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Sommario/riassunto	Nano denotes a billionth; a nanometer is a billionth of a meter. New instrumentation and techniques have for the first time made possible materials research and engineering at this level, the scale of individual molecules and atoms. Extraordinary visions of material abundance,

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unprecedented materials, and powerful engineering capabilities have marked the arrival of nanotechnology, as well as dystopian scenarios of self-replicating devices running amok and causing global catastrophe. Largely a future possibility rather than present actuality, nanotechnology has become a potent cultural signifie