Preface

From one perspective, all intellectual and artistic pursuits are efforts to understand the world, including ourselves and our relation to the rest of the world. If successful, they would not 'leave everything as it is' but bring about some, however slight, desired change of the world in the form of modifications of our surroundings or our consciousness. Indeed, it is in striving for changes in the sense of finding something new (novel), be it new purposes, new ways of attaining them, new inventions, new discoveries, or new outlooks, that the mind finds a focus to help it function more effectively. This fact of life is, I think, the central factor that makes it harder to study philosophy as a quest for some comprehensive understanding of the world as a whole, especially in the contemporary context of greatly increased and diversified human experience.

The preliminary task of finding an appropriate focus becomes, to a considerably greater degree than in other pursuits, a major difficulty in itself. Indeed, it is by no means clear that the attempt is not futile and aiming at something impossible. Hence, even though the goal appears 'higher,' it need not be a 'better' one in the sense of being capable of yielding in practice a greater improvement of our understanding. It is familiar that more decisive advances are generally made in more restricted directions, which, even for the specified purpose of philosophy, often accomplish more than work consciously and directly aimed at it.

If, for one reason or another, anybody, despite the obvious odds against its being rewarding, still chooses to concentrate on philosophy in the tradition of being comprehensive, then it is necessary to search for some suitable way of selection from the vast amount of data and the many competing leading questions. The 'problem of beginnings' is exceptionally acute in this case. It is necessary to find out what are 'fundamental,' a problem to which a diversity of familiar answers have been proposed. Kant formulates the central question as: What is man? He breaks it up into three more limited questions (1781/1787, A805-

B833; 1800, p. 29): What can I know? What must I do? What may I hope? Two hundred crowded years later, most of us would now be more modest in choosing the questions. Instead of beginning (or ending) with philosophical questions in Kant's manner, I would like to begin and end with a classification of what philosophy has to attend to. The guiding principle is, I believe, to do justice to what we know, what we believe, and how we feel.

Philosophy guided by this principle is a sort of 'phenomenology' in the sense as employed, for example, by physicists. Since, however, the term has acquired different associations through the work of Hegel and Husserl, I propose to use instead the perfectly reasonable combination 'phenomenography,' and this book and its planned sequels can be viewed as steps toward explicating this ill-defined idea by an actual development of its implications. One implication is the emphasis on appropriate selections and arrangements rather than on new discoveries (as in the sciences) and new creations (as in the arts). Of the three components I propose to begin, suitably for my preparations, with what we know. This procedure appears to agree also with the main tradition of philosophy, as well as to conform with the natural desire to consolidate first what is relatively certain. More objectively, the other two components have to pass through the sieve of this one before they can enter philosophy (at least as is done in the familiar prosaic manner), because we use here only what we know about what we believe and how we feel. Indeed, for instance, Dewey, who is well known for his central concern with practice, seems to share this attitude toward what we know (1929, p. 297):

> The colder and less intimate transactions of knowing involve temporary disregard of the qualities and values to which our affections and enjoyments are attached. But knowledge is an indispensable medium of our hopes and fears, of loves and hates, if desires and preferences are to be steady, ordered, charged with meaning, secure.

Clearly, in aiming at originality and erudition, a dilemma of the 'narrow gate,' that of striving to avoid the Scylla of pedantry and the Charybdis of dilettantism (a dilemma discussed extensively by Unamuno), is particularly acute for this style of philosophizing. It is, therefore, necessary to divide up the difficulty also within the realm of what we know. As a more manageable and more effective way of developing and communicating what I take to be a moderately satisfactory account of this domain, I shall consider in this book the treatment by what is known as 'analytic philosophy,' which takes it as the central area and the home ground. I shall point out its inadequacies to what we know and at the same time contrast it with my own alternative perspective

which at present remains more definite in its applications than in its articulate formulation. More specifically, I feel a pretty conclusive refutation of the position, represented in different forms by Carnap and Quine, can be offered, along a line explained all too briefly by Gödel (which, by the way, may be viewed as a critical development of Russell's early position).

The term 'analytic philosophy,' unfortunately, means quite different things as a proper name and as a description. In the broad (and natural, I think) sense it includes not only the work of Gödel (in philosophy) and Russell (in its varied aspects), but also, I believe, for example, the work of Aristotle and Kant. In the narrow (and historically accidental) sense, the most distinguished and least ambiguous representatives would seem to be Carnap and Quine. At any rate, it will be more convenient for me, particularly with the deliberate emphasis on mathematics and physics in this book, to concentrate on their work as representative of analytic philosophy in the narrow sense (which is, of course, rather indefinite in itself); I shall call this more sharply defined type of work 'analytic empiricism.' (Inevitably these short labels have to pay the price of inaccuracy. The name 'empiricism' can be understood as being more hospitable, as covering more possibilities.) By centering on a critique of analytic empiricism, I believe that the observations also point to inadequacies of the whole spirit of 'analytic philosophy' in its accidental sense. Hence, the title of the book appears justified.

In a famous passage Aristotle contrasts history with poetry. 'The distinction between historian and poet,' he says, 'consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singular' (*Poetics*, 1451). I am certainly not concerned with offering a history of the analytic movement in its varied manifestations. Rather I am interested in another kind of interplay between the universal and the particular. Instead of approaching philosophy by moving from history to poetry, history is brought in to deregimentize, and thereby to clarify intuitively, rigidified philosophical positions. By looking at the conceptual changes and equivocations at a few turning points, we arrive at a decomposition which reveals alternative recombinations. In another aspect, the concentration on a small number of central philosophers and topics has the 'poetic' advantage of being better able to capture the important and universal points at issue between current practice and the envisaged alternative.

I shall begin with a few aspects of Russell's wide-ranging work, paying special attention both to his influence on Carnap and Quine,

and to several alternative approaches to philosophy, all suggested by his varied experiments with the theory and the practice of philosophy. Russell is followed by a digression on the *Tractatus*, partly for its relation to Russell's work before 1914, but especially for its puzzling influence on later Russell and on the logical positivists. The rest of the book is devoted to a preliminary formulation of my own position, largely by means of a critical exposition of some aspects of Carnap's work and nearly all aspects of Quine's. An extended development of my own views, which, at least with respect to the philosophy of mathematics, to a large extent overlap with Gödel's and owe much to discussions with him, will be given in a book under preparation, tentatively entitled *Reflections on Kurt Gödel.*

A major theme of the present book is that analytic empiricism does not and cannot give an adequate account of mathematics. The meandering arguments for this are pulled together in section 2 (of the Introduction), which questions the 'Two commandments' shared by Carnap and Quine. The comprehensive treatment of Quine's work (under the label 'logical negativism') both in philosophy and in logic, in Chapter 4 (and sections 13 and 14), is meant to provide a model representation of the current ramifications of analytic empiricism; it should reduce the danger of my being accused of dilettantism. A more detailed map of the book is included in the Introduction.

In revising the preceding version of this book, I have benefited from wise comments by Jay D. Atlas, Charles Chihara, Martin Davis, Charles Parsons, Hilary Putnam, Peter Strawson, and G. H. von Wright. Previously, around the end of 1981, a first draft of about a third of this book had been sent around to solicit comments; Richard Rorty graciously wrote me several pregnant pages that enabled me to make several corrections and deletions.

For well over fifteen years I have enjoyed the most valuable assistance of Mrs. Marie Grossi, who has, among other things, uniformly turned ugly manuscripts and revisions into elegant typescripts, quickly and accurately. I am grateful to her indeed for relieving me of all the tedious parts of preparing a paper or a book (in particular, this one) for publication.

I have found it convenient to use a number of abbreviations, which are all explained in the list of references. In addition, I have always found the Chinese custom of compiling chronologies attractive and decided to include a chronological table at the end of the book.

April, 1985