Elgar Prudhomme: I’m new at this - I saw the group name and was curious. :). I like the philosophical bent - one of my interests is human freedom. I’m a philosophy student, by the way.

Jack Sondergaard: I didn’t finish college, but majored in philosophy. I now do a lot of studying and writing articles for my website http://hyperworlds.org

VoyeurOne Baron: That’s excellent, will check it out. What kind of writing do you do Jack?

Jack Sondergaard: I write about design of software that encourages every viewpoint to be heard, not just the consensus one.

MichaelJohn Turner: interesting...

Jack Sondergaard: So that is different from what wikis encourage, which is primarily one viewpoint, or at least only the mainstream ones.

VoyeurOne Baron: Is that the wiki? or the wiki culture?

Jack Sondergaard: Both, I think, as the software encourages just one version of a particular topic or sub-topic, and not a multitude of versions expressing many viewpoints on some subjects.

MichaelJohn Turner: I thought it encouraged the formulation of the most agreed upon viewpoint? Including opposite ones in a way?

Jack Sondergaard: But I would favor the expression in a complete way of all viewpoints and...
freedom to comment on each. And I believe that those holding a particular viewpoint can usually best present it, although individuals vary widely in how effectively they can do that.

MichaelJohn Turner: Can you give a practical example?

Elgar Prudhomme: I am not familiar with many of the technologies available, besides wikis and personal webpages/blogs. MichaelJohn's request speaks for me, too. :)

Jack Sondergaard: Software designed decades ago, but still in development, a hypertext system called Xanadu, allows for practically unlimited versions of any document to be created. And complete freedom to quote anyone else without asking permission, and all quotations point back to the full context of the original. So it favors different goals than wikis, which generally have only one version of a topic.

VoyeurOne Baron: But can't there be a problem of just speaking beside each other and never having to confront... if there is no desire to find common points of reference...?

MichaelJohn Turner: Isn't that the same maybe Jack, as saying everything thats somehow in your mind and therefore impractical?

Jack Sondergaard: Anyone can create an overall topic index, recommendations, a magazine, if you wish, and link it to recommended documents. I don't think it is impractical, as you aren't forcing anyone to read it, but it is there so if someone finds it useful, they will recommend it to others.

MichaelJohn Turner: Don't we edit ourselves to the most agreed upon words?

Jack Sondergaard: Yes, we tend to not be controversial and come to a consensus, even when the facts don't yet support only one possible conclusion.

VoyeurOne Baron: Do you relate this software development to a notion of autonomy Jack?

Jack Sondergaard: Yes, I think it encourages individual critical thought, rather than trying to think only as a group.

VoyeurOne Baron: I see. Could be interesting if you wanted to expand on that on the flack attack wiki (maybe specifically as a critique of the wiki...). Lex, I know, you've started writing an article for Flack Attack. Maybe you want to bring up some of the issues you are thinking about...

Lex Paz: Oh. I'm still working on it. Actually I'm kind of stuck. The issue is virtuality from its latin point of view... potentiality

VoyeurOne Baron: Well, both elgar and Jack are philosophers. So maybe they could help you out...

Lex Paz: The idea is to reinterpret virtuality into a political concept in relation to Marx general intellect... and Hanna Ardent's discussion on virtu.

Jack Sondergaard: Do you mean something like having political offices and duties in virtual worlds? Or something else?

Lex Paz: Rather trying to think virtuality as a kind of common intellect where “political ideas” can “come into existens”. A kind of portal for the creating of politics

Elgar Prudhomme: I am not sure what is meant, still, by “virtuality” - I would like to think of this space, “SecondLife” as a virtual reality space. By “Common Intellect” do you mean, that which we tend to produce in discussions like this one? ... in discussions, in places, like this one... I mean.

Lex Paz: Yes. But more the making of Second Life as a whole. Sharing a common imagination...

Jack Sondergaard: I think it would be interesting to see what changes in attitude would happen if there was no attempt to emulate the real physical world in a virtual world, but everyone could make up any kind of laws of cause and effect. How would that affect their politics.

MichaelJohn Turner: You mean to look at virtuality not only as ‘almost like physical/analog reality’ but as a state of becoming reality?

Lex Paz: Yes, that's it: A state of becoming reality...

MichaelJohn Turner: a state where possibility can become reality

Elgar Prudhomme: Wow – it would seem that political power might still exist in the form of the
decision-makers who either 1.) define the particular virtual world’s “settings” or 2.) monitor or make changes to those settings over time.

**Jack Sondergaard:** I think the similarities to the “real” world (money, land, ownership of things) causes a lot of thinking about how we act here relates to the physical world.

**Lex Paz:** I got a bit lost....

**MichaelJohn Turner:** Of course in that sense, Lex, virtuality exists any moment of our lives?

**Jack Sondergaard:** We can try out ideas here easily and cheaply that would be difficult in the physical world.

**MichaelJohn Turner:** I agree Jack, it offers us a new way of looking at how we (want to) do things...

**Elgar Prudhomme:** Yes – in that regard, Second Life is a simulation space, trial-and-error space, for testing ideas that we might implement in the concrete world.

**VoyeurOne Baron:** But it’s also a place where we do things. An online world isn’t just a model, it’s also a place in itself.

**Elgar Prudhomme:** Yes, this is an actual place - events must “take place” somewhere, and there are events taking place here that are not taking place out in the concrete world. Events – such as me moving this chair/box – occur on all our screens, but it cannot be true that I am doing something in many places at once? so it must be happening “here”, and that “here” is “inside Second Life”

**Lex Paz:** But in a way virtual reality in this sense is other... Second Life is other from first life in the way it poses imagination. But, to go on. and what may be the issue is: How do we relate to the outside – the law of Linden Lab? Maybe you could think of Linde Lab as God from this point of view, from in-world?

**Elgar Prudhomme:** Linden Lab as a corporate decisionmaker – a kind of God over this world, because this “world’s” ground of being is in Linden Lab’s hands. I could see a God analogy making sense. In fact, we will all obey Lindenlab’s godlike command to accept a software update later today, or else we will no longer belong to this world. :). “Convert or die” as a gospel of the corporation that holds Second Life in its hands.

**VoyeurOne Baron:** But the GOD perspective can only be from in-world. I mean, Linden Lab is only God for your avatar. So it comes back to what we talked about at last meeting... to what extent the avatar is autonomous

**MichaelJohn Turner:** The avatar is a puppet but also the puppeteer in other ways

**Lex Paz:** It may of course be possible that God will die one day, like in First Life

**Jack Sondergaard:** I agree with Linden’s policy of requiring software updates, I have designed software, and trying to run this place with different
people using different versions of the software would be a big headache. We do have a great deal of control over the content of Second Life, the users build it.

**Elgar Prudhomme:** Oh, I don’t disagree, Jack. I just was carrying the analogy farther. Arguably, Linden has more influence than the Judeo-Christian God, because Linden’s appeal to us to convert has more immediate consequences than, say, the apostles’ or Moses’

**VoyeurOne Baron:** We have been talking at The Port about getting together programmers in Second Life to help build an Open source, distributed metaverse

**Elgar Prudhomme:** I have heard that there are other attempts to open-source a universe, but I haven’t seen anything like that implemented. has one been run, actually, yet?

**VoyeurOne Baron:** Yes, there are a couple of experiments going on...

**Jack Sondergaard:** That would be an interesting project politically and from a business standpoint. It would be like the customers of a store gathering in a store to meet and plan how to build a competitive business, very interesting

**VoyeurOne Baron:** Indeed.... that’s our thinking. But it wouldn’t really be a business more like a public space without centralized ownership

**Elgar Prudhomme:** I wonder how there would be security and consistency of the physical servers and software in such a universe?

**MichaelJohn Turner:** Already people are using different technologies at the same time, like yahoo voice or skype with second life... So you are involved in this attempt voyeur?

**VoyeurOne Baron:** It’s something we are planning... and looking into (but I don’t do programming myself)

**MichaelJohn Turner:** You think God is listening?

**Elgar Prudhomme:** God is always listening. :) whether he cares is another matter....

**Lex Paz:** I think this God is much slower then the Real Life God

**Elgar Prudhomme:** LOL!! – and probably doesn’t have the manpower to monitor all conversations

**Jack Sondergaard:** I think it would be amusing that we would think so highly of the collaborative environment of Second Life that we would choose to gather here to design a competitor

**VoyeurOne Baron:** One thing that would be relevant would be if it was possible to have encryption in a distributed metaverse

**Jack Sondergaard:** It is possible. http://www.safeworlds.com has a peer to peer fully encrypted collaborative program

**VoyeurOne Baron:** Today in Sweden they are voting in parliament on a new data act (similar to the US Patriot Act), which would require all service providers to store IP-adressess and all communication from and to your computer

**MichaelJohn Turner:** In context of war against terrorism?

**VoyeurOne Baron:** Yes, that’s what they say MichaelJohn. But the music industry has also been very interested in the reform

**Elgar Prudhomme:** *sigh* and here I had hoped we could see the end of that here in the US before it spread elsewhere.

**VoyeurOne Baron:** Now it’s coming to Europe, big time...

**Elgar Prudhomme:** I wonder if Second Life and other online worlds can provide anonymity, though. I think they might, as far as communications are concerned. Once in the Second Life network, your work is not monitored, unless your data line is tapped directly. it’s not like going to website after website, leaving a URL trail behind you.

**MichaelJohn Turner:** Are these trails actually stored in the US now?

**Elgar Prudhomme:** It would not be hard, technically, to do so. I do not know how extensively the US government tracks the online usage of its citizens without a specific warrant.

**VoyeurOne Baron:** I thought the echelon kind of had that covered...
Elgar Prudhomme: Echelon was *supposed* to have been dismantled. But my paranoia isn’t satisfied that this is the case.

VoyeurOne Baron: To what extent does Linden Lab monitor us? What do they do with the data?

Elgar Prudhomme: Text is easy to record in bulk. Theoretically it shouldn’t be hard to archive and then search all the text “spoken” anywhere in Second Life. That is one advantage that an open source universe, with encryption, would offer – a way to monitor the software of the servers, to make sure that the text remained encrypted / the servers remained “blind” to the goings-on in-world.

Michael John Turner: So yes, there are higher hierarchy parties in second life and first life that control and monitor use of relative autonomy, as well as inherent limits to our autonomy.

Jack Sondergaard: I think time will come when most email will be encrypted and authenticated, as a lot of business is transacted by email.

Elgar Prudhomme: ...an issue. In an opensource universe is who gets entrusted with the watchcare of the distributed servers?

Jack Sondergaard: And who will watch the watchers?

Elgar Prudhomme: Exactly. Same problem as in any form of government.

Lex Paz: But Is there a “them”? I mean is their “someone” watching. Or is this discussion more related to a panopticon model? ...i.e we monitoring ourselves...

Jack Sondergaard: Even if someone was listening to us now, so what, we haven’t advocated anything illegal. We just want some privacy in our communications.

Elgar Prudhomme: I would think that “trust” will always be an issue - even with an encrypted, distributed 3D chat space. We will have to trust the others implementations to be secure, and also trust that they are not going to leak our communications deliberately.

VoyeurOne Baron: But the avatar provides a certain anonymity.

Elgar Prudhomme: True - as long as the person looking in doesn’t have access to “Elgar Prudhomme”’s account information, which is tied to a personal credit card with my real name and bank account on it... :)

Jack Sondergaard: Those running the servers have an economic incentive to maintain the trust of their customers.

Elgar Prudhomme: In a pay-per-membership or commercial model, yes. But in a distributed system where each server is not in the hands of someone with economic incentive to remain trusted, the story might be different.

Jack Sondergaard: I used to work in a call center. We had video surveillance and were not allowed to write down any personal information, such as credit card numbers.

VoyeurOne Baron: But it’s not only about trusting the system. It’s also about trusting each other. Every collaborative project/venture we take on together requires high levels of trust. Maybe you could argue that the great thing about the 3D online worlds like Second Life is that they allow for more identity communication and thereby facilitate more trust.

Michael John Turner: Or identity exploration and experimentation.

Jack Sondergaard: When I first started in Second Life, it was disorienting because I had the possibility of being someone completely different. But the more I am here, the more I just want to be myself.

Michael John Turner: I perceive the differences here as greater too between avatars... at the same time easier to bridge.

Jack Sondergaard: Of course I don’t really look like my avatar, not that good looking in Real Life.

Elgar Prudhomme: Lol - same here.

Jack Sondergaard: Yes, I am much more sociable than I was a year ago. At least here.

Michael John Turner: Me too. Also in first life I think, although I tend to go there less lol... which troubles me too.