and the normative evaluation of those acts. When a ruling body uses force or deception, whatever the justifying reasons, the actions which it takes are open to moral evaluation. Most ethical and political theorists argue that the state has a duty to be both successfully defined for the nation and its citizens against aggression, and to punish those persons who wrongfully harm its citizens. Additionally, most political theorists grant the state the right to declare its enemies when necessary to maintain the continuing functioning of the policy.

This is not an unqualified grant of power to the state, however. When political institutions use force or deception against either citizens of foreign lands or their own citizens in pursuit of private purposes (e.g., in order to correct legitimate political disagreement with the rulers or their policies) then those actions can be judged wrong by standard ethical theorists. Of course, rulers will portray such force and deception as necessary to the continued maintenance and stability of the state. But surely one can distinguish between cases when such claims are correct, and cases when such claims are made in the self-serving pursuit of personal gain or institutional power.

H. STERLING BURNETT


In this slim, but tightly argued volume, Sheriff takes on the task of defending Peirce’s categorical framework from the standpoint of its relevance to the context of life. In a previous book, The Four Meanings: Charles Peirce, Structurism, and Literature (1989), Sheriff considered a spirited critique of the type of semantics and literary theory emergent from the French structuralist tradition. He successfully used Peirce’s semantics to reconstruct the relevant and to show how hermeneutics and literary activity is rooted in an evolutionary and realistic context. That careful and rich analysis is moved forward in the current book, with its special emphasis on the role of quality in bringing the self toward its own encounter with the real.

The chapters deal with the foundations of epistemology (with the analysis of the three fundamental categories of extension, secondness, and thirdness), the nature of mind and its difference from consciousness, the role of signs, the structure of belief, and the role of the aesthetic in bringing us toward a social and existential view of life. Sheriff is well aware that many of his contemporaries are inclined to a kind of post-modernism that is little more than a mask for narcissism and the right to secondness (the dyad “self” of the real). Peirce, of course, was fiercely opposed to any form of scientism that would make the personal and the idiosyncratic the measure of the real (thirdness). Sheriff is concerned with bringing out the fine texture of Peirce’s argument in which the real shows itself through our perceptual judgments and our social connections in which the power of evolutionary habit, conceived in belief, has preserved its value again and again.

Perhaps the hardest thing to defend in the current philosophical and literary hermeticism in Peirce’s notion of the growth of concrete reasonableness in the infinite long run. Yet Sheriff makes a bold attempt to show how our very perceptions, when tied to perceptual judgments, move toward thirdness in the linking horizontal pattern that makes the whole perceptual system with the generals that ripple
through nature. Were we to live in the purely irrational (in fiction), we would soon perish. And it follows, for Prater’s at least, that even our most sophisticated literary judgments must follow the trail of thickness if they are to have any purchase in a universe that is exploding with instantiated reason.

Schorr’s analysis of some of Prater’s key structures are compelling and evocative in a way that suggests further exploration. It was inspired with his analysis of belief and the context of mind (within the discipline of psychoanalysis) and consciousness, which is a certified species of mind. Yet much work remains to be done on Prater’s implied belief in something very much like Jung’s collective unconscious, which may not fit into the psychoanalytic framework. There is also a case of much doubt within the Prater community that pertains to the role and nature of God within an evolutionary cosmology. I am persuaded that Prater hinted at a deeply irrational God tied to finiteness, whereas Schorr follows the line, developed by George and Rupen, that God is most fundamentally tied to thickness. Put differently, for the irrational (Schorr-like) reading of Prater, there is far more at stake than the growth of reason. This manifestation would wrestle with cherished notions within pragmatism, particularly those tied to the role of the ground relations in ordinary and extra ordinary forms of perception. Schorr links the ground relations tied to the sign/object/interpreter triad to Wittgenstein’s language games. Suppose the ground were more like a mobile Spirit; that, contrary to most readings of Prater, is tied to finiteness and not thickness (cf. p. 13). In that case, ground would retreat over and around the very semantic relations they help to establish. The true ground of the credible would then involve both an encounter with thickness and a sustained and specific embrace with the ground qua Spirit.

ROBERT S. CORRINGTON


It is an old trial and complaint of people who “do” reviews, whether art, film, music, or literature. If you are not a “teacher”—one who seeks to demystify someone else’s effect, what do you do when you get hold of something that really fails to please you? Where is the line that enacts us from brutality while disabling the plaint fall into a kind of good-natured docility with respect to duller performances?

I find that I have united things to say about Winifred Simmerling’s Discovery of the Other, an inquiry into the way the Simmerlings have figured in the work of the Canadian writers Leonard Cohen, Hubert Aquin, Michel Onfray and Nicole Breton. Having admitted this, let me quickly add that Professor Simmerling knows his stuff. There has been large computer demonstrated which persists what he calls the “intels,” basically that finess or structure that is consonant with Identity, the Same, the dominant theme and in its nature, against the “numenological,” I.e., what diverges this sentence with its difference, its otherwise.

Obviously such a concern is well-intentioned, given the parameters of the