

Biography - Corrington, Robert S. (1950-)*Contemporary Authors Online* - 2006

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Born 1950. **Memberships:** International Association of Semiotic Studies, Highlands Institute for American Religious and Philosophical Thought (executive board, 1992-95), American Academy of Religion, American Philosophical Association, C. S. Pierce Society, North American Paul Tillich Society, Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, Karl Jaspers Society of North America, Semiotic Society of America (executive board, 1992-94), C. G. Jung Foundation for Analytical Psychology, Unitarian Universalist Association, Theosophical Society of America. **Addresses:** Office: Drew University, 36 Madison Avenue, Madison, NJ 07940. **E-mail:** rcorrington@drew.edu.

Drew University, Casperson School of Graduate Studies, Madison, NJ, professor of philosophical theology. Previously professor at Pennsylvania State University.

WRITINGS:

- | (Editor, with Carl Hausman and Thomas M. Seebohm) *Pragmatism Considers Phenomenology*, University Press of America (Washington, DC), 1987.
- | *The Community of Interpreters: On the Hermeneutics of Nature and the Bible in the American Philosophical Tradition*, Mercer (Macon, GA), 1987, 2nd edition, 1995.
- | (Editor, with Armen Marsoobian and Kathleen Wallace) Justus Buchler, *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, State University of New York Press (Albany, NY), 1990.
- | (Editor, with Armen Marsoobian and Kathleen Wallace) *Nature's Perspective: Prospects of Ordinal Metaphysics*, State University of New York Press (Albany, NY), 1991.
- | *Nature and Spirit: An Essay in Ecstatic Naturalism*, Fordham University Press (New York, NY), 1992.
- | *An Introduction to C. S. Pierce: Philosopher, Semiotician, and Ecstatic Naturalist*, Rowman & Littlefield (Lanham, MD), 1993.
- | *Ecstatic Naturalism: Signs of the World*, Indiana University Press (Bloomington, IN), 1994.
- | *Nature's Self: Our Journey from Origin to Spirit*, Rowman & Littlefield (Lanham, MD), 1996.
- | *Nature's Religion*, Rowman & Littlefield (Lanham, MD), 1997.
- | *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press (New York, NY), 2000.
- | *Wilhelm Reich: Psychoanalyst and Radical Naturalist*, Farrar, Straus (New York, NY), 2003.
- | *Riding the Windhorse: Manic Depressive Disorder and the Quest for Wholeness*, Hamilton Books (Lanham, MD), 2003.

Contributor to numerous academic journals, including *Chrysalis*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, and the *American Journal of Semiotics*. Also author of two plays, *Black Hole Sonata (or Waiting for Steven Hawking)* and *One, Two, Three*.

"Sidelights"

A philosophy professor and semiotician, Robert S. Corrington has developed a particular philosophic perspective called ecstatic naturalism. In addition, Corrington is a student of the depth psychology of C. G. Jung and Wilhelm Reich. In his book *The Community of Interpreters: On the Hermeneutics of Nature and the Bible in the American Philosophic Tradition*, Corrington examines the American philosophers Ralph Waldo Emerson, Josiah Royce, and C. S. Pierce to establish an authentic American tradition, founded in nature, of semiotics and metaphysics. As *Cross Currents* contributor

James Campbell explained, "Corrington has laid out in lucid prose a compelling sketch of a living relationship among community, hermeneutics, nature, and religion. For him, community lives and grows as a process of mutual inquiry and interpretation." According to Corrington, the communal approach launched by Pierce is superior to the subjectivist work of European philosophers such as Martin Heidegger. *Church History* writer Douglas R. Sharp stated, "Corrington contends that it is the community which both restrains the primacy of individual experience and perspective, and suggests the criteria by which cogent interpretive decisions can be made." A reviewer for the *Christian Century* felt that "for most tastes, there's a bit too much jargon," but also noted the book's "startling insights." *Religious Studies Review* contributor Phil Mullins called *The Community of Interpreters* "immensely rich, though philosophically dense."

Corrington further explores this philosophical perspective in a loosely connected series of books exploring different aspects of naturalism. Nancy Frankenberry, writing in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, commented that the series "integrate[s] a metaphysics of naturalism, semiotics in the tradition of C. S. Pierce, ordinal complexes as delineated in the work of Justus Buchler, and the author's own highly nuanced use of phenomenological and hermeneutical methods." Robert Cummings Neville, in the *International Philosophical Quarterly*, noted that *Nature and Spirit: An Essay in Ecstatic Naturalism* is a "brilliantly imaginative, serious book of systematic philosophy dealing in roughly equal parts with the self, community, world and God." Corrington further develops Pierce's theory of signs, adding a theory of "selving" through a process of interpreting the world around us. Again, there is much about the use of signs in community formation, and in contrast to the European Continental perspective, an emphasis on integration within nature, in the tradition of Justus Buchler. At the same time, Corrington explores the European phenomenological idea of "horizons," seeing "worldhood" as the sum of horizons.

When referring to *Ecstatic Naturalism: Signs of the World*, *Choice* reviewer W. B. Warde, Jr. predicted that readers "will find this study valuable as a historical journey and a harbinger of further inquiry." Roger A. Badham explained in *Religious Studies Review* that *Nature's Self: Our Journey from Origin to Spirit* explores the subconscious and unconscious aspects of the split between "nature naturing" and "nature natured," noting that we "as products of nature are aware of an internal fissure within ourselves." Corrington draws especially from the work of Carl Jung, finding an innate melancholy as the self confronts nature, from which it feels ejected. At the same time, archetypal images in the unconscious allow a bonding with nature, and a hope of transcending nature's opacity. In addition to Jung, Corrington draws on Julia Kristeva, Paul Tillich, and Martin Heidegger to explore this inner quest for meaning. Frankenberry, in her *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* review, concluded that "*Nature's Self* is elegant proof that the sweep of the metaphysical mind can only move from the inside out."

According to Wesley J. Wildman in the *Journal of Religion*, Corrington's *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy* "plumbs the symbolic world as deeply as any philosophical theologian ever has." Corrington considers human invention of symbols within the framework of nature, finding that nature is an endless factory of signs that build on other signs in a never-ending process. In addition, Corrington uses this process as the basis for a post-theistic theology drawing especially on the work of Spinoza. Wildman stated, "This must be among the most difficult books ever written in the philosophy of religion, directly proportional to the richness of the author's mind. The book's argument is worth the reader's effort."

In a departure from naturalist and semiotic theory, Corrington turns to the life and work of a highly controversial figure in *Wilhelm Reich: Psychoanalyst and Radical Naturalist*. Reich, a sort of renegade Freudian, is perhaps best known for positing the sexual basis of nearly all human behavior, and for his pursuit of "orgone" energy. Often dismissed as a paranoid schizophrenic, Reich actually died in an American jail on a contempt-of-court charge after the Food and Drug Administration ordered his books banned, and even burned. A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor found that the author's effort "to champion Reich as an unduly overlooked revolutionary thinker is valiant but ultimately unconvincing." *Library Journal* reviewer E. James Lieberman found that the biography helps "restore a unique challenger to a place among Freud's more controversial offspring."

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**PERIODICALS**

- | *Choice*, July-August, 1988, review of *The Community of Interpreters: On the Hermeneutics of Nature and the Bible in the American Philosophical Tradition*, p. 1707; October, 1994, W. B. Warde, Jr., review of *Ecstatic Naturalism: Signs of the World*, p. 276.
- | *Christian Century*, July 6, 1988, review of *The Community of Interpreters*, p. 652.
- | *Church History*, December, 1990, Douglas R. Sharp, review of *The Community of Interpreters*, p. 592.
- | *Cross Currents*, summer, 1989, James Campbell, review of *The Community of Interpreters*, p. 230.
- | *Environmental Politics*, summer, 1995, Lisa Lebduska, review of *Ecstatic Naturalism*, p. 358.
- | *International Philosophical Quarterly*, March, 1992, Vincent Colapietro, review of *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, p. 132; December, 1994, Robert Cummings Neville, review of *Nature and Spirit: An Essay in Ecstatic Naturalism*, p. 504.
- | *Journal of Religion*, January, 2000, Joseph Pettit, review of *Nature's Religion*, p. 149; October, 2002, Wesley J. Wildman, review of *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy*, p. 657.
- | *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, spring, 1998, Nancy Frankenberry, review of *Nature's Self: Our Journey from Origin to Spirit*, p. 171.
- | *Kirkus Reviews*, May 1, 2003, review of *Wilhelm Reich: Psychoanalyst and Radical Naturalist*, p. 652.
- | *Library Journal*, June 1, 2003, E. James Lieberman, review of *Wilhelm Reich*, p. 148.
- | *Modern Theology*, April, 2002, Michael L. Raposa, review of *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy*, p. 302.
- | *Philosophy in Review*, December, 2001, Roger Ward, review of *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 411-413.
- | *Religious Studies Review*, October, 1989, Phil Mullins, review of *The Community of Interpreters*, p. 351; January, 1997, Richard Grigg, review of *Ecstatic Naturalism*, p. 45; July, 1997, Roger A. Badham, review of *Nature's Self*, p. 267.
- | *Theological Studies*, June, 1993, Donald L. Gelpi, review of *Nature and Spirit: An Essay in Ecstatic Naturalism*, p. 369.
- | *Theology*, September-October, 2001, Paul Badham, review of *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy*, p. 369.

ONLINE

- | *Drew University Web site*, <http://users.drew.edu/> (July 13, 2004), profile of Corrington.*

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