The title of this review brings into focus the essential thesis of Calvin Schrag’s *Experience and Being* which attempts to lay the groundwork for a future ontology. Within this text there is discerned a movement from a descriptive analysis of experience (or as will be seen, of the Lebenswelt) to its ontology.

What is this experience which plays such a prominent role for Schrag? As is typical for most of the descriptions in this text, experience is first described *via negativa*. Experience does not consist of an arrangement of discrete elements, whether psychic or atomistic sensations. Experience is an unified dynamic field that consists of the interlacing of the constituents: the experiencer-experiencing-figure-background. This fundamental unity attempts to overcome the epistemological priority of the subject-object relationship. This unity is amplified in the following way.

Experience, in its lived concreteness, is the act of experiencing figures (objects, events, situations, persons, moods, chimeras, hallucinations) not in isolation, but contextualized within both determinate and indeterminate backgrounds (p. 18).

The author, then, attempts to unfold the full impact of this by his descriptive analyses and his ontological concerns.

Even though there is no bibliography in the text, the author briefly indicates his indebtedness to the phenomenologists, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. A positive merit of the book is the way in which the author brings to English the descriptive and
philosophical insights of these European phenomenologists. Schrag’s style and alchemy of words elucidates these insights in a very non-technical language. His descriptions are not merely quasi-translations, but creatively vitalize the phenomena.

With this positive comment we can proceed to a discussion of the development of the text with its interrelational and intermingling parts. The book is divided into three parts: I. The Dynamics and Structure of Experience, II. The Contextualized Experiencer, III. Metaphysics, Ontology, and the Experienced World. Each subsequent part unifies the preceding.

The three chapters of Part I present the dynamics and structure of experience. Each chapter is like a spoke on a wheel; each presents a perspective on the whole, but each needs to be complemented by the others. These three aspects are the dynamic field, temporality and spatiality, and intentionality.

Experience is a dynamic field, being fluid as well as configurative. It is a process of concretion. Within this process the constituents (experiencer-experiencing-figure-background) come together in a comingling and an intermixing as the given, as the phenomenon. This phenomenon is given not as granular, but as a concrete global configuration. It is that which is presented; it is the experienced world.

Here there is an ambiguity. First, experience was described as the process of constituents. On the other hand, experience is identified as the given, as the phenomenon. To this experienced world there is an experiencer.

Within this description of the dynamic field, the author continually avoids any primacy or priority. In his desire to avoid all priority of the perceptual model, he avoids all priority and thereby eliminates any unifying principle for this dynamic field, except perhaps the figure-background. What is the unifying perspective that brings everything together? At the very minimum, what is the unitary perspective required for the very discussion of the field? Towards the end of the book, this unity is Existenz.

Temporality and spatiality are also essential structures of experience, but it is lived space and time. These “ingredients within the dynamic structure of experience itself, rather than transcendental and a priori conditions for the possibility of experience” (p. 50) are to be understood concretely and existentially. Space and time of lived