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David Thomas

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Preface

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I would like first to acknowledge some old debts. Ian Hacking and David Papineau initially taught me philosophy and helped me to become clearer about its point. My earliest study of the philosophy of social science was encouraged by John Dunn and Michael Pickering, whose examples confirmed my suspicion that it was possible to do fruitful work on the borderlines of philosophy and social science.

Mary Hesse was my research supervisor; anyone familiar with her work will recognise her influence at many points in this book. Geoffrey Hawthorn commented carefully and sympathetically on successive drafts. Martin Hollis and Bernard Williams examined my doctoral thesis (on which chapters one to four are based) and I have used several of their suggestions. I spent a year as a student of Steven Lukes; chapters two and four, on which I was working at the time, benefited from his criticisms. David Lazar supplied me with a thorough critique of chapters three and four. My views on the philosophy of science have been clarified by conversations with Neil Williams.

I have learnt much from all the above people. None of them would agree with all that I have written; some would agree with very little. It goes without saying that the remaining deficiencies are mine alone.

I am grateful to my former employer, the National Coal Board, for granting me a week's special leave in order to finish this book.

An article based on chapter two was published in *Inquiry*, 21, 1978. I am grateful to the editor and publisher of *Inquiry* for permission to use that material here.

Finally, I would like to thank Diane Swansborough, who gave me much support and encouragement during the writing of this book, and to whom it is dedicated with gratitude and affection.