

Review of: "Beyond the Physical Self: Understanding the Perversion of Reality and the Desire for Digital Transcendence via Digital Avatars in the Context of Baudrillard's Theory"

Martin Maier¹

¹ Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The paper sheds some light on the potential risks of VR/AR/XR and AI technologies, including the advent of the emerging Metaverse. This is a certainly laudible undertaking given the addictive nature of today's smartphones and tomorrow's virtual worlds, especially under members of the GenZ and the fact that they take their avatars as seriously as their physical self. At the downside, however, the article is heavily biased and leaves the reader depressed behind without providing any viable solution and path forward, except the one backward by going back to the old, good times when people played cards and other games. It's a very pessimistic take on technological progress. Further, the writing style of the article is highly repetitive. For instance, the authors states time and again that physical and virtual worlds increasingly converge and blur until they become indistinguishable from each other. Instead of repeating the obvious (in fact, that's the very goal of future 6G networks in general and the Metaverse in particular), the author falls short in elaborating on the "technological advancements [that] hold immense potential for progress and innovation" mentioned toward the end of the article. What is this immense potential? How can it be unlocked? What types of socio-economic progress is on the horizon? Similarly, important questions remain unanswered. For illustration, why should Nozick be wrong with his statement that most users are unwilling to tap into the experience machine, but rather prefer to experience a deeper reality that is non-man-made. What is this non-man-made reality?. Unfortunately, nothing much is said by the author, leaving the reader with more questions than answers. Arguably more importantly, the author takes a heavily unbalanced take by not including other important perspectives. For instance, Russell Belk's well-known work on the extended self and the digital world would be a good starting point. Edward Castronova's work in "Exodus to the Virtual World: How Online Fun is Changing Reality" on the manyfold upsides of virtual worlds goes completely unnoticed. Finally, a scientifically deeper and more rigorous discussion of key terms such as perception, transcendence, and the Metaverse would have strengthened the merit of the paper dramatically by including a thoughtful description of Donald Hoffman's "The Case Against Reality: Why Evolution Hid the Truth from Our Eyes," Scott Barry Kaufman's "Transcend: The New Science of Self-Actualization," and Herman Narualla's "Virtual Society: The Metaverse and the New Frontiers of Human Experience," respectively.