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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...
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 Buchler, in particular, has been more unrelenting than Heidegger in throwing 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 argued, Buchler represents an important consummation of American unavailability, Buchler would be the antecedent structures and powers. While such piety ... move us to honor those evolutionary and cultural traits which mark the outer boundaries of our conscious experience.

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 hermeneutic limitations but will be involved in meaning structures directionality, as part of what Buchler calls the proceptive direction, this interpretive hermeneutic limitations but will be involved in meaning structures perspective, or is in a perspective, that individual will have not only which may be unavailable to another perspective. This interpretive 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." We cannot leap out of our perspective, even though we may bring it into deliberate interaction 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 precepts include no utterances by him, and in which the manipulative side of his being is random.

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.

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.

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 opium of a technological age, the individual is allotted feeble powers by the nature of things, and moves in an environment largely uncontrollable. Trustingly speaking, gross compulsion is equivalent to the finitude of the self, implying the restrictions that pertain to a perspective. 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 lassitude, 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. 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 acting is 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 complete in itself, but is part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void. Radix of involvement are found as part of the out of the void.

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.
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. Ramification 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 a continual 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 categorical struggle to encompass structures of indeterminately 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. For Buchler: 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 a continual 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. 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It should be noted that perspectives are humanly occupied orders and cannot be attributed to pre-human complexes without some conceptual modification—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 calls "query," means of the human 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 methodological traditions. 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 is informed by 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. The movement of transcendence is, for Buchler, the life of query. No precedent 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 to 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. The second, more prodigal kind of wonder is that exemplified by science, the former dominates; in that exemplified in the species of query exemplified by science, the wonder seeks to solve the problem it provokes. Poetic wonder seeks no resolutions; it is best described as wonder. Wonder seeks no resolutions; its indeterminacy is not generated by vexations. 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 all the world. Buchler, while denying the supremacy of the being of the thing, has some sense of the ontological difference in his understanding of the relation between query and wonder. The drive for transcendence within the human process is thus manifest on three levels. On one level, it appears whenever a product or manifest on three levels. On one level, it appears whenever a product or
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 misplaced drive for repose and order. Human individuality is most fully enCEs 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 quickens and deepens the life of each perspective which it serves. It engaged in query probes, guesses, tests; he seeks for and weighs judgments. This relentless pressure against mere methodic repetition preserves the drive for transcendence against the inertia and imperial alternatives, explores limits and possibilities, endeavors to validate pushes up against limits. In the words of Beth Singer, “The person engaged in query probes, guesses, tests; he seeks for and weighs judgments.”

The poem thus has a special dimension lies the grace-filled logic of the human process. In poetic query in particular there is an emphasis on the heart of the human process. The exhibitive judgments embodied in all primary locations for the sense of that prevalence which lives at the very core of the complex it shapes or delineates. “Not only is the writing of a poem a process of actualized whenever the sense of finitude and the drive for transcen­dence—embracing prevails outside of our conditions and making observations or framing principles. Those concepts which are indispensable in determining the character of a philosophy are its categories.

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.

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 those which apply to anything whatever. 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.

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.
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.22

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 conversely to any number of orders.23

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 configurational identity for human awareness and is distinguished from all other complexes. Buchler rejects a monadic view which would see each constituent of reality as mirroring all others from some kind of configuration for human awareness and can be articulated its identity. Whenever a complex is discriminated it assumes some kind of configuration for human awareness and can be distinguished from all other complexes.

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.26

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.

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 poetry. 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.26

A noted, the other side of prevalence points in the direction of transcendence.29 This sense is most clearly preserved in poetry, where the poem makes itself open to the sheerness of the world. The poet, the poet’s voice, and the world are not limited to the word; the poem makes itself open to the prevalence of the world. The poem is both total and particular, a constitution of the world’s otherness. Buchler rejects a monadic view which would see each constituent of reality as mirroring all others from 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 some kind of configuration for human awareness and can be distinguished from all other complexes. 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prevailences 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 exhibitive 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 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 exhibitive treatment.

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 world which is not a natural complex. In his later reflections on the way that the human process also evidenced three 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.

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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 world which is not a natural complex. In his later reflections on the way that the human process also evidenced three 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.

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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 our space within which query moves. It is that clearing which enables us to have the very concept of world as that which transcends all products and perspectives whether actual or possible. But even here we have not grasped the full radicalness of the human drive for transcendence—
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NOTES


5 Justus Buchler, Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment, p. 29.


7 Matthew Lipman gives the following articulation of Buchler's notion of judgment: "Our earliest discoveries of nature reveal to us our natural obligations, obligations which possess a primordial and foundational character, for they antecede 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. 3 (February 26, 1959), p. 246. For Buchler, one of the fundamental tensions within the human process is that between compassion, which decarates our possibilities and actualities, and convention, which opens up new possibilities and actualities.

8 Buchler, Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment, pp. 60-61.