

## STATEMENT AND REFERENT

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# STATEMENT AND REFERENT

An Inquiry into the Foundations  
of Our Conceptual Order

Part I: Statements are Products of Assertion



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For C. V.

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## PREFACE

There are in this volume sentences written as long ago/ as 1957. What was then projected as the third part of a modest discussion of then current issues has, through some fifteen revisions, now expanded into its own three parts. Of the project as originally conceived, the first part, itself grown too large, was published (prematurely, I now believe) in 1965 (*Stratification of Behaviour*). The second part, which was to be on language proper, was abandoned around 1967; such materials on language as I need for the present work are now mostly compressed into Chapter 1, with some scatterings retained in Chapters 2 and 14.

My scheme discovered problems with which I have been much preoccupied. I have been less enjoyably delayed by missteps. Additions were put on and the renovations have been incessant. Even in the course of my ultimate revisions, I ran into slippery stretches and soft spots I could only gesture at repairing. But now time is running out and my energy is ebbing, and I must allow the work to come to its conclusion, with reservations certainly and not without a sense of despair. If the reception of this volume warrants, the two following parts will be wound up in what I hope may be fairly short order.

A swing in the direction of my thinking about my materials and in the development of the text occurred along about 1967. I had accepted a commission to write a short treatise of metaphysics. It seemed to me that I could do a book more serviceable to students by backing up my own speculations with discussions of the metaphysical doctrines of Plato and Aristotle. I then came to see my own enterprise as continuous with the tradition of First Philosophy, and judged that comparisons appropriately emplaced into this work would assist my presentation. My appreciation of

"the tradition" deepened when, several years later, Arthur Melnick taught me something about the philosophy of Kant. These time-tested classics, in their contents, proved to be more instructive and more challenging to me for my endeavors and, I reckoned, for purposes of comparison and contrast, bound to be known to a wider and more enduring public than the contemporary literature I had been straining to keep abreast of. Some of my topics do indeed originate in the modern era, in the writings of Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Austin and their successors, and, for those topics, *those* writings are my classics. Other contemporary worthies are often noticed but little discussed, except where their writings have, for me, broken new ground, e.g. Dummett on *causation*, Grice on *meaning*, Kripke on *modality* and Urmson on *species*. I hope that these bits of autobiography which partially explain the postponements and the volume of this treatise may also work to spare me censure for inattention to still growing bodies of contemporary writing on the topics of this treatise.

My text, though full of commentary, is not a work of scholarship. I have not "researched the literature". My choice of authorities has been pretty much accidentally determined by what I already knew or through preparations for courses my departments have wanted me to teach. I use what I think I know of traditional doctrines both as sources of light and as reflecting surfaces, as points of reference and as parallels. Switching the figure once again, I hope to establish a line of credit from the texts themselves or from a bank of existing interpretations, but not to contribute to the fund of scholarship. I am of course liable for wrong readings.

This work is daunting in its size and complexity, and (I fear) heavy-handed and dull in its presentations; it's not "user friendly", as the publisher's referee found cause to remark. While I would like to believe that every part of the text will be of interest to someone other than myself, I do not think that there is anyone out there who could face the task of reading it straight through in order; the work has been composed with an apparatus attached and according to a plan calculated to dissuade anyone from so arduous an undertaking. I have also decided to present my treatise in three separate volumes, again with the hope that the reception of the first part will warrant the publication of the second and the third.

My three "parts" are explained by their titles. The first five chapters are groundwork for the rest. Subsequent chapters systematically depend upon their predecessors being brought to completion but draw little from the accomplishment and are pretty much self-contained. Summaries are set in the margins of the text, and I believe that any of the readership I envisage could get a pretty adequate idea of all the positions I hold by reading through these summaries, dipping into the main text only where they have a need for argument, illustration or amplification. Summaries of a like kind, extracted from an earlier version of Parts Two and Three, are assembled into a synopsis annexed to this volume, which may serve both to assist advance references and to give the interested reader an idea of where I'm headed.

In the text proper, resume's, comparisons with competing doctrines and traditional authorities, analyses of examples, responses to anticipated criticisms and off-track discussions of such large side issues as *perception* and *knowledge*--discussions I deem necessary to protect the integrity or to increase the plausibility of my systematic presentations--are either emplaced, in reduced font, as insets, or assembled into appendices. These passages are intended only for readers who may be particularly interested in the issues or comparisons brought under review. "Appendix D" is an inexact "formalization" of the materials of Chapter 3, and follow-ups will be included for Chapters 5 through 17. These "formalizations" have proven useful to me both for digesting and for checking my sundry proposals. Formula-haters are urged to skip them.

My presentation is jargon-ridden. The publisher's referee suggests a glossary, and I agree it could be helpful. I remain uncertain over how that glossary could most usefully and most economically be provided. My resolution is to include a few boldface glossary blurbs in the topical index under the appropriate headings, which happen to be mostly on *action* and its several varieties. I don't think this should be any more trouble to the reader than would be leafing forward in the main volume or sifting through a separate booklet.

Batches of the material now included in this volume and the two I hope will follow were, over many years, at several colleges and universities, presented to some two-dozen seminars and to at least

as many classes. These captive audiences have invariably been most usefully forthcoming. Credits for some particular points made in discussions are recorded in footnotes. I simply cannot recollect all the contributors, but have found the following names in various seminar notes: Roger Ariew, Georgia and Paul Bassen, Tim Erdel, Tom Eudaly, Tim Griffin, Philip Hugly, David Israel, Dale Jordan, David Kolodny, Tom Norton-Smith, Gilbert Plumer, John Pollock, Shekhar Pradhan, Donald Riggs and Tom Sorrell. During the period of my final revisions, my department generously allowed me to present the materials one last time to a seminar, and the participants, Tim Griffin, Nancy Kendrick, Tim Ketcher and Jesus Illundain, all of them, made useful criticisms and suggestions. I thank all of these persons for their contributions and also those many others whom I cannot acknowledge particularly. I have also profited greatly in conversation and in correspondence with colleagues and friends. I give special thanks to William Alston, Charles Caton, Hugh Chandler, Tim McCarthy, Alfred MacKay, Robert Monk, Fred Schmitt, Michael Shapira, Manley Thompson, Robert Wengert and Fred Will. I came to my "formalization" of the theory of testing as a result of a brief but fruitful conversation with Dana Scott sometime around 1960, and latterly this part of my presentation has been greatly assisted by the criticisms and suggestions of Jose' Iovino. My thoughts about notions of space, brought together in Chapter 21 of the yet-to-be published third part of this work, largely owe to conversations with Ernest Adams on the materials for two seminars on space and time we jointly conducted at Berkeley; Adams has continued to be a generous correspondent, a valuable critic and an intimidating rival. My greatest debt is to Arthur Melnick for discussions that have invariably been challenging, brisk and freshening. Finally, I must tender thanks in abundance to the publisher's unnamed referee, who provided literally hundreds of criticisms and suggestions, no one of which went unregistered in my ultimate revisions. I thank the departments of philosophy at Berkeley, Urbana, Chapel Hill and Oberlin for the boon of classrooms, students and colleagues. I am grateful for grants of money and time to The Fulbright Commission, The Guggenheim Endowment, The National Endowment for the Humanities and to The Advanced Institute of the University of Illinois and, for clerical grants, to the Research Boards at Berkeley and Urbana. Finally, I gratefully and admiringly applaud Glenna Cilento for her patient decipherment

and typing of several manuscript versions of this work and latterly for her enviable expertise as a word-processor.

Urbana, Illinois  
Nov. 19, 1991