

Reading Assignment 10: Abduction and Skepticism

Assigned Reading

1. R. Feldman. *Epistemology*. Prentice Hall Foundations of Philosophy Series. Pearson Education Inc., 2003, Chap. 7, pp. 141-151
2. I. Douven. “Abduction”. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by E. N. Zalta. Summer 2017. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017, §1-2

Questions

Answer questions one, three, eight, and nine below.

1. What is epistemological conservatism? Motivate the principle using your own analogy (not Feldman’s car analogy) to choosing between two goods or opportunities of seemingly equal value. Then explain why Feldman’s discussion of “suspending judgment” would likewise undermine your analogy.
2. Pryor argues that, when we think we’re viewing a tree, we have “immediate perceptual justification” that there’s a tree before us. Although Pryor argues that immediate perceptual justification exists, he *rejects* two common reasons for its existence. Explain those reasons in your own words.
3. How does the advocate of inference to best explanation (IBE) respond to the skeptical argument? Why might the advocate of IBE be committed to believing certain conspiracy theorists, according to Lipton?
4. According to Douven, what is the central distinction between inductive and abductive reasoning? Contrast the two by providing an example of each type of argument.
5. What is a feature that inductive and abductive reasoning share according to Douven?
6. What is “underdetermination”? Which of the four skeptical arguments that Feldman discussed in chapter 7 (e.g., possibility of error, introspective indistinguishability, certainty, or transmissibility) purports to show a type of underdetermination and why?
7. Why does the “bad lot” objection challenge the reliability of abduction?
8. Given a set of competing hypotheses $H_1, H_2, \dots H_n$, how does Schupbach propose to generate a new set of hypotheses such that at least one must be true? What, according to Douven, is a reason to expect that abductive reasoning will *not* be reliable when applied to a set of hypotheses generated in the way Schupbach says?
9. Contrast ABD2 with ABD1 by using an example of your own devising. Do the same to contrast ABD3 with ABD1.