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## FINITUDE AND TRANSCENDENCE IN THE THOUGHT OF JUSTUS BUCHLER

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The nature of the human process can be characterized as a movement between a sense of finitude and a drive for transcendence. The sense of finitude is sharpened whenever we come to grips with our embeddedness in a world which has no recognizable origin or telos. We encounter limits and compulsive powers which blunt the scope of our drive for encompassment. For thinkers like Heidegger, this sense of finitude is most clearly evident in our being-toward-death, in which the ultimate eclipse of the human process is announced. Within the tradition of American Naturalism, this sense of finitude is expressed in terms of our indebtedness to a nature which defines our possibilities and parcels out our actualities.

The drive for transcendence announces itself whenever the human process struggles to leap beyond natural configurations toward a sense of encompassment. This sense is quickened whenever our products or judgments take on a life which transcends their conditions of origin. Any human product is capable of attaining new relations and new forms of relevance. By doing so it overcomes those antecedent conditions which marked the limits of its unfolding and instantiation. On a deeper level, the drive for transcendence is strikingly present whenever persons live within the life of ramified query in which the movement of encompassment becomes the very life blood of thought. Human maturity or authenticity can be defined as the ability to sustain the tension between the relentless constraints of finitude and the equally relentless lure of transcendence.

While Continental thinkers have well understood this tension and have produced philosophic works which speak from out of this diremption, it is less clear how the classical American tradition has articulated the interplay between them. Idealists such as Royce have

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been less inclined to focus on finitude in favor of a highly charged account of transcendence. Naturalists such as Dewey and Buchler have carefully delineated the various dimensions of finitude but have not, so I would argue, been adequate in their treatment of transcendence. Buchler, in particular, has been more unrelenting than Heidegger in tracing the finite boundaries of the self. What Heidegger understands by thrownness, Buchler presents as our fundamental debt to a nature with no outline or center.

I wish to focus on the early work of Buchler in order to show how he masterfully exhibits the various meanings of finitude in the human process while failing to give a properly radical account of transcendence. In addition, I wish to show how his later systematic metaphysics provides the conceptual horizon within which the earlier studies of human nature can be located. Since, as scholars like Andrew Reck have argued, Buchler represents an important consummation of American humanism and naturalism (terms with which Buchler would be uncomfortable) then it is important that we gain insight into the limitations of this tradition.<sup>1</sup> Once this has become clear we can begin to find a way of articulating the other pole of the human process, the drive for transcendence.

The tradition of Naturalism evolved over an extended period, involving a number of thinkers as diverse as Santayana, Dewey, Woodbridge, Nagel, Randall, and Buchler. Strictly speaking, such naturalism avoids that kind of mechanistic and reductionistic framework which characterizes positivism.<sup>2</sup> Its primary concern is to illuminate the contours of the self within the innumerable orders of nature and thereby to articulate more properly the reach of human nature. Sidney Gelber, writing on Buchler in 1959, gives this account of the Naturalist perspective:

All naturalists are aware of the irrevocable character of nature's workings and the inevitable cycles of birth, growth, and death that impinge upon the human figure. Natural piety is an inescapable datum in the intellectual consciousness of the philosophic naturalist.<sup>3</sup>

Piety in the face of nature entails that method become attuned to antecedent structures and powers. While such piety does not require us to submerge ourselves in harsh inevitabilities, it does move us to honor those evolutionary and cultural traits which mark the outer boundaries of our conscious experience.

Like a number of Continental thinkers, Buchler links the concept of finitude to that of perspective or horizon. Insofar as a person occupies a perspective, or is in a perspective, that individual will have not only hermeneutic limitations but will be involved in meaning structures which may be unavailable to another perspective. This interpretive directionality, as part of what Buchler calls the proceptive direction, will function to illuminate the finite standpoint of the individual. In

Buchler's words, "The individuality of the individual, his finitude, is his limitation to the dominant perspective in his life."<sup>4</sup> We cannot leap out of our perspective, even though we may bring it into deliberate intersection with other horizons of meaning. It is more correct to say that the perspective is that which stands between the self and the world, marking the sphere of transaction between them. A perspective, as a humanly occupied order, is that which allows the world to matter to a self. It is that fundamental clearing within which orders may become manifest.

Perspectives do not come ready made and cannot be manipulated at will. Underlying the evolution of human experience are those natural structures which govern any perspectival assimilation of reality. In infancy, the process of assimilation dwarfs any manipulative potency of the self. In the words of Buchler:

The entrance of an individual into the world is the advent of a process of assimilation: nature and history begin to communicate their burden to him: he begins by accepting a world in which his procepts include no utterances by him, and in which the manipulative side of his being is random.<sup>5</sup>

This is a far cry from Husserl's sovereign transcendental ego, which imposes its constituting acts onto a phenomenal field devoid of intrinsic contours. Insofar as we learn to constitute or form experience we do so against the backdrop of a fundamental assimilative process. It is nature in its giving of itself that serves as the momentum of assimilation. We experience nature long before we experience experience.

Human finitude is not only manifest in our perspectival dimension but in the sheer locatedness of the human process in vast domains which have served to shape the very perspective within which we must understand both self and world. In a particularly striking passage, Buchler traces out some of the senses of our locatedness in nature:

Man is born in a state of natural debt, being antecedently committed to the execution or the furtherance of acts that will largely determine his individual existence. He moves into a contingent mold by which he is qualified and located, and related to endless things beyond his awareness. From first to last he discharges obligations. He is obliged to sustain or alter, master or tolerate, what he becomes and what he encounters.<sup>6</sup>

Our fundamental indebtedness can never be cancelled, no matter how robust our manipulative prowess. While Buchler affirms that assimilation and manipulation are equally fundamental, it is clear that assimilation is of greater scope in determining the outlines of the human process. To be finite is to be always one step behind nature and its overwhelming provision of possibilities and actualities. Our perspectival dimension is but one manifestation of the pervasive reality of our locatedness in innumerable complexes not of our own making.<sup>7</sup>

While we can certainly control many of the complexes within our immediate and remote environments, it is equally clear that we are constantly compelled to retrace paths which have been deeply grooved

by our phylogenetic heritage. The ontogenetic development of the individual is only possible within the context of those evolutionary structures which have enabled the human process to emerge into its present configuration. Cultural and technological evolution have not seriously altered the power imbalance between the world and the self. In the words of Buchler:

Notwithstanding the egoism of a technological age, the individual is allotted feeble powers by the nature of things, and moves in an environment largely uncontrollable. Truistically speaking, gross compulsion is equivalent to the finitude of the self, implying the restrictions that appertain *ipso facto* to a proceiver.<sup>8</sup>

It would seem that most of the claims made by modern and post-modern philosophy about the powers of transcendence within the self are unwarranted in the light of that gross compulsion which marks every dimension of the human process. Whatever manipulative powers we possess are parcelled out sparingly by a nature that does not tolerate perspectival inflation.

This intolerance for any perspective which would deny its ordinal location, its sheer littleness, is unrelenting. As Dewey exhibited from a variety of angles, perspectives have their own natural history and are prey to the processes of natural selection.<sup>9</sup> While nature spawns more perspectives than it can validate, it also struggles to bring its wayward children back into the fold. Hence our finitude is not only manifest in the mere having of a dominant perspective but further announces itself in those pressures which leave their traces around the edges of our perspectival fields. Whether or not we choose methodological humility, we are already humbled by the gross compulsion which locates and limits horizons.

Our products, whether physical or not, stand under the mark of finitude. Anything which emerges from out of our saying, doing, or showing will to some extent mirror its conditions of birth. Each product reflects the perspective which shaped it and which it in turn helped to shape. Products are judgments which may be embodied in assertive, active, or exhibitivite modes. For Buchler:

A judgment presupposes a set of limiting conditions, a perspective, within which it functions to define properties. The individual is one natural complex among the natural complexes which establish a perspective or limiting order for each judgment. Its perspective is what makes a judgment relevant to some portion of the world. An individual judges with respect to the traits that are traits for him. When he molds, describes, or acts, he reckons with realities that antedate that production; yet it is he who through production primarily circumscribes the scope of the product.<sup>10</sup>

The product is embedded in its inaugural perspective and in its own conditions of origin. The contour of a given product is partially determined by those judgments which actualize latent possibilities of expression or articulation. The judgments that go into the creation of a product are themselves caught up in a natural history and have their

own internal lines of convergence which attest to the power of those orders from which they have come. No judgment or product emerges out of the void. Radii of involvement are found as part of the constitution of any human contrivance. Hence all products are embedded in antecedent structures and powers.

Richard Bernstein compares Buchler's analysis of the relation between perspectives, judgments, and products to that of Hegel. Specifically, he argues that Buchler is working within the major historical insights of the phenomenological movement:

For in this tradition, especially in Hegel himself, we can see a perspective developed in which man's products are not simply viewed as objects external to him, but as the direct expression, the objectification of what he is. Just as Hegel would maintain that an individual is and is not the totality of his objectifications (judgments), so Buchler claims that although the totality of an individual's judgments mirror the self, they do not exhaust the powers and potentialities of the individual. Buchler humanizes and naturalizes the phenomenological insight, and he strips it of its intellectual pretensions.<sup>11</sup>

As our judgments, whether active, assertive, or exhibitivite, become embodied in products, they take on a natural history of their own and struggle against the powers of inertia and sheer indifference. Fundamental to the human process is the externalization of our judgments into those artifacts which mark our journey through time. While we cannot discover the full contour of the self through an enumeration of its products, we can gain a fairly reliable sense of its inner logic and outward social involvements. As noted by Bernstein, Buchler strips his analysis of judgment of Cartesian and mentalistic biases which have limited the scope and effectiveness of Continental phenomenology.

Human finitude is thus manifest on a variety of levels, from the nature of our dominant perspective, to the sheer locatedness of the human process in the innumerable orders of nature, to the perspectival and antecedent traits of our products. In his later works, Buchler articulates the nature of the finitude that belongs to non-human complexes. We will exhibit this structure shortly. For our present purposes it is enough to show how the human process is deeply finite in its direction and various domains. We must now turn to an examination of how Buchler understands the movement of transcendence within the human process.

On the conscious level, the drive for transcendence is most clearly manifest whenever we ramify and extend judgments made or products discovered in order to find lines of relevance previously overlooked. A product need not be limited to its conditions of origin and may indeed take on a life outside of the purview of its producer. Buchler asks us to think about the open-ended possibilities of some of our products:

What is being produced when a scientific hypothesis or a work of art comes into being? In either case the ramifications are not limitable; for in the one, formal implications and methodological effects are continually possible, and in the other, there is no boundary to the scope of critical articulation. The ramifications realize the substance of the product, which, plainly, may far exceed the existence and ken of the producer.<sup>12</sup>

Not only may the creator's intention be irrelevant to the communal realization of the product, but the product itself may contain far more than evidenced by its conditions of origin. Ramificational possibilities always exceed ramifications made. A given product may cease to be relevant for an individual or a community, but it is always possible that some future articulations will enable the product to transcend its prior meanings and traits.

If products can transcend themselves whenever they are further realized and articulated by the community, then it follows that perspectives are themselves capable of self-transcendence. While many perspectives preserve an imperial intent, denying any perspectival intersection or further permeation of their boundaries, it is clear that most perspectives are constantly open to at least a minimal degree of self-overcoming. The sense of encompassment is balanced by the realization that no one horizon or perspective can take over for all others. Philosophy is the outward manifestation of that Reason which moves perspectives beyond their hubristic self-closure. For Buchler:

Philosophy effects a distinctive realization: that the categorial struggle to encompass structures of indefinitely greater breadth is both inevitable and valid. The philosopher comes to see that one perspective can excel or embrace but not annul another. Those who are most truly liberated by the philosophic spirit are likely to be most subject to the compulsion of other philosophies. Such compulsion does not entail literal cognitive acceptance but greater articulative mastery over one's own perspective and over the other, and greater conceptual endowment for the sense of encompassment.<sup>13</sup>

Perspectival intersection is aided by the drive for generic encompassment. No horizon can be self-validating any more than it can claim to fully articulate the complexes within its scope. Insofar as a perspective opens itself to semiotic and hermeneutic possibilities outside of its intrinsic meaning-horizon, it participates in transcendence. It should be noted that perspectives are humanly occupied orders and cannot be attributed to pre-human complexes without some conceptual modifications—a mistake made by Leibniz and Whitehead. Humans are perspectival, although not reducible to their perspectives. The drive for transcendence is clearly manifest whenever a horizon recognizes its need for further validation and expansion. Within the heart of most perspectives lies a deep hunger for horizontal intersection and greater encompassment.

Products and perspectives transcend themselves whenever they allow for further traits of meaning and relevance. As these traits are added to the stock of the prior order, they enhance its scope and deepen its integrity. Of course, a product or perspective may take on a radically different meaning than that intended by its producer or occupant. The direction of an individual life may alter in such a way as to transcend previous conditions. Here "transcendence" means that a fundamental shift in the proceptive direction has taken place. It does not mean that a new proceptive direction has annulled the first but that some shift has taken place within the sole directionality.

The animating center of perspectival intersection is what Buchler calls "query." Unlike inquiry, which is tied to assertive judgments and the life of science, query is found in all dimensions of the human process. It is not tied to the model of problem solving and is not reducible to specific tactical methodologies. For Buchler:

Query is more prodigal than method as such. For although it necessarily represents utterance moving toward some end, it luxuriates and complicates. The primary effort of method is repeatedly to complete its instances: of query, to deepen each instance. Method without query can destroy mankind and its own laborious progeny. Method informed by query is the essential expression of reason. Reason is query aiming to grow and flourish forever.<sup>14</sup>

The movement of transcendence is, for Buchler, the life of query. No antecedent commitment is sufficient to satisfy the desire for further probing and articulation. To say that query is prodigal is to say that finitude will always push up against the boundaries which threaten to foreclose it. Insofar as Buchler admits a religious dimension into his Naturalism, it is most clearly evident in his understanding of that liberating query which transcends our various methods.

Of course, query will be manifest in different ways in different methodic contexts. Scientific inquiry, when deepened by query, will seek a different kind of satisfaction than will poetic judgment. Buchler shows the difference as follows:

When the ancient Greeks said that the pursuit of wisdom begins in wonder, they laid the foundation for the concept of query. But there are at least two kinds of wonder. There is the wonder that seeks to be appeased and the wonder to which appeasement is irrelevant. In the species of query exemplified by science, the former dominates; in that exemplified by poetry, the latter. Scientific wonder seeks to resolve the questions it provokes. Poetic wonder seeks no resolutions; its interrogativeness is not generated by vexations.<sup>15</sup>

Like Heidegger, Buchler sees a kind of ontological wonder working within the heart of that kind of thinking which transcends ordinary methodic probing. This wonder, most fully embodied in the life of the poet, transforms our perspective not only by exhibiting a novel array of complexes but by making us sensitive to the shock of the sheer prevalence of the world. Buchler, while denying the supremacy of the notion of Being, has some sense of the ontological difference in his understanding of the relation between query and wonder.<sup>16</sup>

The drive for transcendence within the human process is thus manifest on three levels. On one level, it appears whenever a product or judgment goes beyond the conditions of its origin to acquire new traits. This process may be indefinitely ramified, particularly if the product is one of great exhibitiv power. On the second level, transcendence appears whenever a perspective rejects self-closure so as to become open to extended intersection with at least one other perspective. On the third level, transcendence is manifest within the ongoing life of query, which issues in wonder and the love of inventive communication. All three

levels are interdependent and work together to insure that brute finitude is quickened by the lure of transcendence.

The tension between finitude and transcendence is eternal and pervasive. It is impossible to leap outside of this tension in some misplaced drive for repose and order. Human individuality is most fully actualized whenever the sense of finitude and the drive for transcendence are allowed full scope. Within the dialectical unfolding of these dimensions lies the grace-filled logic of the human process.

For Buchler, transcendence is most strikingly manifest in the ongoing life of query, which struggles against concrescence and closure. Query quickens and deepens the life of each perspective which it serves. It pushes up against limits. In the words of Beth Singer, "The person engaged in query probes, guesses, tests; he seeks for and weighs alternatives, explores limits and possibilities, endeavors to validate judgments."<sup>17</sup> This relentless pressure against the inertia and imperial self-satisfaction which generally governs communal and personal transactions.

In the realm of art, whose products are the result of exhibitiv judgments, query deepens the sense of wonder and the sense of prevalence. In poetic query in particular there is an emphasis on the traits of the complex as a prevalence in its own right. Again, in the words of Beth Singer, "Not only is the writing of a poem a process of query, the poem itself is the embodiment of query: it explores the traits of the complex it shapes or delineates."<sup>18</sup> The poem thus has a special ontological status. In one sense it is an artifact of culture with its own natural linguistic and physical history. As such it is as much a product as are many space-time particulars. In another sense it is one of the primary locations for the sense of that prevalence which lives at the very heart of the human process. The exhibitiv judgments embodied in all forms of art serve as goads to further query and the sheer exploration of possibilities. From the sense of the prevalence of the specific 'objects' of the poem may emerge the more encompassing sense of the prevalence of the world itself. We will return to this theme later.

In expressing the tensions between the various experiences of finitude and transcendence in the human process, we have relied on more general notions which are part of what might best be called a metaphysics of nature. To clarify and strengthen our grasp of the overall contour of human perspectives and their resultant products, it is necessary to analyze the characteristics of those natural complexes which are neither perspectives nor products. This entails a discussion of Buchler's metaphysics as developed in *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*.

Analogous to the tensions within human experience between its sense of sheer locatedness and its movement toward transcendence is the dual status of those natural complexes which prevail outside of our

perspectives. This duality is manifest, on the one side, in the finitude of complexes and their constituent traits, and, on the other side, in those ramificational possibilities which eclipse their given trait configurations. The concern of a general metaphysics is to find some categorial framework which will be fair to all natural complexes no matter what their status in nature. While many philosophers have criticized the notion that we can reflect on the most pervasive features of the world, Buchler insists that such generic articulation is inevitable:

All philosophers have categories in the sense that in their thinking, whatever its level of generality, some concepts function more regularly and effectively than others, toward the end of making distinctions or making observations or framing principles. Those concepts which are indispensable in determining the character of a philosophy are its categories.<sup>19</sup>

While we can have categories of limited scope—for example, those pertaining to the realm of art or the metaphysics of community—it is necessary to attain a degree of self-conscious clarity about those categories which purport to be about all orders of nature. The issue is not between those who would use such categories and those, such as the post-structuralists, who would deny the efficacy of generic concepts, but between those who have an effective and judicious conceptual array and those who, in their very denial of such a framework, use metaphors, analogies, or categories of only limited scope to define orders for which they are not applicable. The effectiveness of a general metaphysics is gauged by its ability to make each order understandable in its own terms while at the same time providing translation mechanisms by which thought can move from such an order to others which are both like and unlike it.

The most general categories are thus those which apply to anything whatsoever. While no human perspective can be fully successful in developing such concepts, it is possible to proceed in such a way as to illuminate some key traits of the world. Generic reflection is fully compatible with fallibilism.

While any general metaphysics will contain a mutually amplifying array of categories, one category will often function as what might be called an enabling category. Such a pre-category provides the broadest possible categorial clearing within and through which the other categories may function. For Buchler, this category is that of the "natural complex":

The concept of natural complex not only permits satisfactory generic identification; it permits various distinctions and categorizations. It encourages striving after the functions of generalizing precisely and portraying uniquely.<sup>20</sup>

The value of an enabling category can only be measured by its fecundity in the articulation and location of other categories. Insofar as it is free from foundationalist or reductionalist intent it can liberate query for a more adequate exploration of identities and differences.<sup>21</sup> More

importantly, an enabling category does not specify the "whatness" of the world any more than it serves as a conceptual primitive into which all differences must be translated. It enables thought to trace more carefully the contours of the world.<sup>22</sup>

For Buchler, each natural complex is an order of traits and, at the same time, a trait within another order. Anything discriminated by us is a natural complex although there are innumerable complexes which are not available to us. Whatever we say about the general features of those complexes which function within human perspectives, we can say about all complexes:

Every complex (complex of traits) is thus a constituent of some other complex and includes other complexes as constituents of it. Stated in what will prove to be an important equivalent way, every complex is an order of complexes and belongs to an order of complexes. Every complex may belong to more than one order, and conceivably to any number of orders.<sup>23</sup>

This dual directionality gives an indication of both the finitude and non-finitude of all natural complexes. Insofar as a complex "belongs to an order of complexes" it will be subaltern to that order and hence located by an order of greater scope. Insofar as a complex 'contains' its own constituents it will locate them and render them subaltern to itself. Thus a given natural complex both locates and is located. This is a twofold form of finitude. On the other hand, the given complex will have relevance for other orders, both actual and possible, and stand ready to assume new and perhaps unexpected forms of relation. It will be open to change or the admission of new traits. In this sense it can transcend its current trait constitution and thereby have new and different forms of relevance for other complexes.

A complex is just the complex that it is even if it is difficult to articulate its identity. Whenever a complex is discriminated it assumes some kind of configuration for human awareness and can be distinguished from all other complexes. Buchler rejects a monadic view which would see each constituent of reality as mirroring all others from its given perspective. Unlike Whitehead he insists that no order or complex is relevant to all others. Instead he argues that the scope of a complex is limited, even if that scope is always open to expansion and constriction.

While complexes are open to the admission of new or even novel traits, no complex will be so open as to be without identity. Each complex, whether discriminated by humans or not, will be exclusive of parts of the world:

A complex indeterminate in all respects would have no traits. For each trait is a determination, implying the exclusion of some other trait and the imposition of limits—implying a prevalence.<sup>24</sup>

Insofar as a complex prevails or obtains, it must set some limits to the intrusion of other complexes. It will also have its own limits which,

while open to modification, will limit its scope and efficacy for the world beyond its prevalence. The category of prevalence itself is one which points in the direction of both finitude and non-finitude.

For a complex to prevail it must preserve its own subaltern traits and stand in relation to other complexes. It must be "ineluctable" and have a "sphere of primacy and domination," which is "restrictive and exclusive of other complexes."<sup>25</sup> In this sense, prevalence points to the sheer finitude of a complex, to its being one thing and not another and to its refusal to admit new traits into its identity. Contrasted to prevalence is what Buchler calls "alescence," which is that dimension of nature which involves the admission of traits, whether temporally (in the form of becoming) or structurally. Insofar as a complex is prevalent in one sense it will not be alescent. However, a complex may prevail in one order while being alescent in another. For example, a tree may prevail as a fairly static object within the perspective of a human observer while being alescent (admitting new traits) in the order of insect life. The tree admits the traits of an invasive insect community and is diminished in specific ways. Buchler would call this a spoliative alescence. Hence the tree is both prevalent and alescent but in different respects.

Hence, a complex is finite as the prevalence that it is. By the same token, it is finite as an alescence because even here it is admitting some traits and not others. Only certain traits are 'available' to it at a given time. When these traits are assimilated, the complex will be a differently constituted prevalence. It will still obtain as something which excludes traits.

As noted, the other side of prevalence points in the direction of transcendence.<sup>26</sup> This sense is most clearly preserved in poetry, where the poem makes itself open to the sheer prevalence of the world. The prevalence of a given complex points in these two ways. Initially it points toward its otherness from all that is, that is, toward its uniqueness within the innumerable complexes of the world. But, more deeply, it points toward the prevalence which lies at the heart of nature. Poetry conveys both the finite sense of a complex's ineluctable reality, whatever its ordinal placement (whether as a space/time particular or as a so-called 'fictional' entity), and the more general sense of prevalence per se. For Buchler:

The radical difference between poetry and other disciplines (at least other disciplines communicating in language), with respect to the prevalences they find, lies in the nature of the communicative burden. What poetry judges to prevail it communicates *as* prevailing, *as* sovereign and ineluctable. This is what is implied by saying that poetry conveys the sense of *a* prevalence (or of different prevalences). And a *generalized* sense of 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.<sup>27</sup>

The general sense of prevalence, that every complex points to the prevalence of the world itself, is basic to the communicative power of poetry. Of course, on one level, the world is constituted by innumerable



prevalences *and* alescences. But on a deeper level, a level which is even more adequately articulated in religious language, the sense of prevalence awakens us to the mystery of transcendence.

To summarize our account of the forms of transcendence evoked in Buchler's general metaphysics, we can focus on three dimensions. The first involves the openness of a complex to novel trait configurations. On one level of analysis this is the finite dimension of alescence in which the complex may change its configuration. On another level, however, a complex participates in transcendence whenever its scope or multiple integrities are enhanced. Those complexes which have a particularly rich contour (which is the sum of its various integrities) participate more fully in transcendence. Of course, this openness may diminish at some point in the history of the complex.

The second form of transcendence is the prevalence of particular complexes. Insofar as a complex obtains at all in any respect it is a prevalence. Poetry provides us with a strong sense of the prevalence of the complex demarcated for exhibitiv treatment.

The third form of transcendence is that of the sheer prevalence of the world itself. This is most clearly manifest to human perceivers in that wonder which does not seek appeasement. Poetry moves between the second and third forms of transcendence and attempts to keep both open at the same time. Of course, the world would prevail even if it were not the 'object' of poetic query. The poet can only invoke that which is prior to the poetic act.

Strictly, Buchler argues that the concept "Being" is insufficiently generic to 'cover' all complexes, particularly those which are possibilities. He would resist a Heideggerian formulation of the ontological difference between beings and Being. However, the ordinal perspective is open to its own version of *die Seinsfrage* when it moves in the direction of the more general sense of prevalence. In the remainder of this essay, I will criticize Buchler's understanding of transcendence in both the human and pre-human orders. This entails showing how his understanding of finitude can be reconstructed to make it more sensitive to the movement of transcendence which works within the human process and which also speaks from out of the heart of nature.

As noted, the human process also evidenced three forms of transcendence: that of the potentially endless ramification of products, that of perspectival intersection, and that of query. In each case, transcendence is limited to specific traits and trait possibilities. A product such as a work of art transcends itself whenever new interpretations (generating what Peirce called "interpretants") are added to previous ones. This phenomenon is well known in the hermeneutic tradition of "reader response." What is not clearly presented in the writings of Buchler is a sense of openness which points not to other traits or interpretations but toward an ultimate import which both shatters and sustains our particular interpretations.

Human cultural products are more than the location of actual and possible interpretations but point ineluctably toward that elusive reality which is not an interpretation. The free space within which interpretation moves is not delimited or traceable by human query. The drive for hermeneutic encompassment is itself made possible by something else. Perspectival intersection, which entails the re-articulation of products, functions only when query moves from encompassment toward the Encompassing.

Our sense of that which is not a natural complex is quickened whenever a product or perspective becomes open to that clearing which lets it find the expansion appropriate to its makeup. The Encompassing is best seen as the lure of all forms of transcendence, helping the finite to negate itself while expanding its trait configuration. Even if one were able to enumerate the 'sum' of all products or perspectives, this totality would not exhaust the ever receding abyss of the Encompassing. Buchler's rejection of the undelimited, of that which is without contour, closes off the Encompassing which makes it possible to have any perspective whatsoever.

Within Buchler's writings there are some hints as to the nature of that reality which is not a natural complex. In his later reflections on the concepts of "world" and "nature" some indications are made as to that enabling condition which lies 'beneath' even natural complexes. Specifically, his understanding of the nature of ordinality, as that which is not the 'sum' of orders, moves toward that of the Encompassing. Nature, in its giving of itself, stands as the undelimited location of those complexes which constitute the world.<sup>28</sup> Transcendence is most deeply felt when we go beyond complexes toward a sense of worldhood. Query points toward ordinality, toward Nature in its naturing of complexes.

Lying beneath the restless movement of query is a sharper sense of encompassment than that felt in the mere movement from one perspectival structure to another. This sense is related to our grasp of ordinal placement and to the fundamental ordinality which lies at the core of the world. To understand our finitude is already to understand what it is to be a subaltern trait within a vast domain which has no contour. The world transcends our proceptive direction on all sides and limits the scope of our various proceptive domains. The world is thus that which encompasses us on all levels of our functioning. We transcend ourselves whenever we reach further into the innumerable complexes of the reality which surrounds us. Insofar as we distinguish between the concept of an order and the concept of the world, we have moved toward a deeper sense of encompassment. While we are encompassed by numerous orders, we are not always cognizant of the ways in which the world is itself an encompassing of a different kind.

Thus we have a movement from one perspective to another which prepares the way for a more radical movement from the understanding of perspectives to the understanding of the world which stands as the

enabling condition for any and all perspectives. But even here we have not grasped the full radicalness of the human drive for transcendence—for a sense of encompassment. Buchler allows for those forms of transcendence which remain tied to products and perspectives. What is not clear is whether or not he is open to the more forceful kind of transcendence which comes from a recognition of that which makes even query possible.

Query, in order to ramify and deepen judgments, must live and move within an open space which itself serves as the lure for its activities. Query cannot be self-generated and cannot propel itself. What animates and measures query is what might best be called the Encompassing itself, which transcends all products, all perspectives whether actual or possible, and the world which makes perspectives possible. The Encompassing is most clearly evident in its curious kind of absence in which it quietly opens out the space within which query moves. It is that clearing which enables us to have the very concept of world as that which encompasses orders and their traits. Hidden within the inner logic of query is that lure which insures that no perspective attained will be exhaustive of the abyss of the Encompassing itself. When the power of the Encompassing stands before thought and experience, then the right ratio between finitude and transcendence will have been attained. This is the ultimate fore-structure which animates Buchler's ordinal framework but remains hidden from view. Once the Encompassing becomes thematic for thought, the tradition of Naturalism will reclaim a more radical understanding of transcendence.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For an account of Buchler's humanism and naturalism, cf. Andrew Reck, *The New American Philosophers* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1968), pp. 149-159.

<sup>2</sup> For the contrast between naturalism and positivism, cf. William M. Shea, *The Naturalists and the Supernatural* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1984). Shea carefully details the contributions of the Columbia Naturalists to our understanding of religion.

<sup>3</sup> Sidney Gelber, "Toward a Radical Naturalism," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LVI, No. 5 (February 26, 1959), p. 193.

<sup>4</sup> Justus Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, 2nd revised edition (New York: Dover Press Inc., 1979), p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> Justus Buchler, *Nature and Judgment*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), p. 3. This book has been reprinted by the University Press of America, 1985.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Lipman gives the following articulation of Buchler's notion of natural debt, "Our earliest discoveries of nature reveal to us our natural obligations, obligations which possess a primordial and foundational character, for they antedate our births and accompany and direct us to our deaths. Alive, we are committed to courses of behavior or to the achievement of satisfactions which we have no choice but to pursue." From "Natural Obligation, Natural Appropriation," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LVI, No. 5 (February 26, 1959), p. 246. For Buchler, one of the fundamental tensions within the human process is that between compulsion, which demarcates our possibilities and actualities, and convention, which opens up new possibilities and actualities.

<sup>8</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>9</sup> In particular, cf. Dewey's *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1958), Chapter 4.

<sup>10</sup> Buchler, *Nature and Judgment*, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Bernstein, "Buchler's Metaphysics," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXIV, No. 22 (November 23, 1967), p. 757. Bernstein goes on to argue that Buchler, while advancing novel and important insights, fails to deal with such key issues as the nature of causation and the nature of God. One of the most important tasks confronting the ordinal perspective is that of developing an adequate doctrine of God.

<sup>12</sup> Buchler, *Nature and Judgment*, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, p. 81.

<sup>14</sup> Justus Buchler, *The Concept of Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 114. This book has been reprinted by the University Press of America, 1985.

<sup>15</sup> Justus Buchler, *The Main of Light* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 110.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed treatment of this, cf. my "Naturalism, Measure, and the Ontological Difference," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 (Spring 1985), pp. 19-32.

<sup>17</sup> Beth J. Singer, *Ordinal Naturalism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Justus Buchler* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1983), p. 125.

<sup>18</sup> Beth J. Singer, "Art, Poetry, and the Sense of Prevalence: Some Implications of Buchler's Theory of Poetry," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXIV, No. 3 (September 1984), p. 268.

<sup>19</sup> Justus Buchler, "Reply to Anton: Against 'Proper' Ontology," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XIV, No. 1., (Spring 1976), p. 85. The entire issue of this journal is composed of a series of papers given at a conference on Buchler's thought at Fairfield University on May 2-3, 1975. Buchler's replies to each paper are also included.

<sup>20</sup> Justus Buchler, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed treatment of the problem of foundationalism as it relates to these issues, cf. my "Justus Buchler's Ordinal Metaphysics and the Eclipse of Foundationalism," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXV, No. 3 (September 1985), pp. 289-298.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen David Ross rejects the centrality of the category of the "natural complex" and emphasizes that of "orders." He sees Buchler as advocating a form of pluralism. "In particular, the theory of orders is a metaphysical theory, of the nature of things. Like Spinoza's and Whitehead's cosmologies, it moves beyond what we say about things and how we know of them to a theory of what there is: orders and their constituents. It emphasizes metaphysical plurality in a fundamental and profound way. . . ." From Ross' *Transition to an Ordinal Metaphysics*, (Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1980), p. 7. However, no account of orders can make sense if one ignores that which functions as an order. Without the notion of the natural complex it is impossible to make sense of such notions as prevalence, alessness, identity, and contour.

<sup>23</sup> Buchler, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Buchler, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, p. 83.

<sup>25</sup> Buchler, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> Beth Singer distinguishes between a "weak" and "strong" form of prevalence in the writings of Buchler. Her distinction is concerned with the difference between merely prevailing as a complex and prevailing more strongly against other alessences. For her analysis, cf. "Some Ambiguities in the Metaphysics of Natural Complexes," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 55-62.

<sup>27</sup> Buchler, *The Main of Light*, p. 141.

<sup>28</sup> This sense is presented in "Probing the Idea of Nature," *Process Studies*, Vol. 3, (1978), pp. 157-68.