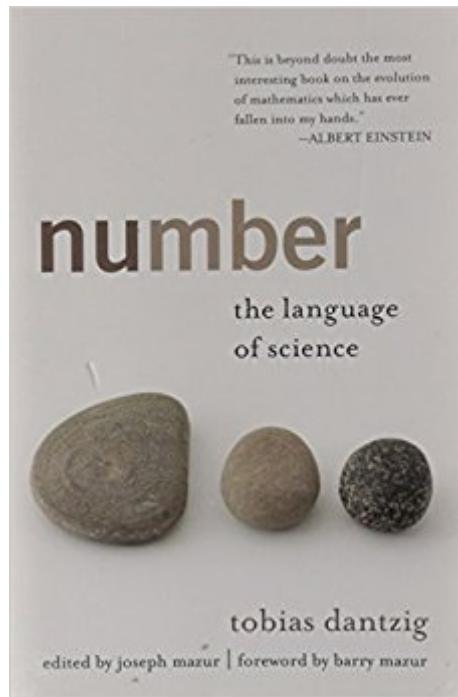


The book was found

Number: The Language Of Science



Synopsis

Number is an eloquent, accessible tour de force that reveals how the concept of number evolved from prehistoric times through the twentieth century. Tobias Dantzig shows that the development of math—from the invention of counting to the discovery of infinity—is a profoundly human story that progressed by “trying and erring, by groping and stumbling.” He shows how commerce, war, and religion led to advances in math, and he recounts the stories of individuals whose breakthroughs expanded the concept of number and created the mathematics that we know today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Einstein called this "the most interesting book on the evolution of mathematics which has ever fallen into my hands." Number was first published in 1930 with the fourth edition coming out in 1954. This is a republication of that fourth edition (Dantzig died in 1956) edited by Joseph Mazur with a foreword by Barry Mazur. It is an eminently readable book like something from the pages of that fascinating four-volume work The World of Mathematics (1956) edited by James R. Newman in that it is aimed at mathematicians and the educated lay public alike. Part history, part mathematics and part philosophy, Number is the story of how we humans got from "one, two...many" to various levels of infinity. Strange to say it is also about reality. Here is Dantzig's concluding statement from page 341 in Appendix D: "...modern science differs from its classical predecessor: it has recognized the anthropomorphic origin and nature of human knowledge. Be it determinism or rationality, empiricism or the mathematical method, it has recognized that man is the measure of all things, and that there

is no other measure." Or more pointedly from a couple of pages earlier: "Man's confident belief in the absolute validity of the two methods [mathematics and experiment] has been found to be of an anthropomorphic origin; both have been found to rest on articles of faith." These are inescapably the statements of a postmodernist.

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