

# Shade of Technology: Mirage and Reality of Metaverse Residents

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## Abstract

**Metaverse is not just a result of instrumental rationality, technological rationality, and economic rationality. It is related to our emotions, cognitions, and leads us to think about the meaning of life and the future of humanity. The "residents" in the virtual world have achieved self through incarnation, but also neglect the physical body, thus failing to realize the agency. Humans pursue places of certainty and security on the one hand; unknown spaces on the other, and the metaverse is a metaphysical world manifested through technology. The meaning of technology is not inherent in technology, but derives from how humans use technology. The temperature of technology depends entirely on human scale.**

## Keywords

**Metaverse; body; Incarnation; Space; Meta-need.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

While the world is still immersed in the anxiety caused by the epidemic, the metaverse has been proposed in a high-profile manner, and 2021 has become the so-called first year of the metaverse. But it has to be said that for most ordinary people, the metaverse may not mean hope, but more likely some kind of panic. This panic stems from the fact that the cognition of the real world may be being rewritten, with a great uncertainty. The logic of believing that technology changes life means that technology is the independent variable, while life is always the dependent variable, and life passively accepts and adapts to the changes brought about by new technologies. When the shade of technology gradually extends until it covers everyone's life, what will it bring to us? welfare or ignorance?

## 2. THE LOGIC OF THE METAVERSE

Personal computers, the Internet, mobile terminals, and artificial intelligence have made several technological leaps, each of which has had a huge impact on human life and culture. The metaverse seems to be a new revolution, but in fact, the issues of the construction and application of the metaverse have been discussed as early as 20 years ago, and the current metaverse is not new in terms of technology (VR, AR and MR), which is essentially a conceptual change.

The reason why the metaverse caused huge repercussions when it was proposed in 2021 is related to the continuous impact of the epidemic on the economy, society and social psychology: the traditional economic model has suffered a shock, globalization has stopped geographically fragmented, and daily life has migrated online. Therefore, the metaverse is the result of instrumental rationality, technical rationality and economic rationality in response to environmental changes; At the same time, just as metaphysics is to physics, it is not difficult to find the philosophical implications of the metaverse relative to the concept of the universe—

making the metaphysical world manifest through technology. The adventurers of the metaverse are using technology, capital and imagination to construct a parallel virtual world suspended above the real world, a set of social order beyond the real world, and a post-human landscape. The technology of the metaverse era will strive to present a hyper-real virtual world, which will likely make our physical practice in the real world less and less, and more people hand over the sovereignty of their spiritual world to technology.

### 3. AVATAR AND BODY

In the virtual world, people act as avatars. The English word "avatar" comes from Hinduism, and in Hindu mythology, the descent (of a deity), but more colloquially the incarnation, of a deity on earth. The concept of avatars has been best developed by the devotees (bhakta) of the god Vishnu, who perceive him as taking a specific form to help the world.[1] So the avatar will have the form of a human being and at the same time possess the power of a god. In the 2009 film *The Avatar*, paraplegic ex-Marine Jack Sully gets the chance to enter a physical avatar built for his late twin brother, which, like Hindu mythology, also features superhumans Ability. When Jack Sully begins to act as an avatar, his disabled body merges with the avatar. At the end of the film, Jack Sully's final decision to continue living in the Na'vi world as an avatar promote the idea that the avatar can be a means of becoming the true self, [2] also means that the "true" self is not identical to the physical body.

Many residents claim to have found their "real" selves through virtual spaces, thanks to the ability to set their own identity and act freely and creatively. That is to say, the incarnated self is more in line with the residents' self-awareness than the offline self. In this case, the "true" self they seek is an idealized self that is not achievable in physical world. This easily reminds us of the late singer Michael Jackson. In addition to making unimaginable efforts in the pursuit of art, he also persistently obtained an idealized self through plastic surgery, transforming an ordinary person into a star who created performing arts myths. For the normal people in the real world such achievement can only be explained as miracles. And the creative space of the Metaverse clearly enables many people to realize their dreams, while projecting their self-images onto the avatars into the dreams—that is their own mythology.

On the one hand we see that, for some inhabitants, the avatar realizes the "real" and "ideal" self, although this implies the imperfection of the self in the real world. On the other hand, we also see that the characters in the game struggle to obtain or buy "skins" that provide superpowers, and the young men and women outside the game turn into the same face through plastic surgery. We are unknowingly living in reality and virtuality of the power game of the world, we lose our original body under the action of various symbolic violence. So incarnations may indeed be self-fulfilling, yet ignore our physical bodies. Isn't the body itself the way to achieve self and experience life? Our knowledge of the body decide how we view and construct our unfinished life. In Zhuangzi(庄子)'s "Xiaoyaoyou"(逍遥游), Kun(鲲) incarnates as Peng(鹏), soaring from the ocean to the sky, which is also an image of transcendence, not the separation of the body and the avatar, which makes us believe that the body will always be the center of meaning.

### 4. SPACE AND PLACE

Entering the metaverse means entering a space that, at least for now, is full of uncertainty. How this space relates to us can be explained by the relationship between space and emotion. We don't have an immediate connection to the unknown world, but we do develop a sense of intimacy with the familiar, meaningful, and bordered environment.

A well-known photo shows Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian refugee who drowned while fleeing with his family in September 2015. His body was found on the coast of Bodrum, Turkey.

In the photo, he is curled up on the beach as if asleep, and the picture is full of helplessness and despair. The death of Alan Jr. sparked worldwide attention, with flowers placed on the beach where he died, and the event became the subject of artists. The touching point of this incident was the lonely body of Little Allen when he was died and the helpless feeling of being without a place. People sent flowers to soothe the loneliness and despair of his passing, and also eased the unbearable sadness of all the witnesses. There is no essential difference between artists expressing mourning with works and ordinary people expressing mourning with flowers. In this event, there is no essential difference: these actions come from the same instinct, and through empathy, people feel the body of Little Allen lying alone on the boundless beach. It is an unbearable sight, and the flowers and candles create a bordered place for the deceased to rest in emotional envelopment, while the living are comforted in their hearts.

No one can answer ultimate questions, and life always exists in uncertainty. Just as a baby needs a mother's embrace, human beings need a mother-like safe haven from which to dispel anxiety caused by uncertainty. This need requires the dissolution of the contradiction between the self and the uncertainty opposite to the self. This paper believes that this is the origin of all human needs, which may be called "Meta-need", which drives human beings to keep to recognize and improve one's own situation—whether natural, social, or about life itself—to determine its own existence. For humans, space must be emotional and bounded before it can generate meaning related to personal certainty. For the moment, on the one hand, the world still does not know when it will be free from the panic and depression brought about by the epidemic. On the other hand, the complicated and confusing metaverse makes people feel that the world is once again experiencing rapid turbulence, thus falling into another uncertainty.

Human existence is driven by meta-need to experience life with meaning and value. On the one hand, meta-need drive people to pursue certainty and a sense of security; on the other hand, meta-need constantly make people feel the call of life to explore the unknown space.

The metaverse is open and self-defined, and the meaning of entering the metaverse varies from person to person. "To be open and free is to be exposed and vulnerable. Open space has no trodden paths and signposts. It has no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is like a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed. Enclosed and humanized space is place. Compared to space, place is a calm center of established values. Human beings require both space and place. Human lives are a dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom." [3] This is the real world and the way the metaverse talks to our lives. We can choose to stay in a safe place or break into a space full of uncertainty. This is human instinct. For innovators and explorers, the metaverse becomes the Wild West where they realize their meaning of life. The essence of life is movement, and staying in a so-called safe place cannot stop the tide of the outside world, and eventually it has to change. It's like a person on a treadmill. He can't stop moving forward, but he stays where he is, but if he stops, he is no longer safe.

In the virtual world of the metaverse, those tourists banish their avatars from the identity that "people" insist on, and act according to their own preferences; at the same time, they are also passively adapting to those strange, novel and even weird cultures, without staying and making those spaces personal places. And those who are creative, defying all conventional coercion, are always exploring possibilities outside the existing culture, and are excitedly creating their new paradise in the metaverse. As Maslow put it, "Acquiring knowledge and systematizing the universe have been considered as, in part, techniques for the achievement of basic safety in the world, or, for the intelligent man, expressions of self-actualization." [4] Meta-need create for itself through meaning and value the private realm (oikos) of certainty and security, a home in which human beings can live.

## 5. TEMPRATURE OF TECHNOLOGY

Mixed reality technology will be certainly powerful in the metaverse age. In the reality-virtual continuum, the sensory information overload we worry about and the confusion of the virtual world and the real world will generally appear.

We seem to see people who are immersed in the virtual world and ignore the physical body. Their avatars are in the dream world, addicted to the siren's singing, and can no longer return to reality. More than 2,000 years ago, Zhuangzi turned into a butterfly in his dream, and through the "experience of aesthetic emotion" to break the obsession of the self, bridge the object and self [5], more than 2,000 years later, countless modern people have become slaves captured by technology, leaving only objectified bodies.

The meaning of technology is not inherent, but derives from how humans use technology. Clearly, using everyday technology meaningfully requires both situational and spatial skills as well as the ability to act and understand action. Whether it is human-to-human communication or human-machine communication, the meaning of action stems from interaction. "The social driven approach of the so-called calm technologies privileges the invisible tool that does not intrude on our consciousness but keeps us focused on the task." [6] The future of the metaverse, like every major technological revolution in the world, will bring inevitable shocks to humanity, but we are not the first to experience such changes. At the same time, technology creates the way people act, and culture perfects what is natural and what is given. The temperature of the technology depends entirely on the human scale.

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