

[PDF] On Growth And Form: The Complete Revised Edition (Dover Books On Biology)

D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, Biology - pdf download free book

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Description:

First published in 1917, *On Growth and Form* was at once revolutionary and conservative. Scottish embryologist D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson (1860-1948) grew up in the newly cast shadow of Darwinism, and he took issue with some of the orthodoxies of the day--not because they were necessarily wrong, he said, but because they violated the spirit of Occam's razor, in which simple explanations are preferable to complex ones. In the case of such subjects as the growth of eggs, skeletons, and crystals, Thompson cited mathematical authority: these were matters of "economy and transformation," and they could be explained by laws governing surface tension and the like.

(He doubtless would have enjoyed the study of fractals, which came after his time.) In *On Growth and Form*, he examines such matters as the curve of frequency or bell curve (which explains variations in height among 10-year-old schoolboys, the florets of a daisy, the distribution of darts on a cork board, the thickness of stripes along a zebra's flanks, the shape of mountain ranges and sand dunes) and spirals (which turn up everywhere in nature you look: in the curve of a seashell, the swirl of water boiling in a saucepan, the sweep of faraway nebulae, the twist of a strand of DNA, the turns of the labyrinth in which the legendary Minotaur lived out its days). The result is an astonishingly varied book that repays skimming and close reading alike. English biologist Sir Peter Medawar called Thompson's tome "beyond comparison the finest work of literature in all the annals of science that have been recorded in the English tongue." --*Gregory McNamee*

Book Description Why do living things and physical phenomena take the forms they do? Analyzing the mathematical and physical aspects of biological processes, this historic work, first published in 1917, has become renowned as well for the poetry of its descriptions. --This text refers to an alternate edition.

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