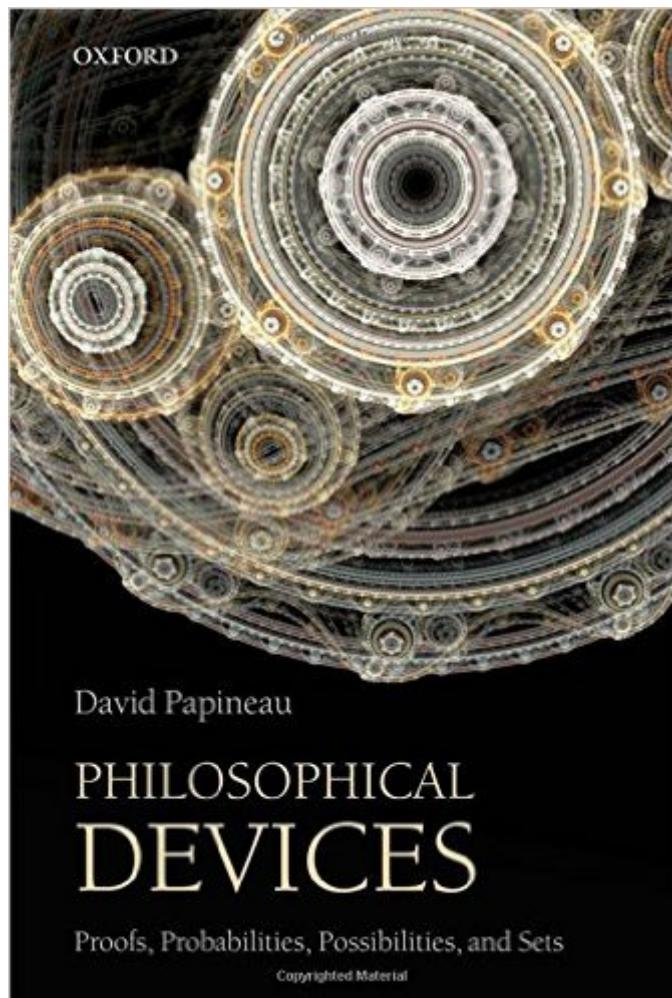


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Philosophical Devices: Proofs, Probabilities, Possibilities, And Sets



Synopsis

This book is designed to explain the technical ideas that are taken for granted in much contemporary philosophical writing. Notions like "denumerability," "modal scope distinction," "Bayesian conditionalization," and "logical completeness" are usually only elucidated deep within difficult specialist texts. By offering simple explanations that by-pass much irrelevant and boring detail, *Philosophical Devices* is able to cover a wealth of material that is normally only available to specialists. The book contains four sections, each of three chapters. The first section is about sets and numbers, starting with the membership relation and ending with the generalized continuum hypothesis. The second is about analyticity, a priority, and necessity. The third is about probability, outlining the difference between objective and subjective probability and exploring aspects of conditionalization and correlation. The fourth deals with metalogic, focusing on the contrast between syntax and semantics, and finishing with a sketch of Gödel's theorem. *Philosophical Devices* will be useful for university students who have got past the foothills of philosophy and are starting to read more widely, but it does not assume any prior expertise. All the issues discussed are intrinsically interesting, and often downright fascinating. It can be read with pleasure and profit by anybody who is curious about the technical infrastructure of contemporary philosophy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The main thrust of this book is sorely needed in philosophy - detailed explanations of commonly-used philosophical tools (concepts, models, analogies, etc.) geared towards an advanced beginner to intermediate-level philosopher (meaning, anyone who studies philosophy, not

just students or graduates of an academic program, but certainly including those). As the book says, it's easy to find superficial treatment of things such as the "Possible Worlds" framework for talking about all sorts of things like counterfactuals, modality, meaning, semantics, truth, etc. The other immediately available resources (though not always easy to track down) are the original works and/or subsequent expert-level critiques, defenses, extensions, etc. Stuff that is much too technical for the person just learning how to use the tool. Yet, many of these "devices" (to start using the word the book uses!) are ones used quite frequently in philosophical conversation and written work, and written with the assumption that the reader already understands everything there is to know about the device. There was, until this book, nothing I could find that filled the gap between the super-easy, high-level explanation and the highly technical expert treatment. This book does that job admirably. I didn't always agree with the reasoning and choices made in the creation of the devices, but that's philosophy for you :-). I couldn't have had the knowledge to agree or disagree until I understood the device in the first place (notwithstanding, of course, the common practice of holding strong political opinions without understanding the issues in the first place :-)). The book's success could be based on the single point discussed above, but it's also a well-written book.

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