

## APPENDIX 2

### Introduction to the Philosophy of Justus Buchler

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Because Buchler's views are not widely known ... this paper is designed to be a general introduction to Buchler's philosophy.... [There] is evidence of a growing appreciation of Buchler's thought [which] - - marks a resurgence of interest in the type of systematic metaphysics in which Buchler engage[s]. [As John E. Smith says:

There is a revival of interest in speculative philosophy, in fresh discussion of basic issues.... There is a new sense of the significance of the problems of what it means to be and the search for the pervasive structure of all that is.<sup>2</sup>

The expression 'speculative philosophy' is not one which Buchler employs, but Smith accurately describes the enterprise to which Buchler's book, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes* (1966, 2 enl. ed. 1990), is devoted. In the other volumes of the system, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment* (1951, 2 rev. ed. 1979), *Nature and Judgment* (1955), *The Concept of Method* (1961). and *The Main of Light: On the Concept of Poetry* (1974),<sup>3</sup> Buchler is exploring the question what it means to be a human individual and searching for the pervasive traits of all forms of human activity.

Buchler's philosophic perspective is markedly different from those of his predecessors or contemporaries, but it is grounded in the history of Western philosophy and, in particular, in certain developments of the classic period in American philosophy. In developing his own views, Buchler reacts to principles adopted by philosophers from the Pre-Socratic's to the present day and attacks various assumptions which are deeply rooted in Western thought. He is especially critical of Dewey and Whitehead, and his positions on a number of issues are diametrically

opposed to theirs. Yet at a deeper level their influence upon him is strong. Despite his sharp criticism of the limitations and biases of their views and of certain doctrines of Peirce, Royce, Mead, and Santayana, Buchler presupposes and carries further these philosophers' critiques of earlier philosophies and their reinterpretations of several pivotal concepts, notably the concept of experience.

Several other themes in Buchler's philosophy link him with the classic American philosophers. One is his rejection of what Whitehead condemns as "the bifurcation of nature." Another, central to Buchler's entire philosophy, might be called "ontological contextualism." As H.S. Thayer points out, one of the elements of the pragmatist perspective is a "methodological contextualism."<sup>4</sup> In Dewey's concept of a situation, a particular kind of context becomes a metaphysical, rather than an exclusively methodological, category. Buchler's concept of an order is a generalization of the concept of context per Se, and his principle of ordinality, one of the central principles of his philosophy, extends the concept of an order to everything there is. A comparable type of ontological contextualism is found in Whitehead and also in Mead's theory of the objective reality of perspectives (which Mead claims is based upon Whitehead) The implications of Buchler's principle of ordinality, however, are quite different, as I shall show.

Other themes common to Buchler and the classic Americans include a concern with meaning, communication, and community and a parallel concern with the social and communicative dimensions of the human self. Action, central to the pragmatist theories of meaning and truth, and also to the philosophy of Royce, plays an important part as well in Buchler's philosophy of man, but for him action is only one of three equally important modes of human production, any or all of which may be central in the determinations of meanings. Finally, Buchler's critical analysis of the nature of philosophy articulates a theme which is especially

prominent in the writings of Dewey and Whitehead.

In his approach to philosophic issues, though not in his doctrines or his analysis of the nature of philosophy, Buchler seems closer to Whitehead than to other philosophers. In our attempt to arrive at an understanding of Buchler, some comparisons with Whitehead should prove helpful. Whitehead is first and foremost a systematic metaphysician. His treatment of science, education, symbolism, the history of ideas, are all extensions of the ontology which receives its most complete formulation in *Process and Reality*. The level of generality of that work, Whitehead's painstaking search for adequate categories, his careful definition and systematic interrelation of these categories, exemplify temper which also governs Buchler's *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*. And just as all of Whitehead's writings articulate the 'philosophy of organism, Buchler reminds us that his own philosophy in its entirety could be called a philosophy of natural complexes .... A most striking illustration of this systematic continuity is the way in which Buchler uses, not only the categories of his theory of utterance or judgment, but also the categories of his general ontology (the 4' metaphysics of natural complexes") in the analysis of poetry.

In his well-known statement of aims in *Process and Reality*, Whitehead says. "Speculative Philosophy is the endeavor to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted."<sup>5</sup> Whitehead's method, in framing this system of ideas, is a method of generalization: In this description of philosophic method, the term 'philosophic generalization' has meant 'the utilization of specific notions, applying to a restricted group of facts, for the divination of the generic notions which apply to all facts' (PR, 8).

The central notions employed by Whitehead as the basis for metaphysical generalization

(e.g. the notions of feeling, perception and mentality) are drawn from an analysis of “immediate experience.’ ‘The elucidation of immediate experience is the sole justification for any thought; and the starting point for thought is the analytic observation of components of this experience” (PR. 6).

Buchler, too, seeks to formulate a logically coherent system of generic concepts which, in Whitehead’s phrase, are “applicable and adequate” (PR. 4). His method ... might be termed a method of generalization. The ‘metaphysical goal,’ he says, is “to discriminate generic complexes that have the widest possible scope” (MNC, 38). But rather than generalizing from traits of experience itself, a practice he condemns as excessively anthropomorphic, Buchler adopts a realist stance, basing his generalizations on common traits he discerns among complexes he takes to be in the world.

Buchler intends the generic concepts of his metaphysics of natural complexes to apply, not only to elements of experience, actual or possible, but to ‘whatever is, in whatever way” (MNC, I). “Whether all complexes are humanly discriminable, we do not know,” he says (MNC, 2), but he maintains that to be at all is to be a natural complex, and that the categories of the general metaphysics of natural complexes must apply to every complex without exception. The problem of how a system of such generality is validated is discussed by Buchler at several points.

Every theory aims, in the last analysis, to exhibit a structure among data ordinarily regarded as disparate: by the use of a relatively small number of categories a scheme is devised which requires to be self-consistent and consistent with other schemes that have come to be thought part of the fabric of knowledge. The burden that a philosophic theory in particular bears is likely to be great; for beyond these primal requirements it dedicates itself to the difficult union

of a high level of generality with interpretative justice. In the case of such a theory the circumstances of verification are usually very complex, and the acceptability of the result depends ultimately, perhaps, upon the presence of a sense of philosophic satisfaction in the reader, who is both spectator and participant (TGT, vii).

In taking philosophy to be “theoretical” Buchler must not be thought to be saying that it is therefore scientific. Applying to the concept of philosophy the categories of his general theory of judgment, Buchler shows it to resemble art as well as science.

Whitehead intends the coherence, necessity, and universality of his system of categories to mirror what he takes to be the coherence of the world: “there is an essence to the universe which forbids relationships beyond itself, as a violation of its rationality” (PR 6). Buchler affirms that there is nothing “beyond” nature, even God, but he denies that world constitutes a single, coherent order. To him “nature” means only “the presence and availability of complexes” (MNC 3). Whitehead expresses the “essence” of the universe in terms of a principle of internal relatedness: “In a sense, every entity pervades the whole world...” (PR 42). Buchler finds discontinuity and irrelevance as well as relatedness in the world. In support of this position he provides a precise definition of what he means by “relation.”

Whitehead’s cosmology is designed to overcome the limitations of the ... Newtonian worldview. But, still consistent with Newtonian science, he takes the world to be a causal order or process. Buchler, concerned as Whitehead to restore to reality the things which physical science cannot encompass, denies that the world can be adequately interpreted as a process. Process, he says, is no more central to nature than are structure or relation, without which there could be no processes.

*The Language of Buchler's Metaphysics*

Buchler's books make heavy demands upon (he reader and he is found by some people to be a difficult philosopher. The demanding character of his work is as much a function of the newness of Buchler's views as it is a consequence of the abstractness of his thought or his uncompromising style of writing. In a review of *The Main of Light*, I.A. Richards says,

This division [of utterance or judgment into three modes] is inviting us to think anew and to think deeply. I should perhaps add that *The Main of Light* manages to make itself unusually clear, exacting though its invitations are. On the delineation of these modes Mr. Buchler lavishes delicate and often exquisite care, seeing that their clarification requires the exposure of a number of stiff philosophical bulwarks that doubtless will endure forever.

The reader of any part of Buchler's system must be ready to accept his "invitations" and to follow him in adopting a radical conceptual reorientation. It is necessary as well to attend to the exactitude of Buchler's formulations. Otherwise, it is easy to become lost in a maze of unfamiliar locutions. The fact that Buchler must use such formulations reflects the unusual generality of his concepts as well as the extent of his departure from traditional schools of philosophy and common usage. As Whitehead has indicated, in striving for adequate conceptualization, the philosopher necessarily "redesigns language":

Every science must devise its own instruments. The tool required for philosophy is language. Thus philosophy redesigns language in the same way that, in a physical science, pre-existing appliances are redesigned. It is exactly at this point that the appeal to facts is a difficult operation. This appeal is not solely to the expression of the facts in current verbal statements. The adequacy of such sentences is the main question at issue. It is bile that the general agreement of mankind to experienced facts is best expressed in language. But the language of literature

breaks down precisely at the task of expressing in explicit form the larger generalities---the very generalities which metaphysics seeks to express (PR 16).

Philosophers can never hope finally to formulate these metaphysical first principles. Weakness of insight and deficiencies of language stand in the way inexorably. Words and phrases must be stretched towards a generality foreign to their ordinary use; and however such elements of language be stabilized as technicalities, they remain metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap (PR 6).

In general Buchler's terms are not coined words but are words adapted to special usages, some of them deliberately archaic. One key term in his philosophy of man, "proception is an obsolete word which appears in Dr. Johnson's dictionary, although it is not used by Buchler in the sense Johnson gives it. "Proception", as Buchler employs the term, refers, not to a single human function, but to the life- process of a human individual. The psychologist, Gordon W. Allport, has borrowed this term from Buchler. In Allport's words,

The term recognizes the fact that each individual carries with him his past relations to the world, his emotional dispositions, and his own expectations for the future.

These proceptive directions' provide his potentialities for seeing, hearing, doing, thinking, making, saying.<sup>6</sup>

Buchler does not speak of "proceptive directions," but only of the unitary proceptive direction." But Allport's use of the term is appropriate, especially in its emphasis on the difference between Buchler's concept and the much narrower "perception" which it seems to resemble.

Whether or not they are represented by new words, Buchler's categories are not fully translatable into any other philosophic or ordinary language. Moreover, his concepts are

interrelated in such a way that it is difficult to define them independently. Buchler's strategy is not to define each term as he introduces it, but instead to build up definitions of technical terms by increments and with reference to one another as he articulates the structure of his system. In reading him it is necessary to remember that many of his statements referring to the meaning of terms and principles are only partial definitions and, if read in too narrow a context, are apt to be misleading.

But the difficulty of Buchler's thought is not wholly due to the novelty or interdependence of his terms or to the way they are defined. Neither is it due to the number or complexity of his categories. In fact, whereas Buchler portrays the world to be profoundly complex, he employs only a small number of his categories and basic principles. When they are understood they seem remarkably simple. However, they are hard to grasp at first because Buchler's categories are not direct substitutes for more familiar ones; they are not coextensive or commensurate with the terms employed by other philosophers. It is not merely that Buchler reinterprets what it means to be a substance or an attribute, or that he provides a new definition of "being" or "experience" or "judgment." The referents of such terms as "natural complex," "integrity," "prevalence," "alescence," "proception," "judgment," are not the same as the referents of the terms which they replace. Buchler's terms are integrated into a structure which does not rest upon conventional distinctions (such as the hard and fast distinction between substance and attribute). Buchler's philosophy is constructed on different axes; he establishes different parameters from those to which we are accustomed.

Part of the difficulty---and the originality---of Buchler's philosophy lies in the fact that he repudiates certain fundamental assumptions which have long dominated Western philosophy. One way to read an understanding of his thought is to see the key assumptions which he rejects,



considering some of his reasons for rejecting them. We may then compare his own views with those he opposes. Let us first examine Buchler's general metaphysics, his philosophy of nature, and then move on to his philosophy of man.

## THE METAPHYSICS OF NATURE

### *Ontological Priority and Ontological Parity*

From the Pre-Socratic's to the present day, philosophers have held that there is some ultimate or absolute reality in relation to which all else is either only apparent or in some say less real, dependent, derivative, or altogether unreal. This assumption of ontological priority takes various forms. For instance it is expressed in the assertion of the primacy of individuals over their qualities, relations, and other supposedly dependent traits. Taking this position Strawson claims that material bodies and persons are 'the basic or fundamental particulars' in relation to which the concepts of other types of particular must be seen as secondary"<sup>7</sup> Materialism asserts the priority of the physical; idealism the priority of the spiritual or mental. Atomism asserts the priority of the component; holism or organicism asserts the priority of the whole. Whitehead states,

In all philosophic theory there is an ultimate which is actual in virtue of its accidents.

It is only then capable of characterization through its accidental embodiments, and apart from these accidents is devoid of actuality. In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed 'creativity'; and God is its primordial, non temporal accident (PR 10-11).

Whitehead repudiates the traditional "substance-quality metaphysics, but he adheres, nevertheless, to the principle of ontological priority which that metaphysics presupposes.

Buchler, too, repudiates the substance-quality scheme. But he also rejects the principle of priority upon which the traditional distinction rests, and bases his systematic metaphysics on his principle of ontological parity.

Buchler finds all versions of the principle of ontological priority to lead to troublesome consequences. In *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes* he considers a number of arguments for ontological priority in an effort to show that individually these arguments are untenable and collectively inconsistent (MNC 33-51). Putting together several of Buchler's own arguments, let us compare one view held by Leibniz which holds that the world must be ultimately composed of simples, with another (that of F.H. Bradley) which contends that the ultimate reality can only be the totality of Being, the Absolute. Both positions rest on the assumption that the ultimate must be complete and independent; but the first view holds the components of the whole to be atomic and self-contained, while the second maintains that only a whole can be independent since components are incomplete and dependent. Ironically, as Buchler, points out, on the second view "what is putatively 'indivisible or 'simple' emerges here as least real, instead of being an 'ultimate'" (MNC 34).

One argument to which proponents of both these positions appeal is that what is dependent cannot exist without that which is independent. This is also the ground for the assertion of the priority of substance and of the contention that individuals are more real than groups or societies. Buchler contends that the dependency involved in each one of these cases is co-dependency. It is as wrong to think that a whole can be without constituents or a "substance" without qualities as to think the contrary. Similarly, he argues, individuals are no less dependent upon a society than a society upon them. Rather than arguing for the dependence of societies, one might contend with equal justification that "societies are less dependent upon individuals

than individuals upon them. For a society endures though each individual in it eventually perishes, whereas individuals never exist in isolation” (MNC 45-46). And, in Buchler’s metaphysics, it turns out that each is a constituent of the other. On the assumption of ontological parity, rather than priority, there is no reason why this cannot be the case.

To Buchler, the various versions of the principle of ontological priority rest upon concepts like dependence, completeness, determinateness, or concreteness, all of which he shows to be vague or confused. Some of his arguments are directed against Whitehead. The latter defines an “actual occasion” to be more real than the prehensions” which are its components. In *Adventures of Ideas* he says, “as used here the words individual and ‘atom’ have the same meaning... they apply to composite things with an absolute reality which their components lack.”<sup>8</sup> This lack is because the components (prehensions) are less “concrete” than the individuals (actual occasions), which are the “most concrete” entities in the universe (PR 28). But the groupings or “nexus” to which they, in turn, belong, are less concrete, less real, than the occasions.

It turns out, then, in Whitehead, that (1) the atomic actualities have component elements; and that (2) the atomic actualities are always components in an order or nexus of actualities. Yet somehow the former kind of components, considered as realities, are less real, less “ultimate,” than the latter kind of components. An atomic actuality is more real than its components, but an order of such actualities is less real than *its* components. Both that which goes to constitute an atom and that which an atom goes to constitute are less real than the atom. All this, curiously, in spite of the fact that atoms are as inconceivable without their components as the components are without them; and in spite of the fact

that these atoms are as inconceivable apart from an order as an order is apart from them (MNC 49-50).

Buchler finds this kind of inconsistency to pervade Whitehead's thought and, in a [separate] paper, reveals it to be at bottom an ambivalence of the subject of ontological parity/priority.<sup>9</sup>

As Buchler sees it, the notions of degrees of being or reality, of absolute and relative reality, or of hybrid ways of being such as "subsistence" or "intentional inexistence," rest upon a confusion between functions complexes serve in relation to other complexes and what it means for these complexes "to be. It is fruitless, not to say meaningless, to hold that some things "are" more or less, or that (they can be more or less actual (as Whitehead holds). Philosophers make this mistake only because they unthinkingly presuppose a single paradigm for everything there is.

There is no ground except perhaps a short range rhetorical one, for a distinction between the real and the "really real," between being and "true being." Among the favorite perennial candidates for the honor of "being" more truly or completely than anything else is "primary substance" or "primary being." It has been the standing historical comfort of "tough-minded" philosophers, preserving their confidence in the solid concreteness of the spatio-temporal individual (MNC 31).

While these philosophers deny the reality of universals or question the reality of other minds, we humans continue to deal with these things. The principle of ontological priority is basically obscurantist and reductivist. In contrast, the natural parity of all complexes, their ontological integrity, is what reveals all differences and makes it possible to ascertain them. The principle of parity obliges us to receive and accept all discriminanda. The conception of ontological priority,

on the other hand, makes all ascertainable differences suspect, and instead of interpreting their relative character and ordinal location, always stands ready to efface them.

Buchler's approach to the problem of the status of such complexes as universals and other minds is not merely to assert the ontological parity, the equal reality, of everything we discriminate, but to recognize that there are many different orders of reality. To deny ontological priority is not to deny that there are other kinds of priority. There is no privileged being or way of being, no unqualified priority. But within what Buchler calls "an order," there may be priorities of relevant sorts. There are temporal priorities, and so on. But "prior in a given order or respect" does not mean "ontologically basic" or "more real."

### *Complexes and Ordinality*

One important version of the principle of ontological priority is the doctrine that anything complex must be ultimately reducible to simple and unanalyzable components. Buchler contends that there can be nothing unanalyzable or undefinable: whatever is, has traits. The most often cited "simple," a discriminable perceptual quality such as a shade of red, is not simple at all. If try to analyze we find it to have many traits. It is perceivable; it is a shade of the color, red; it has a measurable degree of saturation; it presupposes extension, and so on. To (those who object that what is simple here is not what this shade of red has in common with other shades but what is unique to it, Buchler responds, first, that what is unique to this shade of red is no more indispensable to its being just this shade than what it has in common with other shades. Second, he notes that anything absolutely unique would not be comparable to anything else and therefore could not be a constituent of a complex (MNC 17).

If there are no simples, then the constituents of a complex are also complex, and so on, to infinity. This extremely important to the structure Buchler is building. He not only holds that whatever is, is complex; he also holds that every complex is implicated in a network of relations to other complexes.

The first principle of Buchler's metaphysics of nature is that whatever is, is a natural complex, not as a mere multiplicity, but as *an order*, a sphere of relatedness and relevance. Every complex is an order of related traits (although, as we shall see, not every one of its traits must be related to every other). Buchler refers to the constituents of an order sometimes as "subalterns or, most frequently, as "traits." Since whatever is, is a natural complex, each trait, in turn, is an order. And since Buchler holds that every complex must have relations (if it did not, it would not be in the world), every order must be a constituent or trait of some other order or orders, it must be "located in" these orders. This is Buchler's *principle of ordinality*. Every complex is an order and is also a trait of other orders. Since every trait of a complex has its own traits, Buchler maintains that the analysis of any natural complex can be pursued indefinitely; i.e., whatever is, is indefinitely complex.

The principle of ordinality, Buchler says, "represents a generalization and neutralization of the maxim of Anaxagoras, 'Neither is there a least of what is small but there is always a less.... But there is always a greater than what is great...' (MNC, 14). The world, nature, is a tissue of interrelated orders of infinite complexity and variety. There is no determinable limit to its dimensions. Complexes have no hard edges; they intersect and overlap in infinite ways. Yet they have discriminable integrities: they are orders. Despite its complexity, we can find our way in the world.

It would help us understand Buchler's metaphysics if we could stop thinking of the world

as being furnished by things like rocks and planets and think of it in terms of aspects or traits. An order (a natural complex) is not necessarily a “thing.” It is not a substance. Every aspect of an order is also an order. Pervasive qualities, tendencies, and relations, as well as bodies, are natural complexes. Bodies, as well as relations and qualities, are traits of orders (in Buchler’s sense of “trait”) and are also orders. Life, the wind, the climate of a region, love, light, understanding, neurosis, are all, for Buchler, complexes of nature. There are complexes, such as mathematical truths, which are neither spatial nor temporal. The world includes them as well as spatial and temporal complexes, human products as well as galaxies. They comprise different orders, but even if, in some cases, the relations among them are hard to trace, in accordance with the principle of ontological parity all orders are equally natural and equally

### *Identity*

Among the assumptions challenged by Buchler is the assumption that identity consists primarily in sameness. The principle of ontological parity is inconsistent with the doctrine of an underlying substance which (because it remains the same through change) “is” an individual in some special sense. All the traits or aspects of a natural complex are equally and in the same sense constituents of that complex and none are the exclusive bearer of its identity. On the other hand, identity for Buchler is not something attributable only to a completed (hence unchanging) whole. We may identify a complex without knowing all its traits and we can identify it in different ordinal locations. Buchler accounts for this by defining the identity of a natural complex in terms of relation, continuity, and ordinality.

Buchler’s theory of identity, as well as his theory of relation, utilizes the concept of the integrity of a natural complex. By “integrity” Buchler means more than nameable or describable

nature or essence. For instance, in modeling clay we explore its integrity in a unique respect. We might understand the integrity of a natural complex to be any complex of traits in terms of which that complex is discriminable as that complex or that kind of complex.

A natural complex may have many integrities; each reflects an order in which it is located. A human being may be, simultaneously or successively, a mother, a student, a Democrat, a Puerto Rican. Each of these integrities is a constituent of the *contour* or “gross integrity” of this complex. ‘A contour is the integrity of a complex ... in so far as it belongs to many order (MNC 22). While the integrities differ, it is a single complex which is located in these orders. This is because of ‘the continuous relation that obtains between the contour, and any of its integrities (ibid.). Whether they are related to one another or not (as, for instance, being a mother is normally unrelated to being a student), the integrities of a complex are connected through their relation to the contour. The continuity of this relatedness is what Buchler defines to be the identity of the complex. Another way to express this might be to say that the contour mediates between integrities. Because each integrity is a constituent of the one contour, we say “the same complex” is in more than one order. This holds true even as the contour is enlarged by the addition of new integrities.

### *The Conception of Nature*

Since every complex must be located in orders beyond itself it would be contradictory for the world to be a single, all-inclusive complex. But according to Buchler the world is not a single order in another sense. Nothing can be meaningfully said to be outside or beyond nature. In the infinitely dense network of orders which we call “nature” or “the world’ each complex is related



to an indefinite number of others. But, as Buchler sees it, nature is nevertheless irreducibly plural. It contains continuity and discontinuity, relatedness and unrelatedness.

While each complex, each order, is related to others, there are still others to which, on Buchler's theory of relation, it is not related. Buchler defines two types of relatedness which he calls strong relevance and weak relevance. The distinction rests on his distinction between the integrity of a natural complex and its scope. A complex has traits which are not integrities, and which could differ without altering its integrities. For example, the exact number of grains of sand on a beach makes no difference to the fact of its sandiness, its integrity as sandy. Such traits comprise the scope of a complex. For a complex to be related to another, it must be a constituent (determinant) of either the integrity or the scope of the second. To affect the integrity of a complex is to be strongly relevant to it; to affect the scope of a complex, without affecting its integrity, is to be weakly relevant to it. For example the eruption of a volcano is strongly relevant to the geology of an area, modifying its integrity in several respects, whereas the normal succession of the seasons is only weakly relevant to that area's geological integrity.

The consequence of this definition of relation is that two complexes which affect neither one's scope nor one another's integrity are not related at all. This is true even if there is some order in which both are located. To the objection that all complexes are related at least in so far as they are similar to or different from one another, Buchler answers that similarity and difference are not relations. The mere fact that two complexes are alike or different may make no difference to the integrity or scope of either.

Some tree in a Siberian forest, we can assume, has a height that would measure more than the height of both A and B; yet, instead of being related to them..., it may not be actually related to them at all---it may be irrelevant to their scope. We could put together the words, "some tree

in Siberia is taller than A. But framing a sentence, which produces a relation among words, does not suffice to produce a relation among the complexes of which the words speak (MNC 113-114). Just so, two traits of a single complex, like one's age and the color of one's skin, may be unrelated. But in this, case, both traits belong to one contour of traits. Buchler calls such traits "commensurate (MNC 95). The world at large, in contrast, has no continuous contour. There are orders of nature but nature is not an order. One may speak of the world" but the grammar of the expression must not mislead us into thinking that the world is a single natural complex.

### *The Analysis of Being*

Associated with some versions of the principle of ontological priority is the notion that complexes which are intangible, elusive, or undependable in various ways, are somehow unreal, that they do not exist, or that they are not part of nature. Not only dreams, mirages, and fictions have been classed as unreal, but also universals, number groups, societies. God, on the other hand, so elusive! and intangible as to be unexplainable by means of conventional metaphysical categories, has been taken to more real than anything else to exist "absolutely." Philosophers of different persuasions have alternately and contradictorily taken either that which is outside the mind or that which is inside it—or the mind itself---to be unreal or at least indemonstrable.

The principle of ontological parity holds that everything that is, is equally real. 'No discriminanda can be consigned to 'non-being' under pain of contradiction; for they have the being that enables them to be discriminated (MNC 31). Complexes are discriminable because they make a difference, and their reality consists in the difference that they make, their relevance to other complexes, whatever form this relevance may take. Universals, fictions, illusions, secondary and tertiary qualities, all are complexes in different orders. To be located in a fictional

order or an order of discourse is not to be located in an order of physical bodies, but it is nevertheless to be located in an order of nature, in this case an order of human products.

To be located in a natural order, however, is not necessarily to exist, and Buchler does not employ the term 'existence' in his system of philosophic categories. Whether God 'exists' or not, the complex, God, is located in a number of orders, moral, sociological, and literary (to name but a few). God is prayed to, feared, obeyed, and envisioned. In Buchler's terminology, the natural complex, God, which people address, prevails; it is a prevalence.

As Buchler points out [p. 64 below], to prevail is not simply to be." He distinguishes prevalence from another status which he calls alescence, and a complex which is alescent also "is." The distinction between prevalence and alescence, a distinction between alternative and mutually exclusive ways of being in an order, has not been made before either in philosophy or in ordinary language. In making it Buchler is calling attention to a contrast which he takes to be more fundamental than either the contrast between being and becoming or that between persistent sameness and change.

To say that a complex prevails is to recognize it as being located in an order and as having a certain integrity. For example on a given day a blue sky may prevail. It is only in so far as the sky is blue that Buchler would say the complex, the blue sky, prevails. It prevails only in so far as its integrity, its blueness, is inviolate. (The complex we are talking about is not the sky, but the blue sky.) But suppose the blueness of the sky is interrupted by clouds. In one respect, a blue sky prevails; but in another respect, the respect in which it is marked by clouds, the blue does not prevail but is alescent. The clouds are alescences (alescent traits) in the otherwise blue sky.

To reduce his doctrine to the simplest terms, Buchler is saying that in so far as its integrity is not deviated from, a complex prevails. It prevails as just that complex or just that kind of complex. But in so far as its integrity is (or comes to be) deviated from in some way, the complex is alescent.

Anything that is must be a natural complex and must be a prevalence or an alescence in some order. This order may be only an order of discourse or an order of imagination. Merely to mention (or to fantasy or suppose) what purports to be a natural complex---an immortal human being for example, is not sufficient to ensure that there is such a complex in any other order. Yet even if the complex in question be only a term in discourse, *as* a term, it is real. We may question its alleged traits and ordinal locations, but not its reality.

Buchler speaks of alescence *as* “arising or “varying or as consisting in the “introduction of some different integrity into the contour of a natural complex” (MNC 72). This arising or introduction is not to be thought of in purely temporal terms. Alescence is not necessarily a temporal event. Thus it is not to be equated with becoming or change. A flaw in a diamond or in the structure of an argument is as much an alescence as the birth of a child. Conversely, becoming and change are not necessarily alescences. In some orders (e.g., the growth of a plant) becoming or change prevails.

### *Possibility and Actuality*

Just as it is not synonymous with existence, prevalence is not to be equated with actuality. The distinction between actuality and possibility, for Buchler, is as important as the distinction between prevalence and alescence, and for any complex in any of its ordinal locations the two

pairs of categories overlap. In each order in which it is located, a natural complex is either prevalent or alescent and is either an actuality or a possibility.

Buchler finds both the concept of actuality and the concept of possibility to have been uncritically taken for granted and he attempts to analyze both. In the first place, he defines possibilities as traits of natural complexes.

Possibilities ... are always possibilities of and for; a natural complex has certain possibilities---not any whatever. They are possibilities for it---or “the” possibilities for it (MNC 130).

In Buchler’s terms, the traits of a complex *define* the ways in which its contour may continue or extended; i.e., the traits a complex has define or limit the traits it may come to have. They provide for it a limited set of alternatives. Buchler’s concept of natural definition is a generalization of certain established usages of “define,” such as when we say “that an image is defined upon the retina, or ... that a course of events has defined the options available for action” (MNC. 163). In this sense, the traits of a natural complex define its boundaries or limits. Some of its traits define the limits to the prospective extension of the complex. Buchler calls the latter kind of natural definition *prefinition*. Possibilities are *traits prefined by a natural complex*. They are traits of that complex. Thus there are no possibilities which are not traits of natural complexes. It is for this reason that Buchler maintains that it is false to say that there is an infinity of logical possibilities for any complex. So-called logical possibilities are complexes which are only defined within an order of discourse.

Buchler’s detailed discussion of the concept of actuality cannot be succinctly summarized. Its most essential feature is that it defines an actuality, just as it defines a possibility, as a trait of a natural complex. Any complex, according to Buchler, has traits of

actuality (i.e., respects in which it is actual). The category of actuality, therefore, has a much wider scope than other philosophers give to it. There may be actualities in any order, including a literary order. (Because of his ordinal conception of actuality, Buchler finds the concept of fiction, connoting as it does something absolutely not actual, to be unsatisfactory.) In Shakespeare's play, Hamlet is the actual killer of Polonius. The alternative to actuality is not unreality, but possibility.

Like prevalence and alescence, possibility and actuality are ordinal, relational statuses. No natural complex is exclusively an actuality or exclusively a possibility. Whether actual or possible, prevalent or alescent in a given order, a complex may in principle have the opposite status in some other order. Thus, in the play, the character, Hamlet, is actually the son of Gertrude and may possibly become King (this would be an alescence). The same character, in another order, is a possible role for Richard Burton. This possibility not only arose (was alescent) at a certain stage in the order of Burton's life; it has been actualized and may (or may not) be re-actualized. And it will cease to be possible (another alescence) at some future time.

On Buchler's view, then, there are no independent possibilities. But neither are actualities independent; among the complexes upon which actualities are dependent are possibilities.

A possibility cannot be said to prevail or arise if it is unrelated to any actualities, nor can an actuality be said to prevail or arise if it is unrelated to any possibility. Every complex that prevails as an actuality ... is an actualization. It derives from and reflects the possibilities of other actualities (MNC 133).

Moreover, "a consequence of the arising of some possibilities is the arising of other possibilities (MNC, 146). In short, possibilities are efficacious. As traits of a complex, they, too, limit or

define that complex. "Whatever prevails or arises makes a difference" (ibid.).

## THE METAPHYSICS OF THE HUMAN PROCESS

### *Proception*

In analyzing man and his products, as in analyzing nature at large, Buchler challenges assumptions and distinctions which have been the point of departure for most Western philosophers.

When Buchler speaks of a person, or a human individual, or a self, he does not mean a mind or soul or a bodily organism or a compound of the two. His analysis of what it means to be an individual human being cuts across these distinctions. In the first place, a person is a natural complex, not a substance, mental or physical. As a natural complex a person is intrinsically relational and multidimensional. Being human includes being an organism and includes having cognitive and rational capacities, but this is not a sufficient characterization of the integrity of a person or self.

Buchler's theory of the self focuses on the cumulative process which constitutes the self and which is commonly called "experience." But Buchler takes pains to show that all of the various conceptions and philosophic analyses of experience (e.g. as conscious awareness, as a fund of accumulated knowledge or skill as interaction or transaction with the environment) are too narrow to encompass all that enters into or emanates from an individual human history. He analyzes this history as a process of assimilation and manipulation of natural complexes, the process he calls *proception*.

In an adequate theory --- the concept of proception would not eliminate the concept

of experience. No amount of legislation will expel the term “experience” from common discourse or philosophic speculation, and perhaps this is just as well. The generality, as well as the vagueness, of the term answers and stems from the ever present need for a way of designating a number of metaphysically discriminable situations that are somehow felt to be related: the effect upon individuals of factors in nature that do not seem to be identified or identifiable with them; the qualitative characters of this effect in the make-up of individuals; and the inter-individual fabric that seems at once to transcend the limits of an individual and yet to be available to that individual. Various philosophic traditions have magnified or exaggerated one and another aspect of this complex, and the result has of course been the erection of incompatible metaphysical structures. The concept of proception facilitates a juster theory of experience by supplying the means for interpreting it in multidimensional terms (TGT 23).

The concept of proception is designed in part to show how a person is related to other complexes and to avoid the problems entailed by the concept of a self-enclosed consciousness. Buchler repudiates the type of distinction typically made between the experiencing subject and the object of experience, between “inner world” and “outer world.” He recasts the notions of self and experience in such a way as to show that the traditional distinctions, which purport to represent common sense, actually reflect an uncritical, mentalistic bias. As Buchler defines it, the boundary between self and not-self is not a separation between irreconcilably different kinds of complex but a distinction of different types of relatedness. The world is not “outside” the self--- and not “within” the self. It is the matrix within which the self arises and lives. Any complex may come to be related to a human self, but it does not thereby cease to stand in other relations as well.



Proception, although more generic than perception or consciousness and wider than behavior or adjustment, includes all of these. Any complex which is a factor in determining the course of an individual human life enters into the proceptive process, and whatever enters the proceptive process is a precept. Hereditary traits, memories, expectations, are all procepts; social institutions, geographical and historical conditions, physical objects, and persons may be procepts too, in so far as---and only in so far as---they affect an individual human history. A procept as such is not a datum or an idea; it is not a percept or an “immediate” or felt quality. (Here is one of Buchler’s differences from Dewey. According to Dewey immediate qualities are fundamental to experience, and in *Experience and Nature* the immediate is also said to be fundamental in nature. Buchler denies that everything “given” is immediate. He has no place for immediacy in his system. While “uninterpreted feeling is a property that can belong to any phase of proception” (MNC 23-24), it is not a necessary ingredient in any phase. “Precept” and “quality,” like “procept” and “percept,” are not synonymous. A procept does not have to be felt and most procepts are not qualities, although feelings are procepts and qualities may become procepts. A procept is a complex-in-relation to a human self; it is a complex serving as a determinant of the integrity of the self (in the language of Buchler’s theory of relation, it is a complex strongly relevant to the self (cf. ML 91).

### *The Proceptive Order*

Proception is not interaction or, as Dewey calls it, transaction,” with the environment. Some complexes which become procepts are part of the environment but others, such as a hallucination, could not be said to be. Even those which are environmental are not, as procepts, located outside the proceiver. But they are not inside him either. The order in which a procept

*qua* precept, is located in *the proceptive domain*.

Within the world at large is a selection of complexes which are at least weakly relevant to the individual, which fall within his scope. These, according to Buchler, constitute that individual's world. Within this order of complexes is the proceptive domain (cf. NJ 118-120). Like the trails of any natural complex, the traits which constitute the life of an individual, which make him the person that he is, comprise an order. As the order of a process, this order is a fluid one. What Buchler calls the proceptive domain, the cumulative order of complexes which constitute the ongoing history of an individual human being, provides the conditions in terms of which that individual responds to further complexes, i.e., the conditions under which these complexes become precepts. This cumulative set of conditions is a perspective (one type of order). The perspective of the individual shapes the way he makes his mark upon the world and the way the world makes its mark upon him.

The perspective of an individual is not a monolithic order; it is constituted by a multiplicity of less inclusive perspectives, each one defining a situation for the individual.

Perspectives can include or comprehend other perspectives. For each individual the widest perspective is the proceptive domain.. The perspectives in a man's life can be related concentrically as it were; but they also are parallel, they intersect, they are of commensurable and incommensurable, of variable and invariable types (TGT 115).

While the cumulative perspective of each individual is unique, it is central to Buchler's doctrine that individuals may share perspectives. Where this is the case, the individuals comprise what Buchler calls a *community*. In Buchler's view of a community, the members of a community may be aware of one another or may communicate with one another but they do not

have to; one does not even have to be a procept for the other (i.e., they do not have to affect one another's lives), although there is no reason why a proceiver may not be a procept for another proceiver. Taking issue with Royce, Buchler denies that membership in a community is a function of loyalty or even that it requires conscious identification (TGT 42). A community is not necessarily a community of minds; it is a community of proceivers. The necessary condition of community is only 'proceptive parallelism, the similarity of perspective which results when a complex is predominant in the lives of different individuals in similar ways. In this sense of community, tillers of the soil comprise a community, as do lovers of Shakespeare. as well as residents of the same neighborhood. Individuals who belong to a community do not necessarily communicate with one another, but community is a necessary condition of communication (although not a sufficient condition) and communication, in turn, creates further community.

Just as any complex belongs to an indefinite number of orders, the proceiver belongs to an indefinite number of communities. His proceptive domain overlaps the domains of other individuals. From any given community the individual can deliberately abstract himself, but some community the individual must retain, since community and history are ingredients of the self' (TGT 38).

The fact of community and shared perspective entails a denial of the intrinsic privacy of experience.

The distinction between public and private experience is not a distinction, antecedently determinable, between two intrinsically different types of procepts, or between two separate and irreconcilable "realms." Any natural complex may be cornea procept for one or more individuals, and may be designated by a common symbol. In so far as this complex is or has been described or otherwise identified

in common, it is public; in so far as it has not been described or otherwise identified in common, it is private (TGT 27).

‘The individual,’ Buchler tells us,

belongs to many communities visible and invisible to communities for which the defining circumstance is publicly articulated and to those for which it is not....

The invisible community .... is invisible not simply because of limitations in awareness by the faithful, but because of the crude natural edges of individuality and the stubborn pervasiveness of nature (TGT 41, 43).

The proceptive domain of an individual, his gross perspective, as it were, is constituted in part by communal perspectives. He is individual, but he is also intrinsically and inescapably social. Far from being imprisoned in his own subjectivity, says Buchler, the individual is “a crossroads of many communities” (TGT 41).

### *The Proceptive Economy*

Buchler refers to the proceptive process as an economy (cf. NJ 133-137). The proceptive economy is a continuous interplay of two ways of relating to natural complexes. These two dimensions of proception are assimilation and manipulation.

The dictionary meaning of “assimilate,” which is “absorb” or “incorporate,” is close to Buchler’s usage. What is assimilated by the individual is what is incorporated into the proceptive domain; by whatever means it has become a factor in the direction of the proceptive process. In ordinary language we are said to assimilate food or new ideas. It is important to Buchler’s distinction that even in the case of assimilating food, assimilation is not mere passive reception. This is because it has what Buchler would call a manipulative dimension as well. Similarly, all of

what we ordinarily call activity” has an assimilative, as well as a manipulative, aspect. Buchler’s distinction cuts across the traditional categories of activity and passivity.

Buchler’s use of manipulate does not limit the term to “handling” (the sense in which Mead employs it in his theory of “the physical thing”). Buchler’s concept is much closer to Spinoza’s conatus than to Mead’s or to the ordinary senses of this word. It covers all of the ways in which a person responds to natural complexes, ways which range from biological processes through those we would class as intellectual.

In a very real sense we may speak of manipulation and assimilation as essential attributes of proception. The most rudimentary facts of human existence are the gross effort of perseverance and the gross acceptance of the world (TGT 18).

Whatever we manipulate we also assimilate and vice-versa. Manipulation is manifest in the way we assimilate, and what we assimilate helps to determine the way we manipulate. It would be proper to say we assimilate manipulatively. “Thus in the simple act of seeing there is a maneuvering of eye and position, and correlatively there is an acceptance of a framework within which eye and object are located as well as of the properties envisioned’ (TGT 21). The ongoing interplay of assimilation and manipulation shapes the general altitude and characteristic tendencies of the individual; shapes what, in narrower terms, has been called his personality or character but which Buchler refers to (in language more appropriate to a process) as his *proceptive direction*.

The distinction between manipulation and assimilation cannot be easily stated in other language. Superficially it seems to resemble Dewey’s distinction between doing and undergoing as dimensions of experience.<sup>10</sup> But Buchler calls attention to a number of differences between Dewey’s views and his own. Reviewing some of these may help to clarify meaning. Dewey takes

doing” to be instrumental and adjustive. For Buchler instrumental and adjustive activity are only two specialized types of manipulation. He defines manipulation broadly enough to include the case of a “man who inadvertently inhales more deeply and quickly on approaching another” (NJ 136) or one who idly and playfully explores imaginary possibilities. “Undergoing” is associated by Dewey with “feeling” or with “qualitative experience. As pointed out above, one of Buchler’s theses is that feelings are only one type of complex which may be assimilated. Secondly, we assimilate much that we cannot strictly be said either to undergo or to do. Buchler points out that in some places Dewey explicitly excludes from experience that which is not felt or not done. Dewey discusses the following example in both *Reconstruction in Philosophy* and *Art as Experience*:

Suppose fire encroaches upon a man when he is asleep. Part of his body is burned away. The burn does not perceptibly result from what he has done. There is nothing which in any constructive way can be named experience)<sup>11</sup>

To put one’s hand in the fire that consumes it is not necessarily to have an experience.

The action and its consequences must be joined in perception (AE 44).

Buchler holds, in contrast, that “What an individual assimilates is what he sustains, not what he feels...” (NJ 138). The burned man both sustains the burn and manipulatively responds to it even if he does not consciously undergo the pain of burning and in spite of the fact that being burned is not, and does not result from, something he does. Buchler discusses a similar example:

when, for example, he is slandered by his neighbors, in the total absence of awareness on his part, great changes may take place in his possibilities and relationships and the course of his subsequent experience altered; yet these occurrences are assimilated into his proceptive direction, sustained by his involved and related self, in utter

independence of any 'immediate or qualitative experience' (ibid.).

Buchler cites other differences between his own concepts and Dewey's including the fact that whereas one may "do" and "undergo" alternately, or in greater or lesser degree, manipulation and assimilation are inseparable and continuous. The distinction between doing and undergoing "is a less generalized one as well as a differently oriented one than that between the two proceptive dimensions" (NJ 141). But over and above these considerations, Buchler's general attitude toward Dewey's theory of experience is reflected in the sentences immediately following the one just quoted:

And yet, how much less faithful to the complexity of experience is the tradition which Dewey attacked and which held him in its grip more than he suspected. In this tradition, the sole manifestation of 'activity' in what is called 'experience' is 'thinking,' and the sole manifestation of 'passivity' is 'sensing.' Rationalists and empiricists alike have made a travesty of experience, and have argued in a dark corner rather than in the full light of day. That they have been concerned with experience mainly in so far as it bears upon 'knowledge' does not condone the narrowness of their common framework, since the conception of knowledge has itself been, in consequence, correspondingly narrowed and dogmatized. They have inadvertently left it to art to deal with experience in its proper breadth (ibid.).

### *Judgment*

The heart of Buchler's philosophy of man is his general theory of judgment. Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment and Nature and Judgment were motivated by Buchler's

perception of the inadequacy of any view of human nature or human utterance which takes reason or “intelligence” to be the outstanding characteristic of man or takes language to be the paradigmatic form of human expression. Rather than defining man as the “rational animal,” Buchler defines him as “the animal that cannot help judging in more than one mode” (NJ 199). In so defining man, Buchler is trying to correct both what he takes to be a narrow and biased view of human nature and what he sees as an imprecise and equally limited conception of human judgment. Reason is characteristically human, but as defined by Buchler it is less generic than the three modes of judgment which he distinguishes. (It turns out that there may be rational judgment in any of these modes.)

Buchler’s unprecedented contention is that we judge, not only when we deliberate rationally, but whenever we “do” anything at all, whether the doing take the form of conduct, of making something, or of engaging in discourse. Buchler denies that judgment is exclusively a mental or intellectual activity or that a judgment must be a predication or affirmation. He finds that whatever we do involves selection and appraisal; whatever we do involves taking a position with regard to some natural complex. Therefore, whatever we do, we are judging.

While manipulation and assimilation are inseparable, as a bidimensional being [the proceiver] may be studied with major emphasis now on the one dimension and now on the other” (NJ 134). Buchler distinguishes three levels in the economy of manipulation. Over and above bare proceptive encompassment, he specifies two higher levels of manipulation, (1) production, utterance or judgment (the three terms distinguish different aspects of the same complex), and (2) articulation.

The leap by which natural complexes assume a role in the human direction or by which they are preempted and represented, and the leap by which utterance is born, are the most



rudimentary steps in ... the economy of manipulation. If utterance is the realization or fulfillment of discovery, articulation is the realization of utterance (TGT 46).

Everything that influences an individual, whether or not it is something he himself does, is a precept for him. But only what an individual would be said to do is his product or judgment. In the process of proception, complexes are not just (manipulatively) assimilated; they may also be discriminated and their integrities transformed. It is the transformation of procepts which constitutes what Buchler calls production. in the most basic sense of this term (TGT 45, 47). According to Buchler, we are producing whether we are making something, acting in a certain way, or asserting something. Whatever emerges from any of these activities is a product. In producing, i.e., in discriminating, selecting, and modifying complexes, we necessarily appraise them. This is to say, in Buchler's terms, all production is judgment. And as a commitment on the part of the producer, Buchler calls each product an *utterance*.

While in the passage quoted above Buchler associates utterance with discovery, he denies that utterance or judgment is confined to discovery or creation or invention. The generic process of judging is more rudimentary. It is not always deliberate and not necessarily conscious.

...human judging cannot be limited to occasions of intention or voluntary choice

...Each instance of judging though these instances are not to be regarded as neatly

isolated---is at bottom an attitude or stance adopted. It is by his stances that a man,

in so far as he can, determines and redetermines the complexes of his world... He

judges continuously, through what he includes and excludes, preserves and destroys,

is inclined to and averse to; through what he makes and fails to make, through the ways

he acts and refrains from acting, through what he believes and disavows. His attitudes,

and hence his commitments, are his whether he is aware of them or not (ML 93).

Even when the producer is not aware that he is producing, his products are among his procepts. As *his* product, each of his utterances is related to him as an individual. But not every procept is a product or judgment; not every event that occurs within the proceptive process, not even every component of an utterance, according to Buchler, can be seen as something done by the individual.

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at a certain stage in the order of Burton's life; it has been actualized and may (or may not) be reactualized. And it will cease to be possible (another alescence) at some future time.

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The perspective of an individual is not a monolithic order; it is constituted by a multiplicity of less inclusive perspectives, each one defining a situation for the individual.

Perspectives can include or comprehend other perspectives. For each individual the widest perspective is the proceptive domain....The perspectives in a man's life can be related concentrically as it were; but they also are parallel, they intersect, they are of commensurable and incommensurable, of variable and invariable types (TGT 115).

While the cumulative perspective of each individual is unique, it is central to Buchler's doctrine that individuals may share perspectives. Where this is the case, the individuals comprise what Buchler calls a *community*. In Buchler's view of a community, the members of a community may be aware of one another or may communicate with one another, but they do not have to; one does not even have to be a procept for the other (i.e., they do not have to affect one another's lives), although there is no reason why a proceiver may not be a procept for another proceiver. Taking issue with Royce, Buchler denies that membership in a community is a function of loyalty or even that it requires conscious identification (TGT 42). A community is not necessarily a community of minds; it is a community of proceivers. The necessary condition of community is only "proceptive parallelism, the similarity of perspective which results when a complex is predominant in the lives of different individuals in similar ways. In this sense of 'community,' tillers of the soil comprise a community, as do lovers of Shakespeare, as well as residents of the same neighborhood. Individuals who belong to a community do not necessarily communicate with one another, but community is a necessary condition of communication (although not a sufficient condition) and communication, in turn, creates further community.



Just as any complex belongs to an indefinite number of orders, the proceiver belongs to an indefinite number of communities. His proceptive domain overlaps the domains of other individuals. "From any given community the individual can deliberately abstract himself," but some community the individual must retain, since community and history are ingredients of the self (TGT 38).

The fact of community and shared perspective entails a denial of the intrinsic privacy of experience.

The distinction between public and private experience is not a distinction, antecedently determinable, between two intrinsically different types of procepts, or between two separate and irreconcilable "realms." Any natural complex may become a procept for one or more individuals, and may be designated by a common symbol. In so far as this complex is or has been described or otherwise identified in common, it is public; in so far as it has not been described or otherwise identified in common, it is private (TGT 27).

"The individual," Buchler tells us,

belongs to many communities visible and invisible to communities for which the defining circumstance is publicly articulated and to those for which it is not...

The invisible community ... is invisible not simply because of limitations in awareness by the faithful, but because of the crude natural edges of individuality and the stubborn pervasiveness of nature (TGT 41. 43).

The proceptive domain of an individual, his gross perspective, as it were, is constituted in part by communal perspectives. He is individual but he is also intrinsically and inescapably social. Far from being imprisoned in his own subjectivity, says Buchler the individual is "a crossroads of many communities" (TGT 41).

### *The Proceptive Economy*

Buchler refers to the proceptive process as an economy (cf. NJ 133-137). The proceptive economy is a continuous interplay of two ways of relating to natural complexes. These two dimensions of proception are assimilation and manipulation.

The dictionary meaning of “assimilate,” which is “absorb” or “incorporate,” is close to Buchler's usage. What is assimilated by the individual is what is incorporated into the proceptive domain; by whatever means it has become a factor in the direction of the proceptive process. In ordinary language we are said to assimilate food or new ideas. It is important to Buchler's distinction that even in the case of assimilating food, assimilation is not mere passive reception. This is because it has what Buchler would call a manipulative dimension as well. Similarly, all of what we ordinarily call “activity” has an assimilative, as well as a manipulative, aspect. Buchler's distinction cuts across the traditional categories of activity and passivity.

Buchler's use of “manipulate” does not limit the term to “handling” (the sense in which Mead employs it in his theory of “the physical thing”). Buchler's concept is much closer to Spinoza's *conatus* than to Mead's “manipulation” or to the ordinary senses of this word. It covers all of the ways in which a person responds to natural complexes, ways which range from biological processes through those we would class as intellectual.

In a very real sense we may speak of manipulation and assimilation as essential attributes of proception. The most rudimentary facts of human existence are the gross effort of perseverance and the gross acceptance of the world (TGT I8).

Whatever we manipulate we also assimilate and vice-versa. Manipulation is manifest in the way we assimilate, and what we assimilate helps to determine the way we manipulate. It

would be proper to say we assimilate manipulatively. “Thus in the simple act of seeing there is a maneuvering of eye and position, and correlatively there is an acceptance of a framework within which eye and object are located as well as of the properties envisioned” (TGT 21). The ongoing interplay of assimilation and manipulation shapes the general attitude and characteristic tendencies of the individual; shapes what, in narrower terms, has been called his personality or character but which Buchler refers to (in language more appropriate to a process) as his *proceptive direction*.

The distinction between manipulation and assimilation cannot be easily stated in other language. Superficially it seems to resemble Dewey’s distinction between doing and undergoing as dimensions of experience.<sup>12</sup> But Buchler calls attention to a number of differences between Dewey’s views and his own. Reviewing some of these may help to clarify Buchler’s meaning. Dewey takes “doing” to be instrumental and adjustive. For Buchler instrumental and adjustive activity are only two specialized types of manipulation. He defines manipulation broadly enough to include the case of a man who inadvertently inhales more deeply and quickly on approaching another” (NJ 136) or one who idly and playfully explores imaginary possibilities. “Undergoing” is associated by Dewey with “feeling” or with “qualitative experience. As pointed out above, one of Buchler’s theses is that feelings are only one type of complex which may be assimilated. Secondly, we assimilate much that we cannot strictly be said either to undergo or to do. Buchler points out that in some places Dewey explicitly excludes from experience that which is not felt or not done. Dewey discusses the following example in both *Reconstruction in Philosophy* and *Art as Experience*,

Suppose fire encroaches upon a man when he is asleep. Part of his body is burned away. The burn does not perceptibly result from what he has done. There is nothing

which in any constructive way can be named experience.<sup>13</sup>

To put ones hand in the fire that consumes it is not necessarily to have an experience.

The action and its consequences must be joined in perception (AE 44).

Buchler holds, in contrast, that “What an individual assimilates is what he sustains, not what he feels...” (NJ 138). The burned man both sustains the burn and manipulatively responds to it even if he does not consciously undergo the pain of burning and in spite of the fact that being burned is not, and does not result from, something he does. Buchler discusses a similar example:

when for example, he is slandered by his neighbors, in the total absence of awareness on his part, great changes may take place in his possibilities and relationships and the course of his subsequent experience altered; yet these occurrences are assimilated into his proceptive direction, sustained by his involved and related self, in utter independence of any ‘immediate or qualitative experience’ (ibid.)

Buchler cites other differences between his own concepts and Dewey’s including the fact that whereas one may “do” and “undergo” alternately, or in greater or lesser degree, manipulation and assimilation are inseparable and continuous. The distinction between doing and undergoing “is a less generalized one as well as a differently oriented one than that between the two proceptive dimensions” (NJ 141). But over and above these considerations, Buchler’s general attitude toward Dewey’s theory of experience is reflected in the sentences immediately following the one just quoted:

And yet, how much less faithful to the complexity of experience is the tradition which Dewey attacked and which held him in its grip more than he suspected. In this tradition, the sole manifestation of ‘activity’ is what is called ‘experience’ is ‘thinking’, and the sole manifestation of passivity is ‘sensing.’

Rationalists and empiricists alike have made a travesty of experience, and have argued in a dark corner rather than in the full light of day. That they have been concerned with experience mainly in so far as it bears upon 'knowledge' does not condone the narrowness of their common framework, since the conception of knowledge has itself been, in consequence, correspondingly narrowed and dogmatized. They have inadvertently left it to art to deal with experience in its proper breadth... (ibid.).

### *Judgment*

The heart of Buchler's philosophy of man is his general theory of judgment. Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment and Nature and Judgment were motivated by Buchler's perception of the inadequacy of any view of human nature or human utterance which takes reason or "intelligence" to be the outstanding characteristic of man or takes language to be the paradigmatic form of human expression. Rather than defining man as the "rational animal," Buchler defines him as "the animal that cannot help judging in more than one mode" (NJ 199). In so defining man, Buchler is trying to correct both what he takes to be a narrow and biased view of human nature and what he sees as an imprecise and equally limited conception of human judgment. Reason is characteristically human, but as defined by Buchler it is less generic than the three modes of judgment which he distinguishes. (It turns out that there may be rational judgment in any of these modes.)

Buchler's unprecedented contention is that we judge, not only when we deliberate rationally, but whenever we "do" anything at all, whether the doing take the form of conduct, of making something, or of engaging in discourse. Buchler denies that judgment is exclusively a mental or intellectual activity or that a judgment must be a predication or affirmation. He finds

that whatever we do involves selection and appraisal; whatever we do involves taking a position with regard to some natural complex. Therefore, whatever we do, we are judging.

While manipulation and assimilation are inseparable, “as a bidimensional being [the proceiver] may be studied with major emphasis now on the one dimension and now on the other” (NJ 134). Buchler distinguishes three levels in the economy of manipulation. Over and above bare proceptive encompassment, he specifies two higher levels of manipulation, (1) production, utterance, or judgment (the three terms distinguish different aspects of the same complex), and (2) articulation.

The leap by which natural complexes assume a role in the human direction or by which they are preempted and represented, and the leap by which utterance is born, are the most rudimentary steps in ... the economy of manipulation. If utterance is the realization or fulfillment of discovery, articulation is the realization of utterance (TGT 46).

Everything that influences an individual, whether or not it is something he himself does, is a precept for him. But only what an individual would be said to do is his product or judgment. In the process of proception, complexes are not just (manipulatively) assimilated; they may also be discriminated and their integrities transformed, it is the transformation of procepts which constitutes what Buchler calls production, in the most basic sense of this term (TGT 45, 47). According to Buchler, we are producing whether we are making something, acting in a certain way, or asserting something. Whatever emerges from any of these activities is a product. in producing, i.e., in discriminating, selecting, and modifying complexes, we necessarily appraise them. This is to say, in Buchler’s terms, all production is judgment. And as a commitment on the part of the producer, Buchler calls each product an *utterance*.

While in the passage quoted above Buchler associates utterance with discovery, he denies

that utterance or judgment is confined to discovery or creation or invention. The generic process of judging is more rudimentary. It is not always deliberate and not necessarily conscious.

....human judging cannot be limited to occasions of intention or voluntary choice.

Each instance of judging though these instances are not to be regarded as neatly isolated---is at bottom an attitude or stance adopted. It is by his stances that a man, in so far as he can, determines and redetermines the complexes of his world. He judges continuously through what he includes and excludes, preserves and destroys, is inclined to and averse to; through what he makes and fails to make, through the ways he acts and refrains from acting, through what he believes and disavows. His attitudes, and hence his commitments, are his whether he is aware of them or not (ML 93).

Even when the producer is not aware that he is producing, his products are among his procepts. As his product, each of his utterances is related to him as an individual. But not every procept is a product or judgment; not every event that occurs within the proceptive process, not even every component of an utterance, according to Buchler, can be seen as something done by the individual.

To the extent that a man can be said to be the product of other natural complexes, he does not judge. To the extent that any complexes can be said to be his product, he judges (ML 92).

Yet it is not always easy to determine whether a given event in the life of an individual is a product or judgment. "As in many fundamental distinctions," Buchler remarks, "the borderline is not easy to draw" (ibid.).

J.L. Austin and others talk about "performative utterances, statements such as "I promise," which are not descriptions but commitments and therefore acts of the asserter. The fact

that a verbal statement may be an act of this sort is covered by Buchler's dictum that a judgment may function in more than one mode. But he is saying much more than this. In the first place, "utterance," as Buchler uses the term, is not confined to linguistic utterance. Anything a person may be said to do, in the broadest sense of "do," is an utterance: linguistic behavior, working with materials of any sort, physical or social activity, decision-making, thinking, looking, listening, are all forms of utterance. an instance of utterance is an instance of judgment, a commitment on the part of the actor to an attitude or stance toward some complex. Thus it is a pronouncement (utterance) concerning that complex.

In *The Main of Light* Buchler describes the "three principal modes of judgment in the following way:

(1) When we can be said to predicate, state, or affirm, by the use of words or by any other means; when the underlying direction is to achieve or support belief; when it is relevant to cite evidence in behalf of our product, we produce in the mode of *assertive judgment*, we judge assertively. (2) When we can be said to do or to act; when the underlying direction is toward effecting a result; when "bringing about" is the central trait attributable to our product, we produce in the mode of *active judgment*, we judge actively. (3) When we contrive or make, in so far as the contrivance rather than its role in action is what dominates us and is of underlying concern; when the process of shaping and the product shaped is central, we produce in the mode of *exhibitive judgment*, we judge exhibitively (ML 97, italics added).

Buchler insists that there are irreducible differences among the modes of judgment, so that a judgment in one mode will never be convertible into another mode. (E.g. a musical phrase, which is an exhibitive judgment, cannot be conveyed by assertions even though it can be



analyzed or described. Yet it is important to him that a judgment in one mode may be in some sense translated by judgments in the same or other modes.

A judgment, according to Buchler, may function in more than one mode and even in all three. Thus in practice it may be difficult to classify given judgment. But Buchler denies that a judgment must function in all three modes and especially that every judgment must be an assertion. Not only does he deny that judgment is necessarily assertive, he also denies that assertion is necessarily propositional or linguistic.

Although we associate certain types of products habitually with some one of these functions, and may be entirely justified in doing so, there is no fixed type of product required for any mode of judging.... We tend to think, for instance, of declarative sentences as the medium of assertion, and of bodily movement as the vehicle of action; but sentences can acquire the function of judging actively, and bodily movements the function of judging assertively (ML 98-99).

At the same time, Buchler associates each of the modes of judgment, when pursued methodically, with one basic type of human enterprise:

On the methodic level, where (minimally) purposiveness and intention belong to judgments, assertive judgment is exemplified by science, or more generally, inquiry (including any discipline that makes a truth claim); active judgment by conduct morally assessable; exhibitiv judgment, by art (ML 97-98).

Inquiry, art, and moral deliberation are all species of the more inclusive query. In *Nature and Judgment*, Buchler devotes an entire chapter to the concept of query. "When pursued systematically or methodically," he says there, "the process of ramifying judgments is the process of query" (NJ 58). One of the central points of the chapter is that query is not limited to

the assertive mode but is the methodic articulation of judgments in any mode. One of Buchler's most fundamental criticisms of Dewey is that the latter assimilates all query to inquiry.

In *The Concept of Method*, the relation between method and query is altered, and the concept of query is further qualified.

Method becomes inventive when it takes on the property of query. . Although query occurs only in a methodic framework, its traits are not reducible solely to methodic traits. The fact that a process is methodic expresses the purposive functioning of a human power in an order of judgment. But the fact that it is a process of query expresses more than the (methodic) ramification of the judgments involved; it expresses their indefinitely continuing ramification. Query is more prodigal than method as such.... The primary effort of method is repeatedly to complete its instances, of query to deepen each instance (CM 114).

Like art and inquiry, philosophy is also a species of query, a species which Buchler says, has an exhibitivite, as well as an assertive, aspect.

Query is also central to Buchler's conception of reason. "Method informed by query is the essential expression of reason. Reason is query aiming to grow and flourish forever" (ib.). Method is morally indifferent, but Buchler holds query and reason to "imply a type of moral direction" (CM 115). If "invention guards query from being sterile," he says, "query guards invention from being diabolical" (NJ 59). "Nothing is more foundational for all value than query, and reason is devotion to query" (TGT 168).

In Buchler's most recent book *The Main of Light*, his theory of judgment is extended to an analysis of the concept of poetry. Buchler holds poetic utterance, like all sit, to be exhibitivite, despite the fact that poetic contrivance is linguistic. He denies that a poem, as poem, asserts,

even when it employs assertions, arguments, or descriptions. Poetry, like painting or sculpture, is query in the exhibitiv mode. With his verbal expressions the poet probes or explores the traits of a complex, shaping a structure of judgments which, as a structure, conveys or communicates, not merely traits of a complex, but the sense that this complex *prevails*.

“What poetry judges to prevail it communicates *as prevailing, as sovereign and ineluctible*” (ML 141). The poet’s use of language, “which is often conspicuously different syntactically, and semantically from assertive uses of language, functions to convey this sense, which Buchler calls “the sense of prevalence.””

Each poetic work conveys the sense of a prevalence (or of different prevalences).

And a *generalized* sense or prevalence also may supervene to deepen the grasp of prevalences, as may a generalized sense of parity where complexes have become habitually accepted for what they are (ML 141).

### *Communication*

Poetry “communicates’ and, despite its linguistic character, Buchler says it communicates exhibitively rather than assertively. He denies not only that what is communicated is always an assertion but also that it is always desirable to render it in the form of a statement.

Art cannot be said to communicate in the sense that it transmits a “theme” or “message.”

Not only is this accidental and occasional, or false as a generalization; but a product of art does not communicate unequivocally as a product of science does.

Its proceptive effect is not definable by standard or specifiable procedures of manipulation (TGT 32).

There have been many studies of “non-linguistic communication” but they have presupposed that communication is nevertheless assertive. One is said to speak in “body language.”<sup>14</sup> Buchler, taking a very different view maintains that there is communication in all modes of judgment. He further contends that any natural complex whatsoever may acquire a communicative function.

There are additional necessary conditions for the occurrence of communication, but the central notion in Buchler’s theory of communication is that natural complexes may be jointly manipulated and assimilated by perceivers (i.e. conjointly judged) within a shared perspective. In *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, a complex which acquires this function is called a “sign.” Buchler rejects the Peircean conception of a sign as a “representamen.” To communicate, to have communicative import, a complex does not have to stand for anything. The most conspicuous example of this is in instrumental music, where what is communicated is the sign itself, but there are other, less obvious examples.

We are too likely to think of signs as qualitative configurations that are directly manipulatable. But an embrace of lovers is no more of a sign than their whole commonly directed pattern of behavior. The purview of a sign may be restricted and precisely defined, especially when the sign is introduced by convention or resolution as in a devised logical calculus. But it may also be indefinite and undelimited: the sign may be of protracted character (TGT 34-35).

Because of the complexity of his perspective, an individual may adopt more than one stance in relation to the same procept. Therefore he may communicate “reflexively” himself. Any complex which generates reflexive communication is also a sign; it is said by Buchler to communicate to the individual. In NJ, Buchler suggests a somewhat different but equally broad definition of a sign “as anything which for the individual is a means toward further judgment”

(NJ 155).

Reflexive communication, like all communication, is not confined to the assertive mode. It must not be confused with “reflection.” We communicate reflexively, for instance (in the active mode), in keeping our balance on a bicycle, or (exhibitively), in mixing paint. Even if we say to ourselves, “a little more of this or that,” we are only translating an exhibitive judgment by an assertion.

Rather than primarily a giving, a taking, and an exchanging of tools (linguistic and other signs),” Buchler says, “communication is better understood as a relation which presupposes individual histories and forms of community, non-linguistic as well as linguistic” (NJ 44). Language, he says, is not a kit of tools, but “is better understood as a common attribute, a state of community that actualizes itself as a common attribute, as a form of communication and as a process of production” (ibid.).

### *Meaning*

Meaning in Experience and Nature, Dewey says, "meanings do not come into being without language, and language involves two selves involved in a conjoint or shared undertakings" (EN 209). He continues,

Apart from language part from imputed or inferred meaning, we continually engage in an immense multitude of immediate organic selections, rejections, welcomings, expulsions, appropriations, withdrawals, shrinkings, expansions, elations and defections, attacks, wardings off, of the most minute, vibrantly delicate nature.

We are not aware of the qualities of most of these acts; we do not objectively

distinguish and identify them. Yet they exist as feeling qualities and have an enormous directive effect on our behavior (ibid.).

Buchler would interpret all of the acts Dewey mentions as active judgments, utterances in the active mode. (A sharp disagreement with Dewey relates to the latter's narrow construction of "judgment" as "the settled outcome of inquiry" (cf., e.g., NJ 50). Buchler would certainly agree that each of these acts has its directive effect upon us, but would contend that they affect more than our behavior. Every product of the individual is also a procept and therefore affects continuing proception and further judgment. But in addition to affecting us, Buchler would hold that, as a judgment, each of these organic" discriminations and commitments represents us; it reflects or expresses the perspective which generated it.

Buchler would agree that we are not aware of the qualities of most of these acts, but he would deny that they necessarily "exist as feeling qualities" or that they are more or less "immediate than any other procept. Finally, he would agree that none of these acts, per se, is meaningful. But he would emphatically refute Dewey's dictum that meanings do not come into being without language, and he would deny that it always takes two selves to establish meaning.

According to Buchler, any judgment, any product, may acquire meaning. So, in fact, may any procept. But procepts, whether or not they are produced by us, acquire meaning only through judgment of the level or sort Buchler calls articulation. (Articulation is not a mode of judgment; there is articulation in all three modes.) Even a procept which functions in communication as a sign is only potentially meaningful until it is given meaning through articulation. That is, no procept and no product is meaningful until, through (another) judgment, its relevance for other complexes is established.

Not every judgment articulates. When we articulate,

In the process of introducing a judgment relating to another judgment or procept, do not *merely* act toward, make something with, or say something about the latter. In acting, making, or saying, we establish, reveal, or tacitly specify the way in which the product or procept functions with respect to other products or procepts in the given perspective (NJ 63).

A dictionary definition and an explanation are both forms of articulation, but these are not the only forms. A word acquires meaning through usage; a scientific experiment establishes the meaning (as well as the validity) of a hypothesis; a portrait reveals the character of a subject; a critic, comparing two books, confers (new) meaning upon both. Articulation exploits or fulfills a procept or product. For example an interior decorator may enhance the character of a house or a judicial decision may extend the applicability of a law.

It is tempting to use “interpretation” as a synonym for Buchler’s ‘articulation’ but in the conventional sense of ‘interpret’ the two are not at all identical. However, Buchler’s concept is heavily influenced by Royce’s concept of interpretation, a concept Royce in turn derived from Peirce. But Royce makes interpretations “mental process” and takes “the interpreted object” also to be “a mental expression.”<sup>15</sup> For Buchler, *as* we have seen, procepts are not mental and any procept may be articulated. The process of articulation itself may take the form of physical rather than mental activity and may involve any type of material or medium.

### *Knowledge*

When we see that poetry is judicative though it does not function assertively, we can also see that it is capable of achieving knowledge by means of exhibitiv query. The conception of knowledge as solely propositional stands opposed to an acceptance not of

poetic knowledge alone but of artistic knowledge generally (ML 148).

Buchler's position regarding poetry is that poetry yields knowledge without necessarily being assertively true or logically valid. Judgment in any mode, active or exhibitive as well as assertive, may achieve cognitive gain. Not all knowledge is "knowing that" or even "knowing how."

Generally speaking, we get to know (or gain cognitively), in the sense of acquiring and exercising a power, when we have defined (discriminated) a complex of judgment---active, exhibitive, or assertive---that is different in some respect from any we have hitherto defined, and when we are compelled to utilize this judgment to augment the process of judging in a given order.... A scientific determination and a poetic discrimination alike acquire cognitive value in relation to other discriminations before and after (ML 151).

Not every judgment, then, constitutes knowledge, but potentially any judgment may. Knowledge is a function acquired by judgment in virtue of its relations to other judgments. One of the most controversial consequences of Buchler's theory of the modes of judgment is that to count as knowledge, a judgment need not be true: truth may only be predicated of assertive judgments. Judgment in other modes have other criteria of validity. Buchler contends that every judgment calls for validation, but validation is not necessarily verification. Verification is to validation as inquiry is to query. Just as there is judgment and query in all three modes of judgment, there is validation in all three modes and validation in each mode carries its own type of compulsion.

Writing of C.S. Peirce, Buchler says, "To follow [his] experiments in ... philosophy is far less like strolling in green fields than like climbing a rocky slope. Those unafraid of the ascent may expect to breathe a purer atmosphere, one which discourages complacent slumber and the



manufacture of neat fictions.” The contours of Buchler’s philosophic system are not less challenging and the ascent is not less exhilarating. Of his thought one might say, as Buchler again says of Peirce, “Even to the most unsympathetic, [it] cannot fail to convey something of lasting value.”

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Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This essay is reproduced by permission, and with thanks, from *Southern Journal of Philosophy* XIV.I (1976); pp.3-30. Only the first two paragraphs are altered.

<sup>2</sup> *The Spirit of American Philosophy* (Oxford U.P. 1963 and 1966); p.205.

<sup>3</sup> With the exception of *The Main of Light*, published by Oxford U.P., these are all published by Columbia University Press. The following abbreviations will be employed: TGT *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*; NJ = *Nature and Judgment*; CM = *The Concept of Method*; MNC *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*; ML *The Main of Light*.

<sup>4</sup> H.S. Thayer *Meaning and Action: A Critical History of Pragmatism* (N.Y. Bobbs-Merrill 1968); pp.352-58.

<sup>5</sup> *Adventure of Ideas* (N.Y. MacMillan 1933); p.227.

<sup>6</sup> *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (N.Y. Holt, Rhinehart, Winston 1961); p.1343.

<sup>7</sup> *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen 1959); p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Adventures of Ideas* (N.Y. Macmillan 1933); p.227.

<sup>9</sup> "On a Strain of Arbitrariness in Whitehead's System," *The Journal of Philosophy*. LXVI.19 (1969); p.589-61

<sup>10</sup> See e.g., *Art as Experience*, p.44.

<sup>11</sup> *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, p.86; NJ p138.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g., *Art as Experience*, p.44.

<sup>13</sup> *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, p.86; NJ p.138.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., R.L. Birdwhistle *Kinesics and Context* (U. of Pennsylvania 1970). Birdwhistle makes his methodological commitment explicit in the following passage: "... the paramount and

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sustaining influence upon my work has been that of anthropological linguistics..., it was only in linguistic analysis that I could find either data or models which could penetrate my preconceptions.” p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> *The Problem of Christianity* p.148.

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