

TOPICS:

Future of Business, Innovation, Technology, Science

BIG IDEAS:

- **Digital Maoism.** The Hazards of the New Online Collectivism: The hive mind is for the most part stupid and boring. Why pay attention to it? The problem is in the way the Wikipedia has come to be regarded and used; how it's been elevated to such importance so quickly. And that is part of the larger pattern of the appeal of a new online collectivism that is nothing less than a resurgence of the idea that the collective is all-wise, that it is desirable to have influence concentrated in a bottleneck that can channel the collective with the most verity and force. The fact that it's now being re-introduced today by prominent technologists and futurists, people who in many cases I know and like, doesn't make it any less dangerous.
- **Technology and the Future of the Human Soul or What is a Person?** Technology is getting powerful enough that it will soon change the meaning of the word "person." How will we find meaning and direction when biotechnology and artificial intelligence threaten to undo every assumption we have about our identities?
- **Advice to a Young Digital Artist.** Jaron leads a skeptical appraisal of computers and the psychology of relating to them that can break through the blandness barrier that confines most digital creations.



Jaron Lanier

*Computer Scientist, Composer,
Visual Artist, and Commentator
on all things Digital*

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BIOGRAPHY

Jaron Lanier came on the scene with his work in Virtual Reality (VR), a term he coined. In the early 1980s, Jaron founded VPL Research, the first company to sell VR products. In the late 1980s, he led the team that developed the first implementations of multi-person virtual worlds using head mounted displays, for both local and wide area networks, as well as the first "avatars," or representations of users within such systems. He led the team that developed the first widely used software platform architecture for immersive virtual reality applications. Sun Microsystems acquired VPL's seminal portfolio of VR patents and networked 3D graphics in 1999.

Since then, Jaron has collaborated broadly with researchers in machine vision, computational neuroscience, cell biology modeling, and other disciplines defining the border between human cognition and the rest of the world. He also is working with physicists on "digital" approaches to fundamental theories.

Lanier is a well-known author and speaker. "Jaron's World," a monthly column in *Discover* magazine, is devoted to his own wide-ranging ideas and research.

He writes and speaks on numerous topics, including high-technology business, the social impact of technological practices,

the philosophy of consciousness and information, Internet politics, and the future of humanism. His client list includes most of the well-known high technology firms, as well as many others in the energy, automotive, and financial services industries.

His book, *Technology and the Future of the Human Soul* will be finished someday, but is delayed by epic procrastination. His writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*, *Harpers Magazine*, *The Sciences*, *Wired Magazine* (where he is a founding contributing editor,) and *Scientific American*. He has edited special "future" issues of *SPIN* and *Civilization* magazines.

He has served in various research groups concerned with the future and has been appointed a fellow at Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, the World Economic Forum, and the MacArthur Foundation Roundtables. Jaron is also one of the "remarkable people" of the Global Business Network.



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