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Date	Tue, 12 Aug 2014 15:38:12 -0400
From	Christopher Barry <>
Subject	OT: Open letter to the Linux World

What is intelligence? Not exactly the spook kind, but rather what is the definition of intelligence in humans? This is pretty good: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligence#Definitions

By most accounts, the self-appointed and arguably too influential creators and thinkers of the day around the 'One Linux' idea fit the definition of intelligent people - at least in the technical realm.

And their messages are pretty compelling:
* Simplify cross-distro development.
* Enable faster boot times.
* Enable an on-demand, event driven architecture, similar to 'Modern' Operating Systems.
* Bring order and control to subsystems that have had as many different tools as there were distros.

All seemingly noble goals. All apparently come from a deep desire to contribute and make things better.

Almost anyone could argue that these intelligent people thought hard about these issues, and put an enormous amount of effort into a solution to these problems. Unfortunately, the solution they came up with, as you may have guessed by now, is 'systemd'.

While not new, it's grotesque impact has finally reached me and I must speak to it publicly.

So, what is systemd? Well, meet your new God. You may have been praying at the alter of simplicity, but your religion is being deprecated. It likely already happened without your knowledge during an upgrade of your Linux box. systemd is the all knowing, all controlling meta-deity that sees all and supervises all. It's the new One Master Process that aspires to control everything it can - and it's already doing a lot. It's what init would look like if it were a transformer on steroids. It's complicated, multi-faceted, opaque, and supremely powerful.

I had heard about systemd a few years back, when upstart and some other init replacements I can't remember were showing up on the scene. And while it seemed mildly interesting, I was not in favor of using it, nor any of them for that matter. init was working just fine for me. init was simple and robust. While configuration had it's distro-specific differences, it was often these differences that made one pick the distro to use in the first place, and to stay with that distro. The tools essentially *were* the distro. I just dist-upgraded to Jessie, and voila - PID 1 was suddenly systemd. What a clusterfuck.

In a 'One Linux' world, what would distros actually be? Deprecated. No longer relevant. Archaic shells of their once proud individualism. Basically, they're now just a logo and a default desktop background image. Because let's face it, there only needs to be One Modern 'competitor' to the Windows/Mac ownership of personal computing. A unified front to combat the evil empires of Redmond and Cupertino is what's needed. The various differences that made up different 'flavors' of Linux needed to be corralled and brought into compliance for the war to proceed efficiently. Um, what war?

For me, Linux had already won that war way back in 1994 when I started using it. It did it without firing a shot or attempting to be just like the other OSes. It won it it by not giving a flying fuck about market share. It won it by being exactly NOT them. It won it by being simple and understandable and configurable to be exactly how *I* wanted it to be. It won it by being a collection of simple modular components that could be plugged together at will to do real work. It won it by adhering to a deeply considered philosophy of the user being in the drivers seat, and being free to run the things she wanted to, without layers and layers of frameworks wrapping their tendrils into all manor of stuff they should not be touching. It won it without the various 'CrapKit' shit that's begun to insinuate itself into the heart of my system of late. It won it without being overly complex and unknowable. That kind of opacity was was the core of Windows and Mac, and that's exactly what I despise about them, and exactly why I chose to use Linux

in the first goddamn place. systemd is embracing *all* that I hate about Windows and Mac, and doing so in the name of 'modernity' and 'simplifying' a developer's job.

So why would very smart people who love and use Linux want to create or embrace such a creepy 'Master of All' daemon? Ostensibly, it's for the reasons they say, as I mentioned at the top. But partially I think it's from a lack of experience. Not a lack as in programming hours, but a lack as in time on the Planet. Intelligence alone is not a substitute for life experience and, yes I'll say it, wisdom. There's no manual for wisdom. Implementing systemd by distros is not a wise move for them over the long term. It will, in fact, be their ultimate undoing.

Partially it's the larger-than-life egos of the people involved. Has anyone actually read what Poettering says about things? Wow. This guy is obviously convinced he has all the answers for everyone. Traditional ideas about simplicity and freedom are quaint, but have no real place in a 'modern' OS. Look, he's just smarter than you, so get over it and move aside. He knows what's best, and he has it under control. How old is this guy anyway? 12 or so? He's a fucking tool (IMHO).

Partially it's roiling subsurface commercial interests. Look, We can make more money selling stuff to Linux users if there were a simpler distro agnostic way to do that. Fuck choice, they'll like what they get.

Partially it may well be nefarious and shadowy in nature. With One Ring to rule them all, having access to it sure would be sweet for those hell-bent on total information awareness. Trust is not real high on my list of things to give out these days.

Partially it's a belief that the Linux Community must fight against the hegemony of Windows and Mac - as if the existence of Linux depends upon the vanquishing of alternatives. Those who think Linux should cater to idiots and droolers should go back to their Macs and Windoze boxen, and stop trying to 'fix' Linux. It wasn't fucking broken!

Partially - and this is what I cannot abide - it is a blatant disregard and disrespect - whether knowingly or not - of the major tenets of *NIX. It's a thoughtless discarding of, and a trampling on the values that I personally hold to be true and just, and I am not alone here. systemd is the exact opposite of what defines *NIX. And I'm not blathering on about POSIX compliance either. It's the Philosophy stupid.

systemd is a coup. It is a subversive interloper designed to destroy Linux as we know it, foisted upon us by the snarky we-know-better-than-you CamelCase crowd. They just don't get it down deep where it matters. systemd is not pointing in a direction that we should be going. It does not encourage freedom. It does not encourage choice. It does not display transparency. It does not embrace simplicity. It seizes control and forces you to cede it. It makes applications and major system components depend on it, and they cannot function without it. It's gaining speed by luring naive or lazy or just plain clueless developers into the fold with the promise of making their lives easier. Buying into this way of thinking ignores the greater dangers that systemd represents.

Debian has always held the line against this kind of thing in the past, and has always earned my utmost respect and loyalty for their integrity. Debian's decision here was as a hand forced. Debian has made a grave and cowardly mistake here, and they need a course correction immediately. Incorporating systemd was not an intelligent choice, and certainly not one very well considered. Debian must reject systemd and its ilk, and restore itself to the values that got Linux to this point in history, in no small part *led* by Debian. They must loudly and publicly divorce themselves from GNOME, however painful and upsetting that may seem in the sort term, and focus on the core values of simplicity and freedom. Put systemd and it's cabal in non-free where it belongs if you must. Let the user decide if that's what they want. Enlightenment is an excellent choice for a default desktop that does not have the bloated baggage of GNOME. And to the Debian Leaders - after 20 years of my loyalty and evangelism, you really let me and all of us down. You need to grow a fucking pair and do the right thing here and now.

Kick these fucking carpetbaggers to the curb!

Gnome. The Linux Foundation. freedesktop.org, and others. These are all groups with agendas. These are not those who believe in freedom. They believe in control and standardization. They believe in sameness. Who are these people anyway? Who are these self-appointed keepers of the Linux flame? (subliminal malware reference intended). What are their true agendas? Who funds these people? Why do they so aggressively want to change the core of Linux away from it's true philosophy? Let them go

off and create their own 'competitor' to Windows and Mac. If they did,
it would be the same opaque, backdoored, user-tracking bullshit that
Windows and Mac have become. They DO NOT speak for me, and you should
not passively allow them to speak for you either.

systemd is a trojan. systemd is a medusa. systemd is Substance D.
systemd is scary - not just because it's tools suck, or because it's
a massive fucking hairball - but because architecturally it has way
too much concentrated power. We all need to collectively expel it from
our midst because it will own Linux, and by extension us and our
freedoms. systemd will *be* Linux. Sit idly by and ignore this fact at
all of our collective peril.

OneLinux == zero-choice

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Regards,
Christopher Barry

Random geeky fortune:
BOFH excuse #202:

kernel panic: write-only-memory (/dev/wom0) capacity exceeded.