

# Persons, Institutions, and Trust

Essays in Honor of  
Thomas O. Buford

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**Philosophy of Personalism**



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# Table of Contents

<b>Part I: Buford: The Person and Personalist</b>	<b>1</b>
Thomas O. Buford Autobiography	1
Chapter 1 “On Behalf of Poetasters”	11
Charles Carlo Conti	
Thomas O. Buford response	90
Chapter 2 Fourth generation Boston University personalism: The philosophy of Thomas O. Buford	93
Randall E. Auxier	
Chapter 3 Dancing with Tom	113
J. Aaron Simmons	
Thomas O. Buford response	123
<b>Part II: Persons, Institutions, and Communities</b>	<b>125</b>
Chapter 4 Are institutions persons? Buford and the primacy of social order	127
Randall E. Auxier	
Thomas O. Buford response	133
Chapter 5 Faith, philosophy and idols: Thomas O. Buford on the parables of Jesus	135
James Beauregard	
Thomas O. Buford response	153
Chapter 6 Christianity and intellectual seriousness	155
Mason Marshall	
Thomas O. Buford response	165

Chapter 7	Freedom for the common good: Danish personalism on democracy and the engaged human	169
	Jonas Norgaard Mortensen	
	Thomas O. Buford response	187
Chapter 8	Persons in relation	189
	Eugene Thomas Long	
	Thomas O. Buford response	202
<b>Part III: Trust and Problems of Personal Existence</b>		<b>207</b>
Chapter 9	Why should I trust you, Tom Buford?	209
	Richard Prust	
	Thomas O. Buford response	216
Chapter 10	Trusting to dance within the nexus	219
	Nathan Riley	
	Thomas O. Buford response	227
Chapter 11	Buford and Brightman on trust, suffering, and the non-rational given	229
	James McLachlan	
	Thomas O. Buford response	249
Chapter 12	Buford, Kohak, and a renewed understanding of the personal nature of time	253
	John Scott Gray	
	Thomas O. Buford response	259
Chapter 13	Death and self-importance	261
	John Lachs	
	Thomas O. Buford response	265
<b>List of Contributors</b>		<b>269</b>
<b>Index</b>		<b>275</b>





**Part I:**  
**Buford: The Person and Personalist**



# Thomas O. Buford Autobiography

I was born in Overton, Texas to Oliver Parker and Annie Doris Smith Buford on November 17, 1932. My father owned a service station, a Gulf station. Overton was an oil field town located on the Western edge of the East Texas oil field. The streets were paved with hard clay and dirt. When it rained they were muddy, when heavy oil field trucks ran over them the trucks sank up to their axles, requiring a team of mules or oxen to pull them out of the muck. In the hot summer, the roads swarmed with dust. Later they were “paved” with oil. To our bare feet under the hot sun the oiled streets burned, leaving whelps. It was an oil field town swarming with men looking for work on the many rigs nearby. Fights along Main Street were common; each week at least two men were stabbed in the many bars along Main. My father carried all his money on him, armed with a pistol (he was not a good shot, but he could pull off a great bluff, and nobody bothered “Buford”; having worked on oil rigs in South Texas, he knew how to take care of himself). He was well liked by everyone in the small town. When he died of cancer in 1943, the whole town grieved, a hole was left in my heart that remains.

*1939–47 (questioning arises from life experience)*

I attended the Overton Public School System. There was little intellectual stimulation; no one in the city was thought of as intellectual, but many knew one man, an attorney who was thought of as smart; he read books. Few in Overton attended college but most had graduated from high school, though some men who worked in local refineries had some higher education, mostly in engineering. My father attended one year at Mississippi College, ran track, but quit after a dispute with an English teacher. All my teachers had graduated from college and some had work toward an M.A. Only the Superintendent of Schools earned a doctorate. Neither he nor any of my teachers were open to conversations with students away from class. But in class I regularly asked my math teachers to explain the principles underlying the mathematics they taught. None of them had any idea what I was asking for; just do as I’ve taught, I was told, and you will be fine, meaning making a good grade. I did, yet they seemed genuinely annoyed by my persistent questions. I later

learned they were uniformly uninterested in presuppositions, or in answering my questions.

For young men what was available in Overton and Overton High School was scouting, football, and band. My bad heart (from rheumatic, from which I almost died when I was nine years old) meant football was not an option, so this highly competitive pre-teen chose music and scouting. In 1947 I was awarded the rank of Eagle and earned forty-three merit badges. Meanwhile music drew me in. The trombone was my passion; I often practiced four hours a day beyond what was required in Band practice.

#### *1947–51 (My faith generated questions)*

I played trombone from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade through high school, was invited to play in the All-State Band for three years, and became known as the best in Texas. Also, when I was in the fourth grade I was the manager of the High School football team, earning a letter sweater. I left Overton when my Mom opened a dress shop in Jacksonville, Texas. While in Jacksonville High School, I was elected by the faculty to attend Boys State in Austin, Texas during the summer of 1950. During my Junior year I was invited by the director of Bands at Sam Houston State College to play in their band during my senior year in high school. Accepting, I moved to Huntsville, Texas. During those days, a friend, Quay Wagenecht, from first Baptist Church, Huntsville and fellow trombone player and I had long conversations about the basic principles of our Christian faith. His questions awakened in me again the desire to understand presuppositions, in this case the Christian faith, which we tried our best to practice. Again, we were stymied, and received no help from either our church or the college about how to proceed. The summer after graduating from high school (summer of 1951), at the encouragement of Mr. Hinkle, Director of Bands at the college I applied and was accepted by National Music at Interlochen, Michigan, and through competition won first stand in the National High School Band. I also played first stand in the National High School Orchestra. While there I decided that the field of professional music was not for me, even though I felt I had the talent. Meanwhile the questions persisted, but I knew I needed help.

#### *1951–1962 (Preparations)*

After my time in Michigan, the end of National Music Camp, I returned home to Jacksonville, applied to North Texas State College,

as it was known then, with the intent to prepare for entering law school. I played in the NT band. But my mind was consumed by questions regarding presuppositions and was focused on the meaning and truth of my faith, such issues continued to occupy my thinking. I majored in government and took two courses in political theory, during which I read Plato's *Republic*. I recall during my sophomore year, as I was studying Plato, I thought, "this is what I've been looking for, a philosopher that focused on presuppositions. Plato, plus the Christian faith, expressed the presuppositions that lay at the base of the Christian faith as I knew and practiced it. For example, the lower cannot control the higher but the higher can and should control the lower. In addition he had a method of dealing with them. Finally, I could see a way of dealing with questions that bothered me. It seemed simple at the time; understand Plato and I would understand the presuppositions of my faith. So, enamored by that insight, right then, I decided to pursue graduate study in Philosophy. North Texas offered only one other course in Philosophy, Logic, taught by an English Professor, a strange, uninviting man indeed. It seemed to be a complete waste of time, except for reading the text, Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*, a strange text for a logic course. Yet, I began to think about the relation of science to the humanistic world I knew. Snow had not written his *Two Cultures* at that time (that came later in 1959), and that relation continues to perplex me (now in the form of technology and global bioethics). The English professor spent little time discussing Logic.

I was a college debater at University of North Texas and knew something about using Logic. Though using logic in debate, its pattern, structure, and criterion for knowledge and truth were not at all clear to me. It would not be until I studied Logic in graduate school that such topics would be investigated, and later, as I taught Logic at my first teaching job, that Logic became a fascinating field of study. While at North Texas I taught a few classes in mathematical logic (or symbolic logic, as we called it). Classical Logic, that formed the underpinnings of the Western Philosophical tradition, was considered obsolete and in need of replacement, and a modern symbolic system such as that of E. J. Lemmon put in its place. Though not rooted in the system of Whitehead and Russell, Lemmon's system is nevertheless extremely powerful.

After graduating from North Texas, I attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and earned the BD. In seminary I wanted to clarify my own deepest religious thought, before entering graduate school. Dr. John Newport, the most erudite and

distinguished philosopher of religion in the Southern Baptist Convention, aided that goal. He was a moderate Evangelical, who taught the outlines of the philosophy of religion, but he never grappled with the basic questions. He could state the problems, but they were not really problems for him. His history of Philosophy from an Evangelical Perspective was fascinating, but why take that approach, except that was what a conservative Seminary expected of him. While in seminary I formulated my first philosophy question: if God is necessary, immutable and eternal, and the world is contingent, temporal, and changing, then how can the eternal relate to the temporal, the immutable relate to the mutable, the necessary be connected to the contingent? If I could understand that question and solve it, I would know the relation of God to the world, specifically, I would understand prayer. (Later, at Boston University, that issue would help form the core of my dissertation (on Creation). I followed my question and attempted to penetrate to the deepest presuppositions of the evangelical faith I practiced. That question continued to churn away in my mind until I learned to reconsider the nature of God, the world, and how we come to know, and recognized such questions are metaphysical, epistemological, and logical. Soon I began to say, "Keep God (as a person whom I could worship) and get rid of the Greeks," which I could not worship. At that time, though I was unaware of it, I was giving up an evangelical expression of my faith. Later at Furman I gave a Sunday morning devotional using that question as the focus of what I wanted to say. They never invited me back. Also, during Seminary days, well before attending Boston University, I gave up biblical literalism, and rejected being a Southern Baptist.

#### *1962–1969 Boston University*

After seminary, I applied to Vanderbilt University and to Boston University, and was admitted to both programs; Vanderbilt offered no financial aid, Boston University offered a graduate assistantship, with tuition paid. So in the fall of 1958, my wife, Dee and I drove to Boston, and I began pursuing the PhD in Philosophy and Dee the MA in English. That Fall I studied Epistemology under Peter A. Bertocci; Metaphysics would follow in the spring. Both courses focused on Borden Parker Bowne's Epistemology and Metaphysics accompanied with Bertocci's own insights, mostly drawn from his work in Psychology. Many scholars thought Psychology was Bertocci's primary field, though most recognized him as a Philosopher who taught Philosophy at BU.

New graduate students were invited to Dr. Bertocci's home, where his gracious hospitality enchanted all of us. Dr. Bertocci was unfailingly generous and encouraging. He continued that way to me through my dissertation, which I wrote under his guidance. When I began my dissertation, *The Idea of Creation, in Plato, Augustine, and Emil Brunner* (1963), I was stumped; what approach should be taken? I recalled that during a seminar on the metaphysics on F.H. Bradley, taught by Richard M. Millard, I came to the conclusion that every metaphysical system was animated by a root metaphor, or master image. If so, what is a root metaphor, and what is the root metaphor underlying the idea of creation? That insight I thought would be the connective tissue for the dissertation. I mentioned that problem to Dr. Marx Wartofsky, under whom I studied David Hume; he encouraged me to read Stephen Pepper's *World Hypotheses*, a book on root metaphors underlying Metaphysics. I did and my insight from my Bradley studies was confirmed, and my work on the dissertation moved steadily along, a pleasure to write. Now I had a new question, what is the source of a Master Image? (as I learned to call it from my studies in the thought of Giambattista). In the Summer of 1962, when the pastor of Tremont Temple Baptist Church, invited me to assist him, I quickly agreed. I married the young, did some counseling, developed a course of studies for Wednesday evenings, visited the sick, and buried the dead. I had an office on the eighth floor, where I wrote most of the dissertation. Right down Tremont Street and beyond Boston Common was The Boston Public Library (or the BPL, as most graduate students at Boston University affectionately called it) had most of the materials I needed. Private libraries on Beacon Hill close to Tremont Temple Baptist Church supplied the remainder. BU's library was inadequate to do the kind of work needed for my dissertation. Harvard's Weidner's collection included what I needed, but the books and articles were always checked out. So I gave up on them and used the BPL collection. During that year at Tremont Temple, I completed three of four chapters. The last chapter was completed during my first year of teaching; the degree was received in the spring of 1963.

*1962–1968 Kentucky Southern College (first job and new questions focused on education)*

My first job was in Louisville, Kentucky at a new liberal arts college, Kentucky Southern College. Its educational focus was on the interrelation of the disciplines, and my job was to create a philosophy

Department, a religion department, and most importantly, a course of studies that would interrelate the disciplines, one that each student would take a course in every term of their college career, and in which every faculty would participate every term. I'd never heard of such a course of studies, but I had a family to care for when the college President, Rolin Burhans, and Vice President, Bruce Heilman (a few years later, Bruce became the President of The University of Richmond) traveled to Boston and visited me in my office at Tremont Baptist Church to discuss the job. When they returned to Louisville they wrote a letter and offered the job, and I gladly accepted. Little did I know that new questions would arise, refocusing my philosophical work and interests.

I was responsible for developing an educational program, but knew little about education and learning. My metaphysical/theological interests were placed in the background and I focused on education: A freshly minted Ph.D., I wanted to write, but about what? Not about what other people we doing, but about what I was doing and the questions that arose naturally as I thought philosophically about educating young people, or people in general. I became a philosopher of education. My first book, an edited work, *Toward a Philosophy of Education* (1969), prepared at Kentucky Southern in the 1960s during the height of student unrest on college and university campuses, was published in the spring of 1969 while at North Texas. Meanwhile I was studying the Analytic Movement in Philosophy and became interested in the other minds problem, a conundrum lying at the core of knowing in the modern world, and, of course, learning. A second edited work issued from that study, *Essays on Other Minds*, (1970). In the winter of 1968, we learned Dee's mother had cancer. She would not move to Louisville, so we moved to Denton, close to Dallas to care for her, she passed away in the summer of 1968.

#### *1968–1969 North Texas State College*

During the fall term of 1968, it became clear to me that a large state university was not the place for me. I taught analytic philosophy as a subject matter, I had few serious students and only one colleague with whom my interests and questions were compatible, Joe Barnhart, whom I knew at BU and who helped me get the job at North Texas. Furman called and after a short visit and conversation I accepted their offer.

*1969–2006 Furman University (Religious questions persist and so do educational ones. New ones about Greek thought were raised, looking for a new way to think about religious issues)*

After moving to Furman, and still enamored but beset with issues in education, in the fall of 1972 Furman offered a Humanities sequence modeled after the Kentucky Southern ID sequence. Being in charge of the program the same questions I thought about at KSC haunted me. I learned of local and national organizations, such as the Society of Philosophers of Education, and began writing for their publications, in my case, *The Proceedings of the South Atlantic Philosophy of Education Society*. My published essays focused on learning in Humanities 11, 12, 13, on what my students were supposed to be gaining from their learning. Their learning had to be goal centered. OK, but on which goals? They were asked to focus on a time line from Ancient Near East to the twentieth century. They also were expected to learn the major and minor events and figures, literary, scientific, religious, and political. They were also, expected to learn the cultures of the historical periods, and to articulate and examine their deepest convictions, and their fundamental weaknesses. They were also expected to write papers on these topics. Understanding students' learning these matters requires thinking carefully about the meaning and conduct of learning. Those issues included those in action theory, in philosophy of mind, particularly the place, if any, of intention, and purpose in learning. The National Endowment for the Humanities awarded me a Summer Stipend (1992) to fund a summer away from teaching and to support my investigations. I was quickly involved in a thicket of complex issues central to action theory, philosophy of mind, and intention (Elizabeth's Anscombe's work on intention was helpful). Most of those writing in these fields were not concerned with education or students learning. They focused on how to make Psychology a legitimate scientific investigation. The philosophical questions that grabbed me grew out of what surrounded me each day and not simply from professional interests, the issues I was concerned with rarely coincided with those expressed in the philosophical literature of the day.

During my work on the Humanities sequence and earlier at Kentucky Southern, I recognized that students were at a point in their lives where they could not go back to where they were at fifteen, nor could they be where they would be at thirty-five. Yet they did not know what was best for them. They were in a crisis. They could neither go back, nor jump years forward. They had the challenge of

making tough decisions without knowing if what they were doing was the best for them. They were at a developmental stage as Erik Erickson argued. It was clear that Philosophy could help them, they were faced with philosophical problems and Philosophical study could help them grapple with life's challenges. (In the midst my studies, our son, Robert Carl was driving home from a date, and the steering mechanism of his sports car broke, his car left the road and ran into a tree, ending Rob's life. He was only sixteen. After the coroner left our home, Dee and I stood at the front door holding each other, and we said together almost with one voice, "We are cerebral people, let's agree that we will not try to wrap our minds around this unimaginable tragedy. And we have not since that day, June 21, 1976. The healthiest thing we did was to continue the institutional pattern of our lives. We attended church the next Sunday, which was our way, I continued to teach summer school and we paid close attention to our family. Another hole left its indelible mark on the whole family. From that experience I learned about evil, and my thoughts found their way into the last chapter of *Know Thyself* (2011). My interest in institutions began during those days.) Returning to the insight of the place of developmental stages in education deeply influenced my next two books *Philosophy for Adults* (1981), a book that formed the core of my teaching adults in the evening school at Furman, and a text for undergraduates *Personal Philosophy the Art of Living* (1983). In addition, Erazim Kohak, a Professor of mine at Boston University, and I wanted to encourage and foster the study of Personalism in America, so we decided that I would begin a journal, and Furman generously underwrote its initial expense. Erazim wrote the introduction and we named it after two defunct Personalist Journals, one at Boston University, *The Philosophical Forum* and the other at USC, California, *The Personalist*. He called it the *Personalist Forum*. It began in 1985 and continued. After I gave up the editorship, Professor Randall Auxier assumed editorship and with his strong and able leadership steered the journal through rough times. Randy led the journal to its present status, *The Pluralist*, the journal of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy.

In the meantime, John Howie at SIU, Carbondale and I, prepared a festschrift for Peter A. Bertocci, upon his retirement, *Contemporary Studies in Philosophical Idealism* (1975). It seemed that the 1980s was a time for many ideas to take shape that would later find their way into other essays and books. On sabbatical, I wrote a book on Jesus' parables, *Ambushed on the Road to Glory: Finding the Way*

*through Jesus' Parables* (1991) that situated the Parables in their rhetorical context which was the honor and shame culture of the Ancient Near East. Under Verene, I learned Giambattista Vico's ideas on Master Image. My work was supported by Furman grants under the Kellogg and Mellon programs. In 1985, I was inducted into the Academy of Distinguished Alumni of Boston University. I continued to puzzle over the same issues I had as a college student, and a philosopher of education and was slowly gaining and enriching my understanding. Under Verene, I studied Giambattista Vico's thought. In the 1990s I attended two National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institutes, one on Vico that was held at Emory University and led by Professor Verene; Vico's ideas found their way into my last two books, finally freeing me from the grip of Plato and its Christianized form central to most Protestant Theology. I began to think of myself as a Hellenistic Christian. Vico's thought, particularly the Master Image and its relation to elliptical arguments, Aristotelian logic in general, and specifically warrants deeply influenced my thought. One issue bothered me as I thought about Colleges as institutions—what is an institution, and their place in the life of students, particularly their capacity to form identity? While on sabbatical in 1994, I wrote my thoughts on education, except for institutions; they were developed and argued for in the book, *In Search of a Calling: The Student Search For Identity in College* (1995).

Then in 1998 I was invited to become the Senior Lily Fellow in the Lily Program in the Humanities and the Arts. I took up residence at Valparaiso University the home of the program. There I thought seriously about institutions, and learned all I could. That work culminated in two books written in the early 2000s one on Trust and the other on Self Knowledge. When I returned to Furman, I was invited to collect, edit, and publish a series of lectures in the honor of L.B. Johnson, former Chaplain of Furman University, *What Really Matters* (2001) and (2003). Soon thereafter I edited with Harold Oliver important lectures that had been delivered to the Personalist Discussion Group, a group founded in 1937 by Edgar Sheffield Brightman, the most prominent Personalist in America until he passed away in 1953. It has met continuously since its formation in 1937 at the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association. It was entitled *Personalism Revisited: its Proponent's and Critics*. (2002)

In 1990, Charles and I formed the Conference on Person as an international conference (Conversation), and held our first meeting at Mansfield College, Oxford. It continues as the International Forum

on Persons that meets every other year in Europe and other years in the U.S. This conversation has been for me an opportunity for ideas to come together, to congeal, into my latest writings: *Trust, Our Second Nature: Crisis, Reconciliation, and the Personal* (2008) and *Know Thyself: An Essay in Social Personalism* (2011). Together they provide stability and solidarity for a different culture. Since my faith was expressed traditionally within the framework of Plato's metaphysics, and I have argued that both Plato and Aristotle's philosophies were undercut by what ancient and medieval thinkers spawned, skepticism and modern science, and a new basis for our culture must be articulated. In this sense I was developing a post-modern worldview. Interestingly, that means that the framework developed in *Trust* and *Know Thyself*, constitutes a new framework for expressing the Christian faith, one that as of now has not been worked out. In addition, I developed a theory of institutions. In this way I answered the key problem that motivated my search through all these years, the relation of God to the world. Two other questions arose from my work in Personalism: 1) why are the European, the British, and the American forms of Personalism so different? And 2) what do Personalists share in common? Personalists have rejected the reduction of persons to an Absolute, to the State in any form such as Totalitarianism of the Fascism or Communism sort, or to autonomous individualism. Each of these has been addressed in European, British, and American forms.

A new impersonalism and a threat to persons and to Personalism appears in a new movement expressed in the language of technology, transhumanism, (Zoltan Istvan, *The Transhumanist Wager*) declares that this is the end of the human era, and the beginning of the robot era. This should start an enthusiastic conversation in Personalism.

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Chapter 1

**“On Behalf of Poetasters”**

Charles Carlo Conti

**“The grace of movement and flow of nature can be found in the grace, movement, and flow of writing.”**

(Iuan Rees)

O sweet spontaneous  
earth how often have  
the  
doting

fingers of  
prurient philosopher pinched  
and  
poked

thee  
, has the naughty thumb  
of science prodded  
thy

beauty .how  
often have religions taken  
thee upon their scraggy knees  
squeezing and

buffeting thee that thou mightest conceive  
gods

(but  
true

to the incomparable  
couch of death thy  
rhythmic  
lover

thou answerest

them only with

spring)

(e. e. cummings, *Complete Poems*, 58)

**“The matters we are dealing with are mysteries, and it is impious of the philosopher to suppose he can handle them with demonstration as plainly as he might chalk and cheese.”**

(Austin Farrer, *Finite and Infinite*, 4)

## “Divinest Etymology”

This paper is dedicated to Tom Buford, as is this book entire, in a way inclusive of religion and philosophy, as is Tom’s life and work. It was originally written for a Personalist Conference at the University of York in June, 2016 which Tom attended with the help of his son, Russ. That accounts for its style and its tone, a tribute to Tom’s presence which I have tried to retain in this rewrite.<sup>1</sup> My writing is throughout a form of ‘first-personal’ address to others, which I learnt from John McMurray. The first-personal singular makes the third-person an absolute necessity. (Not ‘*cogito ergo sum*’, but *Dico*, ‘we co-exist’.) ‘I speak to you; and humbly await your response.’ I believe that is the way philosophy *ought* to be done, with a view towards ‘knowing oneself’ *with* others; not for them or against them. I believe Tom believes that too: - the ‘*I*’ and the ‘*we*’ form a new generic in personalist philosophy.

Combining titles – borrowed from Anthony Kenny and J. L. Austin – I’d like to think that what I have to say amounts to an ‘ordinary-language’ paean on behalf of ‘Bufordian Excelsis’ which goes flat against Kenny’s trite gibe that any philosophy tainted with theology is usually ‘on behalf of poetasters’. (Now you know who said what; but aren’t you surprised an ‘ordinary-language’ philosopher the likes of J. L. Austin should talk about ‘divinest etymology’? No surprise at all: ordinary language *often* seeks to excel itself; to find the right word for the right occasion if only to avoid social wrongs. “Why can’t you apologize with the same ease for stepping on the neighbour’s baby as trampling on daisies by the same name?”

I’d like to think my work, as well as Tom’s life, is all about *logo-excelsis*. As well as being more ‘down-to-earth’ – even ‘dust-bowl’ American at times and not enough ‘super-bowl-ish’ at times – I believe word-reverie transforms petty and indiscriminate claims to truth from a mere dictatorial tyrant or prosaic pariah into rhapsodic poetry. *Logo-excelsis* – one might say – transforms ‘the ordinary into the sublime’: changes a pig’s ear into a silky spire rather than a spent purse or a sharp protest let alone a slippery phrase. *Logo-excelsis*

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to this paper retaining its original informal style and tone celebrating Tom’s presence and the affection between the two men, the volume editors have also chosen to stay with Charles’s wonderful but idiosyncratic (and well-argued for) style, punctuation, indentation, and spacing preferences, capitalizations, and presentations of poetry and verse in bold type and with variant fonts and font sizes.

excels at communicative effect; the furthest thing from a nit-picking polemic. It aims to be creative, not "negative, critical, and dismantling", as P. F. Strawson described too much of 'analytic philosophy'. And if all else fails, I hope this paper is provocative enough to break conventional standards of language if only to illustrate what I think Tom thinks is central to personalist philosophy:

'Know Thyself' . . . (but)

*BEFORE A THOU!*

Trouble is, Tom has so many blessings they can't be counted 'one-by-one', as the hymn intones, but must be taken 'in the full and the round'; if only to see what the 'good Lord' has done. There is a serious side to the harmonies of effective grace. 'Form' puts flesh-and-blood on the frail skeleton of language; more, is constituent *of the very content it seeks to express*. And this is because it believes it has detected such in the contours of language; even if, on occasion, music does it far better. 'Form' is not only conducive to content, it encapsulates what I have to say. Fetchingly: 'Form' in-forms us of what *really* matters or *really* counts to us. More importantly, how we seek to express it, whatever 'it' is. In the religious case, 'form' is especially suited to contend with, not merely cope with, evanescent 'reals', especially when the 'inscape' of consciousness is lived under the sky-scrape of 'gods', so to speak.

And perhaps this is the way 'smart God' arranged it: for a natural effulgence to whelm up *within* consciousness which seeks a form indicative of the spirit of divination itself! In which case, 'form' not only *detects* content, it *deigns and designs* it in one. This may be discerned by the effect of words on us, whether as writer/reader or speaker/hearer, listener, panderer or ponderer. That so, personalist philosophy – which is a *sophia* for the person – may be credited to the fact that persons are always souls 'in the making' as when the Spirit moved 'across the face of the waters', breathing 'the breath of life' into the nostrils of pending consciousness which avoids any need for direct transfusions of 'irresistible grace'.

There is a historical precedent for such 'life-giving' forms; known as *formalitas*. It is called *philosophia perennis* and stretches back to the ancient Greeks and Romans; the latter shrewd enough to clothe their naked statues in embellished robes thereby increasing the aura of beauty and the sensuousness of touch with contours. And have you ever wondered why an undressed man is 'naked' while an

unclothed woman a 'nude'? (And please don't tell me the answer is obvious, or I'll know you're 'barking *at* the wrong tree.)

By honouring aesthetic requirements in this way, where form participates in its own content, *logos* may be said to 'show itself', as Wittgenstein said and I never fully understood until I undertook this paper. Little wonder he added, "Philosophy ought to be written like poetry." So here's my next hankering question: - How many commentators have you heard who explained that remark? Or this one? "Everything I have written I would like to say I have written for the glory of God and the edification of my fellow-man."

But if words are that potent and best exchanged live – on 'show for tell' – why celebrate 'the other' with a *festschrift* of this kind; in formal language?

In Tom's case, the answer is obvious. Because Tom's philosophy affects the person Tom is, expressed as 'personalist philosophy'. This may be the wrong order because the person Tom is might only have been expressed by *one* type of philosophy, personalist is scope, or contained therein. Either way, what this means is that all those distinctions language-philosophers hitherto took such comfort in – the formal *versus* the material components of language; theory *versus* practice, first-order discourse and second-order analysis, – are patently false. 'Saying is speaking, and speaking is us!' Sometimes language speaks *to* us – loud and clear or soft and low. As Heidegger saw it, we *all* live 'in a 'house of language'; for some, a tumble-down shack on the wrong side of town, for others, not enough however, a stately cathedral of the mind situated on the village green as *corpus Christianum*; the 'body' of the Church and the fabric of society interwoven as one.

That's why we, the undersigned, celebrate Tom Buford in this way, by way of the written mode, because no other philosopher seems better apprised of the wisdom of the verse, "As a person thinketh, so is he."

The moral of 'thinking words' means that certain words allow us to think clearly and more thoughtfully. They don't exactly do our thinking *for* us, but some words force us to do it for *ourselves*. As 'philosophers of action' taught last century, thought *in and as action* conspires to renew life and guide it along more moral channels. Tom epitomizes this transformation, when thought is baptized by personalist concepts and leads to moral actions.

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# Index

## A

Action, 7, 14, 15  
Active Active Citizenship, 181  
*Affrontement*, 186  
*Alienation*, 185  
*Ambushed on the Road to  
Glory*  
*Finding the Way Through  
Jesus Parables*, 9, 100,  
118, 135, 138, 143, 145,  
149, 153, 231, 240, 243  
Anselm, 81, 237  
Anthropology, 27, 43, 50, 151,  
152, 186, 197  
Aristotle, 10, 16, 166, 167,  
227, 250, 266  
Associations, 171, 178, 182,  
203  
Augustine, St., 17, 94, 243,  
244, 248

## B

Background and Foreground,  
119, 133, 221, 223, 229,  
239, 246, 250, 256  
Bakunin, Mikail, 170  
Barth, Karl, 27, 74, 87  
Bertocci, Peter A., 4, 5, 8, 24,  
25, 39, 43, 44, 45, 50, 56,  
91, 94, 98, 99, 101, 102,  
111, 155, 166, 187, 190,  
191, 202, 204, 240, 267, 269  
Boehme, Jacob, 239  
Bowne, Borden Parker, 4, 50,  
91, 93, 97, 111, 150, 152,  
162, 163, 189, 222, 250, 267  
Brightman, Edgar Sheffield,  
9, 50, 91, 94, 96, 97, 98,  
111, 166, 187, 190, 191,  
231, 232, 233, 234, 235,

236, 237, 238, 239, 240,  
242, 246, 248, 249, 250,  
251, 252, 267, 269  
Brown, David, 199  
Buber, Martin, 28, 52, 71, 193,  
229, 230, 245, 266  
Buford Family, 4, 6, 8, 12, 18,  
20, 21, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30,  
53, 116, 117, 118  
Bultmann, Rudolf, 191

## C

Christian, 2, 9, 10, 31, 36, 52,  
62, 110, 135, 138, 139, 141,  
142, 144, 148, 150, 152,  
154, 163, 172, 200, 227,  
240, 243, 245, 247  
Christian Tradition, 163  
Christianity, Christian  
Tradition, 137, 149, 201  
Ciardi, John, 69  
Citizen, Citizenship, 171, 173,  
176, 178, 180, 186  
Civil networks, 179  
Civil society, 171, 178, 181,  
183, 186  
Common Good, 172, 173,  
175, 177, 187  
*Common Good, The*, 169  
Communal spheres, 178  
Community, 117, 140, 142,  
152, 171, 173, 180, 182,  
184, 187, 190, 193, 194,  
196, 202, 203, 220, 224,  
226, 252, 264  
Compassion, 237, 252  
Constitution, 172  
Control, 176, 180, 238, 249,  
251  
Conversation, 9, 173, 174,  
176, 182, 186

*Corpus Christianum*, 14  
 Cosmic Personalism, 23, 43,  
 50, 54  
 Cultural Dyadic Objectivism,  
 213, 215, 219, 220, 221  
 Cultural Monadic  
 Subjectivism, 219, 220,  
 221  
 Cura, Danish Personalistic  
 Think Tank, 169

## D

*Dane, The*, 173  
 Darwin, Charles, 40, 95  
*Das Heilege*, 68  
 Dawkins, Richard, 45  
 Democracy, 173, 174, 177,  
 182, 186  
 Dennett, Daniel, 59  
 Depersonalize, 132, 170  
 Derrida, Jacques, 35, 64, 114  
 Descartes, Rene, 220, 221,  
 222  
 Dignity, 51, 94, 97, 105, 113,  
 116, 118, 169, 170, 178,  
 187, 267  
 Diversity, 201, 236  
 Dunne, John, 192

## E

Einstein, Albert, 40, 85  
 Eliot, T.S., 16, 147  
 Emergent Novelty, 42, 45, 55,  
 57, 74, 78, 90  
 Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 109,  
 185  
*Energia*, 34, 56, 57, 59, 67, 81  
 Enlightenment, 101, 148, 198  
 EU Commission, 181  
 Europe, 10, 173, 174  
 European Parliament, 183  
 Evil, Problem of, 8, 229, 230,  
 231, 232, 236, 238, 239,  
 243, 246, 248, 251  
 Existentialists, 184, 191

## F

Faith, 2, 3, 4, 10, 98, 99, 114,  
 117, 118, 135, 138, 139,  
 142, 144, 148, 151, 192,  
 193, 200, 201, 202, 203,  
 212, 213, 214, 215  
 Family, 6, 8, 103, 104, 105,  
 118, 138, 139, 143, 144,  
 171, 182, 193, 194, 195,  
 203, 261, 263  
 Family, Families, 107, 119,  
 178, 194  
 Farrer, Austin, 11, 15, 17, 19,  
 23, 24, 25, 30, 37, 44, 45,  
 52, 53, 57, 65, 82, 86, 91,  
 187, 270  
 Feuerbach, Ludwig, 17, 22,  
 26, 27, 28, 30, 40, 42, 43,  
 45, 46, 48, 50, 51, 52, 55,  
 56, 58, 61, 64, 66, 73, 75,  
 78, 79, 80, 82, 84, 86, 90,  
 91, 92, 193, 234, 235  
 Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 17  
 Freedom, 110, 117, 132, 170,  
 171, 172, 173, 176, 184,  
 186, 187, 191, 192, 193,  
 195, 196, 197, 217, 222,  
 237, 238, 247  
 Friendship, 91, 113, 116, 200,  
 201, 202, 214  
 Frost, Robert, 194

## G

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 199  
 Galbraith, Jo-Anne, 77  
 GDP, 183  
 God, 4, 10, 92, 94, 96, 101,  
 107, 110, 111, 118, 131,  
 132, 133, 134, 139, 140,  
 141, 142, 147, 148, 149,  
 150, 151, 152, 153, 154,  
 161, 165, 167, 189, 190,  
 199, 200, 209, 215, 219,  
 220, 225, 226, 227, 228,  
 230, 231, 232, 233, 234,  
 235, 236, 237, 238, 239,  
 241, 242, 243, 244, 245,

247, 248, 249, 251, 252,  
260, 261, 270, 271

## H

Hamlet, 176  
Hawking, Stephen, 53  
Heidegger, Martin, 114, 146,  
184, 191  
History and tradition, 192  
*Homo Habilis*, 52

## I

Idealism, 8, 100, 189, 235  
Idealist tradition, 189, 191  
Idols, 230  
*In Search of a Calling*  
*The College's Role In*  
*Shaping Identity*, 9, 30,  
100, 109, 110, 113, 121,  
155, 230, 232, 247  
Institutions, 8, 9, 10, 91, 92,  
102, 103, 104, 105, 128,  
129, 130, 131, 134, 171,  
177, 178, 180, 181, 197,  
198, 200, 201, 213, 217,  
219, 220, 224, 225, 226,  
229, 230, 240, 242, 246,  
250, 257, 258, 260  
Primary, 128  
Secondary, 129  
I-Thou-It, 133, 209, 219, 250,  
260, 266

## J

James, William, 16, 36, 62, 86,  
93, 94, 97, 163, 233, 250,  
267  
Jaspers, Karl, 200  
Jesus, 118, 136, 138, 141, 142,  
147, 149, 151, 153, 240,  
241, 244, 245  
Justin Martyr, 155

## K

Kenny, Anthony, 12

Kierkegaard, Soren, 22, 62,  
71, 72, 114, 117  
King, Jr., Martin Luther, 96  
*Know Thyself*  
*An Essay in Social*  
*Personalism*, 10, 115,  
133, 162, 231, 246  
Koch, Hal, 173, 174, 175, 176,  
182  
Kohak, Erazim, 8, 254, 256,  
257, 259  
Kurtz, Howard, 176

## L

Language, 137, 176, 223, 229,  
245  
Law, 97, 141, 148, 195, 196,  
198, 201, 203, 213, 241  
Law and justice, 195, 198  
Lewis, C.S., 158  
Libertarian Theories, 196  
Life, 99, 109, 110, 135, 137,  
142, 149, 170, 173, 175,  
180, 181, 185, 186, 211,  
214, 227, 232, 236, 242,  
246, 264, 266  
Lotze, Rudolf Herman, 189

## M

Macquarrie, John, 193  
Matthews, Gareth B., 164  
McTaggart, J.M.E., 189  
Media, 128, 130, 175, 176, 224  
Mental Illness, 160, 164  
Midgley, Mary, 45  
Monadic Subjectivism, 209  
Moral ideal, 198  
Mother Earth, 45  
Mother Nature, 38, 57, 60, 67,  
75, 78  
Mounier, Emmanuel, 97, 170,  
184, 186, 203  
Mouw, Richard, 155  
Myth, 136, 137, 142

## N

Natural law, 193

Natural theology, 162  
 Neoliberalism, 180  
 Nexus, the, 219, 220, 224,  
 225, 226, 260  
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 51, 66  
 Non-Rational Given, 231,  
 233, 242, 246, 248, 249,  
 251, 252

## O

Occupy Wall Street, 177  
 Other, 96, 152, 156, 159, 169,  
 170, 173  
 Other Minds Problem, 6, 187,  
 266

## P

Parables, 136, 137, 139, 142,  
 149  
 Participation, 178, 184  
 Person, 9, 102, 103, 104, 107,  
 109, 117, 119, 128, 129,  
 130, 132, 159, 189, 191,  
 193, 195, 196, 197, 203,  
 209, 212, 215, 219, 222, 254  
 Personal Idealists, 191  
 Personalism, 8, 91, 93, 95, 96,  
 116, 131, 133, 150, 152,  
 189, 191, 219, 222, 227,  
 229, 250, 256  
 Personalist Society, 22, 24,  
 25, 190  
 Phillips, D.Z., 35  
*Philosophia Perennis*, 13  
 Philosophical Anthropology,  
 24  
 Philosophical Faith, 200  
 Plantinga, Alvin, 159  
 Plato, 3, 5, 9, 10, 37, 48, 219,  
 220, 221, 227, 250  
 Platonic Ideals/Forms, 236,  
 241  
*Pluralist, The*, 8, 98, 190  
 Politicization, 174, 175  
 Politics, 39, 128, 130, 171,  
 175, 196  
 Professionalization, 176  
 Putnam, Robert, 179

## Q

Quantum Theology, 40, 55,  
 74  
 Quantum Theory, 37, 38, 56

## R

Rationalism, 22, 231, 249  
 Reciprocity, 179  
 Reflexivity, 19, 65, 83  
 Relational, 16, 118, 187, 209,  
 214  
 Religion, 198, 224, 230  
 Religious Communities, 139,  
 196, 198, 200, 201  
 Renouvier, Charles, 97  
 Republic, 178  
 Responsibility, 171, 179, 182,  
 196, 230  
 Ricoeur, Paul, 24, 64, 65, 97  
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 196

## S

*Sabbath*, 144, 146, 148, 149,  
 153  
 Sacred Story, 136  
 Sartre, Jean-Paul, 170, 184,  
 240, 248, 271  
 Self and Other, 192, 197  
*Sensus Divinitatis*, 159  
 Shakespeare, William, 176,  
 263  
 Shea, George Beverly, 39  
 Social Capital, 179  
 Social Mindset, 173, 182, 186  
 Social Personalism, 117, 127,  
 190, 191  
 Social Trust, 118, 179  
 Society, 195, 196, 223, 225,  
 242, 246, 257  
 Solidarity, 10, 128, 129, 130,  
 133, 174, 181, 187, 214,  
 217, 229, 230, 242, 258  
 Sophia, 13  
 Spin Doctors, 176  
 St. Paul, the Apostle, 16, 17,  
 58  
 Stengel, Richard, 178

Suffering, 184, 189, 230, 233,  
237, 246, 248, 252

## T

Taylor, Charles, 199  
Technology, 3, 10, 143, 144,  
145, 146, 147, 148, 153,  
154, 272  
Tennant, Frederick Robert,  
190  
Texas, 1, 160  
*The Personalist Forum*, 8, 19,  
20, 98, 103, 190, 269, 271  
Theodicy, 231, 248  
*Time* magazine, 178  
TimeBank, 183  
Tocqueville, Alexis de, 175  
Transcendence, 16, 69  
Transcendent Reality, 199–  
202  
Trotter, F. Thomas, 155

Trust, 180, 210, 214, 216  
*Trust, Our Second Nature  
Crisis, Reconciliation, and  
the Personal*, 128, 153, 210

## V

Volunteering, 183  
Volunteering, European Year  
of, 181

## W

Ward, Keith, 201, 202  
Whitehead, Alfred North, 3,  
15, 128, 190, 233, 249  
Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 14, 46,  
48, 49, 52, 72, 78, 79, 80,  
86, 88, 89  
Wojtyła, Karol, 25, 95, 184,  
185, 187