PRIORITY PROJECTS AND NATURAL COMPLEXES:
PHILOSOPHY AS A MEDIATIOR BETWEEN RELIGION AND SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Priority Projects and Natural Complexes:

Philosophy as a Mediator between Religion and Science

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The relationship between religion and science has undergone tremendous change in the last few hundred years. The Church, once the home to the most powerful scholars and thinkers, has given way to the institutions of scientific development. This relationship has tension that goes beyond the historic and digs into the systemic modalities of reason that are unique to each domain. The metaphysics of natural complexes, as articulated by Justus Buchler, offers a unique conceptual scheme through which both religion and science are restricted and liberated with respect to each other. The thesis presented here is that the philosophical traits that are prevalent in both religion and science allow for philosophy to operate as a mediator between the two complexes. Philosophy, guided by query and ontological parity, is able to both encourage and critique religion and science without subsuming the other.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an exposition and application of the metaphysics of natural

complexes constructed by Justus Buchler in his book aptly named *The Metaphysics of*

Natural Complexes.[1] The purpose of this application is to examine the ways in which

science and religion relate to each other. The argument will also concentrate on the

modalities of philosophy which are operant within religion and science and attempt to

mediate the relationship between religion and science through philosophy.

The paper has four primary objectives which correspond to the four chapters.

First, I will provide an introduction to the primary issue being addressed: the relationship

between religion and science. After a brief history of the interaction between religion and

science I will elaborate the basic structure of the metaphysics of natural complexes.

Second, I will examine the generic complex of religion and attempt to identify points of

ontological priority. Once the points of ontological priority have been identified, I will

employ ontological parity, a notion explained in detail below, and evaluate ways in which

religion can function with practical priorities rather than ontological priorities. Third, I

will examine the complex of science much the same way I examined religion. Points of

ontological priority will be identified and reconfigured into practical priorities that can

operate consistently within ontological parity.

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[1] Buchler, Justus, *Metaphysics of natural complexes*, 2nd., expanded ed. (Albany: State University
of New York Press, 1990).

Fourth, and finally, I will conclude with the work of philosophy as mediator. The philosophical traits that lie within religion and science offers a common discourse through which philosophy can mediate the two as equals. This mediation requires some self-examination of philosophy qua philosophy. Buchler's notion of 'query' as "inventive communication" will be a guiding force for the philosophical work required to move forward.[2]

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[2] Justus Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, (New York, NY: Columbia UP, 1951), 168.

METAPHYSICS AND COMPLEXES

"But in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as cultural posits. The myth of physical objects is epistemologically superior to most in that it has proved more efficacious than other myths as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience." – W.V. Quine[3]

In recent years there has been a rapidly expanding body of work surrounding the relationship between religion and science. The claim has arisen that science, supposedly free from the bondage of classical metaphysis, contains the conceptual apparatus to appropriately categorize and analyze the world. This scientific endeavor is imbued with naturalistic assumptions that operates over and against any type of supernaturalism and usually affirms some type of reductionist program. Some "philosophers have doubted that such a naturalism can give an adequate account of mind, culture, ethics, freedom, or art, that it [naturalism] 'reduces' the most complex human features of reality to the most simple."[4] Moreover, there are a number of lingering questions regarding whether or not a divinity of some sort can be consistently conceptualized within naturalism because the divine is not, by necessity, disconnected from nature but is often articulated as operating outside of nature's constraints. Thus, it has become common for the naturalist to assume an allegiance to a type of metaphysical claim that disallows any type of divine being.

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[3] Willard V. Quine, "The Two Dogmas of Empiricism"*, The Philosophical Review*, (1951, 20-43), 41.

[4] Larwence Cahoone, *Orders of Nature*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 1.

This claim is systematically sublimated within its own system; the claim usually lies in unarticulated premises and hidden metaphysical assumptions.

Opposite the naturalism articulated above there are religious theologies that affirm supernatural events and beings that interact in some limited, or perhaps unlimited, manner with the world we inhabit.[5] The relationship between these two diverse groups is complicated by the interconnectivity which has existed between religious institutions and the development of scientific institutions. In Western history, specifically, the pursuit of natural philosophy which began in Greece, was subsumed within the theological discourse which dominated Europe for centuries. Eventually a conception of natural theology emerged and reconfigured natural philosophy once more.[6] Distancing itself from its semi-theological roots, natural philosophy eventually divided itself up into the standard sciences we recognize today: Physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, etc.

With the specialization and advancement of science the perceived likelihood of supernatural explanations for any observed phenomena became less plausible with seemingly more exhaustive natural explanations of causal chains. A side effect of this was that scientific investigation and education became imbued with naturalist assumptions. While naturalism is not a necessary prerequisite for scientific work, the two are becoming, for better or worse, synonymous. This is a novel development within the study of nature. Religion and science can be traced within the historical narrative to similar instances of generic inquiry and application of reason. However, the routes taken by the sciences and religion (specifically Christianity) within the twentieth and twenty-

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[5] See: Polkinghorne, J. C., *Science and Providence*.
[6] See: Lindberg, David C., and Ronald L. Numbers. *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*.

first centuries have constructed new conceptual frameworks and beliefs that have at least appeared to have caused deep rooted conflict.

The contemporary situation regarding the relationship between religion and science has been shaped largely by two books published in the late nineteenth century: *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* in 1875 By John Draper[7] and *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* in 1896 by Andrew White[8]. These two books promoted a particular view with respect to the relationship between science and religion which eventually became known as conflict thesis. The conflict thesis suggests that there is an inherent intellectual conflict between religion and science. Further, these books argue, European history serves as a case study for the ubiquitous nature of this conflict. Specifically, with regards to Draper and White, the conflict thesis was meant to suggest that religion was a roadblock to the progress of science. Which is to say not only does the conflict thesis posit inherent hostility between religion and science but that science is the superior institution. John Draper concisely described the conflict:

> [The] history of science is not a mere record of isolated discoveries; it is a
> narrative of the conflict of two contending powers, the expansive force of
> the human intellect on one side, and the compression arising from
> tradtionary [sic] faiths and human interests on the other.[9]

 While neither Draper nor White were attempting to put forward an atheistic agenda, they did not want religion interfering with scientific endeavors. Within the conflict thesis lies an assumption that the institutions of religion and science are static rather than historical

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[7] John William Draper, *History of the conflict between religion and science*, 1875, Reprint, (Champaign, Ill.: Project Gutenberg, 1990).

[8] Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1960).

[9] Draper, *History of the Conflict,* vi.

and dynamic. The locus of the conflict, according to Draper and White, lies within conflicting truth claims about the world. However, more recent studies that look into the historical accounts of Draper and White suggest that they over-stated the nature of the conflict within the historical account.[10] Some scholars suggest that the relationship between religion and science is generally free of animosity aside from specific events which are more easily understood as political tension as opposed to a conflict seated within the nature of the two discourses.[11]

The legacy of the conflict thesis lingers within intellectual thought regardless of the issues with its historical accuracy. Some authors in the so-called New Atheist movement such as Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins, suggest that the conflict between religion and science is a necessary product of their respective goals and methodological assumptions. By this account, the historical trajectory of the relationship is of less importance and that the methods or imperatives that each discourse relies upon are intrinsically conflicting. While these more recent works, which harbor deep seated alignment with the conflict thesis, have been critically examined by numerous scholars[12], there is a lacking of new philosophical work which does not privilege either science or religion. Also, arguments have arisen which suggest that both discourses correspond to nonrelated spheres within the human process and thus any conflict between them is

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[10] Gary Ferngren (editor). *Science & Religion: A Historical Introduction*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), ix.

[11] Colin A. Russell, "The Conflict of Science and Religion", *Encyclopedia of the History of Science and Religion*, (New York, 2000), 15.

[12] See work by: Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function,* (Oxford University Press, 1993), David Bently Hart, *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), and Terry Eagleton, , *On evil*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

political rather than intrinsic to their existence.[13] The apparatus offered within this paper might fall, hesitantly, into the latter category. However, unlike its cousins, this paper will offer a metaphysical account of the relationship between religion and science rather than a pragmatic separation. The metaphysics of natural complexes offered will restrict and reinforce both science and religion within their ordinal schemes and offer modes of analysis which do not require one discourse becoming subsumed by the other.

The internally plural discourses which constitute the larger categories of science and religion are organized around particular forms of argumentation and ontological commitments. However, as Alfred North Whitehead puts it, "[the] difficulty in approaching the question of the relations between Religion and Science is, that its elucidation requires that we have in our minds some clear idea of what we mean by either of the terms, 'religion' and 'science.'"[14] I am not interested, for example, in examining the possibility for the existence of God with respect to the Kalam Ontological Argument or the neural patterns associated with 'religious experience'. As we shall, hopefully, see such arguments fall victim to ontological priority, which will be explained shortly, and fail to communicate anything meaningful between religion and science.

What I am interested in, is the broadly abstract notions of both 'religion' and 'science'. As religious endeavors and commitments can vary from individualistic forms of Protestant Christianity to highly communal Buddhist monasteries, and science can range from quantum chemistry to astrophysics. Because of the levels of abstraction, certain individual traits will be necessarily lost. There is no monolithic force of religion

[13] Stephen Jay Gould, *Dinosaur in a haystack: reflections in natural history*, (London: Penguin Books, 1996).

[14] Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the modern world*, (New York: Free Press, 1967), 180.

any more than there is a monolithic force of science. The abstractions 'religion' and 'science' are simply place holders for certain types of inquiry. For our purposes it is the *type* of inquiry that allows for discrimination between the two discourses, not the purposed answers.

From the complex and fluid relationship between religion and science another level of relationships begins to surface: philosophy's relationship with science and religion. This other level emerges because religion and science lack the proper tools to evaluate their relationship with an outside body of discourse without ontological prioritizing commitments. Indeed, religion and science, in their standard forms, make it their goal to internalize and dominate any form of inquiry with their own terminology and demarcations. The apparatus of priority projects within science and religion makes room for, or rather requires, the work of philosophy. There are modalities within the philosophical discourse which are efficacious in their analysis without bearing the burden of ontological priorities which are, I will argue, part of both science and religion as they are currently envisioned. The mode of philosophy most pertinent to our current problem is metaphysics.

The system developed in *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes* by Justus Buchler will be the methodological architecture of this paper. I will begin with a brief introduction to Justus Buchler and his conception of the metaphysics of natural complexes and then express that system with respect to science and religion. I will spend time inside each discourse (or complex, as we adopt the language of our system) attempting to identify specific contours and traits that solidify them as complexes, while unearthing various positions of ontological priority and reformulating those positions in

accordance with ontological parity. After the examination of both science and religion

from within the metaphysics of natural complexes, I will articulate a position in which

philosophy works as a mediator between the two complexes of science and religion.

Further, I will argue that there is a possibility for conflict between religion and science

because their ordinal systems overlap in at least one natural complex which is particularly

important in the human process: causal analysis. This final exposition will be an assertive

culmination of the work within the previous sections.

Buchler was involved in Columbia University for most of his academic career. He

earned his Ph.D. from the Columbia philosophy department in 1938 where he eventually

became a professor and held the Johnsonian Chair in Philosophy.[15] His career at

Columbia, which began 1942 and ended in 1971, was noted for his role as an educator

more than for his original publications which never gained much traction in the world of

academic philosophy. He became a foundational leader in the Contemporary Civilization

program, where his leadership was noted as self-critical and conducive to growth and

development.[16] His role as an advisor to graduate students was one that "exhibited a

serious commitment and responsibility to be rigorous in the coherence, organization and

persuasiveness of one's work. Students could expect from Buchler, as their dissertation

advisor, genuine intellectual challenge as well as responsible, careful criticism at all

states of their work."[17]

His own academic work found itself in a field that was going through a paradigm

shift. Buchler was certainly aware of the shifts in the academy, as evidenced by his

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[15]Sidney Gelber, "Notes and Reflections on Justus Buchler," *Nature's Perspective*, (Albany: State
 University of New York, 1991, 7-14), 8.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 9.

reviews and courses on Dewey, G.E. Moore, Husserl, etc. The originality of his thought is not some type of disconnect where he isolated his thought from the historical currents of philosophic thought. Rather, his work stands in spite of the turn towards language and away from metaphysics. Buchler was more than comfortable interacting with diverse schools of thought. "For example, he disagreed with G.E. Moore on almost all major issues but had a high regard for him and his persistent comment to philosophy."[18] Buchler's place in the history of philosophy is not of a renegade who refused to engage the wider trends in thought. Rather, it is a result of a paradigm shift where the contemporary thinkers were not interested in metaphysical formulations. This certainly was not a malice oversight or an indication of his philosophical rigor, but rather one of emphasis and concern.

His philosophical legacy is not helped with the *prima facie* understanding of "Natural Complexes." Buchler's entire system rests upon the acceptance of this utterly generic, and interestingly, pre-categorical, understanding of being. Systematic philosophy, specifically metaphysics, attempts to articulate methods and categories of understanding reality. Specifically, at least since the Kantian turn, it attempts to understand reality as experienced and lived by humans. Philosophy, in its 20th century actualization, is generally a discussion that includes and features both characters and ideas. The adjectives Hegelian, Kantian, Platonic, Aristotelian, etc., are ubiquitous within contemporary philosophy. Buchler's *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes* is virtually, but not completely, devoid of character discussion and is an attempt at laying the groundwork for utterly novel work. This method stands in contrast, for example, to Whitehead's

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[18] Ibid.

Process and Reality, which spends significant time working with historical philosophers prior to its systematic construction. Whitehead does rather in-depth analysis with Hume, Descartes and Kant.[19] *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes* spends virtually no time relating itself to other philosophers. This makes it difficult to find a way into Buchler's metaphysics within the history of philosophy. This paper will attempt to draw Buchler into conversation with the scholars working around the complexes of religion and science.

The natural complex is the basic and most generic term within Buchler's system. It is pre-categorical in the sense that everything is a natural complex. "Whatever is, in whatever way, is a natural complex."[20] Natural complexes are a particular way of articulating being. However, unlike the historical tradition of being, natural complexes can refer to referents without any empirical substance. "Relations, structures, processes, societies, human individuals, human products, physical bodies, words and bodies of discourse, ideas, qualities, contradictions, meanings, possibilities, myths, laws, duties, feelings, illusions, reasonings [sic], dreams-all are natural complexes."[21] The entire discourse of metaphysics shifts from what is real, to in what way are things real. Similar to, but transcending, the statement of Quine quoted above, existence qua existence ceases to be a useful means of discrimination, rather the way in which things exist becomes the primary mode of analysis. This shifting of focus leads to fruitful and interesting philosophy. As Robert Wolff notes, "As is often the case in philosophy, the answer lies in

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[19] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and reality,* Corrected ed. (New York: Free Press, 1978), 131-156.

[20] Bucher, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes,* 1.

[21] Ibid.

changing the question."[22] Natural complexes are a mode of thought that disrupts the fiction-real dichotomy and wonders at that ways in which things are. The generic-ness of the term necessitates a reorganization of thought though which metaphysics takes place.

A natural complex is realized, or known, when it is discriminated. Which is to say that whenever something, anything, is understood to have traits that can be contrasted with what it is not, a natural complex has been identified.[23] Avoiding an anthropocentric metaphysics, Buchler does not suggest that all natural complexes are discernable by human minds. The question, then, is what are the basic qualities that everything in existence shares. Buchler's answer, simply put, is relationality. There are no pure simples, every natural complex is in relation with other natural complexes and is located within an order of relations (ordinality). A natural complex "affects and is affected by other complexes. This is not a doctrine of internal relations. For although every natural complex is related to other natural complexes, it does not follow that every natural complex is related to every other natural complex."[24] Natural complexes reside in more than one order of relations. I, for example, exist in an order of relations within the structure of my immediate family. I exist in another order of relations when I attend a concert, or a baseball game. Both complexes of relations are true at the same time in different ways. There are no simples in the ordinal relations of natural complexes, as everything relates to something else, forming a complex. In order to approach natural complexes without arbitrary constellations of preference placed over the particular complex being investigated, the principle of ontological parity needs to be employed.

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[22] Robert Paul Wolff, *In defense of anarchism*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 1.

[23] Bucher, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes,* 2.

[24] Richard Bernstein, "Buchler's Metaphysics," *Nature's Perspective*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1991, 29-48), 41.

Ontological parity is the second pillar upon which Buchler constructs his system. If a proper understanding of natural complexes is to suggest that everything, in whatever way it is, is a natural complex, then ontological parity is that everything, in whatever way it is, is equally real. Buchler suggests that "we must discard the notion of some complexes as 'less' and other complexes as 'more' real."[25] Instead of privileging certain categories with an 'ontological priority,' Buchler suggests that an ontological parity is the means by which natural complexes, and thus metaphysics, need to be examined.

Natural complexes are identifiable by being discriminated from other complexes. Non-being, as a term, cannot apply to any natural complex because it must have some sort of being in order for it to be discriminated. Thus, "no complex is more 'real,' more 'natural,' more 'genuine,' or more 'ultimate' than any other."[26] This is where Buchler reorients the entire project of metaphysics. Where, for example, philosophers such as Kant wanted to employ metaphysics in order to distinguish between phenomenal and numenal (real and unconfirmed-real), Buchler's system determines the ways within which things are real, and how they relate to other things. Natural complexes are the things which we investigate, and ontological parity is the method of investigation used. This shifts the discussion away from what is real towards what are the relationships between any given object(s) of inquiry. Distinctions do not become less important in ontological parity. On the contrary, distinctions become of more importance; the types of distinction also find themselves ordered differently. "No distinction, then, is dismissed. It only awaits its analysis- the interpretation of 'how and in what sense it is real.'"[27]

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[25] Buchler, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, 31.
[26] Ibid., 31.
[27] Ibid., 32.

Buchler calls this ontological principle *ordinality*. "Every complex is in an order and belong to an order of complexes. Thus orders are inclusive and belong to more inclusive orders."[28] Natural complexes are, above all else, ordinal. They belong to orders, they are orders, they are operative within different orders, etc. The relations of a natural complex are always multiple and both actual and possible. The orders of those relations are similarly multiple and both actual and possible. "An order' needs to be distinguished from 'a pattern' or 'a form.'"[29] Patterns and forms do not imply the manifold of organizational possibilities that orders can achieve. Ordinality is the structure, or framework, by which natural complexes are organized and understood. Prevalence and alescence occur within ordinality. Prevalence is the Indeed, it is that ordinality is the condition for the possibility of prevalence or alescence. The ordinal relations of natural complexes are so plural and inter-related that, as noted above, there are no simples. There are no simples because there is always an ordinal rationality within any given natural complex.

With common vernacular, phrases like "the natural order" or "the order of nature"[30] misrepresent what is meant by ordinality within Buchler's system. Buchler does not want to suggest that the natural *has* an order, rather that the natural *is* composed of orders. Buchler begins to articulate his idea of nature when discussing ordinality. Nature is the whole of the orders within nature. But, nature is not an order of all orders. "The idea of 'unlocking the secret' of nature is primitive and barbaric, despite its

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[28] Ibid., 93.
[29] Ibid., 94.
[30] Ibid., 99.

ostensible influence in the history of science and philosophy."[31]

Buchler uses Spinoza's categories of nature: *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* in order to articulate the ways in which ordinality operates within nature as a category. *Natura naturata*, Buchler suggest, can mean the prevailing and arising of natural complexes. *Natura naturans*, on the other hand, can mean what natural complexes do prevail and arise. [32] "But the engendered affects the engendering, as the engendering cumulatively modified the engendered."[33] Nature, in this sense, is not the order that encapsulates or encompasses all orders of natural complexes, rather nature is that through which orders are able to be discerned. Nature, as a category, holds a pragmatic place within the system rather than any form of ontological ideality. The natural sciences, in Buchler's view, would not really be the sciences of nature, rather the sciences of particular natural complexes which order the physical world within which we are ordered. Science, or any form of inquiry, does not discover nature qua nature.

If natural complexes are related through ordinality, how exactly are those relations governed? If the concept of a natural complex is generic enough to encapsulate whatever is, then the relations between these complexes needs to be generic enough to encapsulate a wide array of interactions and relations. What, then, does it mean for two natural complexes to be related? Each natural complex is a determining trait within the scope of the other natural complexes scope. The scope of a complex is the ordinality of its relations with respect to the integrity, or uniqueness, of the complex. "Relation is the

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[31] Ibid., 100.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

measure of scope, as well as its peculiar determinant."[34]

Relations between two natural complexes are the 'ramifications' of each complex. Since every complex is, in fact, a complex, its relations are both outwards and inwards towards the orders of complexes within and without. None of these relations are determinate *per say*, as they are always dependent upon the specific conditions of any given natural complexes. "A master may enlarge the powers of his pupil while the pupil inhibits the growth of the master…the relation of friendship may entail a mutual, progressive, extension of scope."[35] The dynamics of relations between complexes is always in flux as different complex prevail and alescent in different ways within different orders, all of which maintain the same level of realness.

The configuration of the verb "to be" is articulated by the concepts: prevalence and alescence. If there are no degrees of being or reality as posited by ontological parity, then a given natural complex is no more or less real than any other. Yet, to say simply that everything *is* would not adequately state the relevant differences between the ways, if not degrees, of being. Buchler disagrees with what other philosophers have identified as the primary ontological differences: "being and becoming," "permanence and change," "the static and the dynamic," "stability and instability," "determinateness and indeterminateness."[36] Buchler conceptualizes the differences in terms of prevalence and alescence, which together are meant to encompass the continuum of what it means "to be."

Every complex prevails in some way, in some order of relations, because every

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[34] Ibid., 104.
[35] Ibid., 105.
[36] Ibid., 75ff.

complex must be said to exist.[37] This is not to say that to prevail is to exist, because a complex already exists whether or not it is prevailing in a given order. It just so happens that in order for a natural complex to be discriminated it must prevail in a certain respect.[38] Further, every natural complex that prevails has "a sphere of primacy and domination; that it is restrictive and exclusive of other complexes."[39] Once discriminated a natural complex is that which operates over the distinguished datum, or more strongly, the natural complex *is* the distinguished datum. However, it is only prevalent in a certain way. "This is true of the complex merely as a complex: it prevails against some other complex that might have prevailed instead or in its stead."[40]

The corollary is true as well. If a natural complex is prevalent in a given order of relations then it is not prevalent in another order of relations. Thus, by definition, as a complex, it *must* prevail in a certain order. If it does not prevail in any order then it ceases to be. When a complex is not prevailing in an order to which it belongs, "we shall say that it is alescent, or an alescence."[41] Alescence suggests variation or change within the complex. This can imply irrelevance, decay, etc. Thus, a natural complex is prevalent to the extent that it excludes traits and is discernable. A natural complex is alescent to the extent that it is admitting, or including, traits. Interestingly, and perhaps obviously, natural complexes can be both prevalent and alescent in different orders.

Unlike Whitehead, Buchler's relationally is not that of universal relations with everything that exists. For Whitehead, whose basic metaphysical unit is the actual entity,

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[37] Ibid., 52.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 53.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 55.

every actual entity prehends, or experiences, every other actual entity in an actual world

relative to any given actual entity. In this way, the entire universe is experienced, in a

sense, by every actual occasion in existence.

Buchler suggests that while the relationships of any particular natural complex are

innumerable, there is no reason to think that every natural complex relates to every other

natural complex. Indeed, Buchler finds the contention dubious if not epistemological

hubris. "They think that some relation or other between complex is always 'logically

possible.' Whether the addition of the word 'logically' adds to the strength of the

contention, or adds anything to the contention at all, is doubtful."[42] Buchler suggests that

if every natural complex is related to every other natural complex then the ordinal

system, and rationality writ large, is effectively a mirror that offers nothing but

tautologies. If every complex, with its subaltern complexes, is related to every other

complex with their subaltern complexes, how is anything distinguished as prevailing? "If

they are all the same relation, we cannot say they are relevant to each other in all respect,

for there are no respects."[43]

Every natural complex is ordinally related to an indefinite amount of other natural

complexes, but not all other natural complexes. These relations are always particular to

their instances and the substances of the complexes involved. The relations become more

nuanced when actual relations are considered against possible relations. Both relations

are real, but they are not the same. "There are no 'pure' possibilities which never are

related to actuality, or which are actualized out of the blue-arising in no particular order

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[42] Ibid., 120.
[43] Ibid., 122.

and relating to no particular order. But neither are there 'pure' actualities, exemplifying no possibility and having no possibilities."[44]

The metaphysics of natural complexes offers a uniquely generalized method of discrimination. This method, and its ability to allow natural complexes to define their own traits and contours, will now be applied within the complexes of religion and science.

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[44] Ibid., 129.

PRIORITY IN RELIGION

Now that the basic conception of the metaphysics of natural complexes has been laid out, it is time to work out the ramifications. In particular the notion of ontological priority needs to be located in its numerous forms and replaced with parity. I will begin my application of ontological parity within the realm of religious thought. It should be noted that there is no ontological prioritizing reason why the discussion of religion precedes the discussion of science or philosophy. The discussion must begin somewhere, and here the choice was religion. It is a practical priority given the limits of the complex of a paper.

In dealing with a complex as diverse as religion it is difficult to capture all of the particular traits that may arise in any given instantiation. Recalling Whitehead's attempt to "speak in the most general way possible, and to keep in the background any comparison of particular creeds,"[45] I will attempt to analyze traits that are applicable to as many particular instances of religious thought as possible. While Whitehead himself got sidetracked by discussing particular instances of European Christian history, this analysis does not rely upon anecdotal historical occurrences but is an attempt to abstract religious thought into a broad category. The construction of this category will necessarily be limited and incomplete; there are always more sub-altern complexes to be analyzed. As such, it will only apply to the religious complexes which can be said to be located within

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[45] Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 180.

the order of the discriminated complex of religion which is articulated here. In this respect, the argument is not trying to become more than it asserts. In any attempt to speak broadly and generically, it is important to remember that we do not speak universally.

There will be two sections with respect to the discussion of religion. The first section will deal with the construction of the complex known as religion. Drawing from numerous traditions, and acknowledging the biases associated with my own ordinal location within the complex of Euro-American thought, the category of religion will allow for analysis of its prevalent traits. The goal is to identify thought that is explicitly religious as opposed philosophical or ethical. The second section will attempt to identify points of ontological priority and reformulate them to consistently operate within the metaphysics of natural complexes. These points will be conceptualized as what I call practical priorities. In other words, the language surrounding authoritative ontological claims with respect to causality necessarily requires ontological parity, but those claims are able to retain practical priority with respect to the internal coherence of any given religious system.

As noted above within the brief history the conflict between religion and science has focused mostly on some form of Christianity and some form of Naturalism. For example, Alvin Plantinga formulated his thesis within *Where the Conflict Really Lies* as such: *"there is superficial conflict but deep concord between science and theistic religion, but superficial concord and deep conflict between science and naturalism."[46]* The two key terms within his argument are "theistic religion" and "naturalism." Of course, Plantinga means monotheism, namely Christianity, Judaism and Islam. By

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[46] Alvin Plantinga, *Where the conflict really lies: science, religion, and naturalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), ix.

limiting the conceptual apparatus of religious thought to 'theistic' religious thought, Plantinga is able to make specific claims with regards to religion. Unlike Kant who argues that Christianity (properly envisioned) is *the* religion and make a claim at universality, Plantinga is content to argue specifically for his localized tradition.[47]

Buddhism, Hinduism, Daoism, and most eastern religions fall outside of the purview of Plantinga's argument. Plantinga is not interested in the relationship between religion qua religion and science qua science. Plantinga will get a deeper treatment in the final chapter with his philosophically based discussion of science. However, this paper is attempting to identify the appropriate ordinal location of religion and science and analyze their relationship as natural complexes. This requires a certain amount of abstraction, luckily the metaphysics of natural complexes allows for both generic discriminations while maintaining the ability to produce crisp and distinct analysis.

How do we begin if we want to discuss religion, but not *a* religion? The process of abstraction will always do a certain amount of violence to the particular complexes it is abstracted from. However, this does not suggest that the abstractions constructed are a worthless distortion of their constitutive components. In our attempt to isolate religion from religions there will be a level of vagueness that haunts us, but the prevalence of the term itself suggests a level of comfort with such vagueness. The complex of religion needs to be broad enough to contain, for example, the notion of a monotheistic universe and the notion of a polytheistic universe. Moreover, Panentheism and Pantheism in all of their various articulations need to be accounted for within the complex religion. It appears that the work needed is to find what is necessary and sufficient in order for a

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[47] Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the limits of reason alone*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 145.

complex to be a sub-altern complex of religion. This work is possible because of the fact

that the complex of religion exists and it has traits and it does not seem to be a concept

that is empty of useful discriminations.

The monotheistic traditions are the most familiar forms of religion to the Euro-

American thinker. Terry Eagleton, who is quite involved in the public discussion of

religion and science, offers an explanation for the academic limitation to monotheism

when discussing theology and science:

> I should also confess that since the only theology I don't know much
> about is Christian theology, as opposed to those kinds I know nothing at
> all about, I shall confine my discussion to that alone, on the grounds that it
> is better to be provincial than presumptuous.[48]

The danger of presumption is real and problematic. Provincial discussion,

however, offers technical but shallow discriminations. This is why Kant was not content

in defending a European Christianity, but needed a universal natural religion. With

respect to his conception of Christianity, Kant suggests that "[t]his religion possesses the

prime essential of the true church, namely, the qualification of universality…"[49] This

present project wants to avoid both types of descriptions when analyzing the order of

religion: there is not an attempt to construct a universal truth to which all religions are

pointing, or a suggestion that all religious discourse is necessarily provincial. While there

is importance with respect to provincial discussion, that does not negate the need for

more generic dialogue. And generic dialogue does not require a universal regulative

ideal, the position Kant wants Christianity to hold. In order to open up the complex of

religion, it might useful to identify some of its obvious traits. Religion, as far as we are

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[48] Terry Eagleton, *On evil*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 3.
[49] Kant, *Religion within limits of reason*, 145.

aware, is a complex exclusive to the human process. Further, it prevails in multiple

cultures with multiple traits particular to those cultures. Perhaps most importantly, it

answers a particular set of issues that linger within the human process. These issues

include, but are not limited to, questions concerning origin, afterlife, purpose, and

morality, are dealt with by the various complexes known as religions. It seems fair, then,

to assert that religion is a mode of inquiry about the world. This religious mode inquiry

follows different rules from those guiding science and philosophy, but might make claims

with respect to the same complexes that science and philosophy are making claims.

While there are aspects of faith involved in various dimensions of the human

process, it holds a peculiar place within religion. In his discussion on religion in *The*

Things in Heaven and Earth John Ryder divides his treatment of the topic into two

organizing principles: God and Faith.[50] I will discuss the details of his analysis below, but

the distinction between God and Faith is important. God, as treated by Ryder, is the

monotheistic God of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Faith, on the other hand, is a much

broader category and "is a point of departure, a general framework for dealing with

whatever one faces."[51] Drawing on the work of William James and George Santyana,

Ryder suggests that religious faith occupies an odd space within the human process. It

does not quite encapsulate culture writ large, and it is not completely individualized.

There is an echo of Paul Tillich's maxim that "religion is the substance of culture, culture

is the form of religion"[52] Its traits span the complexes of individual belief and

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[50] John Ryder, *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An essay in Pragmatic Naturalism*, (New York: Fordham, 2013), 119.

[51] Ibid., 134.

[52] Paul Tillich, "Aspects of a Religious Analysis of Culture," The Essential Tillich, ed. F. Forrester Church (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 103.

institutional dogma. Using the notion of redemption as a case study for faith, we might be able to identify the way in which faith operates within the religious complex. In order to produce the analysis I will contrast redemption as used by Theodor Adorno within the philosophical context of Critical Theory and redemption as employed by the Dominican priest Hubert McCabe and Catholic scholar Eugene McCarraher within the religious context of Catholic Christianity. This contrast will hopefully offer an excellent example of parsing out traits that are uniquely religious.

The connection between Adorno's eschatology and Christianity can be seen through McCabe's description of the similarity between Marxism and Christianity: "Just as the Marxist looks forward to...the final withering-away of the state, so the Catholic looks forward impatiently to the withering-away of the organized church."[53] Adorno, throughout his career, worked to create a critique of Enlightenment, which he saw as the motivating force behind Nazi ideology. Enlightenment, in the way Adorno is employing it, includes the priority of the techno-scientific and market economies. This interpretation was oriented around the constellation of redemption which was fueled by Adorno's Jewish heritage. Walter Benjamin, a close interlocutor of Adorno, suggested that "only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past-which is to say, only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments."[54] The understanding how things are, or have been, is incomplete within this narrative of redemption. Redemption opens up the past and moves beyond how things are and have been, and shows the redeemed what things ought to have been and could yet be. Benjamin's notion of redemption is,

[53] Eugene McCarraher, "Hubert McCabe's Revolutionary Faith," *Commonweal*, (2010, 3-15), 15.
[54] Walter Benjamin, "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," In *Illuminations*. 1st ed., (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968, 253-264), 254.

perhaps, more explicitly eschatological then Adorno's because the redemption of mankind operates at the end of history. Adorno uses redemption as a practical ideal, not an actual possibility at the end history.

Redemption is a state of affairs that allows for a backwards looking accuracy that cannot obtain otherwise. David Kaufman thinks that Adorno has been secularized by his American readership and that Adorno's use of redemption is religious, more specifically Jewish. Kaufman suggests that "Adorno's redemptive ontology…demands that we see what has become as a distorted version of what should be and asks us to judge the existent in terms of its distortions."[55] To use the Christian terminology of McCabe and McCarraher, what we see has become a distorted version of the *Imago Dei*, and we ought to judge that distortion in relation to the revelation of Scripture. However, here we note that there is a sharp distinction between the redemption within Christian eschatology and the redemption within Adorno's thought. Kaufman notes Adorno's redemption is not the construction of a utopian optimist. For Adorno, "The truth that the light of redemption casts reveals pained fragments, not triumphant totalities."[56] On the other hand, the redemption offered within the Christian tradition articulated by McCabe and McCarraher is a totalizing harmony of the world with its creator.

Adrono's redemption, which consists of fragments of pained reality, is not equivalent to the Christian notion of eschatological redemption, which consists of a utopian ideal. However, both concepts serve a similar pratical purpose, they allow us to

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[55] David Kaufmann, "Correlations, Constellations and the Truth: Adorno's ontology of redemption," *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, (2000, 62-80), 75.
[56] Ibid., 76.

"overcome that false way of seeing the world, we must aim for its replacement with a human standard of flourishing."[57]

Critical Theory and Christianity part ways in their critique of Enlightenment because of Christianity's normalizing totality which is the standard for its critique. The Critical Theory of Adorno exclusively provides critique in fear of perpetuating the very normative structure which Christianity relies upon. Critical Theory makes note of the domination inherent in Enlightenment culture, whereas Christianity critiques the *type* of domination and authority. Adorno sees the religious conception of redemption, and the orders implied within that structure, as simply another form of domination. Christianity advances an alternative culture through the use of religiously specific complexes. Redemption, in complex of Christianity, is a positive affirmation of a totalizing principle: God. The ability of Christianity to make these positives claims stems from its teleological position. Causal chains, whether determined or open, are working towards a meditated goal. Critical Theory does not offer a positive claim because, for the Critical Theorist, to do so would be to instantiate another form of domination. Critical Theory aligns with the metaphysics of natural complexes in the rejection of totalizing teleology.

This is complicated by Adorno's relationship with Jewish negative theology. In many ways the orthodox Christian understanding of God incorporates aspects of God from the negative theology of Judaism, the un-idolizing of God. As Terry Eagleton notes in *Reason, Faith, and Revolution,* the God of the Christian and Jewish scripture "is the enemy of idols, fetishes, and graven images of all kinds-gods, churches, ritual scarifies,

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[57] McCarraher, Hubert McCabe's Revolutionary Faith, 10.

the Stars and Stripes, nations, sex, success, ideologies, and the like"[58] The God of

Scripture, according to Eagleton, is a God who does not want systemic social domination,

oppression, alienation of labor, objectification of individuals, etc. However, this God

does not posit anything about itself, it is the non-God. It many ways this God is the

rejection of gods as dominating and coercive.

Terry Eagleton continues the Christian critique of Enlightenment by suggesting

that Christianity can offer realizable solutions to the problems that Enlightenment culture

creates without an appeal to the problematic eschatological view of redemption.

> "Salvation…is a question of feeding the hungry, welcoming the
> immigrants, visiting the sick, and protecting the poor, orphaned, and
> windowed from the violence of the rich. Astonishingly, we are saved not
> by a special apparatus known as religion, but by the quality of our
> everyday relations with one another. It was Christianity, not the French
> intelligentsia, who invented the concept of everyday life.[59]

The Christian notion of Salvation, as viewed by Eagleton offers the possibility of

a positive alternative to the Enlightenment culture. The acknowledgement of the *Imago*

Dei allows for undistorted human relations that overcomes the domination inherent in

Enlightenment. In *Minima Moralia* Adrono notes that "Every undistorted relationship,

perhaps indeed the conciliation that is part of organic life itself, is a gift"[60]. To understand

the world or a relationship as a gift is to put a very religious mythic understanding on the

ontology of relationships. Eagleton notes that God made the world "for the hell of it. He

made it as a gift, superfluity, and gratuitous gesture, out of nothing, rather than out of

grim necessity"[61] While there are issues within the metaphysics of natural complexes

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[58] Terry Eagleton, *Reason, faith, & revolution: reflections on the God debate*, (New Haven: Yale
   University Press, 2009), 18.
[59] Ibid., 19.
[60] Ibid., 4.
[61] Ibid., 8.

with the philosophical notion of God creating the world *ex nihilo*, the religious

implications which Eagleton articulates have a powerful aesthetic.

Critical Theory offers an alternative that knows it cannot be actualized due to its

commitment to something akin to ontological parity. Adorno does not want to substitute

the priority hierarchies within Enlightenment for just another set of priorities.

Christianity, on the other hand, offers an alternative that can only be an alternative if it is

actualized, and it is organized by the ontological priority of God. This priority is

tempered, although no less guilty of priority by McCabe's warning about the temptation

of action, that "the gospel is not "a program for political action,"… but rather "a critique

of action itself, a reminder that we must think on the end."[62] While the Critical Theorists

are paralyzed by their fear of action becoming dominating action, the Christians move

forward by actualizing their ontology of redemption within everyday life. However, as

McCabe suggests, the Christian must act in a way that is aligned with their end,

eschatological redemption, and not in accordance with the dominating structures of the

status-quo.

Adorno warns of self-interest taking hold within the critical project. In *Minima*

Moralia he says, "He who stands aloof runs the risk of believing himself better than

others and misusing his critique of society as an ideology for his private interest."[63]

Adorno creates the image of someone who believes that they are not complicit with the

domination that is being exerted by Enlightenment culture. But we are all complicit, no

one should think themselves to be beyond rebuke. This could be seen as a critique of

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[62] McCarraher, Hubert McCabe's Revolutionary Faith, 14.
[63] Theodor Adorno, and E. F. N. Jephcott, *Minima Moralia: reflections from damaged life*, (London: Verso, 1978), 26.

Christianity's positive claims of subverting Enlightenment. At any given point, the Christian is perpetuating the dominating forces of Enlightenment while thinking she is embodying the subversive nature of her religious convictions. However, one of the key features of Christianity's subversion of Enlightenment is the solidarity of humanity.

Christianity finds resonance with humanity's longing for justice, fellowship, and self-fulfillment, which all lay beyond anything that Enlightenment can imagine. Terry Eagleton notes "It is hard to imagine informing some hard bitten political lobbyist in a Washington bar that only through a tragic process of loss, nothingness and self-dispossession can humanity come into its own."[64] As Eagleton makes explicit, the notion of self-dispossession, the rejection of self-interest lays at the heart of the Christian commitment to reform the world. The Christian commitment makes Adorno's hope of redemption real. Where Adorno is unwilling to commit to the actualization of redemption, the Christian is willing to sacrifice everything in order to bring that redemption into being.

At the end of *Minima Moralia*, Adorno writes "Perspectives much be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light."[65] The messianic light will come and reveal the distortions which Enlightenment has thrust upon us. Adorno concludes *Minima Moralia* by stating it does not really matter if redemption, or the messiah, is real or not. The difference is ultimately between ontological commitments. Adorno is not willing to posit a priority scheme which turns redemption into a form of

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[64] Eagleton, *Reason, faith, & revolution,* 38.
[65] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 247.

domination. Christianity, as articulated here by McCabe, McCarraher and Eagleton, has a powerful image of redemption specifically because of its priority scheme.

One of the lingering questions surrounds the possibility of practical priorities. Can Christianity propose a practical priority of God, and reject ontological priority, and still remain a coherent religion? Can the actuality of redemption with respect to the future be reframed as a possibility within the order of history, rr does such a reformulation cease to be a religious belief and move into an order similar to Adorno's proposition? The ontological commitments of the Christian position force them to accept a priority scheme as the actualization is the motivation for belief.

Redemption, it would seem, can be used in both a religious and non-religious context. However, the religious use has particular implications that imply faith-claim loyalties that are tied into priority projects. These loyalties are the distinguishing factor with respect to religious complexes. The religious can be articulated as a mode of inquiry that employs faith-claim loyalties to ontological propositions. Faith-claims, with respect to the religious, are appeals to authority or tradition. This can be seen within the polycannon of Buddhism, the Biblical cannon of the Judeo-Christian traditions, and the orientation of smaller religious sects that center on a particular leader. The object of authority is always insight into the *reality* of the world. The religious groups can keep their authorities as long as it is understood as practical priorities rather than ontological priorities.

Since the example of redemption example is firmly grounded on western tradition, a few brief examples from eastern religion might help the exhaustiveness of the purposed analysis of the religious complex. First, I will examine the ways in which

Robert Corrington engages with the Yogistic thought of Sri Aurobindo. Corrington is not

exactly interested in distinguishing between the religious and philosophic, indeed his

project is to expand the relevance of the religious, but his treatment of Aurobindo offers

excellent insights into the treatment of thought that smuggles faith-claims into

metaphysics. Second, I will look at Buddhism through the work of Owen Flanagan.

Flanagan is interested in separating the philosophically insightful aspects of Buddhism

from the metaphysical faith-claims that identify it as a religion. Contrary to Corrington,

Flanagan is interested in eliminating the relevance of the religious complexes. In both

cases, Corrington and Flanagan, the complex of religion, as a bundle of traits, becomes

more clearly discernable.

Corrington is working towards a notion of religion that operates consistently

within the metaphysics of natural complexes. While articulating the potencies and

potentiality of 'god-ing' within nature, Corrington draws parallels and negative examples

from the work of Sri Aurobindo. God-ing might also be articulated as the construction of

the religious from, and within, nature. Importantly for Corrington, god-ing reveals the

possibilities of a self to "more creatively encounter… [its] various unconscious

dimensions…"[66] These various dimensions of the unconscious include the unconscious of

nature. It is important to articulate this process as unconscious as it has no goal setting

capacity, it "is a natural process of opening and clearing that has no plan or goal for

'itself.'"[67] The analogous concept in Aurobindo's thought is the "descent of the over-

mind."

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[66] Robert Corrington, *Nature's sublime: an essay in aesthetic naturalism*, (New York: Lexington, 2013), 116.
[67] Ibid., 117.

The over-mind is an infinite consciousness that has to descend into our plane of existence in order to impart some of its potentiality into the finite minds of humanity. This takes place through the over-mind awakening the Spirit within the terrestrial world. [68]This over-mind has metaphysical ramifications and is part of a spiritual system of organizing beings. The stratification of consciousness into various levels of non-corporeality and moving beyond the necessity of a metaphysics capable of analyzing the events involved with god-ing, Aurobindo's system carries the baggage of faith-claims that do not directly follow from the complexes at work. Corrington surely wants to recognize that something *like* this "descent of the over-mind" happens with respect to the human consciousness expanding from the powers of nature. He does not, however, want to retain the supernatural metaphysics and appeals to tradition that weigh down Aurobindo's system.[69]

Unlike Corrington, Flanagan is utterly unsympathetic to the metaphysics of the system he is analyzing. His project is succinctly stated as:

> Imagine Buddhism without a karmic system that guarantees justice ultimately will be served, without nirvana, without bodhisattvas flying on lotus leaves, without Buddha worlds, without non-physical states of mind, without deities, without heaven and hell realms, without oracles, without lamas who are reincarnated lamas. What would be left? My answer is that what would remain would be an interesting and defensible philosophical theory with a metaphysics, … epistemology, and ethics. This theory is worthy of attention... [70]

Flanagan is, unlike Corrington, rather generalized in his approach. Corrington specified an author and conceptual scheme through which he would parse out philosophical

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[68] Ibid., 116.
[69] Ibid., 122.
[70] Owen Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva's Brain Buddhism Naturalized*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), 3.

notions. The question of the philosophical, as opposed to something else, will be dealt with in the last chapter of the paper. For now, it is enough to visualize the philosophical as a mode of inquiry not bound by tradition or metaphysical loyalties. Flanagan is explicitly interested in deflating religion (and philosophy writ large) in order to be "consistent with science."[71] His project is an attempt to "tame" the uncontrolled thought perpetuated by religious institutions.

With respect to Buddhism, Flanagan is interested in abstracting out a form of ethics that does not rely upon an appeal to tradition or authority, i.e. the Bible, but flows from basic premises which any 'scientific naturalist' would be willing to accept as given. This flows from the interplay between ethics and psychology within Buddhism. Flanagan quotes the Dali Lama as suggesting, "The principle aim of Buddhist psychology is not to catalog the mind's makeup…rather its fundamental concern is to overcome suffering…"[72] Flanagan is interested in abstracting out this fundamental normativity through neuroscience and mind-states. However many problems there may be with Flanagan's project, it provides an example of the explicitly religious as opposed to the non-religious. For Flanagan, religious thought is grounded on "ungrounded, untestable, or false premises or ideologies."[73] The religious faith-claims are made in 'bad faith.' Suggesting, at the very least, that other forms of faith-claims are made in 'good faith.' While there are problems with Flanagan's position with regards to ontological parity, the point that religious thought is grounded on something particular is well made.

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[71] Ibid., 59.
[72] Ibid.,.103.
[73] Ibid., 59.

Religious thought, as a mode of inquiry, offers numerous methods into realms of value. Not exactly synonymous with culture or heritage, religion brings a whole explicit metaphysical system with ontological commitments to bear upon the content of the human process. Can religion remain religion without requiring faith-claim loyalties to ontological priority projects? Further, does religion have an equal say upon the value and origin of causal chains which science makes its object of study? I will examine the latter question in the final chapter of this paper as the content is more applicable to philosophy's role within the triadic relationship. The former question relates directly to our discussion of the complex of religion. Indeed it might be the most important application of ontological parity with respect to the complex of religion.

The question of ontological priority projects within religious complexes is expressed through two different ontological commitments in religious thought. The first, and most common in western traditions, is the monotheistic God. The second is a general commitment to metaphysical realities that do not obtain within the Kantian field of appearances, or the realm of scientific observation, such as eternal souls, Karma, beings such as angels, gods, demons, spirits, etc. The religious commitment to God might, but not necessarily, entail a commitment to a loaded metaphysical scheme. In some religious complexes the notion of a singular all powerful being does not prevail, but in others is does.

John Ryder frames his discussion of God by ruling out the suggestion that religion is simply "social or psychological conditions."[74] Further, there is more to the complex of God than his existence within the ordinal system of reality. Ryder suggests that, "God's

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[74] Ryder, *The Things in Heaven and Earth,* 121.

existence can not [sic] be breezily waved aside without equally breezily waving aside the power that belief in God has."[75] Faith in God has as much to do with the complex of God as his existence. Buchler notes that everyone appeals to experience, and the belief in God has affected the experience of countless humans. There is no meaningful discussion to be had about the existence of God. The point of discussion within the metaphysics of natural complexes with respect to God is: in what way does God exist. The metaphysics will limit the possible answers due to the commitment to ordinality and ontological parity. God as a creator *ex nihilo*, for example, causes some problems.

Ontological parity demands that possibilities and actualities contain equal amounts of existence. Ryder suggests that, "actuality 'is' no more than possibility 'is.'"[76] Possibilities are no less of a natural complex then actualities. If possibilities are a necessary ontological entailment of actuality, then the possibilities of the world exist alongside of the actuality of God. Positing that God simply created the possibilities does not solve the problem, because it would simply move the problem to another level. The possibility of God creating the world exists as a complex and exists within an order. This complex would be in some sort of relation to the complex of God, which means that there was not *nihilo.* [77]

God, like any other complex, must be located in at least one order. God alone as the first cause fails to make conceptual sense as God must already be in relation via ordinality to other complexes. Thus, God was not alone. Whatever is, is a complex, and complexes are what they are because of their location within a certain order. God would

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[75] Ibid., 120.
[76] Ibid., 127.
[77] Ibid.

necessarily be located within an ordinal location and contain sub-altern complexes. "Neither of these structural requirements is compatible with a creator *ex nihilo*."[78]

Many religious traditions do not posit a creation *ex nihilo*, but the critique of such a stance serves as an example of how ontological parity operates within a given religious claim. This does not imply that the concept of God must be rejected, rather God must become a practical priority that contributes to the contour of any complex that includes the complex of God. God prevails in numerous ways within the human process, but that prevailing cannot be reified into an ontological priority. Religion must accept the limits of its practical priorities and cease to provide accounts of the world that purpose to be *more real* than other accounts. The coherence and reasonability of religious accounts can be, and are, analyzed on their own individual terms. But, such analysis is only meaningful after a religious account has committed to ontological parity.

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[78] Ibid., 126.

PRIOTIRY IN SCIENCE

It might be hopeful to assume that science, unlike religion, would be easy to articulate as a complex. That hope quickly diminishes once the traits, or sub-altern complexes, of science are analyzed and considered. Specifically, issues that are similar to the complex of religion creep up when attempting to identify the traits of scientific inquiry. The various sciences, much like the various religions, are multiple, potentially mutually exclusive, and territorial. Despite this diversity there is something specific that we mean when we refer to 'science' that is not reducible to any of the particular sciences. In other words, there is some specific contour of all the sciences that allow them to be ordered within the complex of science.

This chapter, much like the previous, will be split into two primary divisions. The first division will be an attempt to formalize the complex of science consistently within the language of the metaphysics of natural complexes. This will be established by examining various conceptualizations of science qua science. The second division will explore the ways in which science has been imputed with ontological priority. This priority comes, as will be expounded upon below, from philosophical propositions which are not necessary traits of science but have nonetheless become prevalent within the complex. Importantly, these propositions are not synonymous with any particular (or generic) conceptualization of science. Rather these propositions are established in order to perpetuate priority projects.

The complex of science is certainly as elusive as the complex of religion. There are operant levels of reduction that attempt to establish priority schemes within the complex of science itself, let alone with the ordinal relations outside of science. However, much like religions, some of these priorities are practical and allow for internal coherence. Like any institution of humanity, the complex of science is porous and fluid. This paper is not interested in taking a position with regards to the internal orders of science as it relates to the contour of science itself. For example, the debate with regards to falsification or verification is not within the purview of the metaphysics of natural complexes. Some of these types of issues, however, might help establish the framework within which science delineates itself from the non-scientific. The two examples that will be explored reside within two different scientific discourses: Darwinism and reductionism. Both of these terms have high priority and importance within 'Scientific Naturalism.' I will begin with a discussion of Darwinism, which sits within the larger complex of evolutionary biology, and how the dialogue surrounding it helps make clear the complex of science. Then I will discuss reductionism, which is most clearly endorsed within the complex of physics.

As detailed above, nineteenth century was a century of scientific upheaval with respect to the old, religiously grounded, metaphysics. Perhaps the most important book to be published within this upheaval was the *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. It is important to note that Darwin was not the source of evolution. Rather, his important contribution came via natural selection and the supporting observations made on the Galapagos. When Darwin was working there was an interesting mix of thought regarding biology and mechanism. Kant famously suggested that the mechanism of science cannot

account for the adaptive abilities of organisms. However, this was not a claim that ran counter to the scientific paradigm that prevailed in his lifetime. Rather, Kant was "arguing that complete scientific explanation was impossible in biology."[79]

The historical context of Kant's argument was the infancy of biology as we now understand it. Science, within the paradigm of Newtonian physics, was coming to mean mechanistic explanation and there was some serious disagreement about the efficacy of mechanistic explanations with regards to organic life. Within the wake of Kant there was discussion of science as mechanism as well as discussion of biology as science, and what science means if not mechanism. Of course, the scientists were not exactly bound by the philosophical ramifications of their framework. Fredrick Gregory notes that scientists "in particular were perfectly capable of ignoring philosophical conclusions when they threatened to undermine or challenge working assumptions."[80] The priority of science has a long history, and as will be discussed below, has not changed much. The scientist is not interested in the logical entailments of her system, rather she is interested in the efficaciousness of the system within the narrow confines of her experiments. The philosophical issues surrounding the practice of science notwithstanding, the progression of scientific models into areas of discourse that affected religious belief culminated in, not initiated by, Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

The notion of a completely naturalistic, or scientific, explanation of the organic world was the primary accomplishment of Darwin. This did not remove all theological or philosophical issues that were operating within any given scientific paradigm. For

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[79] Frederick Gregory, "The Impact of Darwinian Evolution on Protestant Theology," In *God and nature: historical essays on the encounter between Christianity and science*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, 369-390), 369.

[80] Gregory, The Impact of Darwinian Evolution on Protestant Theology, 371.

example, "Darwin himself remained a deist, believing that the origin of the universe could old be explained in terms of a supernatural creator."[81] Darwin's natural selection offers an excellent case study in the internal conceptualizations of science as science. Since the observations of Darwin and the content of his Evolutionary theory extend beyond what is usually thought of as experimentation, the application and discursive practices that surround Evolution have been the source of much controversy. The publication of *Origin of Species* and the immediate reactions from the larger community offers some insight into the complex of science.

It is important to note that evolution itself was not a foreign concept to the scientific culture of the Nineteenth century. The truly creative notion which Darwin introduced was natural selection. Even then, Darwin was not the only person to formulate the notion. Alfred Russel Wallace, a self-educated Englishman who spent time studying and researching in south East-Asia wrote a letter to Darwin which laid out evolution by natural selection, if not in those terms. Wallace concluded by asking, "if you feel the enclosed paper has any merit, would you pass it along to someone influential?"[82] Darwin, who was in the midst of his research and did not have a formulated theory of natural selection in writing, "after a few days of panic and despair…entrusted the situation to his two closest friends…"[83] His two companions, Lyell and Hooker, used their influence within the academy to prepare for an announcement of a joint discovery.

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[81] David Ray Griffin, *Religion and scientific naturalism overcoming the conflicts*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000) 34.
[82] Charles Darwin and David Quammen, *On the origin of species*, Illustrated ed. (New York: Sterling, 2008), ix.
[83] Ibid.

The announcement, which took place at a Linnean Society meeting, did not create the stir that Darwin had hoped. Moreover, he did not even inform Wallace that an announcement had been made. Darwin was pressured, by Lyell and Hooker, to present unfinished manuscripts and notes that did not contain the entirety of his theory of natural selection for fear of allowing Wallace to take full credit for the insight. The lack of response from the Linnean Society announcement, and the threat of Wallace, pushed Darwin into quick action. He produced the first manuscript of what would be known as *On the Origin of Species* in under a year, while omitting much of the research he has accumulated previously.

The content within which *On the Origin of Species* was published gives us some insight into the process of scientific development. First, it is important to note that Darwin was not the only, or even original, individual to propose something like evolution by natural selection. Perhaps it was from fear of becoming a footnote of history, much like Wallace has become, or maybe it was a simple desire for years of study to not be made worthless. Whatever the reason, Darwin found himself pressured to publish faster than he felt comfortable with. Evolution by natural selection, perhaps the most important biological theory of the nineteenth century, was rushed to publication due to the politics of the academy. Science is more than the processes of experimentation, observation, and interpretation. There are social, or perhaps internally political, aspects to the development of the scientific community. A theory does not always succeed because of its inherit explanatory powers, it needs to carry the torch of authority which can only be granted by certain institutions. While the human aspect of religion is fairly obvious, science has a tendency to be abstracted outside of the human process.

Buchler, while discussing human judgement, offers some preliminary notes on the complex of science. With respect to the interaction between the community of science and the individual scientist, "any product whether of science or art requires and proceptive domain for its genesis and locus."[84] In other words, science is not something that can possibly be abstracted out of the human process. Buchler ties science to a form of compulsive judgment. The implication is that science is oriented around the compulsion of deductive logic opposed to other forms of query, which include theology and philosophy, which are not strictly organized around that singular principle. This is complicated by our discussion of *On the Origin of Species* above. The force of history compels contemporary thought into the agreement of Darwin following the compulsive judgment of logic. But, at least initially, the reception of evolution via natural selection at the Linnean Society displayed disinterest or misunderstanding. The production of natural selection into a prevalent paradigm in the biological sciences offers a clear example of the human process of science as tied up within the political and self-interested aspects of individuals.

Science is a complex that resides within the order of the human process. The process by which biological evolution through natural selection became a dominate paradigm within the sciences displays how deeply science lies within the human process. Too often the compulsive judgments which propel science are conflated with judgments that reside outside of the complex of humanity. The logic of compulsive judgments are reified into ontological priorities that gives science a back-door into claims of ultimate priority of inquiry. The principles of science understood as practical priorities allows for

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[84] Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, 68.

analysis of both the content of scientific claims as well as the extensive human processes by which those claims are made. Reductionism within the field of physics offers an example of ontological priority causing philosophical dilemmas which threaten to undermine the authority of the scientific process.

The proposal of reductionism comes with the force of materialism. And in its most charitable formulation, reductionism, can quite powerful. For example, if we were to take all of the gluons and quarks that make up the fabric of the universe which is our solar system and create a perfect mirror of any given state of affairs somewhere else in the galaxy, then we would construct the exact same state of affairs in our fabricated solar system.[85] Chinese politics would continue along the same path just as the storms on Jupiter would continue their furry in a perfect mirror. This picture is quite compelling because every neural pattern, every intimate human action, *everything*, would be supposedly perfectly mirrored. At least in their initial conditions. And perhaps the initial conditions are all that *needs* to be mirrored. However, it would seem that the reductionist model requires reductionist assumptions that are neither demonstrably true, nor even apparently true. If one is to purpose a thought experiment, the conclusion cannot assume the premises. Further, reductionism needs to include a determinism that assumes if the same initial conditions can be perfectly mirrored by precisely placed gluons and quarks then the original and mirrored histories would travel along the exact same path.

While there are a number of interesting objections to hard determinism[86], the strongest response which Buchler could pose to the reductionist would come vis-a-vis

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[85] See John Polkinghorne, *Quantum Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

[86] See Objections to hard determinism in Peter Van Inwagen, *Ontology, Identity, and Modality: Essays in Metaphysics*, (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2001).

ordinal complexity and ontological parity. The sequences of prevalence and alescence

within orders of traits is not guaranteed to follow a set script determined by sheer

causality. Moreover, the reductionists find some lingering issues within their purposed

scale of reduction. Sheer determinate causality is *especially* weak on the micro level of

the universe (gluons and quarks), the very level reductionists want to set as a standard.

Quantum relations do not play by the same rules as the Newtonian physical objects that

we observe in the world.[87] Probability and uncertainty are, according to a number of

prominent models of quantum mechanics, intrinsic characteristics of the universe.

Reductionism appears to be a position taken out of the Newtonian era. However, it still

persists and prevails amongst scientific naturalists who attempt to move beyond their

field to make claims of universality. Causal determinism might be the only efficacious

model for astrophysics, but that does not imply it is *the* model which guides all natural

processes. This assumed universality is where the logic falls apart for the reductionists.

They mistake the physical laws as exhaustively governing all natural complexes.

There is no order of orders, and no natural complex of natural complexes.

Corrington suggests that, "Nature is orders, not exhaustively constituted *by* orders, not

"something" defined *as* orders, just orders."[88] Physics, for example, continues its quest

for the universal theory of everything which, if found, would be *the* natural complex of

natural complexes. In some ways physics already sees the 'laws' of its internal operations

as holding some form of ontological status which relates to every possible complex in

existence. At the risk of repetition: nature is not an order of orders. Rather, nature is an

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[87] John Polkinghorne, *Quantum Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 32ff.

[88] Robert Corrington, "Evolution, Religion, and Ecstatic Naturalism," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 31(2010): 125.

innumerable amount of orders, a multiplicity. There is no Nature; nature has no unified referent. Natural complexes have innumerable relations, however, they do not relate to *all* other natural complexes. Nature, as Buchler understands it, has unexhausted breadth and depth for exploration and understanding. Which is to say, in some sense, the world is irreducible; it does not consist of simples. The prevalence of one particular natural complex, i.e. physical relations between objects, does not suggest that no other orders of relation exist or could become prevalent.

Ontological parity posits that no natural complex is more real than any other. This is not to imply that natural complex lack difference. According to Buchler, the principle of ontological parity "presupposes that no two complexes, in whatever order and however discriminated, are similar in all respects."[89] Ontological parity forces analysis of every natural complex, with a lack of priority, and with that analysis comes the recognition of the individual integrity of each natural complex. Reductionism conflates a particular type of analysis, namely the scientific analysis of quarks and gluons, with the most real type of analysis. There cannot be a most real type of analysis because there are no natural complexes that are more or less real to be analyzed.

Further, while the reductionist might want to talk about the abstracted gluons and quarks, it should be realized that there is no gluon and quark outside of the relations within which it exists. A natural complex "affects and is affected by other complexes. This is not a doctrine of internal relations. For although every natural complex is related to other natural complexes, it does not follow that every natural complex is related to *every* other natural complex."[90] Natural complexes can reside in more than one order of

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[89] Buchler, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes,* 33.
[90] Bernstein, Buchler's Metaphysics, 41.

relations. I, for example, exist in an order of relations within the structure of my

immediate family. I exist in another order of relations when I attend a concert, or a

baseball game. Both complexes of relations are true at the same time in different ways.

There are no simples in the ordinal relations of natural complexes, as everything relates

to something else, forming a complex. So the question is, can the relations of ordinality

be replicated by sheer physical replication? If we accept that natural complexes are more

than physical objects, or, if we agree that when we talk about natural complexes are not

simply talking about the laws of science, then it would seem that we refuse the

reductionist thought-experiment from the beginning.

But maybe science, more than religion and philosophy, appeals to our

experience. The prevalence of science as the gatekeeper of experience is also

questioned by Buchler:

> "Science appeals to experience," is in one sense absurd. There is no one
> who does not "appeal" to experience in the sense defined above ; for no
> one is there a world other than the world he proceives. What is ordinarily
> intended by the usage is the appeal to certain formalized or
> semiformalized techniques of manipulation. This is clear when the term
> "observation" is used instead of "experience." Sometimes, however, a
> distinction is intended between "private" (or "internal") and "public"
> experience, and the "appeal" is said to be to the latter.[91]

Now, this is an interesting continuation of standard understanding, albeit with

more specific vocabulary, and a subtle critique of language. The formalized manipulation

requires very specific forms of communication in order to accomplish some type of

"public" experience. Buchler, it seems, wants to cause a rupture within the system which

suggests that science is the primary and most reliable form of inquiry. While science

certainly has its place in the manipulative aspects of proception, there are numerous,

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[91] Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*.

perhaps innumerable, complexes taking place within any endeavor which make the pronouncement of 'objective' data or information a nonsensical enterprise. This is not to say that science does not achieve its goals. Rather, that the enterprise of science is simply one method of working within a particular system. "The scientist, like the artist, thinks in terms of specific projects and problems."[92] The scientist, artist, and philosopher all limit the focus of their proceptive direction with respect to their vocational work. Science has an advantage of utility with regards to its material production, but the ontological significance of scientific work is neither above nor below any other discipline.

This is not to suggest that the work produced by all three enterprises (philosophy, theology, and science) contain the same sort of authority regarding all matters. This is one of the many reasons to conceive of them as ordinal. Only "the madman"[93] refuses to relent when the observational evidence is constructed, by formalized operations, into a product for public interpretation. Art and philosophy, for example, do not construct or create the same compulsion with regard to their product; there is deliberation within art and philosophy, but science is compelled by formalization. It should be noted that there are certain types of philosophy, and possibly art, that are compelled by similar formalization but the characteristics are not as determinant with regards to the larger complexes of philosophy and art.

Indeed there are different domains within which each product is relevant and possibility authoritative. This process resides within the community of interpreters; moving from the proceptive direction of an individual all the way through to validation. Buchler suggests, quote, "Any expression of man, then, constitutes an utterance or

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[92] Ibid., 68.
[93] Ibid., 73.

judgment, and every utterance is subject to validation, even if it be not actually validated."[94] It could be suggested that while peer reviewed (validation) work is, generally, considered more compelling for scientific endeavors, the same type of rigor occurs within philosophy and theology. Difference is not a sufficient reason for hierarchy. Buchler correctly notes that different forms of validation apply to the various forms of human judgment as they constitute a wide array of possible statements.

The validation for practical cohesion of a particular science is not sufficient to organize all modes of truth-seeking. Ontological parity is required to combat the tendency to turn compulsive logic into an ontological priority project.

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[94] Ibid. 154

THE WORK OF PHILOSOPHY

Religion and science both have practical priorities operating within their discursive apparatus. These priorities are treated as ontological within their respective complexes but the evaluations done above show that they are more of epistemological priorities that allow for the complexes to determine themselves. Philosophy, generically speaking, does not have these traits. There certainly is philosophy that argues for priority schemes, ontological limitations, etc. However, these are not determinate traits of philosophy. With respect to the relationship between religion and science, as has been briefly noted above, philosophy is needed as a mediator. This is not a job, for example, of philosophy of science or philosophy of religion because the internal workings of either complex is not the object of study. Rather, we are trying to locate the points of interaction and conflict between the two complexes.

A primary point of interaction appears to be causality, which has been a traditional category within metaphysics. For example, Kant, following Hume, spent a lot of time and effort attempting to formulate a conception of the world which makes sense of the subjectively located experience of the self and the external certainty of causality within experience. This lifelong project was an attempt lay a framework for the authority of science with respect to causality and the authority of religion with respect to moral and ethical choices. The centrality of causality in the relationship between religion and science is not a novel proposition. The new work comes from reframing of the relationship within the framework of Buchler's metaphysics.

This chapter will examine the relationship between religion and science as it relates to causality. The conflicting claims with regards to causal authority emanate from the metaphysical assumptions under any given religious or scientific disposition. As noted above, Plantinga wanted to locate the conflict between religion and naturalism, but in so far as science assumes causal chains, in which any given link must be identifiable in the empirical world, there is a breakdown of causal connections when a divinity is able to manipulate this process. As will be argued below, the notion of a causal history for any given state of affairs does not necessarily lead hard determinism. Different ordinal schemes will appropriate various forms of causal determination within the limits of their scope. There are echoes of Kant's third antinomy within the metaphysics of natural complexes articulated here.

The philosophical task is to determine the relevance of the practical priorities between religion and science. Which discourse gets to be determinate with respect to certain complexes? The question is almost vast to consider, but the metaphysics of natural complexes allows for nuanced investigation of any given complex. Every point of conflict between religion and science cannot be synthesized under a general rule, but a method for investigation can be established. The metaphysics of natural complexes allowed for broad and distinct work within the complexes of religion and science, but how does this metaphysics address the issue of causality? Buchler engages in a discussion of actuality and possibility which might open the door to including other thinkers whose work runs on parallel lines.

Buchler takes issue with the classical assertive judgments which surround the categories of actuality and possibility. He suggests that a pure distinction between the two

does not exist. Possibilities are never 'pure' in the sense that they are not related to an

obtained states of affairs, or actuality. A possibility will always prevail as an actuality

within an order, and as an order, of actualities. Further, there are no pure actualities that

do not have ordinal relations with possibilities.[95] This pushes against the traditional

Aristotelian/Thomist logic which allows for God to occupy an 'unmoved mover' position

where God is pure actualization without any possibilities. Such purity of actuality or

possibility, Buchler suggests, is as fictional as simples.[96]

Buchler notes that over the course of his system, it should be apparent that there is

a proper way to ask questions about possibilities and actualities. That proper way lies

within the ordinal system of natural complexes. What, exactly, does it mean to suggest

that possibilities are located within an order of natural complexes? Recalling the re-

orientation of philosophical questions at the beginning of the paper: in what way is a

possibility real? In the case of natural complexes, possibilities are always *of* and *for* any

given complex. "[A] natural complex has certain possibilities-not any whatever."[97] There

are not infinite possibilities for any given complex, but its possibilities are innumerable;

they are limited by whatever possibilities prevail into actualities.

Possibilities prevail in certain respects, and they can be alescent with respect to

actualities. Buchler's ordinal system tethers possibilities to actualities. Actualities which

were previous possibilities that became actualized through the sequence of time. There

are finite boundaries to possibilities. For example, there is no possibility that I will

become Babe Ruth, or Woodrow Wilson. Possibilities, which are themselves complexes,

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[95] Ibid p. 129
[96] Buchler, Justus. *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*. p. 129
[97] Ibid. p. 130

are always located within an order. "Complexes therefore differ genuinely in their possibilities, whatever other qualification or classifications are found to be pertinent."[98]

Buchler's discussion of possibilities and actualizes rests upon the conception of both categories being understood as natural complexes and obeying the primary structures of natural complexes within the realms of their dominance. A possibility's prevalence leads to the actualization of that possibility and discontinues other possibilities. An actuality becoming alescent leads to the prevalence of another actuality. His discussion on possibilities and actualities is concluded with a statement concerning the status of that natural complex which prevails in philosophical thought, the human:

> The merest breath a man takes favors one possibility and renders others obsolete. . . . At the other end of his scale, where he is unique in the manner of his kind, he methodically actualizes possibilities that he has produced or apprehended. In so doing, he also keeps actualizing himself. He is not the sole or even the most basic determinant of his own actualization. His is not the only kind of complex that is continually in process of actualization. His kind alone, however, is able to dwell with the possibilities, and this is crucial for his degradation or salvation. [99]

Buchler is interested in the application of his ordinal metaphysics and not the operations of causality itself, i.e. the way in which a possibility becomes an actuality. It is enough for his system to acknowledge that when certain actualities obtain certain possibilities are barred from obtaining. The interesting implication from this system is the acceptance of reality as moving through space-time through probabilistic (possibility-laden) means rather than deterministic. And this probabilistic trait is apparent in all natural complexes as all natural complexes have possibilities.

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[98] Ibid. p. 141

[99] Buchler, Justus. *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*. p. 184

The metaphysics of natural complexes offers an interesting way into Kant's third antinomy. The problem posed by the third antinomy of reason concerns freedom and determination. The antinomy is found by positing contradictory conclusions about the world, i.e. that the world contains both determinate causality and free causality, and the world contains only determinate causality. Kant suggests that reason, operating dialectically, is content with both of these hypothetical syllogisms even though they offer contradictory conclusions. One aspect of the antinomies is that they rely upon reason reaching beyond its empirical limitations to cosmological concepts.

The argument for freedom, as put forward by Kant, relies on the impossibility of an infinite regress. If the series of causal events is historically infinite, meaning never reaching completion, than all events would have already occurred. "[I]f it [the series of causal events] had always existed, its consequence would also have always existed, and would not have only just arisen."[100] Hence, it is impossible for the natural causation which we observe in the field of appearances to be the only form of causation. Reason demands that there be a first beginning and a completeness of the series of causal chains. This implies that freedom takes the form of "absolute spontaneity."[101] "This transcendental freedom, without which, even in the [ordinary] course of nature, the series of appearances on the side of causes can never be complete."[102]

The argument for determination, as put forward by Kant, counters the argument for freedom by suggesting that freedom violates the law of causality. Every event presupposes a state of affairs prior to the event that determined the event to occur.

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[100] Immanuel Kant, and Norman Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Reissued ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 409.
[101] Ibid., 411.
[102] Ibid., 410.

According to the argument, Transcendental freedom "is not to be met with any experience, and is therefore an empty thought-entity."[103] The illusion of freedom allows for the understanding, which is always seeking the origin of events, a point of determination with the cause beginning in the act itself. However, this is no more than a pragmatic illusion which, if true, would undermine the possibility of a coherent experience. If spontaneous events occurred outside of causal relations, they would be like unexplainable holes in experience.

Kant's solution to this antinomy is to remind us that when we perceive and experience we are not given access to things-in-themselves. And this restrains us from making ontological claims as to the form of causality. Thus, Kant suggests, "the effect may be regarded as free in respect of its intelligible cause, and at the same time in respect of appearances are resulting from them according to the necessity of nature."[104] Kant is attempting to make a distinction between empirical causality and the intellectual concept of causality. Subjects belonging to the sensible world have both an empirical character and an intellectual character. The empirical character is that which stands in thorough-going unity with other appearances under the laws of nature. In other words, our experience is coherent because of the laws imposed by the understanding on empirical character of our experience. However, subjects also have an intelligible character which does not stand under the conditions of sensibility. The transcendental unity of apperception is not a sensible experience, it is the locus of experience. This is to say, subjects have both the status of an appearance in so far as they are to us, and they are also intelligible in so far as they are to themselves an experiencing unity. Since this

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[103] Ibid., 411.
[104] Ibid., 467.

intelligible character is an aspect of the thing-in-itself, it is not subject to the laws of space and time since space and time are aspects of the manifold of sensible experience. Thus the intelligible "must be considered to be free from all influence of sensibility and from all determination through appearances."[105]

Kant's answer to the third antinomy sets the stage for the ethical considerations in his later work. This bifurcation of causality allow for the authority of scientific explanations within the realm of appearances, and for the authority of moral law within the realm of the human process. It will not be until later in his life, with the publication of *Religion within the limits of reason alone* when Kant attempts to merge the ethical framework of the categorical imperative with the religious framework of Christianity. The success or failure of Kant's synthesis is not relevant at the moment, but the orientation of that synthesis around causality lends support to the claim made in this paper that religion and science have conflicting interests with regards to causal claims.

Plantinga, who has made a name for himself by his articulation of the freewill defense, suggests that it is not science and religion that are making conflicting causal claims. Rather the metaphysical assumptions of scientific naturalism are conflicting with religion. Science qua science is, according to Plantinga, more in line with theistic religion than this naturalism. Even though Plantinga is making a very different argument than Kant, the authority regarding causal claims is central to the discussion.

Evolution, divine action (miracles), and evolutionary psychology are the specific areas of study which Plantinga argues the conflict between science and theistic religion are superficial. It is helpful for us to conceptualize Plantinga's thesis as stating that

[105] Ibid., 469.

scientific naturalism has, wrongly, become synonymous with science and the conflation of the two has created illusory conflicts between theistic religion and science. In his discussion on Evolution and Christianity Plantinga suggests that Dawkins confuses the issue when discussing the way evolution works. After making historical claims about how the evolutionary process has occurred, Dawkins will then proceeds to insert philosophically, specifically ontologically, loaded answers as to *why* it has happened. Dawkins attempts to explain the causal phenomena by appealing to his metaphysical assumptions. However, Plantinga suggests that Dawkins might not be fully aware of the assumptions, and the controversies involved, he brings to the table because such levels of analysis are not within Dawkins skill-set: "After all, he's a biologist and not a philosopher."[106] Evolutionary Theory, Plantinga suggests, is not at odds with Christianity. Rather Christianity is at odds with "the idea that evolution, natural selection is unguided. But that idea isn't part of evolutionary theory as such; it's instead a metaphysical or theological addition."[107] This statement might be at odds with the way in which Darwin understood natural selection as discussed previously, but the success of Plantinga's argument is not our interest.

Moving from evolution to a discussion about divine action (miracles), Plantinga enters into discussion not just with scientists but with the whole community of those whose object of study involves religion. Plantinga seems particularly interested in theologians that have accepted the consequences of scientific naturalism as if they were the necessary consequences of accepting that science can tell us something useful about the world. For example, "Bultmann apparently believes that no supernatural powers, not

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[106] Plantinga, *Where the conflict,* 17.
[107] Ibid., 63.

even God himself, can interfere with this closed continuum of cause and effect."[108] Plantinga summarizes the apparent conflict by suggesting that science discovers natural laws and that if God acted in a miraculous way it would be incompatible with science because divine action appears to violate the natural laws of causality. However, Plantinga wants to ask, "is all this really true?"[109]

Plantinga suggests that theologians, and philosophers, that uphold a form of "hands-off theology" are attempting to toe-the-line for Newtonian physics. However, the causal laws of Newtonian physics only apply to closed or isolated systems. If God were to act in the world, for example, by changing the velocity of any given particle, then it would be obvious that energy was not conserved but, it would be equally obvious that the system is not closed.[110] Moreover, "it is no part of Newtonian mechanics or classical science generally to declare that the material universe is a closed system...because that claim isn't physics, but a theological or metaphysical add-on."[111] Further, Plantinga suggests that the possibility of causal openness offered by developments in Quantum Mechanics might open a possible avenue for God to operate in the world, but any form of belief in miracles would necessarily be limited by the consequential limitations of Gods interactions with the world.[112] It should be noted that Plantinga is not taking the argument to the next step, he is not suggesting that miracles actually do occur, simply that if they did they would not be contrary to science. His position is that the only reason why

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[108] Ibid., 70.
[109] Ibid., 75.
[110] Ibid., 78.
[111] Ibid., 79.
[112] Ibid., 93ff.

science rejects the possibility of divine action is due to the influence of naturalism, not because of the consequences of science itself.

Plantinga devotes a lot of text to a discussion and eventual refusal of Intelligent Design.[113] Plantinga's suggestion is that the proper relationship between religion and science opens up possibilities for Christians, and one guesses Muslims and Jews, to add on their own metaphysical frameworks to the scientific narrative. However Behe's attempt at systematizing design within the evolutionary model has failed. Despite the misguided efforts of Intelligent Design, Plantinga wants to make sure that room is open for Christians to express their theological assumptions in a way that is equal to the naturalist's expression of their theological assumptions. Both the religious thinker and the naturalist should be able to answer the causal *why* questions without one being given ontological priority within science.

Further, Plantinga offers his own argument for why Christianity, and all theistic religions, share a "deep concord" with science in a way that naturalism does not. First and foremost Plantinga wants to make the case that simply because science, as an enterprise, is an attempt to find truth it does not follow that other roads to knowledge need to be closed. "That is like claiming that now that we have refrigerators and chain saws and roller skates, we no longer have need for Mozart."[114] Plantinga argues that science as an enterprise of truth seeking makes perfect sense in a world where a creator established a connection between what is observed in the world and what is real. The match between the content of our cognitive faculties and the world as-it-is can be easily explained by the God doctrine. However, naturalism has a hard time expressing why our

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[113] Ibid., 225.
[114] Ibid., 267.

cognitive faculties would lead to anything approaching the truth. Some, such as Chomsky, suggest that "it is just blind luck if the human science-forming capacity, a particular component of the human biological endowment, happens to yield a result that conforms more or less to the truth about the world."[115] The "deep concord" between science and religion is that religion can give an epistemological justification for the truth finding capacities of the human mind.

Now that Plantinga has established what he believes is the "deep concord" between science and religion he turns his attention to the "deep conflict" between naturalism and science. Already mentioned, this conflict is the contrasting stance that religion and science have in concord. Naturalism fails to provide an adequate account of why the human mind is capable of truth seeking. Plantinga finds that this conflict originates in naturalism's materialistic understanding of human persons. If, in fact, both naturalism and evolution were true then there would be little interest in the truth-value of beliefs. Rather, the interest would be in orienting ones beliefs towards satisfying "fitness" and reproductive measures. Plantinga's formulation is probability based. "[I]t is unlikely that our cognitive faculties are reliable given naturalism... by way of evolution."[116] Thus the conflict does not lie between religion and science but rather between science and naturalism.

The primary argument might end up being neutered by his insistence on combining materialism with naturalism. It might have been more effective for him to frame the primary conflict between theistic religion and naturalism. Then, instead of using science as the site for a proxy war, theistic religion and naturalism can engage in

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[115] Ibid., 269.
[116] Ibid., 348.

direct conversation. However, his far reaching thesis provides insights into the philosophically complex assumptions that pervade method and belief. Contemporary science writers certainly include ontological naturalism within their worldview and conflate it with actual science, and the impact of those conflations are far reaching. In their attempt to acquiesce, even theologians become hesitant to critically examine the assumptions that pervade scientific writings. Indeed, with the fear of becoming irrelevant, theologians have seemingly accepted practical priorities from the scientific community and have infused those priorities into their own work. This is not necessarily a problem, of course. The problem arises when the metaphysical assumptions go unexamined.

But where does this examining lead? How does the metaphysics of natural complexes get anywhere? When are discriminated complexes affirmed as knowledge and not merely a consequence of individual perspective? All discriminated complexes *are* perspectival but that does not mean, for example, the relationship between science and religion boils down to which camp any given actor is currently residing within. The pragmatic tradition might prove to be a fitting ally for the metaphysics of natural complexes with respect to the import of ontological parity into the human process. After all, the uncovering of metaphysical assumptions is not an activity of analysis for the sake of analysis. Rather, to echo the spirit of Karl Marx, the analysis is meant to change the human process by rearranging our practical priorities and establishing ontological parity within our beliefs.

Rather than become subsumed by some form of ubiquitous relativity, the pragmatist philosopher Cheyrl Misak argues that "judgments about what ought to be

done, what is good, and what is just can be truth or false."[117] There is little from for the human process to flourish if the authority of priority is "at the mercy of the vagaries of individuals."[118] She finds it intuitively true that when we make judgments we are really assuming that our understanding of right is in some sense objectively right, not just right with respect to our own subculture of our immediate group. We always have something like the Kingdom of Ends underlying our claims. In order to ground her theory of truth Misak wants to apply the philosophical inquiry of pragmatism, in the tradition of Dewey, instead of the increasingly fashionable deconstruction. Misak qualifies her project by suggesting that she is not interested in the particular discussions of application, but rather she is interested in exploring "how morality and politics fit into our world-views."[119] In other words, she is attempting to find the generic traits of a natural complex, which we can call truth, rather than a specific species within that genus.

The pragmatist project of truth is analogous to the application ontological parity. She is making claims about the nature of inquiry in its most generic sense without providing an ontological hierarchy to any given mode of inquiry. Her project is not to posit a universal truth, rather it is to construct an epistemological/political framework through which deliberation about truth can be held. This project leads her to a democratic understanding of inquiry. This democratic ideal mirrors the principle of ontological parity in that no one voice has a necessary priority over another. However, that does not imply practical priorities need to be demolished. For example, medical legislation should be reviewed by doctors, not electricians. We can reframe the question with the language of

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[117] Cheyrl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 2
[118] Ibid., 2.
[119] Ibid., 7.

our metaphysics of natural complexes as, 'if all complexes are equally real, what is regulative force that urges the collective human process to recognize a consistent world?'

Misak wants to argue for a philosophical pragmatism which allows us to understand there is a "best fit" solution to a problem, even if that does not translate into some sort of metaphysical rule or priory scheme for all similar problems. Misak develops the concept of convergence to justify her position. Pragmatism, she argues, believes that correct judgment does not reside within any given individual even though it is the individual who judges, it (correct judgment) resides within the community of inquirers.[120] Misak suggests that "what is important is what fits with all the experience that would be available, what the community of inquirers would converge upon."[121] This broad appeal to experience allows for the possibility of objective moral considerations. Since the process of constructing truth is necessarily a process of community, and if the community is democratically structured, then there is no necessary contradiction with a community constructing an objective standard of truth, morality, and politics. With the enduring maxim that there is a possibility for more evidence and larger community, the community of interpreters never ceases inquiry.

There is an important non-modernist assumption at work: there is no finalization, there is no achievable totality of truth. As Misak suggests:

> "After the moral horrors of this century, surely no one will even want to say… that we are getting closer to the truth. This should not prevent us from thinking that here and there we have made improvements, corrections, and progress, as opposed to changes in whim or fashion."[122]

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[120] Ibid., 95.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., 97.

Misak wants to avoid the enlightenment position of undiminished progress. However, she does not want regulate *all* developments to preference. There has been some *real* progress, even if it takes the form of something such as gender equality (if that can be considered something small). So while Misak does not want to suggest that society writ large is moving closer to the ideal of truth or moral orientation, there are certainly areas of genuine, deliberate, progress.

Convergence should not be expected to do more work than it claims. The pragmatist account of truth is very tolerance of disagreement. It does not need to coerce everyone to its particular stance. However, it is ground enough for one to make an objective claim with an openness to future development. The concept of convergence requires continued investigation into reasoning around truth even though there might be countless undetermined beliefs. Misak wants us to remember that despite all the numerous contradictory accounts of truth, there is no need to assume that an objective truth does not exist. For example, a legal argument always assumes that there is an objective physical history of a crime in the face of contradictory accounts of what happened in a given instance.[123] Objective does not here imply the view from no-where, rather a view that would be agreed upon by the community of interpreters. Truth, on this account, is always a resident of the human process.

This problematizes any simple conception of a correspondence theory of truth. The pragmatist understanding of truth and belief is based upon the marriage of inquiry and convergence. "If truth is a matter of a statement's getting the physical world right, then how could we possibly think that statements about what is just and unjust might be

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[123] Ibid., 99.

true or false?"[124] It's a false dichotomy based upon the ontological priority given the 'physical world.' The path to understanding a true state of affairs is complex and perspectival, and bound up in relations. And Misak does not see a destination on that path, it is a journey that humanity will necessarily never complete. The solution is a matter of humility. Echoing the love of reason suggested by Buchler.[125] The inquirer must assume that there *is* a right answer to the question, but any answer given will be incomplete.

Misak is aiming her analysis at the realm of morality and politics but the ontological priority of scientific inquiry is called into question. Misak notes that "not only has science failed to live up to its own ideals, but we do not know that those ideals will remain the same."[126] Science moves beyond the practical priority of a motivating final answer, and posits the possibility of formulating that answer. Not only are the practical priorities reified into ontological priorities, but traces of naive realism pervade the sciences. As mentioned above Misak finds the limiting of truth to correspondence to be highly problematic for our moral and political claims about the world. It follows that correspondence, especially with the restraining of certainty by the community of interpreters, would be equally lacking with respect to the physical world. The history of science is more a story of fluctuating conceptual frameworks more than a story about progress towards the Truth.[127] In the early to mid-19th century scientists believed that all of the basics of physics had been figured out and it was simply a matter of plugging in the variables. However, with the rise of Atomic theories, Plank Time, and Quantum

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[124] Ibid., 155.
[125] Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, 168.
[126] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 97.
[127] See: Thomas Hankins, *Science and Enlightenment*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970).

Mechanics the world of physics became a domain torn apart by competing theories. The claims of Quantum Mechanics cannot be universally true if the claims of traditional physics are true. Possible syntheses have arisen but none have captured the paradigm yet. The way in which both domains claim to know the way in which objects relate to one another cannot both be true at the same time in the same way. Atoms do not work like solar systems. Gravity and magnetic fields do not account for the ways in which subatomic particles relate to each other. Some physicists hope for a grand unifying theory which could account for the discrepancies and harmonize the systems. However, there are some physicists, such as John Polkinghorne[128], who do not believe such a theory is even possible. Perhaps the domains of knowledge are simply and utterly incommensurable and multiple. Further, ontological parity suggests that the reduction of all knowledge to a unified physical theory (even if possible) distorts the metaphysical relationships at work between those objects.

Aware of the potential pitfalls and abuse of authority that the community of interpreters , Misak suggests that "the pragmatist must be careful not to suggest that the way in which we are converging on truth is that we are getting closer and closer to some specified ideal."[129] The end of inquiry is a regulative concept and not a point in the future nor a series of propositions which constitute the whole truth. She even asserts that "only the general democratic methodological principle can be justified by a philosophical argument."[130] The primacy of philosophy with respect to the moral and political concerns of Misak is mirrored within the relationship between religion, science, and philosophy.

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[128] John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship between Science and Theology*. (Philadelphia: Trinity International, 1991).

[129] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, 97.

[130] Ibid., 96.

Philosophy that is guided ontological parity has the tool-set and ability to analyze without domination, unlike religion or science.

Using Misak's work as an example of ontological parity shows that the implications of the metaphysics of natural complex moves beyond purely speculative philosophy. Buchler offers an organizing principle with respect to the various modes of inquiry which pervade religion, science, and philosophy: query. Query is not limited to truth-seeking.[131] Query is guided by reason and reason is not merely an analytic or structure. The practical priorities established within religion and science ought to be guided by reason. Reason is, within any application of the metaphysics of natural complexes, the means by which ontological parity is established and practical priorities can retain their integrity. "Reason is a form of love, as love…is a form of reason. It is love of inventive communication."[132]

The work of philosophy rests within the generic application of query and the qualitative realm of reason. "The problem of reason is to discriminate among the potentialities of the new."[133] Religion and science, among many other modes, make strides of inquiry and authoritative explanatory claims within experience. The potential consequences of these new, or perhaps renewed, claims requires the continuous work of philosophy. Philosophy, then, needs to be weary of practical priorities reified into ontological priorities while working closely and democratically with both religion and science.

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[131] Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, 168.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid

The possibilities of reason and query are endless. Buchler places the human process as one complex among the innumerable complexes of nature. The answers to the struggles between religion and science are multiple, but two necessary components of any workable answer are ordinality and ontological parity. We are in innumerable relations with the complexes of the world, and there are no complexes that are more real than any other complexes.

> The merest breath a man takes favors one possibility and renders others obsolete. . . . At the other end of his scale, where he is unique in the manner of his kind, he methodically actualizes possibilities that he has produced or apprehended. In so doing, he also keeps actualizing himself. He is not the sole or even the most basic determinant of his own actualization. His is not the only kind of complex that is continually in process of actualization. His kind alone, however, is able to dwell with the possibilities, and this is crucial for his degradation or salvation. [134]

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[134] Buchler, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, 184.

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