Not long after Steve Jobs got married, in 1991, he moved with his wife to a nineteen-thirties, Cotswolds-style house in old Palo Alto. Jobs always found it difficult to furnish the places where he lived. His previous house had only a mattress, a table, and chairs. He needed things to be perfect, and it took time to figure out what perfect was. This time, he had a wife and family in tow, but it made little difference. “We spoke about furniture in theory for eight years,” his wife, Laurene Powell, tells Walter Isaacson, in “Steve Jobs,” Isaacson’s enthralling new biography of the Apple founder. “We spent a lot of time asking ourselves, ‘What is the purpose of a sofa?’”

It was the choice of a washing machine, however, that proved most vexing. European washing machines, Jobs discovered, used less detergent and less water than their American counterparts, and were easier on the clothes. But they took twice as long to complete a washing cycle. What should the family do? As Jobs explained, “We spent some time in our family talking about what’s the trade-off we want to make. We ended up talking a lot about design, but also about the values of our family. Did we care most about getting our wash done in an hour versus an hour and a half? Or did we care most about our clothes feeling really soft and lasting longer? Did we care about using a quarter of the water? We spent about two weeks talking about this every night at the dinner table.”

Steve Jobs, Isaacson’s biography makes clear, was a complicated and exhausting man. “There are parts of his life and personality that are extremely messy, and that’s the truth,” Powell tells Isaacson. “You shouldn’t whitewash it.” Isaacson, to his credit, does not. He talks to everyone in Jobs’s career, meticulously recording conversations and encounters dating back twenty and thirty years. Jobs, we learn, was a bully. “He had the uncanny capacity to know exactly what your
weak point is, know what will make you feel small, to make you cringe,” a friend of his tells Isaacson. Jobs gets his girlfriend pregnant, and then denies that the child is his. He parks in handicapped spaces. He screams at subordinates. He cries like a small child when he does not get his way. He gets stopped for driving a hundred miles an hour, honks angrily at the officer for taking too long to write up the ticket, and then resumes his journey at a hundred miles an hour. He sits in a restaurant and sends his food back three times. He arrives at his hotel suite in New York for press interviews and decides, at 10 P.M., that the piano needs to be repositioned, the strawberries are inadequate, and the flowers are all wrong: he wanted calla lilies. (When his public-relations assistant returns, at midnight, with the right flowers, he tells her that her suit is “disgusting.”) “Machines and robots were painted and repainted as he compulsively revised his color scheme,” Isaacson writes, of the factory Jobs built, after founding NeXT, in the late nineteen-eighties. “The walls were museum white, as they had been at the Macintosh factory, and there were $20,000 black leather chairs and a custom-made staircase.... He insisted that the machinery on the 165-foot assembly line be configured to move the circuit boards from right to left as they got built, so that the process would look better to visitors who watched from the viewing gallery.”

Isaacson begins with Jobs’s humble origins in Silicon Valley, the early triumph at Apple, and the humiliating ouster from the firm he created. He then charts the even greater triumphs at Pixar and at a resurgent Apple, when Jobs returns, in the late nineteen-nineties, and our natural expectation is that Jobs will emerge wiser and gentler from his tumultuous journey. He never does. In the hospital at the end of his life, he runs through sixty-seven nurses before he finds three he likes. “At one point, the pulmonologist tried to put a mask over his face when he was deeply sedated,” Isaacson writes:

Jobs ripped it off and mumbled that he hated the design and refused to wear it. Though barely able to speak, he ordered them to bring five different options for the mask and he would pick a design he liked. ... He also hated the oxygen monitor they put on his finger. He told them it was ugly and too complex.

One of the great puzzles of the industrial revolution is why it began in England. Why not France, or Germany? Many reasons have been offered. Britain had plentiful supplies of coal, for instance. It had a good patent system in place. It had relatively high labor costs, which encouraged the search for labor-saving innovations. In an article published earlier this year, however, the economists Ralf Meisenzahl and Joel Mokyr focus on a different explanation: the role of Britain’s human-capital advantage—in particular, on a group they call “tweakers.” They believe that Britain dominated the industrial revolution because it had a far larger population of skilled engineers and artisans than its competitors: resourceful and creative men who took the signature inventions of the industrial age and tweaked them—refined and perfected them, and made them work.

In 1779, Samuel Crompton, a retiring genius from Lancashire, invented the spinning mule, which made possible the mechanization of cotton manufacture. Yet England’s real advantage was that it had Henry Stones, of Horwich, who added metal rollers to the mule; and James Hargreaves, of Tottington, who figured out how to smooth the acceleration and deceleration of the spinning wheel; and William Kelly, of Glasgow, who worked out how to add water power to...
the draw stroke; and John Kennedy, of Manchester, who adapted the wheel to turn out fine counts; and, finally, Richard Roberts, also of Manchester, a master of precision machine tooling—and the tweaker’s tweaker. He created the “automatic” spinning mule: an exacting, high-speed, reliable rethinking of Crompton’s original creation. Such men, the economists argue, provided the “micro inventions necessary to make macro inventions highly productive and remunerative.”

Was Steve Jobs a Samuel Crompton or was he a Richard Roberts? In the eulogies that followed Jobs’s death, last month, he was repeatedly referred to as a large-scale visionary and inventor. But Isaacson’s biography suggests that he was much more of a tweaker. He borrowed the characteristic features of the Macintosh—the mouse and the icons on the screen—from the engineers at Xerox PARC, after his famous visit there, in 1979. The first portable digital music players came out in 1996. Apple introduced the iPod, in 2001, because Jobs looked at the existing music players on the market and concluded that they “truly sucked.” Smart phones started coming out in the nineteen-nineties. Jobs introduced the iPhone in 2007, more than a decade later, because, Isaacson writes, “he had noticed something odd about the cell phones on the market: They all stank, just like portable music players used to.” The idea for the iPad came from an engineer at Microsoft, who was married to a friend of the Jobs family, and who invited Jobs to his fiftieth-birthday party. As Jobs tells Isaacson:

This guy badgered me about how Microsoft was going to completely change the world with this tablet PC software and eliminate all notebook computers, and Apple ought to license his Microsoft software. But he was doing the device all wrong. It had a stylus. As soon as you have a stylus, you’re dead. This dinner was like the tenth time he talked to me about it, and I was so sick of it that I came home and said, “Fuck this, let’s show him what a tablet can really be.”

Even within Apple, Jobs was known for taking credit for others’ ideas. Jonathan Ive, the designer behind the iMac, the iPod, and the iPhone, tells Isaacson, “He will go through a process of looking at my ideas and say, ‘That’s no good. That’s not very good. I like that one.’ And later I will be sitting in the audience and he will be talking about it as if it was his idea.”

Jobs’s sensibility was editorial, not inventive. His gift lay in taking what was in front of him—the tablet with stylus—and ruthlessly refining it. After looking at the first commercials for the iPad, he tracked down the copywriter, James Vincent, and told him, “Your commercials suck.”

“Well, what do you want?” Vincent shot back. “You’ve not been able to tell me what you want.”

“I don’t know,” Jobs said. “You have to bring me something new. Nothing you’ve shown me is even close.”

Vincent argued back and suddenly Jobs went ballistic. “He just started screaming at me,” Vincent recalled. Vincent could be volatile himself, and the volleys escalated.

When Vincent shouted, “You’ve got to tell me what you want,” Jobs shot back, “You’ve got to show me some stuff, and I’ll know it when I see it.”
I'll know it when I see it. That was Jobs’s credo, and until he saw it his perfectionism kept him on edge. He looked at the title bars—the headers that run across the top of windows and documents—that his team of software developers had designed for the original Macintosh and decided he didn’t like them. He forced the developers to do another version, and then another, about twenty iterations in all, insisting on one tiny tweak after another, and when the developers protested that they had better things to do he shouted, “Can you imagine looking at that every day? It’s not just a little thing. It’s something we have to do right.”

The famous Apple “Think Different” campaign came from Jobs’s advertising team at TBWA\Chiat\Day. But it was Jobs who agonized over the slogan until it was right:

They debated the grammatical issue: If “different” was supposed to modify the verb “think,” it should be an adverb, as in “think differently.” But Jobs insisted that he wanted “different” to be used as a noun, as in “think victory” or “think beauty.” Also, it echoed colloquial use, as in “think big.” Jobs later explained, “We discussed whether it was correct before we ran it. It’s grammatical, if you think about what we’re trying to say. It’s not think the same, it’s think different. Think a little different, think a lot different, think different. ‘Think differently’ wouldn’t hit the meaning for me.”

The point of Meisenzahl and Mokyr’s argument is that this sort of tweaking is essential to progress. James Watt invented the modern steam engine, doubling the efficiency of the engines that had come before. But when the tweakers took over the efficiency of the steam engine swiftly quadrupled. Samuel Crompton was responsible for what Meisenzahl and Mokyr call “arguably the most productive invention” of the industrial revolution. But the key moment, in the history of the mule, came a few years later, when there was a strike of cotton workers. The mill owners were looking for a way to replace the workers with unskilled labor, and needed an automatic mule, which did not need to be controlled by the spinner. Who solved the problem? Not Crompton, an unambitious man who regretted only that public interest would not leave him to his seclusion, so that he might “earn undisturbed the fruits of his ingenuity and perseverance.” It was the tweaker’s tweaker, Richard Roberts, who saved the day, producing a prototype, in 1825, and then an even better solution in 1830. Before long, the number of spindles on a typical mule jumped from four hundred to a thousand. The visionary starts with a clean sheet of paper, and re-imagines the world. The tweaker inherits things as they are, and has to push and pull them toward some more nearly perfect solution. That is not a lesser task.

Jobs’s friend Larry Ellison, the founder of Oracle, had a private jet, and he designed its interior with a great deal of care. One day, Jobs decided that he wanted a private jet, too. He studied what Ellison had done. Then he set about to reproduce his friend’s design in its entirety—the same jet, the same reconfiguration, the same doors between the cabins. Actually, not in its entirety. Ellison’s jet “had a door between cabins with an open button and a close button,” Isaacson writes. “Jobs insisted that his have a single button that toggled. He didn’t like the polished stainless steel of the buttons, so he had them replaced with brushed metal ones.” Having hired Ellison’s designer, “pretty soon he was driving her crazy.” Of course he was. The great accomplishment of Jobs’s life is how effectively he put his idiosyncrasies—his petulance, his narcissism, and his rudeness—in the service of perfection. “I look at his airplane and mine,” Ellison says, “and everything he changed was better.”
The angriest Isaacson ever saw Steve Jobs was when the wave of Android phones appeared, running the operating system developed by Google. Jobs saw the Android handsets, with their touchscreens and their icons, as a copy of the iPhone. He decided to sue. As he tells Isaacson:

Our lawsuit is saying, “Google, you fucking ripped off the iPhone, wholesale ripped us off.” Grand theft. I will spend my last dying breath if I need to, and I will spend every penny of Apple’s $40 billion in the bank, to right this wrong. I’m going to destroy Android, because it’s a stolen product. I’m willing to go to thermonuclear war on this. They are scared to death, because they know they are guilty. Outside of Search, Google’s products—Android, Google Docs—are shit.

In the nineteen-eighties, Jobs reacted the same way when Microsoft came out with Windows. It used the same graphical user interface—icons and mouse—as the Macintosh. Jobs was outraged and summoned Gates from Seattle to Apple’s Silicon Valley headquarters. “They met in Jobs’s conference room, where Gates found himself surrounded by ten Apple employees who were eager to watch their boss assail him,” Isaacson writes. “Jobs didn’t disappoint his troops. ‘You’re ripping us off!’ he shouted. ‘I trusted you, and now you’re stealing from us!’ ”

Gates looked back at Jobs calmly. Everyone knew where the windows and the icons came from. “Well, Steve,” Gates responded. “I think there’s more than one way of looking at it. I think it’s more like we both had this rich neighbor named Xerox and I broke into his house to steal the TV set and found out that you had already stolen it.”

Jobs was someone who took other people’s ideas and changed them. But he did not like it when the same thing was done to him. In his mind, what he did was special. Jobs persuaded the head of Pepsi-Cola, John Sculley, to join Apple as C.E.O., in 1983, by asking him, “Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water, or do you want a chance to change the world?”

When Jobs approached Isaacson to write his biography, Isaacson first thought (“half jokingly”) that Jobs had noticed that his two previous books were on Benjamin Franklin and Albert Einstein, and that he “saw himself as the natural successor in that sequence.” The architecture of Apple software was always closed. Jobs did not want the iPhone and the iPod and the iPad to be opened up and fiddled with, because in his eyes they were perfect. The greatest tweaker of his generation did not care to be tweaked.

Perhaps this is why Bill Gates—of all Jobs’s contemporaries—gave him fits. Gates resisted the romance of perfectionism. Time and again, Isaacson repeatedly asks Jobs about Gates and Jobs cannot resist the gratuitous dig. “Bill is basically unimaginative,” Jobs tells Isaacson, “and has never invented anything, which I think is why he’s more comfortable now in philanthropy than technology. He just shamelessly ripped off other people’s ideas.”

After close to six hundred pages, the reader will recognize this as vintage Jobs: equal parts insightful, vicious, and delusional. It’s true that Gates is now more interested in trying to eradicate malaria than in overseeing the next iteration of Word. But this is not evidence of a lack of imagination. Philanthropy on the scale that Gates practices it represents imagination at its grandest. In contrast, Jobs’s vision, brilliant and perfect as it was, was narrow. He was a tweaker to the last, endlessly refining the same territory he had claimed as a young man.
As his life wound down, and cancer claimed his body, his great passion was designing Apple’s new, three-million-square-foot headquarters, in Cupertino. Jobs threw himself into the details. “Over and over he would come up with new concepts, sometimes entirely new shapes, and make them restart and provide more alternatives,” Isaacson writes. He was obsessed with glass, expanding on what he learned from the big panes in the Apple retail stores. “There would not be a straight piece of glass in the building,” Isaacson writes. “All would be curved and seamlessly joined. . . . The planned center courtyard was eight hundred feet across (more than three typical city blocks, or almost the length of three football fields), and he showed it to me with overlays indicating how it could surround St. Peter’s Square in Rome.” The architects wanted the windows to open. Jobs said no. He “had never liked the idea of people being able to open things. ‘That would just allow people to screw things up.’ ”

ILLUSTRATION: ANDRÉ CARRILHO
All the tweaks applied by using Windows Tweaker can be safely undone. Windows Tweaker is small, efficient and easy to use tweaker. Windows Tweaker contains over 100 useful tweaks for Windows 8.1, 8, 7 and Vista. Using Windows Tweaker, you can enhance your Windows for smooth running, faster performance and lower memory consumption. You can now also search tweaks. What more???

Subscribe to The Tweaker via Email. Enter your email address to subscribe to The Tweaker and receive notifications of new posts by email. Email Address. Tweak calendar. April 2021. M. tweaker. Also: tweeker. 1. Person who constantly stays up cleaning, washing, organizing, powertooling, sorting or otherwise keeping themself busy doing menial tasks. 2. Someone who constantly makes slight alterations on (usually a very specific) object, i.e. computer, software, automobile, etc. 3. A compulsive liar, thief, or both. 4. A methamphetamine ("tweak"), or other form of speed, addict (who displays all of the above in an obsessive-compulsive manner). “Tommy what are you doin' man?” "I've been real busy sorting bolts!" Tweak or tweaker may refer to: Tweak, a slang name for methamphetamine. Tweaker, or alternate spelling tweeker, an individual addicted to methamphetamine. Tweak or tweaker may as well refer to: Tweaking, the act of making small mechanical or electronic improvements. In cryptography, particularly disk encryption, tweakable refers to a group of modes of operation for block ciphers. Tweak (programming environment). Tweakers, a Dutch technology website. The most popular tweaking software, Ultimate Windows Tweaker 4 for Windows 10 adds several new tweaks for the new operating system. Those of you who have upgraded to Windows 10, would want to use it to judiciously tweak your Windows 10 and personalize your computing experience. With judicious tweaking, it can make your system faster, more stable, personal, and more secure with just a few mouse clicks. Ultimate Windows Tweaker is like a TweakUI for Windows 10.