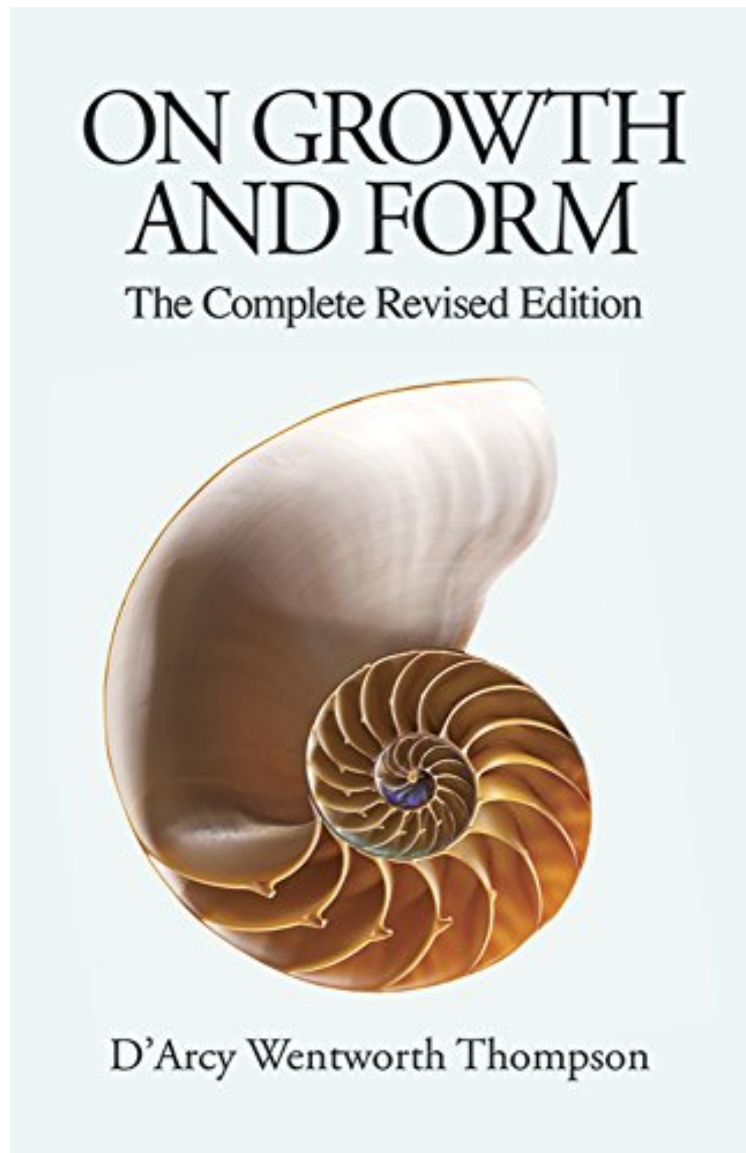


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## On Growth and Form: The Complete Revised Edition

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In this classic of biology and modern science, Sir D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson (1860-1948), one of the most distinguished scientists of the modern era, sets forth his seminal "theory of transformation" - that one species evolves into another not by successive minor changes in individual body parts but by large-scale transformations involving the body as a whole. First written in 1917, the book was revised by Thompson in 1942 the revision reprinted here. The esteem in which this monumental, lavishly illustrated work is universally held derives not only from its scholarship and creativity, but also from the rich literary style that exemplifies Thompson's great erudition in the physical and natural sciences, ancient and modern languages and the humanities. The book begins with studies of organic magnitude, the rate of growth, cellular form and structure, adsorption, and the forms of tissues, then examines a vast spectrum of life forms, and concludes with a comparison of related forms that leads to the theory of transformations.

.com 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