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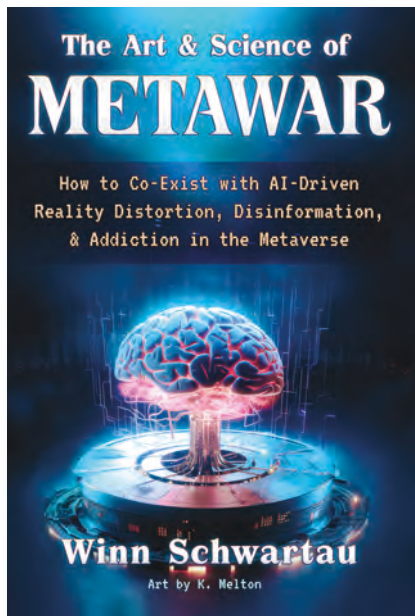


INTERVIEW

How to Co-Exist With AI-Driven Reality Distortion, Disinformation, & Addiction in the Metaverse

The Metawar Thesis

On May 9th of this year, Winn Schwartzau gave a seminar called 'Metawar: The Battle for Reality in the Metaverse' at a meeting of the Platform for Information Security in Utrecht. He told us then, that he would travel through Europe inviting critical questions on this subject matter. Questions and conversations with folks from many different disciplines that would sharpen his mind on the content matter of his new book that will appear on December 4th, 2023. Winn kindly agreed that before such release he would welcome an interview to be published in our IB-Magazine. So we interviewed him! Before diving into the subject matter one may ask who is this guy Schwartzau?



Who is Winn...? Winn Schwartau has lived Cyber Security since 1983, and now says: "I think, maybe, I'm just starting to understand it". His predictions about the Internet and security have been scarily spot on. He coined the term 'Electronic Pearl Harbor' while testifying before Congress in 1991 and showed the world how and why massive identify theft, cyber-espionage, nation state hacking, and cyber terrorism would be an integral part of our society. Winn was named the 'Civilian Architect of Information Warfare' by Admiral Tyrrell of the British Ministry of Defence.

He wrote about 15 books and participated in more than 1.000 TV-shows. His interests: loss of privacy, the psychological aspects of Cyber..., the Metaverse (being like the internet, but worse because immersive), the mathematics and sensory manipulations behind it and becoming aware that technology is only one of the steps of innovation, more important how-to live-in coexistence with it!

His visit May 2023 to The Netherlands and the United Kingdom "Changed my life, my views on the matter". He fears that too many people are blinded, have biased views or are exposed to external manipulation of their unconscious minds. So to test his hypotheses, he asks the audience "to call out my bullshit and let's discuss it". And he considers Europe the place to do

that, because in the European Union the policies and compliances are more people centric instead money centric.

So as a courtesy to his positive view on us, Europeans, we should at least pay attention to his thoughts and visions. And it starts with Metaverse and the claim of Facebook that they are Meta! It's not theirs to claim the name, there is too much to be said about their privacy statements; so, let them come and bring it on. Let's consider the facts instead of words. Let's consider the presumptions, the arrogance of the Big Tech companies.

The Metaverse

According to Winn the Metaverse is a human condition strongly related to storytelling, and storytelling is a powerful way of human communication. Exemplary: the 'Nachtwacht (Night Watch by Rembrandt) in het Rijksmuseum' is a story. Metaverse convinces people that it is worth to listen to stories and by doing so change things leading to a distortion of reality. The reader should realise that everything in that process involves (and leads to) information!

Take your big TV-screen at home. Most people are not aware that she/he is being made part of the story shown, like a book that binds you, however with use of many more senses than the story in a book. In fact, the TV-story is attempting to absorb your mind. You see the 'bad guy', yourself being the 'good guy' and through this manipulation it is stimulating you to crave for the reward i.e., a plethora of 'feel-good chemicals' (made by one's own body). Such rewards will lead to addiction and compliance to act as you are guided, based on how you are influenced to think.

Consider the six domains of planetary conflict according to Winn Schwartau:

1. war on soil (army);
2. war on sea (navy);
3. war in the air (air force);
4. space war (satellites);
5. cyberwar (digital) and
6. Metawar (mind control).

To contain Metawar it is necessary that people care more about themselves, necessitating governments to regain their care roll in order to assure that Big Tech are giving up their power positions and their wish to progress their commercial

(also power) empires for the happy oligarchs. So like Bernie Sanders told on the TV-show of Arjen Lubach: "have a dislike for unregulated capitalism"; added by Winn with "content alone should shake people".

Winn elaborates: "... from immersive stories & music to real-time immersive reality made by Artificial Intelligence (AI) good intensions are paving the road to... addiction". It leads to a new way about how our minds work. He refers to the work of the Dutch professor Sander L. van der Linden.

Editors: Van der Linden is a social psychologist at the University of Cambridge, he is well-known for his studies regarding social influence, risk, human judgement and decision-making; all dealing with fake news and misinformation. Van der Linden developed: the inoculation – and conspiracy theory and the gateway belief model. He looks to generate psychological resistance, teaching people to recognise manipulation techniques, helping people to understand (mis)perception of scientific consensus (through a two-step process of attitude change) and to grasp the idea of strong identification regarding to conspiracy theories (1).

'From fun to threat?'

As discussed earlier, Big Tech is enticing people for the sake of profit making. Big Tech may therefore serve as an enabler when developing technology further. As such immersive reality may lead to people wanting more and more (as in an addiction) this may end up in reality distortion on purpose. The purpose being behavioural control of the person, groups of people or possibly a complete society/nation. How can this happen?

Winn explains that behind the immersive addiction lies neuroscience: starting with a reward mechanism (instant gratification, feel good 'Likes', rewarding neurotransmitters in the brain pleasure centres), conscious versus subconscious

processing in the brain, based upon: "our fast system 1 (unconscious) versus our slow system 2 (conscious) brain-structure" (D. Kahnemann (2)); and the focus question there: "Is it REAL?"

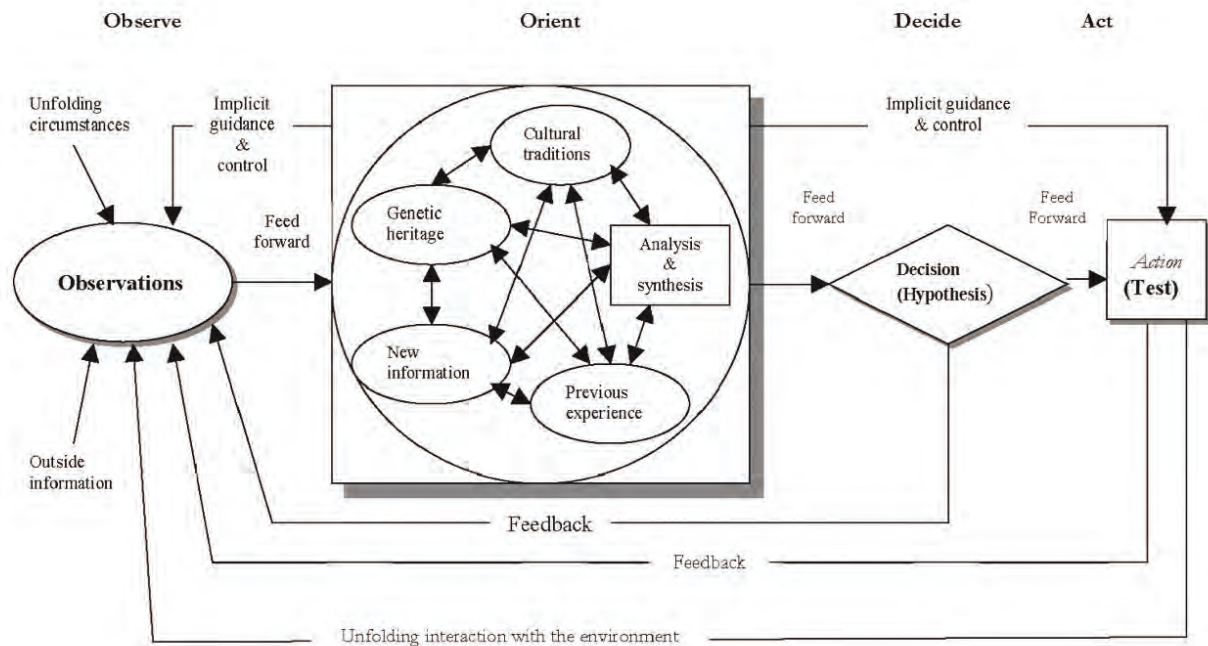
Winn states that our subconscious brain is targeted using (mainly) visual (about 80% sensory attack surface: 10 MB/s) and sound stimuli (about 10% sensory attack surface: 100 kb/s). The unconscious neural processing goes at a velocity of about 400 billion kb/s (European value: 'miljard') versus the conscious neural processing of only 2 kb/s. Being aware of the Meta-warrior who uses social constructs to tell you to feel good about something and Big Techs, as the enablers, leads to the big question: "can people, as organic entities, combat the silicon/chips-based addiction machine(s); once such machine is seeking (Editor: having, think about the smart phone?) control over human behaviour?"

So, Big Tech is not concerned with people and people's privacy. They use more versed network (2.0/3.0) technologies creating surveillance capitalism. Will Government guard its citizens? Look - editors: as a not welcomed policy - what China is doing!?. Winn adds to it: China is modifying its people's behaviour through Big Tech orchestration and that could signify disinformation and Metawar. Thus, do people really care enough about themselves and do they care about self-protection against the addiction?

Threat measures

Which mechanisms are there to counter the eminent threat of the Metaverse? In Sweden tomorrow is knocking at the door. There, the Psychological Defence Agency has been instituted. "Safeguarding their open and democratic society, the free formation of opinion through identifying, analysing and countering foreign malign information influence, disinformation and other misleading information directed at Sweden or at Swedish interests" (3).

Winn himself repeats there are three main strategies: Big Tech reforming, government safeguarding (caring!) its people and people making aware of the responsibility owned to themselves: "Caring for yourself". He thinks that the European



Union is doing better than the USA.

When you put forward to your audience statements like: "Mozart outsells the Beatles!"/"Meat from Belgium is infected!" or "Alien baby in Texas!" and follow up with the question: "Is this true or false?", every time a gut reaction can be expected. Such statements will spread 100 times faster than other news thanks to our gut. The reaction of a wise woman or man should be: "Is it real?" and Winn's suggestion: "Do verify and look it up!"

In general: humanity as a biological based being has no defence system against (dis)information, when encountering it, the reaction will be primal: freeze, flight, fight, – Winn adding: "the need for sustenance (feed) and the drive to mate". The foregoing being an adaptationist perspective on the acute stress response spectrum (4).

So, the main question would be: "Do I automatically accept it or not, do I believe it without verification?". The answer would be: critical thinking is necessary. Everybody has to co-exist with technology, so we have to press the PAUSE-button regarding our primal reaction. We have to take time to reflect; 'hold your breath', 'count to 10'; thus, asking ourselves - upon receiving the input received by our sensory system - "Is it real!" Within that context 'resistance is not futile'. Winn explained by a real-life example: "The Netherlands is a country with cobbled streets, that troubled my vestibular sense (movement, gravity and/or balance sense allowing us to move smoothly). I had to take into account to step higher when walking in order to prevent me from falling. So, I had to push my PAUSE-button.

Another aspect is that we all have different clocks in our minds. One specialised in conscious awareness of elapsed time and the other one remembering past experiences (5).

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Stephan reflected on his question in May: “If resistance might be futile”, now concluding as result of this interview that “resistance might not be futile”. Winn however, now added to it: “giving-up is a choice to allow yourself to fail”. Humans are not perfect, time to push the PAUSE-button might be missing. It also put forward questions like: “Do we have free will?” and “What do magicians do?” To answer the last question first: “They distort reality of their audience!” Regarding the free will, Winn refers to Benjamin Libet and his experiment regarding the brain initiating voluntary movements before we are aware of having decided to move; calling into question the efficacy of our wills (6). The results of Libet’s experiments are important.

So “How to realise yourself that Metaverse is distorting reality?”. Winn retorted “that is a very beautiful question”. It deals with motivation: good or bad? He sees the distortion as a fast OODA-loop (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) (7), which we - as human beings - can’t compete with. So, harness your human mind, take a deep breath and don’t overreact. Push the PAUSE-button.

New book release

Winn has written a new book in his already impressive series of books, titled: ‘The art & science of Metawar’. He gave us on atomic level an overview of the lay-out:

- act 1: foundation for the book, the brain as a time-system;
- act 2: strategic brain – as well as reality distortion;
- act 3: defensive metawar.

He is not disclosing all information on the book, but said that the 3 acts are to be recognized as him storytelling, relating also to the theme of Neuroscience, which has a young history of 20 years. And be aware that act 2 describes the unconscious distortion, changing reality. For us a non-brainer to read.

With thanks to Winn for his time, humor and intensive conversation.

A book review is on the action list for 2024. Interested readers can pre-order it for December 4th, 2023 at the Amazon site for the paperback and as Kindle book.

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