## **Preface**

This is one of a loosely linked series of loose-knit books inspired by Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*. As Voltaire remarked of the Holy Roman Empire, *mutatis mutandis*, his was neither philosophical nor a dictionary. Mine is philosophical in part, but lowlier themes occupy more than half the book and afforded me more than half the fun, philosophy being on the whole no laughing matter.

The one trait that the book shares with a true dictionary, namely alphabetical order in lieu of structure, brings grateful release from the constraint of linear exposition. Cross-references abound, but they refer forward and backward indiscriminately, there being no presumption that the reader will read the eighty-three pieces in one order rather than another.

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W.V.Q.