

Disentangling the China Metaverse

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This insight section originates from a two-day workshop organized at the Università Federico II of Naples involving three scholars with expertise in the construction of the Chinese Metaverse. The following Q&As aim to trace continuities and changes in the perspectives of Chinese scholars from different backgrounds (ranging from cultural studies to philosophy of communication and political economy) regarding the emergence of MR and metaversal technologies in the People's Republic of China, also emphasizing the different trajectories that the metaverse is following, not only at a technological level, but also from a historical, economic, and cultural perspective.

Q1 China's engagement with the Metaverse is driven by a combination of technical rationality, techno-nationalism, and domestic market logic. From your perspective, how do these three drivers interact and influence the actual development priorities and policy frameworks for the Metaverse in China, and which factor, if any, holds the most sway in shaping its trajectory today?

JD: The three driving forces are always intertwined. However, concerning China's societal transformation amidst the changing world geopolitics, techno-nationalism is becoming more important to consolidate domestic consensus and to secure international competition. It is indeed an effective tool to legitimize most policy initiatives. Besides, the market growth and sustainability are also at stake since China's economy is facing some challenges from inside and outside; meanwhile digital economy plays a key role in bringing market dynamics into this system, including offering more but precarious job opportunities, boosting domestic consumption, and bridging China with global markets via diverse e-commerce channels. Thus, I think the techno-nationalist mindset is of great

importance for today's policy making in China, but the market logic is also critical as it relates to problem-solving in the real economic process.

XX: The advancement of China's metaverse is the outcome of dynamic coupling among three driving forces: technological rationality, technological nationalism, and domestic market logic. Through the interaction of policy guidance, technological breakthroughs, and market demand, these forces jointly shape a development trajectory characterized by independent innovation, scenario implementation and cultural value. It can be described as independent innovation as the core, scenario implementation as the focal point, and cultural value as the orientation.

The three driving forces exhibit an interactive mechanism. Technological rationality as the foundational support, emphasizing instrumental attributes and efficiency orientation, enhancing productivity through technological innovation while focusing on breakthroughs and integrated applications of core technologies such as blockchain, AIGC, and XR. Technological nationalism supports independent innovation and the pursuit of international discourse power, leveraging policy guidance and resource allocation to promote the autonomy of key technologies and the export of cultural values. Domestic market logic acts as the demand anchor, driven by user needs to propel consumption upgrades and industrial transformation, facilitating technology implementation and business model innovation while feeding back into policy adjustments and technological iteration.

This interactive mechanism has influenced development priorities and policy frameworks. In terms of development priorities, it has achieved a shift from technology-driven to scenario-based leadership. At the technological level, policies focus on addressing weaknesses and building an ecosystem, while also planning for AI ethics and governance. At the application level, priority is given to low-risk, high-value scenarios such as culture and cultural tourism, exemplified by Shanghai's "Cultural Tourism Metaverse Action Plan," which promotes related projects to meet market demands while strengthening cultural identity. At the industrial level, efforts are made to cultivate a collaborative ecosystem of "technology-content-hardware," with platforms like Tencent and NetEase integrating technologies to form commercial closed loops. In terms of policy frameworks, a three-tier system of "national strategy + local practice + industry self-regulation" has been established. At the national level, the top-level design of building a digital cultural powerhouse incorporates the metaverse into the realm of new productive forces. To accelerate the development of new industrial frontiers and competitive advantages, five government agencies including the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT), State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), and National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA) have jointly launched the "Three-Year Action Plan for Metaverse Industry Innovation Development (2023-2025)". This initiative focuses on building an industrial metaverse and empowering manufacturing sectors through integrated innovation in next-generation information technologies. The plan outlines 14 key tasks across five dimensions: establishing advanced metaverse technology ecosystems, developing industrial metaverse platforms, creating immersive digital lifestyle applications, building comprehensive industrial support systems, and establishing secure and

trustworthy industrial governance frameworks. At the local level, a pattern of "east, west, south, and north" has been formed through differentiated distribution. At the industry level, self-regulatory norms and technical standards are synchronized to promote compatibility between domestic technological self-discipline and international rules. At the local level,

Policy tools integrate technical rationality and market logic, becoming the core force shaping China's metaverse development path. Specifically, it lies in leveraging the strategic orientation of policies, the centralized allocation capacity of resources, and the anchoring effect of cultural values to build a metaverse narrative system based on China's cultural characteristics, ensuring that in global competition, we not only follow the technological frontier but also try to emphasize cultural value innovation.

LH: The primary driver behind the development of the metaverse in China is the demand for economic growth. However, in today's complex society, the causal relationship between technology and the economy has become increasingly indirect, leading to a widening gap between ultimate determinants and immediate decision-making factors. For instance, although the specific economic benefits of metaverse technologies remain uncertain at present, optimism and positive expectations toward such technologies have attracted substantial speculative investments.

Due to the lack of a clear trajectory for technological development and economic monetization, culture has emerged as a significant short-term influence guiding technology policy. Particularly noteworthy is the phenomenon of *scientism* that took root in China since the early 20th century—a widespread belief in the intrinsic link between scientific advancement and national strength. During the same period, a collective psychology of catching up with and surpassing Western civilization also took shape. This mentality emphasizes imitation and adoption of cutting-edge global technologies and strives to avoid missing out on any developmental opportunities. As a result, policy formulation in frontier technology often prioritizes symbolic advancement over pragmatic market evaluations.

Such techno-nationalist sentiments and related cultural influences have led to a top-down, ideology-driven approach in shaping China's policies on emerging technologies, which are frequently detached from their market evaluations. However, policy-making does not entirely overlook the gap between technological potential and practical applicability. Instead, the dominant cultural paradigm creates a demonstration effect, rapidly facilitating a nationwide environment that is friendly to technological adaptation. This is often achieved through local government-led investments designed to align institutional conditions with the requirements of technological deployment.

Therefore, in the case of cutting-edge technologies such as the metaverse and artificial intelligence, the most influential factors remain the imagination of technological futures held by political elites, as well as cultural undercurrents like techno-nationalism.

Q2 The concept of a "Chinese-style cultural metaverse" emphasizes the deep integration of traditional Chinese culture with modern digital technologies to foster unique experiences and disseminate national culture. This is also confirmed by the same translation of the word 'Metaverse' into 元宇宙 Yuanyuzhou, which substantially differs from the original English

version. Could you elaborate on specific, tangible examples of how this cultural integration is being achieved in practice, and what are the most significant challenges in ensuring that these digital interpretations genuinely convey the depth and authenticity of traditional Chinese culture?

JD: Chinese culture is a very stable system, as well as its narratives. However, I am not going to say that any technical revolution will fall into a Chinese characteristic approach, which merely emphasizes China as an exception and undervalues the commonalities between China and other countries or cultures. Perhaps, it is because of the massive application of Metaverse technologies in the exhibition of traditional Chinese culture online (e.g. museum) and offline (e.g. lantern festival), we can easily find the connection between Metaverse and traditional culture. But it has to be noticed that the Metaverse has been used in modern and urban settings as well to showcase future visions and even construction plans. Arguably, the Metaverse fits the development agenda well for both the government and industries. Therefore, though used widely in relation to traditional culture, the Metaverse is not considered only as a tool for cultural inheritance, but as a catalyst for boosting national and local economy, optimizing political performance via appealing to cutting-edge technologies, and expanding the market scale. Therefore, due to the pragmatic approach to using these technologies, the depth of Chinese culture conveyed by them is often overlooked.

XX: The integration of traditional culture with modern digital technologies has given rise to numerous practical applications across multiple fields. In the digital revitalization of cultural relics and heritage, Dunhuang's "Digital Sutra Cave" employs 3D laser scanning and VR/AR technologies to replicate the murals of the Mogao Caves, while AI restoration algorithms recover faded details. Users can virtually explore the "Dunhuang Manuscripts" in 360 degrees, creatively recombine mural elements, and achieve a modern transformation of traditional cultural symbols. The Palace Museum's "Digital Artifact Repository" utilizes high-precision digital modeling to construct a 3D model library of artifacts, complemented by AR technology to launch interactive e-publications. Visitors can "touch" virtual artifacts through AR glasses, watch restoration animations, and experience historical scene transitions, turning static relics into dynamic narratives.

Immersive innovations in cultural tourism also stand out. The Hangzhou Asian Games' Digital Torchbearer program generated 100 million digital torchbearer avatars using blockchain technology, achieving a virtual-physical ignition of the main torch tower via AR. The avatars incorporated cultural elements such as Liangzhu jade cong and West Lake landscapes, conveying the Eastern philosophy of "eternal renewal"¹ and marking the world's first large-scale AR-interactive sports cultural event. Suzhou Bay Digital Art Museum's "Journey Through a Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" employs 8K ultra-high-definition projection and motion capture to transform the Northern Song Dynasty painting *A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains* into an interactive immersive space. Visitors can participate in the painting's scenes through body movements, experiencing the aesthetic "mood" of traditional landscape painting and elevating the experience to homo sapiens wandering within the artwork.

¹ "Eternal renewal" means the concept of life and things continuing and repeating, reflecting the profound understanding of nature and life in eastern culture.

In the innovative development of IP and digital assets, Sanxingdui's "Digital Artifact NFTs" issued blockchain-based digital collectables of bronze masks and sacred trees, paired with AIGC-generated virtual narratives. These digital collectables preserve the original patterns of the artifacts while using virtual homo sapiens to explain ancient Shu civilization, making archaeological achievements accessible to younger audiences. Henan TV's "Metaverse Opera" applied motion capture and holographic projection to adapt the *Tang Palace Night Banquet* dance into a virtual homo sapiens performance, creating a metaverse stage with VR devices. The virtual performers' costumes replicate Tang Dynasty attire, and their movements incorporate elements of opera, bringing traditional art into the view of Generation Z in interactive and shareable forms.

The ultimate goal of the cultural metaverse lies in achieving innovation for civilizational inheritance, rather than technology-driven showboating. The essence of China's cultural metaverse is technology as the vessel and culture as the soul, yet in practice, it faces the dilemma of a soul without a vessel. The greatest challenge in preserving the depth and authenticity of traditional culture stems precisely from this disconnect. In the short term, it is necessary to coordinate commercial value and cultural value to prevent the instrumentalization of technology from diluting the cultural core. In the long run, it is necessary to build a support system composed of three aspects: a traditional culture database, a cultural interpretation model, and an ethical review mechanism, so as to ensure that digital technology becomes a carrier of activating rather than alienating traditional culture.

LH: In Chinese culture, the concept of the "metaverse" is relatively new, and there is no directly equivalent term in the Chinese language. As such, the Chinese term "元宇宙" (yuányǔzhòu) was coined to correspond to the English concept of "metaverse." Nevertheless, subtle cultural differences persist in the process of conceptual travel and translation. "Metaverse" was once translated as "超元域" (chāo yuán yù), but this term was abandoned due to its excessive abstraction. In other words, both translators and the public prefer a term that evokes a sense of familiarity and resonance among speakers.

In the Chinese term "元宇宙," "元" (yuán) corresponds to "meta," while "宇宙" (yǔzhòu) corresponds to "verse." The character "元" in Chinese not only conveys a sense of transcendence but also carries meanings related to origin and primacy—it refers to what is fundamental and essential. This differs slightly from the English notion of a realm beyond or parallel to the physical world. The Chinese term even implies that this world is more fundamental and original than the real one.

The word "verse" originates from "universe," which derives from the Latin "universus," combining "uni" (one) and "versus" (turn), originally describing all things turning into one unified whole. On the other hand, "宇宙" (yǔzhòu) is deeply embedded in Chinese cultural imagination. This term dates back to the pre-Qin period: "宇" (yǔ) refers to all spatial dimensions (east, west, south, north, up, down), while "宙" (zhòu) refers to all temporal dimensions (past, present, future). Thus, the Chinese concept of "宇宙" constitutes a space-time continuum rather than merely a spatial structure. Moreover, unlike a unified

spatial framework, "宇宙" inherently encompasses the possibility of multiple parallel space-times.

Traditional Chinese conceptions of time are not linear but cyclical, evolving through alternating periods of order and chaos, as captured in sayings such as "long united, must divide; long divided, must unite" and "thirty years east of the river, thirty years west of the river." This reflects the rhythm of agricultural society, where activities were organized according to annual cycles, reinforcing a circular view of time and mode of thinking. Although the introduction of Buddhism brought some linear concepts of past, present, and future, the Buddhist notion of "reincarnation" further strengthened this cyclical understanding of time.

This traditional perception and structure of time and space in Chinese culture make it more receptive to the recombination of time-space and parallel realities. For example, contemporary Chinese web literature frequently features time-travel plots—modern people travelling to the past, ancient people coming to the present, and even cross-gender transitions—all reflecting a flexible conception of time and space in Chinese culture and a greater openness to virtual worlds.

Q3 Chinese understanding of virtuality not as a mere illusion, but as confirmed by previous studies, inspired by Chinese scholars and scientists like Qian Xuesen "another possibility of reality" or "a vibrant experience, a third mode of being", which can even enrich life and impart moral significance by presenting alternative possibilities. How does this profound philosophical perspective, which views the virtual as inherently linked to and capable of transforming reality, influence the overarching purpose and design philosophy of the Chinese Metaverse – moving beyond purely recreational or economic aims – particularly in its potential to offer deeply enriching life experiences, foster personal reflection, and serve educational or societal functions that might diverge significantly from typical Western virtual paradigms?

DJ: Virtuality is also reality. Chinese philosophy always underlines the dialectical way of thinking. I believe that building a virtual world is not only mirroring the real world, but also reminding people who live in the real world of some important issues, including the meaning of life, family, and the importance of adhering to ethical principles. One typical example is the story of *Journey to the West*. The Palace in Heaven is both a projection of the imperial power system on the earth and a dominator of the human society under the highest power of Buddha. Another example is the movie about *Nezha*. In that story, the virtual world inside a traditional Chinese painting is also a real world for physical and spiritual training. There is always a channel connecting the virtual and real worlds. Thus, for Chinese people, the Metaverse seems technically far away but spiritually inside of us. It is a medium for self and group reflection, which may differ from those in Western societies.

XX: The overarching goal of China's metaverse is to transition from technological empowerment to civilizational dialogue, transcending instrumental rationality. Its core lies in promoting cultural heritage innovation and upgrading social governance through the deep integration of virtual and real worlds, rather than merely pursuing technological

breakthroughs and economic benefits. In the pursuit of cultural sovereignty, many Chinese scholars regard the metaverse as a carrier of "new forms of digital civilization," emphasizing Chinese-style cultural innovation. For instance, Qian Xuesen proposed the concept of "spiritual realm" by integrating VR technology with Zhuangzi's philosophy. Regarding social value, it adheres to "prioritizing social benefits," such as prioritizing virtual human technology in public services to embody "technology for good."

The Chinese metaverse has developed a three-stage interactive design concept that seamlessly integrates the virtual and the real. From the philosophical perspective of the intrinsic connection between the virtual and the real, it creates a closed loop of reality anchoring, virtual expansion, and feedback to reality. Real anchoring requires designing virtual scenarios based on authentic cultural resources to avoid detachment from reality; virtual expansion breaks through time and space constraints through virtual technology, creating a "realistic possibility"; while feedback into reality transforms virtual experiences into concrete actions and value recognition, as exemplified by the "Digital Torchbearers" initiative at the Hangzhou Asian Games.

The specific functional potential of China's metaverse is reflected in the integration of deep experience, personal reflection and social empowerment. Deep life experiences enable users to transition from observing to participating, with the help of XR, AIGC, and other technologies, to achieve cultural immersion. Through virtual scene construction, personal reflection builds a valuable dialogue space to guide users to internalize the collision between traditional culture and modern values. In terms of educational and social functions, the metaverse can be used to re-present educational scenarios, promote the implementation of functional features such as experiential learning and co-created governance, and realize a paradigm innovation from pure knowledge transmission to comprehensive ability improvement.

The metaverse in China differs from the Western virtual paradigm to some extent. China pursues the unity of cultural inheritance, social progress, and the free and comprehensive development of individuals through the path of coexistence between the virtual and the real. This difference stems from the philosophical tradition of the unity of the Dao and the vessel in China, and is expected to provide an alternative possibility of non-Western centrism for the development of the global metaverse.

LH: Qian Xuesen translated "virtual reality" as "Lingjing" (灵境), considering it "distinctively Chinese." Although ancient China did not possess the technology to realize virtual reality as we know it today, it harbored a rich tradition of imagination and conceptions pertaining to virtual experiences. Among these, the notion of "huan" (幻) stands out as one of the most distinctive and enduring. "Huan" in Chinese carries derived meanings (衍生) such as illusion (幻觉) and magic (幻术), yet at its core, the concept is intimately connected with "nothingness" (虚无), "reality" (真实), and "transformation" (化). Primarily, "huan" refers to a subjective experience distinct from the everyday real world—an experience so vivid that it supplants reality and becomes a new form of truth. Tracing its origins, "huan" is often associated with changes in the environment or the subject: either the environment induces illusions, or the subject enters the body of another

person or an animal. It is this very process of transformation (化) that alters the experience of reality.

Unlike a simple true-false binary, the Chinese concept of "huan" does not regard illusion as mere sensory deception or environmental unreality. Instead, it perceives "huan" as an alternative, more genuine perception of reality or another possibility of the real. As early as two thousand years ago, Daoist philosophy established an equal status for "huan" and reality. For instance, in the famous anecdote of "Zhuangzi dreaming of being a butterfly", Zhuangzi regarded the experience of being a butterfly in a dream as equal to his experience as a human, thereby reflecting on the "real" self and the world.

During the Wei and Jin periods (220 - 589 a.C.), Buddhist thought entered Chinese intellectual circles, and its doctrine that "form is emptiness" (色即是空) popularized the concept of "huan" even further. While the Daoist notion of "huan" negates the distinction between the real and the illusory, it still acknowledges the existence of an essence and order in the world. Buddhism, however, denies all essence and reality, reducing everything to nothingness. It regards secular life and the real world as "huan"—where illusion is emptiness, and illusion is reality. The concept of illusory emptiness (空幻) breaks down the boundary between reality and virtuality, transcending the true-false dichotomy. "Huan" is neither "being" (有) nor "non-being" (无). This philosophy treats "huan" as a lively experience—a third type of experience parallel to false illusions and everyday life.

In literary creation, the Chinese literati even employed "huan" as a criterion for evaluating the quality of a work. Precisely because "huan" is not real, authors need not worry about invoking unnecessary associations among readers, and can instead create with greater freedom. For example, *Dream of the Red Chamber* (one of the Four Great Classic Novels of Chinese literature) used dream illusions to depict reality, evading the literary inquisition and political censorship of the early Qing Dynasty. Li Zhi (李贽) of the Ming Dynasty (though many believe the actual author was Ye Zhou (叶昼), who wrote under Li's name) remarked in a preface commentary on *Journey to the West*: "Writing without *huan* is not writing; *huan* not taken to the extreme is not *huan*. The most illusory matters are the most real matters; the most illusory principles are the most real principles. Thus, speaking of reality is not as good as speaking of *huan*." The story of *Journey to the West* is absurd, yet it contains satire aimed at the real world of the Ming Dynasty.

Since there is no rigid boundary between the illusory realm and reality, the choices made within the illusory realm can impact reality. Conversely, the illusory realm also becomes an important pathway for individual enlightenment and growth. From an existentialist perspective, "huan" allows one to traverse time, space, and subjectivity, compelling the breaking of fixed perspectives to examine life from new angles, revealing its impermanence (being-toward-death), and thus rethinking the meaning and choices of life.

In traditional Chinese thought, "huan" is not unconditional; it requires some medium or technique to be realized. For example, through dreams, magic, conjuring, hallucinogenic plants (such as mushrooms), drugs, smoke, alcohol, and other means, one may escape rational control and enter another world. The discourse on "huan" is often associated with "hua" (化), which has two meanings. The first is an action directly entering the body of

another person, animal, or plant. This concept likely originates from shamanism, once prevalent in China, where shamans would enter the bodies of other animals to gain unique perspectives or abilities. The second meaning is the creation of an illusory realm. Those skilled in creating illusions are often associated with mystical powers; for example, enlightened monks or Daoist priests often used illusory techniques to show people the future or alternative possibilities, thereby leading to enlightenment. One of the most important media for entering illusory realms in ancient Chinese artistry was painting. The Chinese did not regard painting as a static reproduction of reality but saw the painting itself as an illusory realm—a space one could enter. "Huan" was also a key principle in the creation of Chinese landscape painting. Traditional Chinese landscape painting aimed to create an illusory realm that could be entered and traversed imaginatively. It was not merely a realistic depiction of scenery but sought to create an ideal space that was "feasible" (可行), "expected" (可望), "habitable" (可居), and "navigable" (可游). By externalizing human perception, landscape painting guided viewers into the illusory realm, allowing them to travel along the routes arranged by the artist. This was not only enjoyable but also a soul-cleansing spiritual journey. By entering the illusory realm generated within the painter's mind, viewers achieved a fusion of different horizons.

In summary, the Chinese conception of the metaverse presents an alternative perspective distinct from the Western one, thereby enriching the global discourse on the metaverse.

Q4 Following Girginova's suggestion (2024) Chinese-style cultural metaverse offers a new perspective for global metaverse development and can inspire other nations in cultural preservation and technological innovation. What are, in your view, the key predicted divergences in values, technological applications, or content presentation between China's approach to the Metaverse and that of Western cultures, and how might these differences shape the future global discourse and potential interconnectedness of virtual worlds?

DJ: Metaverse technologies are used for cultural preservation, economic growth, and social governance in China. To differentiate China from other countries, I suggest focusing on holistic rather than concrete perspectives. First of all, most technological innovations are prioritized to be used for economic development and the improvement of social governance. Secondly, since China is still one of the largest populous countries in the world, popularizing the use of those technologies and securing the equality of technical rights is central to the national policy-making process. Thirdly, as the geo-technical competition escalates, China is likely to adopt autonomous approaches to develop its technical, economic, and cultural strengths, which may lead to a more diverse outcome in the global Metaverse development.

XX: There are significant differences between China and Western cultural contexts in terms of values, technological applications, and content presentation in the metaverse. In the dimension of values, China emphasizes "cultural subjectivity" and "social value priority," adhering to the logic of "civilizational continuity" through virtual-physical symbiosis. At the level of technological application, China follows the principles of "independent control and scenario implementation," guided by policies to serve the real economy. In content presentation, China is characterized by "reality anchoring and traditional revitalization," deeply rooted in historical and cultural resources.

These differences have significant implications for the direction of future discussions and the potential connectivity of the global virtual world. In terms of discussion trends, the focus of China's cultural metaverse discussions lies in promoting the deep integration of cultural preservation and technological innovation, providing the world with new ways to sustain civilization, and shifting global discourse from focusing on the latest technological breakthroughs to exploring how technology can empower culture.

Regarding potential interconnectivity, China and the West face dual risks: fragmentation of technological standards and cultural identity. Differences in blockchain infrastructure, digital identity systems, content moderation mechanisms, and other aspects may lead to the formation of "parallel universes" in the future global virtual world, with several distinct metaverse systems coexisting and struggling to interoperate in terms of technical standards and governance rules.

Despite these differences, the interconnectivity of the global virtual world can still be achieved through "cultural inclusiveness + technological collaboration." For example, at the cultural level, establishing a "Metaverse Cultural Heritage Alliance" could promote the sharing of digital cultural resources among nations, fostering mutual learning among civilizations while respecting cultural sovereignty. At the technological level, cross-regional technical standards could be developed to enable blockchain interoperability and mutual recognition of digital identities, avoiding technological barriers. At the governance level, a global "multi-stakeholder collaborative governance" mechanism could be established to balance government regulation, corporate innovation, and user rights.

Although differences exist, future global discussions on virtual worlds must transcend adversarial thinking, integrating cultural diversity into technological innovation and upholding ethical boundaries in commercial development. The insight offered by China's metaverse is that the ultimate value of virtual worlds lies in enriching the forms of Homo sapiens civilization through virtual-physical integration. This vision may propel the global metaverse from a "fragmented technological utopia" toward a "diverse and symbiotic digital civilization community."

LH: As mentioned in the previous question, the traditional Chinese concept of the metaverse, represented by the notion of "huan" (幻), does not posit a strict binary opposition between reality and virtual reality. Instead, it remains open to a third type of experience that transcends this dichotomy. As a form of life experience, "illusion" challenges the modern tradition of instrumental rationalism and redefines the virtual: not as an escape from reality, but as an integral part of life experience and a mirror for moral reflection. Of course, one cannot equate ancient concepts with contemporary ones in a simplistic manner. However, these ideas offer an enlightening perspective for rethinking modern views on the metaverse. How to integrate China's discourse on "huan" into the global discourse of the metaverse remains a question worthy of future research.

China primarily regards the metaverse as a modern technology. Under the belief in scientism, the metaverse is often associated with national strength and future development, which in turn promotes its technological development and application. At the same time, China also views the metaverse as a form of life experience and an ideal state of living. Greater emphasis is placed on user experience, alongside a strong focus on its moral and educational value. For instance, although the technology is not yet widely adopted, some institutions have already begun using it for exhibitions and even cadre training. Both

perspectives are conducive to the promotion and adoption of metaverse technology in China.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, China witnessed rapid growth in online shopping, live streaming, and virtual meetings. There was also widespread acceptance of biometric data collection, such as personal movement monitoring and facial recognition. Many forms of online interaction have persisted beyond the pandemic, illustrating China's generally welcoming attitude toward new technologies. This openness suggests that Chinese society may be relatively receptive to the integration of parallel virtual spaces and real-world environments inherent in the metaverse, thereby facilitating the acceptance of virtual interaction and metaverse technologies in China.

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