

INTRODUCTION

Viewing Philosophy

I

Philosophy is a strange subject in that "What is philosophy?" is a persistent, endlessly contested question of *philosophy* itself. It plainly poses tendentious philosophical problems. Philosophers, both through most periods in the history of their subject and at the present time, have hotly, and without achieving much by way of agreement, disputed what philosophy is. In an introductory physics, biology, geology, or chemistry text, if it is at all representative, as well as such a text in any other firmly established science, a broad characterization of the field can, and typically will, be given in the introductory chapter or preface that generally would be accepted by practitioners in the field in question as at least roughly characterizing what the field is. Some, with a penchant for niceties, might demur at this or that phrasing, but, if the text is at all a standard one, there would be no wholesale repudiation of its characterization of what the field is. Moreover, what is "standard" is not just a matter of some local consensus, but is accepted throughout the scientific community: that is the worldwide community of physicists or the worldwide community of biologists and the like. But this is not so in philosophy. What is philosophy? How should it be characterized? What is its scope and subject matter? What, properly, is it? All these questions are vigorously contested. And, concerning what should be said, we gain nothing more than some local and transient consensus.

It is so local that these matters are often conceived rather differently from philosophy department to philosophy department in universities in Canada and the United States, to say nothing of the very deep differences between France, Germany and Italy, on the one hand, and the Anglo-American and Scandinavian culture-areas on the other. We get even more of a tower of Babel when we extend our gaze to South America, Africa,

Russia, and the Indian subcontinent. By contrast, physics, chemistry, biology, geology, and the rest of the "hard sciences" are pretty much the same across all these culture-areas and indeed throughout the world. A chemist trained in Uganda, for example, may be a little less up to date than a chemist trained in London; if the Ugandan chemist goes to London to work or study, he probably will have some catching up to do. But it is just catching up. It is not that he is faced with a whole new, or almost wholly new, subject matter, a radically different methodology and ways of conceptualizing things. But a student from France or Germany soaked in Kant, Hegel, Marx, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Foucault, and Derrida, but ignorant of logic and analytic philosophy, coming (assuming she could get in) to the philosophy department at UCLA or MIT, or even at Oxford or Harvard, would feel very much at sea. It would be like she was no longer studying the same subject. And the same would apply to the student from MIT who found herself at Heidelberg or Padua or Nanterre. Jacques Derrida and George Boulos go about very different things in very different ways, as did Martin Heidegger and Bertrand Russell.

It is natural to respond that when philosophers look at the great philosophers of the past—Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Scotus, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Reid, Kant, and Hegel—they share a common heritage. This, of course, is in a way so. But, even here, when Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Karl Popper and Gregory Vlastos talk about Plato, for example, very different things get said; what is appropriated from the great figures of the past is radically different. They sometimes hardly seem to be talking about the same people. Similar things sometimes should be said for their appreciation of their worth. For Russell, Ayer and Popper, Hegel is a figure of fun, a charlatan, who should not be taken seriously, while for John Dewey, Charles Taylor or Alasdair MacIntyre, Hegel is a very deep and centrally important philosopher in the Western tradition from whom we still have much to learn. In short, philosophy divides into schools, sometimes warring, often contemptuous of each other, sometimes just utterly indifferent to each other. Fashion seems to rule the day; ideological clashes are deep and pervasive, while the theoreticians of the various schools are usually firmly convinced that they are doing things rightly and that the others are mistaken. Not infrequently, they believe that some of them—typically those most distant from them—are completely beside the track. They acknowledge, of course, that there are deep and perplexing philosophical problems, but they also think that they have, in general terms anyway, the right way of going about things and ways very different from theirs are just thoroughly misguided. There are analytic philosophers who think that proper philosophy, or at least proper contemporary philosophy, *just is analytic philosophy*. The Continental stuff, they believe, is bullshit. Continental philosophers of the traditional sort

return the compliment by claiming that analytic philosophy is utterly superficial, arid logic-chopping. And so it goes and with it the whirligig of fashion and of stubborn, often uninformed, ethnocentrism.

However, it should also be said that there are many philosophers now on either side of the philosophical iron curtain who are not so rigid and, to borrow from talk about music, there are now many crossovers—philosophers who can and do play it both ways with a foot in both camps. And much *very contemporary* French philosophy, turning against its own traditions, seems very subservient to Anglo-American philosophy, as if French philosophers, Anglo-American preconceptions to the contrary notwithstanding, have lost their own voice. But it is also the case that what philosophers with a foot in both camps take philosophy to be, with the widening of their vision, tends to become amorphous and variable from philosopher to philosopher. So fashion, ideology and radically different conceptualization continue to rule the day. And this is not just a matter of our confused and conflictual times, for it is not new to philosophy, but is something that has repeatedly happened throughout most of its varied history.

Most philosophers simply ignore such considerations, but, if pressed with a kind of sociological account of their subject matter, they, rather grudgingly, will acknowledge this tower of Babel phenomena, while at the same time trying to extinguish any real impact from it on them. Having conveniently swept the phenomena under the rug, they, never taking the matter to heart, go about business as usual—in fact, their quite different businesses as usual—as if nothing were rotten in the Kingdom of Denmark.

Perhaps nothing really is rotten, but surely all this diversity—this thorough lack of consensus, this absence of cross-cultural and transhistorical paradigms—strongly suggests that something is askew. It is difficult to see how philosophers in good faith, in the face of this, can just go on as usual without some measured response to it or at least a wary skepticism about what they are doing. It is certainly hard to regard such diversity as the glory of philosophy and it is hard not to think of it as a scandal in philosophy.

Yet the need, or at least the desire, to philosophize is very pervasive across cultural space and historical time. People have repeatedly been driven to it, even though it is anything but clear whether there is anything that gives these diverse activities a unity or whether they have any tolerably clear conception of what they are being driven to or what they are questing for. It is, that is, not evident what we are doing when we do philosophy. Indeed it very much appears that there are many different things that people are doing when they do philosophy and that there is no essential underlying rationale for, or underlying unity to, all these diverse things. But appearances may be deceiving; perhaps there is something, or some

cluster of things, that is the task or the tasks of philosophy when it is *properly* done? (There is here, of course, a *normative* intrusion and is this, to go around the mulberry bush again, proper?)

We shall be looking into that, trying to get some grip on that. "Philosophy" is not the name of a natural kind. In that way it differs from "oak" and "tide" and is more like "gender" or "pessimism". There is nothing there in the social world that we could discover that philosophy must be. Rather, philosophy is what that diverse lot of people who call themselves philosophers do. Moreover, their activities are so diverse that there is nothing that we could sensibly call the task of philosophy. But it is possible, and may even be true, that there is something, or some cluster of related things, that, when we reflect carefully on why we want to philosophize, we will, at least from where we now stand in history, come to regard as the most humanly engaging and intellectually demanding (perhaps they will not come to the same thing?) task or cluster of related tasks of philosophy. When we think carefully and searchingly and take our reflections to heart is there anything we will agree on here? Is there any reasonably distinctive sort of thing that we will really want to do that we will take to be the center of philosophical activity? There hasn't been in the past, but *maybe* things will be better in the future? (The skeptic in me says, "I wouldn't bet my ranch on it.")

Given the very many different things that philosophy has been, and is, and in the skeptical spirit that diversity should generate, there is good reason to ask whether we can, in anything but an implicitly partisan manner, discover or articulate some cluster of things that is philosophy's central task: its deep underlying point or at least its point for us standing where we stand now in cultural history. We shall in this volume, in trying to get a grip on this, first have a look at some diverse traditional conceptions of "the central task of philosophy" and then argue, though not without trepidation, for a transforming of philosophy that will yield a distinctive conception of a central, and humanly important, task of philosophy.

II

In considering these matters, we should keep firmly in mind what we have just stressed, namely, that the very idea of philosophy is problematical (what once was called essentially contested) and that the force of this is particularly strong in our time. Perhaps that is just an effect of a scientific culture, but the very idea of some distinctive philosophical knowledge or justified philosophical beliefs or philosophical truth is very problematic. Philosophers ask questions like what is knowledge, truth, causation, goodness, justice, ultimate reality, genuine evidence, morality, mind, body, God, freedom, and the like. Philosophical questions tend to be very

general and in that way abstract. Biologists tell us about causal connections between events of certain sorts, physicists tell us about causal connections between events of other sorts. The philosopher, by contrast, asks about causal connection *in general*. She asks about what it is for one event to cause another. Similarly, she will ask, with utter generality, what consciousness is, what truth is, what justice is, what ultimate reality is. By contrast, a physicist will tell us that there are neutrinos, a neurologist that there are synapses, a historian (perhaps) that there are classes, a botanist that there are no ferns in Greenland, a mathematician that there are no end of prime numbers. But the philosopher—going for complete generality—will want to know what sorts of things there are altogether.

However, it is not clear, when we get *so general*, what it is that we are asking. In asking, in such a general way, what causation is, what truth is, what reality is, what goodness is, what could we be asking other than asking how "cause", "truth", "reality", "good", and their equivalents in other languages are used? We are asking, that is, a question that is an empirical question about our linguistic regularities, but (at least supposedly) marking uses that go so deep that they would mark linguistic regularities in any language. But philosophers, or at least most of them, particularly the traditional sorts, think that they are asking something other than that, or at least something somehow more than that. They do not want to be caught up in what they regard as linguisticism. But what is this "more" or "other" that they are asking for—what does "more" or "other" come to in this context? What would it be like to answer these questions is by no means crystal clear. We are unclear what it is we are supposed to be doing here. We do not even have a firm understanding of what we are asking. It looks like philosophers have dropped too much context and generalized at least once too often. But, sensible or not, such generality is very characteristic of philosophy. Without it we do not seem to be doing philosophy at all.

III

I will now abruptly shift contexts while continuing to fasten on the question "What is philosophy?" We have, or so at least the logical positivists (logical empiricists) thought, only two secure, well regulated types of knowledge. Deductive knowledge attainable in the formal sciences of logic and mathematics: where starting from axioms and utilizing rules of formation and transformation, we deduce *theorems*. *Given these axioms*, we can establish purely deductively and uncontroversially that certain other propositions must be true. This is one secure and well regulated source of knowledge yielded by logic and mathematics. In these disciplines we can really prove theorems and not just discursively and dialectically argue for

so and so in ways that are invariably inconclusive and typically contested. The other source of secure knowledge is experimental and observational knowledge where from hypothesis construction, experiment, observation, and induction, we can really establish that certain things are so or at least probably so. We form hypotheses, make deductions and observations, and gather evidence. Through these procedures we increase our knowledge of what the world is like.

These are the two great sources of secure knowledge. The logical positivists, but not only the logical positivists, concluded that these are the *only* sources of secure knowledge that we have or indeed could even come to have. They may be the only sources of knowledge we have *period*. But philosophy is anomalous with respect to both. Facing this, a few philosophers have proposed to reduce philosophy to logic, but that has been a non-starter as those who proposed it soon realized themselves (e.g., Bertrand Russell). (It is one thing to say, truly or falsely, that logic is sometimes a useful tool for philosophy; it is an altogether different thing to say that philosophy is logic.) Some few others (a very few) have tried to construe philosophy as an experimental science. But just as there are no theorems proved in philosophy, so philosophy has no experimental results such that we can sensibly speak of the experimental results established by philosophy. Indeed, as it is a humbling experience for philosophers to try to list the theorems proved in philosophy, so it is equally humbling for them to list the established results of philosophy, experimental or otherwise. "Every event has a cause" is a plausible enough sounding claim as perhaps is "There are only particulars." But they certainly do not function as or even like empirical hypotheses or empirical observation statements (to be pleonastic). "Every event has a cause" is not like "Every winter it snows in Montréal" or "Every April the swallows return to Regina." We understand perfectly well what it would be like for the latter two propositions to be false. There is nothing *conceptually* anomalous about the swallows not returning in April to Regina or about it not snowing one winter in Montréal. But we are not clear about what it would be like to observe a causeless event or even whether there could be one. "Causeless event" is not, or certainly does not seem to be, self-contradictory like "causeless effect". But still the very notion is *conceptually* anomalous in a way a snowless winter in Montréal is not. Similarly, while we understand what it would be like to establish experimentally and observationally that there are only speckled trout in Meech Lake or that there are only sparrows around Bill's bird feeder, we have not the remotest idea what it would be like to establish or to disestablish *experimentally* or *observationally* that there are only particulars.

In short, philosophical propositions seem neither to be truths of logic or of mathematics or like such truths, nor experimental hypotheses or

propositions establishable experimentally or observationally. The two firmly established and regulated sources of knowledge seem not to yield anything philosophical. Philosophical knowledge or warranted assertions, if there are either, certainly do not seem to be theorems of logic or mathematics or like those theorems or experimental hypotheses or simply empirical observations. So we are left at a loss as to what kind of knowledge or warranted assertion, if any kind, they can yield. They seem to be very anomalous and problematic propositions. We are in the dark as to how to establish or disestablish their truth or falsity or even how to ascertain or determine what counts for or against their truth.

It could be replied that this is a too scientific way of looking at things and indeed even an old fashioned, Pre-Quinean way of being scientific at that. It in effect takes too uncritically the distinction (alleged distinction) between the analytic and synthetic of *the a priori* and *the a posteriori*. As we shall see in Chapter 2, not all sentences, including plainly meaningful sentences in science and everyday life, are naturally so classifiable and yet they, not infrequently, state things we plainly often know. The division between formal and non-formal science may not be as sharp as it was pictured as being above. There are propositions not clearly, on the one hand, true by definition or in virtue of "their meaning alone" or, on the other hand, experimentally or observationally true, which are none the less unproblematic bits of knowledge, if anything is, e.g., "Orthodox Jews fast on the Day of Atonement." If on a given occasion a Jew does not fast on the Day of Atonement, it does not follow that he is not an Orthodox Jew, but the truth of the statement "Orthodox Jews fast on the Day of Atonement" is not established experimentally or experientially either. Yet the proposition is unproblematically true. So it may be that the logical positivist conception of the sources of secure knowledge, as commonsensical and tough-minded as it at first seems, is too narrow. I may be—and this will become important in Part Three—that there is nothing anomalous at all in saying that we know that pain is bad, torture is vile, that we should normally tell the truth, even though these propositions do not fit into either model of secure knowledge: logical and mathematical knowledge, on the one hand, or experimental and observational knowledge, on the other.

IV

However, distinctively philosophical propositions, e.g., "There are only particulars," "Forms are the ultimate reality," "Pleasure and only pleasure is intrinsically good," "God exists," or "Every event has a cause" are all very problematical. In beginning to see how they are problematical, it may well be valuable to see that they are neither of a type, on the one hand, with the propositions of logic or mathematics, nor, on the other hand, with

experimental hypotheses or observation sentences, such as "The cow is in the corn." When it is also noted that they are not uncontroversially establishable as true or false, as are scientific statements which do not fit, or at least do not fit comfortably, in the analytic/empirical division, such as "Kinetic energy is equal to one half the product of mass and velocity squared" or "All physical laws must be Lorentz-invariant," we come to realize that, even with the abandonment of the analytic/empirical dichotomy, they still remain problematic.

So philosophical principles lack the secure establishability of scientific and many commonsense propositions of everyday life, e.g., "Frustrated people are often aggressive" or "Around eight in the morning on a weekday the subway is normally crowded." So while we might be able to demarcate philosophical propositions from scientific ones (formal and non-formal) and commonsense empirical propositions and plain moral propositions, the problematicity of the philosophical propositions is revealed in that very demarcation. We seem at loss as to how to establish, or even weakly confirm, the truth of clearly philosophical propositions. At the very least, to take only a part of this, philosophy, whatever it is, does not appear to be a science, either formal or non-formal. A naturalism (a scientific naturalism) that ties itself to so construing philosophy seems at least to be plainly mistaken.

V

So in this volume we will concern ourselves most centrally with the *philosophy of philosophy*. We will ask what philosophy is, what it has been, what, if anything, it can reasonably be, and, finally, what it should be. Following what has become a rather common practice, I shall call this inquiry *metaphilosophy*. Some philosophers object to this label denying that there is, or even can be, any such thing, or at least any such coherent thing, as metaphilosophy, for the philosophy of philosophy remains firmly *philosophy*. When we ask what philosophy was, is, reasonably is, properly is, what it should become, we are asking *philosophical* questions. To assert—or, for that matter, to deny—that philosophy is, properly is, or should be so and so is to make a philosophical claim and to engage *in* philosophy itself and any such claims, or attempted claims, will themselves be bits of philosophy and not something *meta-to-philosophy*.

Notoriously, "What is philosophy?" is itself a philosophical question and a question *in* philosophy. Philosophical positions are taken about what philosophy is or should be and philosophical arguments are deployed for or against these positions. This being so there can be no such thing as a metaphilosophy as something standing before or above or underpinning philosophy, saying what it is, properly is, or should be. All such claims are

themselves *philosophical* claims and claims *in* philosophy. *There is no philosophically neutral standing back and answering these questions without engaging in philosophy itself.* (In this way metaphilosophy is very different than metaethics. Metaethics—or at least most metaethics—is really meta-to-ethics, though this is not to deny that it is philosophy, but it is to deny that it is ethics or at least that it is typically ethics.)

Thus, while strictly speaking there can be no metaphilosophy, we will, as a convenient short-hand, call the *philosophy of philosophy* "meta-philosophy". That is to say, I shall take as metaphilosophical questions that cluster of philosophical questions or perplexities concerning "What is philosophy", "What is it, properly?", "What should it be?", "What (if anything) is its point, purpose, or task?", "What is its proper subject matter, scope, method or methods?", "What is its nature (if indeed it has one)?", "What kind (if any kind) of discipline is it or should it become? Is it a science? Can it become a science and, if so, in what sense?", "What, if anything, are the data of philosophy or is that even the right way to conceptualize things in speaking of philosophy?". Is there, or can there even be, something *external* to philosophy, such as science, logic, common sense, religion, tradition, that philosophy can or must appeal to in trying to check its claims or that it must presuppose or assume in the very doing of philosophy? These and similar questions are themselves philosophical questions about philosophy—though some of them may be philosophical pseudo-questions. Though still, pseudo or not, they are also questions *in* philosophy. These questions, and questions like them, I shall call meta-philosophical questions. The inquiries in this volume, though sometimes only by indirection, will all be metaphilosophical.

VI

Getting Straight About Philosophy is divided into three parts with two chapters in each part. Part One, entitled "Philosophy as Metaphysics," first looks at philosophy construed in very traditional terms as having its center in Systematic Speculative Metaphysics. This way of conceiving of philosophy, and of centering it and articulating it, is now both in the Anglo-American-Scandinavian ambience and on the Continent much out of favor. This is even true for philosophers who do analytical metaphysics. Still it is a way of conceiving of philosophy that historically has had a very powerful influence. It well might be called the classical tradition, a tradition running from Plato to Hegel and even finding impressive contemporary representatives in the work of Alfred North Whitehead, Brand Blanshard and Bernard Lonergan. Moreover, it is a conception of philosophy that attracts many to philosophy and just seems to some of them what philosophy really is or at least should be. If they cannot have this,

they want done with philosophy. It also has its defenders in the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition of Catholic philosophy and from academics and intellectuals from outside of philosophy such as Leo Strauss and his followers.

I attempt in Chapter 1 to articulate the core conceptions that are common to such speculative metaphysics, show its attraction and rationale, and then to show why such a way of conceiving and doing philosophy cannot be sustained. In the chapter following that—Chapter 2 of Part One, "Metaphysics and *a priori* Knowledge"—I turn to philosophers, many of whom are of a more Kantian orientation than those discussed in the first chapter, who seek clearly to demarcate philosophy as an autonomous discipline distinct from other disciplines and from other activities. They seek to do this by circumscribing a domain of knowledge of the requisite general sort: a knowledge which is both *a priori* and synthetic. Philosophical propositions, and metaphysical propositions in particular, are, they argue, synthetic *a priori* propositions, categorially distinct from both analytic propositions—John Locke's "trifling propositions"—and the empirical propositions of science and of everyday life. I argue that the very notion of a synthetic *a priori* proposition is a non-starter. What has made it seem otherwise to some philosophers is either that they have an overly narrow conception of analyticity (say, a strictly Kantian one) or fail to recognize the force of the arguments deployed by W. O. Quine, Mortin White, and Hilary Putnam designed to show that both in science and everyday life there are many sentences which are not straightforwardly empirical without being *a priori*, or at least unproblematically *a priori*, either. The idea that all sentences or propositions must be one or the other (empirical or *a priori*) is, or so at least I shall argue, an unempirical dogma.

The argument for this leads me to some discussion of the analytic/synthetic distinction itself and to the challenges to it coming from Quine. When this is sorted out, as I think Putnam has done very well, there is no place left for the *synthetic a priori* or any kind of metaphysical necessity. Yet the case for metaphysics, or at least a transcendental metaphysics (if that is not a redundancy), stands or falls with the case for the *synthetic a priori*. My argument shall be that it falls.

I conclude Part One with a brief discussion of *scientific* metaphysics which eschews the *a priori* and all transcendental argumentation and takes itself to be continuous with science and to be its most abstract, general and theoretical side. I argue that that last claim is a conceit and that such a metaphysics is hardly a metaphysics at all. It is in reality conceptual analysis and conceptual analysis with a dubious point. Genuine metaphysical philosophizing will take a transcendental turn, but, or so I shall argue, there are good reasons for believing that no transcendental arguments can be sound. So the conclusion of Part One shall be that, while philosophy

construed as metaphysics has its evident attractions in giving us an argument-rooted comprehensive vision of the world, including our place in such a world, such visions are as impossible as the logical positivists, pragmatists and Wittgensteinians took them to be.

I turn in Part Two to philosophy as epistemology. While the stress on philosophy as metaphysics comes from the classical world, was continued by the Medievals and by Spinoza and Leibnitz down to Hegel and the Absolute Idealists following in his wake, philosophy as epistemology, or, more cautiously, as centered in epistemology, is an invention, or at least a stress, of the modern world, starting with Descartes, finding its full flourishing in the British empiricists, going on to Kant (though there mixed with much else as well), and continuing into the contemporary period with such foundationalist philosophers as Bertrand Russell, Moritz Schlick, C. I. Lewis, and A. J. Ayer. Sometimes it is linked with a dualistic metaphysics (as with Curt Ducasse or C. D. Broad) or with metaphysical realism. But often it takes itself to be free of metaphysics. I examine it on its epistemological side only as the claim to provide us with secure foundations of knowledge which would defeat global epistemological skepticism, after posing in clear terms the challenge of a global epistemological skepticism, and provide us with a foundation of knowledge such that we will have a criterion, or criteria, for determining in any domain (religion, science, morality, our common life) whether we have there genuine knowledge or not.

Classical foundationalism from John Locke to C. I. Lewis would find this foundation in primitive sense certainties, a more modest foundationalism in basic empirical statements that are intersubjectively available. Philosophy, foundationalists of all sorts believe, if it is not to be lost in a holistic fog, must so ground itself. Philosophy most fundamentally should concern itself with the clear articulation and defense of such foundations. If we construct a metaphysics, as *some* of them believe we should, it must be solidly grounded in such a foundationalist epistemology. If, like Moritz Schlick and A. J. Ayer, we eschew metaphysics, we still should articulate a foundationalist epistemology to exhibit the real ground of our genuine knowing.

In Part Two I articulate this foundationalist conception of philosophy, argue that on its own terms it cannot defeat global skepticism, and that, skepticism apart, it fails in both its classical and modern forms to articulate a viable conception of the foundations of knowledge. That foundationalist project is a characteristic project of modernity and of the empiricist temperament. But for all its attractions—or so I shall argue—it is an impossible project replete with errors, some of them deep and ineradicable. But I shall also argue that we do not need foundationalism to defeat global skepticism. The two take in each other's dirty linen. Moreover, in

rejecting foundationalism, as Otto Neurath, John Dewey, W. O. Quine, Richard Rorty, and Donald Davidson all well argue, we need not, and indeed should not, abandon the empiricist temper of modernity. But this is an empiricism that does not conflict with a commonsense realism (with the realistic spirit) though it does set aside metaphysical realism.

In Part Three there is a sea change in thinking about what philosophy not only is, but about what it can and should be. I pass from nay-saying against the Tradition, with its conception that at the core of philosophy there is either metaphysics or epistemology or both, to a yea-saying where I argue for a transformation of philosophy away from its metaphysical and epistemological past to a conception of philosophy as social critique and articulation. Philosophy, I argue, should not concern itself with the perennial problems of philosophy, but with the problems of human beings and most particularly, for us, as we philosophize, with the taxing social, political and moral problems that face us in our epoch. This goes in a roughly Deweyian pragmatist, contextualist way, but it also owes much to the later work of John Rawls, such as we find in his *Political Liberalism* and in a series of essays preceding it, where he deliberately travels philosophically light, setting aside, for the purposes of his social theorizing, metaphysical and epistemological issues. Dewey's broad conception of scientific method, what he sometimes calls the method of intelligence, is not at all scientific, and comes to very much the same thing as Rawls's method of wide reflective equilibrium. If one were to take a slogan for my conception of a transformed philosophy, it would be that of philosophy as grappling with the problems of life within the limits—the methodological limits—of wide reflective equilibrium alone. In Chapter 5, I describe, elucidate, illustrate, and defend that conception of what the office of philosophy should be.

In Chapter 6—the concluding chapter—I face the objection that this is too narrow and partisan a conception of philosophy. And I also, and I believe even more centrally, carefully examine the understandable arguments behind the reaction that philosophy construed as concerning itself with the problems of life inescapably requires either one or two things (more likely both) if its arguments are to be sustained. The first is that it will require deep foundations in a normative ethical theory or at least the acceptance and defense of general normative ethical principles requiring a normative ethical theory for their justification. The second is the claim that such a pragmatic philosophy makes metaethical assumptions which require a metaethical theory for their proper articulation and defense. Without, in short, the claim goes, a metaethical underpinning and a foundation in normative ethical theory, the Deweyian-Rawlsian turn will be baseless and arbitrary. Philosophy cannot escape so easily, if at all, its ancestry.

I argue that it is a mistake to try to find a basis for such a pragmatic approach in systematic normative ethical theory of either a foundational or non-foundational sort. Such theorizing, I shall argue, standardly suffers from the ills of foundationalism as well as other more destructive ills which apply to both its foundationalist forms (which are its most characteristic forms) and its non-foundationalist forms as well. Metaethics, particularly in its most contemporary forms, is less evidently irrelevant to philosophy as an examination of problems of life than normative ethical theory. Indeed in its most modest underlaborer forms it is not irrelevant at all, for conceptual clarification is often, though less often than many philosophers believe, of crucial importance. But—or so I shall argue—metaethical theory, no more than normative ethical theory, can provide the grounding for the pragmatic turn in philosophy that I defend. However, intrinsically interesting some metathetical problems and theories may be, they are better left to benign neglect by a philosophy bent on social critique and articulation. Both metaethical theory and normative ethical theory or some amalgam of them are wheels that, in this respect at least, turn no machinery.

VII

I do not explicitly address questions in the philosophy of language and the philosophy of logic in this volume. Much of the work here, often of an awesomely technical sort, has by now passed over, and rightly so, I believe, into science. What started as philosophy became, with its development and greater precisening, science and this is just as it should be. That some people, practicing their science, are still housed in philosophy departments is an accident of history. Such theorists so theorizing will, probably in the next fifty years or so, have departments of their own. There are, however, for the time being, still some philosophical residues and I, in effect, concern myself with them by considering what such theorizing can and cannot do in philosophy.

I do not consider issues in the philosophy of mind or the philosophy of religion. Traditional issues such as dualism, materialism (eliminative or otherwise), or epiphenomenalism are tied up in the viscidities of metaphysics and metaphysics, I argue in Part One, should be set aside. Present day work in cognitive science has its philosophical cheerleading and *perhaps* can sometimes profit from some underlabour elucidations, but it neither requires nor can it come to have philosophical foundations. Foundationalism is as bankrupt here as elsewhere.

Philosophy of religion, to move on to the other subject I do not discuss, traditionally has been utterly entangled in metaphysics. Its core claims are cosmological-metaphysical claims and sometimes of the most

obscure sort. Philosophies of religion of the traditional sort and those theologians attempting to do natural theology fall with the fall of metaphysics. They may fall anyway even if some metaphysical view is viable (say, a materialist one), but a necessary condition for their viability—the viability of such traditional philosophy of religion and natural theology—is the viability of metaphysics. Their fate, that is, is tied up with the fate of metaphysics.

However, some contemporary philosophy of religion is anti-foundationalist, and some of it seems at least to travel light metaphysically. Where this anti-foundationalism in the philosophy of religion takes a Wittgensteinian turn, it drops all cosmological claims and becomes in effect, whatever its author's intentions, a kind of moral articulation, a way of facing and attempting perspicuously to display the problems of life. As such it goes into a broadly Deweyian hopper and, in effect, whether its practitioners are aware of it or not, casts religion in an *entirely secular* frame. In its non-Wittgensteinian and non-empiricist forms, by contrast, anti-foundationalism in the philosophy of religion does not travel metaphysically light. It simply appeals to, or presupposes, the old cosmological-metaphysical claims of a theistic outlook as unargued dogmas: as dogmas they deliberately do not argue for. They just proclaim, in a way which fits badly with their supposed anti-foundationalism, that they are *properly basic*. Indeed they invoke them as such dogmas in their crudest forms. Such metaphysical propositions are simply accepted dogmatically without defense. It is, at least in effect, an aggressively assertive metaphysics without argument. But a metaphysics without argument, as John Passmore has observed, is nothing, or at least nothing rationally defensible. Indeed it hardly deserves the label "philosophy", yet metaphysics is intertwined in philosophy of religion as traditionally understood. In shying away from argument, such theistic anti-foundationalism—even proclaiming what they call a "standard theism"—in effect claims the worth of metaphysics, as traditionally conceived, without incurring its risks and its costs. Such philosophers of religion may succeed in showing that these metaphysical claims can have no foundationalist underpinnings and that *foundationalist* atheistic or empiricist critiques, what they call atheology, are ineffective against the claims of religion. But not all secular critique is foundationalist critique. And, most centrally, these theistic metaphysics-encumbered alleged anti-foundationalists in the philosophy of religion just proclaim their fundamental cosmological-metaphysical claims without facing arguments concerning the intelligibility of such metaphysical claims or questions about what reasons we could have for believing them to be true or even for understanding what could count for or against their truth so that we could have some understanding of these claims. They make, to put the matter curtly, no effort to show that these cosmological-metaphysical claims can reasonably be taken to be true

or taken as true. They also believe that any secularist critique of the claims of religion presupposes some form of foundationalism when it does not. Secular, including explicitly atheistic critique of religion, does not stand or fall with foundationalism. Such anti-foundationalist Christian or Jewish philosophers cannot so easily dispose of skepticism over religion.

Wittgensteinian anti-foundationalism in religion is, as I remarked, a form of moral articulation embedded in narratives (Christian or Jewish or Islamic stories) touched with emotion. It is in reality an utterly secular view of the world, misleadingly calling itself a perspicuous representation of Christianity, Judaism or Islam *from the inside*. Non-Wittgensteinian theistic anti-foundationalism in the philosophy of religion, by contrast, genuinely sets itself off from secular conceptions. But it mistakenly thinks that a secular view of the world, involving a critique of religion, must be foundationalist and then just dogmatically, without argument, proclaims against it a crude form of transcendentalist metaphysics. We get, like in the good-old-time-religion, proclaiming here rather than argument or elucidation. But strangely enough it comes from philosophers of a sometimes analytical bent. But since secularism need not, and indeed should not, be foundationalist, the situation is not that of setting dogma against dogma and letting faith (religious or otherwise) take its pick: decide which it will take to be properly basic, where anything goes.

VIII

So, to pull the threads of these preliminary matters together, I shall try here to see something of how philosophy and the vocation of a philosopher has been conceived, and is now being conceived; I seek critically, as well, to examine these conceptions and finally to set out a certain somewhat new way in which—or so I shall argue—philosophy should be conceived and practiced. I will, that is, articulate and argue for a certain kind of transformation of philosophy. My conception, as any such conception would be, is tendentious and so the burden of proof rests on me. However, in shouldering this burden, and trying to make such a case for what philosophy should be, it is crucial to take into consideration not only the strength of my own case, but the strengths and weaknesses of the alternatives as well. I seek, I hope accurately and as persuasively as they can be made, to set out the core claims and styles of reasoning of these alternative ways of conceiving of the office of philosophy and to make clear their rationales. All philosophy is contentious and metaphilosophy most particularly so. Any attempt to say what philosophy properly is should be viewed with considerable suspicion: taken, that is, with a grain of salt. I, of course, do not exempt my own claims here. It is, however, time to end

the sketchings and proclaimings of an introduction and to turn to the alternatives themselves set in narratives, but narratives rooted in argument.