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AMBIGUITY AND LOGIC

In this book, Frederic Schick extends and applies the decision theory he proposed in two previous Cambridge books: *Understanding Action* (1991) and *Making Choices* (1997). He shows how the way we see situations affects the choices we make, and he develops a logic of thought responsive to how things are seen.

The book considers many questions of choosing and some familiar human predicaments. Why do people in choice experiments act so often against expectations? How might they and the experimenters be looking at different problems in them? Why do people cooperate so often where the textbook logic excludes that? How can there be weakness of will – and must it always be faulted? Does how we see things affect what they *mean*, and what are people reporting who say that their lives have no meaning for them? These very different questions turn out to have some closely related answers.

There are vivid discussions here of cases drawn from many sources. The book will interest all who study how we choose and act, whether they are philosophers, psychologists, or economists – or any combination.

Frederic Schick is Professor of Philosophy at Rutgers University.

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PREFACE

EACH of the essays in this book was written during the past five years. Only two have been published elsewhere. Each can be read on its own. Still, they were meant to be read in sequence; Essay 1 is general, Essay 2 more narrowly focused, Essay 3 more technical, etc. In a wholly perfect world, they would be read in the order presented.

An earlier version of Essay 3 appeared in *Economics and Philosophy* of 1999 (as “Status Quo Basing and the Logic of Value”). An earlier version of Essay 5 appeared in *The Journal of Philosophy* of 2000 (as “Surprise, Self-Knowledge, and Commonality”). Essay 2 is a revised version of a paper that will appear in *Synthese*. I thank the editors and publishers of these journals for their permission to reprint these papers.

Each of these papers, or some earlier version, has been presented to one or another academic group, at Lund University and Uppsala University in Sweden, at Cambridge University in England, at Columbia, the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, the University of Arizona, the New School University, and others in the United States. I thank the audiences at these meetings for their lively and useful discussions.

Finally, a special thanks to my friends – they know who they are – who have encouraged me in this. And a very special thanks to those who encouraged me though they weren’t persuaded.