Authors of dissertations submitted for an award (such as this one) are an unenviable lot. There is an element of irrevocability which is not present in the papers submitted for the journals or in the manuscripts prepared for the publishers. These can be amended, modified and improved. On the other hand, the dissertations once submitted are immutable. This is a handicap both for the referees who judge the theses and the authors who submit. The judges are in no position to get clarifications for their doubts, points of ambiguities, matters of details. Whereas the authors, unable to know which might be the best way to present their investigation, are plagued by the thought whether they have judiciously exercised Occam's Razor. In such circumstances the preface gives a convenient platform for the author to be his own critic.

The synopsis paraphrases the thesis contents. I had a temptation to expand the Part I, which deals with the general aspects. But this would have brought in extraneous matters. I had to keep in mind that this is not a monograph. So I had to confine to those aspects which gave a background to the investigations presented in the second part. In retrospect I feel that I should have elaborated the second part to some more extent. Perhaps it can be justified, since in these days of publish or perish, conciseness is the best
policy. Regarding other matters such as what are the original contributions and new findings, the readers are the best judges. I also feel that I might have given more extensive references in the first part. There are some other minor (!) deficiencies, but I hope they will not impede an assessment of the thesis.

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