

Parnassus House
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Great Founders of Futurism and Technology (Disney and Jobs)

Walt Disney (1901–1966) and Steve Jobs (1955–2011) each founded firms that harnessed the power of the imagination to produce radical innovations that reshaped American life.

Disney's journey began with innovations in animation – the release of the first successful feature-length animated film (*Snow White*) – and culminated in a world-encompassing empire of the imagination that includes Walt Disney Studios, Disneyland, EPCOT, and more.

Jobs began by making and selling personal computers from his garage in California. He ended up reimagining personal computing with the iPhone, and leading Apple to surpass many of its rivals to become one of the most valuable firms in American history.

1. Both Disney and Jobs exemplify how futuristic founders use *imagination*. They refuse to accept received opinions about what is possible or practical, pushing their teams to create radical innovations. They seem to feel that they can bend, or even conquer, reality itself. Jobs even became notorious for his “reality distortion field.”
2. Disney sought to create realms where he had *total creative control*. With animation, he was able to bring the inanimate to life. Later, he exerted that same degree of control over Disneyland. The aim of such projects is *wish fulfillment* – the conjuring of a “magical experience” in which reality can be made to look and feel better than it really is.
3. Wish fulfillment has multi-valent effects. On the one hand, it buoys the spirit and relieves the pressures of harsh day-to-day reality. People feel an almost *religious* sense of providence and security at Disneyland. But, on the other hand, it *detaches* people from reality, here and now – instead inculcating in them wistful nostalgia for the past, hopeful dreams for the future, or the whimsical desire for pure fantasy.
4. Disney and Jobs are emblematic of the elevation of the *creative* as a human type in American life. Each figure sought to produce salutary effects through transcendent *artistic* expression. Perhaps they did, to some extent. But “art” for mass consumption takes the form of *entertainment*, which puts people in a *passive* state of reception. It lacks the *prescriptive* force to cultivate *virtue*, which is the goal of the classical regime.
5. Great founders of technology and futurism are often *perfectionists*. Their perfectionism makes their products great, and inspires intense loyalty within their teams. But perfection is an unreachable horizon. Striving for something unreachable fosters the need for ever more control, and the feeling of perpetual dissatisfaction.
6. After all that they achieved, in terms of corporate profits, creative production, and radical innovation, each man said explicitly that his greatest achievement was the creation of an *organization* that would outlive him.