



# Symmetry: A Mathematical Journey

*By Marcus du Sautoy*

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Symmetry is all around us. Of fundamental significance to the way we interpret the world, this unique, pervasive phenomenon indicates a dynamic relationship between objects. Combining a rich historical narrative with his own personal journey as a mathematician, Marcus du Sautoy takes a unique look into the mathematical mind as he explores deep conjectures about symmetry and brings us face-to-face with the oddball mathematicians, both past and present, who have battled to understand symmetry's elusive qualities.

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

When most of us think of symmetry, we think of looking into a mirror or playing patty-cake with a child. As Oxford don du Sautoy (*The Music of the Primes*) tells readers, this is only the tip of the triangle in the mathematical realms of symmetry, where symmetrical objects exist in dimensions far beyond our ability to imagine. The author takes readers gently by the hand and leads them elegantly through some steep and rocky terrain as he explains the various kinds of symmetry and the objects they swirl around. Du Sautoy explains how this twirling world of geometric figures has strange but marvelous connections to number theory, and how the ultimate symmetrical object, nicknamed the Monster, is related to string theory. This book is also a memoir in which du Sautoy describes a mathematician's life and how one makes a discovery in these strange lands. He also blends in minibiographies of famous figures like Galois, who played significant roles in this field. This is mainly for science buffs, but fans of scientific biographies will also find it appealing. B&w illus. (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Du Sautoy specializes in symmetry, and that concept is instantly visualized in the tiling of the Moorish Alhambra Palace, which initiates his tour through the history and ideas of his mathematical subject. This accessible introduction makes for a shrewd start, for, as seems congenial with mathematicians and their abstract pursuits, du Sautoy takes symmetry in this work to the nth degree—specifically, to the 196,883d dimension. But far from stumping his readers, the author inveigles them with clarity about symmetry's foundational concepts, cast of mathematical heroes, and wry portrayals of the quirky personalities among his contemporary colleagues in group theory, as symmetry is technically called. The package works as well here as in his highly praised *The Music of the Primes* (2003), with the addition of imparting the personal frisson of making a mathematical discovery. Relating his triumphs, confiding his worry about whether, at age 40, he's still got the creative spark, du Sautoy well demonstrates that whatever discoveries he has yet to make, he's able to engage general readers in the cerebral dramas of pure mathematics. --Gilbert Taylor

About the Author

Marcus du Sautoy is the Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science at the University of Oxford. The author of *The Music of the Primes*, he is a frequent contributor on mathematics to newspapers and radio, and has hosted several programs for BBC television. He lives in London.

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