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(p. 186), the history of scholasticism requires reflection on what it means to call a discourse “scholastic” and on how we understand the relationships between specific genres and scholastic discourse (p. 183).

Other essays in this collection, as well as that by Clooney just mentioned, respond to Cabezón’s list of traits in another way, raising questions about the formation of scholastic dispositions and the contexts for their expression. Clooney suggests a helpful distinction between “intellectualist” and “performative” scholasticisms, according to which “the former are preponderantly focused on questions of comprehensive understanding, the latter on formation in right thinking and acting” (p. 187). This contrast offers a new perspective on pedagogical choices and genre emphases.

In his account of Rabbinic scholasticism, Michael D. Swartz argues that “to be interested in the idea of scholasticism is to be interested in the living context of learning” (p. 93). This is clearly the case in Robert Goss’s engaging discussion of Christian-Buddhist scholastic apologetics in eighteenth-century Tibet. Describing Ippolito Desideri’s preparation to engage Buddhist scholastics, Goss argues that this Jesuit modified his own doctrinal language and scholastic method, creating a new “interpretive medium” (p. 82). A concern with the interaction of devotion, study, and pedagogy is visible in Paul Griffiths’s discussion of an ideal-typical scholasticism (p. 202), in which the practices of reading and composition are linked to particular epistemological commitments and institutional contexts (pp. 208–28). His attention to educational institutions sits well with Daniel Madigan’s lucid discussion of speculative theology and legal scholasticism in Islam. There the importance of the “guild-school aspect of scholasticism” (p. 56) is emphasized as the mechanism through which orthodoxy is delineated and its transmission assured. Cabezón tantalizingly suggests a relationship of reflection and recapitulation between ideology and material production (p. 142), which deserves fuller elaboration.

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CORRINGTON, ROBERT S. *Nature’s Religion*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997. xv+192 pp. \$58.00 (cloth); \$22.95 (paper).

In *Nature’s Religion*, Robert S. Corrington sets for himself a daunting task: to characterize the origins of becoming and the possibilities for continuity in nature and in human existence. He does this through a sustained consideration of the self that is impressive in both its speculative scope and its systematic structure. Corrington delves into the “great between that underlies the self and the folds of nature” (p. 38). Corrington is especially helpful in his insistence that philosophy move beyond the semiotically explicit and explore more thoroughly the semiosis of the unconscious. Exploring this unconscious and its manifold eruptions, Corrington is to be applauded for his effort to provide a map of this unruly domain. Insofar as Corrington’s book offers an account of the semiotic self that is more exact than others, it is of obvious importance. But whether or not it does this is for others more versed in semiotics than I to decide. However, this is also a book about philosophy and philosophical theology, and on these matters, I will sound a few critical notes.

At the heart of Corrington’s project is the ontological difference between nature naturing and nature natured. Owing an acknowledged debt to Martin Heidegger,

## The Journal of Religion

Corrington identifies ontological difference as “the fissure between the potencies and the orders of the world,” a fissure that “enters into our awareness through the unconscious” (p. 4). It is ontological difference that makes experience of the sacred, of nature’s religion, possible. Nature naturing is an “unruly ground” from which semiosis emerges through the ongoing interplay between what Corrington calls “intervals” and “sacred folds.” I leave it to the reader to unpack these novel, but sometimes opaque, categories. Whatever insight one can gather from these concepts, their success rests on the coherence of appeals to ontological difference, and it is not at all clear that such coherence is forthcoming in Corrington’s text.

Corrington makes at least two strong claims about ontological difference. First, he contends that “any philosophical theology that does not start and end with the ontological difference will fail to understand anything of the complex where of the sacred within nature itself” (p. 7). Second, having insisted that ontological difference is the *sine qua non* of philosophical theology, Corrington places some rather significant brakes on any race to evaluate this first claim with critical rigor. Reason, the agent of critical evaluation, proves impotent with respect to considering the unruly ground on the one side of the ontological difference. Reason “is a dependent product of the unruly ground, and cannot as a product, gain access to its indefinite and unconditional source” (p. 100). Corrington recognizes that this appeal to the “irrational ground of the world” (p. 15) might cause one to doubt the possibility of success in a project that relies so heavily on the existence of something that, in itself, we cannot understand (see pp. 100–101). It is important that Corrington offer a way out of this difficulty, for if he cannot, he will have left us with no reason for concluding that philosophical theology should affirm ontological difference in the first place.

Corrington’s proposed solution is a phenomenological appeal to the semiotic effects present in nature and the self. This is a strategy that many Thomists will be familiar with: seek to explain that about which in itself we can know nothing in terms of its effects. But this is a very controversial strategy, for it presupposes, at least at the philosophical level, that we have good reasons to believe that the effects we phenomenologically isolate are indeed effects of that which cannot be known, in this case, of unruly ground. Corrington never really provides, or at least clarifies, these good reasons. If, then, a rival account of these effects is available, one that can identify a relation between cause and effect that is open to critical evaluation, anyone who does not wish to leave critical thought behind has good reason to accept this alternative account instead of Corrington’s. One would also have reason to doubt Corrington’s criticisms of rival philosophical theologies, such as the one he levels against the writings of Charles Hartshorne, so long as these critiques rest on a contention that these philosophies have failed to recognize the significance of ontological difference.

Hartshorne’s own principle of contrast, in fact, provides good reason to conclude that any appeal to things like an unknowable unruly ground is always a mistake. According to this principle, understanding is fundamentally differentiation, and so it requires at least enough positive predication to make differentiation possible. Yet, Corrington asks us to understand, or at least believe that he understands, something that explicitly resists consideration in terms of such predication. Differentiation of the irrational, or nonrational, from the rational, and this is what I think the difference between nature naturing and nature natured amounts to, will not do if the former is indistinguishable from nothing since such a differentiation is indistinguishable from no differentiation at all. Corring-

ton boldly declares that “nothingness is an enabling ground” (p. 15), but this is a use of words impervious to critical consideration. Where there is no differentiation, there is no understanding.

It will not do for Corrington to counter that the possibility of metaphysics, of nature natured, including Hartshorne’s metaphysics, must itself be explained, for this simply begs the metaphysical question. Corrington has offered us no reason to think that there is anything prior to metaphysics because the ontological difference that supposedly indicates an unruly ground prior to metaphysics is a difference of dubious philosophical value.

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WIEBE, DONALD. *The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academy.* New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999. xx+332 pp. \$49.95 (cloth).

In this collection of essays, Donald Wiebe argues that theological agendas continue to interfere with the scientific study of religion and have kept religious studies from becoming a legitimate academic discipline. Sometimes this interference comes from those with a particular religious agenda, what Wiebe calls “‘capital-c’ confessional theology.” More often, however, the problem comes from putatively secular academics whose methodological assumptions contradict the distinction between teaching religion and teaching about religion on which the field is founded. That is, their scholarship and teaching may not promote the teachings of a particular religion, but they do promote the idea that religion “in general” is good, or at least that it is not to be criticized, an idea Wiebe calls “small-c’ confessional theology.” This kind of tolerant, relativistic assumption recalls Dwight Eisenhower’s statement that what people need is a deeply held faith—and it does not matter which one. The most important contribution of these essays is that they show how prevalent and how compromising to academic standards this pro-religious assumption is.

As a philosopher of religion concerned with unexamined theological assumptions in my own subfield of religious studies, I read Wiebe’s jeremiads and case studies with sympathy. In the end, though, I found his solution that the study of religion be restricted to what he calls the naturalistic paradigm to be too narrow. Two issues are central.

The first issue has to do with whether or not scholars should bracket explanations of religious phenomena in order to understand them in their own terms. I am persuaded by what some have called the “Logical Connection Argument” that human behavior is constituted in part by the intentions of the agent, so there can be no identification of an action as the action it is without reference to the insider’s point of view. Wiebe argues, in my opinion rightly, that if one combines this phenomenological goal of understanding religion with the exclusion of explanation—perhaps on the grounds that religion is *sui generis* and therefore inaccessible to “outsiders”—then one has taken an antiacademic and implicitly proreligious commitment. Religious phenomena are not immune to sociological and psychological explanations. Nevertheless, the insider’s view and the methodological procedure of bracketing are crucial first steps in the identification of religious beliefs so that the academic study of religion has data to work with. Consequently, there is a place in religious studies for phenomenology, and Wiebe’s statements that “the ‘insider’ approach in Religious Studies is not acceptable to the academy” (p. 7), that bracketing implies theological commitment (p. 146), or that the only