



# Artificial Believers: The Ascription of Belief

*Afzal Ballim, Yorick Wilks*

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Modeling of individual beliefs is essential to the computer understanding of natural languages. Phenomena at all levels -- syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic -- cannot be fully analyzed in the absence of models of a hearer and of the hearer's model of other believers. The heart of this text is the presentation of an artificial intelligence (AI) program intended to simulate certain aspects of a human believer. This book provides a prolog program, *Viewgen*, that maintains belief structures about the world and other believers, and is able to ascribe beliefs to others without direct evidence by using a form of default reasoning. The authors contend that a plausible model such as this can -- in the best cognitive science tradition -- shed light on the long-standing philosophical problem of what belief is.

The issues presented here will be of considerable interest to an informed general reader as well as those with a background in any of the disciplines that make up what is now called cognitive science: philosophy, linguistics, psychology, neuropsychology, and also AI itself.

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