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Socio-philosophical analysis of the metaverse

The article considers the metaverse as a concept that can be studied by philosophy. The development of augmented and virtual reality technologies has made it possible to create entire virtual worlds. The hardware and software framework is only developing, but already now it can be understood that the emergence of a virtual world is more than possible. Taking advantage of the idea of a metaverse, corporate giants of the information industry have already begun to build mini-metaverses. The ecosystem should surround the person and fight for his attention. So now the more a person spends time in a conditional metaverse, the more this virtual reality will develop. The very idea of creating a single hub for communication, creativity, and leisure is an ambitious project. However, an insufficient understanding of the essence of the metaverse is added to this. The absorption of man by the artificial world is even more actualized, in the process of which even more questions arise. The article analyzes the understanding of the metaverse as a second reality and the accompanying characteristics and features of the metaverse.

Keywords: metaverse, philosophy of technology, virtual reality, technology, reality, avatars, virtual space, augmented reality, simulation, perception of reality.

Introduction

Since M. Zuckerberg announced the creation of the metaverse and renamed Facebook Meta, questions have been increasingly appearing in the public discussion, what is the metaverse in general, why did some tech giants of the industry need it and why is it being criticized by Zuckerberg's colleagues?

Through specialized equipment, such as virtual reality or augmented reality glasses, we can access the Metaverse, a virtual world where we can communicate with other users. Each of these users will have an avatar, or virtual representation of themselves, and will engage with immersive worlds through things.

This process resembles a "second" digital reality where we may communicate with friends, collaborate with coworkers, spend time with partners, and even hold employment.

We can think of the phrase "cyberspace" to comprehend the term "metaverse", as their meanings are comparable. The value will not often vary all that much. This is so because the term itself describes a shift in how people engage with technology rather than a particular kind of technology.

Virtual reality is frequently one of the technologies that make up the metaverse. Virtual worlds endure even when a person is not in them, like augmented reality, which mixes elements of the actual and virtual worlds.

Despite this, access to the metaverse does not always involve the use of augmented or virtual reality. For instance, it might be claimed that the video game Fornite is a type of metaverse since it contains certain features of a virtual world that one can enter through a computer or mobile device.

The phrase "metaverse", meanwhile, first appeared in N. Stevenson's 1992 book "Snow Crash". The metaverse, a three-dimensional virtual world that grew so well-liked that people worked and spent their spare time there, is described in the book [1].

The protagonist of the book, Hiroaki Hiro, works as a pizza delivery man in the ordinary world but transforms into a samurai prince in the metaverse. At some time, Hiro learns that a potent computer virus known as Snow Crash exists in the metaverse; learning more about this virus will play a crucial role in the book's storyline.

The interface via which we may communicate with other users of the metaverse is an avatar, a customized 3D character that we must build to access it.

It is significant because the author, long before the concept of cyberspace as such started, was the first to suggest a wholly virtual environment. The author proposes the concept of avatars in his work (or virtual characters of real people in a tangible world).

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These are participatory places, first and foremost. A user in the metaverse can engage and communicate with the virtual environment as well as with other users and avatars. Users are a part of the changes happening all around them, adding the causality function to the virtual environment.

Second, much as in the real world as we know it, these virtual worlds or metaverses are characterized by being under-resourced and subject to the laws of physics (more or less).

Thirdly, the multiverses are durable and self-contained entities in their own right. This indicates that the metaverse continues to function even when we are not using it. This gives the multiverse the quality of a living body, in which the dynamics of the universe continue to operate whether or not users are linked to it.

The users of the Metaverse, who also have authority over their personal data, are the true owners of the system rather than any one corporation or platform. This is where blockchain technology comes into play, as it makes sure that all transactions in the virtual world are global, public, and safe.

The metaverse removes all types of obstacles, both physical and psychological, because it is a three-dimensional virtual realm. There are no restrictions on how many people may utilize it concurrently, what can be done there, what sectors individuals can work in, etc. It is a limitless area. More people can access it than through current internet channels.

The decentralized virtual economy based on bitcoins is now open to users. Avatars, virtual apparel, NFTs (non-fungible tokens), event tickets, and other digital assets may be purchased, sold, and traded on markets.

The utility and appeal of the metaverse are greatly influenced by non-replaceable tokens (NFT). NFT is a safe class of digital asset built using the same blockchain as cryptocurrencies. An NFT can stand in for a piece of digital art, a music, or money instead. A form of digital document or evidence of ownership that may be purchased or sold in the metaverse is sent to the owner via the NFT.

In theory, the multiverse has an enormous range of potential outcomes. For instance, computer games like Minecraft and Roblox have existed for a long time and provided an experience like the metaverse. However, in 2020, new ones emerged like The Sandbox and Decentraland, which boosted the video game economy by introducing digital assets. In addition to importing our own NFTs and purchasing virtual lands, we may also utilize NFTs obtained from the game to advance our position in the virtual world by finding, exploring, or creating new areas.

The same rules apply to playing these video games as to any other. In other words, a person may explore many virtual worlds and engage with businesses and famous people.

There are also virtual places where a person may wander, converse with others, play games, construct structures, or attend events, such as malls, art galleries, or squares. Some even plan their own musical performances.

The relationships that may be built with other users are where the “magic” resides. In the metaverse, there are many of gathering spots. While playing in personalized rooms on sites like Spatial, one can also meet in expansive open spaces like The Sandbox. These applications were created specifically for occasions like conferences or meetings.

Classic video games like Grand Theft Auto are examples of “classical metaverses”, where it is possible to interact with other players in a virtually open environment that closely resembles the real world.

Role-playing game is the name of the gameplay genre that has gained a lot of traction in GTA. A mode where the job performed by the player’s avatar perfectly replicates what happens in reality. In virtual reality, one often starts from a lower position — like a trash collector or a taxi driver—and may move up the social ladder based on earnings and expertise.

Roblox, on the other hand, is an excellent illustration of a conventional metaverse with features akin to a blockchain metaverse. It is an online video game platform that enables players to build their own virtual worlds using a robust virtual space building technology.

There is a distinction between a centralized and a decentralized world in metaverses using blockchain. The administration of the virtual world is the primary distinction between these two types. Companies, for instance, have complete control over the metaverse blockchain under a centralized metaverse. As the sole entity is able to determine the metaverse’s future course, the organization holds all user data in them.

The distinction between the two is that the former accepts bitcoin payments while the latter uses NFTs for virtual goods. As a result, they have a separate virtual economy. However, a small group of organizers hold control over this economy.

Blockchain-based decentralized metaverses feature a fully autonomous virtual economy that is managed by people. The Sandbox, Decentraland, and Cryptovoxels are all affected by this. Although they were first created by a single entity in charge of creating the virtual world, all of them want to become decentralized independent entities. In other words, consumers will have total power over all of these metaverses in the future.

The aim to build a virtual environment as a representation of life on the Internet is what will drive the development of the metaverse. There are billions of computers, millions of servers, and other electronic devices connected to the Internet. Internet users may engage with one another, visit websites, buy and trade products and services, and communicate while online.

The Internet is the foundation of the Metaverse, not the other way around. Through the use of technology like virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), social media, and digital money, users navigate a virtual environment that closely resembles the real world. The act of "browsing" the Internet. However, people may "live" in the metaverse to some extent.

Experimental

The problem of socio-philosophical understanding of the metauniverse lies in the plane of the problems of cultural studies, the philosophy of reality, the philosophy of technology, and sociology. Therefore, the author of the study relies on a number of research methods. Including a structural-functional approach for understanding the work of the metaverse, a comparative method for analyzing options for the execution of the metaverse. A systematic approach is used to study technologies.

Results and Discussion

The novel phenomena of the metauniverse are well understood by philosophy. The existence of the metaverse opens the door to a different interpretation, one in which it is possible that our everyday lives are already a part of the metaverse.

Three philosophical stances make it easier to see why this option cannot be quickly ruled out.

The initial strategy is metaphysical. Does reality have a basic level? How are different levels connected to one another and how are known items interdependent?

The metaverse is a crucial topic for metaphysical research since it provides access to the contemporary notion attributed to Descartes. Specifically, the hypothesis that our sensory perceptions are deceiving and that, as a result, reality as we see it may really be more like a dream or an illusion [2].

In the analytical philosophy of the XXth and XXIth centuries, this concept was heavily debated. Hilary Putnam's writings on the idea that people may genuinely be wired-up containers with brains attached to them are probably the most well-known examples [3].

The notion that the cosmos as we understand it is a computer simulation. In this case, in contrast to what we may expect, reality would be more like software than hardware. "The Matrix" and other philosophical and scientific movements contributed to the appeal of this scenario.

The level of immersion provided by this environment will be greater than what has previously been acknowledged. For instance, several firms provide apparel based on haptic technology; items like gloves, shirts, or bracelets that enable you "feel" the virtual objects you encounter in the metaverse.

This indicates that the trend is to blur the line between the metaverse and the actual world. If it were feasible, it would surely indicate that it has never been impossible (and the conditional here should not be misconstrued: it will be). In this setting, the question of what our reality is becomes pertinent.

Epistemological philosophy is the second school of thought that reexamines the metaverse.

According to Descartes, God's attributes preclude him from fooling us via the reality we sense in a profound and lasting way. However, there are two issues with this premise. First of all, it assumes a highly personal and uncommon conception of God. Second, because Descartes' reasoning is circular: we are certain of God's existence because we have a clear understanding of him, yet his presence is what ensures the accuracy of our understanding.

According to David Chalmers who brings up the issue with a healthy dose of skepticism, it is actually hard to know if we are living in the Matrix. We would not be able to see reality outside of this ecosystem if projections, like everything else that makes it up, are a part of it [4].

Nonetheless, Chalmers' doubt cannot be refuted. Binding considerations are raised when one is aware of the potential of residing in Zuckerberg's metaverse. We will undoubtedly discover the presence of at least

one mimicked world from our current vantage point. Can this information be used to determine if the metaverse is a simulation that can reproduce and spread in both “up” and “down” directions?

The ethical perspective is the third and final philosophical stance. Humans would be able to freely choose to “walk away” from the world we now know to completely and permanently immerse themselves in a different ecology if there were a metaverse.

It becomes logical to question in this situation if we think it is ethically acceptable for adults to decide to leave an extra-universe reality behind. Will this choice be seen as more akin to that of someone who locks himself in his house and watches TV or someone who is under the influence of a stifling drug?

Other concerns associated with the preceding one are whether the government should step in to stop individuals from choosing to go scuba diving, if it should monitor what is going there, or whether it should combine the two. The significance of our reaction will be directly tied to the governmental policy that is being implemented in this respect.

The natural state, which Locke refers to, is a condition of full and total freedom in which each individual lives his or her life without interference from others. This does not imply, however, that a person is free to act whatever he pleases or that he considers acting in his own interests independent of the community that he is a part of, as morality is necessary for a person to live in the natural state.

Locke’s state of nature is pre-political since there is no civil authority or governmental system to enforce the law, but it is not pre-moral because man has a moral obligation to conduct his life without compulsion or undue influence over the lives of others.

Locke’s conception of the state of nature is incorrect since it sustains the idea of human identity and selfhood with security, liberty, and property under the most democratic government in existence today [5].

In such a democratic society, the government uses the legal system and the surveillance system to safeguard human life as efficiently as possible. However, as we have seen throughout history, the government may just as readily take those same lives.

Our freedom may also be protected by the government, but it is equally simple to take it away. An example that is both less harsh and more uplifting is how during the pandemic, governments throughout the globe curtailed residents’ freedom to stop the virus from spreading.

Governments also have a duty to protect our property, but, to be honest, we never truly own any of it since they have the power to take it away from us at any time. All that is necessary for law enforcement authorities to swiftly revoke access to our assets or even seize them as collateral is a simple allegation of unlawful or criminal behavior or even just getting in trouble with the IRS.

However, even in the finest possible democracy, John Locke’s theory of human identity cannot be implemented in the real world. We can benefit from the metaverse in that regard.

We are now residing in the metaverse’s alpha version. Our employment, our friendships, our income, and even our identity all depend on digital technology to some extent, if we pay careful attention.

For instance, the great majority of workplaces use a digital platform for information sharing or data storage. Due in large part to the epidemic, even meetings started happening online via Zoom.

The simplest way to interact with people is now social media. In contrast to the past, where interaction required physical contact, relationships may now even be created out of this. Since the majority of our lives are broadcast virtually in real-time, they also act as our digital identity, even if most of the time this identification looks too flawless to be genuine.

But as a result, the digital self has surpassed the real self in importance. Therefore, when the metaverse first began, we were living in its alpha phase.

According to M. Kaku, the Metaverse is the interface of a planetary society that exists within the framework of the Internet, which serves as the world's primary means of communication [6]. Accordingly, the metaverse is a temporal simulation that exists in the future thanks to the Internet.

In terms of freedom, the metaverse will allow us to live our virtual lives as we like without putting other people’s lives in jeopardy.

In the metaverse, you only live when you access it, unlike the actual world where you must constantly be present due of your physical existence.

The most prominent cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, will one day recreate property, allowing us to free money from the control of a central bank. Because each wallet has a unique, non-transferable key and because every transaction is computed and recorded using Blockchain technology, bitcoin is nearly difficult to print, destroy, or steal.

Finally, since worldly rules do not apply in this simulation, our life will not suffer any penalties in terms of safety. We are unable to live as we choose in the actual world because there are rules and social agreements that prevent us from going too far. Yes, by isolating ourselves in a cabin in the midst of a forest, away from society, we may avoid these regulations. However, we would be deprived of the conveniences that can only be found in a state with a government, such as access to electricity, health care, regular human contact, or simply a simple cup of tea.

The metaverse will be a common meeting place for all individuals from all over the world, thus the cultural differences that are related to a highly multicultural actual world will not be an issue either.

This "better world" approach appears to be highly appealing at first glance. Think about how each of us might create our own universe using the settings we enjoy most, much like in a video game. Through an avatar, we may create a new persona and behave more openly and freely in the world. On a really chilly day, we can work remotely without leaving our warm beds, and after work, we may meet friends or take a trip somewhere exotic. It is not hard to see individuals wanting to spend the majority of their time in such a virtual environment rather than tackling the never-ending issues in real life.

On the other hand, we must be aware of the risks posed by the metaverse. Technology's developing addiction to humans, which leads to a yearning to "be in touch", as well as how tech corporations take use of these flaws to boost their bottom lines.

There is a third significant risk in addition to these two: the decline of human sensitivity and the capacity for delicate emotion. Our delicate sentiments get weaker as we spend more time in an abnormal setting, while our strong instincts and impulses become stronger. We have already witnessed instances of people becoming so absorbed in their mobile games that they fail to notice those around them, even those who are seated next to them and in need of assistance.

In addition, life itself comprises essential components required for existing in actuality. We get more "charged with life energy" when we spend more time outside taking in the splendor of nature and engaging in physical contact with one another.

In light of the aforementioned, what can we do to feel hopeful about the future rather than pessimistic given that the present reality is difficult and virtual reality, with all of its attractions, threatens a crucial component of our humanity?

A new and better world has already been shown to us by great leaders of the East and West and classical philosophers. A reality that we can create by using our own strength and shaping our surroundings. For instance, we can act with greater justice and morality if those things are lacking in the world. We may lead by example and encourage others to be little braver if there is too much fear around us. If others around us are driven by a need for money, we can demonstrate a more balanced way of life in which money is only a tool for achieving more significant objectives, etc.

"Be the change you wish to see in the world", said Mahatma Gandhi [7]. Plato and Confucius both stated something along such lines earlier: "The city is what it is because citizens are what they are" [8] and "Every societal growth begins with individual development" [9]. They made the connection between an individual's inner condition and society at large, along with many other classical philosophers. "He who lives in accord with himself lives in harmony with the cosmos" as Marcus Aurelius once remarked [10].

In addition to transforming reality, we are also creating a superstructure of reality, or supra-reality, as a result of our success in social and human growth. We are able to accomplish an ambitious concept of virtual existence owing to VR and AR technology.

Until now, we have only ever used the term "Internet" to refer to this technology; yet, virtual reality is more appropriate. Online, we communicate, trade, buy, sell, work, play, and do everything else that was formerly thought of as being personal. These actions are currently solely performed by our imaginations. Nonetheless, the phrase "metaverse", which refers to the metaphysical realm, might make people understand that our own "basic reality" might not be all that basic. Has this ever occurred? The line between the actual and the imaginary or metaphysical may have a significant impact on a person's mental state. In such settings, what starts to look real becomes more subjective than objective.

Conclusions

The problem of the metaverse is so multifaceted that an interdisciplinary study of the phenomenon is needed. Philosophical understanding of the virtual space is experiencing a renaissance, as never before has the creation of a virtual world been as realistic as it is now. The world's tech giants have set their sights on creating an ecosystem in which, in theory, people can spend part of their time. These worlds are intended

primarily as a promising service that corporations can capitalize on, but also as an alternative to the real world. In our reality, we also use the products of these companies, but in the metaverse, all our attention can be absorbed by the products of a certain brand. This will lead to the emergence of large metaverses from different companies. Just like social networks, they will compete and develop. We can only guess where this will lead, but the creation of a popular virtual space is inevitable. Another question is whether humanity will be ready for the temptations of the metauniverse.

Metamer resources are mostly found in the digital world, but it is possible that their application will promote happiness in the actual world. Designers of virtual worlds, for instance, can use metaverse income to produce assets in the real world. Additionally, courts are starting to treat the theft of virtual goods the same way they treat the theft of real-world property. Given the nature of interaction, exploitation, and ownership of rights, there may not be many variations between the laws of any information system, both in the metaverse and in the actual world.

There may be new opportunities for brand owners and creators to offer hardware and software for AR and VR devices as we move from traditional Internet connectivity to the metaverse. They will endeavor to enhance these devices' usefulness as well as their availability and dependability as they advance. This is closely tied to intellectual property rights as more patented inventions come to market. As brands start to appear, offering both tangible and intangible products, services, and equipment, the virtual trademark domain will also start to take shape. There will be items that exist in both the physical and digital worlds.

The metaverse itself, as well as the social, legal, and political levels, will undoubtedly necessitate philosophical contemplation if the projection is realistic enough. This is so that the same demands as in the base reality—governments, legal systems, and economic regulation—can be addressed, unlike the Internet, where individuals can connect directly in various locations. However, it is not as if these structures were simply imported from our world and put to use. This is true because the metaverse is designed from the ground up to maximize individual and societal innovation and output, which defies basic economic and legal principles. In a metaverse where development is exponential, options are almost endless, and the propagation of beliefs has the potential to be harmful, how can we establish a stable society? If we want to be more responsible in the future, these are problems that need to be solved.

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С.М. Жакин

Толықтырылған және виртуалды шындықтың мәні мен құндылығы

Мақалада метаәлем философияны зерттейтін ұғым ретінде қарастырылған. Толықтырылған және виртуалды шындық технологияларының дамуы бүкіл виртуалды әлем құруға мүмкіндік берді. Аппараттық және бағдарламалық қамтамасыз ету жүйесі тек дамып келеді, бірақ қазірдің өзінде виртуалды әлемнің пайда болуы мүмкін емес екенін түсінуге болады. Метаәлем идеясын қолдана отырып, ақпа-

раттық индустрияның корпоративті алыптары шағын метаәлемдерді құра бастады. Экожүйе адамды қоршап, оның назары үшін күресуі керек. Енді адам шартты метаәлемде неғұрлым көп уақыт өткізсе, соғұрлым бұл виртуалды шындық дамиды. Байланыс, шығармашылық және демалыс үшін бірыңғай хаб құру идеясының өзі өте өршіл жоба. Алайда, бұған метаәлем мәнін жеткіліксіз түсіну қосылады. Адамның жасанды әлемге сіңуі одан да өзекті өзекті болып отыр, оның барысында одан да көп сұрақтар туындайды. Автор метаәлемді екінші шындық ретінде түсінуді, сондай-ақ метаәлемнің ілеспе сипаттамалары мен ерекшеліктерін талдаған.

Кілт сөздер: метаәлем, философия технологиясы, виртуалды шындық, технология, шындық, аватарлар, виртуалды кеңістік, толықтырылған шындық, симуляция, шындықты қабылдау.

С.М. Жакин

Сущность и ценность дополненной и виртуальной реальности

В статье метавселенная рассмотрена как понятие, поддающееся изучению философией. Развитие технологий дополненной и виртуальной реальности позволило создавать целые виртуальные миры. Аппаратно-программная база только развивается, но уже сейчас можно понять, что появление виртуального мира более чем возможно. Воспользовавшись идеей метавселенной, корпоративные гиганты информационной индустрии уже начали строить мини-метавселенные. Экосистема должна окружать человека и бороться за его внимание. Так что теперь, чем больше человек проводит времени в условной метавселенной, тем больше будет развиваться эта виртуальная реальность. Сама идея создания единого хаба для общения, творчества и досуга — очень амбициозный проект. Однако к этому добавляется недостаточное понимание сути метавселенной. Еще более актуализируется поглощение человека искусственным миром, в процессе которого возникает еще больше вопросов. Автором проанализировано понимание метавселенной как второй реальности, а также сопутствующие характеристики и черты метавселенной.

Ключевые слова: метавселенная, философия техники, виртуальная реальность, технология, реальность, аватары, виртуальное пространство, дополненная реальность, симуляция, восприятие реальности.