

MUSKISM

*A Guide for the
Perplexed*

allen lane

Quinn Slobodian & Ben Tarnoff

Muskism

Muskism

A Guide for the Perplexed

QUINN SLOBODIAN
and BEN TARNOFF



ALLEN LANE

an imprint of

PENGUIN BOOKS

Copyrighted Material

ALLEN LANE

UK | USA | Canada | Ireland | Australia
India | New Zealand | South Africa

Allen Lane is part of the Penguin Random House group of companies
whose addresses can be found at global.penguinrandomhouse.com

Penguin Random House UK
One Embassy Gardens, 8 Viaduct Gardens, London SW11 7BW
penguin.co.uk



Penguin
Random House
UK

First published 2026

001

Copyright © Quinn Slobodian and Ben Tarnoff, 2026

The moral right of the authors has been asserted

Penguin Random House values and supports copyright.
Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes freedom
of expression and supports a vibrant culture. Thank you for purchasing
an authorized edition of this book and for respecting intellectual property
laws by not reproducing, scanning or distributing any part of it by any
means without permission. You are supporting authors and enabling
Penguin Random House to continue to publish books for everyone.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner for the
purpose of training artificial intelligence technologies or systems. In accordance
with Article 4(3) of the DSM Directive 2019/790, Penguin Random House
expressly reserves this work from the text and data mining exception.

Set in 12.8/16pt Dante MT Std
Typeset by Six Red Marbles UK, Thetford, Norfolk
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorized representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-241-80511-4

Penguin Random House is committed to a sustainable future
for our business, our readers and our planet. This book is made from
Forest Stewardship Council® certified paper.



Copyrighted Material

Contents

Introduction: An Operating System for the Twentieth Century vii

PART ONE Foundation

1. Fortress Futurism	3
2. The Superset	18
3. Sovereignty as a Service	32
4. Electric Autonomy	57

PART TWO Cyborg

5. Attention Alchemy	84
6. Cybernetic Collectives	103
7. Godwin's Engine	121
8. State X	139

Conclusion: Four Futures for Muskism 156

Acknowledgements 169

Notes 171

Index 225

Introduction:

An Operating System for the Twenty-First Century

Everyone has an opinion about Elon Musk. He is a genius entrepreneur, launching humanity toward a science-fiction future. Or a ketamine-addled meme-lord, inflating bubbles and babbling about birth rates. Or, more recently, a cat's paw of the far right, his brain rotted by Twitter and dark prophecies of migrant invasion.

The verdicts differ but they share one thing: they treat Musk as an individual. Savior, clown, villain, addict. But good history looks past the singular psyche. When we—a historian and a tech writer—started discussing this book, we thought the more useful question is not *who is Musk?* but *what is Musk a symptom of?* What follows is our attempt at an answer, drawn from what Musk has publicly said and done, as documented in the citations that appear at the end of this book.

A century ago, Henry Ford wrote his best-selling memoir *My Life and Work*. Soon after, people coined a term: “Fordism.” Out of one man came a new common sense. Fordism was more than cars rolling off assembly lines; it became shorthand for twentieth-century capitalism, built on the pairing of mass production with mass consumption.¹

We treat Musk the same way. As others have suggested, he is not just a man but the avatar of a worldview: Muskism.² This is

not his term—just as Ford never spoke of Fordism. If Fordism was the operating system of the twentieth century, we contend that Muskism offers a possible operating system for the twenty-first.

Like Fordism, Muskism is a modernizing project. But Fordism rewrote the social contract with a promise of rising living standards for all: cars in every garage, fridges in every kitchen, wages climbing with productivity. Muskism does not distribute rewards broadly. Its promise is sovereignty through technology.

Musk does not just sell cars, rockets, or satellites. He sells the fantasy that, in an increasingly unstable world, both states and individuals can fortify their self-reliance by plugging into *his* infrastructures. The paradox is that, in doing so, you become reliant on him. What is sold as *techno-sovereignty* is entry into Musk's walled garden, to which he holds the master key. Both the Pentagon and NASA depend on SpaceX; Starlink has become indispensable on the battlefield and in the wilderness; X and Grok are being woven into the state. Trying to unplug from Musk, you realize he owns the socket.

This techno-sovereignty is also selective. It offers autonomy for some and exclusion for others. Migrant hordes and their liberal enablers are vectors of a “woke mind virus” that needs to be traced, contained, and neutralized. Muskism sees the world as corrupted code. Empathy for one's fellow humans is an “exploit”—a vulnerability in our mental software—manipulated by bad actors to push the West toward “civilizational suicide.”³ “Suicidal empathy is like an autoimmune disease,” Musk says, “the body attacks itself.”⁴

If one face of Muskism is techno-sovereignty, the other is expulsion. Countermeasures include purged social networks, ideologically cleansed AI models and mass deportation of ethnic outsiders. The end goal is a purified community defined by cultural and genetic membership in a white, European West

garrisoned by superior technology—a fortress to protect the best of humanity from the worst. The technologies of Muskism’s walled garden will fortify the walls of the nation and the home. Harden your heart, harden your borders and debug the codebase. “If tolerance means the end of Western Civilization,” he posted to his 225 million followers in 2025, “then we cannot be tolerant.”⁵

What’s the point of thinking about Muskism rather than Musk? For one thing, Muskism helps clarify Musk. Many still think of him as a libertarian who despises government. We think the reality is inverted: Musk has built his empire by fusing with the state. He repeatedly discusses his desire to colonize Mars, which he describes as his life’s work. The logic of Muskism shows that Mars was never a serious exit plan—it is a bargaining chip, leverage for further techno-sovereigntist pursuits. Musk’s online persona is similarly misunderstood. Critics see immaturity or malice; fans see relatability or authenticity. Both fail to see that, in Muskism, trolling is infrastructure. Every joke, every poll is a stress test of responsiveness: can he still move markets with a post? Can he tutor the algorithm and the underlying training data to push it further rightward? Can he simulate democracy through a reply-guy plebiscite? This is not play, but experiment. Wittingly or not, Musk is measuring and manipulating the elasticity of attention, the bandwidth of belief.

Muskism also envisions a less human future. Through automation, humans are purged from the productive process. Through social media, brain–computer interfaces, and artificial intelligence, humans are merged with the machine, forming what he calls a “cybernetic collective.” The promise of sovereignty through technology acquires a cyborg form.

Musk is often seen as invincible. Yet the foundations of his kingdom are fragile. One of the less noticed resemblances

between him and Ford is the extreme illiquidity of their personal wealth. Nearly all of Ford's fortune was in his Ford stock, which was privately held until almost a decade after his death. Musk's wealth is also almost entirely held in the stock of his own companies. As he put it in an interview, "if Tesla and SpaceX went bankrupt, I would go bankrupt too immediately."⁶

This is why Muskism depends on the perpetual expectation of pending technological breakthroughs, planetary salvation, or financial windfalls. To sustain his wealth, Musk must sustain belief in the exponential future growth of his companies. He learned the financial value of such fabulism in Silicon Valley. The bubble needs to stay inflated. Looking at his biography, we can see that Musk's outlook is often downstream of the business cycle. When credit is cheap, his rhetoric expands. When money is tight, he sees enemies everywhere.

We are living in an era when Muskism could thrive. Across the democratic world, people's trust in institutions is at historic lows.⁷ The growth of anti-migrant sentiment has empowered the far right, which is enjoying its greatest resurgence since the 1930s—with Musk as its loudest mouthpiece. Donald Trump is scuttling the liberal international order abroad while assailing the American constitutional order at home. The intensifying rivalry between the United States and China, along with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has made for a more fragmented, paranoid, and militarized world. Israel's genocide in Gaza, conducted with full bipartisan support from the United States, has shredded the last pretense of international law.

Muskism is well suited to these developments. Its promise of sovereignty through technology is attuned to the politics of a deglobalizing world, where states increasingly value independence over integration. Its offer of autonomy for some and exclusion for others is aligned with the new anti-humanitarianism,

under which certain populations are marked for banishment and death. Its fascination with cyborgs accords with the technomaximalism of a political and business elite that finds every occasion to digitize our lives more deeply, most recently under the guise of artificial intelligence.

To say that Muskism is worth taking seriously is not to say that its success is guaranteed. But the institutional breakdown of our era offers an opening. At some point, society will stabilize on a new basis. Muskism could provide the foundation.

To be clear, we are not making the argument that a coherent set of beliefs has guided Musk's choices over the years. He is not a systematic thinker, nor someone guided by a fixed ideology. We are interested in not only what he says but also in what he does, and in the historical forces that have shaped those actions. Muskism can be found in the feedback loop between man and moment. To understand the world that Musk aims to build, we have to understand the worlds that built Musk.

This is what our book sets out to do. We tell the story of Musk's defining moments, from apartheid South Africa to meme coins, from the launch pad to the doomscroll. We explore how his improvisations, magnified by financial cycles and geopolitical crises, crystallized into Muskism. Our book is a guide for those perplexed not just by Musk but by the historical conjuncture we find ourselves in.

PART ONE

Foundation

Elon Musk has long cited Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* novels as a formative influence.¹ The series, widely considered a science-fiction classic, is set far in the future, in the waning days of the Galactic Empire, as a genius mathematician named Hari Seldon establishes an organization called the Foundation. The purpose of the Foundation is to preserve and advance human knowledge during the dark age that follows imperial collapse. Through a series of crises, the Foundation gradually expands its influence and grows into a new Galactic Empire.

Asimov was interested in how history moves from one epoch to the next. (Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* served as his initial inspiration.²) In *Foundation*, he presents a model of historical motion where eras do not follow one another in an orderly sequence, like a line of railroad cars. Rather, the seeds of the new era germinate inside the preceding one. The Foundation is created in the first Empire to serve as a nucleus for the second.

There is a similar story to be told about the emergence of Muskism over the past half-century. It arose from specific historical conditions while pointing beyond them toward something new.

The first part of this book tracks the evolution of Muskism through four formative periods of Musk's life. Chapter 1 examines his childhood in apartheid South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. Chapter 2 takes up his early career in Silicon Valley during the dot-com boom of the 1990s, where he made his first fortune. Chapter 3 looks at SpaceX, which he founded in 2002 after cashing out of the internet

FOUNDATION

economy and moving to Los Angeles. Finally, Chapter 4 is devoted to Tesla, which he took over as CEO in 2008 after having been an investor for years.

Together, these four chapters introduce the pillars of Muskism. They show how Muskism's promise of sovereignty through technology took shape within the most important political, economic, and cultural developments of the last fifty years. Like the Foundation, Muskism would be a new order, built in the shell of the old.

I

Fortress Futurism

“Let us wake up to the physical possibilities of a greater living,” Elon Musk’s maternal grandfather wrote in 1940 in the journal of Technocracy Incorporated.¹ Joshua Haldeman was a chiropractor and former bronc rider in Saskatchewan—and an active member in a movement that wanted to kill off capitalism and democracy at one stroke. Founded by the American engineer Howard Scott in 1933, Technocracy envisioned a society run under the dictatorship of engineers, who would allocate resources according to scientific principles. Currency would be replaced by stable units of energy called “ergs.” This approach, combined with widespread automation, would ensure a life of greater leisure for all. Only those between twenty-five and forty-five would have to work, and only four hours a day, four days a week. “In Technocracy we see science replacing an economy of scarcity with an era of abundance,” proclaimed Scott.²

Among believers, devotion to Technocracy was total. Members referred to themselves by numbers. (Haldeman’s was 10450-1.)³ They wore matching grey overcoats and drove convoys of matching grey Pontiac sedans. They even had a special salute. “The new culture of Technocratic man will be full of the mood of mastery,” wrote Technocracy sympathizer E. Merrill Root, who would go on to help start the *National Review*: “The old

culture is the wail of the impotent; the new culture will be the poetry of the potent.”⁴

This future would require a new order: a superstate or “Technate” that would stretch from Greenland to the Galapagos. Only at such a scale could it command the resources for self-sufficiency. Economic independence would also shield the Technate from the corrosive entanglements of the global financial system. Haldeman showed a special fondness for this aspect of Technocracy. “Here on this Continent we have everything that is needed to provide us with certainty and security,” he wrote in a 1940 article for the group’s magazine. “Here, with a Technological Control in this Technological Age, the North American people could withstand the attack of the rest of the world combined.”⁵

After the Canadian government banned Technocracy in 1940, Haldeman was briefly arrested. When his other political experiments proved uninspiring, he emigrated with his family—including Elon’s mother, Maye, a convertible, and an airplane for backcountry adventures—to South Africa in 1950.⁶ The timing was significant. The family arrived only two years after the National Party came to power and introduced a policy of “apartheid,” or racial separatism. In fact, this was part of the draw for Haldeman. “Instead of the Government’s attitude keeping me out of South Africa, it had precisely the opposite effect—it encouraged me to come and settle here,” Haldeman told the pro-apartheid newspaper *Die Transvaler* soon after arriving.⁷ To the regime’s supporters, South Africa was a citadel of white civilization at the end of a Black continent, ringed by enemies. Later, in a self-published anti-Semitic screed, Haldeman denounced international opposition to apartheid as proof of a Jewish “conspiracy to establish a world dictatorship.”⁸

But South Africa was not only a white-supremacist state. It

was also a modernizing one. Apartheid, the South African intellectual W. A. de Klerk argued, was “an attempt to remake a society in the total vision of a socio-political ideal.”⁹ The regime, as the historians Paul Edwards and Gabrielle Hecht remind us, pursued “a technopolitical project” that commanded the loyalty of those who subscribed to its prime directive: the construction of a utopia founded on racial segregation.¹⁰

Apartheid’s architects saw themselves as futurists. They embraced technology, which they hoped would help them harden racial inequalities of an enduring and old-fashioned sort. They found support from international firms like IBM, Ford, and Toyota, which sold them technology to bolster their sovereignty. Mainframes were used to count, track, and re-allocate Black laborers; blueprints for auto factories were used to create homegrown industry; nuclear weapons gave the regime the ultimate defense against its enemies. Singapore’s first leader, Lee Kuan Yew, described turning his nation into a poisonous shrimp: indigestible to the predators around it.¹¹ South Africa, facing down the twin threats of *rooi gevaar* (red danger) and *swart gevaar* (black danger)—Communism and Black nationalism—played the same game. Only by adopting modern techniques and technologies could the state ensure its survival.

Though often dismissed as an anachronism, South Africa was in some respects—like its partner state Israel—a precursor to our own time. Its model of militarized, modernizing isolation fits more comfortably in today’s world of export controls, trade wars, rearmament, and reshoring. Despite Musk’s conflicted relationship with his country of origin, apartheid South Africa was the cradle of Muskism. It taught the lesson of fortress futurism: the belief that technology can strengthen self-reliance in a hostile world.

City of the future

Musk was born in 1971 in Pretoria. His hometown was a showcase of fortress futurism. As the regime's administrative capital, it housed the executive offices where apartheid was planned, and the security services that kept it in place. The architecture of its government buildings expressed the aspirations of apartheid's rulers. They were done in the sleek modernist minimalism of the International Style, with pilotis, podiums, and curtain walls, made of concrete, steel, and glass. The Pretoria of Musk's youth gleamed like a gearbox, as cutting-edge in appearance as Le Corbusier's capitals in Brasilia or Chandigarh.¹²

Close to the gearbox, at the city's edge, stood a cluster of brutalist structures. This was South Africa's main nuclear research site. It was called Pelindaba, a Zulu phrase that means "the end of the story."¹³ Working with uranium gleaned from gold mining, and drawing on expertise from American and Israeli scientists, South Africa first developed nuclear power and then nuclear weapons. The regime had its first operational nuclear warhead by 1982.

The rest of Pretoria set apartheid in stone. The Black population was pushed into segregated townships on the outskirts of town. Meanwhile, the white elite clustered in suburbs like Waterkloof, where Musk lived during high school, perched on the ridge south of the city. These were enclaves of swimming pools and green yards, with quick roads into the ministries and military installations of the city center. They were not yet the gated communities they would become by the 1990s, but they didn't have to be. The entire state ensured their safety.

Dotting the city's perimeter were factories and warehouses.

These were sites of industrialization where South Africa hoped to build domestically the things it had previously imported. An interlocking system strove toward economic self-sufficiency. Pretoria West produced steel, ammunition, rubber, and plastic. To the east, Ford built a factory in Silverton in 1967. To the north-west, BMW constructed its first plant outside of Europe in Rosslyn in 1968.¹⁴

The car factories were built between the white city and the Black townships so that Black labor could be kept close at hand, tapped when needed and cast aside when not. Whereas the basic principle of Fordism was mass production plus mass consumption, South Africa's variant preserved mass consumption as a privilege for the white minority. In the 1980s, the political scientist Stephen Gelb gave the South African system a name: racial Fordism.¹⁵

Another key technology of productivity, security, and population management for the South African state was the computer. A Department of Planning established in 1965 envisioned the nation as a factory floor organized along racial Fordist lines.¹⁶ Bureaucrats cleared so-called "black spots" from white areas through the forcible resettlement of Black communities—displacing three and a half million people by the early 1980s—while directing streams of cheap Black labor toward new industrial sites.¹⁷

Carrying out this vast project of social engineering required the accumulation of immense amounts of personal data. South Africa was what one historian calls a "biometric state."¹⁸ Computers played a critical role in enabling the government to store and process the information required to implement apartheid, such as in the "Book of Life" identification system that used IBM mainframes to record the racial classification of every citizen. Anti-apartheid activists quickly grasped the dystopian

potential of such tools. A 1982 pamphlet titled *Automating Apartheid* imagined a near-future scenario in which an operator asks a computer:

Give me the names and addresses of all blacks on Victoria Street. Include pass numbers and fingerprints . . . the computer flashes the requested data onto a screen . . . At the same time, the information is electronically transmitted to the police . . . Imported computer technology makes this type of operation simple.¹⁹

Although the state's actual capacities fell short of such fears, the specter of techno-authoritarianism was real. From the outset, apartheid was a data-driven project—a reactionary technocracy that saw society as something to be optimized. Officials understood that computers could sharpen this project's precision. Yet digital tools were not only in the hands of the regime. Anti-apartheid groups also adapted them, using the Commodore 64—an early personal computer launched in 1982—to send encrypted messages to militants abroad.²⁰ Technology hardened the state's armor but could also make cracks in it.

The world in a box

Another person for whom the computer was a portal to the larger world was a young Elon Musk. A shy, nerdy child, Musk was alienated by the machismo that dominated white South African society. It was “not an intellectual culture,” his father Errol recalled.²¹ At school, Musk was bullied relentlessly. At home, he read constantly. When he ran out of books at the library, he later told a biographer, he devoured the entire

Encyclopaedia Britannica.²² Musk belonged to the English-speaking minority of the white citizenry, which tended to be critical of apartheid but not necessarily antiracist in its outlook. Apartheid was the project of the Afrikaners, descendants of the Dutch settlers (“Boers”) who had once fought the British for control of southern Africa and now made up the majority of the country’s white minority. As the leaders of the ruling National Party, the Afrikaners were the most politically powerful faction of the population. “White, English-speaking South Africans such as Musk’s family benefited from apartheid’s racial hierarchy but lived mostly separate lives from the ruling Afrikaners,” observes South African journalist Rachel Savage.²³

Even so, anglophone whites did sometimes go into politics. Elon’s father spent eleven years on Pretoria City’s Council, representing the suburb of Sunnyside from 1972 to 1983.²⁴ In 1980, he joined the Progressive Federal Party, a predominantly white group of English-speaking reformists who opposed apartheid, but left after only three years because he disagreed with the party’s antipathy to a new constitution that introduced a “tri-cameral” parliament, which gave limited representation to those citizens designated as “coloured” (people of mixed racial descent) and Indians while continuing to exclude the majority of the Black population.²⁵ Later, Errol would remember the apartheid era fondly. “There were no problems. People, Blacks and whites, got on very well with each other,” he told the *Guardian* in 2025. “Everything worked. That’s the reality. Of course, people don’t want to hear that, but that’s the truth.”²⁶

Musk attended Pretoria Boys High School, founded in 1901 as a finishing school for the British colonial elite. He and his classmates posed for photographs in striped boating blazers in imitation of Eton and Harrow, at a classic Anglo-South African remove from the more déclassé Afrikaners and the Black population.

“While the country as a whole was very much in flames and in turmoil, we were blissfully very safe in our little leafy suburbs, going about our very normal life,” recalled one Pretoria Boys student who had been a year ahead of Musk.²⁷ At the same time, the school was not without its more liberal leanings, admitting its first Black student in 1981. Musk befriended the student’s cousin and was one of the few white people to attend the boy’s funeral after his death in a car crash in 1987.²⁸

Most of all, Musk would have experienced the South Africa of the 1980s as unbearably provincial. This feeling would have only been sharpened by all the traveling he did as a child, made possible by Errol’s wealth and frequent business trips. His father took him all over the world, from Hong Kong to the United States.²⁹ By contrast, his home country was a closed society, far from everywhere. “South Africa was like a prison for someone like Elon,” his brother Kimbal recalled.³⁰

But what was the way out? According to his own oft-repeated lore, Musk had an epiphany as an adolescent after reading Douglas Adams’s 1979 sci-fi hit *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*.³¹ The book’s hero is Arthur Dent, a man rescued from his meaningless existence by an alien who takes him on an intergalactic adventure. The story is filled with intricately imagined futures. Most of it is unbelievably far-fetched, but there’s one part that would have felt plausible to the young Musk: the Hitchhiker’s Guide itself. Designed for travelers who need quick, useful information while roaming the universe, the Guide is a handheld electronic device. It “had about a hundred tiny flat press buttons and a screen about four inches square on which any one of a million ‘pages’ could be summoned at a moment’s notice,” writes Adams.³²

In the early 1980s, Musk acquired just such a Guide for himself in the form of the Commodore VIC-20, one of the

first affordable personal computers. Musk saw it for sale at the Sandton City Mall in Johannesburg and freaked out. “It was like, ‘Whoa. Holy shit!’” he later told a biographer. He promptly “hounded” his father into buying it.³³ The VIC-20 didn’t come with any pre-installed programs. But it did come with a programming language, BASIC, that you could use to write your own programs, as well as a *Programmer’s Reference Guide* that taught you how. The book also advertised a range of applications for sale, from those for playing chess to those for composing songs, managing inventory, and performing “biorhythm charting.” Musk stayed awake for three days straight learning to program the machine. “I just got super OCD,” he later said.³⁴

Alongside Apple and Radio Shack, Commodore was one of the companies that first introduced the paradigm of personal computing in the 1970s and 1980s. In doing so, it redefined programming. Instead of needing to go to a campus computer lab, novices like Musk could learn to program at home—and this enabled a more intimate relationship with the machine. The programmer merged their mind with the computer. They achieved a kind of cyborg consciousness, losing themselves in a digital flow state so complete that they no longer felt the presence of their body or the passage of time.

Musk used the Commodore to program his first product: a video game called *Blastar*, which involved shooting down an alien spacecraft. He sold it for \$500 to a magazine, which published the source code for the benefit of other computer users.³⁵ The computer gave him the power to create virtual worlds. It also let him forge virtual connections with other parts of the physical world. Errol would later remember Musk showing him a “gray box with a red light on it”—a modem. “He said, ‘With this thing . . . I can communicate with the computer at Oxford University,’” Errol recalled. “He was good at looking at the future.”³⁶

The mech

A paradox of the 1980s—the years of Musk’s childhood—was that South Africa was becoming more repressive internally even as pinholes were opening up to the wider world. If computers offered one such aperture, another was provided by television. TV had only appeared in South Africa in 1976, one of the last industrialized countries to introduce the technology. It had held off because Hendrik Verwoerd, the prime minister commonly regarded as apartheid’s chief architect, considered TV’s destructive potential comparable to that of a nuclear bomb.³⁷ The wrong programming could corrupt the minds of the citizenry. “The government has to watch for any dangers to the people, both spiritual and physical,” he cautioned.³⁸ (The approach had its admirers. In *National Review*, James Burnham wrote: “The absence of a ‘native’ liberation movement in South Africa is equivalent, very nearly, to the enforced absence of TV in South Africa.”)³⁹

Star Trek appeared on South African television in 1980 and the films screened in theaters.⁴⁰ Musk would later repeatedly cite the series as an inspiration. The ashes of the actor who played Scotty, James Doohan, were even, as one journalist put it, “accidentally re-cremated” in a failed SpaceX launch.⁴¹ But there were other shows Musk must have watched as well, including *Battlestar Galactica* and *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, broadcast in South Africa in the early 1980s, and the animated series *Transformers* and *Robotech*, which aired in the decade’s second half.⁴² *Transformers* recounted, according to the South African TV listings, the “battle for supremacy” between two races of aliens, the good Autobots and the evil Decepticons.⁴³ They were both robots that transformed into vehicles—in this case, automobiles. Decades later, when Musk began to pour money into