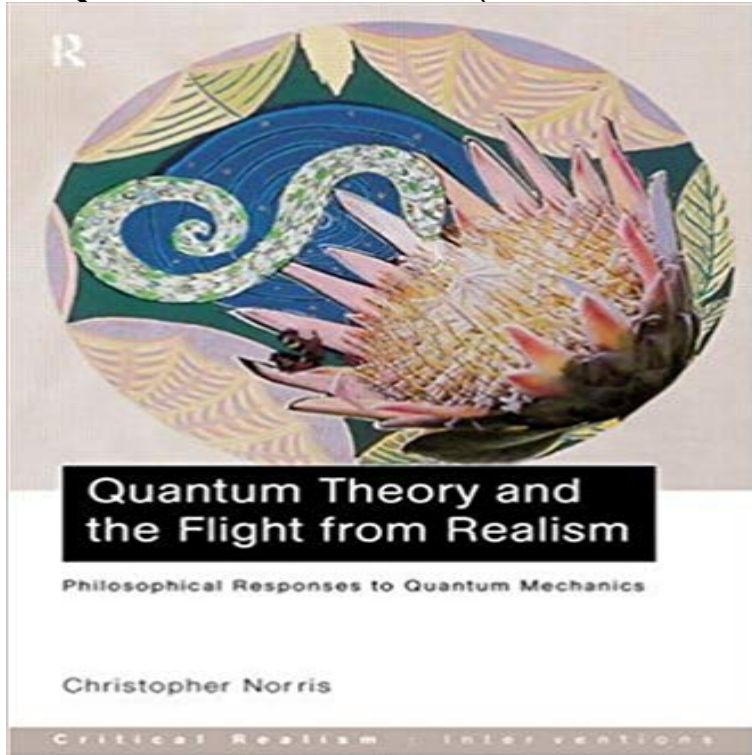


Quantum Theory and the Flight from Realism: Philosophical Responses to Quantum Mechanics (Critical Realism: Interventions)



This book is a critical introduction to the long-standing debate concerning the conceptual foundations of quantum mechanics and the problems it has posed for physicists and philosophers from Einstein to the present. Quantum theory has been a major influence on postmodernism, and presents significant problems for realists. Keeping his own realist position in check, Christopher Norris subjects a wide range of key opponents and supporters of realism to a high and equal level of scrutiny. With a characteristic combination of rigour and intellectual generosity, he draws out the merits and weaknesses from opposing arguments. In a sequence of closely argued chapters, Norris examines the premises of orthodox quantum theory, as developed most influentially by Bohr and Heisenberg, and its impact on various philosophical developments. These include the ideas developed by W.V Quine, Thomas Kuhn, Michael Dummett, Bas van Fraassen, and Hilary Putnam. In each case, Norris argues, these thinkers have been influenced by the orthodox construal of quantum mechanics as requiring drastic revision of principles which had hitherto defined the very nature of scientific method, causal explanation and rational enquiry. Putting the case for a realist approach which adheres to well-tried scientific principles of causal reasoning and inference to the best explanation, Christopher Norris clarifies these debates to a non-specialist readership and scholars of philosophy, science studies and the philosophy of science alike. Quantum Theory and the Flight From Realism suggests that philosophical reflection can contribute to a better understanding of these crucial, current issues.

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