

Introduction

What's an *ARC*? This question was the title of the first editorial introduction to our journal. It is also the question that has haunted editors ever since. What does *ARC* stand for? What is the distinctive quality of this journal that sets it apart? In 1973 the founding editors of our journal (J. C. McLelland, Peter Richardson, and Art van Seters) offered a threefold answer to this vertiginous quandary. They used the metaphors of covenant, parable, and spark to illustrate the dynamic and energizing space that the journal is meant to offer. They claimed that an Arc, as covenantal partnership, is meant to fashion a "two-way encounter creat[ing] a space in between, cleared for action and pregnant with new possibilities." Like the *parabola*, *ARC* "throw[s] one thing alongside another (para-ballo) so that a comparison and contrast could generate a new idea, an insight or revelation. Arcs are for teasing minds, inviting imaginations to explore a frontier region, strange and surprising." In creating such two-way encounters, generating space for bringing diverse voices together within a comparison/contrast dynamic, *ARC* is similar to an electrical spark. Our space for dialogue is, in a sense, "the field of force we call energy" with "the dynamic flow happen[ing] when a polarity is created, enabling the current to discharge its power across the gap."

Although the journal has moved away from its strictly Christian theological, indeed primarily confessional, roots to a more inclusive, academic study of various religious traditions, our founders' dream of creating an intellectual *ARC* is still very much the distinctive nature of our journal. *ARC* strives to generate a "field of energy" where a space is truly created for insightful research, pedagogical reflection, and engaged dialogue. A comparative critical approach has typified many articles which have appeared in our pages; a variety of religious traditions have been dealt with, sometimes in explicit comparison; various methods and theoretical stances have emerged, reflecting the interdis-

disciplinary nature of both our journal and our field. The inclusion of graduate students alongside established scholars, as both contributors and editors, has been a proud tradition for *ARC*, bringing together the voices of both young and not-so-young academics in a spirit of collegiality. By bringing diverse perspectives, traditions, methods, and voices together, we continue to generate a dialectic “space” (the “space in between”) for the “teasing of minds” and the perpetuation of imaginative creativity.

We are pleased that this “root idea of dynamic interaction” continues in the current volume of *ARC*. Our opening contribution, by Martin Adam, explores the philosophical aspects of perception and its object of the particular within Dignāga’s Buddhist epistemological system, exploring the tension between perception and inference within cognition. Adam explores not only Dignāga’s philosophical system, but also developments of that system within post-Dignāgian elaborations. Following Adam, is Yo Hamada’s fascinating exploration of “inter-religious experience.” Although scholars are accustomed to studying “religious experience,” Hamada argues that given our increasingly globalized and multi-cultural world, it is necessary to recognize the interaction and personal negotiation of various religious traditions within individuals’ lives. Hamada explores this “inter-religious” method by first laying out some basic theoretical guidelines, and, secondly, by interviewing participants of both the Elijah School and the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI). Our third contributor, Jennifer Reid, also brings differing, though similar, cultural traditions together in order to explore certain aspects of postcolonial discourse. Reid compares the Melanesian cargo cults with the Harlem based movement of Father Divine’s Peace Mission of the 1930s. In both cases, ethnic minorities react to the dominant cultural body, rejecting the status of being “rubbish men,” thereby inverting and claiming ownership of those (material) aspects of culture that have been social tools of marginalization. Joel A. Linsider applies Robert Alter’s theory of a narrative type-scene to the Hebrew Bible. Linsider offers a close study of the type-scene motif within those biblical narratives that have a theme of “pursuing,” “overtaking,” and “dividing the spoils.” Although a very focused analysis of a particular form of type-scene,

Linsider's study challenges readers to explore other possible type-scenes within the Hebrew Bible. Our final article is the second part of a two-part study on narrative characterization in ancient Greco-Roman religious texts. Richard P. Thompson, in the first part of his study had explored the rhetorical necessity of considering audience reception within narrative construction. In this second part, he turns his attention to first laying out literary aspects of characterization reflected in the ancient historiographers, and, secondly, to specific examples found in Josephus and the New Testament book of Acts.

Last year, we inaugurated a new, and ongoing, section within *ARC* for the exploration of more theoretical and methodological questions. *Discipline in Dialogue* offers a forum for pedagogical reflections, theoretical explorations, survey's of the field or its sub-fields, and responses and rejoinders to articles published in our journal. We are pleased to continue this new section with the four contributions published here. We begin with a pedagogical reflection on the necessity of fostering collegiality within the academy. Dean G. Blevins, drawing upon his specialization in religious education theory, challenges us to reject the hierarchal and alienating model of teaching and, rather, to create communities of collegiality. Following Blevins' opening reflection, we are pleased to also have an engaged dialogue by our next three contributors on the pedagogical value of the recently published *Guide to the Study of Religion*. Michel Desjardins leads off the discussion by exploring the *Guide's* usefulness from a teacher's perspective, while Anne Whitcombe gives us a student's perspective on how well this book works within the classroom setting. Willi Braun, one of the two editors of the *Guide*, responds to the concerns and challenges raised by both Desjardins and Whitcombe.

Our final two articles in this year's volume of *ARC* fall into a now permanent section of the journal, *Notes and Reflections*. This section offers a "space" for short critical notes and articles of a more personal or reflective nature. Arvind Sharma, a vocal voice for the application of non-reductive methods within religious studies, offers a short note on the question: "Is phenomenology of religion the distinct method of religious studies?" Sharma's note is a helpful theoretical teaser for scholars to contemplate. Readers may also be interested in the devel-

opment of Sharma's perspective on phenomenology of religion, and philosophical phenomenology, in his forthcoming book *To the Things Themselves: Essays on the Discourse and Practice of the Phenomenology of Religion* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter). Our final article is a short tribute to Ninian Smart, whose recent passing has left a void in the field and shocked many of us. We are grateful to Donald Wiebe for his reflection on Smart's career and contribution to the development of the academic study of religion. As Wiebe aptly notes, the impact that Ninian Smart has had on our field of study cannot, and should not, be ignored.

I would be remiss not to express my gratitude to various individuals who have made the publication of this year's volume possible. My editorial team has been outstanding, both in their competency in carrying out their duties and, perhaps more so, their encouragement and enthusiasm over the past year. Barbra Clayton has returned to the ARC editorial committee as our book review editor, having served in the past as the editor of the journal. Her experience has been invaluable in the transition between editorial committees. Jessica Main, our assistant editor, has been exceptional in her duties. I am particularly indebted to her technical skills, solving several technical problems that arose during production alone. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to have worked with both Jessica and Barb over the past year. Although officially not a member of our editorial committee, Marcel Parent was of great help in volunteering his time and skills in our marketing production. Victor Hori and Arvind Sharma have also been very helpful, offering advice and guidance when needed. The various anonymous individuals who continue to contribute their time to the refereeing process are also greatly appreciated. I am very thankful for the continued assistance of the administrative staff in the Faculty of Religious Studies, in particular Luvana Difrancesco, Samieun Khan, and Peggy Roger. Without the gracious assistance of such individuals, the creation of an Arc—be it as a covenant, a parable, or a spark—would have been impossible.