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Metaverse the true Brain Rot of Evolution

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Abstract

Human evolution has been a relentless pursuit of dominance, intelligence, and control. From primitive survival instincts to the intellectual revolutions that shaped modern society, Homo sapiens have consistently redefined existence. Yet, every great leap forward has come with unintended consequences. The same intelligence that allowed early humans to master fire and language now fuels artificial intelligence and virtual worlds—realms that blur the boundaries between reality and fiction. The metaverse and gaming industry stand as modern testaments to this relentless innovation, creating spaces where digital identities often overshadow physical existence. In a blind race to a fabricated universe, we risk losing what makes us humans, leading to true brain rot.

At the heart of this digital transformation lies an unsettling paradox. While technological evolution promised enlightenment, connectivity, and progress, it has instead accelerated a cognitive decline masked as entertainment. The metaverse, once an escape, has become a replacement. Gaming, once a pastime, has morphed into an addiction. What began as a tool for exploration now dictates the emotional and intellectual engagement of millions, conditioning users into perpetual cycles of dopamine-driven dependency.

The metaverse and gaming industry are no longer just recreational domains; they are psychological laboratories, refining techniques of engagement to ensure prolonged immersion. Borrowing from behavioral science, developers craft environments that exploit human neurology—leveraging reward systems, artificial scarcity, and social validation to create digital loops that entrap the mind. Every quest completed, every virtual trophy earned, and every social interaction within these worlds fuels an insatiable craving for more, mirroring the addictive patterns of substance dependency.

While past generations feared automation taking over physical labor, today's crisis is more insidious—technology is taking over human thought. Privacy is traded for convenience, critical thinking is replaced by algorithmic nudges, and the mind, once the seat of rational inquiry, is now a battleground for digital exploitation. Evolution, once defined by survival and adaptation, is now dictated by engagement metrics and data consumption. As humanity stands on the precipice of a self-inflicted intellectual recession, the question remains—can we reclaim our cognitive autonomy, or have we already surrendered to the machine?

Introduction

The human species evolved through a series of destruction, innovation, and migration. With a much lighter build and a larger brain, humans evolved and the patterns of thought coupled with the ability to

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build and think governed the world in no time. The Scientific Revolution, beginning around AD 1500, was based on "the discovery of ignorance," a necessary admission that motivated study and experimentation, and led to innovation.[4] Although humanity progressed in an orderly fashion towards uniting the world through the internet, without which lives of the modern man are incomplete to an entirety.

Today's world has been on a whirlwind rollercoaster journey through a series of crossroads where any number of paths could be selected. History's choices are not made for human benefit and humanity has not necessarily improved as history has progressed.[5] Human history is by nature chaotic and what we call progress, has not brought us any closer to happiness.

The basis of modern science is the recognition of ignorance, which motivates observation, measurement, and the elaboration of theories, all of which are methods of empirical scientific research. Science today has great prestige because, like religion in the past, it provides answers to the world's great questions.

Though often applied in ways that are beneficial to people, such as medicine or energy, scientific research in the modern era can also be used to create technologies that result in new ways we can harm each other: Weaponry and Virtual Reality.

With the world changing and evolving at an extremely fast pace, the Discovery of ignorance has been ignored, this is the paramount sarcasm of human existence. Homo Sapiens thus hold the record among all other organisms for driving the most plant and animal species to extinction, thereby holding the dubious distinction of being the deadliest animals in the annals of biology.[6]

Humanity stands at the cusp of a new era in which natural selection will be replaced by intelligent design—driven by humans, through genetic or biological engineering. This creates a world of moral and ethical choices, which will be dictated by the desire to prolong human life, cure diseases, or create superior human beings. This desire to keep growing more, doing more and feeling more, lead to an air of dissatisfaction with normal lives and eventually lead to a rapid growth of the Sixth world; the Gaming World.

The metaverse and gaming industry are no longer just recreational domains; they are psychological laboratories, refining techniques of engagement to ensure prolonged immersion. Borrowing from behavioral science, developers craft environments that exploit human neurology—leveraging reward systems, artificial scarcity, and social validation to create digital loops that entrap the mind. Every quest completed, every virtual trophy earned, and every social interaction within these worlds fuels an insatiable craving for more, mirroring the addictive patterns of substance dependency.[7] The consequences of this digital conditioning manifest in dwindling attention spans, emotional desensitization, and a widespread inability to engage with reality outside of virtual gratification.

While past generations feared automation taking over physical labor, today's crisis is more insidious—technology is taking over human thought. Privacy is traded for convenience, critical thinking is replaced by algorithmic nudges, and the mind, once the seat of rational inquiry, is now a battleground for digital

[4] https://www.ynharari.com/book/sapiens-2/

[5] Law Review Genesis Of Legal Regulation Web And The Model of The Electronic Jurisdiction of The Metaverse, https://blr.flaw.uniba.sk/index.php/BLR/article/view/316#:~:text=The%20model%20of%20complex%20electronic,and%20mutual%20relations%20in%20Metaverse

[6] The Dangerous Rise and Impending Collapse of Homo Sapiens, https://www.wrath-bearingtree.com/2016/07/the-dangerous-rise-and-impending-collapse-of-homo-sapiens/

[7] Artificial Intelligence and Life in 2030: The One Hundred Year Study on Artificial Intelligence, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365359355_Artificial_Intelligence_and_Life_in_2030_The_One_Hundred_Year_Study_on_Artificial_Intelligence

exploitation. Evolution, once defined by survival and adaptation, is now dictated by engagement metrics and data consumption.[8] As humanity stands on the precipice of a self-inflicted intellectual recession, the question remains—can we reclaim our cognitive autonomy, or have we already surrendered to the machine?

The arrow of money stuck the scent of history

It started as a serotonin booster, a way to escape the reality of our dull lives and immerse into a world where we had full control of our surroundings. Metaverse eventually offered a plethora of advantages by creating an extensively engrossing parallel world to the pre-existent physical world. This transformation fueled the rapid expansion of the gaming industry, dominated by leading corporations such as Tencent, Microsoft, and Sony. This sector is projected to grow substantially, reaching an estimated value of $8.92 billion in India over the next five years. With 442 million gamers, India stands as the world's second-largest gaming market, trailing only China.[9]

The metaverse, an expansive virtual realm combining augmented reality, virtual reality, 3D holographic avatars, videos, and other communication methods, offers users a hyper-real alternative world for activities like shopping, attending events, networking, and gaming through their avatars. However, this immersive environment has also become a breeding ground for concerning behaviors. Notably, incidents such as the virtual assault experienced by researcher Nina Jane Patel within 60 seconds of entering Horizon Worlds highlight the urgent need for robust safety measures. Similarly, reports from organizations like “SumOfUs” detail instances where female avatars faced sexual harassment and assault, underscoring the pressing necessity for stringent safeguards to protect users in these digital spaces. Similarly, when gamer Chanelle Siggens logged on the virtual reality game on the metaverse called Population One, she was approached by a player, in the virtual lobby of the game, who simulated groping and ejaculating onto her avatar.[10]

Although the avatars in the metaverse are virtual, the abuse faced by users feels disturbingly real.[11] The immersive nature of virtual environments intensifies psychological and emotional distress, as incidents of harassment, hate speech, and even virtual assaults mirror real-world trauma. Cases such as users experiencing sexual harassment within seconds of entering digital spaces highlight the urgent need for regulatory frameworks and ethical guidelines. Despite the digital nature of these interactions, the impact on victims is tangible, raising critical concerns about accountability, legal protections, and the role of platforms in preventing such misconduct.

Human society has always evolved through the power of shared imagination, a concept Yuval Noah Harari explores in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*.[12] From religious beliefs to economic systems, much of what structures civilization exists because people collectively accept it as real. The metaverse is a natural extension of this evolution—a digital landscape where identities, interactions, and economies are reconstructed in virtual form. However, just as every major societal shift has introduced new

[8] AI Won’t Replace Humans-But Humans With AI Will Replace Humans Without AI, https://hbr.org/2023/08/ai-wont-replace-humans-but-humans-with-ai-will-replace-humans-without-ai

[9] https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/indian-gaming-industry-to-grow-to-8-92-billion-in-next-5-years-report-124070900896_1.html

[10] https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/spotlight/the-metaverse-of-harassment-and-hate/articleshow/92897196.cms

[11] *Ibid at 4.*

[12] https://www.ynharari.com/book/sapiens-2/

challenges, this virtual world brings its own set of dangers. Issues like harassment, identity theft, and cybercrimes highlight the struggle to regulate a space where traditional legal frameworks fall short.

As Harari writes, "Fiction has enabled us not merely to imagine things, but to do so collectively." The challenge now is ensuring that this collective imagination does not spiral into lawlessness, but instead evolves into a structured digital society that protects its users, thus it's safe to say that as Criminals evolve with technology; laws must evolve even faster.

In light of technological developments in the field of "Big Data," which allow for the processing of such information in novel ways, there are growing concerns that we are "sleepwalking" into a future of algorithmic regulation, where decisions about individuals and society in general are made by software taking into account thousands of variables not interpretable in human language.[13]

The Animal that wanted to be God

"The real problem is not whether machines think, but whether men do." – B.F. Skinner

One of Skinner's most famous experiments involved a Skinner Box, a device used to study operant conditioning. In this experiment, a rat was placed inside the box and given a lever to press. Every time the rat pressed the lever, it received a food pellet. Over time, the rat learned to associate pressing the lever with receiving food and continued to press it regularly.[14]

Just as Skinner's rats learned to associate pressing a lever with receiving a food pellet, gamers and metaverse users are conditioned to seek rewards—be it in the form of in-game achievements, virtual currencies, or social validation. This reinforcement system keeps them engaged, triggering the brain's dopamine and serotonin pathways, much like a carefully designed reward mechanism.

The problem arises when this digital reinforcement becomes excessive. The constant influx of serotonin and dopamine creates a cycle where users need increasingly higher levels of stimulation to achieve the same level of satisfaction. Over time, this can lead to dependency, withdrawal symptoms when offline, and even mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, or dissociation from reality.

Gaming companies, aware of these psychological triggers, design their platforms to maximize engagement—leveraging in-game rewards, streaks, and social interactions to keep users hooked. This business model, while profitable, raises ethical concerns about digital addiction and its impact on mental well-being, mirroring the concerns Skinner's behaviorist theories highlight about environmental conditioning and control over human behavior.

The insignificant animal that was *Homo sapiens* 70,000 years ago today stands "on the verge of becoming a god." Over the centuries, humanity has made immense progress in many fields, but has done relatively little to relieve human suffering. Humanity remains dissatisfied with its achievements but worse yet, unsure of what it actually wants to achieve in the future.

Despite growing privacy concerns indicated by several studies, individuals seem willing to give up their privacy in exchange for services without much thought and only seldom adopt privacy protective technologies.[15] These apparent inconsistencies are based on a false assumption of rationality in privacy decision-making, a process that is challenged by information asymmetries, externalities, and uncertainties, as well as the "bounded rationality" of humans, who in such complex situations, because

[13] https://www.technologyreview.com/2013/10/22/112778/the-real-privacy-problem/

[14] https://achology.com/psychology/burrhus-frederic-skinner-quotes/?srsltid=AfmBOorwlNWb36pn7BuQyTYTdE1WlTn0YipKzkiEtKB7yWVn1YkxpJiZ

[15] Privacy and Rationality in Individual Decision Making, https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/1392696

of high deliberation costs and their inability to process and compute the expected utility of every alternative action, take reasoning shortcuts that may lead to suboptimal decision-making.

As a result, consent to the collection, use, and disclosure of personal data, even if binding in a legal sense, is often not meaningful, in the sense of providing an individual with real control over their data. Further, consumers may find it pointless to avoid collection by one particular product or service and forgo any such effort given the vast data collection that is generally taking place. In fact, research from the Pew Research Center found that ninety-one percent of American adults "agree" or "strongly agree" that they have lost control over how their information is collected and used by companies.[16]

The result is a heightened threat to individual autonomy because one's capacity and facility for choice requires a degree of freedom from monitoring, scrutiny, interference, and categorization by others. This autonomy that privacy protects has a broad their expected disutility and compare it to the expected utility of a given online product or service.

This erosion of privacy signals a deeper transformation—humanity's pursuit of omnipotence through the metaverse. No longer satisfied with mere existence, man now seeks digital godhood, crafting realities, identities, and even consciousness within virtual worlds. The metaverse offers an illusion of control, a domain where individuals transcend biological limits to shape their own universe. Yet, this self-proclaimed divinity comes at a cost—the surrender of real-world agency in exchange for artificial dominion. In striving to become gods of the digital realm, humans risk becoming mere data points in a system they no longer control.

Conclusion:

Humanity's long and arduous journey from primitive survival to the pinnacle of technological advancement has been defined by destruction, innovation, and adaptation. Over millions of years, evolution painstakingly refined Homo sapiens, equipping them with intelligence, dexterity, and a unique capacity for imagination.

Yet, in mere decades, the metaverse and gaming have outpaced this slow, organic process, reshaping human experience at an unprecedented velocity. The deliberate progression of nature has been overtaken by the rapid acceleration of digital reality—a reality where the mind detaches from the physical, where identity is fluid, and where existence is no longer bound by the biological constraints that governed evolution for millennia.

This radical shift reflects a deeper human ambition—the insatiable desire to transcend mortality and assume the role of creator. The metaverse, in many ways, is the ultimate manifestation of *mankind's longing to play god*, constructing virtual worlds that mimic, distort, and ultimately replace reality.

However, in this pursuit of digital divinity, the scent of history is lost. The lessons of patience, balance, and the natural order—ingrained through centuries of human struggle—are drowned in the intoxicating speed of technological progress.

What took nature eons to perfect, man now seeks to override in the blink of an eye. The digital universe expands relentlessly, yet the human psyche remains bound by its ancient wiring, unable to keep pace with the world it has created.

As a result, the rapid proliferation of the metaverse and gaming-induced virtual immersion is not merely an evolution—it is a divergence, a departure from the fundamental principles that governed human

[16] Public Perceptions of Privacy and Security in the Post-Snowden Era, https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2014/11/12/public-privacy-perceptions/

development.

Unlike natural evolution, which refined the species for survival, this artificial progression breeds detachment, addiction, and cognitive decay. Human attention spans shorten, dopamine cycles accelerate, and reality itself becomes a blurry concept.

The ability to construct alternate existences fuels dissatisfaction with the tangible world, making real-life struggles seem unbearably mundane. With every moment spent navigating hyper-real landscapes, humanity inches further away from the authentic, from the unfiltered experience of living.

The metaverse does not merely change how humans interact—it redefines what it means to exist. This unchecked digital revolution raises unsettling questions about agency, consciousness, and the very essence of identity.

In an era where one can reinvent themselves at will, the line between self-expression and self-destruction grows perilously thin. Where history once shaped civilization through hardship and perseverance, today's instant gratification culture seeks shortcuts to fulfillment, diminishing the weight of struggle that once defined progress.

The irony is striking—man, in his hunger to become a god, is fast becoming a mere algorithm, an entity shaped and controlled by the very systems he had designed. The great paradox of modern existence is that while technology promises liberation, it often leads to enslavement—to screens, to simulations, to an insatiable hunger for an artificial perfection that reality can never provide.

If evolution was once the slow march of progress, the metaverse is the chaotic sprint toward an unknown fate, one where humanity may lose itself in the very worlds it created.

The God's of Nothingness - "In seeking to transcend the limits of biology, humanity risks not evolution, but erasure—trading reality for illusion, wisdom for gratification, and in the end, becoming gods of nothing but a fading digital mirage."