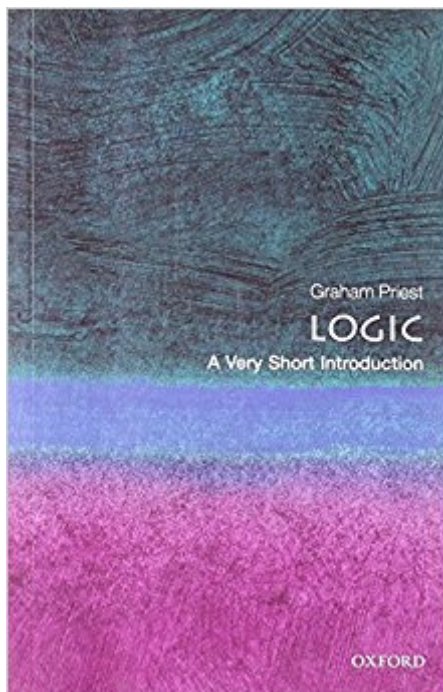


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Logic: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Logic is often perceived as having little to do with the rest of philosophy, and even less to do with real life. In this lively and accessible introduction, Graham Priest shows how wrong this conception is. He explores the philosophical roots of the subject, explaining how modern formal logic deals with issues ranging from the existence of God and the reality of time to paradoxes of probability and decision theory. Along the way, the basics of formal logic are explained in simple, non-technical terms, showing that logic is a powerful and exciting part of modern philosophy.

About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

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Customer Reviews

"This book is terrific... It covers a lot of ground, but in a wonderfully relaxed and interesting way."-Simon Blackburn, University of Cambridge and author of *Think*

"This text is ideal for giving students a quick introduction to formal logic or for adding pizzazz to an otherwise dry logic course."--Glenn Ross, Franklin & Marshall College

Graham Priest is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Queensland. He has also held positions at the University of St Andrews and the University of Western Australia. He is the author of

In Contradiction, Beyond the Limits of Thought, and over 100 articles in philosophy books and journals. He has held visiting positions in universities in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Russia, and Brazil, and is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities.

Logic is hard to teach, very likely because - pace Aristotle's contention that humans are the rational animal - most people just don't naturally think that way. Which, of course, is a good reason to learn logic to begin with (just like it's good to learn the basics of probability theory, despite, indeed because, of the fact that most people are intuitively really bad at probabilities - witness the success of the gambling industry). I must admit that when I was reading Graham's book (he is a colleague at the City University of New York where I also work) my first reaction was that he was taking an unusual and not necessarily easy path in his little introduction to logic. But the more I read the more I, ahem, saw the logic of his way of structuring the subject matter, and I think it actually works quite well in the end. The book does not give the reader the impression that everything is settled in logic. On the contrary, practically every chapter ends with a twist that softens some of the conclusions just reached, along the lines of "yes, but have you considered..." Graham's specific field in logic has to do with paradoxes and what is called paraconsistency, and you will find quite a few references to the former subject (though not the latter, which is too technical for this level of treatment). Throughout the book you will also - amusingly, I thought - encounter several proofs of the existence of god, together with a clear explanation of why they run afoul of one or another principle of logic (i.e., they don't work). The last chapter is about further readings, but don't skip it, as it also offers an interesting little history of the field, which helps the reader put everything else s/he has read so far into the broader perspective of the human quest for knowledge about what makes and does not make sense to say about the world.

Graham Priest is obviously a good teacher, for he is a clear and helpful writer, and this a highly useful and insightful little volume. I had never formally studied logic, but needed a good clear account of two topics in particular: modus ponens and conditionals, and the slippery slope. I got them right here. For me his two chapters on these topics were the functional highlights, for they gave me the exact background knowledge I was after. But the book also provided me with good strengthener sections on material I already felt comfortable with: the liar paradox, Russell's paradox, probability, etc. One thing that annoyed me slightly was the plethora of logician's symbols. He introduces them appropriately, but then proceeds to just deploy them afterwards without further reminders and help. So I felt I had to be turning back, searching: now what was that square box

symbol? Or have my thumb inserted at p.115 so I could be constantly flicking to the list of them at the back. But overall, a worthy purchase. Very helpful.

The basic features of logic aren't easy to grasp. This introductory book gives the reader the indispensable tools to make the first steps in the field. The author explains the main questions in logic by reference to ordinary reasoning. The logic's operators are presented and the most important logicians are referred to. In the final of each (short) chapter the main ideas are recapitulated. The author gives reading suggestions and a glossary of logic's symbols in the end of the book allows the beginners more familiarity with the technicalities of the field. Also in the end one finds questions to fix the informations presented in the book.

Every idea is introduced with examples, which keeps the motivation for the questions considered at the fore. The author has chosen examples the reader will likely see again--and in fact I expect that most readers will have already seen them in one form or another. (I'm not at all bothered, as some other reviewers seem to have been, by the fact that some examples were arguments for the existence of God.) My complaint is specific to the Kindle edition, and is the reason I give this 4 instead of 5 stars. Some of the equations don't show up correctly. Some equations are missing equal signs! There are other annoyances such as a missing minus sign or a zero that turns into a little o. All of these typos are easy enough to figure out, once you know to be on the lookout for them.

I would call this book "A Very Good Short Introduction." There is no need to have previous knowledge in logic and not much mathematics is required. Perhaps some improvement in the symbols used. Graham does a great job keeping the reader interested and his references are good. The historical summary and references is very good if one is interested in continuing reading on the subject.

Not a bad primer.

This is not a review of the book itself, but a heads-up -- the Kindle edition is missing quite a few symbols.

I got this book because I am starting a study of philosophy. It is my understanding that that in order

to understand philosophy, one must understand logic. This book was fantastic. Absolutely fantastic. It wasn't at all what I expected-but that's OK. It is what it is. About the author-At first I wasn't sure if he was a completely arrogant prick, a witty, funny writer. It turns out it is the latter. Very good work on that. My goal in reading this book was to get a general sense, so I was able to gloss over some of the deeper details-especially the mathematical parts, but I was still able to get a sense of what he was saying. I feel that if I need to, I could always go back and re-read certain parts of this book. I am very well satisfied by this book. I recommend it to anyone trying to gain exposure to formal logic.

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