



The Infancy of Atomic Physics: Hercules in His Cradle (Dover Science Books)

Alex Keller

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Atomic physics is a mighty Hercules that dominates modern civilization, promising immense reserves of power but threatening catastrophic war and radioactive pollution. The story of the atom's discovery and the development of techniques to harness its energy offers fascinating insights into the forces behind twenty-first-century technology. This compelling history portrays the human faces and lives behind the beginnings of atomic science.

The Infancy of Atomic Physics ranges from experiments in the 1880s by William Crookes and others to the era just after the First World War, when Rutherford's first speculations on the structures of the atomic nucleus led to the discovery of the neutron -- and thus to nuclear weapons and nuclear power. It describes the dramatic researches as they were made, and it shows how they were interpreted in the scientific language of their time. This survey not only depicts the impressions of leading scientists like Thomson, Rutherford, Einstein, and Bohr, but it also reflects the views of ordinary laboratory scientists as well as the ways in which innovations were introduced to the wider public.

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