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## Rudolf Diesel

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# Rudolf Diesel

**So umstritten, wie heute der Dieselmotor ist, so umstritten war zu Lebzeiten auch sein Erfinder Rudolf Diesel.**

Diesel saw himself as a scientific genius and the James Watt of the late nineteenth century. He was *vain*, oversensitive, and a little paranoid. He did not win the hearts of other engine makers.

In 1912, twenty years after Diesel *conceived* his engine, four people wrote books about its development. Diesel wrote one and people out to minimize his *claims* wrote the other three. The seeds of the dispute, Bryant argues, were *sown in* Diesel's conventional view of invention – that a *device* is first invented, then developed, and finally *improved*, all in a linear sequence. Diesel left clear records of what he did. Between 1890 and 1893 he definitely invented the engine using his knowledge of thermodynamics. The idea of burning fuel slowly, and at higher pressures, was certainly his.

Diesel also worked from 1893 to 1897 at the Augsburg Machine-Works developing a working engine. During that time he had to do a lot more theoretical work and invention. In his view, he was still inventing the engine. People outside the process saw all that as development – the dirty work anyone has to go through to make a good idea into *workable* hardware. After 1897 Diesel figured he was finished, and he turned to *promoting* the engine. But it was still *woefully* unready for the market. It needed eleven more years of *improvement*. Meanwhile, Diesel worked himself into a nervous breakdown promoting the not-yet-ready engine.

Diesel saw his own development work as a continuation of the inventive process (as it surely was). But he viewed all the innovation needed to make the engine into a commercial success as no more than *mop-up* work by lesser minds. He irritated other engine designers by *sneering* at their work. He failed to see that what made his engine *viable* in the marketplace was a lot of truly inventive thinking by very good engineers.

Diesel was badly troubled by criticisms of his role in creating the engine, and, in 1913, he *vanished* from a boat to England. His body was found ten days later. His death brought out all kinds of *lurid* stories about plots to sell secrets to the British. However, it seems pretty clear that he *committed suicide*.

I have an old Diesel engine book first published in 1912 with an introduction by Diesel.

	regretfully
	held in high regards
self-loving	declares second-rate
designed	refusing ... *see list acknowledges
entitlements	endanger *see list
caused by machine refined	
practicable	
marketing awfully development	
clean-up	
smiling practical	
disappeared	
overdramatized	
carried out self-murder	

In the 4th edition, the English author *ruefully* says that Dr. Diesel's friendship was "more *valued* than he knew." In his introduction Diesel says he "finished construction of the first commercially successful motor" in 1897. Then he arrogantly *asserts* that few factories are good enough to build his engines – that *second-string* makers shouldn't even try.

Still, there's no *denying* Diesel was a *visionary*. He *admits*, for example, that his engine seems to *threaten* England's coal industry. But, he adds, we'll soon extract our Diesel fuel from coal *tar*. We now know how to do that. We don't make much Diesel fuel from coal tar today, but we know how to do so – anytime we choose to.

Prof. Dr. John Lienhard, University of Houston

<i>admit, to</i>	zugeben, eingestehen
<i>assert, to</i>	feststellen, erklären
<i>claim</i>	Anspruch, Behauptung
<i>commit, to</i>	begehen
<i>conceive, to</i>	konzipieren, ausdenken
<i>deny, to</i>	leugnen, abstreiten
<i>device</i>	Gerät, Apparat
<i>improve, to</i>	verbessern, verfeinern
<i>improvement</i>	Verbesserung, Optimierung
<i>lurid</i>	reißerisch, schrecklich
<i>mop up, to</i>	aufwischen, erledigen
<i>promote, to</i>	fördern, anpreisen
<i>ruefully</i>	reumütig
<i>second-string</i>	zweitrangig
<i>sneer, to</i>	spötteln, verachten
<i>sow, to (sowed, sown)</i>	säen
<i>suicide</i>	Selbstmord
<i>tar</i>	Teer
<i>threaten, to</i>	bedrohen
<i>vain</i>	eingebildet, eitel
<i>value, to</i>	schätzen
<i>vanish, to</i>	verschwinden
<i>viable</i>	brauchbar, realisierbar
<i>visionary</i>	Visionär
<i>woefully</i>	beklagenswert, elend
<i>workable</i>	funktionsfähig, praktikabel

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