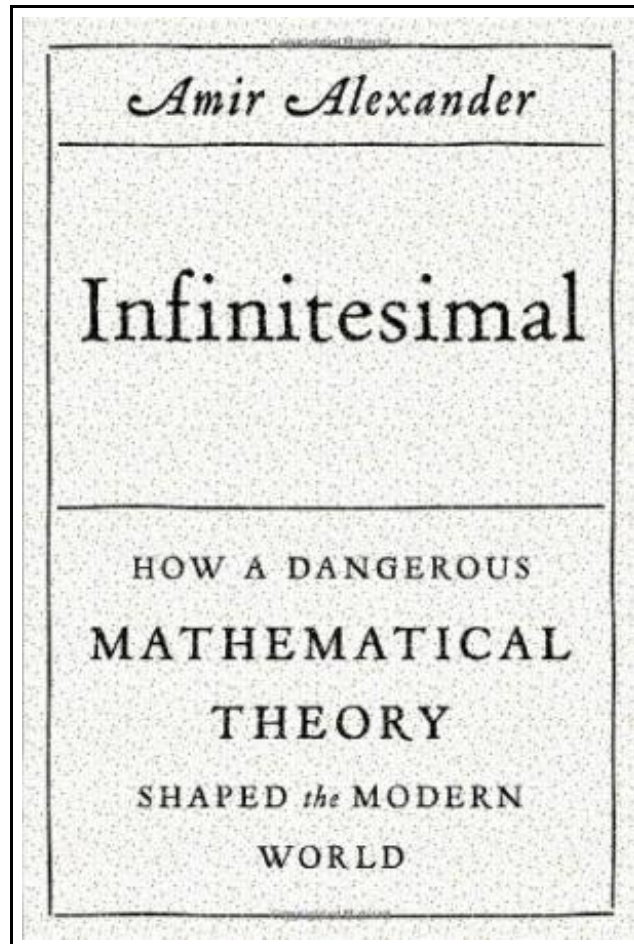


Infinitesimal: How a Dangerous Mathematical Theory Shaped the Modern World



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INFINITESIMAL: HOW A DANGEROUS MATHEMATICAL THEORY SHAPED THE MODERN WORLD



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Scientific American / Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. Hardcover. 368 pages. Dimensions: 9.1in. x 6.1in. x 1.1in. Pulsing with drama and excitement, *Infinitesimal* celebrates the spirit of discovery, innovation, and intellectual achievement and it will forever change the way you look at a simple line. On August 10, 1632, five men in flowing black robes convened in a somber Roman palazzo to pass judgment on a deceptively simple proposition: that a continuous line is composed of distinct and infinitely tiny parts. With the stroke of a pen the Jesuit fathers banned the doctrine of infinitesimals, announcing that it could never be taught or even mentioned. The concept was deemed dangerous and subversive, a threat to the belief that the world was an orderly place, governed by a strict and unchanging set of rules. If infinitesimals were ever accepted, the Jesuits feared, the entire world would be plunged into chaos. In *Infinitesimal*, the award-winning historian Amir Alexander exposes the deep-seated reasons behind the rulings of the Jesuits and shows how the doctrine persisted, becoming the foundation of calculus and much of modern mathematics and technology. Indeed, not everyone agreed with the Jesuits. Philosophers, scientists, and mathematicians across Europe embraced infinitesimals as the key to scientific progress, freedom of thought, and a more tolerant society. As Alexander reveals, it wasn't long before the two camps set off on a war that pitted Europe's forces of hierarchy and order against those of pluralism and change. The story takes us from the bloody battlefields of Europe's religious wars and the English Civil War and into the lives of the greatest mathematicians and philosophers of the day, including Galileo and Isaac Newton, Cardinal Bellarmine and Thomas Hobbes, and Christopher Clavius and John Wallis. In Italy, the defeat of the infinitely small signaled an end...



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