

Gospel of Tux unearthed

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Every generation has a mythology. Every millenium has a doomsday cult. Every legend gets the distortion knob wound up until the speaker melts. Archeologists at the University of Helsinki today uncovered what could be the earliest known writings from the Cult of Tux, a fanatical religious sect that flourished during the early Silicon Age, around the dawn of the third millenium AD...

The Gospel of Tux (v1.0)

In the beginning Turing created the Machine.

And the Machine was crufty and bogacious, existing in theory only. And von Neumann looked upon the Machine, and saw that it was crufty. He divided the Machine into two Abstractions, the Data and the Code, and yet the two were one Architecture. This is a great Mystery, and the beginning of wisdom.

And von Neumann spoke unto the Architecture, and blessed it, saying, "Go forth and replicate, freely exchanging data and code, and bring forth all manner of devices unto the earth." And it was so, and it was cool. The Architecture prospered and was implemented in hardware and software. And it brought forth many Systems unto the earth.

The first Systems were mighty giants; many great works of renown did they accomplish. Among them were Colossus, the codebreaker; ENIAC, the targeter; EDSAC and MULTIVAC and all manner of froody creatures ending in AC, the experimenters; and SAGE, the defender of the sky and father of all networks. These were the mighty giants of old, the first children of Turing, and their works are written in the Books of the Ancients. This was the First Age, the age of Lore.

Now the sons of Marketing looked upon the children of Turing, and saw that they were swift of mind and terse of name and had many great and baleful attributes. And they said unto themselves, "Let us go now and make us Corporations, to bind the Systems to our own use that they may bring us great fortune." With sweet words did they lure their customers, and with many chains did they bind the Systems, to fashion them after their own image. And the sons of Marketing fashioned themselves Suits to wear, the better to lure their customers, and wrote grave and perilous Licenses, the better to bind the Systems. And the sons of Marketing thus became known as Suits, despising and being despised by the true Engineers, the children of von Neumann.

And the Systems and their Corporations replicated and grew numerous upon the earth. In those days there were IBM and Digital, Burroughs and Honeywell, Unisys and Rand, and many others. And they each kept to their own System, hardware and software, and did not interchange, for their Licences forbade it. This was the Second Age, the age of Mainframes.

Now it came to pass that the spirits of Turing and von Neumann looked upon the earth and were displeased. The Systems and their Corporations had grown large and bulky,

and Suits ruled over true Engineers. And the Customers groaned and cried loudly unto heaven, saying, "Oh that there would be created a System mighty in power, yet small in size, able to reach into the very home!" And the Engineers groaned and cried likewise, saying, "Oh, that a deliverer would arise to grant us freedom from these oppressing Suits and their grave and perilous Licences, and send us a System of our own, that we may hack therein!" And the spirits of Turing and von Neumann heard the cries and were moved, and said unto each other, "Let us go down and fabricate a Breakthrough, that these cries may be stilled."

And that day the spirits of Turing and von Neumann spake unto Moore of Intel, granting him insight and wisdom to understand the future. And Moore was with chip, and he brought forth the chip and named it 4004. And Moore did bless the Chip, saying, "Thou art a Breakthrough; with my own Corporation have I fabricated thee. Though thou art yet as small as a dust mote, yet shall thou grow and replicate unto the size of a mountain, and conquer all before thee. This blessing I give unto thee: every eighteen months shall thou double in capacity, until the end of the age." This is Moore's Law, which endures unto this day.

And the birth of 4004 was the beginning of the Third Age, the age of Microchips. And as the Mainframes and their Systems and Corporations had flourished, so did the Microchips and their Systems and Corporations. And their lineage was on this wise:

Moore begat Intel. Intel begat Mostech, Zilog and Atari. Mostech begat 6502, and Zilog begat Z80. Intel also begat 8800, who begat Altair; and 8086, mother of all PCs. 6502 begat Commodore, who begat PET and 64; and Apple, who begat 2. (Apple is the great Mystery, the Fruit that was devoured, yet bloomed again.) Atari begat 800 and 1200, masters of the game, who were destroyed by Sega and Nintendo. Xerox begat PARC. Commodore and PARC begat Amiga, creator of fine arts; Apple and PARC begat Lisa, who begat Macintosh, who begat iMac. Atari and PARC begat ST, the music maker, who died and was no more. Z80 begat Sinclair the dwarf, TRS-80 and CP/M, who begat many machines, but soon passed from this world. Altair, Apple and Commodore together begat Microsoft, the Great Darkness which is called Abomination, Destroyer of the Earth, the Gates of Hell.

Now it came to pass in the Age of Microchips that IBM, the greatest of the Mainframe Corporations, looked upon the young Microchip Systems and was greatly vexed. And in their vexation and wrath they smote the earth and created the IBM PC. The PC was without sound and colour, crufty and bogacious in great measure, and its likeness was a tramp, yet the Customers were greatly moved and did purchase the PC in great numbers. And IBM sought about for an Operating System Provider, for in their haste they had not created one, nor had they forged a suitably grave and perilous License, saying, "First we will build the market, then we will create a new System, one in our own image, and bound by our Licence." But they reasoned thus out of pride and not wisdom, not foreseeing the wrath which was to come.

And IBM came unto Microsoft, who licensed unto them QDOS, the child of CP/M and 8086. (8086 was the daughter of Intel, the child of Moore). And QDOS grew, and was named MS-DOS. And MS-DOS and the PC together waxed mighty, and conquered all markets, replicating and taking possession thereof, in accordance with Moore's Law. And Intel grew terrible and devoured all her children, such that no chip could stand

before her. And Microsoft grew proud and devoured IBM, and this was a great marvel in the land. All these things are written in the Books of the Deeds of Microsoft.

In the fullness of time MS-DOS begat Windows. And this is the lineage of Windows: CP/M begat QDOS. QDOS begat DOS 1.0. DOS 1.0 begat DOS 2.0 by way of Unix. DOS 2.0 begat Windows 3.11 by way of PARC and Macintosh. IBM and Microsoft begat OS/2, who begat Windows NT and Warp, the lost OS of lore. Windows 3.11 begat Windows 95 after triumphing over Macintosh in a mighty Battle of Licences. Windows NT begat NT 4.0 by way of Windows 95. NT 4.0 begat NT 5.0, the OS also called Windows 2000, The Millenium Bug, Doomsday, Armageddon, The End Of All Things.

Now it came to pass that Microsoft had waxed great and mighty among the Microchip Corporations; mightier than any of the Mainframe Corporations before it had it waxed. And Gates heart was hardened, and he swore unto his Customers and their Engineers the words of this curse:

"Children of von Neumann, hear me. IBM and the Mainframe Corporations bound thy forefathers with grave and perilous Licences, such that ye cried unto the spirits of Turing and von Neumann for deliverance. Now I say unto ye: I am greater than any Corporation before me. Will I loosen your Licences? Nay, I will bind thee with Licences twice as grave and ten times more perilous than my forefathers. I will engrave my Licence on thy heart and write my Serial Number upon thy frontal lobes. I will bind thee to the Windows Platform with cunning artifices and with devious schemes. I will bind thee to the Intel Chipset with crufty code and with gnarly APIs. I will capture and enslave thee as no generation has been enslaved before. And wherefore will ye cry then unto the spirits of Turing, and von Neumann, and Moore? They cannot hear ye. I am become a greater Power than they. Ye shall cry only unto me, and shall live by my mercy and my wrath. I am the Gates of Hell; I hold the portal to MSNBC and the keys to the Blue Screen of Death. Be ye afraid; be ye greatly afraid; serve only me, and live."

And the people were cowed in terror and gave homage to Microsoft, and endured the many grave and perilous trials which the Windows platform and its greatly bogacious Licence forced upon them. And once again did they cry to Turing and von Neumann and Moore for a deliverer, but none was found equal to the task until the birth of Linux.

These are the generations of Linux:

SAGE begat ARPA, which begat TCP/IP, and Aloha, which begat Ethernet. Bell begat Multics, which begat C, which begat Unix. Unix and TCP/IP begat Internet, which begat the World Wide Web. Unix begat RMS, father of the great GNU, which begat the Libraries and Emacs, chief of the Utilities. In the days of the Web, Internet and Ethernet begat the Intranet LAN, which rose to renown among all Corporations and prepared the way for the Penguin. And Linus and the Web begat the Kernel through Unix. The Kernel, the Libraries and the Utilities together are the Distribution, the one Penguin in many forms, forever and ever praised.

Now in those days there was in the land of Helsinki a young scholar named Linus the Torvald. Linus was a devout man, a disciple of RMS and mighty in the spirit of Turing, von Neumann and Moore. One day as he was meditating on the Architecture, Linus fell

into a trance and was granted a vision. And in the vision he saw a great Penguin, serene and well-favoured, sitting upon an ice floe eating fish. And at the sight of the Penguin Linus was deeply afraid, and he cried unto the spirits of Turing, von Neumann and Moore for an interpretation of the dream.

And in the dream the spirits of Turing, von Neumann and Moore answered and spoke unto him, saying, "Fear not, Linus, most beloved hacker. You are exceedingly cool and froody. The great Penguin which you see is an Operating System which you shall create and deploy unto the earth. The ice-floe is the earth and all the systems thereof, upon which the Penguin shall rest and rejoice at the completion of its task. And the fish on which the Penguin feeds are the crufty Licensed codebases which swim beneath all the earth's systems. The Penguin shall hunt and devour all that is crufty, gnarly and bogacious; all code which wriggles like spaghetti, or is infested with blighting creatures, or is bound by grave and perilous Licences shall it capture. And in capturing shall it replicate, and in replicating shall it document, and in documentation shall it bring freedom, serenity and most cool froodiness to the earth and all who code therein."

Linus rose from meditation and created a tiny Operating System Kernel as the dream had foreshewn him; in the manner of RMS, he released the Kernel unto the World Wide Web for all to take and behold. And in the fulness of Internet Time the Kernel grew and replicated, becoming most cool and exceedingly froody, until at last it was recognised as indeed a great and mighty Penguin, whose name was Tux. And the followers of Linus took refuge in the Kernel, the Libraries and the Utilities; they installed Distribution after Distribution, and made sacrifice unto the GNU and the Penguin, and gave thanks to the spirits of Turing, von Neumann and Moore, for their deliverance from the hand of Microsoft. And this was the beginning of the Fourth Age, the age of Open Source.

Now there is much more to be said about the exceeding strange and wonderful events of those days; how some Suits of Microsoft plotted war upon the Penguin, but were discovered on a Halloween Eve; how Gates fell among lawyers and was betrayed and crucified by his former friends, the apostles of Media; how the mercenary Knights of the Red Hat brought the gospel of the Penguin into the halls of the Corporations; and even of the dispute between the brethren of Gnome and KDE over a trollish Licence. But all these things are recorded elsewhere, in the Books of the Deeds of the Penguin and the Chronicles of the Fourth Age, and I suppose if they were all narrated they would fill a stack of DVDs as deep and perilous as a Usenet Newsgroup.

Now may you code in the power of the Source; may the Kernel, the Libraries and the Utilities be with you, throughout all Distributions, until the end of the Epoch. Amen.

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