

## /dev/random

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I've looked at the cloud from both sides now:  
From in and out, and still somehow,  
It's the cloud's delusions I recall;  
I still trust the cloud not at all.

(apologies to Joni Mitchell)

**A**s humanity's adoption of the cloud paradigm slides ever closer to unity, detractors like yours truly grow increasingly scarce and anathematized. Rather than retreat into a bitter lepers' colony for Cloud-Luddites ("Cluddites"), I choose instead to cast my remaining stones from the unfettered, if somewhat dizzying, forefront of prophecy.

There will come a time, sayeth the prophet, when all personal computing devices will be wearable thin-clients, communicating with their data and applications via whatever is set to replace Bluetooth and/or WiFi. People will no longer buy software or storage devices but rather subscriptions to CCaaS: Cloud Computing as a (dis)Service. There will be specific application bundles available (word processing, graphics manipulation, spreadsheets, etc.), as well as omnibus cloudware plans that allow access to a broad range of data crunching techniques.

All advertising will be razor-targeted to the person, place, circumstance, and even current physiological status of its victims <sup>H^H^H^H^H^H</sup> audience. Even ad contents themselves will be written on the fly by personalized marketing microbots that have spent their entire existence studying and learning a single person's lifestyle. Because there will be no one left in the labor pool who subscribes to any consistent rules of grammar, spelling, or rhetoric, these ads will be mercifully incomprehensible to most.

Moving further afield in our technology examination, reality television will merge with products such as GoPro, Looxcie, and MeCam along with ultra-high bandwidth Internet access to create millions of around-the-clock multimedia streams starring absolutely everyone you know. For a fee, you can have writers supply you with dialogue while actors will fill in your voice to create the ultimate Shakespeare metaphor come to life: all the world really *will* be a stage.

Instead of news desks, anchors, and reporters, there will just be alerts sent out automatically by event-recognition algorithms embedded in the firmware of personal cams. They will recruit all nearby cameras into a newsworthy event cluster, or NEC. The combined streams from the cams with the best viewpoints will be labeled as a live news event and available with stream priority from the provider. Premium service subscribers will have voiceovers

of commentators taking a marginally educated guess at what's going on, very similar to today's "talking head" model only not so well-dressed.

The stars of this mediaverse will be those people who manage to be near the most interesting occurrences. Naturally, a thriving "underground" business of *causing* news events will spring up, so that news personalities can maintain their fame without all that tedious roaming to and fro, looking for notoriety-inducing happenstance. The likelihood of witnessing everything from thrilling bank robberies to tragic aircraft accidents can be artificially boosted by these professional probability manipulators—for the right price.

With individual television stations obsolete and replaced by on-demand media clumps, product-hawking will be forced to evolve as well. People will be paid to carry around everything from soda cans to auto parts in the hope that someone's stream will pick them up and the omnipresent optical marketing monitor algorithms will recognize and plug same with a plethora of canned ads. With the average personal cam spitting out ten megapixels at 40 FPS, discerning one's product from the background noise of other people's inferior merchandise will not be all that difficult.

Because your wearable cam will be capable of monitoring various physiological parameters—ostensibly for your health's sake but really in order to gauge your response to various commercial ploys—any positive reaction to a product or event will cause an influx of ads for things judged by often puzzling equivalence formulae to be similar in some way. Think a dog you saw pooping on the curb was cute? Prepare to be bombarded for a full fortnight by vaguely canine and/or poop-related product and service advertisements. Carelessly employ a search engine to look up the best brand of adult diaper for an aged relative? Many hours of bodily fluid-absorbent entertainment will now be yours to enjoy in virtual 3D and ultrasurround-sound, with no means of escape sans an unthinkable disconnection from the grid.

While we're on the topic of disconnection, it won't be long before being unplugged from the grid not only is inadvisable from a mental health perspective, it will not even be possible without surgery. A routine implantation when an infant is about six months old will tie them into the worldwide grid, although a compatible interface will be necessary to do any computing. This will encourage toddlers to learn their alphabets (or at least the more popular letters and numbers) and, more importantly, emoticons as early as possible so that they can begin texting. Eventually I predict these Internet access modules will be absorbed into the body and tacked on to our DNA, creating the prospect of future pre-natal communications, where Twitter accounts are created automatically as soon as the child reaches a certain level of development.

@TheNeatestFetus: OMG I thnk im bein born!!!

@Embryoglio: hw du u no?

@TheNeatestFetus: gettin squeezed out 1 end brb

@Embryoglio: u still ther?

@TheNeatestFetus: b\*\*\*\* slappd me! #BreathingRox

@ Embryoglio: playa

It just keeps getting sillier from there, I'm afraid.

To bring this oblique essay back around to UNIX, let me just reassure my readers that every device I've prophesied here is running some stripped-down version of an embedded Linux kernel that I've just now decided to call Nanix (you know, because it's so small and everything).

What role will the by-now ubiquitous cloud play in all this? Every role imaginable. It won't be a cloud any longer, but rather an all-encompassing noxious ground fog that instead of creeping in on little cat feet will stomp around on enormous T-Rex talons. There will be nothing subtle or elegant about it. Data security, I must add—albeit reluctantly—will be a quaint concept of the past, like chivalry, coupon books, and pundits with something germane to say.