

THE LURE AND EERINESS OF MACHINE LIFE

Machines becoming more human-like

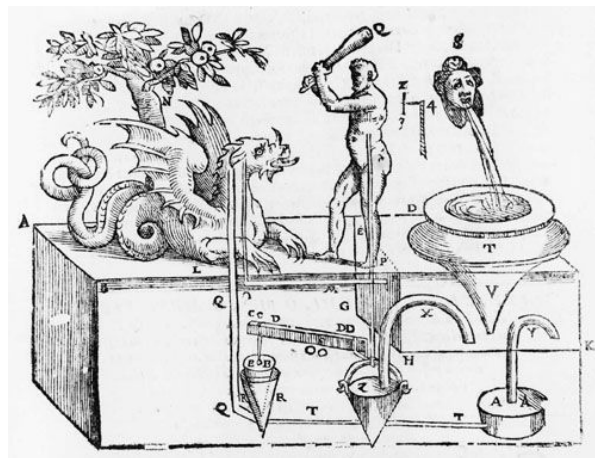
“Can machines actually be alive?” - people have had this conversation for a long time. It dated back to 800 BC.

Examples:

1. Iliad by Homer(Hephaestus) [800 BC]

Homer described an example of the god of technology, Hephaestus in Iliad.

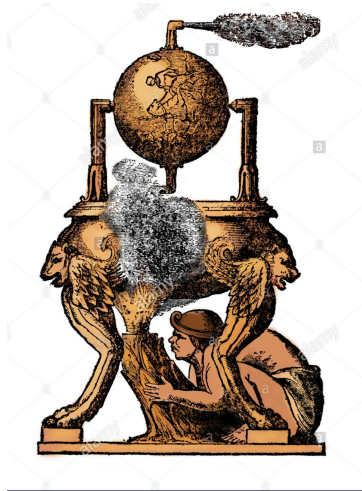
Hephaestus -> **golden maidens** who are able to help in building and constructing the shield of Achilles.



2. Hero of Alexandria [First Century CE]

He constructed a number of very clever machines that could in some ways imitate human behavior. He made a statue which has a fire in it. You light this fire, and it boils a reservoir of

water, that's inside the machine causing steam to expand, and then causing that figure at the right to lower its pitcher of water and douse the statue.



3. Clocks in Europe [1400s]

People started to make clocks and embellished them with lifelike figures that could do things like strike the hour.



4. Jacques de Vaucanson [18th Century]

The high point in the history of automata was given by Jacques de Vaucanson who lived in France. Automata was not just for aristocracy but it they were starting to become objects of display(special effects)

Three masterpieces by de Vaucanson:

- **Flute player (left)**

The one at the left is a flute player, and that's an actual flute in its hands. So the machine was actually able to blow air across the top of a flute and get notes out of it

- **Duck (center)**

Vaucanson's most famous piece was that little duck in the center, people used to come over and art this duck. You would place metal pellets in front of it and the duck would lean over and eat the pellets, and you would see its feathers ruffle and then it would excrete.

- **Drummer (right)**



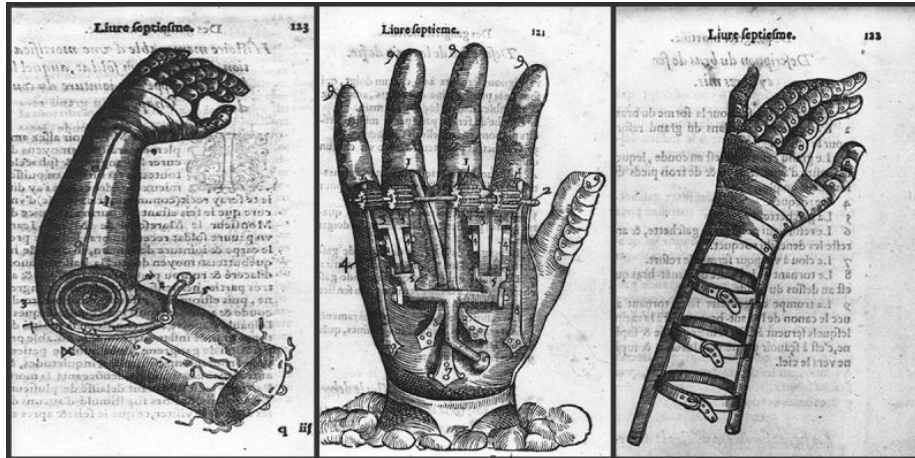
Humans can be treated as Machines?

These machines, becoming more and more imitations of life caused the people at the same time to start wondering if human beings can be treated as machines.

Examples:

1. Ambroise Paré

In the 1500s, a French surgeon Ambroise Paré was interested in making **prosthetics**. The diagrams in this page of his book represent things that were in fact actually built are not confirmed. To make a prosthetic hand, you are already imagining that the workings of the human hand can themselves be modeled by a machine. In other words, now we're not talking about machines that are lifelike, we're talking about humans starting to be viewed as machine-like.



2. Rene Descartes

17th century philosopher, Rene Descartes was intrigued by the idea of modeling human behavior in machine terms. He displays his idea of how **reflexes** work. The idea is that if a person puts their hand near a fire, then there is some kind of perhaps pneumatic pressure that runs up the lines of nerves to their brain, and causes them like a machine, to pull their hand away from the fire.



3. Machine Man by Julien Offray de la Mettrie

“Simply admit that organized matter is endowed with a motive principle which alone distinguishes it from unorganized matter, and that an animal's everything is dictated by the diversity of this organization, as I have sufficiently proved. That is enough to solve the riddle of the substances and of man. We can see that there is only one substance in the universe, and that man is the most perfect one. He is to the ape and the cleverest animals what Huygens planetary clock is to one of Julian Laroy's watches.”

In this book, de la Mettrie is concerned with pushing the boundaries of how far can you call people machines.

Progress of human-like Machines and people's response to it

After the 1700s, the lines between machines being seen as lifelike and humans being seen as machine-like began to blur in Literature and Philosophical Science. An example of this is mentioned in a story called Sandman by a German writer ETA Hoffmann

Example - ETA Hoffmann - Sandman:

It introduces this kind of eerie machine named **Olympia**, a machine woman who is so lifelike as to be strange and disturbing. The story begins to point at the anxiety that people feel around machines that can behave like people. The anxiety was somewhat dispelled later in the century when the story was turned into an opera by **Jacques Offenbach**. In this opera, Olympia the doll sings the song. Offenbach played this for laughs, but the Hoffmanns story is anything but humorous, it's a very serious and scary story. It's an example of the kind of conversation that began to be felt more and more.

The anxiety of people around machines is reflected in the 20th century where machines that act like people, that rebel against people, that fool others into thinking that they are people.