

RISK: Health, Safety & Environment (1990-2002)

Volume 3
Number 2 *RISK: Issues in Health & Safety*

Article 11

March 1992

Book Review

Allan M. Wheatcraft

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/risk>



Part of the [Biotechnology Commons](#), and the [Health Law and Policy Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Allan M. Wheatcraft, *Book Review*, 3 RISK 185 (1992).

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University of New Hampshire – Franklin Pierce School of Law at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in RISK: Health, Safety & Environment (1990-2002) by an authorized editor of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact ellen.phillips@law.unh.edu.

Book Review

Erratum

The citation for this review is *3 RISK 173 (1992)* in most commercial databases.

SHELDON KRIMSKY, BIOTECHNICS AND SOCIETY: THE RISE OF INDUSTRIAL GENETICS. (Praeger 1991) [280 pp.] Bibliography, figures, index, list of acronyms used, tables. LC: 90-23214, ISBN: 0-275-93860-3. [Paper \$17.95. P.O.B. 5007, Westport CT 06881.]

As many readers know, Professor Krimsky served on the National Institute of Health's Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee and as an advisor to a presidential commission on bioethics. He also played a role in drafting the first legislation passed in the U.S. (in Cambridge, MA) on the use of recombinant DNA technology.

An analysis of technological change is usually made with the benefit of hindsight. This book provides a unique and interesting view from within an ongoing technological revolution. Drawing on his background, Krimsky documents present concerns with regard to biotechnological research and advancements. His purpose in so doing is to preserve freshness and skepticism with regard to the subject matter and to provide future generations with a record of the questions being asked, the options available and the decisions being made in the field at this time.

The analysis begins with an overview of the industrial context of biotechnology. Krimsky traces developments from the advent of microbiology in the 1700's to the "biotechnics" of today. This part of the book includes a number of informative graphs, charts and tables. An entire chapter is dedicated to the role of patents in biotechnological advancement and makes the important point that a patent does not grant any right to use or sell a patented invention, *only to exclude others* from making, using, or selling it. Here, the capacity to patent living organisms is treated as raising issues distinct from others concerning genetic engineering, with public perceptions and industrial implications being featured.

Krimsky then gives an in-depth analysis of the relationship between academia, corporations and government with regard to biotechnology

before proceeding to a discussion of genetics and ecology. Frost-reducing bacteria are used to exemplify the problems faced when moving genetic research from laboratory to field tests, including public reaction to risk potential.

Chapters in the final section of the book deal with current social controls for regulating new biotechnologies. A discussion of several fragmented programs illustrate what Krimsky believes to be a significant lag in the development of methods to assess advances in biotechnology that underlie new applications. He argues that methods for selecting the most appropriate applications of new developments are critical and that emphasis needs to switch from incentives to develop new applications to incentives encouraging assessment and selection of new basic developments as they are made.

BIOTECHNICS presents a well-written overview of a rapidly developing area of technology and the concerns it has generated. Social, legal, ethical and ecological problems abound, as do governmental programs designed to deal with them. Because such topics are of wide concern and are treated comprehensively, this book should have broad appeal.

Allan M. Wheatcraft[†]

[†] Mr. Wheatcraft received his B.S. (Chemical Engineering) from the University of Virginia and has experience in the polymer industry. He has completed his second year at Franklin Pierce Law Center.