



Probabilities in Physics

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Many results of modern physics--those of quantum mechanics, for instance--come in a probabilistic guise. But what do probabilistic statements in physics mean? Are probabilities matters of objective fact and part of the furniture of the world, as objectivists think? Or do they only express ignorance or belief, as Bayesians suggest? And how are probabilistic hypotheses justified and supported by empirical evidence? Finally, what does the probabilistic nature of physics imply for our understanding of the world?

This volume is the first to provide a philosophical appraisal of probabilities in all of physics. Its main aim is to make sense of probabilistic statements as they occur in the various physical theories and models and to provide a plausible epistemology and metaphysics of probabilities. The essays collected here consider statistical physics, probabilistic modelling, and quantum mechanics, and critically assess the merits and disadvantages of objectivist and subjectivist views of probabilities in these fields. In particular, the Bayesian and Humean views of probabilities and the varieties of Boltzmann's typicality approach are examined. The contributions on quantum mechanics discuss the special character of quantum correlations, the justification of the famous Born Rule, and the role of probabilities in a quantum field theoretic framework. Finally, the connections between probabilities and foundational issues in physics are explored. The Reversibility Paradox, the notion of entropy, and the ontology of quantum mechanics are discussed. Other essays consider Humean supervenience and the question whether the physical world is deterministic.

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