The Spatial Web and the Birth of the Borg

by **Joseph P. Farrell**, *Giza Death Star*
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This strange article — shared by U. to whom a big thank you — at first did not capture my imagination. I read it, thinking, "oh this is just a typical paean of praise to the wonderful world of digitech we're entering," and as such, it didn't really capture my imagination. It was the usual loosey-goosey stuff about how wonderful it will be to be interconnected, and how dangerous a time it is that we're entering, but it also presents a golden opportunity for us to make it a better world. I think you get the idea, and most of us have probably read articles like this before…

…Insert group hug, kumbaya, and jonquils and daisies here.

But then, as I was half-reading and half-skimming, my mind caught something that said "Whoa! Go back! Read that again, and *pay attention* this time!" It was a bit of carefully disguised transhumanism. Here's the article, and see if you catch it too:

[An Introduction to The Spatial Web](#)

Now perhaps if you're like me, the mad and insane rush of some people to embrace the transhumanist goal of human-machine integration will have made you focus on various paragraphs in this paean of praise. But here's the ones that woke me up:

The Spatial Web weaves together all of the digital and

physical strands of our future world into the fabric of a new universe where next-gen computing technologies generate a unified reality; **where our digital and physical lives become one.** This is a new kind of network, not merely one of interconnected computers like the original Internet or a network of interlinked pages, text, and media like the World Wide Web but rather a "living network" made up of the interconnections between people, places, and things, their virtual counterparts, and the interactions, transactions and transportation between them. Like the World Wide Web before it, this new Spatial Web requires new code to bring it to life. Not merely software code, but critically, ethical, and social codes as well.

==Today, we can't share knowledge all that effectively because we cannot share our mental models and maps of the world directly between brains. We can't copy/paste ideas and concepts between ourselves, much less create, edit, or share them with AI, or IoT devices.==

But what if we had the technology to collaborate with machines and artificial intelligence to share collective 3D models and maps of our experience and knowledge directly? Instead of being locked in our Private VR we could share in a kind of multi-dimensional Public AR — a digitally-mediated consensus reality — an idea as exciting as it is concerning. However, using Distributed Ledger technologies like Blockchain could enable us to reliably verify factual data about the world while enabling the freedom to collaboratively explore, edit, mashup, and remix reality. These technologies could help us confirm the difference between the real and the "projected," between the empirically valid and the creatively expressed, providing us an Augmented Intelligent Reality.

The power of the Spatial Web initially comes from its ability to describe the world in the language that the world speaks to us in — geometry. The Spatial Web lets us use a digitally-mediated universal language in which all information can

*become spatial. It enables the current information on the web to be placed spatially and contextually on objects and at locations, where we can interact with information in the most natural and intuitive ways, by merely looking, speaking, gesturing, or even thinking. But it also enables the digital to be more physical as sensors and robotics become embedded into our environments and onto the objects around us. It makes our world smarter as it adds intelligence and context to any place, any object, and every person that we encounter, and it allows our relationships with each other and this new network to be more trustworthy, more secure, and faster by decentralizing and distributing the computing and storage of the data. It will enable us to accelerate and improve, augment and enhance every facet of our existence — our education, our creativity, our health, our businesses, our legal system, our politics, and our ecologies. **The Spatial Web has the potential to move us from predominantly egocentric and ethnocentric concerns to more worldcentric ones that are more holistic, equitable, and inclusive.** (Boldface emphasis added)*

Note the ending on all the required cliches: "holistic" and "equitable" and "inclusive" and "egocentric" and "ethnocentric" march across the page in a parade of progressive pabulum to make us feel better about all this. He might have thrown some flower petals — jonquils and daisies will do — to give it that touch of "nature" and "innocence." Huzzah! a utopian world of "interconnectedness" dawns before us.

But I rather suspect that behind the word "egocentric" lie the words "personhood" and "individuality" and which includes all the things that come with them, like creativity, personality, and (here's a big one), responsibility. Similarly, behind the word "ethnocentric" come other concepts, like tradition, heritage or culture. Thus, the move is really away from personhood and away from that peculiar type of

interconnectedness called heritage, tradition, culture. Those are, you'll note, very human things.

What we're being asked to contemplate is rather a world where "our digital and physical lives become one," where everyone shares "collective 3D models and maps of our experience and knowledge directly" so that "instead of being locked in our Private (Virtual reality) we could share in a kind of multi-dimensional… digitally-mediated consensus reality." Even the author of this has to admit this is "an idea as exciting as it is concerning." Ahhh…. but wait! There's good news. We might be able to avoid "all that is 'concerning'" by (here comes more onanistic prose) "using Distributed Ledger technologies like Blockchain" which "could enable us to reliably verify factual data about the world while enabling the freedom to collaboratively explore, edit, mashup, and remix reality."

Uh huh… So imagine a world like this, where everyone's thoughts are open to everyone else in the waking world. I'm reminded of the *Star Trek* concept of the Borg, a collective hive where each individual hears — *constantly* — the interior conversations of every other member of the hive. It's a world were there is constant noise, endless chatter, and no *rest* for the individual from any of it. There is no conversation either, just chatter.   It is an inhuman world, precisely *because* it has no place for the "egocentric", a term whose negative connotations are employed by such people precisely in order to do away with the underlying concept of the individual person itself. It is an inhuman world precisely *because* it has no place for the "ethnocentric," a term whose negative connotations, again, are employed precisely in order to do away with the underlying concept of tradition, culture, and heritage. Certainly, those terms can bear both a negative and a positive sense. When "egocentrism" goes to extremes, one ends up with a narcissist, a sociopath, a psychopath; but "egocentrism" might also convey simply the concept of "self-awareness," that one is, indeed, a "self." I

say this because there are certain "new agey 'philosophies'" that think the self is the root of all problems, and I cannot help but get that impression from the the statements in this article. Notably, other terms like "equitable" and "inclusive" have been left conveniently undefined, and how much blood has been spilled in the last century by similarly utopian ideologies, espousing similar utopian (and onanistic) prose, in the name of "inclusiveness" and "equality"?

No, you can count me out of this latest Borg collective. I do not want to be "holistic" nor "worldcentric", nor "included". I'd much rather remain egocentric, ethnocentric, and all the other isms that make me human, and just sit and enjoy a pipe of tobacco, and some good old fashioned analogue conversation with friends, than to be an integrated digital cog in a "digitally mediated consensus" of "holistic, equitable, and inclusive world-centrism."

And one final thing, did you notice the subtle thing that was done here, with the reference to "distributed ledger technologies"? Did you notice how subtly humanity itself was transformed into a crypto-currency, and into the collateral for it? Not for nothing does the diagram chosen to illustrate the "Spatial Web" take the shape of a Cube…

… just like *Star Trek's* Borg…

See you on the flip side…