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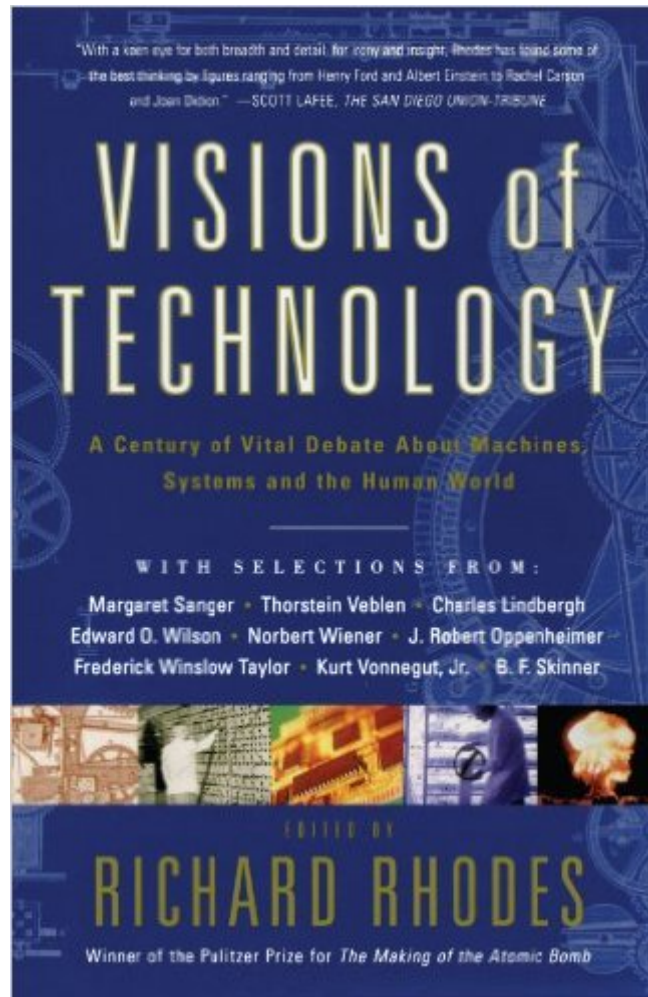
Visions Of Technology: A Century Of Vital Debate About Machines Systems And The Human World

"With a keen eye for both breadth and detail, for irony and insight, Rhodes has found some of the best thinking by figures ranging from Henry Ford and Albert Einstein to Rachel Carson and Joan Didion." —SCOTT LAFEE, *THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE*

VISIONS of TECHNOLOGY

A Century of Vital Debate About Machines, Systems and the Human World

WITH SELECTIONS FROM:
Margaret Sanger · Thorstein Veblen · Charles Lindbergh
Edward O. Wilson · Norbert Wiener · J. Robert Oppenheimer
Frederick Winslow Taylor · Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. · B. F. Skinner

EDITED BY
RICHARD RHODES
Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*

Synopsis

Technology was the blessing and the bane of the twentieth century. Human life span nearly doubled in the West, but in no century were more human beings killed by new technologies of war. Improvements in agriculture now feed increasing billions, but pesticides and chemicals threaten to poison the earth. Does technology improve us or diminish us? Enslave us or make us free? With this first-ever collection of the essential twentieth-century writings on technology, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Richard Rhodes explores the optimism, ambivalence, and wrongheaded judgments with which Americans have faced an ever-shifting world. Visions of Technology collects writings on events from the Great Exposition of 1900 and the invention of the telegraph to the advent of genetic counseling and the defeat of Garry Kasparov by IBM's chess-playing computer, Deep Blue. Its gems of opinion and history include Henry Ford on the horseless carriage, Robert Caro on the transformation of New York City, J. Robert Oppenheimer on science and war, Loretta Lynn on the Pill and much more. Together, they chronicle an unprecedented century of change.

Book Information

Series: Machines, Systems and the Human World

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; 1st Touchstone Ed edition (January 15, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0684863111

ISBN-13: 978-0684863115

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #207,255 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)   #124 in Books > Computers & Technology > Computer Science > Robotics   #163 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Industrial, Manufacturing & Operational Systems > Robotics & Automation   #619 in Books > Computers & Technology > Hardware & DIY

Customer Reviews

This is not a run of the mill anthology of 20th Century scientific thinking and predictions. This a many and varied collection of articles, some so short as to only occupy a few lines, whilst some run to 2 or 3 pages.Some of them are ironic, such as predictions that never came to pass (eg Spiro Agnew on Supersonic flight), whilst others transpire to be very omniscient in their warnings for the future

(concerns about the 'O' rings on the Space Shuttle 6 months before Challenger exploded).Well worth a read to look back at where we were, consider where we've come to, and where we might be going.

This book has been required reading for the Technology and Society course I teach for more than five years. I'm keeping my fingers crossed that it doesn't go out of print because it presents a wonderful view of the development of technology during the 20th century, in the voices of those who lived it. The short vignettes are engaging and even college seniors in their final semester can't put it down. It should be great for casual reading as well. Highly recommended.

Richard Rhodes presents a chronological collection of technology-related articles, written during the 20th century. Since we are born into an "already-made" technological world, I found it revealing to get the perspective from people who lived at the time these inventions and findings were made. It is surprising to realize that many of the concerns about techology development shown by people at those days are still in the minds of individuals today.It is not only interesting and instructive to read about how technology has developed during the past century, but it also makes us evaluate how technology affects us and, to some extent, defines the way we think and do things today.I particularly liked the idea of having several short articles (1 to 4 pages each) written by a large variety of people. This structure lets you read several articles in a row and pick up your reading after several days, without loosing the overall picture.I recommend this book to anyone interested in knowing a little more on how technology has developed through the eyes of both people who worked on it and people who lived the inmediate consecuences of it. I think it is a excellent source for analysis for people in the area of Philosophy of Science.

One can look at A. Lincoln's address at Gettysberg makes one think that he had devine assistance unless you read where Lincoln was coming from and see how studied he was thereby allowing him to draw from history. Much of the technology we see now e.g. the hypertext language and other internet interworkings, satellite and missile activity came from "Techies" that studied techniques that came before allowing them to became fast studies. Most of our amazing break throughs came about by building on giants of the past going back to Leonardo, and many many more. Book was a good reminder of the progress of order and a lot of damn hard work.

It came on time, and the book was better than advertised.

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