



# Micrographia: Tabled & Illustrated

*Robert Hook*

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## **Micrographia: Tabled & Illustrated** Robert Hook

Micrographia is a historic book by Robert Hooke, detailing the then thirty-year-old Hooke's observations through various lenses. Published in September 1665, the first major publication of the Royal Society, it was the first scientific best-seller, inspiring a wide public interest in the new science of microscopy. It is also notable for coining the biological term cell. Observations: Hooke most famously describes a fly's eye and a plant cell (where he coined that term because plant cells, which are walled, reminded him of a monk's quarters). Known for its spectacular copperplate engravings of the miniature world, particularly its fold-out plates of insects, the text itself reinforces the tremendous power of the new microscope. The plates of insects fold out to be larger than the large folio itself, the engraving of the louse in particular folding out to four times the size of the book. Although the book is best known for demonstrating the power of the microscope, Micrographia also describes distant planetary bodies, the wave theory of light, the organic origin of fossils, and various other philosophical and scientific interests of its author. Publication: Published under the aegis of The Royal Society, the popularity of the book helped further the society's image and mission of being "the" scientifically progressive organization of London. Micrographia also focused attention on the miniature world, capturing the public's imagination in a radically new way. This impact is illustrated by Samuel Pepys' reaction upon completing the tome: "the most ingenious book that I ever read in my life." Hooke also selected several objects of human origin; among these objects were the jagged edge of a honed razor and the point of a needle, seeming blunt under the microscope. His goal may well have been as a way to contrast the flawed products of mankind with the perfection of nature (and hence, in the spirit of the times, of biblical creation).

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