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## Proceptivism: Applying Buchler's Theory of Human Judgment to Art, Dance, and Choreographic Methods

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PROCEPTIVISM: APPLYING BUCHLER'S THEORY OF HUMAN JUDGMENT TO ART,  
DANCE, AND CHOREOGRAPHIC METHODS

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
Theatre Studies

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by  
Michael Stephen Blue  
November 2022

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

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## ABSTRACT

### PROCEPTIVISM: APPLYING BUCHLER’S THEORY OF HUMAN JUDGMENT TO ART, DANCE, AND CHOREOGRAPHIC METHODS

by

Michael Stephen Blue

November 2022

In 1951, philosopher Justus Buchler crafted *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, a seminal work that changed how philosophy examined human judgment. One central and guiding principle to Buchler's theory is what he called “proception,” a lens through which to freshly view human experience. Specifically, proception is a philosophically appropriate substitute for the term “experience,” and refers to the process by which the human individual relates to their world as a cumulative being. Buchler describes in copious detail how the individual accomplishes proception by way of judgments or “utterances.” That is to say, crucial to relating to the world as an individual is judgment, and essential to judgment is expression.

Human expression likewise has many philosophic layers to it, but none are more critical than the creative aspect. While Buchler rarely addresses creativity and the arts in his philosophy of human judgment, I argue that his ideas about judgment and proception imply that the creative process is at the core of human experience, or proception. Thus, this study reevaluates human judgment as it relates to creativity and the arts. I explore how to apply the key elements of Buchler’s theory to the arts, and particularly dance, an endeavor I have dubbed “proceptivism,” a new approach to both Buchler’s theory and the arts.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Thank you also to Gabrielle McNeillie, who cofounded with me the recent incarnation of the Ellensburg Dance Collective, and collaborated with me on *The Kiln* and other projects. I highly value your talent and artistic sensibilities.

I would also like to acknowledge my mother. Thank you not only for your practical help, but for teaching me to value kindness, determination, and the creative spirit above all else. And thank you Izzy, my wee daughter, who always keeps me on my feet (because I'm running after you playing hide and seek!), and who will one day be old enough to read this and ask why I made her read it. And thank you, Rachel Kotkin, for making me laugh most every night, and to view the world with a fresh pair of eyes. You'll always be a Kotkin Smartkin in my heart.

Not least, someone who cannot go without mention is Stephen Schulz, whose unwavering support and profound depth of character has made this project possible. Your talent and unquenchable thirst for knowledge never ceases to amaze me. You are an inspiration. Thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	A MISSED OPPORTUNITY IN BUCHLER’S THEORY.....	15
	Proception.....	31
	Procept and Proceptive Domain.....	33
	Communication.....	35
	Perspective.....	36
	Convention.....	37
	Community.....	38
	Projects and Products.....	39
	Compulsion.....	40
	Judgment.....	41
3	TOWARD A GENERAL DISCUSSION ON ART AND ART-MAKING...	43
	Query.....	44
	Validation in art.....	47
	Communication.....	60
4	DANCE AND APPLIED PROCEPTIVISM.....	70
	Movement is the crux of Proception.....	72
	LMA- Effort.....	81
	LMA- Kinespheric directions.....	94
	Communication.....	96
	Spectatorship.....	101
	Meaning.....	104
	Validation.....	105
5	CONCLUSION.....	109
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	114
	APPENDICES.....	119
	Appendix A—Process of emotional clarity.....	119
	Appendix B—Choreographic configuration for <i>The Kiln</i> .....	120
	Appendix C—Diagram of method for <i>The Kiln</i> .....	121

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

"Every living moment represents an implicit discovery."<sup>1</sup>

—Justus Buchler

In the year of his death (1991), the American Philosophical Association (APA) offered a brief biographical account of Justus Buchler and his work, in which they stated that one of the prevailing aspects of Buchler's career was the great diversity of topics he tackled, ranging anywhere from "poetry to God."<sup>2</sup> Yet no topic in the great spread of Buchler's philosophic discourse is more mysterious and metaphysical than his theory of human judgment, which boldly offers an entirely new perspective on "human experience," or what Buchler calls "proception."

In Buchler's seminal work, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, he defines *proception* as the process in which an individual's "whole self is represented."<sup>3</sup> Though this explanation may at first appear as overly brief and quixotic, there are many layers to Buchler's basal and succinct statement on proception, a concept which unfolds tirelessly within his theory of human judgment. Likewise, I have found that Buchler's great unraveling of proception potentially provides a vast and mostly untapped resource for the arts, particularly when it comes to art theory, criticism, and creative process (just as other integrations of philosophy in art have done in the past). The purpose of this study, therefore, is to prod the theory of human judgment

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<sup>1</sup> Justus Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1951), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Sydney Gelber and Patrick Heelan, "Justus Buchler 1914-1991," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 65, no. 1 (September 1991): 22.

<sup>3</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 5.

and apply Buchler's philosophical lens of proception and judgment to a discussion on art and specifically dance.

Necessarily, this investigation also looks into the function of proception within the context of *art-making*, or the process of constructing artistic expression.<sup>4</sup> I also take into careful account other key elements of Buchler's theory, such as *judgment*, *communication*, and *validation*, among others. As a whole, the adoption of these concepts for the understanding of art I refer to as *proceptivism*, though this approach tends toward a focus on Buchler's fundamental notion of proception. I posit that proceptivism rings especially true for dance and choreography, which I demonstrate as inherently conducive to such an application, with many parallels existing naturally between dance theory and the theory of human judgment. However, before I fully introduce Buchler's theory, I would be remiss if I did not first begin with a general outline of Buchler as a philosopher and his connections to various schools of philosophic thought—all of which influence his ideas of proception and the context for my own application of proception to art and dance.

When glancing over Buchler's long academic career as a philosopher, it becomes immediately apparent how difficult it is to place Buchler into a singular, specific school of philosophy. However, Buchler was arguably first and foremost an avid follower of the Socratic method, which in turn shaped his own ideas on philosophic discourse—a format this study will naturally adopt. In his own words, “a method is a power of manipulating natural complexes, purposively and recognizably, within a reproducible order of *utterance*; and methodic activity is the translation of such a power into the pursuit of an end—an end implied by the reproduction.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> David Bayles and Ted Orland, *Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking* (Santa Cruz, CA: Image Continuum Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Justus Buchler, *The Concept of Method* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1961), 135. Emphasis my own.



Simply deciphered, Buchler offers here the framework that supports his overall approach to philosophy, including his theory of human judgment: *utterance* he uses as a synonym for *judgment*, and method is the purposeful action of judgment that is ordered and reproducible, and in this way produces a discernable product.<sup>6</sup>

Though the Socratic method, well-known for its “defining terms,” is of obvious influence, at the start of Buchler’s academic career he also became heavily absorbed in the writings of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, who is widely seen as the primary originator of pragmatism in philosophy. Buchler, in fact, wrote his dissertation on Peirce.<sup>7</sup> To this day, a simple search in most academic databases will generate hundreds (even over a thousand) citations of Buchler’s works with regard to Peirce, far outweighing his other writings. It could even be said that, in some contexts, Buchler is best known for his work on Peirce. Considering the significance of Buchler’s involvement with the subject of Peirce, it may not appear odd that Buchler is not more often viewed, alongside Peirce, as belonging to pragmatism rather than to metaphysics. Granted, Peirce dealt with metaphysics to a great extent, and it is commonly seen as one of the three main categories of his system of thought. Moreover, it is easy to see the roots of Buchler’s metaphysics in Peirce which, as APA’s biographical sketch mentions, he develops well beyond Peirce’s own discussion.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, pragmatism as a system owes a lot to the pairing of Buchler and Peirce—it is difficult to find a discussion within this school without at least one citation of Buchler’s edited *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*.<sup>9</sup> In addition, it has been said that Buchler’s insights into metaphysics “provide a sound ontological

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<sup>6</sup> I offer further explanation of these terms, including *manipulation* and *natural complex*, in the sections and chapters that follow.

<sup>7</sup> Justus Buchler, “Charles Peirce’s Empiricism” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1939).

<sup>8</sup> Gelber and Heelan, “Justus,” 23.

<sup>9</sup> Charles S. Peirce and Justus Buchler, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce: Selected and Edited, with an Introduction by Justus Buchler* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1955).

basis for interpreting Peirce's point that there are no fixed limits to inquiry,"<sup>10</sup> which itself echoes the Socratic method.

Though a seamless transition from Peirce's pragmatism would appear to branch immediately into metaphysics for Buchler, so too can the case be made for naturalism. Prominent members of contemporary systems of naturalism, such as John Ryder or Robert S. Corrington, credit Buchler as a pragmatic naturalist, referencing, of course, Buchler's Peircean influences.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Ryder and Corrington lump Buchler in with the so-called Columbia School of naturalism, which has been described as the origin for many secular forms of naturalism, with Buchler's ideas acting as arguably the most developed source.<sup>12</sup> Ryder, who did his dissertation under Buchler, is considered to be at the forefront of the Stony Brook School, which carries on the system of thought initiated by Buchler and others of Columbia Naturalism (e.g., John Dewey and John Herman Randall Jr.).<sup>13</sup> While Ryder is somewhat guilty of relaxed methodological plurality over a more directed Socratic method as Buchler would have it, Ryder pushed pragmatic naturalism forward based on metaphysical and ontological perspectives stemming from Buchler's ordinal naturalism, which aids his fluid method to nevertheless not be considered "flabby pluralism."<sup>14</sup> Ryder takes into account "experience" much in the same way that Buchler discusses perception and suggests that the "original, naturalist trait of pragmatism"<sup>15</sup> from the Columbia School be reabsorbed by naturalism so as to reject extreme relativism and its denial of

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<sup>10</sup> Gelber and Heelan, "Justus," 23.

<sup>11</sup> Robert S. Corrington, "The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism," review of *The Things in Heaven and Earth*, by John Ryder, *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 35, no. 3 (September 2014): 279.

<sup>12</sup> Corrington, "The Things in Heaven," 279.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Alicia Garcia Ruiz, review of *The Things in Heaven and Earth*, by John Ryder, *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* VI-1, (July 2014): 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ruiz, review of *The Things*, 2.

objectivism.<sup>16</sup> In his later work, particularly those pertaining to his theory of human judgment, Buchler has retained this philosophical value to a great extent, and yet balances neatly between objectivism and the relative reality of the individual experience.

These and other principles from Buchler carried over to Corrington as well. Chief among them are Buchler's concepts of *ordinal nature*, *natural complexes*, and *ontological parity*. Corrington paraphrases Buchler's concept of ordinal nature the most succinctly. The term "ordinal nature," as he puts it, means that nature is "ordinal" in the sense that it is "constituted by innumerable intersecting and relevant orders."<sup>17</sup> In other words, as Ryder too points out, nature does not function as one, all-encompassing, "superorder," but rather an indefinite number of orders in relation to one another. Nature is likewise devoid of any one definitive order that stands in total isolation; "there is no set of sets or a perfect self-representative series."<sup>18</sup> Buchler's logic and method here, resounded by Ryder and Corrington, in turn resounds the Peircean assertion that there is no fixed limit to inquiry, which further evidences the viewpoint of Buchler as, specifically, a pragmatic naturalist. Yet, in a published conversation between Buchler and Corrington, Buchler says he is "very wary of Columbia naturalism," and likens the movement to an "addendum to scientific faith."<sup>19</sup> In this conversation, Buchler criticizes Dewey's assertion that naturalism follows the scientific method, which Buchler labels as "dogmatic," and says that Dewey "corrupted the idea of naturalism in his *A Common Faith*," specifically mismodeling a definition of "God as the relation between the practical and the ideal" based on George (Jorge) Santayana's own definitions.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Buchler rejects any attempt to ultimately define nature.

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<sup>16</sup> John Ryder, *The Things in Heaven and Earth* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Corrington, "The Things in Heaven," 279.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Justus Buchler and Robert S. Corrington, "Conversation between Justus Buchler and Robert S. Corrington," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 3, no. 4 (1989): 261-262.

<sup>20</sup> Buchler and Corrington, "Conversation," 261-262.

He offers that nature is “a metaphysical category which is... ubiquitous and all-embracing,” and “that its *metaphysical* definition... should be in constant process of being built.”<sup>21</sup> Buchler is somewhat tolerant of entertaining the idea of crafting a philosophical equation for “God,” but gives the impression that, if even possible, it would be the result of a long process we haven’t come close to arriving at.

All in all, Buchler concludes “I can’t really say ‘I am a naturalist.’”<sup>22</sup> As we can see here already, Buchler can be a difficult man to place into a specific philosophical genre, but this I argue presents great potential for an application of Buchler’s thoughts to fields not immediately considered in the context of academic philosophy, such as the arts. In other words, this elusive quality to Buchler as a philosopher does not necessarily make his work less approachable. Rather, it evidences his availability to a diverse array of applications, including the arts, though this is an opportunity not yet exploited by the arts or any philosophy that takes the arts on as a subject of inquiry or application.

Others scholars and philosophers are beginning to separate (though not completely remove) Buchler from the naturalists, particularly pragmatic naturalism. For example, in his 2013 book *The Orders of Nature*, Lawrence Cahoon makes the clear distinction between the “ordinal naturalism” of Buchler and the pragmatic naturalism of Dewey and the Columbia school.<sup>23</sup> The ordinal perspective on nature is, for Buchler, in many ways inseparable from what he calls “natural complexes.” As Buchler and subsequent naturalists contend, there is no “universal trait,”<sup>24</sup> or any trait that may claim its fixity as a thing-in-total. As Buchler states:

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence Cahoon, *The Orders of Nature* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Corrington, “The Things in Heaven,” 280.

“Whatever is, in whatever way it is, is a natural complex.”<sup>25</sup> Or, as Corrington puts it: “To call something a natural complex is to provide a conceptual and experiential clearing *within* which it can exhibit its own and its relational traits.”<sup>26</sup> A complex can have traits, but these traits are found both within itself and within orders “beyond itself,”<sup>27</sup> with fluid ordinal process. In this way, one can also describe Buchler as an “ordinal naturalist.”

The placement of Buchler’s philosophy is further supported by his own criticisms of the philosophical principle of *ontological priority*, which asserts that one entity is prior to another in being. Buchler sets up a “more real model,” or a contrasting principle of *ontological parity*, to address the issue that if one subject is prior to another, then it necessitates the subject with ontological priority is more real. Buchler makes the point that one subject cannot be more real or fundamental than another, thus every natural complex exists relative to another, hence its ontological parity. However, this does not require any natural complex to be prior to another. Therefore, Buchler’s concept of a natural complex is interdependent with his own notion of ontological parity and, conflated, represent the foundation of his views on ordinal nature. According to this view, Buchler also does not refute the existence of God, but neither does he give priority to God. Moreover, though he occasionally touches the subject, Buchler appears to be generally unconcerned with the idea of God and the divine.

Buchler’s ordinal approach has thus often been described as “secular naturalism;” through ontological parity, the divine is no more fundamental than any other natural complex. This means that “God” lacks priority to its creation. That is to say, whether or not a supreme being exists, its philosophical reference cannot be held higher than natural phenomena, nor is it

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<sup>25</sup> Justus Buchler, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, ed. Kathleen Wallace, Armen T. Marsoobian, and Robert S. Corrington, Second, expanded edition (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Corrington, “The Things in Heaven,” 280.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

more real or prior in existence—both the source and the products of creation exist simultaneously, and are each a natural complex. In this way, Buchler (arguably far more so than any naturalist prior to him—no pun intended), takes naturalism out of a traditionally theological context and pushes it finally into the pure arena of philosophical discourse. In this sense Buchler has demonstrated his aptitude for being adaptive and progressive as a philosopher rather than rigid. His infidelity to tradition is a quality that again lends itself well to diverse applications of his philosophy, as I have already shown to be the case. Yet, despite this fact, the arts remain mostly untouched.

Further considerations include descriptions of Buchler’s philosophy as American realism, positivism, non-reductive naturalism, ordinal phenomenology, constructive postmodernism, systematic non-foundationalism, deconstructivism, and even “hard-core pluralism,”<sup>28</sup> among others. Obviously, the scope and intended focus of this study restricts me from addressing all of these viewpoints, but listing them gives a sense of the vast and unique philosophical ecosystem that is Buchler’s work. That said, there are a few other points to touch on that further illustrate the art-potential found in Buchler’s overall works, that includes and permeates through his theory of human judgment. Firstly, besides his strong Peircean influence, it is important to make note of his involvement with transcendental philosophy—specifically, concerning the works of Santayana. Though Buchler does not buy into the ontological priority that Santayana explores extensively (which has been described as a “materialist”<sup>29</sup> form of naturalism), and he criticizes Santayana’s claims at having utilized Peircean symbolism,<sup>30</sup> he shares Santayana’s non-reductive approach. The non-reductive style is somewhat paradoxical, as it both affirms the transcendent

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Angus Kerr-Lawson, “Santayana's Non-Reductive Naturalism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 25, no. 3 (1989): 229.

<sup>30</sup> John Lachs, “The Proofs of Realism,” *The Monist* 51, no. 2 (April 1967): 289.

and denies it. The non-reductive style has been since attributed to Santayana, who never described himself as such, but he exemplifies the attitude by asserting belief in substance, while simultaneously arguing that the given qualities of a thing do not exist. Belief in the ultimate qualities of a thing, he explains, leads to faith in the description of reality rather than knowledge of the object itself.<sup>31</sup> Santayana thus attempts to stray from what Buchler called “scientific faith,” and places philosophic emphasis on the material thing transcendent of reductive quality. Indeed, Buchler has referred to his own theory of human judgment as a type of “objective relativism.”<sup>32</sup> Buchler comes by this influence honestly—a good deal of his early work was devoted to Santayana.<sup>33</sup>

Ironically, Buchler’s tendencies toward the secular space in philosophy, via metaphysics, seems to partially circle back to the spiritual. Buchler was himself the son of a prominent Rabbi, Samuel Buchler, and the student of philosopher Morris R. Cohen—founder of the Conference on Jewish Relations, and one of the first American Jews to hold a regular professorship in philosophy.<sup>34</sup> [Cohen steered Buchler’s study of Peirce, and Buchler’s *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes* is considered, in large part, to systematically reflect Cohen’s metaphysics.<sup>35</sup>] This in mind, it could be said that Buchler owes at least some of his method and philosophic endeavor to his Jewish roots in Talmudic study and debate. Not surprisingly then, Buchler’s philosophy appears to accommodate the mystical. For one, Martin O. Yalcin has recently suggested that

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<sup>31</sup> Kerr-Lawson, “Santayana’s,” 230-231.

<sup>32</sup> Justus Buchler, *Nature and Judgment* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1955), 128.

<sup>33</sup> E.g., *Obiter Scripta: Lectures, Essays and Reviews by George Santayana*, ed. Justus Buchler and Benjamin Schwartz (New York, NY: Scribner’s, 1936).

<sup>34</sup> Lawrence Cahoon, “The Metaphysics of Morris R. Cohen: From Realism to Objective Relativism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 78, no. 3 (July 2017): 449-450.

<sup>35</sup> Cahoon, “The Metaphysics,” 468.

Buchler's ordinal naturalism provides the most accessible concepts in metaphysics to facilitate understandings of the sacred.<sup>36</sup>

What could be considered a pleasant surprise, so to speak, is some association between Buchler's philosophy and feminism. Felicia E. Kruse has applied Buchler's ordinal metaphysics to discussions on nature within the context of ecofeminism—the view that ecological issues are simultaneously feminist issues, and that ecological wrongs (e.g., deforestation) often negatively impact women, particularly in developing nations but also in American society.<sup>37</sup> Though I would not classify Buchler as a feminist,<sup>38</sup> what makes this application appropriate is, as Kruse points out, the fact that his ordinal view and concept of natural complexes “resists the Cartesian drive” to set up a hierarchal scheme—his work is thus inherently a great equalizer, since he rejects ontological priority.<sup>39</sup> In her review of pragmatism in relation to feminism, Marjorie C. Miller likewise notes Buchler's “reconceptualizing reason” which manages to avoid a dichotomy that traditionally sets up “categories symbolically associated with the male and derived in exclusionary or dominating relation to traits symbolically associated with the female.”<sup>40</sup> Perhaps Buchler's well-known activism in anti-McCarthyism, and his Vice Chairmanship for the National Academic Freedom Committee of the ACLU, has also helped him gain some attention as it concerns human rights and philosophy.

In sum, in light of Buchler's diverse philosophical connections and wide possibility for application, I as a dancer, choreographer, and performance studies scholar propose two new

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<sup>36</sup> Martin O. Yalcin, *Naturalism's Philosophy of the Sacred: Justus Buchler, Karl Jaspers, and George Santayana* (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2013), 466.

<sup>37</sup> Felicia E. Kruse, “An Ordinal Context for Ecofeminism,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (1995): 15.

<sup>38</sup> Though Buchler makes persistent use of the male pronoun to refer to the universal human, this was considered standard practice during his time and was even expected.

<sup>39</sup> Kruse, “An Ordinal,” 23.

<sup>40</sup> Marjorie C. Miller, “Feminism and Pragmatism: On the Arrival of a ‘Ministry of Disturbance, a Regulated Source of Annoyance; a Destroyer of Routine; an Underminer of Complacency,’” *The Monist* 75, no. 4 (October 1992): 451.



considerations of Buchler's theory. First, that proception *is* a creative process; this perspective can both inform art-making *and* provide insight into the creative process. I assert that exploring *proceptivism* is necessary to expanding discussions on the theory of human judgment—not only when it comes to notions on art, which is a philosophically anemic sector of Buchler's theory, but on certain principles that I argue are incomplete. Second, I suggest dance as a direct and suitable medium for exploring what I call "proceptivism," particularly in the way that the embodied process of choreography not only brings awareness to proception in art but enlivens *procept* (a unit of proception) with movement. In the following paragraphs, I lay out a brief outline of the coming chapters to illustrate the framework by which I accomplish the aforementioned considerations.

Having outlined Buchler's philosophical affinities in this chapter, in chapter 2 I review the primary associations between Buchler's work and the topics of art and art-making, sparse though it may be. Not only do I view art as an underdeveloped consideration in the theory of human judgment and among Buchler's wider works and influences, but I also further address Buchler's ideas on poetry, pointing out his overall deficit when it comes to linking poetry with art. Inevitably, this process of review puts added focus on Buchler's theory of human judgment, which not only serves as the philosophical reservoir for this study but, as I point out, is the connecting undercurrent to his philosophic work as a whole. Naturally, it becomes essential in chapter 2 to more fully introduce Buchler's theory of human judgment, explaining its key concepts and an overview of core principles.

In chapter 2, I discuss the concept of *proception* and its general meaning, providing what can be considered an operational definition specific to this study. I then explain the units of proception, or *procepts*, along with the *proceptive domain* and the *proceptive dimensions* of

*manipulation* and *assimilation*. In addition, I outline the relationship of procept to *product*, and show the fundamental differences between *perspective* and proception. Other primary components of the theory covered include *communication* and its categories of *reflexive*, *asymmetrical*, and *symmetrical*, as well as what is crucial to communication: Buchler's ideas on *community*. I also discuss the modes of *convention* and *compulsion*. Last, but not least, I offer basic understandings of *judgment*, which is as fundamental to Buchler's theory as the concept of proception, though even more difficult to pinpoint.

Having thus crafted a context for Buchler's theory related to proceptivism, in chapter 3 I turn my focus to the relationship of proception to discussions on the subject of art and art-making—the core of proceptivism. I revisit the needs for exploring proception and human judgment through the lens of art and art-making, and vice versa, approaching art by way of Buchler's theory. In particular, I take into account Buchler's concepts of *query*, *validation*, and *communication*. Furthermore, I look at the role *communication* plays in art, and the interplay of *community* and artist within the art-making process. It is my hope that chapter 3 demonstrates how proceptivism, or the process of proception in art and art-making, not only nourishes a starved subject within the theory of human judgment, but enhances and revitalizes the theory. In this way, I posit that proceptivism has a genuine potential to be impactful for the theory of human judgment.

In chapter 4, I move from highlighting the art-deficit in Buchler's theory to emphasizing the opportunities. In other words, at multiple points within the theory of human judgment, I show how proceptivism may be incorporated and applied. Specifically, it is in this chapter that I shift toward an application of proceptivism to ideas on dance. I initiate this transition by asking the necessary question, “why dance?,” when considering an art-medium for the spotlight. I address

this issue with the simple assertion of movement as the crux of proception, which I demonstrate with further review of Buchler's principles, placing special attention on *communication*, *spectatorship*, *meaning*, and *validation*. In addition, I describe these principles in terms of dance theory, borrowing extensively from Laban Movement Analysis (LMA).

Chapter 4 also takes into account a transcription of ideas from the previous chapter to elements of choreography, demonstrated through the analysis of a choreographic work I have been involved with, a piece called *The Kiln*. I uncover frequent cognates in dance theory to Buchler's theory, as made evident in *The Kiln*, and I reiterate Buchler's notions of *query* in the context of this choreography. Overall, *The Kiln* functions as a case study or working example of how artists can directly apply proceptivism to analysis and creation. Also, my analysis emphasizes how dance is a natural and convenient subject for proceptivism, with many existing overlaps between LMA and the theory of human judgment. Moreover, this analysis hints at how an application of proceptivism to dance creation might be accomplished, and how further development in this direction of both analysis and applied choreography might enhance the literacy of current movement theories, such as LMA.

Overall with this study, I endeavor to apply Buchler's theory to more in-depth discussions on art and art-making, a current gap in scholarly discourse. (Even Beth J. Singer's book, *Ordinal Naturalism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Justus Buchler*,<sup>41</sup> which has been described as the only one of its kind in encapsulating the philosophic system of Buchler's work,<sup>42</sup> only ever loosely touches on the subject of art). I argue that Buchler's theory of human judgment can be advanced by developing in this direction, and perhaps requires it. This is a

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<sup>41</sup> Beth J. Singer, *Ordinal Naturalism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Justus Buchler* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1983).

<sup>42</sup> Armen T. Marsoobian, review of *Ordinal Naturalism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Justus Buchler*, by Beth J. Singer, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (1987): 172.

sentiment Buchler shares: “the theory of judgment needs to introduce a category that will help us understand the *exploratory* character which may belong to any type of judgments on the methodic level, and therefore to poetry;” he continues to explain that art and poetry are, respectively, a “species” and “sub-species” of query.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, I review dance as an art-medium under the lens of proceptivism. In addition, I attempt to formulate connections between the principles of choreography and the principles and ideas of the theory of human judgment, and argue dance as a suitable artistic medium for such a direct application. Alongside these efforts, however, I hope to make Buchler’s work, particularly his theory of human judgment, more visible. As I have illustrated here, it is difficult to ultimately categorize Buchler as a philosopher; his background and those who have claimed him as their own represent a diverse array of thought. This has meant that Buchler has remained somewhat inaccessible to the mainstream, artists and art critics included. Yet, in my opinion, it also shows his great talent as a philosopher. Therefore, it is my wish that this study helps to initiate Buchler’s work into focus among a broader audience (especially as it may concern art), and for subsequent review of my own ideas.

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<sup>43</sup> Justus Buchler, *The Main of Light* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1974), 109-110.

## CHAPTER 2

## A MISSED OPPORTUNITY IN BUCHLER'S THEORY

As outlined in chapter 1, Buchler belongs to a multitude of philosophical veins, but with no central pledge of allegiance at its heart—what, then, is the guiding or cohesive element to his work overall? Of course, this is an ambitious question, but to begin to answer, it is essential to examine Buchler's ideas on *judgment*, a philosophical concept that permeates the lion's share of his discussions, particularly post-Peirce, and provides an excellent opportunity for exploring art and art-making. Despite the fact that judgment and perception are not often discussed or explored in connection with art or the creative process, and virtually nothing has been explored when it comes specifically to art-making (especially among the so-called “fine arts”). But what exactly has, in a general sense, been said?

Beginning as far back as his philosophical tangling with Peirce, we see some evidence of the importance of art to Buchler. In particular, with Peirce's *semiotics* (which he spells “semeiotics”) or *sign theory*, which accounts for any signification, representation, reference, or meaning.<sup>1</sup> In Peirce's own words, he describes a sign as: “Anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the later is thereby mediately determined by the former.”<sup>2</sup> Though Peirce's own extensive writing on the subject (which Buchler toiled over early in his career) does not clearly state a connection with art, and it is said that Peirce's personal interest in art was “minimal,”<sup>3</sup> and that he was “moved more by meals and fine handkerchiefs than by the art he

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Atkin, “Peirce's Theory of Signs,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, November 15, 2010), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce-semiotics/>.

<sup>2</sup> Atkin, “Peirce's Theory.”

<sup>3</sup> Michael Leja, “Peirce, Visuality, and Art,” *Representations*, no. 72 (2000): 97.

saw.”<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, we see substantial evidence for the significance of art by way of an application of Peircean philosophy in subsequent explorations, especially as it concerns visual art. Critic Michael Leja, for instance, posits that “Peirce’s writings have had immense appeal for analysts of visual culture in recent decades. This is sometimes attributed to the special capacity of his semiotic theory to accommodate visual signs.”<sup>5</sup> Gary Shapiro, a contemporary of Buchler, also makes use of Peirce’s idea of a *sign* as a way to facilitate more “intelligible” interpretations of art.<sup>6</sup> Considering Shapiro’s study helps illustrate how extensive philosophical discussions on art can be if they stem from Peirce’s work with signs, even though Peirce himself held little regard for art. This consideration, in turn, can show the potential Buchler has harbored for an application of his philosophy to art, as it extends from Peirce.

By understanding an artwork as a sign (“something that stands for something to someone (or to another sign)”), Shapiro suggests that, while restricted in meaning “by its own nature and its object,” a sign in art is nevertheless “open to interpretation because it must address some interpreter.”<sup>7</sup> However, he points out that though some interpretations are acceptable, others may be nonsensical, causing the signs in art to possess “partial indeterminacy.”<sup>8</sup> Shapiro asserts that if signs in art are to be coherent, this is accounted for by considering the general characteristics of a sign, which itself does not “determine its own interpretation, but requires interpretation.”<sup>9</sup> Hence, the angle Shapiro takes assumes a discussion of an artwork’s meaning demands an exploration of its interpretation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Leja, “Peirce, Visuality,” 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>6</sup> Gary Shapiro, “Intention and Interpretation in Art: A Semiotic Analysis,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 33, no. 1 (1974): 33.

<sup>7</sup> Shapiro, “Intention,” 33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

The meaning of an art-sign is often thought of as one dimensional, especially when conflated with the artist's intention, which Shapiro describes as being "a condition of the sign's being meaningful."<sup>11</sup> Though not meaning's dependent variable (and, as the author notes, has been a primary mode of considering an art-sign's meaning by intentional-istic theorists like Erwin Panofsky). In other words, in terms of Peirce's semiotic *triad* (*sign-object-interpretant*), an art-sign's object is not its meaning but its own interpretant, or the rule that determines its interpretant.<sup>12</sup> Yet, as critics of semiotic theory have pointed out, it appears that an art-sign's meaning is also not totally open to interpretation since there can be no way of identifying the most significant or unique interpretant. Or in other words, "no single interpretant is adequate" since the interpretant, of which there are an indefinite series, also functions as a sign, thus producing meaning that is indeterminable.<sup>13</sup>

Contrary to Peirce who suggested an "ultimate" interpretant of a sign or "intellectual concept,"<sup>14</sup> Shapiro offers the consideration that there may be different types of signs, and that artistic semiosis could be its own animal, and further addresses the issue with a fresh perspective on the symbolic aspect of an art-sign. Shapiro rejects a unique interpretation, recognizing that if this were the case we would have to think of a complex art-sign with only one single meaning. Yet, he gives us a sort of middle ground where, as previously mentioned, interpretations can be more or less acceptable; however, just like in art, this function "leaves out far more than it includes."<sup>15</sup> And the performing arts, with their ephemeral nature, further complicates the pragmatic method of Peirce.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Monty Don, "Séricourt," *French Gardens: The Artistic Garden*, directed by Rachel Bell (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013), DVD.

Additionally, Shapiro opens up a fresh viewpoint on the symbolic aspects of an art-sign. He argues that an art-sign's object is not an icon, nor is it indexical, but neither is it simply a concept. This is because the material aspect of a word that expresses the concept does not lend to its meaning, and may even inhibit understanding or communication. Poetic meaning, conversely, may be heavily steeped in the sound sequence of its recitation, which then becomes "lost in translation" if read as simple text.<sup>16</sup> But meaning in art is not a fixed, static fossil—symbols grow through their interpretation, what Peirce would call a "living" symbol which retains its identity through change.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, symbols are not to be confused with icons and indices, which are "natural signs;" symbols require convention, being that they must be both general and repeatable. Thus, according to Shapiro, the relation of an art-sign to its object must be symbolic (an idea that runs near to Buchler's own assertions on art-sign and communication, which speaks to his influence on Shapiro).

Shapiro is also cognizant that it is necessary to reconcile intention with an art-sign, but he wrestles with it more than he pins down any definitive answer. He arrives at suggestions that are part empirical in approach, and part pluralistic, but does not come to any clear conclusions on the matter beyond a recognition that aesthetic theories (which attempt at some fundamental formula for intention in art) have each failed to be wholly convincing, and he essentially leaves the issue there. That said, though Shapiro appears to have fallen short of the mark as far as concluding anything about intention in art, he addresses thoroughly issues of art object, art-sign, symbolism in art, and interpretation, as I have detailed above.

Buchler addresses this problem of intention adequately in his theory of human judgment, and in his ideas on poetry, even if it is not entirely direct. Indeed, Shapiro cites Buchler's post-

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<sup>16</sup> Shapiro, "Intention," 41.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.



Peirce works when commenting on the metaphysical promiscuity of determinacy. In addition, many of Shapiro's assertions, which are soaked in semiosis, echo Buchler's theory of human judgment, in particular those of *signs*, *communication*, and *community*. Furthermore, in his musings on intention, though Shapiro's emphasis on the importance of an *experience* in art [Shapiro openly borrows from Dewey's assertion that the "product of art... is not the work of art," the work in art being an outcome that "is an experience that is enjoyed because of its liberating and ordered properties"<sup>18</sup>] is equally anemic of philosophical commitment and detail as to that of *intention*, Buchler supplements vigorously with his theoretical principle of proception, which I will return to extensively in later chapters.

To reiterate, although Peirce does not concern himself directly with art, considerations of Peirce's thoughts on semiosis have nevertheless influenced several studies on the interpretation of art, including Shapiro, and Peirce's ideas also persist to ripple through critiques of actual artworks, both material and performative artworks. Even if seemingly in passing, these nods to Peirce (which by extension often includes Buchler's influence, as well as being an influence *for* him) can have obvious impact on artists and art critics. For example, in a discussion on Lamia Joreige's *Objects of War*, an ongoing multimedia installation first exhibited at the Tate Modern in 2000, critic Laura U. Marks briefly references Peirce's *The Fixation of Belief* (from Buchler's edited publication), quoting the famous line: "The irritation of doubt causes a struggle to attain a state of belief."<sup>19</sup> While, at first glance, Marks cites Peirce almost offhandedly, she also borrows from Peirce to set up a guiding concept that is significant to her critique (though his work does not endure any further reference). Indeed, it is significant to her pitch: Lamia's work showcases a

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 42, citing: John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York, NY: Minton, Balch and Co., 1958), 214.

<sup>19</sup> Laura U. Marks, "Dangerous Gifts: Lamia Joreige's *Objects of War*," *Art Journal* 66, no. 2 (2007): 21.

collection of mundane or “banal”<sup>20</sup> objects from the daily lives of those who experienced the Lebanese Civil War, which are placed around the exhibition hall for onlookers to peruse. Each object acts as a story during wartime that is told by the respondents—though the focus of the story is the object, the war becomes an overwhelming presence.

According to Marks, these objects “tease” and “irritate” memory that aids new generations to “rewrite history through action in the present.”<sup>21</sup> Peirce wrote copiously on the ways in which we arrive at a fixed belief or opinion, and Marks seems to have forged a similar, implicit connection. According to Peirce, logic and the scientific method offers the most sound method for forming belief or opinion, for which doubt is its great servant. For Marks, *Objects of War* provides a cognate of irritation: it prods at the seductive powers of forgetting (and with it, the oppressive forces of silence), and it spurs us into dialogue. As with Peirce, the artwork is a line of inquiry that gravitates toward opinion and belief. And even more so for the consumers of the art than the respondents: it is a propulsion into motion, rather than an acceptance of dead beliefs without living and relevant discourse. The onlooker thus becomes part of the object’s story instead of simply witnessing cold artifacts. Though Shapiro deems considering works of art as artifacts “old and trivial,” he grants that by means of the Peircean artifact being exhibitiv of its “artificiality,” there is an openness without limitation.<sup>22</sup> In this way, nearly anything can semiotically account as artifact, which in turn may be seen as a “work of art.” In her critique, Marks alludes to this same concept, pointing to artifacts of war that have made their way into the artistic arena and are now, literally, works of art.

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<sup>20</sup> Kyla McDonald, “Objects of War No.1’, Lamia Joreige, 2000,” Tate , January 2010, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/joreige-objects-of-war-no-1-t13247>.

<sup>21</sup> Marks, “Dangerous,” 21.

<sup>22</sup> Shapiro, “Intention,” 36.

In another instance of Peircean influence by-way-of Buchler, R. Swearer attempts to skip over issues with the critic/interpreter and artist dyad by proposing various lenses by means of “conceptual art.” Though Swearer makes no claim at having formulated an artistic “treatise,” in his study *The Artistic Proposal*, he molds viewpoints based on the framework of conceptual art, or “the chain of actions and reactions set in motion by twentieth century modernism.”<sup>23</sup> He quickly asserts that a primary goal of conceptual art is to “abolish the role of critic/interpreter,”<sup>24</sup> which leaves only the role of the artist: as you step into the world of art creation you are immediately part creator. This happens by means of expressing ideas more than consumable material works and aesthetics.<sup>25</sup> His argument is driven by an almost invisible influence from Peirce, especially when it concerns the symbols and signs that reference the conceptual work, and our inference as we engage with these symbols and signs. In particular, Peirce’s *Logic and Signs*, from Buchler’s edited publication, sparkles through, and is loosely cited: logic being the determinant in physical reality with respect to navigating the arbitrary nature of art’s signs.<sup>26</sup> Hence, Swearer offers yet another example of the ghostly presence Peirce (and by extension Buchler’s early philosophical work) has had on art investigations, being arguably significant but remaining indirect and background.

It is important to mention that in the aftermath of Peirce, *semiotics* has itself had more direct influences on art and art criticism, though after acquiring a comfortable distance from Peirce both chronologically and philosophically, yet with fidelity to the basic purpose of his original sign theory. These different and ever-expanding areas of semiotics with artistic impacts include cognitive semiotics, literary semiotics, and pictorial semiotics, to name but a few.

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<sup>23</sup> R. Swearer, “The Artistic Proposal,” *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 43, no. 2 (1986): 147.

<sup>24</sup> Swearer, “The Artistic,” 147.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

Bearing in mind these Peircean influences on art and art discussion in the modern era, it is not a giant leap of the imagination to assume Buchler had also absorbed Peirce's semiotic attributes and applied them to thoughts about art. In addition, there are emerging scholars and studies that directly connect Peirce and Buchler. For example, in Armen T. Marsoobian's study of Peirce's semiotic triad, he admits openly that his analysis relies heavily on Buchler's general theory of human judgment.<sup>27</sup> Specifically, Marsoobian borrows Buchler's terms of *exhibitive* and *assertive* "interpretants" to "revise Peirce's formulation" in order to better interpret poetry and music,<sup>28</sup> and he cites Buchler's own works on the topic of poetry. On the other hand, Shapiro warns of the limitations of Peircean semiotics in connection to art and states that there is danger in appropriating his ideas for this purpose.<sup>29</sup> Yet, ironically, Shapiro too has taken a smidge from Buchler beyond Peirce, because he relates the determinacy of art signs to Buchler's *query*, a principle in his theory of human judgment.

The art-deficit in the original Peircean perspective Buchler has himself attempted to fill, with *some* direct discussion on art, and with a focus on poetry. This effort is best represented in Buchler's book, *The Main of Light*,<sup>30</sup> which is devoted entirely to the subject of a philosophical analysis of poetry. The title for this work is curious, as it is taken from Shakespeare's sonnet 60, and implies the destructive power of time, the "60" from sonnet 60 representing "our minutes," just as sonnet 12 stands for the 12 hours on a clock. The "main of light," in this context of time, could be seen as the light in its inchoate stage before it eventually wanes into "eclipse," or

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<sup>27</sup> Armen T. Marsoobian, "Saying, Singing, or Semiotics: 'Prima La Musica e Poi Le Parole' Revisited," *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism* 54, no. 3 (1996): 269.

<sup>28</sup> Marsoobian, "Saying," 269.

<sup>29</sup> Shapiro, "Intention," 34.

<sup>30</sup> Justus Buchler, *The Main of Light* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1974).

sunset. In his book, Buchler attempts a core understanding of poetry, or its “main of light,” which he immediately refers to as “an elusive domain of art.”<sup>31</sup>

While he does not claim to have revealed the “nature of poetry,” Buchler introduces his intention to better understand poetry—not only through philosophy but also, in-particular, his theory of human judgment. Moreover, Buchler states that any philosophic attempt to define poetry *must* “concern itself with the kind of human utterance that poetry is;”<sup>32</sup> *utterance* is, for Buchler, synonymous with *judgment*. It is therefore necessary for him to reconcile an “elusive” quality of language, and Buchler contends as much, writing that the task to place poetry within the framework of judgment “in turn requires that we become clear, or at least clearer, about the concept of utterance or judgment.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Buchler admits it is essential to his theory to tackle the issue of poetry and, by extension, art. He acknowledges that “poetic utterance, and artistic utterance in general,”<sup>34</sup> are thinly covered in his theory and in related schools of thought, and it is a subject which “had simply never been dealt with satisfactorily on the foundational level.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, *The Main of Light* was meant by Buchler to accompany four other books on the subject of metaphysics, natural complexes, and human judgment.<sup>36</sup>

Why Buchler focuses on poetry beyond all other forms of art is largely a fact of its obvious cognate with *utterance*; though both employ language, they are yet “wider and philosophically more basic than the concept of language.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, though poetry uses

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<sup>31</sup> Buchler, *The Main*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. This study focuses on Buchler’s seminal work, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, being that this book is both foundational and the most informative. While his other books on human judgment are eloquent (and are at times cited by me), they primarily branch into tangents well beyond Buchler’s original subject, and thus lose the focus of this study.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

language, “not all language can be poetry.”<sup>38</sup> While Buchler begins with broad and generous notions on poetry, he subsequently dives into such specialization that he ultimately evades the art question. Buchler seeks to “illuminate what it means to be an instance of poetry,”<sup>39</sup> though in action he transcribes poetry into such particular considerations (or “viable philosophic language”<sup>40</sup>) that his arguments do more to set poetry aside from art than to exemplify poetry as a *form* of art—art with such qualities that permeate all mediums. These arguments, in the vein of “metaphysics of the human process” toward “a general ontology,”<sup>41</sup> function to pigeon hole poetry as a “specific kind of human complex.”<sup>42</sup> Buchler shows us this aspect of poetry in a convincing and eloquent manner, but he “differentiates the poetic product”<sup>43</sup> all-too-well, and in effect almost isolates poetry from art.

Across the board, Buchler makes sparse mention of the word “art,” and *the Main of Light* is no exception. Where art is referenced, Buchler examines its quality and function, which he extrapolates from ideas on poetry far more than any general discussion. For instance, Buchler asserts that “when language is poetic it is exhibitivite in function,”<sup>44</sup> and he labors to refine this function in terms of human judgment. He extends this notion to art on the whole, writing that “exhibitivite judgment [is] exemplified on the methodic level by art,” and it is “the process whereby men shape natural complexes and communicate them for assimilation.”<sup>45</sup> I will revisit the concept of *assimilation* later, but suffice to say, Buchler has offered a reduction of art to a specific function, which he has found to be true of poetry. In this study, I retain this idea of art as exhibitivite judgment to a large degree, but I also challenge this as an over-simplification. Thus I

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 101.

intend to make new assumptions and to utilize concepts found elsewhere within Buchler's theory to approach art and judgment in a more wholistic manner.

To reiterate, in *The Main of Light*, Buchler applied his theory of human judgment to ideas on poetry. Though in doing this, he philosophically isolated poetry (not falsely but severely), so that it nearly became removed from a general application to art and art-making. This focus is part and parcel of the need Buchler expresses in "clarifying essential differences with the artistic mode of utterance."<sup>46</sup> The task itself reflects his address to the issue of whether or not there is a hierarchy of artistic mediums or disciplines. While Buchler entertains the notion, he pits George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Santayana against one another to illustrate how, though they overlap on the idea of poetry as being "apex" in importance among the arts, they differ fundamentally. Buchler shows us Hegel and Santayana's essential flaws in espousing a hierarchal system, though the question does spur him into a specialization of poetry over general notions on art. However, Buchler does not give up on Hegel's assertion of poetry's "universality," refining the concept to mean that "there is no specifiable content that poetry cannot deal with."<sup>47</sup> In addition, Buchler appears to preserve both Hegel and Santayana's view that "poetry is older than artistic prose."<sup>48</sup> In other words, while perhaps not superior to other art forms (as Buchler does not accept a hierarchal scheme), poetry nevertheless has an almost boundless scope that can elude prose or tangible artistic medium. This may account for Buchler's focus on poetry, since it can thus be seen as presupposing of all other art, and that he is compelled to effectually set poetry apart. However, such a motivation could certainly be described as a betrayal to ontological parity.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 14.

Though not nearly as oft-cited as his associations with Peirce, Santayana's work also was impactful to Buchler's philosophic career and outlook, particularly in Buchler's attraction to poetry. And it is no surprise that art holds such great potential within Buchler's theory, as Santayana provided several opportunities for art-discussion. Santayana, like Buchler, saw potential in art to reveal reason, claiming that "of all reason's embodiments, art is... the most splendid and complete."<sup>49</sup> This is made so, Santayana argued, by the imagination. However, Santayana also considered religion to be within the realm of the imagination, and though he did not believe in the existence of God, he placed religion in this context above art and, even, philosophy. He stated that religion was "the head and front of everything."<sup>50</sup> Buchler takes issue Santayana's use of the word "imagination" and attempts to refine the concept philosophically. Nevertheless, Buchler arguably addresses the problem from a subjective standpoint, as the subjective process in human judgment is crucial, which mirrors Santayana's consideration of the "real world," in comparison with imagination, as "ashes in its mouth."<sup>51</sup>

In addition, Buchler may have been influenced by Santayana's idea on art's function. Critic Willard E. Arnett summarizes clearly the many distinctions within art that Santayana makes; which, as aforementioned, Buchler has both criticized and, to a certain degree, adopted. Arnett seems to divide Santayana's review of the arts into two groupings, one as aestheticism, which concerns itself with beauty, and all other forms of art that are spiritual or rational. Santayana saw the fine arts as both "a value of the imagination" and (contrary to criticisms that Santayana demeaned the fine arts) that it was possible for the fine arts to be products of spirit and

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<sup>49</sup> Willard E. Arnett, "Santayana and the Fine Arts," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 16, no. 1 (September 1957): 87.

<sup>50</sup> George Santayana, "A General Confession," in *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, ed. Paul Arthur Schipp (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1951 [1940]), 7.

<sup>51</sup> Arnett, "Santayana," 87.



reason, if they are not restricted by purely aesthetic goals.<sup>52</sup> In other words, “the creation of beauty is not the *only* function of the fine artist.”<sup>53</sup> For Santayana, the function of art was “to interpret and transmute all vital aspects of life, and not simply to increase and intensify the sensuous joys.”<sup>54</sup> Granted, Buchler does not concern himself much with the form art takes (outside of poetry), nor does he accept that some artforms or artistic endeavors have more philosophic integrity than others. However, Buchler does also, with his tunnel vision for poetry, evade philosophic investigations into the fine arts and working artists (beyond scattered mention and broad allusions). Similarly, Buchler reflects Santayana’s attitude that, though perhaps not disapproving of the fine arts, disregards a singular focus on their aesthetic values and function. For Buchler, proception and judgment are by nature processes that “interpret and transmute,” which closely mirrors Santayana’s ideas about the function of art.

Santayana and Buchler part ways more obviously when it comes to views on nature. For Buchler, nature is composed of natural complexes, and the ordinal process does not ultimately differentiate from nature, spirit, animal, and human. Conversely, Santayana distinguished between natural and spiritual morality, and for Santayana, it is spiritual life that propels the arts and philosophy, as well as religion, and even science, to develop and express “positive values of human existence.”<sup>55</sup> However, as Arnett points out, “spiritual” for Santayana does not mean superior to nature, though rather the “completion” of it.<sup>56</sup> It seems likely that Buchler adopted this template from Santayana, that Buchler then utilized to iron out metaphysics into a more even playing ground (that is, the “natural complex”) being that Santayana, despite his hierarchal scheme, is also inclusive of lower functions as necessary and part of the same system. In this

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

way, the two philosophers differ in degree rather than in kind. Furthermore, Santayana, though accused by Arnett as sloppily blurring lines between poet and philosopher (e.g., *Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe*),<sup>57</sup> is defended still by Frederick W. Conner and Richard Rorty alike, who assert that Santayana accomplishes the view that “poetry and philosophy have nothing in common.”<sup>58</sup> Although Buchler works toward query in poetry, among other overlaps, he nevertheless holds onto a similar distinction that has likely stemmed from Santayana.

The concept of creativity as inherent to nature, whether completed by spirit as Santayana suggests or shaped and communicated for assimilation as part of the proceptive process as Buchler posits, has likely informed the basis to an interesting notion in philosophy known as “transcendental creativity.” The idea, proposed by Leon Niemoczynski in 2013, is a strong reaction to “ecstatic naturalism” formulated by Corrington (a student of Buchler’s), and appears to borrow from Buchler’s *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*. In brief, Niemoczynski rejects Corrington’s psychoanalytic-semiotic method that attempts to address “Peirce’s insufficiencies”<sup>59</sup> when it comes to an ontology of signs in naturalism, but in essence anthropomorphizes natural phenomena. However, Niemoczynski does share Corrington’s allegiance to Buchler’s notion of “nature naturing” that creates “itself out of itself alone,”<sup>60</sup> writing that “nature naturing retains a significant (and hence “divine”) ontological integrity because, as a source of all creation, all of creation ultimately depends on it.”<sup>61</sup> In addition, Niemoczynski accepts Corrington’s denial of a classical theist’s deity, and that nature is

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<sup>57</sup> George Santayana, *Three Poets: Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1910).

<sup>58</sup> Frederick W. Conner, “‘To Dream With One Eye Open’: The Wit, Wisdom, and Present Standing of George Santayana,” *Soundings: And Interdisciplinary Journal* 74, no. 1 (1991): 171.

<sup>59</sup> Leon Niemoczynski, “Nature’s Transcendental Creativity: Deleuze, Corrington, and an Aesthetic Phenomenology,” *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 34, no. 1 (January 2013): 22.

<sup>60</sup> Niemoczynski, “Nature’s,” 18.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

impersonal to human experience. This view is shared by Ryder (once a student of Buchler's), who suggests that the disregard of a dogmatic interpretation of "nature" allows us to consider the arts as "cognitively significant activities."<sup>62</sup>

But what Niemoczynski truly contributes is his to investigate what he calls "speculative naturalism" as a "phenomenological aesthetic" of nature naturing.<sup>63</sup> This looks specifically at nature as creation, and as divine, though beyond human psychoanalytic understanding. Yet, nature cannot ever exist outside of what we know to be evolution—nature is never a finished product.<sup>64</sup> The psychoanalyst is in the same danger as the classical theist of assigning human attributes to nature or divine creation. The philosopher-artist, in this vein, treads a fine line between "experimentation," or the investigation that is "co-becoming... of qualitative feeling within an aesthetic,"<sup>65</sup> and "mere personal expression" that may "distort the nature of what is created."<sup>66</sup> Niemoczynski asserts that, through aesthetic phenomenology, we may uncover the transcendent that allows "the nonhuman to shine through what is nonhuman,"<sup>67</sup> and thus curtailing the anthropomorphizing of nature's creativity. As will become more evident in this study, Niemoczynski in his assertions obviously reflects Buchler's own attitude toward nature, and shows us how this basis of perspective is conducive to creativity.

The above summary of viewpoints clearly illustrates how far reaching and tangential the dots to connect Buchler and art presently are in the literature. Eloquent though he is, even Buchler strays into the weeds of poetry rather than directly and adequately apply his theory of human judgment to art and art-making, which I consider a missed opportunity. Moreover, while

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<sup>62</sup> Ryder, *Heaven and Earth*, 50.

<sup>63</sup> Niemoczynski, "Nature's," 19.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

Peircean influences on art are more plentiful (particularly if extended to the greater field of semiotics), Buchler is a different philosopher and direct applications of his works to art investigations remain slim, at best. Hence, the focus for this study concerns Buchler's contribution to ideas on human judgment, which in turn offers the most concrete philosophical framework for exploring an application of Buchler's thought to art and art-making (and yet, in this regard, it is vastly underrepresented). Therefore, the main purpose of my exploration is to apply Buchler's theory of human judgment to discussions on art and art-making, as well as to utilize these concepts in review of choreographic method (which I describe by means of LMA). This approach I call "proceptivism," which references Buchler's central and guiding notion of proception in human judgment. In addition, according to my recent survey, Buchler's theory could unfortunately be described as generally sluggish in the current literature. As such, it is my hope that the application of art (i.e., proceptivism) will thereby reinvigorate Buchler's philosophy among contemporary discussion.

As mentioned in chapter 1, Buchler defines proception as the process by which an individual's "whole self is represented." While this statement sounds grand, Buchler did not necessarily intend it to be so. Buchler introduces the concept in such a way because his theory of human judgment, to which proception is crucial, serves as a philosophical substitute to earlier ideas on human experience. That is, Buchler attempts not only to review what we mean when we say "experience" but to replace the word entirely with "proception"—what he considers to be more semantically fulfilled. This more developed approach to experience (i.e., proception) I utilize in this study to formulate ideas on art and art-making, and to apply directly to a review of choreographic method. Crucial to these efforts also is the argument that proception is itself an act of adaption and modification by the individual, and ordered by the individual (though

inseparable from community). That is to say, proception is a process that is by nature creative—hence proception *is*, fundamentally, a creative process. To proceive (or, if you like, “experience”) is to create, on at least a basal metaphysical level. As I will show, my argument and thesis contributes a new lens to Buchler’s theory. Moreover, this argument adds a new perspective from which we may coherently analyze art and the creative process in general. This approach is what I call “proceptivism,” which essentially functions as an investigation into creative process that thereby can inform art-making.

However, for the remainder of this chapter, I will first outline the basic principles to Buchler’s theory that are most pertinent to this exploration into proceptivism. The following layout is intended to help explain core concepts for the purpose of making this study more coherent, especially considering the recent decline in the usage of these philosophic terms.

### **Proception**

The idea that must first be addressed is, of course, proception—it is the most fundamental concept to the theory of human judgment (likewise to proceptivism), yet it can easily elude understanding and appear mysterious. So far, I have only alluded to Buchler’s concept of proception in its grandest form (e.g., “the process in which [an individual’s] whole self is summed up or represented”).<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately, Buchler himself does not directly define proception to any great extent in his writings. Rather, much of what we know about this concept in philosophy is indirectly inferred from the context of his discussions. Nonetheless, I will breakdown down the general components of this otherwise broad configuring of proception and thereby formulate a more precise operational definition to serve this study.

Although straightforward descriptions remain scant, Buchler immediately introduces “proception” as a semantic substitute for the more loose and colloquial term of “human

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<sup>68</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 5.

experience.”<sup>69</sup> However, that is not to say that proception *is* experience. Buchler does not bother to redefine the word “experience,” which may lead to confusion, but specifies “proception” as a type of *process* (an “interplay” between an individual’s “activities and dimensions”).<sup>70</sup>

Therefore, proception replaces experience on a semantic level, but does not do so philosophically. Instead, proception offers philosophy new language through which to evaluate “experience” as a metaphysical process of individuation. In addition, Buchler stresses that proception is a *natural* process among an untold number of other natural processes (i.e., proception is as much a part of the natural world as any ecological function).<sup>71</sup> This is because, though the world exists objectively, the individual’s interface with the world is a lens of proception, and to proceive is the individual’s “basic relationship” to an otherwise objective reality, conscious or unconscious.<sup>72</sup> Buchler writes, “For no one is there a world other than the world he proceives.”<sup>73</sup> At this point of contact, there is the cumulative and continual process that constitutes the individual.

But there is another essential element to proception: movement. Buchler asserts that proception is a “process of individuated *movement*.”<sup>74</sup> Buchler further explains proception as the “natural historicity” of the individual, and so any directed movement, or “propulsion,” is necessarily cumulative.<sup>75</sup> Proception is thus the cumulative *action* of the individual, who *moves* through specific parameters Buchler calls “dimensions.”<sup>76</sup> It follows, then, that the individual is thereby *always* in motion, and to cease to move is to cease to proceive. Moreover, proception is the movement or *process in motion* representative of the individual’s whole “experience” (both

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>74</sup> Buchler, *Nature*, 31. Emphasis my own.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>76</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 4.

conscious and unconscious), referred to as the *unitary direction*, or “the composite, *directed* activity of the individual.”<sup>77</sup> [With all of this mind, it is no wonder Buchler did not consider “experience” to be a philosophically appropriate word!]

### **Procept and Proceptive Domain**

Being that proception is a process, it is important to ask what “substantive elements” occur therein?—and to first tackle this issue, Buchler has offered the elements of *procept* and *proceptive domain*.<sup>78</sup> Most simply put, a procept is a unit of proception, proceptive domain refers to the territory of individuated movement, and this motion that occurs requires *proceptive direction*, along the aforementioned *dimensions*. More specifically, “a procept is anything that is a property *of* the individual, that happens *to* him, that affects or characterizes him in any way at all, so long as it relates to him *as a proceiver* (as an identifiable and cumulative individual) and not as a mere entity in the cosmic maelstrom.”<sup>79</sup> A procept is a unit that is part of an individual’s proceptive domain, so long as it truly modifies and reinforces the individual’s proceptive direction.<sup>80</sup> Something might relate to the individual ontologically, but it may not modify or reinforce their proceptive direction.<sup>81</sup> For example, though some political decision in Scotland might stand in relation to a Burmese national on the grounds of being human, or that it simply exists, something so detached from the person in Burma cannot be said to be an actual procept for that individual, lest it be *observed*.<sup>82</sup>

It is important to note that proception and individuation are not the same thing. Buchler uses “individuation” more as a descriptor, since the proceiver “relates continuously and uniquely

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 4. Emphasis my own.

<sup>78</sup> Buchler, *Nature*, 118.

<sup>79</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 8.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

to a world,”<sup>83</sup> and thus to perceive is also to be an individual. A procept is object or neutral until it is “relevant to the individual as individual.”<sup>84</sup> Proceptive domain, on the other hand, is a structured amalgam of procepts—it is the process of proception that facilitates the order found in a proceptive domain, whereas the proceptive direction is “the character of the potentialities in proception.”<sup>85</sup> Buchler explains:

“The concepts of proceptive domain and proceptive direction make it possible to express the unity of the individual by emphasizing his continuity with himself, and the fluidity of the individual by emphasizing his continuity with the world.”<sup>86</sup>

Categorized based on “perspectival distinctions,” Buchler divides the proceptive domain into three general parts: *imminent*, *floating*, and *gross*. [Yes, a poor choice of words]. In the chapters that follow, I will address these different domain types while applying Buchler’s theory to explore ideas on art, what I call “proceptivism.” But in brief: the *imminent* domain concerns abstractions of self out of time, as well as an understanding of the minimum context of a situation of the individual; the *floating* domain comprehends the situation of the individual, and the *gross* domain is the order that causes the situation to be discernable.<sup>87</sup> In general, the proceptive domain is a “subaggregate of the aggregate that constitutes [the individual’s] world,”<sup>88</sup> and the parts to domain are likewise interrelated.

The proceptive direction is composed of two correlative dimensions: *manipulation* and *assimilation*, which Buchler considers core features of proception.<sup>89</sup> Manipulation is essentially an *acting* dimension, whereas assimilation has a *spectatorial* quality. Of course, Buchler points

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<sup>83</sup> Buchler, *Nature*, 122.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>86</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 8.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>88</sup> Buchler, *Nature*, 119.

<sup>89</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 18.



out that these attributes of proception happen in partnership, and are in fact two sides of the same coin, two aspects of the same process. But we distinguish manipulation as the product of an agent—the actions are deliberate, yet may or may not be adjustive (though often are).

Assimilation accepts and is not even necessarily aware,<sup>90</sup> and depends on prior or current manipulation.<sup>91</sup> Together, the interplay of manipulation and assimilation form a fundamental interpretation of proception (i.e., “experience”).<sup>92</sup>

### **Communication**

Buchler sees communication as a “circular process,” because it “feeds” on procepts and then “breeds” *products* which then provide potentialities for future procepts.<sup>93</sup> Though proception is distinct from communication, communication is paramount to proception in order to operate. According to Buchler, if we were to remove communication from the equation completely, proception would only exist in its most base and inchoate stage; it “would be little more than protoplasmic endurance.”<sup>94</sup> Communication is the “guiding mechanism” of proception.<sup>95</sup> Communication, in turn, depends on individual direction, and the transmission of symbols for proceptive assimilation.<sup>96</sup>

There are three general types of communication: *reflexive*, *symmetrical*, and *asymmetrical*. In all instances, the question of community is of importance. Reflexive communication does not directly engage with community, but does so reflexively, or with the community that permeates the individual. Symmetrical (also referred to as *social*) communication “presupposes not only community but... joint manipulation and assimilation of

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 29.

signs correlated with the dominant procept.”<sup>97</sup> Whereas asymmetrical communication offers “new elements” for proceptive assimilation and manipulation indirectly by others, and tends more toward ambiguity. For example, an officer who directs traffic communicates symmetrically, but an orange cone placed in the middle of the road communicates asymmetrically, and the lone driver who soliloquizes in response to the cone communicates reflexively.

### **Perspective**

The theory of human judgment makes special effort to distinguish a judgment from a perspective, though the two are nevertheless interrelated, interconnected. According to Buchler, a perspective is the “essence of a judgment, the condition and the potentiality of its completion.”<sup>98</sup> In other words, aspects associated with a judgment, such as “meaning, truth, moral value, or social influence,” are come by some perspective.<sup>99</sup> In addition, a judgment may be connected to multiple perspectives, though not every property of the judgment may be related to each perspective. That is to say, some properties of a judgment can be by virtue of one perspective, and other properties by another perspective; varying moral standards, for example, may emanate from a judgment but they do not each share the same properties. By this logic, a judgment can express one or more perspectives, and within a perspective there is judgment.<sup>100</sup>

One apparent issue that the complex relationship of judgment and perspective leads to is that of identifying a perspective, and to discern a judgment as related to one perspective versus another. When aiming at a definition for *perspective*, Buchler describes a perspective as a sort of “order in which a given set of natural complexes function as procepts for a given proceiver or...

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 129.

for a community of perceivers.”<sup>101</sup> In this way, Buchler argues, a perspective is an aspect of a natural process, and thereby belonging to proception.<sup>102</sup> Yet, Buchler warns, it is erroneous to identify perspectives by exact borders, with the exception only of “artificial” perspectives, such as “formal calculus.”<sup>103</sup> Though a perspective may be exclusionary, it nevertheless retains an inexact nature (Buchler uses the example of Religious perspectives, which are often both narrow and vague simultaneously.<sup>104</sup>) However, Buchler does offer that a perspective is a general order that may highlight a “given situation,” which is itself “determinable in the last analysis by convention.”<sup>105</sup>

### **Convention**

In a later segment on *compulsion*, I will address *convention* as a term from Buchler’s theory, which is indeed a core concept but not one I consider as necessary to introduce out of context. Succinctly put, “convention” can be either a social or proceptive process that concerns products (e.g., “situations”), and configures products into a specific coherency by distinguishing what is relevant from what is irrelevant. Convention *does not* necessarily imply a cultural obligation.<sup>106</sup> How we understand a “situation” might be, at its heart, an abstract character resulting from *compulsion* (a concept I introduce in this chapter’s final segment), though we detect its fuzzy limits via *convention*.<sup>107</sup> These boundaries are further blurred by the entanglement most situations have with other situations, and thereby intertwined perspectives.<sup>108</sup> Yet beyond convention, the most general order that provides coherency is the *proceptive domain*, which can be considered the perspective of “greatest comprehensiveness for the individual,” that

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 90-91.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

directs the discernment of all perspectives for the individual.<sup>109</sup> That is to say, the proceptive domain is the individual's "widest perspective."<sup>110</sup> Perspective is therefore neither synonymous with judgment nor proception, it is a factor of the two.

## Community

At its most simple, a community consists of at least two perceivers.<sup>111</sup> However, the individual also constitutes a community within, which Buchler declares as *reflexive* or *proceptive community*, and it is through reflexive communication that reflexive community is actualized.<sup>112</sup> But beyond what is reflexive, community is thought of by Buchler as two or more perceivers for whom a certain natural complex functions as a dominant procept.<sup>113</sup> This type of community Buchler discerns as a *social community*; just as reflexive communication actualizes reflexive community, the "character of proception" is either partly or completely influenced by a social community.<sup>114</sup>

Another type of community recognized by Buchler is the *invisible community*, or communities that exist in a scope beyond our immediate awareness, in objectivity. They are determined by a proceptive direction. However, the invisible community is *invisible* not purely as a result of a lack of awareness, but because of the "crude natural edges of individuality and the stubborn pervasiveness of nature."<sup>115</sup> In other words, community is invisible because of the fuzzy metaphysical quality of the "self" in the universe, and there are multiple invisible communities. They can be the subconscious, subcultural product of oppressive erasure or silence,

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 43.

they can be “communities of memory,” and so on. Yet in all cases, what makes an invisible community a *community* at all is the potential for “unanimous action or feeling.”<sup>116</sup>

### **Projects and Products**

A procept may be represented as elements of sign-complexes, which Buchler calls a “project.” Also, being sourced in reflexive communication, distinguishes a project as an “instance” of query.<sup>117</sup> However, this does not mean that every *product* is a project. While all products are in some way an outcome of the proceptive direction, not all are the result of reflexive communication. Therefore, it is important to Buchler to clearly define a project, in-particular, as a product of reflexive communication, which allows a project to retain the moniker *product* as a general term, but not specifically. Splitting hairs, a project differs from a general product in that it emerges reflexively and thereby has not yet realized its communicative potential. Query transforms project into product (that is, a *product of query*) by fulfilling what is available to communication. Moreover, projects beget their own products; and in actuality, these sorts of products (also considered products of query) are most likely the outcome of multiple projects.<sup>118</sup>

A project that becomes a product of query is composed of the sort of judgment that comes from the arts and sciences, or judgments of “deliberative invention.”<sup>119</sup> However, as is often the case with art and science, not all projects coalesce into a socially available product. In this way, the project is not necessarily dependent on social communication while operating reflexively. In addition, projects (and even products in general) are considered “procept-

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

transformations” that alter the proceiver’s relation to an object.<sup>120</sup> In this study, the context in which the word “product” is used should tell what type of product is being discussed.

### **Compulsion**

The proceiver judges the world and the products of communication in two “modes”: *compulsion* and *convention*.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, each judgment is an expression of either compulsion or convention, which Buchler explains further as a “terminus of the proceptive direction, or... of the train of communication.”<sup>122</sup> As mentioned, convention deals directly with the order of products, from which the individual makes sense of these products via the weighing of options. But through *compulsion*, the proceiver responds to a situation that is outside their grasp of control. Perhaps counterintuitively, “convention” actually offers a freedom of choice, while “compulsion” imposes conformity. This means that “a conventional judgment is the relatively indifferent product among a possible group of alternatives,”<sup>123</sup> whereas compulsion has no alternative, nor are alternatives within the purview of the proceiver in that given situation.

Though I provide greater detail on compulsion in the coming chapters, at its crux, Buchler recognizes a root form of compulsion, or what underlies all types of compulsion that affect the individual, which he calls *gross compulsion*. This underlying condition speaks directly to the limitations of proception, or the “finitude”<sup>124</sup> and “essential fixity of the self.”<sup>125</sup> But more than that, Buchler describes gross compulsion as *acceptive* or *assimilative*, meaning that even in our manipulation of products, we may only manipulate the properties that we have prior accepted.<sup>126</sup> Therefore, the judgment becomes the “sole product possible.”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 62.

## Judgment

Judgement is a concept in Buchler's theory that is delivered somewhat by osmosis. In his seminal work, *Toward a Theory of Human Judgment*, he does not even include a chapter named "Judgment," but does include chapters named for all other foundational terms. Rather, like proception to a degree (and they are interrelated), much of judgment is understood through what we infer from lengthy discussion. Nevertheless, the concept of judgment is a paramount topic to introduce. It is as central a notion to Buchler's theory as proception.

Judgments are considered by Buchler as "crystallized manipulations" that serve to "render nature assimilable."<sup>128</sup> The domain of judgments is thus composed of "nature in process of self-illumination."<sup>129</sup> In the coming chapters I elucidate on this esoteric understanding of judgment to shed light on the importance of the artist as self (or individual proceiver), and the illuminating creative process. But more succinctly, judgments can be thought of as *products* (or "ramified relationships") formed out of a system of appraisal and pronouncement from the individual.<sup>130</sup> However, to also make product *distinct* from judgment, a product is a unit of any *thing* which can be source to human "concretizations," while judgment is product in its "ultimate function, status, or direction."<sup>131</sup> A product alone is either crude material or a byproduct of metaphysical or actual industry, whereas judgment is more like a finished product. Also, a judgment stands out of time, in that the "circumstance of its origin do not comprehend its entire being."<sup>132</sup> Or in other words, "the product is an event in time; the judgment is eternal... it always represents in its utterance more than it reflects in its occurrence."<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Buchler, *Nature*, 7-14.

<sup>131</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 48.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

Buchler subdivides judgment into three categories: *active*, *assertive*, and *exhibitive judgment*. Active judgments involve some kind of action that is metaphysical, though sometimes this action is also literally in physical motion. Assertive judgment are products that result from true/false decisions. Exhibitive judgments are potentially the most dynamic, and are the products of shaping, arranging, or manipulating material or signs. Moreover, a single product may possess qualities that characterize some or all of the types of judgment, and to varying extents.

In the chapters that follow, I will both reference and expound on what I have outlined above. However, this summary of terms particular to the theory of human judgment should serve as a point of reference for the reader, to provide overall clarity. With this basic understanding, we have already begun to unravel the yarn of proception; it is now time for us to follow this thread deeper into new territory for the theory of human judgment: a direct application to art discussion.



### CHAPTER 3

#### TOWARD A GENERAL DISCUSSION ON ART AND ART-MAKING

Discussions on the process of proception and human judgment in art and art-making, an application I am calling proceptivism, are underdeveloped in the current literature, as illustrated in the previous chapters. However, this does not mean that Buchler's theory of human judgment cannot provide ample opportunity to expand the concept of proception in terms of the creative process. After all, proception is not synonymous with perception, which is limited to the sensory scope of the individual and what sense can be made of it, be it by conscious, subconscious, or impulsive design. By contrast, the individual, according to Buchler, "proceives nothing less than [the] world, and nothing in particular. He functions in a universally available world individually appropriated."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, proception is the means by which the individual lays claim to the objective world, a process of appropriation that, I argue, *necessitates* creativity, even if it is reflexive, and overall mirrors artistic endeavor. Proceptive appropriation and the creative process can even be shown, in many cases, to be one and the same (or, at least, the two actions are at times so tightly woven they are philosophically indeterminate as separate units).

Buchler stresses that there is a distinction "between the objective relation which issues in inarticulate feeling and the objective relation which issues in judgment."<sup>2</sup> This means that, at its most basic level, judgment makes it possible for the world to either be proceived or remain unproceived, and is thus distinguished from perception in that judgment fundamentally requires more than simple awareness—it demands a modifying action from the proceiver. But how, exactly, we make this distinction in art-making is of special interest to what I call proceptivism.

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<sup>1</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

If we are to consider proception as a necessity of the creative process, along with proception as part and parcel of human judgment, then so too is the creative process crucial to judgment. In other words, proception, judgment, and creativity are all interdependent with one another. Hence, it is vital to the task of proceptivism to not only illuminate the junction that connects proception to creativity, but also with art and judgment. In this chapter, I first approach this endeavor by delving into review on the core philosophical components that Buchler uses to investigate this particular interplay, and discuss their relation to art-making. These components include: *query*, *validation*, and *communication*.

### **Query**

A project is a procept that is represented as an “element” in a “sign-complex,” yet it is the result of reflexive communication, that presupposes social communication which it “imports” into individual process.<sup>3</sup> A product of query, however, is what emerges from an application of query to project. The project’s outcome as a “product of query” refers to its social or communicative availability, hence the product of a work of art, such as a finished painting. Buchler writes that the products of query “comprise the judgments of the arts and of the sciences, and in general all judgments that emanate from deliberative invention.”<sup>4</sup> The products of query, therefore, must be communicable, even though they stem from reflexive efforts. Or simply put, the products of query are expressive and inventive.

To clarify, the theory of human judgment offers the term *query* to refer to the transition of project into product, from what is potentially communicative to being communicative. Query is an “evolution”<sup>5</sup> that is defined by Buchler as a “process of planning”<sup>6</sup> which drives human

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<sup>3</sup> Buchler, *Nature*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 54.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

invention. The compulsion of query is thus distinctive in the sense that human invention is propelled via a creator who is also a planner, and that “planless creation is purposeless creation.”<sup>7</sup> Of course, it is not difficult to hear an artist object to this notion, particularly those who engage in automatism, stream-of-consciousness, or any form of improvisation. To be fair, such impulses in art are indeed not without purpose. However, in keeping with Buchler’s theory, neither are these impulses planless. Buchler emphasizes that artistic query, in particular, “takes the forms of both overt and reflexive experimentation.”<sup>8</sup> Plans, therefore, can operate reflexively, perhaps even without the direct awareness of the artist (just as a procept does not require direct awareness of the proceiver), only that it modifies the proceptive direction (yet can be made apparent through the process of artistic invention). Moreover, whether overt or reflexive, artistic query functionally remains as the “deliberative manipulation”<sup>9</sup> of artistic events by an *active* artistic agent.<sup>10</sup> The notes played during musical improvisation, for example, likely follow specific parameters of explorations that dictate a vein of imagination. In contrast, without structure, the music crumbles into noise or discordance. The reflexive output hence demands the ordered craft of the artist. Thus, what appears as impulse is nevertheless the product of direct manipulation and planful experimentation.

The compulsion of query is likely distinct. However, Buchler does not directly provide a label to his meager descriptions of compulsion in query. Yet, I argue, as is the case (at least) with art, the compulsion of query is what Buchler offers elsewhere as *logical compulsion*, or “the compulsion imposed by the laws of logic.”<sup>11</sup> Buchler explains that logical compulsion is “the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 69.

elemental framework within which proception and communication occur.”<sup>12</sup> Though Buchler stresses that *commitment* is essential to logical compulsion; for the proceiver to be “committed to a course of reasoning.”<sup>13</sup> Because reasoning is crucial to a “process of planning,” we may then assume that commitment is likewise paramount to following an artistic framework. In other words, the “process of planning” in art occurs within a framework that by nature demands commitment. Whether the artistic effort is overt or reflexive, without planning there is neither structure nor true commitment. Buchler has thus, in effect, drawn a bold line that connects artistic commitment and artistic structure. In addition, Buchler states that “the laws of logic exercise the most basic compulsion” and are themselves the necessary “conditions of conceivability.”<sup>14</sup> In this way, Buchler has also offered (albeit indirectly) that, by means of logical compulsion, a project evolves into product via the individual’s conceptual action, which is again evidential of commitment and planning. The artist cannot produce, be it overtly or reflexively, without conceiving, which is itself a process logically compelled. An artistic product, therefore, must be conceivable even if, as procept, it does not inherently require the direct awareness of the artist. The procept is rather *expressed* as artistic product and is thereby conceivable within the artist’s proceptive direction.

If we are to further apply logical compulsion to the action of transforming project into product (i.e., query), we must then consider the philosophical significance of what an artistic product is. Later in this chapter, I describe artistic products (along with other products of proception) as issuing from human judgment, but emerging more specifically from what Buchler often refers to as “utterance.” For the time being, however, it is important to highlight a connection between product and meaning. An artistic product, having transformed from project

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 70.

and thereby following an artistic framework (or a “process of planning” driven by logical compulsion), like any product of proception, is also an utterance, and thus has meaning. Yet, again, according to Buchler, query in art is dependent on commitment; therefore, by the same token, artistic meaning must also be contingent on the commitment of the artist. Buchler writes that “when we ‘mean’ we express and reflect a commitment... which a product mirrors.”<sup>15</sup> By this logic, then, art without commitment has no meaning.

### **Validation in art**

While commitment in art is certainly crucial to meaningful expression, still to be determined is whether or not this expression is *valid*. As discussed prior, artistic invention occurs within the proceptive domain. However, art’s production requires validation by some form of *completion*, because the products of art are born of human judgment. According to Buchler’s theory of human judgment, it’s possible that “for *any* judgment *some* validating perspective can be determined or defined.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, we assert a judgment as valid when we recognize that it is final, in a relative sense, and that it no longer requires manipulation.<sup>17</sup> But this relative finality does not deny art-making as a creative *process*, or that the vast majority of art’s effort takes place outside of what is exhibited as a *final product*. Rather, I would like to emphasize the use of the word “relative.” When a product has “relative finality”<sup>18</sup> that does not mean it is the same as a static, unmalleable object. Instead, such a product is only final *relative* to a greater complex. Buchler writes:

“Artistic practice validates its exhibitiv judgments by determining and redetermining their order in more complex products... This conception embraces collaborative as well

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

as strictly ‘individual’ invention. What is important is the uniqueness of exhibitivite query and the exhibitivite perspective.”<sup>19</sup>

The value Buchler attaches to “uniqueness” in this statement stems from the view that product is distinguishable from the maelstrom of process—query that is necessarily exhibitivite if its products are to be validated. Furthermore, what is “unique” is not able to be copied, or at least not finally or absolutely. This is particularly true for art-making:

“For the artist the perspective that generates a particular judgment is an induplicable order... A work of art, then, may be said most properly to be validated by its creator (or creators) in the process of its creation and enunciation. This process of (exhibitivite) validation occurs in the kind of perspective that is assimilable but not duplicable.”<sup>20</sup>

Buchler has thus posited that validation in art is ultimately free of fixity. While validation in art is distinguishable and unique, he asserts that it is also assimilable and absorbable. In addition, Buchler shows that validation in art may emerge from the creative process (so long as it is an exhibitivite query) but is simultaneously not isolated, or ultimately separate from the creative process.

Buchler also points out that “artistic invention is, at the very least, a temporal process;”<sup>21</sup> though it is not bound to a specific limit of time. By this vein, validation may be either enduring or ephemeral (a momentary articulation in process, or an ingredient of “liveness” in process) and so is entirely flexible. If we put this in terms of proceptivism, artistic *product* and artistic *process* are by no means mutually exclusive and in fact appear to not only coexist but function as symbiotic and simultaneous aspects of creation. In addition, art-making as a process within the proceptive domain depends, holistically, on the validation of its products, for these are

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 148.

themselves a complex. Buchler expresses that the proceptive domain is in many ways a complex of “obligations to validate.”<sup>22</sup> What Buchler is suggesting here is that to validate is even itself born out of process. Transcribed to art-making, we can therefore begin to understand validation as an integral part of the creative process.

Let’s return for a moment to the idea of completion. I have discussed how, according to Buchler’s theory of human judgment, completion is a judgment that is valid, and likewise a valid judgment is one that is complete. They are two sides of the same coin. Completion is also that which no longer demands manipulation, nor is it duplicable (i.e., it is unique). Moreover, the finality of completion is only relative to a greater complex, whereby it is integral to an exhibitiv process. In light of proceptivism, art-making can thus also be seen as a process of validation, whose products possess relative finality in that they are distinguishable from the creative process. Yet artistic products also offer a somewhat novel exploration into validation that may further build on Buchler’s postulations. That is, a look at the exhibitiv function of artistic products with regard to validation raises the question of whether or not the individual artist can validate a product as final—succinctly put, the answer appears to be both *yes* and *no*, concurrently.

As we’ve already established, judgments are shown or exhibited before they are compelled toward validation and completion. Hence, artistic “obligations to validate” must be the products of a creative process that are then revealed within an exhibitiv space. Therefore, to ask if a sole artist can validate a product on their own, we need to first consider whether an exhibitiv space can be exclusive to the individual. In other words, is it possible for a product of art to be singularly exhibitiv to its art-maker? However, judgments or products are not *automatically* valid or final; they require the review of a proceiver, and, according to Buchler, there are certain conditions that make the product eligible for review. (Let me stress that these

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 147.

conditions are not what constitutes completion or validity but are what makes a product reviewable for the proceiver in order to determine or deny completion/validity). Specifically, products must be “understandable vehicles by which attention is focused and query simplified.”<sup>23</sup> A product must be coherent, noticeable, and present its most basic query (i.e., the process of a product’s “evolution from project”<sup>24</sup>). Thus our question is yet again transformed: we must ask if these conditions are reviewable by the artist alone. Certainly, Buchler contends that a *community* of perceivers (which is composed of at least two perceivers) is able to review a product, as well further determine validity.<sup>25</sup> But if the artist is solitary with their efforts toward validation, it then follows that the most basic requirement for the individual would be, at least initially, to recognize these conditions.

Clearly, it is no leap of the imagination to suggest that the individual artist is fully capable of finding their own product *coherent*. Moreover, perceiving the *simple query* of a product would then be predicated on an intimate knowledge of the creative process behind the product, which the artist would no doubt possess. However, whether the artist *notices* the product is not so clear. The products of art issue from the artist’s reflexive community, so if there is no community present, then products could remain obscured by the ambiguity of process. Hence, there can be no vacuum that keeps the artist wholly separate, and likewise no artist works alone.

Despite the logic of this argument, I find that it actually does more to support the opposite view. If the artist is operating always in a reflexive community then it follows that the artist is reflexive *of* community, and thus can offer the same attentions. Buchler’s statement that “each successive enterprise of articulation critically aroused by a work of art is a step in its

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 39.



validation,”<sup>26</sup> must function also for the individual. Essentially, the artist is capable of being their own critic. Buchler continues: “the validity of a work of art lies in the extent to which it modifies human query,” but this is “not to be confused with ‘social approval.’”<sup>27</sup> That is to say, validation in art is not inherently the same as an attempt to propitiate an audience but rather to stimulate query, which I argue may function on an individual level.

Buchler provides some wiggle room here; wherein the ability to gauge the products of art (or even an entire “work of art”) in terms of influence on further query (a continuance of process) is potentially also in the hands of the singular artist, since the artist does not require outward societal acceptance. However, Buchler does not omit society with his statement; he simply disregards “social approval.” As such, Buchler is still implying community involvement, so how then can the individual artist operate as self-validator? As mentioned earlier, community may consist of two or more perceivers but it can also be reflexive, and this aspect can function on the individual level. That is to say, the reflexive community is more than just represented by the individual, the reflexive community can actually operate *within* the individual. Although, this does not mean that the artist modifies in total isolation, for we have established that there exists no vacuum; the individual is so inextricably tangled with community that, even at its most distant point, it remains reflexive. Considering such a capacity for community, and Buchler’s standard for validity in art, the modification of the singular artist’s query must, then, simultaneously occur *for a community*.

In sum, the *individual* artist can in fact validate a product as final, but as an *isolate* the artist cannot. What is required in all cases of validation is community—a truly isolated artist is

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

an oxymoron, or at best a hypothetical entity and not actual.<sup>28</sup> Community is composed of multiple perceivers, but we have seen that the individual can at least function as community reflexively, and so by this particular avenue the artist is capable of validating products as final. In the next chapter I will revisit validation specifically in regard to dance as a communicatory movement along some proceptive direction, and as “a process of appraisal”<sup>29</sup> that is of *reflexive community*. But for the remainder of this section, I draw further attention to the concept of *compulsion* (which is necessary to discuss in order to investigate *any* principle of proceptivism).

According to Buchler, any proceptive discovery of the perceiver is fulfilled by judgment or utterance, but it is *articulation* that truly realizes an utterance.<sup>30</sup> We can view this realization as an *expression*. And as articulation is defined by Buchler as the manipulation of the subjects of communication,<sup>31</sup> then each expression is up for validation—it becomes valid, says Buchler, once it requires no further manipulation.<sup>32</sup> In this way, it is easy to see how the artist may validate through artistic expression. And considering the constant pressure of validation upon expression, then it must follow that the individual artist is ever-compelled not only to articulate but to *validate* their work, even via reflexive community.

In addition, Buchler asserts that “articulation is an imperative of life and of expression.”<sup>33</sup> If we are to accept this statement as true, then validation becomes not just an extension of articulation or communication, but akin to a vital life function of the individual. Hence, validation is, at the very least, a crucial *motivation* behind any artistic endeavor. This type of compulsion Buchler describes eloquently:

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<sup>28</sup> Though it is worth further philosophical investigation into the hypothetical scenario to see if an isolate can at minimum be *representative* of community, even if the artist is evidently unable to exist as community wholly unto themselves.

<sup>29</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 150.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

“The individual, then, is not ‘entitled’ to whatever he utters. He must substantiate; he must validate or render secure the products that emanate from his own perspectives. He must define and discover his proceptive commitments and accept as data of validation the critical query of others who may share some part of the same perspective.”<sup>34</sup>

While Buchler recognizes that validation does not occur in total isolation, the community he has alluded to with this description can, as we’ve seen, be inclusive of the reflexive community, and thereby operate on the individual level. However, the individual’s “active judgments cannot all relate to him as their sole subject; and his desires and preferences remain to be articulated by a process of communication that transcends his own visible intent.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, Buchler resounds that what is crucial to the validation of an individual’s utterance is articulation or communication. Therefore, if communication is vital to validation, then it is so for life. By this definition, it can be said that the communication and subsequent validation of an individual’s utterance is a matter of life and death. Granted, not every utterance is articulated, and not every expression, though subject to validation, *becomes* validated. But it is the drive *toward* validation that is necessary, and having at least some general success in validation is *required*, which offers a great force of compulsion for the individual. For the artist, specifically, I will discuss this compulsion in terms of *evidential compulsion*. Although Buchler claims that art is *not* evidentially compulsive, I assert otherwise—partially on the grounds of multiple inconsistencies in Buchler’s argument, and primarily that art appears, quite conspicuously, to fall in line with Buchler’s own requirements for evidential compulsion.

For clarification, we articulate judgments that are necessarily validated, but not *every* utterance need be validated. Rather, there is a recurring output of validation that emerges from

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

the storm of judgment. “Storm” is a good metaphor: like rain, only a partial amount of the water that is held by the clouds falls to the ground. When rain ceases a desert may form; when there is no output of validation from the individual, it is in a dreamless state of existence, a coma, or death. The artist, therefore, ever-capitulates to the compulsion to communicate and to validate with the same vigor of what compels life, but the artist need not succeed at every turn. Without any artistic validation the artist is no longer an artist, and without any validation at all the individual is no longer an individual. While the artist may not be the “sole subject” of judgment, as Buchler states, the artist individually may be reflexive and so communicate reflexively. In other words, the artist makes it possible to talk to oneself. The creative process of art, in this way, is to communicate with the self, whereas the self constitutes reflexive community and experience—the artist talks to “I,” but always to the community therein, and likewise validates in this way.

Any datum of validation the individual may receive transcends their “visible intent,” being that the intention remains to be validated by a process of communication, and that the face-value of intention could very well be a byproduct of utterance that goes to the wayside as judgment is validated (just as the intention of any message, for example, can be misinterpreted even if it is understood as coherent). Moreover, an intention may even be understood but seen as insignificant to the coherency of the message or unimportant in a certain context. Simply put, the individual’s intention is subject to contextual value. For the artist, however, it may be somewhat different, as artistic communication is potentially more directly abstract (i.e., an abstract *representation* of utterance or proception serving as artistic expression), and so intention is also interpreted by abstract means. Therefore, the data of validation is likewise abstract, and what is “visible” with intention does not necessarily apply, since what is abstract is non-linear. Rather,

the artist seeks to discover evidence of what compels them to communicate, and via validation can reveal intention through an abstract lens. Furthermore, the abstract form of intention in art is particularly uncorrupted if it is validated reflexively by the individual (and it is the reflexive act that begets the artist's creation). As the reflexive act is necessarily communicative, intention is thus part and parcel of the individual artist's process of validation.

What is evidential for the artist, including the reveal of intention, comes from a compulsion that we may understand as a proceptive realization, evidenced by the data of validation. According to Buchler, the compulsion of art lies in its effect on proception,<sup>36</sup> and so a proceptive realization is also, for the artist, a self-discovery made through the creative process. Moreover, Buchler posits that what is needed in art is a "proceptive modification,"<sup>37</sup> suggesting that art literally makes manifest the "self-in-process," and thereby evinces what I described earlier as self-aligning modification of other. Requisite to evidential compulsion, however, is not crude modification but what Buchler calls *adjustive manipulation*, meaning that proceptive modification involves "a necessary condition of adaptation, exploration, and control" that leads to an "experimental decision."<sup>38</sup>

While Buchler does not hold the opinion that art is experimental in this way, he does offer that "what we call 'evidence' compels by defining the adjustive limits of human action."<sup>39</sup> What Buchler has missed, however, is that the creative process for the artist functions entirely on these very principles of experimentation—we are constantly defining the limits of human action. Without experimentation there is no craft, and all craft originates in experimentation. For example, a string plucked may produce a sound; through experimentation we bring this sound

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

out of ambiguity and into the distinctions of notes, resonance, harmony, and eventually music (which itself is continually redefined and compelled by the limits of action that composers and musician discover through their creative process). Music, in turn, heavily influences proception (can a non-deaf person think of life without it?). Therefore, the process of art-making both exposes and affects proception, and the measure of which is evidentially compulsive by the limits of human action.

It could be that Buchler sees art as a speculative manipulation of abstraction in the same way that he views *some* aspects of science. Buchler describes mathematics, for instance, as a “symbolic manipulation which is non-adjustive in character and which moves in the direction of increasing abstraction.”<sup>40</sup> Granted, art, similar to math, is symbolic, abstract, and perpetuates abstraction. But, unlike math, art does not lack measurable action (what is needed for Buchler to consider manipulation adjustive). In art, we make the abstract visible, or tangible; it is not a straightforward calculation. That said, I certainly do not wish to disparage math, only to point out that math is not, in this context, a true cognate for art.<sup>41</sup>

To be fair, Buchler also shies away from adjustive manipulation when it comes to compulsion in philosophy, again emphasizing abstraction. He states that philosophy “defines individuality and proception by aiming at the utmost in abstractness,”<sup>42</sup> and so I assume he is relating art, in this capacity, to philosophy, albeit indirectly. However, like with art and mathematics, artistic compulsion and philosophic compulsion are likely more distanced than Buchler is acknowledging. It may be true that artists apply philosophic thought to the most abstract forms of expression. But abstraction in art finds itself within a set of parameters that

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> And even so, math might also be mistakenly unassigned by Buchler to adjustive manipulation, because it can be representative or an integral part of mechanical action, as well as used as a tool in art—it would be interesting for a mathematician to develop this criticism further.

<sup>42</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 80.

become distinguished through experimentation that balances fact with idea. To borrow again from the example of music, an improvisation explores within the strict confines of key, or else risks dissonance.

Buchler insists experimental parameters as the arena for adjustment, explaining that experiment is the process of “adjusting a given relation between ideas and facts,”<sup>43</sup> yet I do not see these conditions as exclusionary of art, just the contrary. With art, we make the experimental process manifest. To illustrate, I’ll return to my example with music: ideas, whether linear in fashion or wholly abstract, are tested within the constraints of facts, or the physical limits of sound, pitch, rhythm, etc. Without these facts, music would melt into a puddle of incoherent sound, perhaps not even discernable as noise. Facts make art possible, so that the creative process functions like a controlled experiment that defines the limits of action, and surely, there is action in art. For example, proceptive modification particular to human action can also be taken literally as human *movement*, and so can easily be applied to dance.

In brief, proceptive modification is adjustive in that it defines the limits of human action, stemming from experimentation. Art meets these requirements, and offers self-discovery, though Buchler gives contradictory examples of adjustive manipulation and, as I have shown, either unfairly excludes art or admits to not knowing where to place its compulsion. However, compulsion by the process of “adaption, exploration, and control” would not be possible without procepts—indeed, procepts are the metaphysical substance that compose Buchler’s notion of experimentation, and I assert that it is also the case for art. That said, I should return for a moment to an explanation on procepts.

I am sitting in my poorly ventilated office, looking at an orange I will eventually reward myself with for having made progress on my writing. My relationship with the object, with the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

orange, is my “experience” of the orange, indelibly imbued with my understanding and perception of the orange. Yet more so: the orange is my process of the orange, by which I *modify* the orange in relation to myself, and thus can be seen as a unit of my proception. In other words, the orange is itself object, but in relation to my proception of the orange it is procept. The process by which I adapt the orange as procept (my aforementioned relationship to it) is the subject of interest to the artist, because the process of adaptation is by nature a creative process, which would imply that proception inherently *is* the creative process. That is to say, our “experience” (i.e., our proception) is founded on our creativity (or, at the very least, proception is so interdependent with the creative process that they are philosophically indistinguishable from one another). Perhaps this is the reason why Buchler stumbles on categorizing or defining compulsion in art and, for the most part, leaves art alone save for a philosophically isolated treatment of poetry (although he does, sparingly, allow ideas on art to seep through the cracks of his general theory).

Buchler’s ignorance of the artist’s process is further shown in his contention that, because art is “exhibitive and not assertive,” the idea of evidence in art is “irrelevant.”<sup>44</sup> He goes on to say that the validation art seeks is “open and unlimited, ever more determinate through the growth of reflexive and social communication.”<sup>45</sup> Yet, does not Buchler’s own reference to the reflexive quality of art imply the individual? If so, why then would the individual not be the individual artist? It seems again that Buchler breezes past the fact that the individual artist creates. That is to say, art is more than simply exhibitive; it is an act of creation. It is true, however, that art has an indefinite *potential* that may appear to non-artists as “open and unlimited,” but art operates within relative constraints and is produced via defined limits; thus its

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



manipulation meets the requirement of being adjustive. These limits are obviously capable of being redefined, reshaped, or shifted, and so art is able to retain its indefinite quality. But that does not mean art is not compelled by means of proceptive modification or experimentation (i.e., evidential compulsion).

Even considering, for sake of argument, the pure exhibitiv effects of artistic product, Buchler nonetheless fails to provide a sound definition for art's compulsion. For example, while admitting that the products of art directly modify proception (which is itself a contradiction), he offers only a weak and wholly vague allusion to compulsion in art. In his seminal work *Judgment*, Buchler writes "there is a mode of compulsion distinctive of art as art,"<sup>46</sup> and leaves it at that. However, though he stumbles over compulsion in art, and turns a blind eye to the creative process, his notions on evidential compulsion, I have argued, ironically provide an excellent definition.

Buchler also puts forward that art affects the individual's qualitative life and responses,<sup>47</sup> which of course contradicts his assertion that art is non-adjustive, for how can art not define the proceiver's limits of manipulation if it has an incremental, and so measurable, effect on the individual? Moreover, he appears to be speaking about the audience and not the artist. Being himself a philosopher and not an artist, Buchler makes the obvious mistake of ignoring the process of the creative individual, and instead focuses on the product of art functioning in society (which is, at best, half the picture).

Another contradiction arises when Buchler propounds that art compels only by establishing a different sort of realization in the proceiver.<sup>48</sup> To elucidate, Buchler says that the individual comes to "understand more, not necessarily in the sense that he 'learns more about

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

himself' or that he grasps new 'facts,' but in the sense that the augmentation of his judgment widens his power of assimilation."<sup>49</sup> So, we see that the proceptive modification for the proceiver is integral to realization. He writes also that the individual "comes either to sense or to utilize a qualitative modification in his relation to the work of art, or a qualitative gain in his proceptive direction."<sup>50</sup> Yet again, Buchler's response is very product driven over process and overlooks the complex workings and process of the artist. Moreover, it seems unlikely that a qualitative gain in proceptive direction can occur without the adaption or proceptive modification of the proceiver, nor a qualitative modification without "exploration and control." That is not to deny a possible emphasis in art that deals with self-discovery within the proceptive direction. But this sort of product of art (or the spectatorial output) is only the tip of the iceberg, and the creative process utilizes a deep compulsion that is at least evidential.

### **Communication**

The artist communicates, and while a community of two or more proceivers is requisite to communication, I have shown that this may also occur on an individual level (if done reflexively). Additionally, it is likely that the act of artistic creation "begins" reflexively (or is so, at minimum, for the individual artist). I have also pointed out that Buchler does not generally consider the creative *process* of the individual artist but instead attends, almost exclusively, to the *products* of art. Buchler also ignores the creative process when referring to reflexive communication in art. For instance, he writes that the effectiveness of a work of art is the extent of which the artistic product "dominates reflexive communication" and "is measurable by the degree... it pervades communication... and influences the subsequent character of

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

communication and invention.”<sup>51</sup> Of course, being that it is reflexive, the “character of communication and invention” can certainly also apply to the individual creator. Thus, in this way, Buchler indirectly addresses the artist and also alludes to spectatorship in art. However, the question remains as to what other modes of communication art utilizes, and to directly review these modes in terms of proception.

Again, Buchler does not fully address the individual artist or the creative process, but I endeavor to fill his oversight by exploring the modes of communication in art. To begin, one mode of communication Buchler recognizes in his theory on human judgment is *asymmetrical communication*. He explains that asymmetrical communication in art “is best understood through its influence on subsequent communication, which is necessarily reflexive and possibly social.”<sup>52</sup> With artworks in general, “any context is itself subject to the same degree of interpretive latitude as its ingredients.”<sup>53</sup> That is to say, the signs of an artwork are ambiguous until made determinable according to an applied context. Therefore, the effect a work of art has on later communications, be they reflexive or purely social, occur asymmetrically, or out of direct context. This is like removing (either conceptually or physically) an artifact from its in situ placement, and then measuring its influence out of cultural context. The pyramids of Giza, for example, have extraordinary influence on subsequent communications, though few are symmetrical with its original context; the US dollar bill would surely make little sense to one of the pharaohs.

The signs of art, however, are not fixed units since the information a sign contains is subject to its contextual packaging. Because of this, Buchler asserts that art does not deliver a

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

solid message; or in his words, “a product of art does not communicate unequivocally.”<sup>54</sup>

However, neither is art completely ambiguous. Buchler writes:

“It is inept to say that the sign-components of artistic products... are “ambiguous”... [because] the import of an ambiguous sign depends upon its context. When a context is specified or identified, the sign becomes determinate.”<sup>55</sup>

Signs or products in art are only ambiguous if understood as isolates. Yet, as is the case with the individual, no sign can exist in a vacuum; its existence depends on contextual housing, just as the artist requires community (albeit the artist may function to some extent reflexively). But also, the sign does not totally shed its theoretically ambiguous nature, for its determinate context is flexible, just as water may fill various vessels to their shape.<sup>56</sup> That is to say, the products of art are adopted and perpetuated proceptively by the spectator, though outside of the intended artistic context. The artist “communicates asymmetrically with the spectator by contributing new elements for proceptive assimilation and manipulation.”<sup>57</sup>

While Buchler’s ideas on asymmetrical communication in art appear to have a strong relationship with the spectator-response to a complete and exhibited work, he does hint, somewhat, at the creative process behind the finished product. Buchler says that communication in art “is a continuous process, not an instantaneous impact,”<sup>58</sup> meaning that products in art are not only fluid and flexible (though determinable via context) but also are persistently applied to new contexts and to various interpretations, hence their asymmetrical latitude. However, Buchler points out that the proceptive response can also itself become an art.<sup>59</sup> In other words, the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> To borrow from Bruce Lee.

<sup>57</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 31.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

asymmetrical latitude of artistic communication is a fertile process that transforms fluid signs into more determinable ones. Therefore, a “continuous process” for Buchler may also imply the process that comes before the actual product of art, and thus hints at the creative process.

Proceptivism will build on this assumption, whole-heartedly.

The process of communication discussed here should not be confused with criticism. Criticism does appeal to the perpetuating nature of artistic signs and communication but, according to Buchler, criticism does not manipulate context. He writes that while criticism may be composed of the products of communication, it nevertheless does not adjudicate the “destiny” of these products, which may be sustained in communication or short-lived regardless of whether or not they are “nurtured” by criticism.<sup>60</sup> It is important to note also that, while artistic communication is “continuous,” this can be interpreted more as *indefinite* rather than *infinite*. In other words, artistic products may extend into the community indefinitely (via a social, symmetrical, asymmetrical, or critical conduit), yet this circuit *will*, eventually, reach its terminus. Buchler describes:

“Some products are exposed at birth, others nurtured... But some exposed products thrive and continue to communicate, while others, though nurtured, fail to sustain their communicative force.”<sup>61</sup>

This does not mean the artistic product loses influence. The artistic product may inevitably ricochet into the social abyss, though at that point it does not do so as product but as energy. Buchler describes this fate as the product “exposed;” which is to say, each product, though flung into indefinite motion, nevertheless has a certain potential for duration, even if that duration cannot be precisely predicted.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

What may (at least partially) predict duration, however, is the mode of artistic communication in which the product is delivered: if the product is communicated asymmetrically, it is likely to have a greater distance from its artistic context. The *communicative demand* between perceivers in asymmetrical communication thus cannot be mutual, and is most likely to involve a non-participatory spectator. “Communicative demand” is defined by Buchler as an implicit need for “articulation in the form of products,” or, “manifestations of proception.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the artistic products delivered by asymmetrical communication may possess an inherently short lifespan. Asymmetrical communication, in this manner, is also farther removed from the creative process, and so possibly only offers the tip of the iceberg in terms of information. However, asymmetrical communication in art, by these means, does provide the greatest opportunity for criticism, since the critic typically operates outside of the artistic creative process.

By contrast, *symmetrical communication* makes mutual demand among the perceivers involved, or a “joint manipulation and assimilation of signs correlated with the dominant procept.”<sup>63</sup> With the perceivers involved symmetrically, Buchler explains that they must also be a procept of each other (though this does not mean percept, since we may communicate with the signs of the individual without direct awareness or attachment to the individual).<sup>64</sup> Rather, what is essential is that the products of communication be “part of a larger and more persistent order of communication.”<sup>65</sup> If the proceiver-procept communicates with another proceiver-procept, engaged by mutual demand, there is potential for the whole self to be represented (which is itself, by definition, an act of proception). An instance of communication, then, “may have no

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

situational locus of any lesser scope than that of the self in its total career.”<sup>66</sup> Therefore, if we are to understand symmetrical communication in terms artistic communication, it follows that symmetry may offer the best mode for proceptivism to function. Moreover, symmetrical communication is perhaps the greatest opportunity for artist-to-artist exchange, provided they make mutual communicative demands and are procepts of each other. While an in-depth exploration of artistic collaboration in proceptivism is beyond the scope of this study, and Buchler does not speak much about cocreating art,<sup>67</sup> I believe it is worth further investigation through the lens of a symmetrical endeavor.

Another important factor to cover concerning communication in art is what function it serves with regard to proception. When it comes to communication in general, Buchler claims that it is “at least a process of transmission.”<sup>68</sup> If we accept that transmission is the basic function of communication, I see no reason why the function of communication in art should differ from its broader purpose. It may be that Buchler agrees. He writes that what art “communicates depends on human receptivity,”<sup>69</sup> which overtly implies a transmission was made. Taking into account the emphasis that both Buchler and I have made on community as a critical aspect of communication, transmission therefore necessitates reception—the only question being if this reception further perpetuates the artistic product, and if it does so symmetrically or asymmetrically. Yet, how might we further describe this product in terms of proceptivism?

A community has been operationally defined as consisting of two or more perceivers, and what binds community together we have seen as, most essentially, communication. The

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> However, a good cognate may be his thoughts on *mutual interrogation* in philosophy (he is a philosopher after all). He claims that mutual interrogation is “the most refined form of communicatory demand,” limited only by the depth of thought associated with it (Buchler, *Toward*, 35).

<sup>68</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 29.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 32.

communication that occurs can act socially or reflexively, and functions either symmetrically or asymmetrically, but in all cases, communication *transmits* a product between perceivers. With at least symmetrical communication, perceivers must be procepts of one another, which thus presents obvious potential for the product being transmitted to also be a procept. However, considering that community requires multiple perceivers, and that *proceiving* is, so to speak, a verb, it seems safe to say that the products we transmit and receive must be procepts. It is unlikely a coincidence, then, that Buchler propounds that an utterance is a procept, since products are born from communicative articulations. With this in mind, it is not surprising that he chooses the word *utterance* as a synonym for *judgment*.

The challenge raised here is for proceptivism to describe what is done with artistic utterances (*articulation*). How do we highlight the way judgments in art are utilized by the creative process? Logically, this endeavor might, first and foremost, consider the perspective offered by a work of art, since, according to Buchler, perspective is interdependent with utterance. Furthermore, Buchler asserts that in a work of art a perspective is “the amplification of the judgment,”<sup>70</sup> meaning that judgment is amplified as articulation—it is an *utterance* particular to artistic expression. However, it is questionable whether such articulation can be owned solely by the individual. In other words, can a perspective in a work of art be peculiar to the singular artist?

The short answer is yes *and* no. While Buchler makes the claim that this amplification “requires collaborative assent by the spectator,”<sup>71</sup> which implies validation, it makes little sense why this cannot occur reflexively. Just as the artist may validate independent of a proximate community by means of reflexive communication, the perspective is obligated to operate in

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.



communication yet is likewise capable of being reflexive. In addition, Buchler stresses that the “perspective as a whole... must be regarded as a judgment-complex,”<sup>72</sup> which suggests that the entirety of perspective in a work of art is composed of a network of *perspectives* that of course can be sourced from multiple perceivers. Granted, this network may be wholly reflexive, but if utterances underly perspective then it is necessary of a work of art to be inclusive of community, albeit at least reflexively. In this manner, one could say that no art is made without performance, for the spectator is always within.

Buchler does not delineate on amplification in the art-making process but, rather, limits his discussion to a work of art. While proceptivism has recognized the finitude of *products* of art, it questions the *finished* quality of a so-called “work of art.” Though products of art may be discernable as relatable units, it is trickier to isolate a specific “work,” especially if what is exhibited as a “work of art” only represents a small portion of the art-making process. Granted, elements or products of artistic efforts are certainly performative and therefore might collectively enter an arena in which spectators could view them as “complete.” Nevertheless, there is a distinct difference between completion and presentation. In other words, there does not seem to be a point where the “work” is not a *working*, and this working only stops when the artist diverges from a particular set of efforts to new processes.

Although Buchler focuses on the exhibitiv qualities of art, his concepts nevertheless allow for a discussion of process, which he hints at. Buchler states: “a work of art is not simply an aggregate of judgments but an order of interrelated judgments.”<sup>73</sup> This can only mean that in the art-making process we are locating the product of utterance as it issues forth in proception. Thus, the idea that art’s judgments are “interrelated” suggests an enmeshment which tangles the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

notion of a “finished work,” and so can surely be taken as acknowledgement of creative process on the part of Buchler. Yet, he does not manage to break away from the spectatorial aspect, writing that “the process of construction lays emphasis on ‘seeing’ the meaning and on ‘feeling’ the impact of the conceptual configuration.”<sup>74</sup> Of course, as stated, art-work may not be capable of functioning wholly outside an audience. However, the spectatorship that Buchler alludes to has an obvious social connotation that art is not obliged to. What’s more, Buchler contradicts himself since, as previously mentioned, he posits that community can reside in the artist—if this be true, then can their art-work not communicate beyond what is typically social? The spectator may always be present, but the spectator does not need to inhabit a purely social sphere. Instead, the spectator can be completely reflexive; the spectator is within. Considering the reflexive spectator, exhibition in art can therefore occur outside of what is directly social, and can even take place with the singular presence of the artist, physically separate from others. Art, in this way, is thus capable of being “anti-social.”

Artist, community, and spectator alike can be seen in this light as inevitable givens and constants during the focused effort of creation. The question therefore arises if this creative process can continue once the effort of the artist has concluded. According to Buchler, it can, provided there exists an assimilation of the process that “demands of the potential assimilator inferential and imaginative labor of a creative kind.”<sup>75</sup> That it is to say, a continual process of art-communication, which operates initially as both the artist and community (including spectator) concurrently. The process can thus evolve creatively among spectators minus the originating artist’s direct involvement or even knowledge of the continuing process.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 123.

Could this continuance of the artist's process be said to be more tangential than it is an evolution? Could it rather be the emergence of new creative efforts and communications, wholly separate from the artist's own process? According to Buchler's theory of human judgment, it occurs as an act of elimination: the assimilator is necessarily a communicator of this process, but may exclude products of the process which inhibit this continuing communication. Hence, by "simply discarding those judgments which happen to impede the actual process of communication,"<sup>76</sup> the assimilator may eventually come to a point that is distinct from the originating process. However, this tributary does not mean the main river ended the moment it left the originating artist. Instead, the divergence represents the point at which the original process concludes, which may or may not be contiguous with the moment the original artist departs from the process. Moreover, the conclusion is not necessarily fixed—the creative process can be continued at any point in time, so long as the judgments of the process remain communicable.

In the next chapter, I take the issues detailed in chapter 3 that directly concern proceptivism and begin to translate them toward a direct application to an artistic medium: dance. This means that I move from the groundwork laid in this chapter of applying proception and human judgment to the art question, and push forward into a narrowing focus on dance that I hope exemplifies an overall justification for proceptivism.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 146.

## CHAPTER 4

### DANCE AND APPLIED-PROCEPTIVISM

Proceptivism, applied directly to the context of art-making, can be seen as the process in art that manifests a self-awareness of proception, which can then inform the act of artistic creation and exploration. Proceptivism contends that the artist is capable of being informed by the products of judgment, or those units that compose one's proception. And it is thus the proceptivist's job to gaze into one's reflection in that deep pool and drink—that is to say, the artist's goal is to express an intimate self-awareness of proception.

While proceptivism is a newly proposed addition to the philosophical theory of human judgment, Buchler does intimate, most often indirectly, that art *is* an appropriate avenue toward an investigation into proception. In the previous chapter, I forged a connection between Buchler's ideas on abstraction and experimentation to artistic investigations. Moreover, that the explorations of art detect what does or does not occur in the proceptive domain, "not by simple inspection but by a difficult process of abstraction."<sup>1</sup> However, to take this use of art one step further, proceptivism puts forth the idea of *dance* as an exemplary medium, or what is potentially the most convenient artistic application to the exploration of proception.

But why dance?

To begin, dance supplies proceptivism with embodied cognates for Buchler's terms—an embodiment that, I argue, can be connected to Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), a method and language often used in dance and choreography to describe, interpret, and document movement. Moreover, as dance employs the actual body of the proceiver, dance—as a conceptual

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<sup>1</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 8.

embodiment of human judgment—is the most readily available instrument to the proceiver, regardless of their preferred artistic discipline or even lack of artistic discipline.

When Buchler defines proception as the “process in which an individual’s whole self is represented,”<sup>2</sup> he is not suggesting a bigger or broader definition of self but referring to a *relationship* representative of the self in active sum. Or, one could say, a holistic relationship. However, a relationship is not static, it is a process that, by its indefinite degree of movement, *represents* the whole individual. That is, the individual is both a cumulative identity and an indefinite process. Therefore, the relationship becomes representative of the whole self in the metaphysical digestive system of the individual—wherein the *other* (itself a process or natural complex) is distinctively refined. In other words, the individual adapts the other according to their subjective reality—there is objectivity, but it is proceived as relative. Meaning, in this way, is the product of a subjective process, or a byproduct of proception. The *other*, in this context, is referred to, in terms of proception, as a procept. It is, again, a relationship process. Moreover, the procept is not just “other” but the product of what has been modified by utterance; though I argue that judgment or utterance is only partly the modifier, because the transformation of object to procept further requires movement within the proceptive domain.

In this chapter I detail what movement and utterance together means to the theory of human judgment, and to proceptivism—specifically as it is seen in dance. In addition, I investigate the overlap between concepts in the movement theory of LMA and those within Buchler’s ideas on proception and judgment. I do this largely with the aid of evaluating an actual work of choreography, one that I have personally been part of as a primary creator. Along the way, I make connections to dance, including the fundamental assertion that proception requires movement—and where there is expression and movement, there is dance.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 5.

### **Movement is the crux of proception**

The most salient reason for the emphasis of dance (among the arts) by proceptivism is the fact that movement is the crux of proception. That is to say, the philosophical idea behind proception depends, at its very core, on the movement of the proceiver. As mentioned in the previous chapters, proceptive direction is crucial to the proceptive domain, and proceptive direction requires movement. The individual perceives at the instant that the individual *moves*. Moreover, the proceiver is, necessarily, a mover. Considering how crucial movement is to proception, then it follows that movement is essential to any representation of the whole self. Or, in Buchler's own words, "the whole individual is the cumulative representation of the moving individual."<sup>3</sup>

It also follows, then, that self-actualization must occur in connection with the movement of the proceiver. Self-actualization functions in much the same way as reflexive communication actualizes reflexive community—the individual makes manifest the proceptive awareness through an expression. The process of self-actualization can hence be described, in the simplest terms, as self-reflective and self-expressive. Yet, the key point of logic here is that self-actualization demands movement. Buchler is quick to highlight this concept; his first mention of "proception" states that "the term is designed to suggest a *moving* union of seeking and receiving, of forward propulsion and patient absorption."<sup>4</sup> But aside from movement, Buchler is also suggesting here that congruent to both reflexive-actualization and self-actualization is a dependency on communication. In this way, *general* proceptive-actualization must communicate. After all, communication is "the guiding mechanism of proception,"<sup>5</sup> and as previously mentioned, communication is a central aspect of art. Thus, if we are to accept dance as a form of

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4. Emphasis my own.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 54.

art, then we also recognize that dance communicates. And if proceptive actualization equally depends on movement *and* communication, dance thus offers both a fantastic model and an opportunity for the proceiver to self-actualize.

Granted, while self-actualization entails proceptive movement, it arguably is not restricted to literally physical movement. That is to say, proceptive movement may employ (perhaps even first and foremost) intellectual movement. Dance, in this light, might then be viewed as unnecessary or frivolous in regard to a direct application of proception and the theory of human judgment. However, Buchler frequently emphasizes human “activity” in direct connection to proception. For example, he writes: “proception is the composite, directed activity of the individual.”<sup>6</sup> I stress here the term “directed activity”—*direction* alone would imply movement, but in relation to *activity* there seems to be little doubt that Buchler suggests here a *body* in motion. Moreover, Buchler makes this comment as soon as he introduces the term “proception,” which then implies that the detection of proception might only be done in motion—that is, as a moving human body. This, at the very least, evokes the dancer, and so the medium of dance is appropriately applicable to proception.

In addition, self-actualization, or what is evidently proceptive, requires one further step beyond both movement and communication. Self-actualization also needs what Buchler refers to as *validation*. In the last chapter, I explored the concept of validation as it relates to art. But, according to Buchler’s theory, and most succinctly put, general “validation is justification,”<sup>7</sup> and operates by appraisal. Granted, at first glance, to suggest that *self*-actualization demands validation might seem like an oxymoron. However, as discussed, part and parcel of self-actualization is communication; thus the proceptive self is transmitting a signal which remains to

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 140.

be justified by the proceiver's community. Likewise, actualization is vital to community. In Buchler's own words, what is produced by human proception "as potential vehicles of communication [stands] in need of a certain kind of actualization which [in turn] can never be wholly achieved: they require to be validated."<sup>8</sup> Here, Buchler argues that validation and actualization do more than just stipulate one another; rather, according to Buchler, validation and actualization are concurrent, conjoined efforts that cannot be teased apart.

I have argued thus far that dance is suitable for proceptivism because movement is necessary to proception. At the least, I posit that proceptive movement is inclusive of physical movement. Furthermore, proceptive movement communicates. Clearly, dance fundamentally achieves both movement and communication, and thereby self-actualizes. Although it now remains to determine how dance can be an avenue for validation.

In our simplest understanding of dance as a performance art, we might assume some level of spectatorship, and this assumption is often correct in the literal sense. Referring to Buchler's most basic illustration of community, there is the need for two proceivers. Spectatorship thus offers, immediately, a community (and as such, a community wherein validation may occur). However, Buchler also asserts that "the individual in himself constitutes a community, the reflexive or proceptive community."<sup>9</sup> In other words, the individual is simultaneously both an identifiable unit and community. It could be, then, that the dancer possesses the spectator, and vice versa: perhaps Buchler's "patient absorption" alludes to the community within; that the self is both part of and stands apart from community, and hence is both "seeking and receiving" communications. Through physical movement, the dancer may concomitantly signal and

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 39.



spectate. Therefore, by this mechanism, the dancer is given the opportunity to *justify* the communication and consequently, in so doing, actualize.

How the dancer may justify communication is, in essence, validation, which Buchler fundamentally describes as “a process of appraisal.”<sup>10</sup> This process can be private, and in the case of art, might always *originate* privately. According to Buchler’s theory, this is due to the singularity of the artistic experience at the point of creation:

“Some perspectives, involving unique and possibly unrepeatable situations, may carry with them unique appraisals relative to individuals. This is very likely the case in all of artistic creation.”<sup>11</sup>

We can thus glean from this view that, even within cooperative artistic efforts, appraisal is, at the very least, something that originates privately for the individual, at the onset of modification. The individual artist can thus be considered the source of their own validation (though it is necessary to note that a judgment unto itself, without a validator—be it the artist or anyone—cannot self-validate, as this would suggest that the judgment needs no validation, which is philosophically unsound).<sup>12</sup>

The concept has empowering potential for the artist and could be developed further to celebrate the diverse nature of artistic endeavor. However, these judgments, though they are private, also do not limit themselves from the broader scope of validation. Buchler suggests that no “judgments which are private, are private in the sense that they are indescribable or uninvestigable.”<sup>13</sup> Artistic validation, though it may originate with the artist, is potentially contiguous with both communication and investigation or query. After all, per Buchler, human

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 151.

expression “constitutes an utterance or judgment, and every utterance is subject to validation, even if it be not actually validated.”<sup>14</sup> The question remains as to the mechanisms by which specifically dance accomplishes validation, both private and otherwise, and what modes of investigation or query generally occur.

To begin to answer this question it is important to make distinctions in dance between what Buchler sees as *assertive*, *exhibitive*, and *active* judgment. According to Buchler, assertive judgments differ from exhibitive, most importantly, because “one judgment may compel another evidentially,”<sup>15</sup> and judgments possess an “indefinite number of implications.”<sup>16</sup> While previously I have argued that exhibitive judgment, at least as it concerns art, can be evidentially compelled, the case can still be made that what is assertive is limited to a more linear investigable scope than what is exhibitive. As I see it, this is because assertive judgment is (perhaps counterintuitively) more demonstrative than what is exhibitive. That is to say, an assertion essentially pushes forward a true/false binary,<sup>17</sup> or it is directly descriptive, which holds the potential to implicate further calculations based on evidence. Hence, though I have argued that exhibitive judgment *can* be evidentially compelled, assertive judgment is *fundamentally* evidentially compelled.<sup>18</sup> This means that when an assertive judgment is validated privately it is

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>18</sup> Granted, the point can be made, as Buchler might insist, that I have measured art’s compulsion on terms of what is actually compulsion in philosophy, which may combine assertive and exhibitive judgments (Buchler, *Toward*, 79-80). Or that what I attribute to exhibitive judgment is an assertive judgment that has taken on an “exhibitive role” (Buchler, *Toward*, 49). However, I have challenged the completeness of Buchler’s ideas on art, which are scantily addressed within his theory—it could be that, as it concerns exhibitive judgment in art, he attempts to address some of these discrepancies by looking at philosophy (though in so doing further bypasses a consideration of art and its compulsion, and digresses into complications of a judgment-complex).

not because it is unique, as may be the case with active or exhibitiv judgment, but because it is restricted.<sup>19</sup>

By contrast, while some products of art *may* be assertive in judgment, art is *necessarily* active. Moreover, considering that judgment in art essentially communicates, then if we are to accept that art (though at times assertive and/or exhibitiv in judgment) is necessarily active, then it follows that art *always* communicates. In addition, active judgments (as well as exhibitiv judgments) have “indefinite potentialities for further investigation, action, and assimilation.”<sup>20</sup> It appears, then, that action and investigation (or query) run parallel. Within this framework of Buchler’s theory, we begin to view “art” as a verb. As such, it is not fanciful to consider dance as exemplar of an *active* artform. That dance expresses with movement, is thereby manifest of art’s essential mode of judgment; thus dance concurrently holds a fundamental potential for investigation in its movement beyond private validation. This logic is resounded in Buchler’s statement: “the proverb that actions can speak louder than words happens to be metaphysically correct.”<sup>21</sup> Hence, dance can operate along a network of metaphysical possibilities that arguably other efforts more directed in assertive (or even exhibitiv) judgment cannot, and dance likely exemplifies the arts in this manner to a degree that is not as obvious elsewhere in the arts.<sup>22</sup>

If, as I have established, dance fundamentally investigates through its active judgment, which is literally made manifest in action, then dance’s investigation logically must follow particular constraints, or directed via certain conditions. But what general modes of investigation does dance engage with? And how do these modalities navigate proceptive direction or domain in terms of dance theory? To answer these questions, I will explore dance’s query in terms of

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<sup>19</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 151.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>22</sup> To be clear, I am not suggesting this network is lacking in other art disciplines, but I do posit that dance is uniquely aligned with Buchler’s ideas.

LMA,<sup>23</sup> highlighting the ways LMA ties to principles found in Buchler's theory of human judgment. Specifically, I will discuss dance's potential in terms of LMA *efforts*, and use for this exploration the review of a working example of my own work, a piece of choreography called *The Kiln*. I will also look at conceptual overlaps in LMA and proceptive direction, as movement within this sphere is crucial to any mode of query, and by extension proceptive *domain*. In addition, subsequent to this look at LMA, I will address in this chapter dance as it concerns Buchler's notions on *communication, spectatorship, meaning, and validation*.

Rudolph Laban, a Hungarian dancer/choreographer and dance innovator who originated LMA, emphasized in his writings the importance of exploring movement in terms of human experience. As such, by extension, Laban's ideas tie to proception, as proception is a continuance in philosophical discussion on experience. His writings may predate Buchler's coinage of "proception," yet Laban's thoughts on human experience (specifically in the context of movement) are essentially comparable to Buchler's. For instance, Laban makes aware of the communicative powers of movement:

"When we realise that movement is the essence of life, and that all expression... uses movement as a vehicle, we cannot help seeing the importance of understanding this outward expression of the living energy within."<sup>24</sup>

It is certainly no leap to assume "expression" for Laban means communication. Therefore, it is important to highlight here that Laban has attributed the fundamental quality of communication to movement at the same time he recognized movement as essential to life. We can easily interpret the statement, then, that movement for Laban is crucial to both human communication and human experience. Moreover, Laban alludes to an internal process that

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<sup>23</sup> Also called Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis.

<sup>24</sup> Rudolf Laban and Lisa Ullmann, *Modern Educational Dance. 2D Ed., Rev. by Lisa Ullmann* (London, UK: Macdonald & Evans, 1963), 101.

approximates proception. For him, it is an “energy” that is understood via the “outward expression.” Semantically, Buchler and Laban overlap, particularly if we supplement “understanding” with “validation,” “outward” with “actualization,” and “expression” with “communication.” Even if we take Laban’s “life” as a more metaphysical reference, it still echoes Buchler who, as I have shown, demonstrates that movement is crucial to proception, and in this way “the motive force of life.”<sup>25</sup>

Though sparsely mentioned, Buchler nods to the impetuses behind art, from which we can extrapolate a moving individual. For instance, Buchler states that “the proceptive direction determines the hunger... of art.”<sup>26</sup> Clearly, *direction* can be taken to imply movement, just as movement suggests direction. Though only in passing, Buchler has thus set up movement as the core of artistic drive (which is also reflective of LMA). Further, he refers to the *action* of judgment that, as previously discussed, is so essential to art. And so, later in this chapter, I will also draw a parallel between this sense of *direction* found in the theory of human judgment and that of *direction* in LMA.

But there exists an even more apparent similarity. According to dance scholar Sam Thornton, Laban saw movement as more than just “a component of the chain which links man’s inner activity and the world around him, for it is the medium through which he actualises his responses.”<sup>27</sup> Here, Thornton suggests that Laban uses, in effect, the same terminology as Buchler, and it appears to also be semantically in the same context. By way of Laban, Thornton essentially describes *proceptive* movement, and stresses the mover as integral to a reflexive community. The study of movement for Laban was thus concerned with a person in relation to the world, and particularly the individual’s relation to community, a concept expressed in his

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<sup>25</sup> Laban and Ullmann, *Modern Educational Dance*, 104.

<sup>26</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Sam Thornton, *A Movement Perspective of Rudolf Laban* (London, U.K.: Macdonald and Evans, 1971), 24.

*Reigenwerk* or “round dance.”<sup>28</sup> Moreover, in his writings Laban will often resound Buchler’s own broad definition for proception, but in connection to creative effort. For example, Laban states that “any creative and expressive activity demands the sustained effort of the whole personality.”<sup>29</sup>

I would like to draw further attention to Laban in that, through action, he calls on us to realize what Buchler would later term the “proceptive direction.” This “proceptive direction” is a direct comparison to Laban’s *kinespheric direction*, limited by *kinesphere*, a limitation which I liken to Buchler’s proceptive domain. Further, according to Buchler, the “way that an individual will act at any time... depends on [their] proceptive direction.”<sup>30</sup> The “will act” of this statement implies that the dancer or mover must be cognizant of the impulses behind action. These impulses, I argue, can be understood via Laban’s *efforts*.

When most people first hear of Laban’s “efforts,” they encounter his “eight efforts,” or general types of effort behind human movement designed to capture the most basic character of the movement. These efforts are known as *float, flick, dab, punch, wring, press, slash, and glide*. These days, Laban’s eight efforts are often taught in the context of theatre, both as stage movement and to transcribe that character of movement to the quality of voice and line delivery.<sup>31</sup> However, for this study, I will look instead to Laban’s effort *drives*. While the eight efforts are certainly descriptive, they only hint at the impetuses that propel effort into movement, as well as being prone to theatrical characterizations that would be more challenging to compare in philosophic terms. In addition, I will spend some time with Laban’s effort *factors* which

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<sup>28</sup> Rudolf Laban and Lisa Ullmann, *A Life for Dance: Reminiscences: With Drawings by the Author* (London, U.K.: Macdonald and Evans, 1975), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Rudolf Laban, *The Art of Movement in Education, Work, and Recreation* (London, U.K.: Macdonald and Evans), 17.

<sup>30</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Though the origin of these efforts was meant for the overall study of human movement, as well as for dance.

provide more detailed descriptors behind the effort of movement, and are more readily tied to inner motives or *drives* of effort than the broad and exceedingly general eight effort types. In both instances, I link effort to the propulsions behind art through the lens of proceptivism. To make these associations more visible, I utilize a real-life example of a method used in a creative project that I cocreated. As such, I explain our method in terms of LMA and the impetuses behind movement, which I then relate to the impetuses behind art (i.e., proceptivism).

### **LMA- effort**

*The Kiln* is an original work by the Ellensburg Dance Collective (EDC), commissioned by *Converge Dance Festival 2019*, performed at Velocity Dance Center, Seattle. *The Kiln* was crafted in the contemporary manner; meaning, the choreography was not intended to follow any recognized convention. Rather, *The Kiln* was an experiment in dance movement that attempted to venture into new territory within the medium whilst still accomplishing the artistic task of telling a story—or in the least, conveying emotional content. This production and the methods used to create it, as connected to LMA, serves as a working example of how dance makes the creative process more visible in terms of the theory of human judgment, and to show that dance can function as an exemplary model for understanding proceptivism in general. This process is made more evident by the added metaphorical layer of ceramics, which demonstrates how the creative process is resounded in human judgment regardless of the artistic medium.

The EDC's primary undertaking in *The Kiln* was to explore the notion of what is commonly referred to as a "formative experience," operationally defined as an event that shapes a recurring emotional pattern in the individual. To encapsulate the concept of a formative experience via dance, the EDC used ceramics as a working metaphor, with clay acting as a representation of the process of the emotional pattern being shaped. The fact that clay must

eventually be fire-hardened in a kiln to retain form (i.e., a “trial by fire”) gave the EDC the title *The Kiln* and its focus.

In the context of Buchler’s theory, we can take proception as a substitute for “experience.” And as mentioned previously, “experiences” can be described by means of human judgment as “procept-complexes.”<sup>32</sup> Thus an emotional pattern in *The Kiln* can also be seen as a procept-complex, and the unit of proception that enters into awareness (the procept that is judgment) as further analogous of a “formative experience.” Additionally, in previous chapters, we have seen that a product has “relative finality” when *valid*, and validation may also serve as a reflection of “formative experience.” Moreover, to be valid requires no further manipulation can be a cognate for the hardening of clay which possesses no further modification. The clay is accepted as what it is, the movement is accepted for what it is, and the emotional clarity is apparent; in this way, we see the creative process in dance as a process of appraisal in judgment.

To direct choreographic style, the EDC observed live ceramicists working with the medium of clay and catalogued their movements to be abstracted later into dance. The exact stories being told through dance that emulate “formative experiences” were then drawn from the life histories of the dancers themselves. Because that inspiration for style (the ceramicists) and emotional content (life histories) were so readily accessible to the EDC, the main choreographic challenge was to convey emotions with novel dance movements. The EDC thus constructed a choreographic method for the project in order to create the embodiment of emotions in *The Kiln*. The choreographic method developed by the EDC utilized LMA as a structural guide to the creative process, though original concepts were also devised to better understand and describe the dance movement objectives particular to *The Kiln*. Considering this artistic process through the lens of proceptivism, though emotions are not exclusively procept, the emotions involved

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<sup>32</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 123.



functioned as a procept-guide, or an aid in what could be uncovered as procept for the proceiver/dancer.

According to LMA, dance movement can be described broadly by its efforts.<sup>33</sup> “Effort” in this specific context refers to the factors that contribute to the body’s motion, summarized in LMA as *flow*, *weight*, *time*, and *space*. Each *effort factor* is differentiated by its *quality*, which in turn is further categorized into two polarities known as *effort elements*, said to either be *indulgent* or *fighting*. Applied effort, however, obviously requires motivation for the dancer to move, which can sometimes be viewed as an emotional impetus. This possible relationship between emotion and the motivation to move was the prime focus of the EDC’s choreographic method devised for *The Kiln*, as it relates directly to the labor of conveying emotion in dance.

Movement motivators are referred to in LMA as *effort drives*, of which four general categories are recognized: *vision*, *action*, *spell*, and *passion*. Hence, the EDC also made use of the LMA *effort drives* as a foundation to the formulation of its choreographic method for the expression of emotion in *The Kiln*. Among the *effort drives*, *passion drive* is the only category LMA clearly associates with emotions. According to LMA, *passion drive* is unconcerned with the dancer’s external environment, but rather connects the dancer to an awareness of internal feelings.<sup>34</sup> *Passion drive* therefore excludes the *effort factor* of *space*, or in this sense the motor connections outside the personal *kinesphere* (the reachable area) of the dancer. *Passion drive* without *space* is further explained in LMA to be without rationality, as *space* is considered to be the area of focused mental activity. This absence of reason in *passion drive* thus gives way to the insular feelings of the dancer, often tending toward either negative or positive sensations.

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<sup>33</sup> Cecily Dell, *A Primer for Movement Description Using Effort-Shape and Supplementary Concepts* (New York: Dance Notation Bureau Press, 1970).

<sup>34</sup> Dell, *A Primer for Movement*, 38.

At first glance, *passion drive* may be seen through the lens of proceptivism as devoid of artistic query, being that *space* involves mental reasoning. However, as emphasized in chapter 3, even if it is solely reflexive in nature and/or beyond the individual's focused attention, artistic query is nevertheless a direct manipulation that modifies the proceptive direction. In this way, the choreographic parlance of *passion drive* becomes a good cognate for *reflexive validation* in proceptivism—which, even as impulse, remains the product of planned experimentation. In turn, this type of artistic query informs the proceptive domain by its output as an utterance of artistic product. Regardless of awareness, reflexive validation in art, including dance, undergoes the transformative evolution of project to product, and is thereby still conceived and *logically compelled*. Pure emotions emanating from *passion drive* can, ironically, be committed to reasoning—it seems that artistic scope doesn't fall outside of reasoning or commitment, and dance is not an exception. But this interpretation of *passion drive* by way of proceptivism does not contradict LMA. Rather, this particular reading of *passion drive* reinforces it as the basis of clear emotion, stemming from the reflexive. It is the artistic implementation of *passion drive* that nonetheless gives it the aspect of reasoning.

Likewise, because *passion drive* encompasses internal senses, the EDC adopted that *effort drive* as the guiding force behind the expression of emotion in the choreographic method for *The Kiln*. Moreover, if *passion* is then to be taken as the goal motivator for expressing emotion in *The Kiln* choreography, the EDC assumed that the motivation of the dancer must first move through the other *effort drives* before reaching *passion*. Because ceramic clay in *The Kiln* already functioned as a representation of a formative experience, the EDC therefore set up a parallel process using *effort drives* to illustrate the coalescing of an emotional pattern in the individual/dancer. The EDC viewed this process as a manifestation of emotion—a

transformation from what is unclear as an expressed emotion to what movement possesses emotional clarity. In proceptivism, emotion or emotional utterance could be seen as achieving *relative* finality by a process of appraisal, via movement through the stages of the *effort drives*. Relative finality in this vein means that emotional content and expression in its clearest and most basal state (i.e., *passion drive*) both requires no further manipulation *and* is reflexive.

As *passion* is assigned to the area of emotional clarity, what is emotionally *unclear* the EDC posited to be in the realm of the remaining *effort drives*. Taken together, the *effort drives* that motivate emotionally *unclear* movement were dubbed the emotional *grey-area* by the EDC. The shift away from the *grey-area* and toward clarity the EDC assumed to follow a series of graduations, moving from the *effort drive* that was most emotionally unclear to that which had true clarity, as in *passion*. *Grey-area* may also be understood as validation, or a process of appraisal, and the shift from project to product—the *grey-area* thus echoes the general creative process via proceptivism, as detailed in chapter 3.

In order to discover the emotional hierarchy within the *grey-area*, the EDC considered the *effort factors* of each *effort drive* other than *passion*. According to LMA, the *effort factors* most directly concerned with emotions or feelings are *weight* and *flow*.<sup>35</sup> *Weight* deals with so-called “gut-feelings,” including the basal intentions and will of the mover, and can be compared in many contexts to an anchor that grounds the individual in movement. *Flow* more specifically involves emotional feeling, yet tends to direct emotional feeling externally, and thus is less introspective than *weight*. Because *weight* and *flow* best relate to emotions within the *effort factors*, the EDC presupposed that the *effort drives* which exclude these *factors* vie for the weakest emotional *drive* within the *grey-area*. (In LMA, the *effort drives* that exclude *weight* and *flow* are *vision* and *action*, respectively).

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Considering *weight* has an internal quality, then by proceptivism it should belong more closely to *passion*. Hence, *weight* deals with products, or emotions (or at least aspects of emotions) that have some relative finitude. *Weight* must then weigh between options (no pun intended), and make a sensible order of products. So, it is again ironic that what is introspective and reflexive, and thus less connected to direct reasoning, is nevertheless active in reasoning by its own nature. That is to say, emotional clarity in dance does not emerge out of mindless effort but planful commitment, though it returns inward. *Weight*, in this way, involves individual choice and can be further described by proceptivism as a product of *convention*, as discussed in chapter 2. In addition, the compulsion behind *weight* could be said to be *logical compulsion* since, though inward and possibly reflexive, *weight* is propelled by deliberation and commitment. By contrast, *flow* appears to be associated with *gross compulsion* in its general state, which accounts for its external direction. Therefore, *flow* could be said to be oriented toward conformity, since its outward motion necessitates assimilation. *Flow* is indeed emotional, but it is more precisely an emotional impulse that is directly and externally expressed.

*Action drive* at first appears to be the most likely candidate for the basal *grey-area drive*. *Action drive* is generally regarded in LMA to be the least involved with feeling and the only *drive* that is specifically non-emotional.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, *action drive* is known in LMA as a *transformative drive* influenced by *flow*. That is to say that *action* is “transformed” by *flow* as *flow* takes up the place of other *factors* and thus becomes different *drives*. However, despite the standard LMA descriptions of *action*, the EDC thought *action drive* inappropriate to *The Kiln* as the initial *drive* in the *grey-area*.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> The EDC did not mean to contradict LMA, and recognizes *action* as the least connected to emotions among the *effort drives*.

In terms of proceptivism, the transformative function of *action drive* in-relation to the external propulsion of *flow* obviously represents the evolution of project into product, by way of validation. Granted, the assimilative aspect of *flow* causes the *factor* to be prone to conformity and lumped in with *gross compulsion*. However, what pushes project into product must be initially compelled. *Flow* acting as an outward expression provides a sign-complex that may be further interpreted in query, resulting in product. Yet, whilst *action* by itself excludes the *factor* of *flow*, it includes *weight* and therefore involves personal intention. Because the EDC set up *passion* as the ideal emotive *drive*, it follows that the *drive* farthest from *passion* would have an opposite orientation. To elucidate, the orientation of *passion* is inward, therefore it is the *drive* whose orientation is most opposed to introversion that the EDC placed farthest away from *passion*, and at the bottom of the *grey-area drives*. Logically then, the *grey-area* for *The Kiln* must begin with the *drive* that excludes *weight*.

*Vision drive*, without *weight*, has no personal intention, and though possessing of the factor *flow* it is nevertheless orientated, in this regard, toward external sensations. On the whole, *vision drive* can be considered an extreme extroversion, often described in LMA as being “out-of-body,” and in this way acting outside the personal *kinesphere*.<sup>38</sup> It is therefore *vision drive* that the EDC set as the initial *drive* within the *grey-area*, followed naturally by *action* (the other *drive* that excludes one of the emotive *effort factors* of *flow* or *weight*). The *drive* that is at the top of the *grey-area*, and therefore closest to *passion*, is the remaining *spell drive*.

*Spell drive* retains the *effort factors* *flow* and *weight* and thus is closer on the emotional scale to *passion*, yet it is exclusionary of the *effort factor time*, a term in LMA that refers to the dancer’s ability to make intuitive decisions that concern the duration or timing of

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<sup>38</sup> Valerie Preston-Dunlop, “Nature of the embodiment of choreutic units in contemporary choreography” (PhD diss., Laban Centre, 1981).

movement. *Time* in this way can either be *sustained* or *quick*, but always consciously consumes some amount of actual time. Therefore, according to the EDC, *spell* pushed the envelope of the *grey-area*—though without *time*, *spell* misses an essential component to distinguish it as a *drive* with apparent emotional clarity. This makes sense by way of proceptivism, being that *time* necessitates decision-making it must be logically compelled, falls within convention, and is therefore committed. These are aspects that are shared by the aforementioned *weight*, and so *time* is likewise closely associated with *passion*.

Emotions are of course complicated, though one can certainly review the quality of an emotion in the general sense. For the purposes of choreographic method, the EDC categorized emotional quality into three general types: *ambiguous*, *negative*, and *positive*. What the EDC calls *ambiguous* refers to emotions that are unclear and therefore fall within the *grey-area*, and in this way relate to the working ceramic metaphor as the amorphous state of clay. When emotions become clear they move toward either *negative* or *positive* qualities of emotion, labeled by the EDC as *emotional polarities* (see Appendix C). The EDC viewed this movement from *ambiguity* to either of the *emotional polarities* as representative of the clay taking artistic form and eventually becoming fire-hardened in the kiln. As clear emotions reach either of the *emotional polarities* they are further expressed by the *effort element polarity* of the corresponding movements. In other words, if an emotion expressed in movement reaches the *emotional polarity* it is expressed by either an *indulgent* or *fighting effort element polarity*. For example, anger, an emotion with a *negative* quality, in movement is expressed by the *fighting polarity*. Conversely, the *negative* quality of grief would be displayed in dance by the *indulgent polarity*.

The *element polarities* neatly correspond in proceptivism to the dimensions of assimilation and manipulation. Similar to the *element polarities* there is an interplay and interdependence between the two. In assimilation, there are aspects that make it appear to fit as a cognate for the *indulgent polarity*. What is *indulgent* must yield to the character of the *factor*, and thus it gives-in to the literal spatial movement that occurs.<sup>39</sup> This yielding quality is necessarily drawn toward a preexisting *effort factor*, which can be seen in Buchler's terms as a dependency on a previous or present manipulation. Assimilation also functions with this sort of dependency, and it yields in a performative manner in the sense that it has a spectatorial aspect. The pull of assimilation emanates a clear but almost automatic communication, it must accept the force it yields to. Manipulation, on the other hand, is purposeful and directed. There is a deliberation involved with manipulation that comes from the individual acting as agent, rather than the spectatorial reaction in assimilation (which may or may not be self-aware of the act). Manipulation hence corresponds to the *fighting polarity*, which comes up against the force of *factor* rather than gives way to it. Thus the *fighting polarity* by nature is required to make deliberate choices, and acts with purpose.

According to the EDC's choreographic method, emotions expressed in movement have the ability to move between the *negative* and *positive polarities* but they do so only between opposite *effort elements*. Therefore anger, a *fighting negative* emotion, would not move directly to joy in the *positive polarity*, as joy shares the *fighting effort element*. Anger however could, as per the EDC choreographic method, move toward relief in the *positive polarity*, as relief is an *indulgent effort element*. On the other hand, movement within the *emotional polarities* may occur between opposite *effort elements* but is not restricted to an either/or scenario. In this case,

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<sup>39</sup> When the dancer is naturally drawn into one direction, this phenomena is commonly referred to as "spatial pull" or "spatial tension," often (but not only) associated with the *indulgent polarity*.

the emotion of anger in movement may shift to a *negative* emotion within the *indulgent effort element*, such as grief, but anger can also move to another dance expression within the *fighting polarity*. Movement along the *cross of axis* (see Appendix C) is therefore only laterally inflexible. In addition, emotive dance movements in *The Kiln* shift through the *grey-area*, or *axis*, on their way toward *passion*, however the duration of *ambiguity* is seemingly unlimited (with the exception perhaps of extreme timing) and can be near-instantaneous, drawn-out, or any timing in between.

The shift from *ambiguity* to the resulting clarity (i.e., *emotional polarity*) is paralleled in *The Kiln* with the creative process of ceramics (see Appendix A). This process begins with the liquid amorphous state of clay, as the artist mixes the clay into a solid element. *Vision drive* corresponds to this stage in the ceramic process—without *weight* it has no inherent body that may be molded. The next stage is the gathering of the mixed clay into a solid mass and kneading into a workable clump. *Action drive* relates to this stage as it, moving from *vision*, acquires *weight* and therefore becomes solid, though unformed, and begins to connect to the artist's intention. *Spell drive* is externally connected and thus runs alongside the ceramic process of placing the clay on the wheel, though without *time* this occurs prior to spinning the wheel. Finally, with *passion drive* there is the stage where ceramicists “throw” the clay, as in they form the clay on the wheel. The wheel now spins, as *passion* has acquired *time*, and without space the artist becomes the insular sculptor, forming the clay into an artistic object (shown in *The Kiln* choreography as emotional clarity) that is then glazed and fire-hardened by the kiln. For proceptivism, the process is reflective not only of utterance as creative process but of *evidential compulsion*, which I have argued in chapter 3 propels art.



As always with choreography, the number of dancers on stage must be considered. With *The Kiln*, the EDC cast five dancers to perform the choreography, as this number best corresponds with the intended choreographic configurations of dancers. The EDC viewed the theme of the ceramic creative process as best represented by the ratio 4:1, wherein four dancers act together as clay and one dancer performs the role of artist (see Appendix B). *The Kiln* choreography aimed to have each dancer within the clay role perform movements appropriate to the developmental stage in the ceramic creative process. The proximity between the dancers within the clay role also corresponds to the relevant point in the ceramic creative process. In this way, the greatest distance between the clay dancers occurs at the beginning stage in the ceramic creative process (motivated by *vision*), developing alongside the process toward the result (motivated by *passion*), coinciding with the closest proximity between the clay dancers.

Here, too, we see how choreographic method can easily mirror process in proceptivism. *The Kiln* intuitively revealed artistic intention, and demonstrated the compulsion behind proceptive realization, which in the previous chapter I asserted as central to proceptivism. Likewise, *The Kiln* modeled well how this compulsion is evidenced in validation. The path of clay to ceramic, or *vision* to *passion* performed in dance, both illustrated validation and was exhibitively of this validation's data. In addition, *The Kiln* told a personal story of the dancer, of a "formative experience," which in practice also echoed the artist's "self-discovery" as discussed in chapter 3.

Granted, proceptivism emphasizes the role of process over *finished* product in art—even the *products of art*, which compose a "completed work of art," have only *relative* finality. That is to say, even if we are to dissect a "work of art" into its smaller proceptive units we see a

substance that is relative, just as the “work of art” itself represents only the tip of the iceberg of what the creative act entails (is the “completion” truly cumulative of the entire creative process?). In proceptivism, as I mentioned in chapter 3, adjustive manipulation in art is the manifested “self-in-process,” and this exploratory and adaptive process leads to an “experimental decision,” or several. Moreover, the creative process continues in proception past its exhibitiv function, if in no other way than in communication, be it symmetrical or asymmetrical, social or reflexive.

The EDC’s own particular method echoes the general creative process as understood by proceptivism, and in fact made its own *actual* process exhibitiv. Moments of improvisation caused “performance” of *The Kiln* to reveal new aspects of expression dependent on the night audience members observed, making each showing slightly different and each showing representative of a “rehearsal” or window into process. This quality was also woven into the structure of how the choreography was executed. For example, the dancers acting as clay did so in a single unit, though the EDC did not always have these dancers performing precisely the same choreography as one another. Rather, the degree of choreographic uniformity was affected by proximity, and likewise by the corresponding developmental stage in the ceramic creative process. That is, the more proximate the clay dancers were to each other the more uniformed movements became. When dancers were most proximate, movements corresponded to the result of the ceramic creative process and were thus motivated by *passion*, having passed through the other *drives* within the *grey-area*. Moreover, as *passion* movements acted within the personal space of the dancer, uniformity functioned as one total *kinesphere* shared between the clay dancers, though representative of the individual and, in this way, insular.

The single dancer acting as artist was mirrored by the clay dancers (in either movement quality or, once the clay is uniformed, actual choreography) in every way except proximity, as the artist was in the foreground of the audience perspective. The artist role is in this sense a highlighted version of the story being told (i.e., the individual formative experience, as the attention of the audience is naturally attracted to the single dancer outside a group). However, the casting of artist dancer and clay dancers was not rigid. *The Kiln* had complete interchangeability between the clay dancers and the artist dancer so that at any point the artist dancer could switch roles with one of the clay dancers, and vice versa. This switch occurred as a choreographic choice to bring to the forefront the various stories, or formative experiences, to be expressed by the individual dancer acting as the artist. Therefore the outcome was that each of the five dancers had at least one turn in the role of artist, giving each dancer the opportunity to tell their story (hence emotional pattern or formative experience) through movement. The role of improvisation showcased a “pattern” as also in-process, though recognizable as a general categorization of the experience (just as someone might utter the proverbial “I’m still processing that experience”).

This method again reflects proceptivism in that it made use of proceptive direction and domain which naturally overlap with *kinesphere* (which I elaborate on in the following section) and also proceptive dimensional movement along the *grey-area*, with *drives* serving as cognate for compulsion, and the dance itself (or execution of a process) being cognate for convention. The role of the dancer in focus further supports the proceptivist idea of “self-discovery,” or proceptive realization, with its exhibitivistic aspect functioning as both a reveal of discovery and as active query in real-time, providing the data that substantiates validation and utterance.

The choreographic method developed for *The Kiln* not only aimed to better understand and dissect the creative process of the EDC, but also aspired to provide something artistically

fresh and new to the dance world. In this way, the EDC attempted to contribute to the ever-broadening scope of contemporary dance. Moreover, the EDC hoped that the choreographic ambition of *The Kiln* merged accordingly with method and achieved some degree of artistic and aesthetic poignancy, albeit in an unorthodox manner. The EDC believes that emotions, *negative* or *positive*, become profoundly articulate once expressed through the medium of dance, and consequently possess the potential to be beautiful. By way of proceptivism, this becomes apparent in viewing the “self-in-process,” built upon the metaphor of ceramics in *The Kiln*, for which clay can be seen fundamentally as the transition of project into product, of procept, validation, and so on. In addition, however, through the proceptivist lens we can view *The Kiln* as active query, as a process of adjustive manipulation and assimilation, involving the dancer as both actor and spectator, as well as the true spectator to “performance,” who witnesses the data of validation.

### **LMA- kinespheric directions**

To reemphasize from chapter 3, “query is deliberative manipulation,”<sup>40</sup> which means that our process of query in dance must follow specific parameters of exploration, even if it not be “product driven” (e.g., dance improvisation). Though the theory of human judgment may provide opaque definitions of these constraints for a physical application, these parameters become more clearly defined when looking to dance theory, or LMA. In particular, kinespheric direction and kinesphere as cognate to proceptive direction and domain, respectively. To clarify, Buchler claims that the structure of an individual’s experience “would be the proceptive domain; and the process or movement of his experience would be the proceptive direction.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the

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<sup>40</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 68.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

content of experience is constituted by the individual's procepts.<sup>42</sup> There is thus obvious potential for these procepts to function as ingredients to choreographic process, which I suggest should be included in future study. However, what should be underlined here is that Bucher has, on a very fundamental level, related proceptive direction to movement, and thus the constraints of movement to proceptive domain.

In LMA, the dancer or mover functions in much the same way. According to effort-shape choreutics and kinetography—Laban's theory of kinetics and the system of recording movement ("Labanotation")<sup>43</sup>—the *kinesphere* comprises all the immediate-reachable space of the mover without taking another step.<sup>44</sup> In this context, it is easy to place Buchler's notion of domain: the constraints of the mover mirrors his proceptive order. Just as the proceptive domain is not ultimately defined but fluid and indefinite, the dancer may shift spatially, repositioning kinesphere. It is both an exact and fuzzy bubble. Within kinesphere, and throughout movement, there is kinespheric direction along a dimension. The dimensions, which themselves operate within three general or "cardinal" planes (frontal, median, and horizontal), can be thought of as a cross-section of the kinesphere, corresponding to the Cartesian x, y, and z axes. These three dimensions are commonly labeled as lateral, vertical, and sagittal. Within each dimension, there are two possible directions, yet only one possible choice for the mover. However, it is important to note that this choice can be made an indefinite number of times, change in an instant, and do so in multiple capacities (e.g., wiggling fingers), limited only by the physical constraints of the body. Hence, kinespheric dimensions are by no means flat in the Cartesian sense, they apply globally to the entirety of kinesphere.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation* (New York, NY: New Directions, 1954), 6.

<sup>44</sup> Dell, *A Primer*, 69.

The fact that dance and human movement, according to LMA, fundamentally requires *choice*, exactly reflects the principle of convention, found in Buchler's theory. Just as I have detailed previously, proceptivism emphasizes choice and convention as essential aspects to dance, as well as art in a general sense. So we see again how easily and naturally dance theory, on even the most basic level, naturally aligns with proceptivism and the theory of human judgment. Furthermore, just as each dimension in LMA has one possible direction, so too does the dancer or individual have one proceptive direction, which Buchler stresses as a "metaphysical fact."<sup>45</sup> Granted, Buchler asserts that there is one unitary motion of the individual, and in LMA there may appear to be multiple directions. However, according to LMA, the individual could still be considered metaphysically intact according to human judgment, because the choice of movement dictates one direction; two limbs moving in different dimensions nevertheless enact singular decisions of one direction each. LMA thus illustrates the singularity of direction through its concept of dimension.

### **Communication**

What occurs in dance happens, unavoidably, within a dancer's kinesphere, and thereby in the physicalized proceptive domain. Moreover, as I've shown, like all art, dance communicates, even privately or reflexively, and it does so with movement (and even a static body requires movement to be placed in its arrangement). What this fact further implies is that the products of dance (in its domain) involuntarily signal, whether these signals be received or validated or not. Buchler argues that "whatever emanates from any proceptive domain as a product"<sup>46</sup> can signal as an act or assertion. He reassures that "acts and assertions are products," and that "the same

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<sup>45</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 10.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

[principle] applies to the constituents of acts, such as movements and gestures, and to the constituents of assertions, such as words and other types of signs.”<sup>47</sup>

To elucidate, the products of a proceptive domain signal, and the constituents of which are signs. Buchler clarifies that a *sign* is “that which serves to represent or interpret a natural complex and which is itself interpretable.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, “signs are essential to communication, but it is a mistake to think that the materials of communication are exclusively signs.”<sup>49</sup>

However, the case may be that dance is *never* composed of any material that is not also a sign, for it works exclusively with the human body. Buchler likely shares this view, although does not specify any aspect of body as not a sign. Buchler states, “We cannot arbitrarily or antecedently limit what may and what may not function as a sign... a gesture may influence understanding more than a verbal explanation.”<sup>50</sup> Again, this notion resounds “that actions speak louder than words;” perhaps dance operates as the most metaphysically appropriate articulation of this proverb.

Granted, “there is no way of determining precisely the limits or the extent of a sign-situation.”<sup>51</sup> However, the human body and its movement is entirely the property of the human, and thus cannot exist outside of an interpretable form of human communication. A rock, by contrast, is not inherently communicable, unless it is imbued (either physically or conceptually) with a meaningful sign. A rock that holds a symbolic function for one culture might not for another, and therefore communicates nothing. The symbolic function can even be fickle if the rock is sculpturally modified, though not recognizably so for a different community. The human

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 31.

body, however, is quite literally embodied with an indeterminate potential for signs. The human body, in this capacity, is itself a sign.

The question that follows, then, is if dance is exclusive to the body. The choreographer William Forsythe has recently challenged the common assumption that dance requires the human body. In 2014, Forsythe “choreographed” *Black Flags*, a computer programmed routine for robotic limbs to wave black flags. Forsythe was adamant that this creative effort was genuine choreography.<sup>52</sup> Although, even in this animatronic performance, the body remains our safety net that allows confidence in our explorations—the body as choreographer, an undeniable precedent to *Black Flags*, creates the space that becomes nonlimiting to sign-material, as well as opens the door to multimedia discovery, be it animatronic or otherwise. It should be noted also that the dancer may manipulate props, various instruments, use voice, and wear costume, but all could be easily viewed as physical extensions of body. In other words, body is still a presence, and even in accounts of choreography where the body is not immediate and physical, dance nevertheless *communicates*—that is, if we are to accept Forsythe’s flag work, and others like it, as choreography in the first place. However, continuing to humor this idea of dance reaching outside of its own physical body, and thus dealing directly with non-sign material, it is important to further stress that dance must still communicate. This is because the non-sign material is as yet a product of proceptive domain, and by extension a product of the body’s kinesphere, albeit metaphysically.

According to Buchler, each product holds potential to communicate, and each product a judgment that is part of the “proceiver’s world,” or proceptive domain, and the proceptive direction. He writes:

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<sup>52</sup> Louise Neri, “William Forsythe: Choreographic Objects,” *Gargosian Quarterly*, Oct. 23, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgQYc5xJc5w>)



“The product... has a voice... Every product is a judgment. A judgment is a pronouncement: every product is a commentary on the proceiver’s world as well as a faint image of the proceptive direction. It is a version, a rendition of nature, born of manipulation... Any product, moreover, can function to communicate.”<sup>53</sup>

In sum, proceptivism contends that dance communicates, either by signs (as it may always do), or by products that are of non-sign material. This communication “requires individual direction”<sup>54</sup> and, in turn, direction requires movement. Even more succinctly put: movement communicates, and communication moves. In considering this indelible link between dance and communication, dance once again becomes a most convenient candidate for applying the principles of proception. However, that communication is fundamental to dance (even in its farthest distance from an immediately present human) is clear enough, it remains to show what *types* of communication (in terms of Buchler’s theory) dance most readily utilizes.

According to the theory of human judgment, dance appears to function initially, and perhaps most obviously, within *reflexive* communication. This is primarily the result of validation in art (and by extension dance) originating privately. Buchler describes reflexive communication as “that species of communication wherein an individual both manipulates and interprets signs, or communicates with himself.”<sup>55</sup> Dance meets and exceeds this criteria; dance intimately self-communicates because the dancer’s manipulation is a manipulation of the dancer’s own body, which is inherently of a sign. Further, these signs are at first interpreted privately by the dancer, even if it is abstract or impressionable. Dance thus cannot help but be both manipulating and interpreting.

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<sup>53</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 47. Emphasis my own.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

Of course, the arts in general could be said to achieve reflexive communication, especially concerning private validation, but dance is among the cleanest examples—the human who does not simultaneously manipulate and interpret ceases to move. Or more dramatically put, ceases to have a body. Granted, Forsythe’s work in robotics makes aspects of communication more problematic, but as I have stressed earlier, there is nonetheless body present in this type of work, and this body or bodies must manipulate and interpret, or validate, at first privately, be it signs or non-sign (yet communicable) material. And on the point of interpretation, Buchler makes the assumption that “any attempt to determine an instance of sign-manipulation is relative to some cross section of the proceptive domain.”<sup>56</sup> Again, here we see a cognate to the dimensions of LMA, which cut through space as a cross section to kinesphere. What is reflexive is thereby fundamentally a continuation of movement, and thus appropriate to dance.

But dance is not limited to reflexive communication. Rather, all three modes of communication in Buchler’s theory of human judgment occur within dance, just as all modes of communication generally operate side by side. *Symmetrical communication*, for instance, works as “both an instrument of animal survival and a vehicle of abstract knowledge.”<sup>57</sup> On this point dance also offers a perfect analog: the medium emerges from the most basic form of human survival, which is physical existence (i.e., the body), while also producing artistic abstractions. In addition, symmetrical communication has been described by Buchler as “both the condition of awareness and the fruit of awareness.”<sup>58</sup> In this way, also, dance clearly applies as an artform, since essential to human movement is body awareness, which simultaneously provides the communicative products of awareness.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

*Asymmetrical* communication is a less apparent cognate for dance, primarily because its packaging is ultimately unfamiliar. Buchler explains that “the artist may be said to communicate asymmetrically with the spectator by contributing new elements for proceptive assimilation and manipulation.”<sup>59</sup> But the interpretive latitude of these new elements becomes removed from the communicator to an indefinite degree, as this communication is “best understood through its influence of subsequent communication.”<sup>60</sup> Though communication in this mode may easily ricochet out of awareness, hence both the communication’s path into understanding and its descent from understanding occur asymmetrically. Conversely, dance manufactures percepts with the body (a medium that is immediately recognized by both dancer and spectator). However, the dancer nevertheless delivers new concepts via embodiment. The body therefore *becomes* the notion; it is transformed like any other artistic medium and made manifest; the “articulation is realization.”<sup>61</sup>

### **Spectatorship**

As mentioned earlier, *manipulation* and *assimilation* can function interchangeably. Dance clearly demonstrates this concept for it achieves an embodied fusion of actor and spectator. This is important to note, as Buchler emphasizes that the individual in the proceptive direction is “both actor and spectator, literally and inevitably.”<sup>62</sup> What could be more inevitable than the medium of the human body? Only in the most inchoate stage of action is the dancer solely an agent, or actor, and perhaps not even then. But in the dancer’s manipulation of the body (which itself is most crucial to dance) there is an immediate and necessary assimilation. Moreover, the body seems to be a natural application of proceptive *dimensions* to art—which, according to

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 18.

Buchler, “occurs in physiological striving as well as in abstract imagination.”<sup>63</sup> With dance, we clearly have both of these dimensional aspects happening at the same time.

While the “assimilative dimension of man does not necessarily entail awareness,”<sup>64</sup> spectatorship does appear to coincide with some level of awareness. This is particularly true for dance, the very act of which is spectatorial. Again, that is not to say that dance demands an audience, but that it requires the dancer to function as spectator. The individual does so while human movement makes manifest, or communicates, the procepts of the dancer. As these procepts unfold, at the instant of movement, the dancer reacts and thereby not only becomes spectator but develops an awareness of some kind. The proceptual reaction itself seems to be more important to becoming spectator than does even a direct knowledge of the procept. Buchler argues, “not by sensing or by knowing does the individual become the spectator, but by responding to the sheer presence of his procepts.”<sup>65</sup>

In essence, as previously discussed, the actor is manipulator, while the spectator assimilates, and these actions are often conjoined, particularly concerning reflexive communication and private validation. Buchler echoes this for art as a whole: “we might understand the activity of art by emphasizing in it the aim of deliberate assimilation... [or], in some other perspective, the manipulative element.”<sup>66</sup> According to this view, it can be said that dance is an ideal artform to explore or manifestly apply Buchler’s ideas on proceptive communication, since the dancer is necessarily both actor/manipulator *and* spectator/assimilator, immediately and concurrently, as well as neutral in potential symmetry of communication (though fundamentally in-communication and reflexive). This inherent link between dancer and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 21.

dancer-as-spectator is made further apparent in Buchler's assertion that "the spectatorial bent resides neutrally... within the proceptive direction."<sup>67</sup> That is to say, the spectatorial potential depends on movement, and thus the dancer in motion becomes at-once spectator.

The dancer-actor's link to spectator is possibly true even for *Black Flags*, since the acting and manipulating body is still present abstractly, in addition to its spectatorship being accomplished through imaginative movement and assimilation. This idea is supported by Buchler's theory, which states: "like manipulation, assimilation occurs in physiological striving as well as in abstract imagination."<sup>68</sup> In essence, by this logic, there cannot be a choreographer who has at least not witnessed and assimilated human movement, and so Forsythe's creation of *Black Flags*, while certainly farther removed from the dancer in action, nevertheless retains a dancer who is abstractly both actor and spectator.

Furthermore, Buchler plainly posits that "every situation is pervaded with a spectatorial aspect."<sup>69</sup> This permeation is presented within his theory alongside that of *meaning* and exhibitiv judgment, which together further blurs the line between spectator and actor. Meaning, particularly as it concerns exhibitiv judgment, "is determined and molded in the (indefinite) scrutiny by which it is spectatorially reanimated."<sup>70</sup> In other words, meaning in exhibitiv judgment is a performance that is fundamentally spectatorial. At surface value, this may seem to provide justification for the performance as culminative of process, or what coalesces the judgment as meaning. However, meaning and exhibitiv judgment, though perhaps relatively final, are nonetheless not fixed. Performance is not ultimately a "finished product" but a byproduct of an overall process contiguous with countless and indefinite performances—or

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 136.

performances that may not traditionally be seen as a true “performance.” And by the same token, the “finished product” is no less a performance than those which comprise the greater process. Essentially, meaning and exhibitive judgment, and thereby performance, never truly leave the dress rehearsal stage, it is continual. Spectatorship in this context is thus not only the performance itself but its meaning.

### **Meaning**

To ask whether or not dance has meaning is therefore to question if dance performs, as it is to ponder if dance possesses exhibitive judgment. In turn, meaning in dance must be linked to the dynamic concurrence of spectator and actor. Though I’ve shown dance to have these qualities, there are other aspects to meaning as it pertains to the theory of human judgment that require attention. To begin, Buchler’s theory describes meaning as “the process by which a perspective is *shaped* or revealed, that is, articulated in communication.”<sup>71</sup> From this definition, we can glean once more an emphasis on process, but it is also clear that dance fulfills manipulation and communication, just as any art does. While both art and dance may be individually difficult to define, it is certainly true that art has both meaning and movement, and that dance is art in movement. Moreover, as previously shown, the dancer accomplishes these stipulations of meaning at the moment the dancer moves. Buchler’s concept of meaning is made that much more apropos to dance with his choice of the word “shape;” if there was any art that made the active shaping in meaning manifest, it is dance. Furthermore, the shaping of perspective Buchler stresses as crucially “participial.”<sup>72</sup> Here there is an element at the root of meaning that not only communicates but engages, and even solo, there is reflexive engagement with community, or a validation that is private.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 134.

Dance, likewise, initiates via private validation and reflexive communication, and so *must* engage, even if it may emanate from a perspectival and individual source. Moreover, though a product in art or dance (like all products) may be said to *have* or *hold* meaning contextually, this context necessarily “reflects a perspective subject to articulation”<sup>73</sup> to be true. Whether reflexive or inclusive of actual community, “the elasticity or variety which may belong to the meaning of certain judgments is made possible by the fact that any judgment, in being assimilated, is contained in or intersects with the perspective of the assimilator.”<sup>74</sup> Engagement is a communicable and perspectival exchange, but also that the elasticity of this meaning is contingent on the articulation itself. As for dance, what could be inherently more elastic in its articulation? Dance, which shapes meaning with the elasticity of its own body, in effect carries both the lightest and heaviest of meaning, depending on the spectator’s assimilation. Hence, dance overall, by this logic, cannot help but have meaning—to dance is to mean something.

### **Validation**

As we have already established, validation for Buchler is a process of appraisal, but it is also that “in the proceptive process, validation is no less fundamental than discovery.”<sup>75</sup> Appraisal takes on the form of active investigation within the proceptive process—not just in the form of query, but to uncover a relative truth. Buchler explains:

“Every judgment... is a tacit appraisal... It can be expanded to reveal as part of its meaning some discrimination... It is an extraction from an environment of something specific to the exclusion of something else.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 141.

This concept holds potential for dance, and it becomes necessary to ask: Does the artform extract and reveal what is tacit understanding or metaphysical discrimination? Can dance explore its judgments or achieve self-awareness in this particular way?

Perhaps one of the easiest ways to answer these questions is to explore if dance achieves commitment in its judgments. Buchler makes the further assertion that “every judgment implicitly seeks justification, because of the commitment incurred by the proceiver in judging.”<sup>77</sup> That is to say, it is through commitment in the process of proception and judging that drives, implicitly, toward validation. However, in consideration of the interdependence *commitment* shares with *validation*, the question of whether judgments in dance are committed can be rephrased to ask if judgment in dance validates. Granted, I have already shown this to be the case, and that for dance validation originates privately. But more directly, I would like to address the validation process in dance by means, specifically, as an act of creation, since it is of course art in motion. However, the intention behind this movement, which instantaneously acts to create, is not always immediately known by either dancer/choreographer or spectator apart.

LMA attempts to delve into the general aspects of intent with an analysis of *effort*, but outside of LMA’s categorical approach (or cousins to it, e.g., Viewpoints<sup>78</sup>) there exists no central academic guide to awareness in this regard. Yet, Buchler claims that “all creation implies a satisfaction of the creative intent or demand, [which] is the very core of the validation process.”<sup>79</sup> Clearly, Buchler has suggested that reveal of intent to some degree is central to validation. Once more, validation does not include reaching some fixed, conclusive, end-result. Instead, validation seeks to discover relative contexts. On this point, Buchler writes: “validation

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group, 2005).

<sup>79</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 141.



aims to secure, not necessarily resolve.”<sup>80</sup><sup>81</sup> These securities we can view as commitment, whose awareness is an implicit discovery, crucial to the validation process. Specific to the creative process, however, we begin to more clearly see *commitment* as parallel to (or semantically synonymous with) *intent*. To validate in dance, therefore, is to come to the core of our intentions. To uncover intention in dance—be it somewhat describable or abstract and indescribable—is to detect or sense the inherent pull toward justification, and thereby our deepest commitment to utterance.

More broadly applied, this means that with the creative process itself we can readily expose the validation process in proception, which does not need a final outcome but requires security. This security is perhaps an endless pursuit, just as with the Socratic method, which Buchler firmly attaches himself to. It is a journey led by the “spirit of inquiry... a technique of detecting insecurity in ideas in order to attain greater security.”<sup>82</sup> With this in mind, the obvious task becomes to emulate inquiry within artistic confines. Most simply, our task in dance could be driven by the questioning of utterances (“of any judgment and its claim, it is always possible to ask, simply but irresistibly, why?”).<sup>83</sup> However, Buchler stresses:

“Validation is not necessarily associated with method... For methodical validation, past experience is the fund of past instances... [whereas] for proceptive validation, past experience is the basis of familiarity with the present circumstances of judging.”<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, we do not need to rely exclusively on strict method but rather compliment with experience. For example, dance can provide such an experience in improvisation, for

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>81</sup> To clarify, according to Buchler, there *can* be a sense of *resolution* to validation, but it is not *final*.

<sup>82</sup> Buchler, *Toward a General Theory*, 142.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 143.

“spontaneous insight is the unregulated use of the available fund of objects and products.”<sup>85</sup> It is thus my hope that proceptivism legitimizes dance as a philosophically rich potential in all its forms.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In this study, I have emphasized a significant scarcity among the existing literature with concerns to the theory of human judgment and its relationship with art. Moreover, I have highlighted that any use of Buchler's theory in discussions on art remain scant (including among Buchler's own works), and any applications of Buchler's philosophy to artistic creation seem to be indirect at the very best (not to mention few and far between). This disparity is present despite the fact that Buchler made it clear on numerous accounts that there is a definite need for the theory of human judgment to progress in the direction of artistic subjects. Granted, Buchler himself initiated this effort with *The Main of Light*, which reviews poetry on terms of judgment and proception. However, as I have mentioned, *The Main of Light* does more to remove poetry from the context of art than it does to understand it in that way. Hence, because of these deficiencies in the literature, my study has ventured to begin to purposefully fill such gaps.

As a necessary starting point, I first took into account the primary concepts in Buchler's theory and applied these ideas to discussions on art and art-making. Essential to this endeavor has thus been an exploration into proception and utterance, both as a foundation within the theory of human judgment itself, and as a study of how these fundamental notions correspond broadly to art. Yet, from this generalization, various components have emerged that are special to the relationship of proception and utterance with art—the result has been the establishment of proceptivism's core principles. Subsequently, I applied these principles to thoughts on dance, as well as an analysis of choreographic process: for the latter, using LMA and its cognates with proceptivism to illustrate how proceptivism naturally functions within choreography, and how proceptivism might be utilized to inform dance creation in this way.

In a nutshell, my study has thereby sought to satisfy two basic assertions: first, that the mechanics of proception are analogous to the creative process in art, and that proception *is* itself a creative process, and so likely crucial to all creative effort. Through the lens of proception and the theory of human judgment, I argue that we can gain new understandings of art and art-making. In addition, we can use this lens to inform art's creative acts, an overall approach that I have called "proceptivism." Secondly, I advocated for dance as an ideal medium for the exploration of proceptivism, providing clarity and awareness of proception in art, particularly by means of the choreographic process. However, this study has meant more to me than just a collection of new terms that might one day have the honor of being thrown into the great heap of performance theory jargon. It has even meant more to me than acquiring a new philosophic perspective. Rather, what this investigation has done is influence me as a creator, specifically a choreographer.

In my analysis of choreographic process, by way of proceptivism, I have used my own choreography as a working example. While it is true that hindsight is 20/20, proceptivism did not so much offer me the opportunity to uncover "mistakes" I would want to fix, but a self-affirming awareness of an inherently creative process that has strengthened my creative choices and made new discoveries more possible. In other words, this analysis of my work has hinted at the potential an awareness of proceptivism might have in the actual act of creation. This approach should be developed by artists in the future to truly begin to understand the implications of including proceptivism as a guiding force in choreography (or any artistic medium for that matter).

Human movement is, as it is, a creative act endowed with procept. The moving body cannot help but be so. Proceptivism, therefore, does not invent anything new with dance. Rather,

it gives us a fresh awareness to the metaphysical minutia of our innate creativity, and an analytical view that may help to shape our deliberate creative acts. However, proceptivism in this way does not tell the creative what to do, but instead aids the artist in making informed choices. In part, proceptivism accomplishes this by simply revealing procept or proception in art, which can support the artist in making process manifest. But for the dancer at least, proceptivism also offers a philosophic lexicon that, as I have shown, easily pairs with (and even enhances) present traditions of dance theory and critique, particularly LMA. In addition, by emphasizing process and illuminating creative choice, proceptivism seeks to empower the individual artist. This sense of empowerment I have personally felt possible when reviewing my own work through the lens of proceptivism. It is thus my opinion that this specific aspect of proceptivism as an empowering force is yet another area that should be further studied, especially as it may overlap with well-developed modes of empowerment in theatre and movement, such as Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed.

In essence, proceptivism has the potential to provide a new form of artistic *literacy*, which appears to be particularly true (or perhaps the most readily available) for dance and choreography. We have strived for centuries to make the art of human movement more literate and more profoundly understood by theoretical and philosophic means; to borrow from Buchler's ideas is merely a continuation of this exploration. Hence, the development of proceptivism could also open a necessary avenue of discussion for the expansion of dance scholarship in this vein. Perhaps this type of added literacy may help dance scholarship to keep dance farther from assumption and closer to analysis—or as Laban puts it, to “know a little less and *understand* a little more.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Laban, *A Vision of Dynamic Dance* (Barcombe, UK: Falmer Press, Falmer House, 1984), 78. Emphasis my own.

Buchler has frequently expressed how his theory of human judgment might be propelled forward in research, and art has been a common thread to this point. Yet, including art in the topic of human judgment has only been sparsely done, even by Buchler, and including Buchler's theory to artistic creation is virtually non-existent. Clearly then, art is an overlooked area in the theory of human judgment, and it would be foolish not to pursue this subject to a greater degree. Moreover, the case could easily be made that art is a critical ingredient for the long-term survival of Buchler's theory, not to mention its growth potential. In this light, proceptivism could likely reinvigorate the theory of human judgment, which appears to have unfortunately thinned in the literature of recent years. Additionally, the application of proceptivism to dance frees this potential in a highly accessible manner, which I have advocated for as an important path for future development. It is therefore my hope that this study has not only exposed the natural inclination of proceptivism toward dance and choreography, but laid the appropriate foundation for dance research to grow in that particular direction.

By means of proceptivism I have striven to formulate fresh viewpoints on choreography that both compliment existing dance theory, such as LMA, and help to expound on it. The next step (no pun intended) is now to directly implement the active creation of a choreographic work (or choreography-in-process) utilizing these perspectives in proceptivism and the theory of human judgment, and in so doing discover new ones. Above all, it is my desire that any implementation of proceptivism in dance creation does so as an act of *query*. Buchler has made it clear in his many works that query is central to philosophic discourse and exploration, and implies that art as a "species" of query can act as the "exploratory" aspect that Buchler felt his theory needed. Therefore, art as an exploratory effort in Buchler's theory is essentially what proceptivism is meant to be, and at its heart is query. So too can the query of proceptivism push

the choreographic effort, just as any *project* transforms to *product*, and just as art of any medium is *validated*, be it a “finished work” or self-conscious as an on-going process. In all cases, proceptivism requires application—it must take an active role in artistic endeavor in order to grow in dance, art, or to enhance Buchler’s own theory as the “exploratory” element.

Furthermore, a natural place for applied-proceptivism in dance to progress would be an extended investigation into the interchange between *community* and the individual choreographer within the creative process. This would necessarily include a consideration of *spectatorship* found within the creative work itself, and in its *communication*. I hope also that this investigation into applied-proceptivism would lead toward group efforts in dance creation, with a look at how validation functions within the dynamic of both dyads and larger groups of co-choreographers. Granted, the review of co-choreographed works by proceptivism has already been initiated by me, as *The Kiln* was a collaborative effort. But there needs to likewise be an implementation and consideration of applied-proceptivism by multiple choreographers.

Although I have asserted that the application and consideration of art is crucial to continuing the development of Buchler’s theory; and though I have narrowed this focus to emphasize dance as an ideal medium for the exploration of proceptivism; I also wish that my study might foster more enthusiasm for Buchler’s works, and place a brighter spotlight on the man as a philosopher. In other words, I hope to make both Buchler the philosopher *and* his theory of human judgment more visible. Art and dance alike hold the potential to make Buchler and his work more generally accessible—even when taking into account the necessarily academic character of this initial delivery. My intention is rather for Buchler’s work to also eventually be an embodied experience. I want the philosophic and the organic to comeingle in dance investigations, and I hope that in this way we may better appreciate Buchler’s brilliance.

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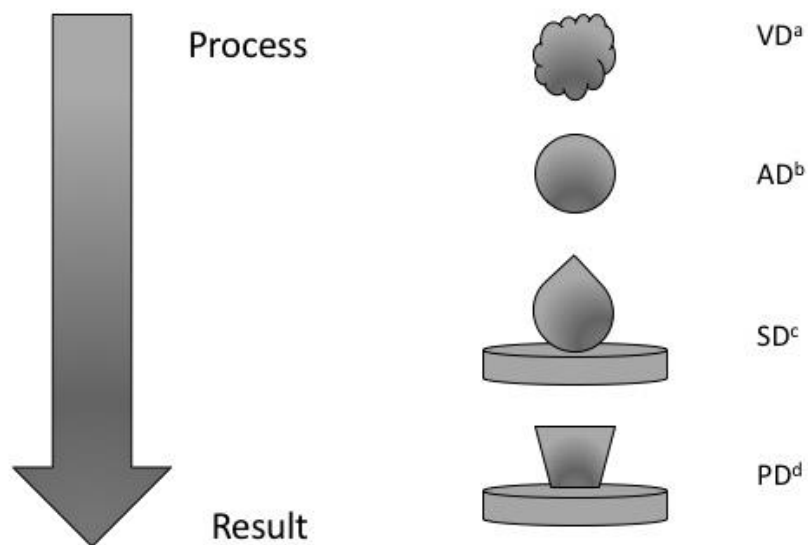
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## APPENDICES

**Appendix A—Process of emotional clarity**

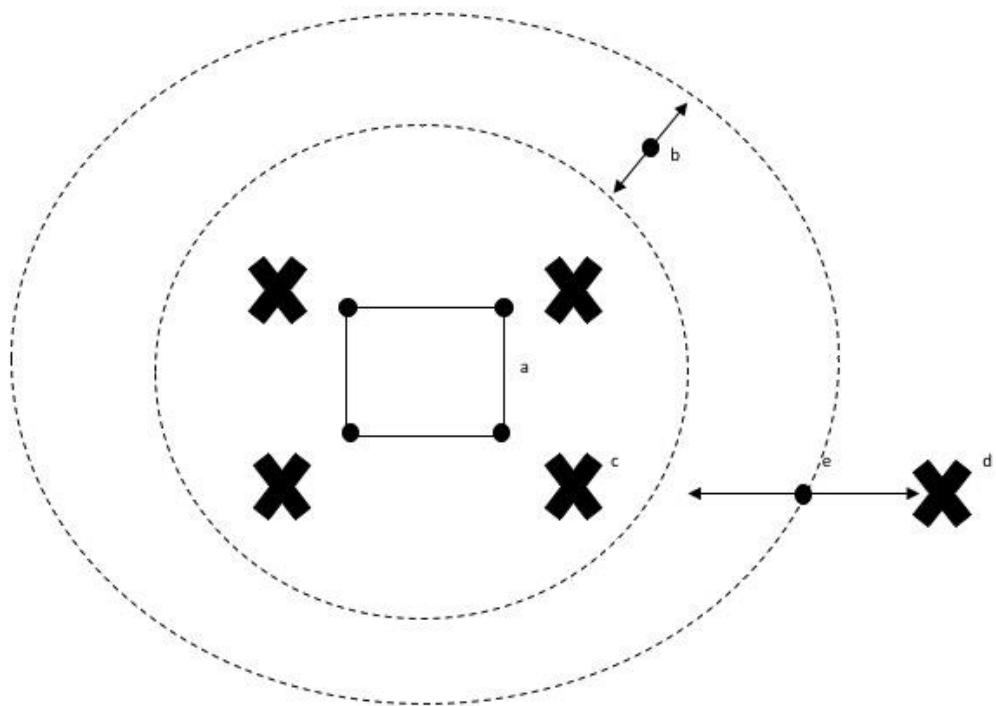
Ceramic creative process as it corresponds to *effort drives* and emotional clarity



- a.) *vision drive* : the mixing of clay, liquid : *ambiguous, grey-area, unclear*
- b.) *action drive* : kneading clay into solid clump : *ambiguous, grey-area, unclear*
- c.) *spell drive* : placing clay on wheel : *ambiguous, grey-area, unclear*
- d.) *passion drive* : clay takes artistic form, end result of process : *emotional polarity, clarity*

## Appendix B—Choreographic configuration for *The Kiln*

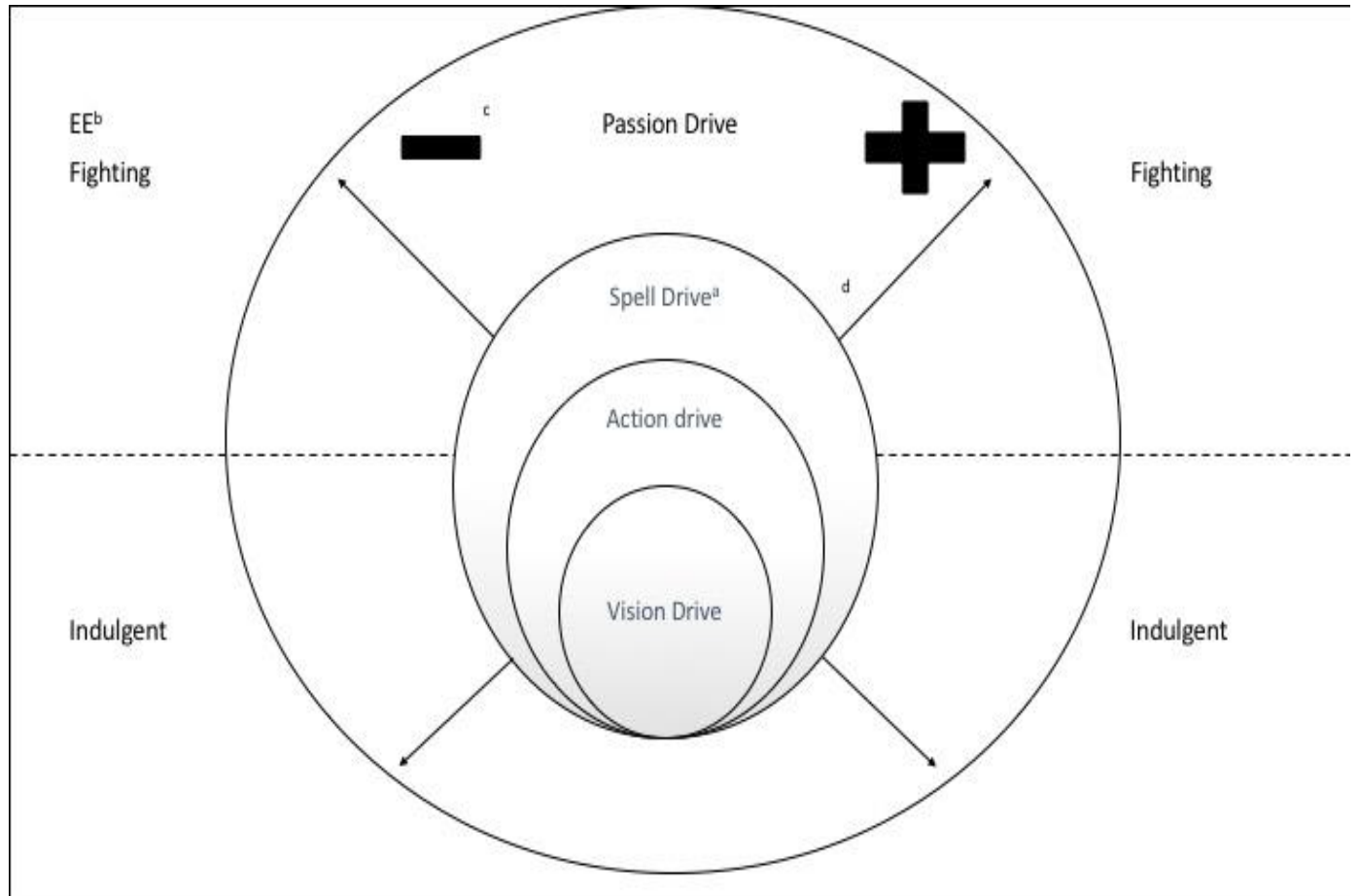
Choreographic configuration, dancer ratio 4:1



- a.) degree of uniformity
- b.) degree of proximity
- c.) clay dancers
- d.) artist dancer
- e.) interchangeability between clay dancers and artist dancer

## Appendix C—Diagram of method for *The Kiln*

Choreographic method illustrated by cross of axis



- a.) axis, or grey-area
- b.) effort element polarities
- c.) emotional polarities
- d.) movement from grey-area, or axis to emotional polarities, i.e., clarity