

Autobiographical Note

Norbert Wiener

Cornell College

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Quotation

"No, the future offers very little hope for those who expect that our new mechanical slaves will offer us a world in which we may rest from thinking. Help us they may, but at the cost of supreme demands upon our honesty and our intelligence. The world of the future will be an ever more demanding struggle against the limitations of our intelligence, not a comfortable hammock in which we can lie down to be waited upon by our robot slaves."

—Norbert Wiener

Biographical facts

- ▶ born 26 November 1894 in Columbia, Missouri
- ▶ child prodigy
- ▶ BA, Tufts University, 1909
- ▶ PhD, Harvard University, 1913
- ▶ long career as legendary professor of mathematics, MIT
- ▶ died 18 March 1964 in Stockholm, Sweden

Interesting facts

- ▶ crater on the moon is named for Norbert Wiener
- ▶ spaceship in Robert Heinlein story named *Norbert Wiener*
- ▶ *Norbert Wiener Prize in Applied Mathematics* honors him
- ▶ affectionately remembered as an absent-minded professor

Special interests

- ▶ Brownian motion, control & information theory, automation
- ▶ how technological innovation will change society
 - ▶ wrote *The Human Use of Human Beings*
- ▶ how feedback in machines might imitate feedback in body
 - ▶ wrote *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*
- ▶ studied in China (learned Mandarin), Mexico, Germany, UK