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Metaversal and transhumanist environments: Perspectives on our impending digital reculturalization

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Scope

Media ecology (ME), the study of media as environments, is an approach to understanding the human condition, and includes a particular emphasis on the effects of media and technology on human cultures and societies past, present, and future. As environments that we inhabit, media influence the way that we perceive, think, feel, communicate, and organize ourselves collectively, to the extent that they can enhance or impede our chances of survival. Understanding media in this way has become all the most vital now that we find ourselves in the Anthropocene, and on the verge of enclosing ourselves within digital environments characterized as metaversal and transhumanist. A new kind of media and technological literacy is needed to grapple with our evolving media environment, building on the work of media ecology scholars such as Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) and Neil Postman (1931-2003). Historically, the introduction of new media and technologies always come with a cost, whatever their benefits may be, and sometimes the negative effects on individuals and societies outweigh the advantages they afford. With the aid of technological literacy based on the media ecology approach, we can mitigate the “numbness” that media are known to produce in us, and thereby better evaluate the potential gains and losses of our innovations, seek to determine their appropriate uses and to prevent their misuse and harmful effects, and create sustainable and ethical human environments.

Descriptors

- Humanism and digital reculturation.
- The importance of education and communication in virtual environments: the Metaverse.
- Artificial intelligence (AI) as an extension of human intelligence.
- New challenges for education and communication regarding technological and algorithmic revolutions.
- Digital media and platforms as generators of learning environments.
- From the city as classroom (McLuhan) to smart cities as learning environments.
- From technologies as human extensions to the effects of our extensions on us.
- Biotechnology and organic media.
- Understanding the effects of media and technology as they relate to education and communication.

Questions

- What are the uses, potentials, and drawbacks of metaversal environments for education?
- To what extent does transhumanism offer hope for human sociocultural, political, and economic progress? To what extent does it challenge or undermine our humanity? And how will this affect education and communication?
- How can McLuhan's basic principle, that the medium is the message, be applied to our understanding of new and emerging digital platforms and their implications for education and communication?
- What are and will be the effects of our sustained increase in the amount of information available and the increase in the speed in the circulation of information on the development of new educational environments?
- What are the educational implications of new and emerging media and digital technology?

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Lance A. Strate (PhD), Professor of Communication and Media Studies at Fordham University, United States, is considered one of our leading media ecology scholars, and was one of the founders of the Media Ecology Association (MEA), serving as first president of the MEA, from 1998 to 2009, and co-founding the journal *Explorations in Media Ecology*. He is the President of the Institute of General Semantics, having previously served as President of the New York Society for General Semantics, as well as being a past president of the New York State Communication Association (NYSCA). In 2015 he held the Margaret E. and Paul F. Harron Chair in Communication at Villanova University, United States, and in 2016 he was given the honorary title of Chair Professor at Henan University's School of Journalism and Communication in Kaifeng, China. Dr. Strate is the author or co-author of nine books, including three books of poetry. Translations of his publications have appeared in French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Hungarian, Hebrew, Mandarin, and the fictional Quenya language. E-mail is: STRATE@fordham.edu

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