Symposium

The Last Supper of the Dinosaurs, Redux. A Dramatic Reading in Four Scenes and Three Alternative Futures

Jim Dator*

Scene One

I grew up in a small town in Central Florida called "DeLand." My grandfather was the town undertaker because he owned the town's main furniture store and could make caskets from the leftover lumber. He inherited both jobs from his father, whose father before him had been one of the founders of the town, having moved to Florida to recover his health which had been lost while he was a Union Army prisoner in the notorious Confederate prison called Andersonville.

When I was young, anything we bought, we bought in one of the stores downtown, owned and run by our friends and neighbors.

Then, one day, a supermarket sprang up on a vacant lot on the edge of town. It covered an entire block and offered far more variety, at lower prices, than did the tiny stores downtown. But my grandfather refused to allow us to shop there. In fact, I did not set foot into that supermarket until well after my grandfather died, and I felt very guilty when I did.

By that time, however, there were supermarkets everywhere, and chain stores like Sears, Penneys, and even Western Auto. Many of the downtown stores were closed, or open only to give the owner something to do until he died. Most of the ones that were still operating had been sold and now were either just sandwich shoppes and bars, or places that sold souvenir cards and trinkets.

And all along the streets and highways between downtown DeLand and the newest, fanciest, grandest shopping sprawls are the tattered remains of what once were themselves new, fancy and grand shopping malls,

* **Jim Dator,** Department of Political Science, and Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa.
Email: dator @ hawaii. edu

now entirely deserted save for one or two buildings in each mall that house the local welfare office, a Salvation Army Outlet store, or a branch of the US Postal Service, each themselves dying institutions.

And newer and grander malls are being planned.

Scene Two

When I was a boy, if anyone wanted to buy anything in the stores in downtown DeLand, you had two choices. You either paid cash and carry (MAYBE you could use a personal check; maybe not), OR you could purchase the item over time via what was called "layaway." You put some money up front as a down payment, the store took the item you wanted out of the display counter and put it in a back room for you, and you went down to the store every week and paid some more until you had paid the full amount and could take your purchase home.

Credit was rare, and rarely used. Only for the absolute essentials in an emergency, or for very expensive long-lasting items, like an automobile, a refrigerator, and of course, one's home.

My grandfather was a devout Southern Baptist, and therefore almost anything that was fun was sinful - drinking, certainly; dancing, definitely; even playing cards. On Sunday, I couldn't go to the movies or watch a baseball game. Fortunately, he thought it was OK to go to the beach on Sunday. But he put in the lowest depths of hell any thought of going into debt just to have something. If he couldn't pay for it entirely in cash, we didn't have it. So we didn't have lots of things, which was OK. I never felt deprived, though I guess I was. But so was most everybody else at that time.

Then the chain stores began giving their best customers charge cards, while the small mom and pop stores either had to extend personal credit, or not compete. It was their inability to give consumer goods on credit that also helped kill most small stores downtown. By the time American Express and Diners Club came along, it was too late for many small shop owners. And those cards required you pay off the entire amount you owed each month anyway.

Oil companies like Esso, Sinclair, or Texaco, had credit cards, but you could only buy gas and oil with them, maybe tires and batteries.

Then, during the 1970s, Master Charge and Visa came along and the world of consumer credit took off, reaching a flood during the 1980s and 90s, and still roaring forward engulfing everything in its path in a mighty rampage of consumer consumption.

Without endless supplies of maxed-out credit cards, each saved at the last minute by ever-rising credit limits, you sales and marketing executives would be sitting around the cracker barrels of your empty stores, playing checkers and counting the minutes till closing time, just like the old days.

Scene Three

There were billboards advertising things when I was a boy, but the biggest thrill when travelling was reading the Burma Shave Signs along the side of the roads (there were no Interstate Highways then), with one word or phrase on each sign spaced out over a quarter of a mile. I can remember one sequence which read: - "Are your whiskers when you wake tougher than a two-bit steak? Try Burma Shave!"

Does anyone know what "two bits" is? Or just how tough a two-bit steak could be, in this era of genetically modified meat-like substance?

In my youth, newspapers had advertisements, of course, but they were, for the most part, pretty dreary things, just telling you what was available somewhere downtown. However, I was alive to hear the very first singing commercial on nationwide radio. It was for Pepsi-Cola, and it enabled Pepsi to come back from repeated bankruptcy to compete against Coke: "Pepsi-Cola hits the spot. Twelve full ounces, that's a lot. Twice as much for your nickel too. Pepsi-Cola is the drink for you. Nickel, nickel, nickel, nickel, Trickle, trickle, trickle, trickle, Nickel, nickel, nickel, nickel, Trickle, trick!"

Advertising was fairly new and controversial when I was young. In fact, I even won a prize of $500 (real money back then) at my university for an essay I wrote on the effects of advertising on modern culture. Before the 20th Century, goods were too scarce to be advertised. Sales and marketing was duck soup. All you had to do as a shop owner was to put up a little notice in your store window that a new supply of bonnets had come in, and that would be enough. The ladies could come streaming in to buy them. And goods weren't laid out on open counters where anyone could touch, and perhaps steal, them. Oh no. They were carefully protected behind glass and wood, with only a few samples put out on display.

I remember going to GUM Department store on Red Square, in Moscow, in the mid 1960s. GUM was the biggest, fanciest, most well-stocked store in all of the Soviet Union at the time. But goods were scarce, and so no one was allowed to even touch the few things on display. My son, maybe 8 years old at the time, DID touch one of the toys on display and the resulting outraged commotion by the shoppers of Moscow as well as the burly security guards was such that we are lucky we are not still rotting in a gulag somewhere in Siberia. I'll never forget that.

And yet, I remembered thinking at the time how much GUM reminded me of the shops in DeLand, when I was young and things were scarce. The interior of GUM was dusty and poorly lighted by natural light straining in the dirty windows overhead - also like the stores of DeLand in my youth.

Now, advertising is as ubiquitous as air, and the most technically sophisticated and captivating part of our culture. People are more likely to leave their television set to go to the bathroom during the show than during a commercial. It was of course TV that made advertising what it is today, just as it was the automobile, advertising, and the credit card that made marketing and sales what it is today.

Scene Four

In the old days, almost everything that was sold in the downtown stores was locally grown or made. My grandmother, who was originally from Michigan, complained until her dying day that, while it was nice to have citrus fruits in the winter, she hated the scrawny Florida tomatoes. She yearned for the real Michigan tomatoes of her youth, available to her as a child, of course, only in the spring and summer. The few chain stores in the DeLand sold nationally-available goods. But almost everything sold was at least "Made in America" if not in central Florida.

Now the situation is completely different. Very few goods are actually produced locally - most of the oranges eaten in Florida come from Brazil, since the orange groves have all been chopped down to put up the endless succession of ever-grander shopping malls.

Coda

I am sure you know that the story I have told about my old home town could be told almost everywhere in North America. It is a story that can also be told worldwide - in Europe, Asia, Oceania, South America, everywhere - though North America remains the leading example.

What's Next?

But, you must be wondering when I am going to get to the future in my talk. While it might be nice to reminisce for a bit about the past, what we want to know is, "What's next?" What is the future of marketing and sales?

Well, to tell you the truth, I don't know. No one does.

Neither I nor anyone else can tell you for sure what lies ahead.

I *can* do this, however, I can suggest some of the driving factors for change (and continuity), and then put them together into some alternative futures for buying and selling.

That is why I spent some time talking about the past. I tried to show how, in just my own life time, a convergence of novel or maturing factors created contemporary sales and marketing systems, and the contemporary world economy which surrounds and requires them. Indeed, it is not just in my lifetime that this change occurred. It occurred during the lifetime of your own organization, Sales and Marketing Executives-International. According to the information on the webpage of the SME, the history of your organization itself overlaps almost exactly with my own life span and so I am sure SME helped cause the changes that I have observed.

Here is the way the section on the history of SME-I on your webpage [http://www.smei.org/] begins:

"In the late 1800s, the sales and marketing profession was not well respected by the general public. Young people did not seek careers in sales and marketing, and it was not regarded as a profession. Many sales managers recognized the need to improve the professional standards and ethical conduct in sales and marketing and formed Sales Managers' Clubs to meet this need...

"In 1935, Thomas Watson Sr. (Founder of IBM), Raymond Bill (the founder of Sales and Marketing Management Magazine), and several other visionaries invited the presidents of many of the Sales Manager Clubs to New York City to discuss forming a coordinated network of sales and marketing executives associations. It turned out to be the first SME International meeting..."

So one thing we need to ask is, given their importance in creating the present, what might be the futures of the four factors I have discussed - what might be the futures of advertising, of consumer credit, of the global economy and especially international trade, and of transportation and communication technologies?

As some of you know, I do not believe it is possible to predict what THE future can be (Dator, 1998). The most any one can do is to take the various factors shaping the futures and see how they might combine in several alternative futures. So I will do what. Here are three of the many alternative futures I see for sales and marketing.

Future One

Consumer sales will continue to grow and sprawl and merge until the entire world, is one big shopping mall. That is a possible trajectory. Indeed, a very likely trajectory if supporting trends continue.

Global population continues to grow at an alarming pace. There will be lots and lots of new people to feed, water, house, clothe, heal, entertain, and otherwise provide for - including provide jobs for - during the 21st Century.

Over forty years ago, the Greek architect and planner, Konstantinos Doxiades, following the French geographer, Jean Gottman, projected global population and global urban growth, and used the now well-known word, "megalopolis" (and later, ecumenopolis), to describe what he foresaw as the "inevitable" future of human settlements (Gottman, 1974). They have been right so far. From the air, it is hard to see where Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto, Boston, Providence, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Charlotte, Atlanta, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, Miami leave off. Though there are some open spaces as you get further South (and I urge you to find them and put up a shopping mall), the entire East Coast of the US is, in effect and function, one big urban area. And it is spreading westward to meet Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Denver, and south to Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Kansas City, St. Louis, Dallas, Houston, New Orleans - all one big megalopolis. Eventually, perhaps, all one big *covered* shopping mall - because that is something else that Doxiades, and especially Buckminster Fuller, foresaw - completely enclosed cities to protect them from the elements - now, also from the effects of global environmental change (Fuller et. al., 1963).

Statistics show that in spite of the increase of golf, jogging, and sun-based tourism worldwide, most people in developed areas spend less and less time outdoors. We are becoming 21st Century cave dwellers, and the development of enclosed megamalls is clearly a major contributor towards this trend.

And everything I said about North America is true of the rest of the world - The Kanto and Kansai Plains in Japan, Korea, Southeast China, Singapore and Malaysia - you name it.

It is not too fanciful to imagine several huge regional domed megalopoli eventually becoming one huge domed global shopping center by the end of the 21st Century.

Future Two

Or might all of this growth come to a crashing halt? Just as downtowns and earlier shopping centers are now deserted shells, so might that be the future of our current megamalls, with no newer, larger malls in their future?

That is also a highly plausible alternative future to the one I just presented, it seems to me. According to data on the website of the International Association of Shopping Centers [http://www.icsg.org/], the trend in new malls is down nationally. The heyday of building malls was the late 1970s with a marked upward spurt towards the end of the go-go 1980s. Since then, it has mainly been refurbishing old malls and not building new ones that has characterized the industry.

Will this be a continuing trend, or is it just a temporary fluke?

If it is a continuing, downward trend, what is the cause? Is it e-commerce? If it is, then no worries, mate. Just hitch your wagon to a website and go online. Who cares if the malls close as long as sales bloom?

I shall have some more words to say about e-commerce in a few minutes. But I want us to contemplate the future of *any kind* of sales and marketing for a few minutes, and to do that, I need to return to something I mentioned above, but left hanging. And that is the matter of consumer debt.

To the extent there is any public concern about debt in the US at all, it has focused almost entirely on the national debt. For the last half of the 20th Century, many Americans were engaged in a political controversy about whether a large national debt was good or bad or indifferent.

It used to be that Democrats, Keynesians all, argued that it was OK for the government to engage in deficit spending during the time the economy was sagging, in order to jump-start it again.

Republicans used to maintain that deficit spending was always evil.

But then the Republicans elected that high-riding cowboy from the Golden West, Ronald Reagan, who, supporting economic concepts that

George Bush Senior at one time termed "voodoo economics," turned the US from being the number one creditor nation - the nation to whom the rest of the world was in debt - to the number one debtor nation - the nation which owes the most to other nations.

And Reagan did that within a two year span - from 1980, when he took over, to 1983. And the US still is the world's leading debtor nation, though Japan is challenging us for that distinction.

Of course, Republicans and Democrats alike now are trying to get you to believe that there are huge budget surpluses currently and for the foreseeable future which, if applied properly, can erase the national debt by 2013, or some such date. Clinton even made a big show a short while ago of paying down one billion dollars - of a 6 TRILLION dollar national debt[1] - not much when you place what was paid against what is still owed. But, as some Congressman said once upon a time, "a billion dollars here, a billion dollars there; before you know it you're talking real money."

However, just a few days ago, the Congressional Budget Office had the courage to admit, and the *Honolulu Advertiser* had the wisdom to print on the first page, that the "Ever-growing budget surpluses, which are prompting the major party presidential candidates to boost their tax cut and spending plans, have done little to change a grim long-term financial outlook for the US." "Even if politicians were to agree to save every penny of the surplus and use it to pay off the national debt, the cost of providing promised health and retirement benefits after the baby boom generation leaves the work force will overwhelm the federal budget, the CBO concluded. 'If the nation's leaders do not change current policies to eliminate that imbalance, federal deficits are likely to reappear and eventually drive federal debt to unsustainable levels' the CBO said."[2]

Moreover, in spite of all this, the US military is demanding to restore its budget back to the bloated levels of the good old Cold War days, even though there is absolutely no credible enemy in sight to require it, and even though the far greater real threat to our national security is not some human enemy but rather our mounting indebtedness on the one hand and looming global environmental change on the other. So it is clear to me that our huge national debt remains a brooding problem for the future, especially when - not "if" but when - the next recession hits, and why it hits which might very well be from the looming end of oil as our profligate fuel of choice.

In any event, it is certainly the case that the discussion of the national debt occupies far more ink and oratory than does the discussion of consumer debt. But it is my contention that it is - and has been for 30 years - to consumer debt that people should turn their attention, because it suggests that most conventional economic beliefs and policies are myths if not outright lies.

No one, not even the richest person in the world, "earns" enough money *through their labor*, to enable them to buy everything they want. Everyone, from the richest to the poorest, has to borrow vast sums of money. The poorest, or at least the middle class, borrow the most, in relation to what they earn, or save.

Without this huge and growing bubble of consumer debt, we would have had a major economic depression in 1980, when Reagan took over, as well as during the mid 1990s, when the Asian portion of the global bubble burst. But how much longer can our portion of the bubble continue to expand?

"[N]ew statistics [from a report by the Federal Reserve] offer ample evidence for those who argue that Americans are living dangerously beyond their means, and that the current patterns of economic growth are creating unacceptable divisions in society." "Growing debt contributed to the plight of the bottom-of-the-ladder groups. The Fed researchers found that about one family in eight spent more than 40 percent of their income toward meeting their debt payments in 1998, up appreciably from 10.5 percent in 1996. The measure rose for most demographic groups, but families with incomes below $50,000 and the elderly showed the greatest strains."

"Perhaps the most striking revelation of the report concerned rising levels of indebtedness during an economic boom fueled foremost by consumer spending. Families took on higher levels of virtually all forms of debt in the three year period under study: mortgages, installment loans, credit-card debt and other obligations. 'The most amazing figure to me is that the median value of total family indebtedness rose from $23,400 in 1995 to $33,300 in 1998,' said Edward Wolff, a New York University economist."[3]

Meanwhile, Americans continue reach the lowest rate of savings ever - month after month after month. Here are some quotes:

"The percentage of income that Americans were able to save [sank] to two-tenths of a percent in June, the lowest level since the Government began keeping monthly statistics in 1959"[4] But on June 28, 1999, the government said the savings rate "fell to a record low of minus 1.2 percent."[5] "By August [1999], the saving rate was minus 1.5 percent."[6]

The headline of an article in the *Star Bulletin* for January 31, 2000 read, "America's spending tops their income" and the first sentence said "American's personal income rose in December and they spent all of it and more, giving the nation's retailers one of their best holiday seasons in years." Elsewhere the article noted that "With Americans spending more than they earned in December, the personal savings rate was pulled to a record monthly low."

Well maybe that was just the Christmas shopping, and the savings rate got better later?

No. The headline in the *Star Bulletin* for August 28, 2000 once again stated, "American's savings rate hits all-time low" with the text explaining that "spending by consumers increased twice as fast as their incomes."

And then, only a few weeks ago, the headline in a *Star-Bulletin* article (September 29, 2000, p. B-4) read, "Free-spending Americans put savings at all-time low." The third paragraph begins, "With spending outpacing income, the amount of after-tax income left over after spending fell to a negative 0.4% - the lowest rate since the Commerce Department began tracking such data in 1959."

Folks, as Dave Barry would say, "I am not making this up." "Consumers are financing shopping sprees through borrowing, previous savings, or gains from stock market and other investments," the report concludes once again.

Indeed, as saving plummets to new depths, levels of consumer debt get higher and higher at the same time:

"Americans are carrying more debt than ever - about $1.3 trillion not including mortgages." " The average household credit card balance jumped 2.5% to $4,722 last year."[7]

Is it a coincidence that Congress recently passed a law making it much harder for consumers to clear all debts by declaring bankruptcy? I don't think so. Will this new law make people less likely to use their cards so as to avoid going bankrupt? I don't think so.

Once upon a time it was possible to deduct the interest you paid on your credit cards from your income tax, like you still can do with your mortgage. When the credit card interest deduction law was changed, I expected there to be a massive slowdown in consumer deficit spending. Silly me for believing the economists who say that consumers are rational! If the change had any effect, it was temporary, and people happily charged ahead piling up debts and double-digit interest rates without a worry in the world.

My grandfather must be rolling in his grave.

Given the fact that our global economy sits on top of a tremendously fragile bubble of national, commercial, and personal debt, it is a good thing that consumers are apparently irrational and keep on going deeper in debt, because anything that might slow or stagnate consumer deficit spending could result in catastrophe for you as well as for me.

Global capitalism is the only game in town. When communism suddenly and unexpectedly collapsed at the end of the 1980s, only capitalism remained, and boy, did it take OFF! Nothing can stop it. There are no alternatives.

Yet from other points of view, many people argue that capitalism, especially growing, global capitalism, is in fact not sustainable. It is not *economically* sustainable, because it is causing the huge gap between the super rich and everyone else which will provoke reaction, and perhaps revolution, in the future (Stiobel, 1999).

Moreover, hypergrowth-oriented capitalism is not *environmentally* sustainable, many people insist. We are eating and polluting the planet at a rate from which old Mother Earth cannot recover. If the masses don't revolt, the Earth may collapse, in either case bringing predatory capitalism, and certainly consumer-frenzied shopping, to an end (Clarke, 2000).

Isn't this what "Seattle" was all about - meaning the thousands of people who showed up in that city a year ago, and brought the WTO conference to a screeching halt? And then showed up in D. C. six months ago, and nearly did the same thing, and in Prague and then Australia a few months ago.

Seattle was not fluke. It was not a one-time event. It is the tip of a very big iceberg of popular and global discontent which allies the mom and pop, small-town shopkeepers of the world with blue collar labor unionists, with environmentalists, with patriots, Militiamen, the Religious Right, and advocates of Buy America. That is a LOT of people who, if united (as they were for a while in Seattle) can change history.

Future three

A third alternative future suggests that sales and marketing might transform, as part of a general global transformation, from an aspect of industrial society, to a feature of the information society, and thence, in the twinkling of an eye, into a part of the performance society—the emerging economy not of goods, not even of information, but of icons, of virtuality, and of play (e.g. Sternberg, 1999; Jensen, 1999; Pine, 1999).

In this future, e-commerce comes into its own as its wildest hypers are presently hyping.

I regret to tell you that I am among the hypers, not only as it impacts you, as marketers and sellers of America, but also because the same forces that are potentially transforming you are clearly transforming me.

That is why I linked us together in the title to my talk. We are both dinosaurs - struggling, surviving remnants of a once, more or less, noble past.

I have been online for many years. I was probably the first UH professor to experience the future when, in the mid 1970s, I was invited to participate in an experiment in electronic communication termed EIES - the Electronic Information Exchange System - set up by Professor Murray Turoff with a grant from the National Science Foundation. I used the very latest equipment - a Texas Instrument terminal which had absolutely no memory - not a single K. If I wanted a record of what I wrote, or what was written to me, I had to "echo" it out on an attached printer. But the terminal did permit me to access, via an acoustic coupler, a long distance phone line which connected me with a minicomputer at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. And from that I could access about 100 other scholars distributed across North America, Europe and over to me in Hawaii.

My life has never been the same since then. And so, when the UH computing center finally established a system, in the mid 1980s, that permitted my students to go online, I required all students in all of my classes to do so, and to join a caucus or listserv (a kind of chat room open only to students in my class).

That totally transformed my classes, the way I taught, and who was in charge. In the old face-to-face classes, it used to be me. But not any more. The students now control their own learning, and I am just one of the guys, trying to get a word in edgewise.

Of course, UH being what it is, I still have to show up in the classroom several hours a week. I have to go to my office on the Manoa campus and sit there for people to come look at me. But this is all a waste of everyone's time.

I have also been teaching entirely online courses now for several years, and I intend to put all of my courses online as soon as I can, and then head for the beach.

I am totally opposed to anyone building any more university buildings anywhere. Certainly no more buildings at Manoa, but also No West

Oahu campus. That is a total boondoggle for the construction industry, and has no pedagogical justification what so ever.

If any of you read the *Star Bulletin* [January 23, 1999], or the University Of Hawaii alumni magazine, *Malamalama* [Vol. 24, No. 1, January-June 2000] then you may know that I have already declared in print that the day of brick and mortar universities is over - not over entirely, but over as "Flagships"; as the major way to obtain an education (Dator, 1998).

They are basically over now. A year or so ago, I stupidly said to my students that they should go to the library do some kind of research. They looked at me as if I were demented. Go to the Library! You have GOT to be joking. The only reason to go to the library is to find a cool, quiet, and empty place to sleep.

If they want information, they go online and find stuff I never knew existed. And often wish didn't.

And so for you also.

If you have ever tried e-shopping, you know it is positively addictive. I have, and I am a person who would far, far rather drop than shop. But there is something I find really intriguing about e-shopping.

Sure, the initial learning curve is a bit high, and even the best websites are still pretty clunky.

But we are dealing with Model Ts, or at best Model As, here - if any of you know what I am talking about and can appreciate *that* distinction. Anyway, what I mean is that we are dealing with early, still very primitive technology. And it is an absolute rule that the earliest technology is inferior, initially, to the technology it will eventually replace.

The pace is steadily picking up. I find the CitiPlaza.com software from Citicorp to be almost as swift as advertised, and it (and all like it) is bound to get better. And I, like many of you, brought my Cue Cat with me in case there was a bar code lying around here that I could nuzzle her snout up against, and make a purchase while I am here with you.

And I absolutely love the recent practice by Amazon.com of what they call, "dynamic pricing," don't you? According to *the Washington Post*, 27 September 2000 (online) "With dynamic pricing, a Web site can evaluate the personal information pertaining to a particular customer and change a product's price based on that customer's income, geographic location, or one of many other variables." "A University of Michigan professor claims to have seen price differences of as much as $10 for certain items."

Moreover, "Amazon seemed to have targeted repeat customers for the price increases." There was an initial outcry against it, but "some observers believe that other Web sites will pick up this trend and that consumers may be powerless against it. "

Don't you love it? I know I do.

It fits right in with a scheme I suggested to the Legislature some time ago that traffic fines and governmental services should be scaled to the wealth or poverty of the violator or service receiver. Rich guys should pay more for speeding tickets than do poor ones; rich polluters should pay more than poor ones; and rich park users should pay more than poor users pay, for three examples. The Legislature scoffed at my idea at that time, but now that Amazon has admitted that business favors "dynamic pricing" and can do it very easy technically, it certainly must be OK for government to follow this shrewd business-like policy as well, don't you agree?

E-government is transforming government as profoundly as e-commerce is transforming you.

So you guys cannot be complacent, and I don't assume you are, because if you are, then e-commerce will eat you for lunch.

A Canadian futurist friend of mine, named Frank Feather, has recently published a book called FutureConsumer.com: *The Webolution of Shopping to 2010.*

Here are some excerpts from it, according to a review in Future Survey, September 2000, p.3:

"The Webolution 'will rock the world utterly transforming life and commerce.' Online sales will grow rapidly in the next decade, topping $1 trillion by 2010, or 31% of retail sales. 'By then, the Web will be 100 times bigger than today - a tidal wave drowning those who can't or won't surf.'

Not only will the web be bigger, it will also be more user-friendly - more life-like, might be a better way to put it. Now, when you e-shop, you have to look at words and pictures, and then write and click. But what appear to be true three-dimensional things that you can touch and handle, and smell and pinch, and turn over and taste, or slam and kick - these already exist now, expensively, in some spheres (such as telemedicine and advanced computer-based component design) but will soon be available, cheaply, to anyone anywhere. Indeed, I saw only two days ago two relevant announcements. One was by "Komid, a Korean venture firm, [that] has developed a browser [called "iConnector"] that can search for and display three-dimensional multimedia content on the Web." "Iconnector features speech recognition capability, as well as the ability to convert between 2-D and 3-D formats." "A built-in e-purse facilitates e-commerce transactions."[8]

The second announcement was about smells: "'Aromagenomics' is the buzz word at DigiScents' booth at Internet World. 'DigiScents is combining biotechnology, informatics, and sensory research to create a digital platform that will revolutionize the world of smell,' says DigiScents CEO Joel Bellenson. 'Digital scent will be added to the streaming media, e-mail, online games, e-commerce and advertising,' says Bellenson."[9]

Feather believes that the web will be a "second skin" for us, going wherever we go, whatever we do, in entertainment, education, and goverance, as well as in shopping, finance and commerce. Just last week a Japanese electronics lab announced "a wearable wireless phone that consists of only a wristband. The band houses a tiny microphone and a device that converts audio signals into vibrations. To listen to a call, the wearer sticks a finger in one ear. The caller's voice is converted to vibrations, which travel through the hand and finger and into the ear canal. The wearer talks back into the wristband microphone. The Whisper phone, as it's called, has no buttons to press, no keypad to control. When the wristband vibrates, signaling an incoming call, the wearer taps his or her thumb and index finger together to 'answer.'" There are also voice-operated commands.[10]

Feather forecasts how much each sector of retailing will grow (apparel and footwear, automobiles, groceries, health and beauty care, homes and home improvements - you name it). By 2010, Feather says, the top five website companies by order of size will be "Walmart, AOL-TimeWarner, Amazon.com, Webvan.com, and Quixtar.com"

Did I read out the name of your company? Why not?

Michael Marien, who writes *Future Survey* and is, I can tell you, a very severe critic of most things he includes in his publication, says of Feather's book that it is "one of the year's best futures books. Clearly and tightly written with a plethora of data and fearless forecasts."

From my point of view, 2010 - Frank Feather's time frame here - is not very far away. How about 2020, and onward?

At the present time, the weakest link in e-shopping is obtaining the physical thing you purchase online. That still has to be actually transported to you somehow. Whole new businesses are growing up around that present fact.

But they won't last long. Almost exactly three years ago, scientists were able for the first time to teleport a molecule from one room to another.[11] That was the first step towards teleporting that is possible now only in science fiction, like the popular television show, *Star Trek*.

But the "telexeroxing", if you will, of physical objects may not be far off, and rapid advances in nanotechnology suggest that fairly soon, creating any object you want wherever you want it may be as easy as getting information via a cell phone is now, or as convenient as getting a drink of water is by simply turning on a faucet in your home.

However, I don't expect the teleporting of live things, certainly not humans, any time soon. But of nonliving things, yes, I guarantee it. Developments in nanotechnology also facilitate it.

Sure, when that happens, downtowns will still exist, though only as pale shadows of what they once were.

So also physical stores and shopping centers will persist, though certainly not in their current pride of place.

What might shopping centers become? Perhaps a quiet, protected place for the huge number of elderly people we will soon have to hang out. All of the developed world will look like an old-folks home in a few years, so you can expect mobs of aging Boomers to cruise your safe, climate-controlled, and otherwise empty malls in their high tech walkers and snazzy electric wheel chairs.

Flagship Universities, Flagship Stores, and Flagship Malls are all merely proud Titanics, and we here are merely rearranging deck chairs and whistling "Dixie".

But, as I say, what do I know?[12]

Till We Meet Again!

I tried to show that there are at least three futures for marketing and sales that I can see. One anticipates the continuation of current growth trends with lots of prosperity still in what you have been doing for the past decades. The second future fears the collapse of the global economy, and of you with it. And the third future looks forward to the transformation of the economy, the society - and the environment.

There no doubt are other options.

So I propose that you invite me back in twenty years so we can see what actually happened and why. It is possible, I suppose, that whatever made you rich over the last decades will continue to work over the coming ones, but I doubt it. Global economic and environmental crisis looks far more likely, I am sad to say. And yet, when all is said and done, my money (had I any) is on the third future, transformation. Where is yours?

Notes

1. *Honolulu Advertiser*, March 10, 2000, p. A2
2. "Budget surpluses won't stop future shortfall, agency says," *Ho-nolulu Advertiser*, October 7, 2000, p. A1.
3. "Fed says family wealth declining dangerously," *Honolulu Advertiser*, January 19, 2000, p. Al, A6
4. *New York Times*, August 4, 1998, p. c2
5. *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, July 28, 1999
6. *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, October 1, 1999, p. C1
7. *Honolulu Advertiser*, October 7, 1999, p. B7
8. Korea Herald 24 Oct 2000. *http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/news/2000/10/ __10/20001024_1056.htm].*
9. TechWeb 26 Oct 2000. *http://www.techweb.com/wire/story/ TWB 20001026S0007].*
10. ["Finger Phones: An Earful of an Innovation" The Standard 10 Oct 2000.
11. A. Furusawa, et al., "Unconditional Quantum Teleportation," *Science*, October 23' 1,998, p.706-709. See also, "Quantum Leap, " *Science*, February 18' 2000, p. 1183; "Telportation guru stakes out new ground," *Science* 26 May 2000, p. 1327; and "Quantum entangled bits step closer to IT," Science, 21 July 2000, p. 405f
12. Versions of this paper were given to meetings in Honolulu of the International Association of Shopping Malls, March 17. 2000, and of the Sales & Marketing Executives - International, October 24, 2000. So the "you" referred to throughout this essay is a bunch of shoppingmall and sales and marketing executives, and may not actually be "you", dear Reader. Thanks to John Alves for arranging both of the speaking opportunities

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