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Kripke (Key Contemporary Thinkers)



Synopsis

Saul Kripke has been a major influence on analytic philosophy and allied fields for a half-century and more. His early masterpiece, *Naming and Necessity*, reversed the pattern of two centuries of philosophizing about the necessary and the contingent. Although much of his work remains unpublished, several major essays have now appeared in print, most recently in his long-awaited collection *Philosophical Troubles*. In this book Kripke's long-time colleague, the logician and philosopher John P. Burgess, offers a thorough and self-contained guide to all of Kripke's published books and his most important philosophical papers, old and new. It also provides an authoritative but non-technical account of Kripke's influential contributions to the study of modal logic and logical paradoxes. Although Kripke has been anything but a system-builder, Burgess expertly uncovers the connections between different parts of his oeuvre. Kripke is shown grappling, often in opposition to existing traditions, with mysteries surrounding the nature of necessity, rule-following, and the conscious mind, as well as with intricate and intriguing puzzles about identity, belief and self-reference. Clearly contextualizing the full range of Kripke's work, Burgess outlines, summarizes and surveys the issues raised by each of the philosopher's major publications. *Kripke* will be essential reading for anyone interested in the work of one of analytic philosophy's greatest living thinkers.

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Customer Reviews

I came to Kripke from Parfit and the study of consciousness, having never previously directly interfaced with his field before. I'd tried a few times to just dive right into Naming and Necessity myself, but never got past a few pages before becoming confused about what he was talking about and why he was talking about. I really lucked out in finding this introduction. It is rich in the context and background of N&N, and very clear in moving from concept to concept. Burgess moves slowly, and gets right into the mind of someone who has never encountered this material before. After reading the first two chapters of Burgess and then moving to N&N, the latter is revealed as if by magic, as if you were one of the professionals in the audience when Kripke was originally giving the lectures, steeped in the context of what Kripke was saying. Reading Burgess first makes N&N feel like a work of popular science or philosophy. The patten Burgess recommends is a good one: read his first two chapters, then read the first two of N&N. The third chapter of Burgess corresponds to the third and final chapter of N&N, but it is not as essential. By the time you've gotten that far, you know enough to take on Kripke's third chapter by yourself if you need to. It's the first two chapters of Burgess that are worth the price. (I haven't yet gotten to Burgess' chapters on Belief and Rules.)

In many ways, Burgess's book is the perfect supplement to Kripke's work. Where Kripke leaves us with brilliant but suggestive remarks, Burgess develops them. Where Kripke spreads a discussion out over the course of a lecture (or several), Burgess starts us off with some snappy principles. Where Kripke tends toward marvelous sprawl, Burgess marshals the relevant points into different chapters, organized by topic. In short, Burgess isn't trying to be Kripke; someone is already doing that just fine. This makes Burgess's book that much more rewarding. Because he shows us Kripke's oeuvre in a new form, with all sorts of connections drawn among the major works, Burgess has given us a way of strengthening and deepening our understanding of Kripke's contributions. It would be very hard for a newcomer to philosophy to achieve this level of understanding just by visiting and revisiting those contributions themselves. Sadly, I have to dock this book a star. There are a ton of typos, especially in the appendices and endnotes. There are even missing symbols in one of the Barcan formulas, which is dangerously confusing. I hope this is corrected in the next edition.

Very useful

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