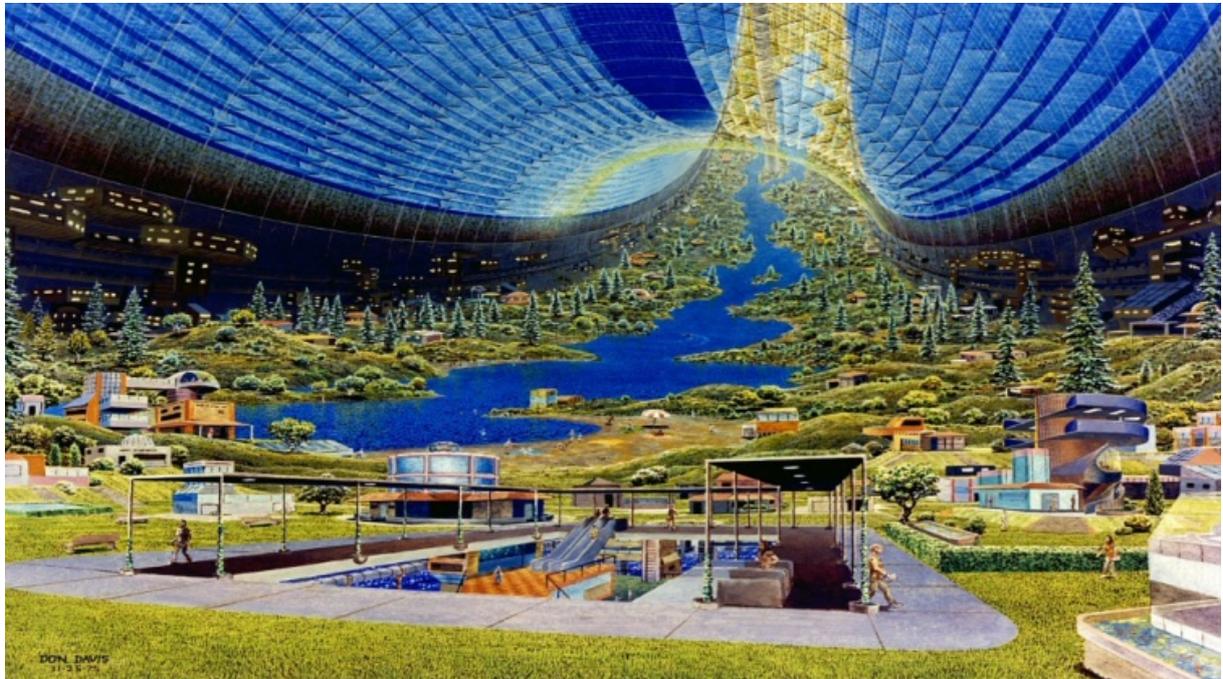


A dream of Elysium

An essay by T. Gilling

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A dream of Elysium (No, not the 2013 film but the true utopia; the place of ideal happiness and trouble-free life).

Elysium, or the Elysian Fields, is a paradise where heroes, made immortal by the gods, would remain after death, living a happy and blessed afterlife. It was originally reserved for mortals related to the gods and other heroes, and later expanded to include those chosen by the gods, heroes, and the righteous. Elysium was a vision of the afterlife developed by certain ancient Greek philosophical and religious cults and sects.

In the 5th century b.c., the poet Pindar wrote:

For them [in Elysium] the sun shineth in his strength, in the world below, while here 'tis night; and, in meadows red with roses, the space before their city is shaded by the incense-tree, and is laden with golden fruits. Some of them delight themselves with horses and with wrestling; others with draughts, and with lures; while beside them bloometh the fair flower of perfect bliss. And o'er that lovely land fragrance is ever shed, while they mingle all manner of incense with the far-shining fire on the altar of the gods.

Nowadays, Elysium is generally used to describe a true utopia; a place of ideal happiness and trouble-free life. However, it is still viewed, unfortunately, as a place for just a lucky few that most will never attain. Such a view was vividly depicted in the 2013 science fiction film, *Elysium*, directed by Neill Blomkamp, where wealth and power were the entry tickets, and not righteous deeds or heroism.

Please note: Film spoilers ahead. If you have not yet seen the film I suggest you skip the next paragraph.

The film, set in 2154, featured the luxurious Elysium space station that had become the utopian home of Earth's rich and powerful. The space station, based on a design known as the Stanford torus, was located 75 miles above the Earth, and had half a million inhabitants. Everyone else lived in poverty on an overpopulated and polluted Earth. The citizens of Elysium had access to many highly-advanced technologies, including medical devices that were able to cure all diseases, regenerate body parts, and even reverse the aging process. These medical devices were not shared with the citizens of Earth. In fact, these devices were specifically programmed to only work for the citizens of Elysium. Consequently, many citizens of Earth that could have been easily cured of their medical ailments were left to suffer and die, to the general indifference of the space station's inhabitants. This obviously led to conflict between the citizens of Elysium and the citizens of Earth. The film portrays a desperate attempt by a small group of Earth citizens to gain access to the space station in order to use an all-powerful software program to make everyone on Earth a citizen of Elysium. This software program had been stolen, by the film's protagonist, from an Elysium resident that was a wealthy and powerful military industrialist. The software program was originally designed to implement a techno-coup by overriding and rebooting Elysium's computer core in order to make Elysium's overzealous and self-righteous Defence Secretary, one of the film's antagonists, the next President of Elysium. The film is a high-quality production, and the scenes of the space station, both inside and out, are quite stunning. The film ends on a bitter-sweet note; Elysium's evil Defence Secretary is killed by her own henchman who, in turn, is then killed by the film's protagonist, who then nobly dies whilst uploading the software program to Elysium's computer core, a terminally-ill Earth girl is then saved using one of Elysium's now accessible-to-all medical devices, and a fleet of robotic medical ships is dispatched by Elysium's computer to all corners of the Earth, thereby ensuring that everyone, everywhere, can finally begin to experience a little bit of the Elysium dream.

Everything is relative, or so it is said, and perhaps it is just not possible to have a utopia, like the Elysium space station, without also having some sort of a dystopia, a hellish Earth, to compare it against. The film highlights the extreme gulf that developed between those that have, the citizens of Elysium, and those that have-not, the citizens of Earth. It is a cautionary tale and one that we would do well to heed as Earth's rich and powerful (*i.e., the one percent*) become ever richer and ever more powerful, whilst everyone else (*i.e., the other ninety-nine percent*) becomes poorer and weaker. We must ensure that the rising tide of technology equitably lifts all boats, and not just the jewel-encrusted super-yachts of the rich and famous. For example, the arrival of robots and artificial intelligences (AIs) within the workforce must benefit the many (*i.e., all of mankind*) and not just a few (*i.e., the rich and powerful that own the robots and AIs*). If the price of technological advancement is that the old order of capitalism must be dismantled then so be it. A future like the one initially portrayed in the film must be avoided at all costs, even though the seeds of such a future are, sadly, already well established in our world. Still, as it is often said, the first step in fixing any problem is to agree that the problem actually exists; something that sounds incredibly easy but which is surprisingly difficult to achieve in practice (*e.g., just look at the disagreement that still exists over the root cause of global warming*).

Today, we do not just have a gap in terms of wealth and power; we also have a gap in terms of those that have access to technology and those that do not, with the former undoubtedly being a primary cause of the latter. We call this gap the Digital Divide. If we are to reduce this particular gap then we must create a world in which everyone, everywhere, has affordable, reliable, and ubiquitous access to the Internet, personal computing, and Web. Of course, our world contains many other inequalities, which will all need to be addressed at some point in the future. However, from a purely technological perspective, bridging the Digital Divide has to be a priority. Not necessarily the overriding priority but a priority nonetheless.

One way that technology could help bridge this divide is by becoming simpler and cheaper, and, thereby, more accessible. I described such an approach in my book, **The STREAM TONE: The Future of Personal Computing?** This approach also seeks to reduce many of the negative impacts that so often seem to accompany technological change. It's all very utopian in its outlook, definitely a dream of Elysium, and like all such dreams possibly unobtainable, as I readily acknowledged in the book's prologue:

This book is based on my observations of the technology world, made over many years. It discusses how certain technologies could be combined to yield a world changing result, and why current trends in both society and technology may allow that to happen far sooner than you might have thought possible.

I have no special inside knowledge that what I am suggesting will actually come to pass, I am simply reading between the lines, putting two and two together, and coming up with what I think is a logical conclusion. It's all an educated guess, really. Of course history may well conspire against me on this matter, in which case my prognostications will simply serve as a sad reminder of opportunities missed and the world will probably be a poorer place for that.

We already live in a science fiction world. Young people that have grown up with computers in their lives, right from the beginning, probably do not realise just how fantastic the world has become. Older folks, that experienced the world before computers, and the arrival of the Internet and the Web, know different. We truly appreciate the impacts, both good and bad, and we can see the bigger picture of how the world has changed, and continues to change.

I have recently seen that certain key building blocks are now available, which could be aggregated in a particular way to give a unique result. In fact, from a certain perspective, the technology that I envision already exists, in various nascent forms, and can be experienced today; it is just a mouse-click away. However, what exists today is but a small taste of the full solution. With a bit more effort and refinement it can be real. It is so very close.

Why do we need this new thing? Because the constant change that we have experienced over the last thirty or so years, the change that we pay for in terms of both time and money again and again and again has to stop, or, at the very least, markedly slow down. We need a period of quiescence and stability in which logical consolidation and refinement can start to take place. Not technological stagnation;

simply a change of focus such that progress can still be made, possibly at an even more accelerated rate, but in a way that does not unnecessarily inconvenience, or burden, each and every user of that technology.

The irony, that to stop the constant change that we have all been experiencing will need one more change, is not lost on me. It is also not lost on me that our modern technology-oriented world is a bit like a giant ocean-going super-tanker; it does not stop or alter course easily. So, even if my foretelling is deemed to have merit and make good sense in theory, the world may be so set on its current technological heading that it just sails on by, leaving my utopian vision undiscovered and unexplored; like a tropical island paradise tantalisingly glimpsed on the horizon that will never be a port of call. I am, however, cautiously optimistic; the signs are, in many ways, quite favourable. This book might be the blueprint for a better future, or it might just be a strange new form of science fiction; only the future knows.

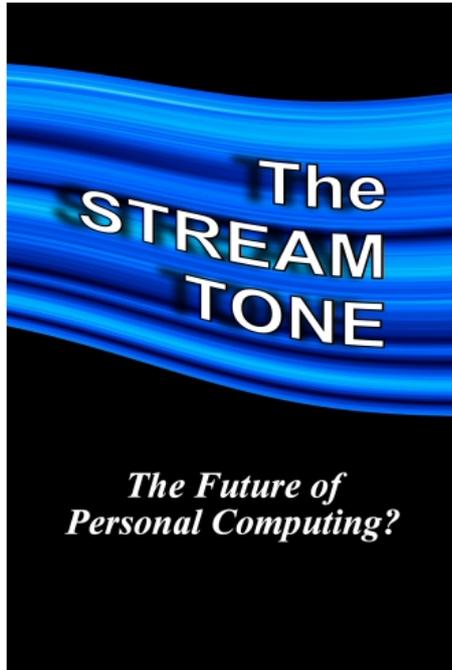
The STREAM TONE: *The Future of Personal Computing?*
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My book describes a new technology ecosystem, known as the Steam Tone, comprised of an access device, communications protocol, service infrastructures, and telecommunications infrastructures, which is designed to replace our predominantly download-oriented approach to personal computing (*i.e., what we do with personal computing devices*) with a streaming-oriented one. The Stream Tone is intended to be an open-source initiative that re-invents personal computing for the 21st century, and, by so doing, makes the world a better, more equitable, place for everyone, everywhere. The Stream Tone can help to bridge the Digital Divide, connect the unconnected, and bring the Internet, personal computing, and Web to the next billion people. In very simple terms, the Stream Tone is about ensuring that the future is more evenly distributed. It represents a bold goal, to be sure, but one that can definitely be achieved if we can all pull together as a team.

I hope that my particular dream of Elysium represents an equitable rising tide of technology that can lift all our boats, and not just those of the rich and powerful.

The STREAM TONE: *The Future of Personal Computing?*

Author: T. Gilling | eBook: ISBN 978-1-78462-792-8 | Paperback: ISBN 978-1-78462-081-3 | Hardback: ISBN 978-1-78462-086-8



Imagine... a world where your next personal computing device is the last one that you would ever need to buy. Where you would never need to worry about operating systems, software patches, or viruses. Where you always had enough processing power, memory, storage, and top-of-the-line graphics. Where you could access all of the very best software applications, regardless of their platform. Where you had a constant connection to all your favourite digital services, and your battery lasted for days, perhaps even weeks, of full-on use. Sounds good, doesn't it? Well, this is the world of the Stream Tone. A world that does not exist in some far off future; this could be, figuratively speaking, our world a mere five minutes from now. All that is needed to make it a reality is the creative convergence of certain technologies that are already available and in use today.

The STREAM TONE: *The Future of Personal Computing?*

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Personal computing is changing from an old world of local services, provided by local devices, to a new world of remote Web-based services, provided by cloud computing-based data centres. **The STREAM TONE: *The Future of Personal Computing?*** is a 408-page academically-oriented non-fiction book that explores, in considerable technical detail, what might be required to make a comprehensive move to this exciting new world, and the many benefits that move could bring. This book not only attempts to make a thorough evaluation of the technology ecosystem that will be required to create this future but also considers many of the implications of such a move. Along the way, it also discusses a wide range of currently-available technologies and how they could possibly be used to enable this future.

Supporting materials (errata, hyperlink-extract, etc.) now available

For further information please visit: www.TheStreamTone.com

