



Nanocosm: Nanotechnology and the Big Changes Coming from the Inconceivably Small

William Illsey Atkinson

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"Imagine: you're looking down at the Earth from space. Oceans and continents blur as the planet transforms into one bright blue ball. And it doesn't stop with our own solar system. There are just as many galaxies in the universe as there are stars in our own! Now reverse the direction of this imaginative voyage, and turn inward rather than outward. That same number of stars in our galaxy is less than half the number of cells in an adult human body. Scale. It's all about scale. The fact is, we occupy a middle kingdom, poised delicately between the unimaginably immense and the unimaginably minute. And now science is on the brink of breaking through to the world beneath what we can see with our eyes. Nanoscience takes as its subject the realm of the infinitesimally small. Tinier than the tiniest atom, if the measurement known as a nanometer were scaled up to the width of your fingernail, then your fingernail would be the size of Delaware and your thumb would be the size of Florida. As author William Atkinson puts it, the domain of the nanometer -- he nanocosm -- is a serious kind of small. But one with big possibilities, and even larger consequences for the way we live. In *Nanocosm*, Atkinson takes readers into the incredibly complex, yet equally beautiful world of nanotechnology. Atkinson distinguishes hype and speculation from the amazing reality of what truly is possible through nanotechnology in our very immediate future: cell-sized computers triggered by single electrons rather than millions -- microchips that contain the diagnostic capability of full-sized medical labs -- exceptionally strong and resilient carbon nanotubes that will revolutionize the process of structural engineering -- and much more. The nanocosm promises to transform our environment by revealing new basic facts that we can turn into useful technology. Even discounting optimistic exaggerations, the scientific breakthroughs that are now upon us will dramatically affect everything about our lives: how we communicate, do our work, spend our leisure time, stay healthy, and even raise our children. Asking critical questions about the latest and most intriguing areas of nanotech, Atkinson interviews the most important scientists, ethicists, and business executives at the forefront of this exciting new field to give a riveting account of what is arguably the most important technical frontier since human beings launched themselves into outer space. At a time of astonishing and rapid advances in what we know of our own world, future ages will no doubt record the twenty-first century as the Renaissance of the Nanocosm. Combining the in-depth information of an up-to-the-second scientific report with the thought-provoking readability of a fast-paced novel, *Nanocosm* charts these first great voyages of discovery into a bizarre new realm, one that is small in size -- but epic in meaning. William Illsey Atkinson is the author of *Prototype*, a finalist for Canada's National Business Book Award. He is president of Draaken Communications, which interprets technological issues for universities, institutes, and private firms. He is a frequent contributor on science and technology to Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, and has received the Prix d'Excellence in Issues Writing from Dalhousie University. He lives in North Vancouver, British Columbia. The most amazing thing about nature is her inexhaustible variety. Scientists, technologists, and theologians speak about 'nature' or 'the world' as if it were a unit. But there are limitless worlds and infinite natures. [We] are poised delicately between the unimaginably immense and the unimaginably minute. -- William Illsey Atkinson, author of *Nanocosm* There's a lot of ""big thinking"" going on these days about some very small subjects. And just what are these subjects? Nanometers -- units of measurement so small that they equal one millionth of a millimeter. Yet what can be accomplished by understanding and harnessing this complex and invisible subworld has the potential to utterly transform virtually every aspect of our lives. At this very moment, nanotechnology is on the brink of exploding into a full-scale scientific renaissance with mind-boggling

implications. Nanocosm probes both the science and the business behind this technological revolution, exploring how nanotech will ultimately be applied in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, information technology, and countless other arenas. Based on in-depth research and interviews with the most important minds in nanotech and rendered in a narrative style reminiscent of Lewis Thomas and James Gleick, the book examines in layman's terms the complex science that underpins this new terrain. Lucid and dynamic, Nanocosm offers an enthralling glimpse at a soon-to-be very different world -- our own. ""Nanocosm is the nanotechnology book we have all been waiting for -- accurate, realistic, and oh so readable. It's a rare book that researchers and business people can both enjoy."" -- F. Mark Modzelewski, Executive Director, NanoBusiness Alliance"

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