



# Micrographia

*Robert Hooke*

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## **Micrographia** Robert Hooke

You are about to open a book that revolutionized the art of scientific investigation. Robert Hooke was still in his twenties when he wrote *Micrographia*, yet in this single volume revealed the immense potential of a single instrument, the microscope, and the many brilliant speculations of a multifaceted mind. *Micrographia* introduces us to the living cell; to microscopic fungi and the life story of the mosquito; we encounter the two contrasting theories about the origin of the lunar craters posed for the very first time. We read the first sensible proposal for the origin of fossils, and an uncanny prediction of the artificial fiber industry in Hooke's discussion of the spinning of silk by the spider. Elsewhere in his great book, gigantic insects populate the pages, and controversy and scientific argument mark out the text.

*Micrographia* is a large book, measuring almost twelve inches tall and weighing three pounds. It was printed in October 1664, and when bound copies appeared on sale the following year it became an instant bestseller. Most people cannot relish the crisp printing and the fine paper of an original issue, and this digital edition brings the look of the first edition truly into the public domain. We can marvel at the clarity of the prose, and the vividness of the pictures. Many of the plates (like that of the stinging nettle, for example, and the louse) have a clarity not regained until the era of the electron microscope. It is hard to believe these are the images from a pioneer who flourished three and a half centuries ago.

Commentary by Brian J. Ford, searchable live text.

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