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Twelve years before the discovery of the double helix, Smith, Amherst, and Mount Holyoke Colleges made a joint appointment – their first – to jump-start a brand new field. The field was “molecular biology,” a phrase then-recently coined; the appointee was a controversial British mathematician, Dorothy Wrinch. Why a mathematician, and what was the controversy? I will show how the course she gave illuminates a fierce debate over the roles of geometry and symmetry in the biological sciences. (Received September 04, 2012)