

# It's the Reboot of the Jetsons

31

19

Save



Mario Queiroz, Google vice president of product management, shows the new Google Home during Google I/O 2016 at Shoreline Amphitheatre in Mountain View, Calif., on May 19, 2016. Justin Sullivan/Getty Images



By Jeffrey A. Tucker

11/13/2024 Updated: 11/13/2024

A Print

*Commentary*

The original “Jetsons” series from 1962–1963 is not easy to find in syndication. That’s too bad. It was a wonderful show.

The theme of this animated show (“cartoon”) was that in the future the technology would make life much more convenient but all the usual problems would still be there. The kids would still be annoying and expensive but ultimately delightful, the job still arduous even if it is only a few hours a week, the boss would still be officious, people would still get sick, and all the normal dynamics of human life would still be there.

The original *Jetsons* was the opposite of transhumanism. All that would really change is that everything would be speedier. The cars would fly. We would live in the clouds. We would have a video phone. Robots would do the chores. Teachers would be electronic. We would travel with ease. Buildings would appear much more quickly, and be torn down too.

There would still be cops on the beat, thieves on the loose, lessons to learn at school, and teenage daughters that spend too much money. Hilariously, the little robots flying around always had puffs of smoke coming out of them as if powered by natural gas. You still had to fuel them.

That’s what made the series so delightful. The future promises to be wonderful but not solve all our problems. Human nature itself would still be present, unchanged, and present the usual challenges and dilemmas. The series both ramped up our expectations and dialed them back.

It was oddly realistic. We did (eventually) get video phones, electronic teachers, and work itself would be lessened in physical difficulty and time spent. But that would only leave us with the same old problems of quirky personalities, family instability, problems with coworkers, and capital depreciation (everything was always being repaired).

In that way, the series perfectly captured the culture of a time and its forward vision.

I wrote a book about it (“[It’s a Jetsons World](#)”). It was the height of techno-enthusiasm. I tried to be realistic but I was caught up in the moment, and was a bit too optimistic and had not considered the downside of digital everything.

In particular, I had not thought through the implications of such a speedy conversion from analogue to digital and just how fragile that would be. Nor had I considered the surveillance angle much less the way our information would become commodified and sold to governments to oppress us even more. Finally I had not imagined that the corporate leadership of the new digital world would be so compromised by involvement in government.

It struck me that all this new technology represented nothing but liberation. I was wrong about that and had not taken seriously the first lesson of the Jetsons show, namely that all the problems would remain present despite all the technological changes.

In my book, I mention briefly that the series was rebooted twenty years later, in the mid-eighties. It had better production values, and some new characters. The biggest change was that the mood was darker. The gadgets changed from happy and friendly to vaguely burdensome even to the point of being menacing.

The machines started talking back and even pushing back. Humans were less in charge and machines more so. They became a source of oppression rather than a universal force of emancipation. They seemed almost to have volition. In a brilliant anticipation of “artificial intelligence” humans seemed to lose some modicum of control as the machinery became ever more imposing.

I never liked the rebooted series probably because it was suggesting something that I did not want to hear. I did not believe back in 2011 when my book came out that my glorious phone and my wonderful websites would eventually turn on me. But, as it turns out, the reboot of the series was precisely right, as we began to learn some twenty years later.

It's long past time that we all take a more critical look at the technologies that define our current times. The National Security Administration and the government generally have become major customers of all the main platforms, including Amazon with its acres of servers for sale and Microsoft which sells so much to the state.

That's just the start of it. Big tech giants have been found to be promoting, without being asked, visions of the world that are contrary to what a majority of Americans favor, as well as engaging in censorship surrounding key elections, showing themselves to be far from neutral.

For making available a relatively censorship-free venue, Elon Musk's X has been pilloried by lawfare of all sorts, and became a pariah in the tech world simply by showing support for Trump over the censors.

There are ways to push back by simply saying no. I used to love these home appliances made by Google, Amazon and the like until I realized that, of course, they are, in effect, tools of surveillance. Yes, they are always listening, else they could not hear when you call them to attention. Once you think about it, the denials are preposterous.

Because I was such a fan, one company kept sending more appliances to me. I had three in my home in addition to the main one, and started giving them out to friends. One day it dawned on me that this company was not being sweet and generous but rather had its own self-interest going on. I dreaded it because I had gotten used to them all, but I unplugged them all and threw them out.

Thereafter I would have to check the time by looking instead of yelling and have to stop and start music by standing up and moving around the room. It turned out to be just fine. I missed nothing about these contraptions. In fact, it was the reverse. I found myself relaxing precisely because I did not have a surveillance device in my home! It felt private for the first time in many years.

Try it out yourself! I took a hammer to mine. It felt good.

I've turned off as many notifications as possible on my phone and experienced blessed peace as a result. I've learned to eschew all "smart" products and choose old-fashioned ones. I'm much happier as a result. Similarly, there is a case for storing up some silver dimes and cash in case the empire of digits goes down.

There are many ways to secede from all the nonsense. It just takes a bit of effort.

What I want is to go back to the first iteration of "The Jetsons" when the technology was fun while hoping to avoid the second iteration when the technology became a menacing threat to the good life.

Speaking of which, can Trump please restore the old Smithsonian Museum of Arts and Industry in Washington, D.C.? It was the first one erected. It was a glorious homage to the practical arts that made America great. It was closed and replaced in the Obama years with a "Museum of the Future" filled with junk no one wants to see. The great things that filled the museum are now stored in a government warehouse somewhere. Maybe Trump can bring it back!

We'll see. I don't believe a president can solve all the problems with technology today. That leaves it to the rest of us to be more attentive and not find ourselves blindly stumbling into a dystopian world created by a bunch of irresponsible and freedom-hating tech titans. We should be in charge of the machines and not the reverse.

It's good to be reminded of that from time to time.

*Views expressed in this article are opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*

**Sign up for the Morning Brief newsletter.** Join 200,000+ Canadians who receive truthful news without bias or agenda, investigative reporting that matters, and important stories other media ignore. [Sign up with 1-click >>](#)



**Jeffrey A. Tucker**

Author

Jeffrey A. Tucker is the founder and president of the Brownstone Institute and the author of many thousands of articles in the scholarly and popular press, as well as 10 books in five languages, most recently "Liberty or Lockdown." He is also the editor of "The Best of Ludwig von Mises." He writes a daily column on economics for The Epoch Times and speaks widely on the topics of economics, technology, social philosophy, and culture.



[WEBSITE](#)

---

## Author's Selected Articles

### **A New Life for Democracy**

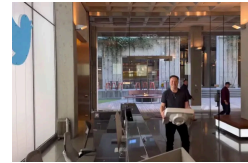
Nov 13, 2024



---

### **Prosperity, Disruption, and the Trump Opportunity**

Nov 12, 2024



---

### **Men and Their Meat Smokers**

Nov 11, 2024



---

### **The Economic Challenges Facing the Trump Administration**

Nov 08, 2024



## RELATED TOPICS

digital surveillance

