PREFACE

At a time when much is being said by philosophers about their own proper function and practice, the impulse to dispense with prefaces and plunge into subject matter can be very strong. I am inclined to agree with Hegel that in any effort to achieve comprehensiveness it is precarious to state at the outset an aim, a theme, or a program. Only good luck can prevent summed-up reflection from lapsing into "a string of desultory assertions and assurances." The reader will perceive that the viewpoint here developed concerns itself not solely with one recurrent theme but with many interrelated themes; that it bears on the resolution of various traditional problems and suggests various new types of problems. If the viewpoint proves to be in any way compelling, its ideas should be applicable well beyond the direct range of the following pages.

This book and its immediate predecessor, Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment, may be read quite independently of one another. Nevertheless, they are closely related, contributing to the same systematic end and the same philosophic structure. I would therefore naturally wish the reader of either book also to read the other.

An attempt to discover fundamental traits in the process of experiencing and producing is an attempt to sharpen the definition of man's status in nature. Such definition or portrayal never has been accomplished by
any one philosophic perspective, and there is no reason to expect that it ever will be. Nor can it be completed, since inevitably it aims both to be consonant with the results of specialized investigation and to anticipate the possible traits of man. Yet some philosophic instruments, some directions, are nearer to adequacy than others, and I hope that those I am trying to devise are among the nearer.

My wife, Professor Evelyn Shirk of Hofstra College, has given every page the benefit of her gift for intensive philosophic observation. Likewise, the comments and criticisms made by Professors James Gutmann and Sidney Gelber of Columbia University, and by Professor Benjamin N. Nelson of the University of Minnesota, have helped considerably to decrease the number of imperfections in this book. The sustained encouragement I have received from Professor John H. Randall, Jr., of Columbia has meant a great deal to me.

J. B.

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