will affect their own particular case and they are obliged to evaluate principles solely on the basis of general considerations. ... [No] one knows his place in society, his class position or social status Nor, again, does anyone know their conception of the good ...” (Rawls, 1978, pp. 136-37).

theories, taken out of this context, would imply as supreme, are subordinate to this still greater and more inclusive end; they are to be continually clarified and corrected in whatever manner loyalty to this higher end may require. ... The supreme end for all is continued cooperation in the clarification and realization of the varied goods that appeal to the desire and aspiration of all men. (RT, p. 714)

The third prerequisite involves two issues. Participants in this democratic process need to recognize that current theories of value do not encompass all the desirable ends that humans are capable of envisioning. They “will therefore be eager to gain pioneering insight into novel values that have thus far escaped all contending theories” (RT, p. 715). When these values “are clearly formulated, they will add to the stock of philosophies of value now competing in the arena” (*ibid.*). Secondly, participants “will want to aid in the process of reconciling present theories, by finding how to detect the dependably positive values of each and to combine them in a more inclusive synthesis” (*ibid.*). According to Burt only the second issue is amenable to a detailed methodology and “given a systematic technique, under the guidance of the idea of democratic cooperation in the determination of ends” (*ibid.*). He postulates five steps (which he denotes “a.b.c.d.e.”) which distinguish the essential features of this methodology. The following is a brief account of these features.

Step **a** requires participants to adopt impartially and tentatively all the theories which they are attempting to reconcile (RT, p. 715). As the synthesis is attempted, all theories will be subject to criticism and revision. This makes it “possible to welcome simultaneously any number of differing theories, just as it is possible for a scientist to entertain at once several different hypotheses between which he is trying to decide by empirical verification” (*ibid.*, p. 716). However, Burt strongly qualifies this hospitality towards differing theories.

Any theories of value that by their very nature are inconsistent with the attitude of cooperation on an equalitarian basis cannot be included in this generous fashion, but must be rejected outright. That is, convictions about value which are undemocratic in their essence must be regarded as intrinsically irrational and necessarily inadequate. And it is important to know how to identify them, both for this reason and because the danger from their presence must be socially guarded against. (RT, p. 716)

Theories can be identified as being undemocratic if their protagonists are intolerant of other theories and if the theories, by their very content, are undemocratic. Examples of such theories are those which promote “doctrines that specifically claim opportunities and basic rights for certain persons or groups which are not allowed others” (*ibid.*, p. 717).

Step **b** stipulates that “cooperative evaluation requires a procedure by which sharable meanings can be given to all value-concepts employed, that is, an impartial common language in which to discuss whatever issues are at stake” (RT, p. 717). If a common realm of discourse is not established “assertions pass each other on parallel lines that never meet” (*ibid.*, p. 719). As an example of this problem, Burt turns to the concept of “justice.” Because the individualist and collectivist have different ideals and use different criteria to define the concept of justice the result is “two virtues and two sorts of obligation rather

than one” (ibid., p. 718). A solution, he suggests, is to define social ideals in neutral terms, such as being a species of “social value” and then see if an impartial agreement can be reached in relation to the notion of justice (ibid., p. 719). He notes that these difficulties in discourse are also apparent in the field of ethics. To illustrate this problem he discusses the conflict that exists between Utilitarians and Kantians. The meaning they each apply to concepts is different and, hence, it is almost futile for them to attempt to reach agreement (ibid., p. 720). This situation, he insists, demonstrates a need for “cooperative definitions” and, as new value-theories appear, the definitions will need to be revised. Just as the “early modern scientists found it necessary ... to redefine all the fundamental terms of physical science, such as “matter,” “form,” “space,” [and] “force,” [so also] in value-theory the same need is obvious” (ibid., p. 721). In the case of ethical and social conflicts, use of the neutral concept “value” in place of the concepts “good” and “right” is an attempt to resolve this need (ibid.).

Step **c** considers how a comparative analysis of different value-theories can proceed in the light of prior agreement having been reached on a neutral and impartial language. Such agreement “places thinkers in a position to compare any pair of competing theories in systematic detail” (RT, p. 721). It will reveal:

- (1) points of essential agreement between any two theories undergoing comparison;
- (2) points on which they flatly contradict each other; and
- (3) points on which there is neither agreement nor contradiction. (RT, p. 721)

The conflict between individualist and collectivist theories illustrate this problem.

On certain points the two theories are in flat contradiction. For example, the individualist holds that absence of constraint, as such, is a good thing; the collectivist denies this. The individualist contends that the best government is that which governs least; the collectivist denies this. What the latter wants is not the minimum of government, but the kind of government which most fully develops the capacity of men to cooperate toward social ends. The individualist is convinced that the state’s proper task is to serve the individual; the collectivist denies this, believing that ... the individual’s proper task is to serve the state. (RT, p. 721)

Step **d** requires an examination of those aspects of a theory on which agreement cannot be reached. Where such contradiction is concerned “one alternative will have to be rejected and one alone accepted” (RT, p. 721). To carry out this task there is a “need to trace the specific consequences to which each of the contradictory alternatives leads in actual human practice, and assess them in the light of the clearest and most inclusive vision of social value to which we can attain, under guidance of the democratic ideal” (ibid.). Consider, for example, the case of a government which suppress citizens who refuse to give unconditional loyalty to their nation. In contrast, another government views its essential function as serving its citizens whatever their beliefs. In the latter case there is no problem. However, in the former case, citizens ought to fix their loyalty on a higher moral order and ignore the narrow demands of such a government. In this situation, for the “most intelligent, conscientious, and morally prophetic citizens ... the object of their

loyalty can never be anything less than the highest attainable good for all mankind, without distinction of race, creed, or nation” (ibid.). In making this comment, of course, Burt reveals his vision for a world community in which a citizen’s loyalties transcend national obligations.

Step e, the final step, involves “a harmonious reformulation of the contentions of the two theories ... and a synthesis of the result” (RT, p. 721). In the applying this step to the competing theories of individualism and collectivism, issues arise that have not been resolved in the earlier steps. For instance, in questioning whether “security of unity is the primary, immediate need ... [or] fuller opportunity for individual activity is the obvious requirement” (ibid., p. 727), the crucial question will be:

What kind of social control will best meet this need, and how much freedom can be allowed without prejudicing its success? In the latter cases it will be: Just what freedoms will promise to assure the appropriate values here, and in what ways must they be limited to make sure that antisocial license is not encouraged? These values, thus clarified, do not stand in opposition to each other, but are mutually supplementary; they can be progressively realized together. Thus a harmonious reconciliation of previously contrasting judgements will be achieved. As a result of this process, what has been distilled from the two viewpoints and retained as possessing constructive promise will be synthesized in a more inclusive theory of social values—a theory which will recognize liberty as the desirable good wherever circumstances so indicate, and unified control as the desirable good wherever a persistently needed form of cooperation is likely to fail without it. It will embody systematic wisdom in meeting all situations of both these kinds. (RT, p. 727)

This process of democratic cooperation, Burt asserts, “never ends, just as the process of seeking scientific explanation never ends” (ibid., p. 728).

Burt anticipates other problems that might obstruct the process of democratic cooperation. The most significant problem is the fanatical dogmatism by which thinkers “commit themselves passionately to one particular theory as to what is good and right, and the consequent heated hostility with which they view other theories that to an impartial eye are just as plausible as their own” (RT, p. 728). Dogmatists flourish because, while decisive action is sometimes called for, “one must realize that what is essential as a guide to decisive action is inappropriate as a guide to constructive reflection about ends” (ibid., p. 729). Indeed, for Burt the defining characteristic of a human being “is a creature who pursues ends” (ibid., p. 604). Regardless of how we arrive at the ends toward which we strive, human life can be seen as a continual process of reconstructing these ends (ibid., p. 606). If appropriate reflection about ends is not carried out, conflict concerning actions will arise due to dogmatists being tied to their “own limited ends” (ibid., p. 732). Instead, if the path of democratic cooperation is followed “no inconsistency will ever appear between the end controlling impartial discussion ... and the supreme end which all ... actions are designed to serve” (ibid., p. 730). Burt does not identify the nature of this “supreme end” but, keeping in mind that he is still writing in his humanist phase, we can assume he means achieving an end such as “the highest attainable good [i.e., liberty, justice, and material necessities] for all mankind, without distinction of race, creed, or

nation” (ibid., p. 721). Such an end in Burt’s view would receive political expression in a world community.

A crucial element of this procedure of democratic cooperation is the need to pursue a universally acceptable standard for the determination of end-judgements.

[This need] ... is poignantly emphasized when we survey the contemporary [1945-46] human scene and consider the tragic urgency of the social problems now confronting the world. These problems are problems of evaluation, and the most difficult ones are problems of determining the ends which ought to be pursued in the complex and tangled interrelationships which now bind together all who inhabit the surface of the planet. The insistent problem that most perplexed man in primitive times has now been solved; scientific knowledge has been gained, and the technical tools invented, which are sufficient to supply the physical needs of food, clothing, and shelter for a far larger population than is struggling to maintain itself at present. But how should these confused interrelationships be organized so that men can live together in happiness and mutual well-being? This is a problem of selecting means and even more, of clarifying ends. The ends most persistently emphasized in the epoch of Occidental history now reaching its close—individual liberty and group autonomy—are clearly exhibiting the defects which are inevitable when they are not sufficiently balanced by other factors, and of course no believer in democracy can suppose for a minute that the ends accepted by totalitarian nations will bring lasting satisfaction or even prove capable of being steadily and intelligently pursued. *What ends can be envisioned*, under the guidance of which men may move hopefully and constructively forward *toward the creation of a world community* that will endure? No question is more pressing, more sobering than this. (RT, pp. 603-4; my italics)

In short, if humankind is to survive, there is a pressing need to develop a philosophy which can assist in the creation of a world community.

Thus for Burt his theory of democratic cooperation has a universal significance for the development of human values. A thinker who practices democratic cooperation does not recognise any boundary and thus “can view impartially the total realm of all possible perspectives on the varied values that appeal to man, determined by all seriously proposed criteria for distinguishing between good and bad” (RT, p. 732). The cooperative thinker carries to completion, in the realm of values, the same quest that scientists have pursued successfully in their “objective approach to the realm of fact” (ibid.). Moreover:

One who is sincerely committed ... to the way of democratic impartiality will inevitably find that ... it becomes, in effect, a *supercriterion*, in the light of which all other evaluational criteria gain their meaning; they constitute, with it, a coherent, unified system.

Viewed thus, the conception of *democratic cooperation* plays, in the field of end-judgements, a role analogous to that of a *cosmic theory* in giving complete unity to the body of factual science. All end-judgements, when determined aright, fall into a pattern, each rendered harmonious with the others by their common acceptance of its authority. It provides at present the rational standard for filling this comprehensive role. In time it will be superseded, but appropriately so only by a supercriterion which includes its distinctive principle and adds something more that in the course of experience proves to be needed. (RT, p. 632-3; my italics)

For persons following the path of democratic cooperation there is also a personal reward. In applying its principles they discover “the secret of a fully integrated self” (ibid., p. 730).

Burt’s theory of democratic cooperation, just as became the case his theory of

expanding awareness, holds that philosophers, instead of adhering to one particular epistemological or value theory, ought to adopt an attitude of openness and tolerance toward competing theories. Thus, it presupposes that philosophers—whether utilitarians, communitarians, logicians, empiricists, positivists, analysts, realists, pragmatists, idealists, or naturalists—are *able* to adopt a completely impartial attitude toward any value theory. It also presupposes that they could “let go” of some of their epistemological and ontological presuppositions and join in synthesizing notions from diverse realms in order to develop an end and a value system that had universal significance for humanity.

Within the confines of his theory of democratic cooperation, Burttt found this task exceedingly difficult to achieve. His major puzzle was why philosophers, instead of adopting an impartial attitude, continued to adhere “dogmatically” to the particular presuppositions which, in turn, dictated their attitude towards truth claims. It was not until he underwent psychoanalysis, as he says in his autobiographical article, that he found an explanation for this incorribility. Philosophers, including himself, were often unconscious of the basic presuppositions underlying their ideas and methods and thus could not adopt an impartial attitude until these were brought to conscious awareness (MPP, p. 435-6f). Although Burttt did not pursue his theory of democratic cooperation, he later developed his theory of expanding awareness to address, among others, the problem of unconscious presuppositions. Behind both theories, however, lies Burttt’s goal to develop a philosophy that could foster a world community.

Appendix F

**Social Science Citations Index (SSCI) References to
E. A. Burtt for Years 1966-92**

(Refer to SSCI Abbreviation Index for the full title of journals, books, etc.)

Burtt EA*Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*

			Vol.	Page	Year
Laudan L	Ann SCI		22	73	66
Cauthen K	Zygon		1	256	66
Kantor JR	Psychol Rec		20	83	70
Piccone P	Monist	309	52	408	62
Hellan PA	Int Phil Q	258	7	575	67
Weyant RG	Mind	N	74	426	66
Chaney RP	AM Anthrop		71	597	69
Altschul GI	B NY AC Med R		46	611	70
Sallis JC	Int Phil Q		7	285	67
Young RM	ISIS		59	251	68
Brush SG	Arch R Mech		39	1	70
Averill JR	Psychol Rep		22	861	68
Cornyetz P	Psychoan Re		53	76	66
Schefflen AE	Psychos Med	E	28	297	66
Campbell JA	Speech Mono	17	37	1	70
Bresler EH	Chest	38	58	261	70
Sarno RA	Ann SCI	52	26	209	69
Power JE	J Hist Idea	254	31	289	70
Silverst A	Psychol B	Ch. 2	66	207	66
Schalgel RH	Philos Phen		27	27	66

The above citations are from the SSCI '66-'70 five year Cumulation—hereafter generally as per the relevant year in SSCI, although sometimes a citation for the year prior is included in the following year.

Smith NW	J Hist Beh		7	375	71
Hegge H	Inquiry		15	362	72
Wisdom JO	Philos Phen		33	62	72
Rogers GAJ	Ann SCI	1	29	237	72
Romanysh RD	AM Psychol L		27	77	72
Oesterei E	Social Res		39	134	72
Rummel RJ	Gen Syst		17	145	72
Needles W	INt J Psych		54	315	73
Averill JR	J Exp Res P		6	275	73
Phillips DL	ACT Sociol		16	13	73
Romanysh RD	J Phenomen		3	187	73
Spraegens TA	Polity		5	288	73
Rummel RJ	Gen Syst		17	145	72
Martinez JA	J Hist Beh		10	160	74
Samuels WJ	Hist Polit		6	305	74
Wisan WL	Arch Hist E		13	103	74
Climo TA	Econom Hist	R	27	461	74
Mackenzi BD	J Hist Beh		10	324	74
Brush SG	Arch Hist E		12	1	74
Schwartz F	Psychol ISS		8	1	74
Susser B	Politic SI	30	22	271	74
Martinez JA	J Hist Beh		10	160	74
Watkins JWN	BR J Philos		26	91	75
Naess A	Inquiry		18	183	75
Larson GJ	Philos EW	1	25	31	75
Sharlin HI	Ann SCI	34	32	55	75

Brown HI	AM Philos	37	12	85	75
Bloor D	Social ST S	R	5	507	75
Horton R	Arch Eur So	202	17	157	76
Rosengre KE	Curr Anthrop		17	667	76
Daneke GA	J Thought		11	190	76
Ball T	Am J Pol Sc		20	151	76
Neville R	Ann NY Acad		265	153	76
Tenbruck FH	Kolner Z So		1975	19	75
Smith JM	J Hist Idea	99	37	571	76
Zupan ML	J Hist Beh	133	12	145	76
Rychlak JF	Cont Hum De		2	1	76
Rychlak JF	Pers Soc Ps		2	209	76
Daneke GA	Bureaucrat		5	295	76
Young B	Radical Sci		1977	65	77
Agassi J	Stud Hist P		8	189	77
Taussig M	Comp Stud S		19	130	77
Zuckerman M	William M Q	238	34	183	77
Heimann PM	J Hist Idea		39	271	78
Haraway D	Signs		4	21	78
Brown RH	Adm Sci Q		23	365	78
McCauley R	Theor Soc		6	313	78
Nathanson S	Personalist		59	241	78
Schroeder WW	Zygon		13	65	78
Wright HC	J Libr Hist		13	250	78
Worland ST	Hist Polit	100	9	504	77
Green WJ	J Chen Educ	140	55	434	78
Dickson D	Radical Sci		1979	7	79
Danziger K	J Hist Beh		15	205	79
Leary DE	J Hist Beh		15	231	79
Blackmore J	Br J Phil S		30	125	79
Cassimat... E	Psychiatry		42	241	79
Wisman JD	J Econ Iss		13	19	79
Wright HC	J Am S Info		30	67	79
Jones RH	Philos EW	85	29	255	79
Dick SJ	J Hist Idea		41	3	80
Eckberg DL	Am Sociol R		44	925	79
Henry J	Ann Sci		36	549	79
Weiler G	Philos S Sc	Ch.3	10	1	80
Copenhav BP	Ann Sci		37	489	80
Kirsch I	J Hist Beh		16	359	80
Leary DE	J Gen Psych		102	283	80
Mackenzie B	J Parapsych		44	125	80
Milne D	Polit Theor		8	575	80
Sabini J	J T S Behav		10	83	80
Matterm RM	Stud Hist P	135	11	39	80
Cohen PS	Sociol RLV		28	141	80
Shapin S	ISIS	280	72	187	81
Bloustein EJ	Rutgers Law		33	372	81
Leahey TH	J Hist Beh		17	273	81
Wicken JS	Philos Sci		48	65	81
Scheflen AE	Book #17720		1980	7	80
Byrne PH	Found Phys	258	11	913	81
Moore JR	Br J Hist S	283 B	14	189	81
Wilson AE	Stud Hist P	127	13	175	82
Anderson CL	Rev Soc Ec		40	199	82
	Radical Science	R	1981	3	81
Turner D	Compare		12	183	82
Wicken JS	Zygon	98	16	303	81
Gooding G	ISIS	208	73	46	82
Spencer ME	Philos S SC		12	121	82
Spencer ME	Theor Soc		11	683	82
Code L	Int Phil Q	109	22	157	82
Akhutin AV	Scientia		117	287	82

Reed ES	Synthese		54	85	83
Wilcox S	ACT Psychol		52	147	82
Wachbrol... R	Yale Law Journal	B	92	564	83
Wilson F	J Bus Ethics	207	2	135	83
Berka K	Filoz Cas		31	293	83
Solomon.. T	Radical Sci	B	1983	83	83
Finley FN	J Res Sci T		20	47	83
Blackmore JT	Philos SC S		13	17	83
Seidman S	Sociol Anal		44	267	83
Stirrat RL	Man		19	199	84
Schaffer S	Social St S	B	14	137	84
Aulie RP	P Am Phil S		127	418	83
Bernal EW	J Med Phil		9	75	84
Budenhol.. FE	Zygon		19	351	84
Costall AP	J Ex An BE	B	41	109	84
Leahey EH	Cont Psycho	B	29	323	84
Rychlak JF	Prof Psychol		15	82	84
Woolfolk RL	Am Psychol		39	777	84
Wicken JS	J Theor Bio	103	117	363	85
Hahveyph... MB	Hist Polit		16	591	84
Kidwell KS	Osiris		1	209	85
Smith R	Social St S		15	67	85
Cleary J	Phil Soc Ph		10	97	84
Sarasohn LT	J Hist Idea		46	363	85
Little D	Soc Sci J	74	22	65	85
Lucas C	J Couns Dev		64	165	85
Strike KA	Teach Col R		87	239	85
Reingold N	Br J Hist S		19	243	86
Coleman SR	Behav Analy		8	77	85
Guerlac H	J Hist Idea		47	3	86
Heinen JRK	J Psychol		119	413	85
McLaughlin A	Env Ethics	238	7	293	85
Garrison JW	J Hist Idea	144	48	609	87
Oakley F	J Hist Idea	187	48	231	87
Holt RR	J Pers Asse		50	376	86
Walzer AE	Q J Speech	114	73	1	87
Palter R	Stud Hist P	152	18	385	87
Kerzber P	OSIRIS	291	2	69	86
Gillespie NG	J Hist Biol	Ch 7 R	20	1	87
Capek M	J Hist Idea	150	48	595	87
Callicot JB	Env Ethics		8	301	86
Little D	Philos S Sc	78	17	197	87
Slife BD	J Personal		55	445	87
Parusnik Z	Filoz Cas	E	36	777	88
Mackenzie B	Behav Brain		10	597	87
Maxwell N	Br J Phil S		39	1	88
Oswald DJ	Rev Soc Ec		45	276	87
Romanucci L	Ethos		16	146	88
Sivin N	J Asian S	R	47	41	88
Wicken JS	Zygon		23	45	88
Williams JC	NY U Law Re	243	62	429	87
Collier CW	WI Law Rev			771	88
Curtis R	Stud Hist P	203	20	77	89
Doll WE	J Curric St		21	243	89
Jones JW	Zygon		24	23	89
Wicken JS	Zygon		24	153	89
Lightman AP	Social St S (Ch 7 N)		19	127	89
Spada MF	Stud Hist P		21	371	90
Smith AM	Am Hist Rev		95	726	90
Martin RND	Synthese		83	337	90
Gillespie NC	ISIS		81	214	90
Leder D	Theor Med		11	9	90
Hestenes D	New Idea PS		8	231	90

Siegel SA	WI Law Rev	14	31	91
Smith CUM	J Soc Biol	14	35	91
Datson L	ISIS	82	522	91
Jager B	J Phenomen	22	60	91
Breed DR	Zygon	26	277	91
Bachnik JM	Ethos	20	3	92

Burt EA
Right Thinking - Study of

		Vol	Pg	Year
Stuart RB	Psychology	26	35	89

Burt EA
In Search Of Philosophic Understanding

			Vol	Pg	Year
Hems JM	Philos Phen	B	28	299	67
Holt H	Am J Psychi	B	123	245	66
Resier OL	Ann Am Poli	B	367	216	66
Saksena SK	Philos EW	B	16	94	66
Piccone P	Monist	171	52	408	68
Gendin AM	Sov St Phil	297	9	259	70
McLaughlin A	Theor Decis	Ch 7	1	121	70
Kariel HS	Am Pol Sci	Ch 9	63	768	69
Blanshard B	Humanist	B	26	167	66
Smith JE	Philos Rev	B	78	99	69
Westphal M	Rev Metaphy	B	19	805	66
Back EB	Social SE	R	43	430	69
Weinstein MA	Midwest J P	321	14	183	70
Smith H	Philos EW		22	441	72
Holroyd J	Couns Psych		6	22	76
Easley JA	Instr Sci		6	319	77
Martin B	Social ST S	163	8	85	78
Holbrook D	New U Q	L	33	487	79
Easley JA	BK# 06708	R	2	139	78
Wright HC	J Am S Info	45	30	67	79
Sanford N	Am Psychol		37	896	82
Wright HC	Lib Trends	3	34	729	86

Burt EA
English Philosophers

			Vol	Page	Year
Osler MJ	J Hist Idea	16	31	3	70
Alexander SS	Q J Econ	794	88	597	74
Wright HC	J Libr Hist	13	13	250	78
Wright HC	J Am S Info	511	30	67	79
Elliot JF	Int J Soc E		14	52	87

Burt EA Chapter in the book entitled:
Essays in East West Philosophy edited by Charles Moore, (Uni. of Hawaii, 1951)

			Vol	Page	Year
McDermott RA	Int Phil Q	103	10	420	70
Smith RC	J Aesthet E	119	11	19	77

Burt EA
Types of Religious Philosophy

			Vol	Page	Year
Mautner T	Am Philos Q	106	6	298	69
Spero MH	Judaism	123	26	206	77
Wright HC	J Libr Hist	52	13	388	78

Burt EA
Philosophical Review

			Vol	Page	Year
Pritchard SK	Int Phil Q	556	6	214	66
			57	590	88

Burt EA
Journal of Philosophy

			Vol	Page	Year
Eastman G	Educ Theory		16	110	66
Franklin RL	Am Philos Q	57 401	1973	55	73

Burt EA
Philosophy Culture East and West (Ch. in book edit. Charles A. Moore, 1962)

			Vol	Pg	Year
Gedo A	Deut Z Phil		17	682	69

Burt EA
MIND

			Vol	Pg	Year
Jan 18					
Isemenge G	Mind	L	75	131	66
60 18					
Hackett SC	Int Philos Q		7	413	67
72 18					
Grene M	Rev Metaphy		21	94	67
Haack S	Philos Stud		35	361	71

Burt EA
Man Seeks the Divine

			Vol	Pg	Year
Fallding H	Sociol Q	67	8	349	67
Creel AB	Philos EW		22	155	72

Burt EA
Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha

			Vol	Pg	Year
Wienphal P	Enquiry	34	14	84	71
Penner W	Adolensence		7	199	72
Abe M	J Chin Phil	49	3	235	76
Bardis PD	Soc Science	R	51	213	76
Barnes DF	J Sci St Re		17	1	78
Keefe T	J Cont Psyt	247	10	16	78
Walsh R	Am J Psychi		137	663	80
Hubik S	Filoz Cas	226	28	744	80
Klug LF	Essence	R	5	227	82
Machovec FJ	AM J Psychi		38	87	84
Mohan B	I J Soc Wor	27	44	253	83
Lecso PA	J Relig Hist		25	51	86
Reeves NC	Omega J-D		20	281	90

Burt EA
Philosophy East and West (Journal)

Makedon A	Simulat Gam		15	25	84
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Burt EA
Radha Krishnan Comp

Chawla S	Int J Comp	29 N	28	79	87
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Burt EA
The Critique of War: Contemporary Philosophers Explorations, edited by Robert Ginsberg, Chicago: Henery Regnery, 1969.

			Vol	Pg	Year
Ginsberg R	Philos Phen		33	174	72

Burt EA
New Scientist

Jamison A	Social St S	R	5	223	75
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¹ In compiling this bibliography I am indebted to the only other bibliography of Burt's works, that by Elsie Myers Stainton, "E. A. Burt: Bibliography," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 22, No. 4, October 1972, pp. 461-465. However, Stainton's bibliography does not include several of Burt's articles written prior to 1972, and obviously does not include works that Burt wrote after this date. My comprehensive bibliography includes all of Burt's works, including those written prior to 1972 which Stainton did not list, and also the works Burt wrote between 1972 and 1988.

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Philosophy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, (PYTT) unpublished manuscript. (The final draft of this manuscript is in the care of the Archives section, Olin Library, Cornell University. As there are several drafts written over a period of some eight years, I have marked them "A," "B," and "C." The draft "C," from my reading, seems to be the final draft and it is the one I refer to unless otherwise specified. In 1987 and 1988 he submitted this manuscript to several prominent publishers but it was rejected. In this manuscript Burtt describes himself as "Edwin Burtt" rather than "Edwin A. Burtt" or "E. A. Burtt." In addition to this draft, there is an earlier draft which I have labelled "A" and "B." Only part "B" (pages 69—218) of this draft is in the Olin library. The other part, part "A" (pages 1—68) is in the care of Mrs. Winifred Burtt-Brinster, Seattle. It is evident, from correspondence exchanged between Burtt and his daughter Winifred from 1981 through to 1987, that he wrote both drafts during this 1981-87 period.

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Personal Letters, Unpublished Short Essays, etc., by E. A. Burt

Letter to Miss Pearl Weeks, 618 South Olive St., St Louis, dated May 1st, 1944 (copy of letter supplied by Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster).

“Should Philosophy Seek Untruth.” Typewritten paper prepared for the Philosophy Discussion Club, Ithaca, February 10th, 1949. pp. 1-13. This has the name “E. A. Burt” on the last page. I found the original with Edwin Burt’s other papers and it is now in the Archives Section, Olin Library, Cornell University.

Declaration (reproduced in Appendix B) headed “Honolulu, June 1959” and finishes with the name “E. A. Burt.” The original is in the care of Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster, Seattle.

Letters to Professor Stuart Cornelius Hackett (Professor of Philosophy, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois) dated December 1, 1970 (one page) and January 18, 1971 (two pages). These letters discuss a *Festschrift* for which Stuart Hackett has prepared a paper dated November 1970. The *Festschrift*, organized by a Dr. Samuel Lindley and who lives in Honolulu, was never published. Dr. Lindley (in 1992) has informed me that the papers were returned to their authors.

“God.” Typewritten 4 page paper with no date. Archives Section, Olin Library, Cornell University.¹

“A New Spiritual Awakening?” Typewritten 4 page paper with no date. Archives Section, Olin Library, Cornell University.

“Spiritual Life and the Nuclear Peril.” Typewritten 13 page paper with no date. Archives Section, Olin Library, Cornell University.

“Transforming Oneself.” Typewritten 4 page paper with no date. Archives Section, Olin Library, Cornell University.

“Spiritual Growth.” Typewritten 2 page paper with no date. Archives Section, Olin Library, Cornell University.

“Military Service and Conscience.” Typewritten 4 page paper with no date. Archives Section, Olin Library, Cornell University.

Letter to Mrs. Winifred (“Freddie”) Burt-Brinster in Seattle dated November 4th, 1967.

Letter to Mrs. Winifred Burt-Brinster in Seattle dated Dec ‘81.

Letter to Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster in Seattle dated 4/11/82 [April 11th, 1982].

Letter to Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster in Seattle dated May 2nd, 1982.

Letter to Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster in Seattle dated November 27th, 1982.

Letter to Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster in Seattle dated 8/7. [Mrs. Burt-Brinster believes this to be August 7th, 1984].

Letter to Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster in Seattle dated October 14th, 1984.

Letter to Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster in Seattle with the date 2/26/85 [Feb. 26th, 1985].

¹ I found this typewritten essay, along with the five following essays, in Burt’s study in June, 1990 and deposited them with his other papers in the Archives Section of the Olin Library.

Letter to Mrs. W. Burt-Brinster in Seattle with the date 2/26/85 [Feb. 26th, 1985].

Newspaper Articles

World (New York), July 12th, 1920. (reproduced in full in Appendix A).

The Cornell Daily Sun, Ithaca, N.Y., Monday, April 9th, 1951. (I have reproduced this editorial in full in Appendix C).

The American Mercury, Burt, Robert M., "The Faith of My Father," no publication date but from information in the article it seems to be 1956. My photocopy of the article is from a copy supplied by Mrs W. Burt-Brinster.

Correspondence, etc., to E. A. Burt.

Letters written from Shui Hing to Burt by his mother. My copies are from originals held by Mrs W. Burt-Brinster.

"Proposed Minute on the death of Marjorie Burt" prepared by Professor Thor Rhodin, Celia Sieverts and Carol Kimball.

"Proposed Minute on the death of Edwin A. Burt," prepared by Cecile Sieverts, Carol Kimball and Professor Thor Rhodin, Convenor. My copy was provided by Professor Thor Rhodin of Ithaca.

Letter to "Dr E. A. Burt from the Office of the Vice-President of the University of Hawaii," dated July 6th, 1959 and signed by Willard Wilson, Acting Executive Officer.

Addendum re Personal Letters, Unpublished Short Essays, etc., by E. A. Burt

"The Cross of Calvary." Unpublished 32 page manuscript written in 1988. Archives Section, Olin Library, Cornell University. (I have derived the "1988" date from correspondence that Burt had concerning this essay in 1988 with Professor Charles C. West, Princeton Theological Seminary. Two letters (dated August 18th, 1988, and October 4th, 1988) from Professor West are with Burt's other papers in the Archives Section of the Olin Library.)

Addendum: In June, 1990, shortly after Burt's death, I visited Ithaca and, while there, catalogued his "remaining" papers in the Archives Section of the Olin Library at Cornell University. I say "remaining" because when he retired in the early 1960s Burt, according to people who knew him, apparently destroyed all the correspondence that he had with colleagues prior to that time. This paucity of correspondence naturally made the construction of Burt's biographical sketch in Chapter 1 difficult. I thus had to turn to other sources for information (e.g., my reference to Scott Donaldson's biography of the poet Archibald Macleish). This paucity also means that, while I have strived to construct an *intellectual* biography of Burt's philosophic odyssey, we lack the further insight that may have been provided by any correspondence he maintained with his colleagues prior to his retirement. In any event, it is primarily due to the good offices of his daughter Winifred Burt-Brinster that we have access to his correspondence (with her at least) since his retirement.

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