The Technological Imagination

Terry Schenold / HS 260 / Fall 2015

Looking Back, Looking Forward

- Kelly Q&Q: The technium and exotropy
- Vannevar Bush and Postwar Technological Imagination

Discussion: Technology Self-Experiment -
McLuhan and the media, technology as mediums -

Stiegler: Technics & Time

"Man is Nothing Other than Technical Life"

1. Temporality of technical vs. cultural evolution
2. The great pivot: 19thC industrialism
   (reversal of Platonic heritage on being vs. becoming)
3. "Permanent revolution"; change is the norm
4. Nation states >>> "Techno-scientific war"
5. Globalization is the globalization of technics

Key Idea: Technology is a form of MEMORY

1. Genetic (somatic, evolutionary memory)
2. Epigenetic (germinal, cultural memory)
3. Epiphylogenetic (tertiary, technological memory)

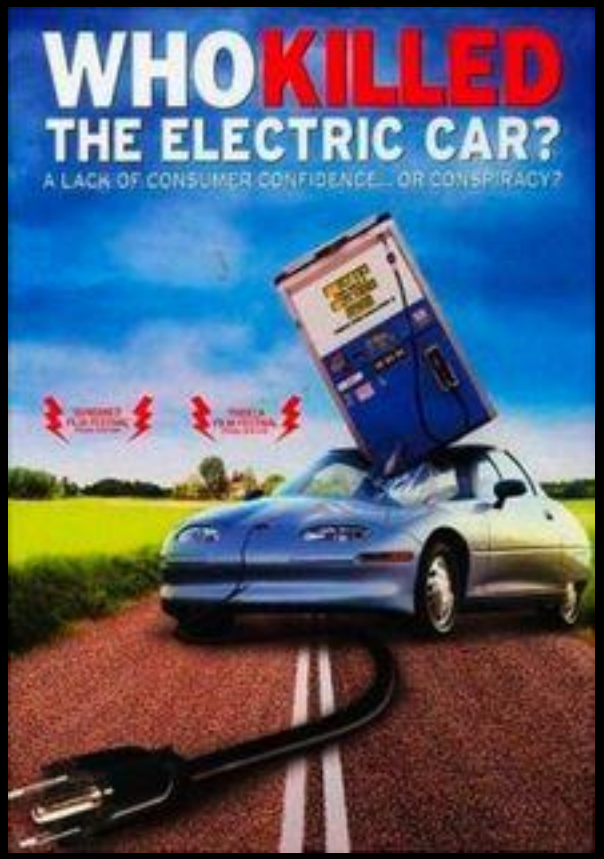
Nye: "Soft Determinism"

Technological Momentum

"The concept of technological momentum provides a way to understand how large systems exercise a soft determinism once they are in place."

-modernity: enmeshed in a "web of technology choices"

-cf. "Network Effect"



Post-War Technological Imagination

The Insider

Vannevar Bush
1890-1974

The Oustider

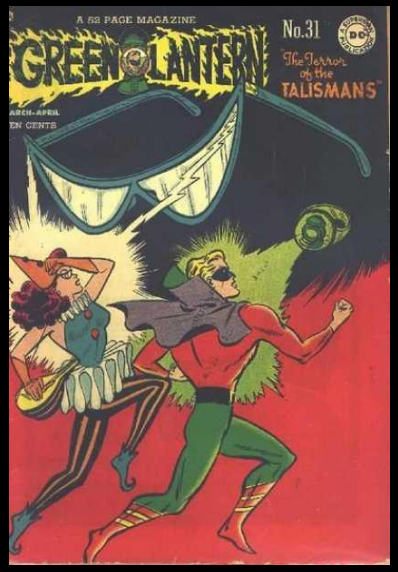
Norbert Wiener
1894-1964

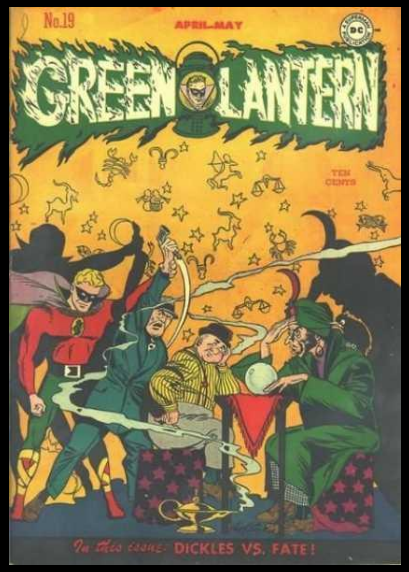
A Cultural Captivation

1. The "Golden Age of Science Fiction" 1930-50s
2. Civil applications of tech created for WWI – WWII

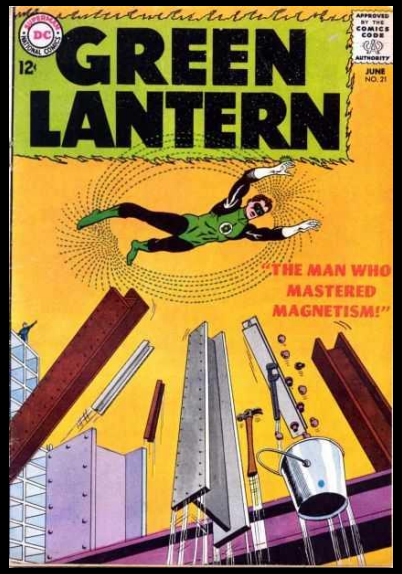
Exemplifying case: postwar comics culture

(post "pulp era")
1941-1949



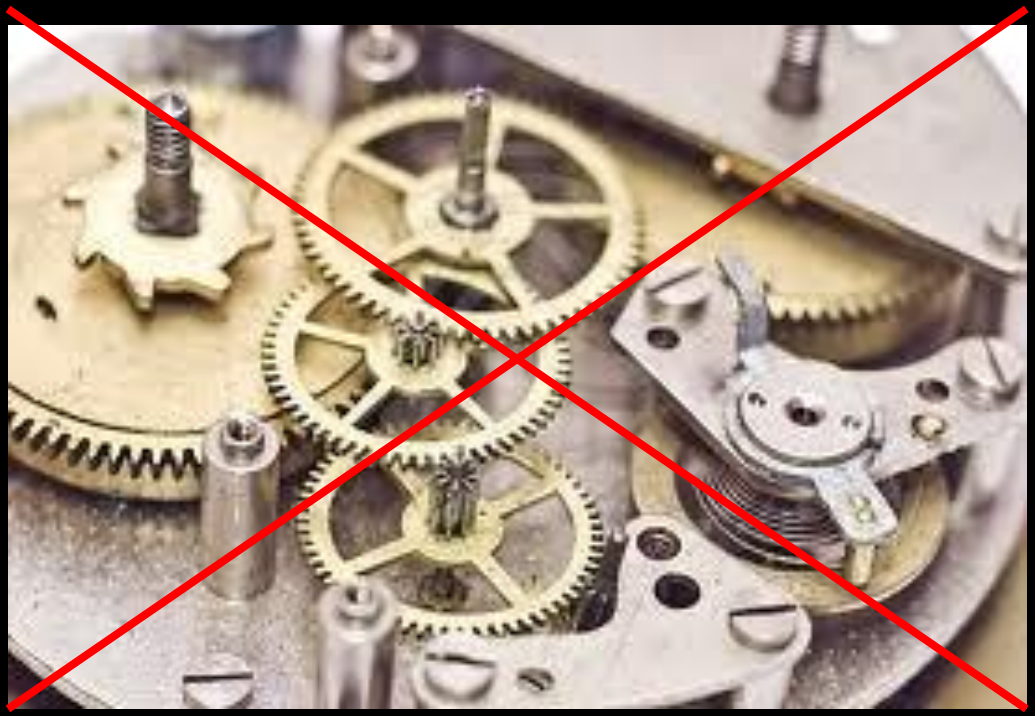


(New Wave SF)
1960+



Feedback, "Sensing" Machines

"This control of a machine on the basis of its actual performance rather than its expected performance is known as feedback" (24)



Mechanized to Electrical

Mechanical trans. of pwr
Centralizing, macro
Mechanical connections

Electrical trans. of pwr
Decentralizing, micro
Wired connections

Next Time: The Primacy of Media

Technology as Mediation, Extension

1. Marshall McLuhan – Understanding Media (1964)
   - ✓ First and Second Introductions
   - ✓ Medium is the Message
2. Marshall McLuhan Speaks archive