

A Practical Logic of Cognitive Systems, The Reach of Abduction (Volume 2)

Dov M. Gabbay



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A Practical Logic of Cognitive Systems, The Reach of Abduction (Volume 2) Dov M. Gabbay The present work is a continuation of the authors' acclaimed multi-volume A Practical Logic of Cognitive Systems. After having investigated the notion of relevance in their previous volume, Gabbay and Woods now turn to abduction. In this highly original approach, abduction is construed as ignorance-preserving inference, in which conjecture plays a pivotal role. Abduction is a response to a cognitive target that cannot be hit on the basis of what the agent currently knows. The abducer selects a hypothesis which were it true would enable the reasoner to attain his target. He concludes from this fact that the hypothesis may be conjectured. In allowing conjecture to stand in for the knowledge he fails to have, the abducer reveals himself to be a satisficer, since an abductive solution is not a solution from knowledge. Key to the authors' analysis is the requirement that a conjectured proposition is not just what a reasoner might allow himself to assume, but a proposition he must defeasibly release as a premiss for further inferences in the domain of enquiry in which the original abduction problem has arisen. The coverage of the book is extensive, from the philosophy of science to computer science and AI, from diagnostics to the law, from historical explanation to linguistic interpretation. One of the volume's strongest contributions is its exploration of the abductive character of criminal trials, with special attention given to the standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Underlying their analysis of abductive reasoning is the authors' conception of practical agency. In this approach, practical agency is dominantly a matter of the comparative modesty of an agent's cognitive agendas, together with comparatively scant resources available for their advancement. Seen in these ways, abduction ha

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