PREFACE

The present book is the result of bringing together Christian philosophers of different persuasions — Roman Catholic and Protestant — as well as two Humanist philosophers with renewed critical views on Christian religion. The aim of the book is to offer in a single volume an analytical treatment of different central topics in Christian philosophy and theology (or its criticism) but, above all, to stretch dialogue bridges among positions that barely talk one to the other. The political aim of the book is to contribute to pluralism, i.e. the view according to which no religion — not even the Liberal Humanist — is to be the official religion of the state, and so the laws and rules governing the body politic must be the result of a consensus among political forces representing perspectives led by different religious motives. I believe that this view, which has been advocated recently — among others — by John Rawls in his book Political Liberalism, is the only feasible alternative to fundamentalism of any sort, the only truly democratic one, and also the only one that encourages full-blown political development and participation.

Pluralism is grounded in respect and freedom. This requires knowledge of the tradition or religious motive of the others’ communities. Humanist fundamentalism in all its forms — classical, historicist and nihilistic — is not willing to admit that it is also grounded in a religious motive that cannot be theoretically demonstrated and that sounds reasonable only to those who are already convinced of it. The aggressiveness of Humanism toward other religious motives has been recently tempered by its own failure to provide a reasonable account of what reason is, a failure that has caused its crashing in extreme relativism. Yet, relativism is not only self-destructive, but still moves within the intolerant frame of mind which is typical of secularized Humanism. It is my hope that this book will lend some
plausibility to the claim that to be reasonable does not mean to pretend to have espoused no religious motive at all, but rather to be consequent in the effort to construct consistent theories which are in accord with the religious motive that one has espoused as much as with empirical evidence. To be reasonable means to be open to criticism, discussion and dialogue with other standpoints.

I want to appreciate the patience of the contributors to this volume and their willingness to submit not only the papers but complete bibliographical references. I gratefully acknowledge Walter Redmond’s careful translation of the classical paper “Die fünf Wege” by the late Joseph M. Bochenski, as well as the help of my wife Luz María, who carefully converted all the citations to the old style (more appropriate for a book with many references to classical ancient authors), produced the bibliographies, and changed the notes at the end to footnotes.

Adolfo García de la Sienra
Teocelo, December 1998

REFERENCE