

# Preface

These lectures delivered at the Royal Institute of Philosophy cannot, even in the case of the first seven by French philosophers, be regarded as representative of French philosophy. That is however necessarily so, since nothing can be representative of contemporary French philosophy except contemporary French philosophy itself. They do, however, reflect one of the characteristics of French philosophy which underlies this: its great diversity. The essays by Pascal Engel, Michèle Le Doeuff, and Bruno Latour suggest explanations.

We are very deeply indebted to philosophers on both sides of the Channel for advice on possible contributors to this volume. Above all, from the beginning we were immensely helped and guided by Rev. Professor Marcel Regnier, SJ, editor of *Archives de Philosophie*. He was to have opened the series, but to our great regret this was prevented by his failing health. We are also deeply grateful to Mr Alan Montefiore, of Balliol College, for his advice and for his chairing many of the lectures.

These philosophers are not, however, responsible for the final composition of the volume. Many were chosen, but few would be called; and of these, a few had to cancel their acceptance at short notice. This was not an unallayed misfortune. Dr Kearney, Dr Elliott, and Dr Krell gave us their splendid papers in their stead, and we are most grateful to them.