Contents

Preface xi
Introduction xiii

1. The Ways of Complexity 1
   1. What Complexity Involves 1
   2. Modes of Complexity 8
   3. The Cognitive Aspect 16

2. The Complexity of the Real 25
   1. The Descriptive Inexhaustibility of Things: The Law of Natural Complexity 26
   2. Descriptive Incompleteness 31
   3. The Dynamic Aspect of Descriptive Inexhaustibility: The Instability of Knowledge 33
   4. The Cognitive Opacity of the Real 36
   5. Nomic, or Operational Complexity 41
   6. The Imperfectibility of Knowledge in a Complex World 45

   1. Spencer’s Law: The Dynamics of Cognitive Complexity 55
   2. The Principle of Least Effort and the Methodological Status of Simplicity-Preference in Science 58
   3. Complexification and the Disintegration of Science 64
   4. Complexity and the Human Sciences 71
4. **Complex Knowledge: The Growth of Science and the Law of Logarithmic Returns**
   1. The Expansion of Science
   2. The Law of Logarithmic Returns
   3. The Rationale and Implication of the Law
   4. The Growth of Knowledge
   5. The Centrality of Quality and Its Implications

5. **Technological Escalation and the Exploration Model of Natural Science**
   1. Accounting for Our Cognitive Competence in Managing Complexity
   2. The Exploration Model of Scientific Inquiry
   3. Technological Escalation: An Arms Race Against Nature

6. **The Theoretical Unrealizability of Perfected Science**
   1. Conditions for Perfected Science
   2. Theoretical Adequacy: Issues of Erotetic Completeness
   3. Pragmatic Completeness
   4. Predictive Completeness
   5. Temporal Finality
   6. The Dispensability of Perfection
   7. “Perfected Science” as an Idealization that Affords a Useful Contrast Conception
   8. Science and Reality

7. **Extraterrestrial Science**
   1. The Potential Diversity of “Science”
   2. The One World, One Science Argument
   3. First Principles
   4. Potential Plurality of Science

8. **Are There Any Limits to the Problem-Solving Capacity of Computers**
   1. Could Computers Overcome Our Limitations?
   2. Problem Solving by Computers
   3. Theoretical Limits are not Meaningful Limitations
## Contents

4. Practical Limits: Inadequate Information  
5. Practical Limits: Limits of Prediction—Real-Time Processing Problems  
6. Practical Limits: Limitations of Representation in Matters of Detail Management  
7. Inherent Limits of Prediction—Self-Insight Problems  
8. Practical Limits: Limits of Modeling—Cognitive Thermodynamics  
9. The Human Element  

9. Coping with Cognitive Limitations: Problems of Rationality in a Complex World  
   1. Stage-Setting for the Problem: Issue Resolution Hinges on Available Information  
   2. Ideal vs. Practical Rationality: The Predicament of Reason  

10. Technology, Complexity, and Social Decision  
   1. Technological Progress Makes Life More Complicated  
   2. Problem Complexity Outpaces Solution Complexity  
   3. The Intimidating Impetus of the Unknown: Risk and Destabilization  
   4. Concretization Quandaries and Decision Gridlock  
   5. A Retrospective Reflection  

11. Complexity’s Bearing on Philosophical Anthropology  
   1. Dimensions of Finitude  
   2. Ramifications of Complexity: The Paradox of Finitude  
   3. Principles of Complexity  
   4. Philosophizing in a Complex World  
   5. After Postmodernism  

**Bibliography**  
**Index of Names**