



Newsletter – May 2022

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THE METAVERSE – HAVEN OR INFERNO?

SEE

The internet has transformed the way people communicate, entertain, live and work. In tandem with the internet explosion, the world has seen the robust development of a host of hardware like laptops, tablets and mobile phones, and software ranging from games to the ubiquitous apps that can be downloaded on devices and serve myriads of purposes for all circumstances of life.

The argument can be made that life for homo sapiens has never been better, and these modern technological equipment and cyber paraphernalia and platforms have enabled never before imagined ways of living, learning and the appreciation of life. In a sense, that argument is tenable and in fact, highly persuasive. However, paralleling these boons, there are threats to the way we live as well. This is especially so for families. Perspicacious concerns that surfaced at the advent of the goggle box, the TV, in all its black and white glory, are relevant more so now than ever, having correspondingly grown exponentially with the seemingly unbridled flourishing of the cyber world. The online realm is the new fire of modern life, tame and friendly as a servant and highly indispensable, but domineering and destructive as a callous and raging master as can be seen in the scams where many people are cheated and millions of dollars lost to scammers.

As we jump into the deep end in the quest to keep in pace with cyber developments it is necessary for us to focus on the corresponding implications for cyber users, a significant part of the world population today. Simply put, the technologically enhanced world portrayed in movies like ‘Ready Player One’ and ‘The Avengers’ are at the doorstep of our real world, and has very likely stepped into the hallway in some jurisdictions. What this means is that the line between the cyber and real worlds has blurred, and people can pick up a virtual cup in a virtual kitchen, and experience it through actual physical movements and biochemical processes of our brains that effect emotions, and our thus-informed consciousness.

The tsunami of cyber technological advances that usher in these possibilities include VR (virtual reality), AR (augmented reality) and BCI (Brain Computer Interface). These terms appear self-explanatory, such as that these developments allow for users to

experience a virtual world that augments their experiences in the physical world, and there could be even direct a command from our brain to the computer to perform what we desire, without us using voice commands, clicking the mouse, or typing on the keyboard. The former two developments have progressed further than BCI, which could be said to be taking brave new steps in its infancy.

Together, VR, AR and BCI enable us to conduct interactions in a three dimensional (3D) space. Currently, there are such experiences which involve the donning of huge goggles, and clients stepping into a three-dimensional room to assess a design prior to renovating a room, for instance. Also, think Pokemon, the game where players track augmented furries hiding in and around real, physical structures. Possibly the salient 3D realm everybody has heard at least echoes of is the metaverse, which employs 3D spatial interface that infuses VR, AR and BCI to varying degrees.

In the metaverse, the vision is that real people interact as avatars virtually, and undergo all ranges of experiences possible, some of which could be impossible in real life for most, such as rocket setting to Mars. More practical applications of the metaverse would be 3D versions of the zoom meetings and home-based learning that started during the worldwide lockdowns of the Covid pandemic, and are continuing even now. The ultimate goal would be to merge these virtual experiences in one platform, such as Mark Zuckerberg's Facebook, recently renamed Meta.

Platforms like Meta see themselves as providing users with an elevated experience, where one seamless transaction and interaction lead to the next, such as shopping, watching a movie, browsing in a bookshop – activities of a typical lazy afternoon spent in a mall. With the metaverse, people can experience a virtual equivalent of that lazy Saturday.

It is quite easy to see that the metaverse is an evolution of the current social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, and it even seems exciting, with our avatar interactions in virtual settings, and the possibility to go places never previously gone - virtually, and purchase all manners of assets, physical and non-physical. Can the reluctant dissenter argue that the metaverse will never take off? Unfortunately, the plane has already lifted, and cruising perhaps at a low, metaphorical altitude. To many others, it may already be a foregone conclusion that the metaverse will reach great heights, and thrive.

The pertinent implications would be that human beings, made in the image and likeness of God, but incarnated, given physical bodies, would now be living more of less also in a virtual, non-physical world. Also, some, if not many, of us would be spending our money which we labour to earn, on digital products, some of which can only exist digitally. Do these implications give us pause? Are we navigating in uncharted territory, more of the same, albeit, hugely enhanced, digital world, or simply walking along avenues inflamed with exciting possibilities of elevated experiences that we could never tread otherwise? Would the last scenario be a haven or an inferno?

**Article by Trudy
(Edited version)**

Personal Reflection

1. What are the benefits of the metaverse?
2. What are the dangers of the metaverse?
3. How would the metaverse affect families in particular, if there is great use or reliance on it?
4. Are there any ways we can alleviate any adverse impacts of the advent of the metaverse?

JUDGE

1. What does the bible say about the above reality?
2. What does the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church and the Encyclicals and Vatican documents say about the above reality. Do they support virtual reality?
3. How would our Lord Jesus Christ respond to the above reality and future changes in the technological world?

ACT

1. How can I introduce such technological advances in my family without diminishing the love and unity among my family members?
2. How must CFSM Movement react to the Metaverse?
3. How does CFSM use the Metaverse and other technological changes to form its members, form the base groups and build the Kingdom of God?

