

Hidden in the heart of the theory of relativity, quantum mechanics, string theory, and modern cosmology lies one concept: *symmetry*.

"A surprising intellectual romp that is itself quite beautiful."

—*Seed*

"[Stewart] shows how the concept of symmetry informs reality, right down to the basic composition of matter. And, by offering glimpses into the lives of the men who helped develop the concept—from Babylonian scribes to gambling Renaissance dandy Girolamo Cardano—he proves that the social and the theoretical have always been inextricably entwined."

—*Wired*

"Impressive...valuable and intelligent...[an] entertaining and intelligent history of 3,000 years in the study of symmetry."

—*Daily Telegraph*, London

Symmetry has been a key concept for artists, architects, and musicians for centuries, but as a mathematical concept it remained, until very recently, an arcane pursuit. In the twentieth century, however, symmetry emerged as central to the most fundamental ideas in physics and cosmology. *Why Beauty Is Truth* tells its history, from ancient Babylon to twenty-first century physics. It is a peculiar history, and the mathematicians who contributed to symmetry's ascendancy mirror its fascinating puzzles and dramatic depth. In *Why Beauty Is Truth*, world-famous mathematician IAN STEWART tells the compelling stories of the eccentric and occasionally tragic geniuses as he describes how symmetry grew into one of the most important ideas of modern science.

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