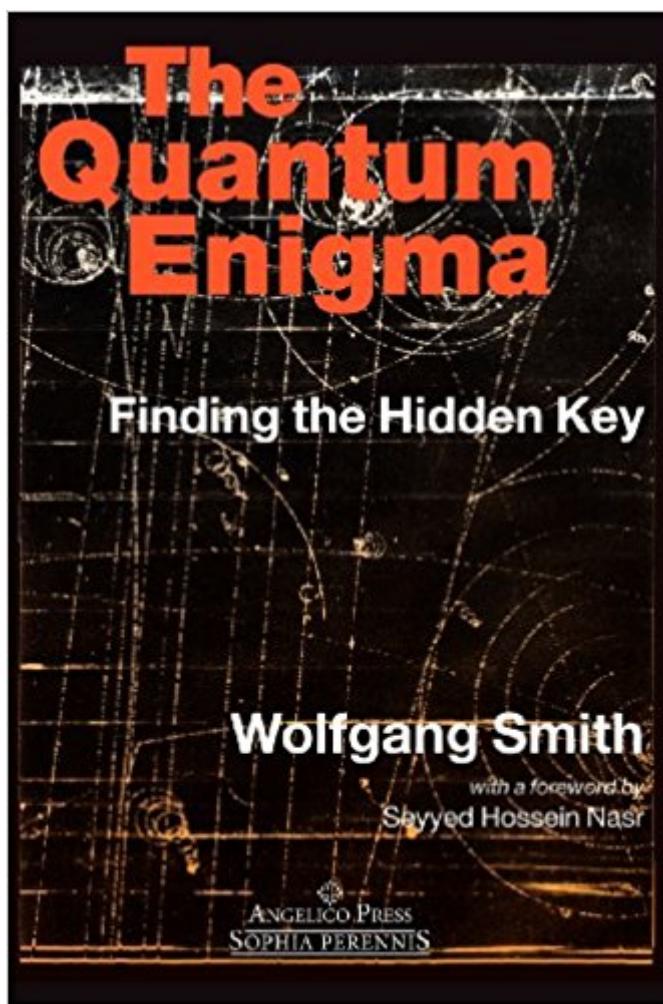


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The Quantum Enigma: Finding The Hidden Key 3rd Edition



Synopsis

Following the overthrow of the classical world picture by the findings of quantum mechanics, physicists have proposed a broad gamut of alternative worldviews. The Quantum Enigma begins with the major recognition that each of these suffers from a certain "residual Cartesianism" that has been smuggled in unconsciously. It turns out that the moment this hidden and problematic premise is discarded, quantum theory begins to "make sense" in a way that it never has before. As the author shows, it is now possible, for the first time, to integrate the findings of quantum physics into a worldview that conforms to the permanent intuitions of mankind. This work can be read by scientists but is also surprisingly accessible to the general reader unacquainted with the technical conceptions of physics or the quantum-reality literature.

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Customer Reviews

"Wolfgang Smith is as important a thinker as our times boast, and this is his most seminal book." -- Huston Smith, author of *The World's Religions*"The Quantum Enigma is of great importance not only for the philosophy of science, but also for the whole domain of human knowledge, and should be disseminated as widely as possible." -- Seyyed Hossein Nasr"Unusually interesting . . . profoundly enlightening." -- Henry Margenau

Wolfgang Smith graduated from Cornell University at age eighteen with majors in physics, philosophy, and mathematics. After taking an M.S. in physics at Purdue, he pursued research in aerodynamics, where his papers on diffusion fields provided the theoretical key to the solution of the

re-entry problem for space flight. After receiving a Ph.D. in mathematics from Columbia University, Dr. Smith held faculty positions at M.I.T., U.C.L.A., and Oregon State University, where he served as Professor of Mathematics until his retirement in 1992. In addition to numerous technical publications (relating to differential topology), Dr. Smith has published three previous books and many articles dealing with foundational and interdisciplinary problems. He has been especially concerned to unmask conceptions of a scientific kind widely accepted today as scientific truths.

Wolfgang Smith does an excellent job explaining the nature of and the reasons for the current uproar over quantum physics, (including superposition, collapse of the wave-function, etc.) and its relationship with classical physics. However he makes no mention of entanglement which I feel is a central challenge to modern scientific beliefs. He explains these theories using scholastic philosophy, which of course is opposed to current reductionist beliefs, but his discussion of the physics clarifies some of the scientific concepts other authors do not completely explain.

The scientific community has been drudging along since the solidification of quantum mechanics. Where premodern scientists rushed to provide philosophical grounds for their discoveries, we have continued to bathe in the ignorance of reductionist empiricism. The realm of quantum mechanics holds within its core a huge opportunity to become re-enchanted with the world once more.

Unfortunately, the most important question: "what makes the wave function to collapse?" is not answered!

In this scholarly, yet accessible book, Wolfgang Smith draws a distinction between his own philosophical views and those of Werner Heisenberg's. Believing that quantity and scale alone do not distinguish the quantum world from the everyday macro world of classical physics, Smith rejects Heisenberg's view and aligns himself with the philosophy of Niels Bohr who once made the assertion that there is no quantum world. Rather, Smith arbitrarily divides the world into three separate categories: The corporeal, the subcorporeal and the transcorporeal. The corporeal world is that which we perceive with our senses, our everyday reality of sight, sound, touch, and smell. Corporeal objects Smith maintains are not anything like the physical world, but merely occupy the same space. Thought most idealist and representationalist philosophers beginning with Descartes and John Locke and continuing to the present consider secondary qualities such as taste, sight, and sound subjective attributes imparted by the observer, Smith considers these qualities just as

objective as mass and quantity, while maintaining, if not incredibly, that even the red color of an apple is an objective quality independent of observation. This corporeal world of the senses is presented by the physical or subcorporeal world--Plato's universal forms (nature in and of itself)--perfectly described by mathematics yet imperceptible to the senses. Atomic and subatomic particles--the transcorporeal world--can never be perceived and must be measured by a subcorporeal measuring device, such as a geiger counter, or bubble chamber. These devices, in turn, make a presentation of themselves by making a transformation into the corporeal world of perception. There is no indeterminacy as suggested by Heisenberg, nor is there any wave/particle duality or quantum measurement problem as described by Bohr. Smith maintains that the state vector collapse does not happen at the level of the atom, but occurs the moment a subcorporeal object passes into the corporeal domain. Macroscopic objects of classical physics are every bit as "potential" as subatomic particles and it is measurement that actualizes the "potentia" from the physical into the corporeal level of reality. As a result, Smith believes that there is no mystery in the Schrodinger's Cat paradox. It is not necessary he claims, for the observer to peer into the box to determine if the cat is dead or alive, since the cat, which belongs to the corporeal world, collapses its own state vector. Just how the transition from the subcorporeal to the corporeal world is achieved isn't addressed directly, but once must infer from statements such as "the entire universe is created for us," that he is an adherent to the strong anthropic principle. As a result, the quantum measurement problem is not solved but instead, is merely shifted from the quantum domain to a supposed transformation between the subcorporeal and corporeal domains under equally mysterious circumstances. Smith believes that "God plays dice" and that it is only an averaging effect of large numbers at the classical level of nature that accounts for the deterministic appearance of reality. In the end Smith disappoints somewhat by reverting to a deity to explain what is at present still misunderstood, betraying his rational sensibility.

It is best to have some familiarity with both the basic theories of Quantum Mechanics and some standard Philosophical concepts that you would have seen in college before tackling this book it is not truly necessary (his explanations are sufficient to cover this deficit). But the depths that Dr. Smith opens for the reader are remarkable with just this little foundation. Current scientific thought seeks to explain the mysteries of State Vector Collapse and Non-locality by digging for more and more elementary particles. Dr. Smith demonstrates that by eliminating the Cartesian Bifurcation in our understanding a better understanding of the real world opens up and we can recognize the quantum mechanical world as the substrate on which our world is formed. By doing so, the bizarre

phenomenon of State Vector Collapse makes perfect sense and we recognize the utter treasure that we have in Quantum Physics, a treasure whose full implications are not recognized in the Physics community of our day. Anyone who is at all interested in Science should read this book!

This is Smith's best summary of his chief philosophical thesis. This takes the few statements of RenÃ© GuÃ©non about modern physics, separates wheat from chaff, and examines the real state of modern physics from a metaphysical perspective. Personally I regard Smith's work as incomplete. Smith edited GuÃ©non's "The Metaphysical Principles of the Infinitesimal Calculus" which brings much light to these problems, but for whatever reason it is not examined in this book. A true contrast of Traditional physics and modern physics would have to integrate these thoughts on calculus as well as taking a closer look at Christian Scholastic physics than the mere statement "materia signitate quantitate". But this book does help us think about physics and quantum anomalies with a bit more rigor, and it contains the most complete and accessible version of Smith's thoughts on the subject -- I'd recommend it over his other books.

This book is breathtakingly brilliant, the best of the books of Wolfgang Smith. The distinction between the corporeal and the physical is so simple and so profound that it will shake the scientific / philosophical worldview of anyone brave enough to pick up this book. This is indeed a hidden key. Not only does it hold the key to quantum theory (which is explained in a way that makes it intelligible to the layman like me), but also a philosophical and historical key. This book will change the way you see a crawling ant and the wheeling stars. It is one of the greatest philosophical treatises I have ever read.

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