

Preface

It is, typically, difficult for common readers to read and to understand philosophical texts unaided. Apart from difficulties arising from translations of original texts into a foreign language, from Greek, say, or German, into Japanese, the fact is that most philosophical texts and commentaries on these texts are not targeted at common or inexperienced readers. This means that a certain period of specific training is needed prior even to hoping to acquire a comprehension of our great philosophical texts. It is somehow like reading musical notation. Before one can 'hear' the score, one needs to undergo some degree of more or less professional training and to learn a specialized language. On average, a continuous effort entailing three to five years of study is necessary properly to grasp philosophical texts. Taking short cuts, such as focusing on particular key terms and ignoring how these are arrived at, is always unsatisfactory and arbitrary.

The aim of this *Hyper-Paraphrase Series* – to coin a title – is, first and foremost, to save common readers the extra time and effort needed to reach a general understanding of Western philosophy, and, second, to dispense with the risk of an arbitrary understanding of philosophy, as mentioned above.

This series of specially summarized and contextualized guides to the most significant of our philosophical texts can be used as a handy tool towards understanding the content of the most important Western philosophical thought. I assure the reader that, by reading this book, he or she will need to devote only a few days to be able to grasp the essence - the big ideas - of a philosophy book that might otherwise occupy one for several months - if not years - comprehensively to read through. Moreover, if the more specialist reader studies this book alongside the subject philosophical text itself, in its original language or in translation, he or she will, I believe, be better able to approach the core of the prime philosophy.

I hope this book is used in this second, adjunctive way, especially by the younger generation.

The 20th century may be called the era of "anti-philosophy". Yet, ironically, more than any previous one, the current century is decisively in need of the essential principles and wisdom to be found in philosophy tracts. I therefore hope to achieve two things with this book: to help the common reader who has had hitherto little to do with philosophy to find an easy way into the philosophies of our mainstream thinkers; and also to empower young people who in the past have experienced difficulty in studying philosophy to learn through this guide to come to understand philosophy, to overcome its abstruseness, and to use it as a helpful instrument to pave the way for their own future.