



Conventionalism: From Poincare to Quine

Yemima Ben-Menahem

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The daring idea that convention - human decision - lies at the root both of necessary truths and much of empirical science reverberates through twentieth-century philosophy, constituting a revolution comparable to Kant's Copernican revolution. This book provides a comprehensive study of Conventionalism. Drawing a distinction between two conventionalist theses, the under-determination of science by empirical fact, and the linguistic account of necessity, Yemima Ben-Menahem traces the evolution of both ideas to their origins in Poincaré's geometric conventionalism. She argues that the radical extrapolations of Poincaré's ideas by later thinkers, including Wittgenstein, Quine, and Carnap, eventually led to the decline of conventionalism. This book provides a fresh perspective on twentieth-century philosophy. Many of the major themes of contemporary philosophy emerge in this book as arising from engagement with the challenge of conventionalism.

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