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Thought Experiments



Synopsis

Can merely thinking about an imaginary situation provide evidence for how the world actually is--or how it ought to be? In this lively book, Roy A. Sorensen addresses this question with an analysis of a wide variety of thought experiments ranging from aesthetics to zoology. Presenting the first general theory of thought experiment, he sets it within an evolutionary framework and integrates recent advances in experimental psychology and the history of science, with special emphasis on Ernst Mach and Thomas Kuhn. Sorensen explores what thought experiments are, how they work, and what their virtues and vices are. In his view, philosophy differs from science in degree, but not in kind. For this reason, he claims, it is possible to understand philosophical thought experiments by concentrating on their resemblance to scientific relatives. Sorensen assesses the hazards of thought experiments and grants that there are interesting ways in which the method leads us astray, but attacks most scepticism about thought experiments as arbitrary. He maintains that they should be used--as they generally are--as part of a diversified portfolio of techniques, creating a network of cross-checks that make for impressive reliability.

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Customer Reviews

It's hard to find books that are really worth having. For example, Drahos book - "Philosophy of IP" and Eisenstein's "Printing Press as an Agent of Change" are two similar grade books. You first have to ask, "who has written about thought experiments in the first place" and then "who has written a book at this level of quality?". For all of the trash talk about "innovation" that goes around these days and all of those people who pretend to know something about innovation starting with the CEO's of

any of your famous companies right down to the arrogant high school students, should take some time and read this book because this gets to the heart of thinking. It is not exhaustive nor was it intended to be I believe but Sorenson did a very fine job with what he presented and I highly recommend it to technical and non-technical minded people. Take your time and read a few pages a time and then chew on what he has to say. You don't wolf down a bottle of 12 year old scotch like Gatorade. Neither should you consume this in such a manner. Fine piece of work.

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