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0521791960 - The Evolution of Reason: Logic as a Branch of Biology

William S. Cooper

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The Evolution of Reason

Formal logic has traditionally been conceived as bearing no special relationship to biology. Recent developments in evolutionary theory suggest, however, that the two subjects may be intimately related. In this book, William Cooper presents a carefully supported theory of rationality in which logical law is seen as an intrinsic aspect of the process of evolution. This biological perspective on logic, though at present unorthodox, suggests new evolutionary foundations for the study of human and animal reasoning.

Professor Cooper examines the formal connections between logic and evolutionary biology, noting how the logical rules are directly derivable from evolutionary principles. Laws of decision and utility theory, probabilistic induction, deduction, and mathematics are found to be natural consequences of elementary population processes. Relating logical law to evolutionary dynamics in this way gives rise to a unified evolutionary science of rationality.

The Evolution of Reason provides a significant and original contribution in evolutionary epistemology. It will be of interest to professionals and students of the philosophy of science, formal logic, evolutionary theory, and the cognitive sciences.

William S. Cooper is Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley.

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2001

Printed in the United States of America

Typeface Times Roman 10.25/13 pt. *System* QuarkXPress [BTS]

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Cooper, William S.

The evolution of reason : logic as a branch of biology / William S. Cooper.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in philosophy and biology)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-79196-0 (hardback)

1. Biology – Philosophy. 2. Logic. I. Title. II. Series.

QH331 .C8485 2001

570'.1 – dc21 00-034260

ISBN 0 521 79196 0 hardback

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Foreword

This book is about how logic relates to evolutionary theory. It is a study in the biology of logic. It attempts to outline a theory of rationality in which logical law emerges as an intrinsic aspect of evolutionary biology, part of it and inseparable from it. It aspires to join the ideas of logic to evolutionary theory in such a way as to provide unified foundations for an evolutionary science of Reason.

An understanding of modern evolutionary explanation and sympathy with its aims has been assumed throughout. A prior acquaintance with the elements of symbolic logic and probability theory has been assumed as well, and some familiarity with decision theory would be desirable. Beyond that, it is my hope that philosophers of science, logicians, evolutionists, cognitive scientists, and others, will find the exposition readable.

The mathematics has been kept to a minimum. The exception is an important appendix which sets forth in mathematical detail a critical portion of the underlying formal development. My effort has been to make the theory as clear as possible, both conceptually and mathematically, with the heavier math kept separate for those who might wish to study the theory in greater depth.

The work owes much to many people. Of special note is the fact that one of the evolutionary models receiving attention (Model 5) resulted from a collaboration with Professor Robert Kaplan, now of Reed College, to whom I am deeply indebted for numerous evolutionary insights. I am grateful to Professors Ernest Adams, Bill Maron, Steven Stearns, and several referees for their valuable suggestions and criticisms of the manuscript. The book consolidates the results of earlier investigations which benefited at various stages from the comments of George Barlow, Mario Bunge, Roy Caldwell, Christopher Cherniak,

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Daniel Dennett, John Endler, Baruch Fischhoff, John Gillespie, Richard Griego, Paul Huizinga, Russel Lande, Richard Lewontin, John Maynard Smith, Stanley Salthe, Glenn Shafer, Dave Wake, Edward O. Wilson, Mary Wilson, and Patrick Wilson. Mention of these kind people does not imply their endorsement of what is said here. Portions of the earlier work were supported by National Science Foundation grants IST-7917566, IST-8113213, and the Miller Institute for Basic Research in Science, Berkeley.

Berkeley, January 2000

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