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ETHICS AND POWER IN THE METAVERSE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF META'S INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The emergence of the metaverse in 2021 ushered in a new digital era that poses profound ethical and social dilemmas today. This research examines the socio-political implications of Meta's project, questioning how its institutional narrative legitimizes new forms of control. **Methodology:** A qualitative approach is employed through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Meta's foundational video (accessed in 2025), examining linguistic legitimation strategies through the categories proposed by Fairclough, in convergence with the corporate legitimation model of Patala et al. (2019). **Results:** The analysis identifies four rhetorical strategies that articulate the company's narrative: 1) inclusion strategies; 2) construction metaphors; 3) visionary prospective; and 4) institutional shield. **Discussion:** The results suggest that Meta's discourse operates as a mechanism of ideological legitimization that tends to render power asymmetries invisible. Through synthetic personalization, the narrative projects an appearance of horizontal community and positions the metaverse as a normative technological development. **Conclusions:** The study concludes that Meta's narrative favors the consolidation of its hegemony in the virtual environment. The findings indicate that the discourse frames the private management of the human experience within frameworks of collective benefit, contributing to the validation of the dynamics of surveillance capitalism.

Keywords: Metaverse; digital communications; information ethics; technological governance; digital rights.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the development of new immersive environments such as the metaverse has generated controversies that transcend the technological realm to become central to ethical debate. Recent scandals concerning the management of harmful content and the privacy of minors on meta platforms (González, 2025) have forced a re-examination of corporate responsibilities in the digital age.

Since its rebranding in 2021, Mark Zuckerberg's company has led the race to define this new space. However, this proposal is not neutral. As a proprietary infrastructure with aspirations of being a public space, Meta's metaverse represents a privatization of social experience, where human interactions are mediated by the commercial interests of a single corporation (Uzun, 2023).

Although the concept of metaverse was first coined by Neal Stephenson in his science fiction novel *Snow Crash* (1992), currently, Ball's (2022) definition is the most widespread, understanding the metaverse as "a 3D virtual world, a network of interconnected experiences and devices, tools and infrastructures that go far beyond mere virtual reality" (p. 5).

However, it is important to note that, despite this definition, the metaverse is still a technological artifact that authors like Alaawad et al. (2026, p. 4) describe it as incipient and marked by structural gaps. It is an environment that is still not democratized and, in practice, unknown or inaccessible to a large majority of the world's population due to existing infrastructure barriers and inequality (Back et al., 2025, p. 1).

In this context, Meta (successor to Facebook Inc., founded by entrepreneur Mark Zuckerberg) emerges as the most ambitious bid to consolidate the metaverse. Thus, with the promise of revolutionizing its users' experience, Meta proposes immersive spaces for carrying out multiple tasks and actions of daily life, such as work, leisure, education, or commerce (Dwivedi et al., 2022, p. 2). However, these proposals also raise substantial questions about the limits of technology, the regulation of the digital environment, social inclusion, individual privacy, and, above all, informational monopoly (Munn & Weijers, 2023, p. 6).

Following this logic, this article aims to examine the social and ethical implications of the metaverse, focusing on Meta's discourse and practices. It seeks to answer the following research question: How does Meta's institutional discourse legitimize its technological hegemony in the metaverse, and what ethical implications does this narrative entail?

Addressing this question requires transcending the view of the metaverse as a mere technical product and examining it as a new existential environment. In this sense, the essential starting point for understanding the moral implications of inhabiting this space is Information Ethics, as formulated by Floridi (2013). The author posits that we live in an "infosphere" that has become the new habitat of human existence, where information constitutes the basis of social, political, and even ontological relations. Floridi also argues that digital technologies not only transform

communication but also "reontologize reality," creating an ecosystem in which human beings act as "informational organisms" or inforg (Floridi, 2013, p. 15).

From this perspective, the theory engages with technological determinism by pointing out that the power of the digital is not neutral. According to Floridi (2013, p. 14), contemporary human beings no longer stand in opposition to technology, but rather exist within it. And it is in this ontological transition that the human becomes informational; they are hybrid humans, cyborgs who exist simultaneously in the physical and virtual realms. In the context of the metaverse, this vision takes shape in the concept of the avatar, a digital representation of the human being that, as the author posited, has reprogrammed identity.

Capurro (2011) expands on this perspective by incorporating the intercultural dimension, arguing that major techno-cultural changes, such as digitization (or the metaverse), generate "crises and challenges to the ethos that underpins social relations" (p. 33). In this regard, the author proposes a "hospitable" ethic that promotes dialogue between cultures and combats the processes of exclusion or marginalization that accompany any technological artifact (p. 36). In this vein, if Capurro's intercultural ethics are applied to the context at hand, there is reason to expect that the metaverse will embrace a plurality of languages, aesthetics, and ways of being that are not subordinated to the single canon imposed by large corporations.

Another key theoretical contribution is Zuboff's (2020) critique of surveillance capitalism, defined as "a new economic order that claims human experience as a free raw material to be exploited for extraction, prediction, and sale" (p. 35). The author identifies in companies like Meta the consolidation of an instrumental power that not only observes but also shapes social behavior through the mass collection of data and algorithmic personalization. The interpretation of synthetic personalization mechanisms reveals how discursive logic positions the individual as an information node, which, in Zuboff's (2020) terms, is linked to the commodification of human experience. There is no longer reciprocity between user and platform because the intrinsic logic is one of unilateral control by corporations. Furthermore, the author argues that Big Tech not only predicts the future but also colonizes it, dedicating an entire chapter to the use of this verb tense in their narratives.

Meanwhile, Yasuda (2025) offers a contemporary perspective focused on the social implications of immersive environments. The author warns that the metaverse could "limit the ability of regulators and the government to protect individuals and concentrate power in the hands of corporations" (p. 4), which requires the development of ethical governance principles that balance innovation with accountability.

From a normative perspective, this debate is also framed in relation to international regulatory frameworks that place human rights at the heart of digital platform governance. In this regard, UNESCO's Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms state that platforms must "adhere to international human rights standards, including in platform design, moderation, and content curation" (UNESCO, 2023, p. 23). This framework is particularly relevant for analyzing the metaverse promoted by

Meta, as it allows for a critical examination of how the company's institutional discourse constructs and legitimizes certain narratives about innovation, inclusion, and technological progress.

To complement these critical perspectives, it is necessary to understand the legitimizing mechanism of these technologies. In the field of technological innovation, the social acceptance of a new artifact is not inherent in its functionality, but rather must be discursively constructed, as Bunduchi and Candi (2022) point out. The authors explain that "companies seek legitimacy in many ways and for different purposes, but when it comes to gaining legitimacy for new products, it is to be expected that they will proactively communicate about them, or develop narratives about them" (p. 5).

However, the construction of these narratives is not merely for advertising purposes, but rather operates as a mechanism of ideological and institutional legitimation. In this sense, Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) argue that rhetoric plays a decisive role in moments of profound institutional change. These authors demonstrate that, faced with disruptive innovations, corporations deploy rhetorical strategies of legitimacy to manipulate shared cultural meanings. The objective of these tools is to present the new organizational form (in this case, the metaverse) not as an arbitrary imposition, but as a necessary historical evolution congruent with prevailing social values (p. 35).

Along the same lines, Patala et al. (2019) begin with a comprehensive review of previous studies and systematize four fundamental rhetorical strategies that organizations employ to persuade their audiences and legitimize their actions. First, the rationalization strategy appeals to the usefulness of a specific practice through arguments based on efficiency or functional benefit. Second, normalization seeks to legitimize an action by presenting it as part of normal operations, using both retrospective references (company history) and prospective references (visions of the future) to integrate it into a coherent timeline. Third, moralization grounds legitimacy in congruence with accepted social values and norms, linking technology to positive ideals such as well-being, nature, or collective progress. Finally, the authorization strategy relies on referencing external authorities to validate the proposal, whether legal frameworks, experts, or figures with institutional authority (p. 5).

To delve deeper into the analysis of rhetorical mechanisms, it is essential to incorporate the concept of "synthetic personalization" proposed by Fairclough (1989). This discursive phenomenon describes how institutions wield power by simulating an intimate, friendly, and interpersonal relationship with mass audiences to whom, in reality, they are strangers. Through the use of a conversational register, corporations fabricate a false symmetry that conceals the instrumental and hierarchical nature of the commercial relationship. In the context of digital platforms, this technique is essential for masking the company's economic interests under a rhetoric of community and horizontal collaboration.

Equally relevant is Fairclough's (2013) contribution on the different types of verbal constructions that structure sentences, distinguishing primarily between material processes (physical actions) and mental processes (cognitive states). The application

of this level of linguistic detail is urgently needed given the shortcomings in current academic literature.

While the technical infrastructure of the metaverse has been extensively studied by other authors (Yang, 2023; Yasuda, 2025), there is a gap in the study of how its social acceptance is discursively constructed. Therefore, this research adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its methodological technique, ideally suited to reveal the power relations hidden in corporate language (Fairclough, 2003).

The relevance of this approach to the present object of study lies in its proven ability to reveal how organizations construct their legitimacy. Previous research has validated this methodology in technological innovation contexts. For example, Patala et al. (2019) applied it to hundreds of press releases from various companies, finding that they use hybrid rhetoric to simultaneously justify the use of both clean and polluting technologies. Similarly, Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) demonstrated how the use of specific vocabularies allows for the naturalization of profound changes by presenting them as inevitable historical evolutions, while Bunduchi and Candi (2022) have shown how legitimization strategies vary according to the stage of the technology life cycle.

In keeping with this research tradition, this study applies the CDA to the case of Meta. Ultimately, unraveling the rhetorical mechanisms that underpin this technological hegemony is essential for critically evaluating the ethical implications of a narrative that seeks to redefine the reality itself.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this article is to analyze how Meta's institutional discourse contributes to legitimizing its technological hegemony in the metaverse and what the ethical and social implications of this narrative are, from a communicational and critical perspective.

Specifically, the research aims to:

1. Identify and systematize the main rhetorical strategies of legitimation present in the institutional discourse of Meta, taking into account the mechanisms described in the academic literature.

2. Analyze how these discursive strategies construct a narrative of community, progress, and technological inevitability, hiding or minimizing dynamics of power, surveillance, and corporate control in the metaverse environment.

3. Evaluate the ethical implications of this discourse in light of Information Ethics, surveillance capitalism, and contemporary debates on digital governance, digital rights, and social inclusion.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach aimed at examining how Meta's institutional discourse contributes to legitimizing its hegemonic position in the metaverse and what the ethical implications of this narrative are. In accordance with this purpose, the study is structured around the following research question: How does Meta's institutional discourse legitimize its technological hegemony in the metaverse, and what ethical implications does this narrative entail?

Based on this question, the following objectives were established:

- To identify the main rhetorical strategies of legitimation present in the institutional discourse of Meta.
- To analyze how these strategies construct a narrative of community, progress, and technological inevitability.
- To evaluate the ethical implications of this discourse from the perspective of ethics and contemporary debates on digital governance and rights.

To achieve the stated objectives, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used as the central research technique. This approach aims to identify linguistic patterns, rhetorical strategies, and semantic choices that contribute to legitimizing the metaverse project as a necessary and unquestionable technological evolution.

The suitability of CDA for this study is based on its extensive validation in research addressing technology, power, and institutions. On the one hand, Fairclough (2003, 2013) conceives of discourse as a social practice that not only reflects reality but also produces and transforms it, allowing us to examine how technology corporations construct hegemonic meanings about the digital future. The three-dimensional model is particularly relevant for connecting the linguistic elements of Meta's discourse (textual level) with the power structures that underpin it (social level).

On the other hand, previous studies on technological legitimation have demonstrated the effectiveness of discourse analysis in identifying rhetorical strategies in disruptive innovation contexts. In particular, Patala et al. (2019) and Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) show that organizations employ specific narratives to normalize profound institutional changes and present corporate interests as collective benefits.

Within this framework, the analysis was structured based on the typology of legitimation strategies proposed by Patala et al. (2019), integrated with the linguistic contributions of Fairclough's CDA (1989, 2003). The analytical categories considered were:

- Inclusion strategies associated with moralization processes.
- Construction metaphors that present the metaverse as a physical infrastructure
- Visionary foresight strategies through the use of future time
- Institutional shield mechanisms, based on reference to legal frameworks, experts or external alliances to legitimize the corporate proposal.

To construct the theoretical framework and contextualize the object of study, a structured search was conducted in academic databases (Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar) limited to the period 2021–2025, coinciding with Facebook's rebranding to Meta. In this process, the following search terms were used in both English and Spanish, prioritizing English as the primary language due to the greater availability of sources: ("Metaverse" AND "Ethics"), ("Meta" AND "Discourse Analysis"), and ("Corporate Legitimation" AND "Technology"). This phase yielded a total of 58 documents. After a refinement process based on reading abstracts and applying exclusion criteria (duplication, lack of peer review, and exclusively technical focus), 16 final sources were selected to form the theoretical and critical foundation of this research.

The sources were differentiated according to their function: academic literature was prioritized for constructing the theoretical framework (Floridi, 2013; Capurro, 2011; Yasuda, 2025; Zuboff, 2020), and reports from international organizations (UNESCO, 2023) were used for the regulatory framework. Additionally, journalistic sources with technological references were selected solely to contextualize market data, without attributing to them the value of theoretical evidence. Finally, exclusion criteria were applied to discard sources that had not been peer-reviewed.

Regarding the selection of the analysis corpus, it consists of the presentation video "*The Metaverse and How We'll Build It Together,*" released by Meta on October 28, 2021, and lasting 1 hour, 17 minutes, and 27 seconds. The choice of this audiovisual document is justified by its foundational nature, as it served as the ideological manifesto at the time of the company's rebranding. To ensure methodological transparency, it should be noted that the material was accessed and captured for analysis on November 10, 2025, while the coding and discourse analysis process took place between December of that year and January 2026.

In contrast to the fragmented nature of web texts, the video presents a cohesive narrative that facilitates in-depth linguistic analysis from Fairclough's perspective (1989, 2003, 2013). For this analysis, the official English transcript was compared with the Spanish translation.

Finally, the discourse analysis was carried out using a qualitative interpretation procedure, identifying rhetorical patterns that operate as mechanisms of ideological legitimation. Thus, an analysis matrix was designed based on the classification of legitimation strategies proposed by Patala et al. (2019), as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1.

Matrix of Categories for Critical Discourse Analysis

Strategy (Patala et al., 2019)	Category	Definition	Textual Indicators (Examples)	Theoretical Interpretation
Moralization	Inclusion strategies	Use of first-person plural pronouns to dissolve the boundary between corporation and user.	"We will build", "Together", "Us/Our".	False symmetry of power that activates "synthetic personalization" (Fairclough, 1989), hiding commercial interests under a rhetoric of community.
Rationalization	Construction metaphors	Use of action verbs that present the metaverse as a physical infrastructure or an engineering work.	"Build", "Create", "Make".	Predominance of "material processes" (Fairclough, 2003) that present an abstract ideology as a tangible physical fact.
Normalization	Visionary foresight	Use of future verb tenses to transform speculations into certainties.	"Will be", "Going to", "Future of the internet".	It presents Meta's metaverse as the only possible destination (Zuboff, 2020)
Authorization	Institutional shield	Appealing to external authorities, legal frameworks, or experts to validate the proposal and mitigate the perception of risk.	Disclaimer ("Forward-looking statements") and references to third parties ("Experts", "Partners").	Use of legal frameworks and citation of experts to share the ethical responsibility of surveillance (Patala et al., 2019).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The application of these categories allows us to transcend the literal content of the messages, connecting linguistic findings (micro level) with social implications (macro level), as shown in Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional model.

4. RESULTS

The critical analysis of the selected corpus (promotional video) reveals that Meta's institutional discourse operates not merely as a presentation of a technological or even recreational product, but as a tool for ideological legitimation. The application of the analytical matrix has allowed for the identification of four rhetorical strategies that articulate the narrative of Zuckerberg's company: the simulation of community through the use of inclusion strategies, construction metaphors, visionary foresight, and the institutional shield.

4.1. Inclusion Strategies

The most significant quantitative finding in the script of the foundational video *The Metaverse and How We'll Build It Together* is the saturation of the first-person plural pronoun. The term "we" (and its variants we're, we've, and we'l) appears 299 times, establishing an average frequency of almost 4 mentions per minute.

As evidenced by the title of the analyzed video, *The Metaverse and How We`ll Build It Together*), Meta establishes a framework of horizontal collaboration from the outset. Discourse analysis shows that this "we" is ambiguous and strategically oscillates between two referents: sometimes it refers to the company (Meta's engineers) and other times to humanity ("we" as a society).

From the perspective of rhetorical strategies (Patala et al., 2019), this corresponds to a moralizing mechanism. The authors define this tool as one that seeks to align technology with accepted social values, linking technology with collective progress (p. 5).

According to Fairclough's (2013) concept of synthetic personalization, the strategic use of inclusive pronouns ("we," "together") allows institutions to simulate a false symmetry of power, creating the illusion that there are no differences in interests between the corporation (which seeks economic gain) and the user (who seeks connection, leisure, or experience). The following table includes some examples of pronominal inclusion strategies used by Meta.

Table 2

Evidence of Pronominal Inclusion Strategies of Meta

Extract From the Corpus (Meta, 2021)	**Analysis of the Discursive Function**
We will build it together (Video title)	It suggests that the user is a co-creator of the infrastructure, obscuring the fact that the intellectual property and servers are private.
'We all know what we want" (1:04:51)	It assumes that the vision of the future metaverse is shared by everyone, both business and society. It transforms a private business strategy into a supposed general will of humanity.
"Together we can create a more open platform "(1:12:56)	It presents the corporation not as a monopoly, but as an indispensable partner in freeing the digital economy from current restrictions.
"That's how we're going to represent ourselves in the metaverse" (6:35)	The company decides the limits of human representation (avatars), but narrates it as if it were a collective choice of society, camouflaging the unilateral technical decision.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

4.2. Construction Metaphors

Lexical analysis identifies the predominance of a semantic field linked to physical engineering. The action verbs "build," "create," and "make" appear a total of 67 times in the discourse.

According to Fairclough, the predominant use of material processes allows the company to present its proposal, not as an abstract commercial aspiration or a simple business model, but as a physical and tangible fact (2003, p. 176).

Furthermore, this lexical selection also reveals a rationalization strategy. According to Patala et al. (2019), this legitimization mechanism is based on demonstrating the usefulness of the investment and its superior technical performance (p. 403) compared to existing alternatives.

In Meta's speech, Zuckerberg operationalizes this strategy through action verbs and overcoming challenges that make the benefits of the new device tangible. When he states that "we are moving beyond what is possible today, beyond the restrictions of screens, beyond the limits of distance and physics" (Meta, 2021, 1:16:32), the entrepreneur is problematizing physical reality, defining it as an inefficient and obsolete environment.

Thus, the metaverse is rationalized not as a corporate whim, but as a necessary technological innovation that offers direct functional value to the user: the technical capacity to overcome the 'material barriers' imposed by tangible reality. The project's legitimacy, therefore, is built upon the promise of its efficiency.

Figure 1

Mark Zuckerberg's Statements Regarding Consulting Experts



Source: Screenshot extracted from the video *The Metaverse and How We'll Build It Together*, by Meta, 2021 (https://youtu.be/Uvufun6xer8?si=6A-hTZFcZGqGwidW&t=3210), timestamp: 53:30.

4.3. Visionary Foresight

Meta's discourse is primarily in the future tense. The video shows a constant repetition of structures like " we'll" all "build ", "a lot of us will be creating". In total, the modal auxiliary verb "will" (along with its contractions "we'll" and "you'll") appears 74 times.

Following Patala et al. (2019), this normalization tactic seeks to legitimize disruptive innovation by presenting it as part of a natural process (p. 399). To this end, the corporation resorts to constructing a coherent timeline that links retrospective references (the history of the technology) with prospective references (visions of the future), as is evident in the following table.

Table 3.

Evidence of Standardization Strategies

Temporal Dimension	Extract From the Corpus (Meta, 2021)	Analysis of the Discursive Function
Retrospective Normalization	"We've gone from desktop to web to phones. From text to photos to video. But this isn't the end of the line." (1:01)	It positions the metaverse not as a disruptive shift, but as the next link in the technological chain.
Retrospective Normalization	"The basic story of technology in our lifetimes is that it`s given us the power to [...] experience the world with ever greater richness." (0:37)	It rewrites the history of technology by omitting past conflicts or harm, defining it as a positive force of "experiential wealth" to justify the next step (the metaverse).
Prospective Standardization	"We believe the metaverse will be the successor to the mobile internet." (1:48)	By labeling it the "successor," Meta invalidates any other alternative for the future. Its particular metaverse is not an option, but the legitimate heir to the internet.
Prospective Standardization	"The future is going to be beyond anything we can imagine" (1:17:16)	The use of simple future tense constructions ("is going to be") eliminates uncertainty. It suggests the inevitability of the event.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

4.4. Institutional Shield

Finally, the authorization strategy is manifested in Meta's effort to validate its private proposal by appealing to external authority figures and explicit legal frameworks. According to Patala et al. (2019), this strategy seeks legitimacy by citing laws, experts, or institutions that support the corporate action.

The analysis identifies two key mechanisms. First, the legal shield materialized in the video's initial disclaimer, which includes cover art that remains visible for the first 14 seconds, serving as a forward-looking statement. The text is as follows:

> The following presentation includes forward-looking statements about our future business plans and expectations. Actual results may differ materially from those expressed or implied in our forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements involve sucstantial risks and uncertainties related to our business, [...]. Any forward-looking statements made in this presentation are based on our beliefs and assumptions as of the date of this presentation, and we undertake no obligation to revise or publicly release the results of any revision to these forward-looking statements.

Discursively, this text gives Zuckerberg's discourse the status of official communication, validating his predictions as legitimate information and not as mere advertising narrative.

Furthermore, there are frequent references to authority figures both within and outside the company through phrases such as "we've had the opportunity to work with incredible developers," "we're spending a lot of time talking with experts," "getting perspectives from outside the company," or "let's talk about how creators and developers are going to build all of this." In this way, Meta attempts to dilute its sole responsibility for the design of the metaverse, suggesting that the system is endorsed (or at least overseen) by a community of experts.

Figure 2

Mark Zuckerberg's Statements on Moving Beyond Physical Screens



Source: Screenshot extracted from the video *The Metaverse and How We'll Build It Together*, by Meta, 2021 (https://youtu.be/Uvufun6xer8?si=6A-hTZFcZGqGwidW&t=4593), timestamp: 1:16:33.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research reveal that Meta's discourse does not merely function as a product presentation, but rather as a mechanism for institutional legitimation. In light of the theoretical framework, the results offer significant evidence for addressing the research question, suggesting that the company deploys a narrative based on the appearance of community that obscures the underlying power dynamics.

First, the analysis of inclusion strategies reveals a fundamental contradiction between rhetoric and practice. The use of collective pronouns like "we" or "together" suggests a collaborative construction of the metaverse, corroborating Fairclough's (1989) concept of "synthetic personalization." Furthermore, the analysis of inclusion strategies suggests that Meta simulates a false symmetry of power that blurs the lines between corporation and user. In light of the results obtained, this narrative of universality appears to conflict with the material conditions analyzed by Alaawad et al. (2026) and Bakk et al. (2025) warn that the current metaverse, far from being a democratized space, persists as an incipient environment marked by profound structural gaps in access. The overuse of the homogenizing "we" as a discursive resource tends to neutralize the critique of surveillance capitalism put forth by Zuboff (2020). This strategy could contribute to diluting the perception of ethical responsibility and minimizing the visibility of its exclusive control, as Uzun (2023) points out.

Complementarily, this legitimization is reinforced through the rationalization strategy and the use of construction metaphors via verbs like *"build" or "create.*" By narrating the metaverse through this verbal lexicon, Meta executes what Patala et al. (2019) define as justification by utility, directly connecting with Floridi's (2013) Information Ethics. The preeminence of material processes (Fairclough, 2003) could allow the organization to project a tangible vision of its strategic proposal, presenting it as a technical project, similar to building a bridge. According to Floridi, this obscures the fact that reality is being "reontologized" under commercial parameters. Along these lines, the analysis suggests that the narrative tends to position an economic reconfiguration of social space as a technical solution of collective utility, hindering the ethical debate about who controls the foundations of this new reality.

Furthermore, the discourse operates on the temporal dimension through visionary foresight, confirming Zuboff's (2020) warnings about the "right to future time." The systematic use of the simple future tense not only describes a near-term scenario but also projects it as normative, symbolically restricting the consideration of alternatives and limiting the possibility of imagining a digital future that does not involve total immersion. This narrative legitimizes Meta's hegemony before the product is even viable, validating Suddaby and Greenwood's (2005) thesis on how rhetoric allows institutions to present their commercial interests as the inevitable end of human progress.

Finally, the reliance on legal frameworks and external experts reveals the project's insecurity through its authorization strategy. The constant need to validate the vision through institutional shields (disclaimers, expert references) suggests a paradox: while the discourse promises unlimited freedom ("do almost anything you can imagine"), the company takes refuge in regulatory authority to protect itself from the consequences of that very freedom. This amounts to outsourcing ethical responsibility to regulators who, as Yasuda (2025) and Yang (2023) point out, often lack the technical capacity to govern these new environments in real time, leaving the user vulnerable to corporate power imbalances.

In sum, Meta's institutional discourse operates as a legitimizing mechanism that, through metaphors of progress and community, masks unresolved tensions

regarding ownership of the metaverse and responsibility for managing this new virtual environment. This ability to define the limits of what is possible and desirable could be interpreted, within the framework of surveillance capitalism, as a sophisticated form of exercising symbolic power.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The present study aimed to examine the ethical and social implications of the metaverse through the deconstruction of Meta's institutional narrative. Following a critical analysis of the foundational discourse of *The Metaverse and How We'll Build It Together*, the results suggest that Meta employs Fairclough's synthetic personalization strategy. This relates to the first objective, which focused on analyzing the simulation of community that Meta carries out through the systematic use of inclusive pronouns such as "we" and "us". Its rhetoric of horizontal collaboration succeeds in discursively dissolving the structural power asymmetry between the corporation and its users. Based on the applied analytical method, it can be inferred that Meta's rhetoric functions as a mechanism for concealing the commercial hierarchy, presenting private interests as collective aspirations.

Regarding the second objective, focused on examining the function of construction metaphors, it is observed that the lexical selection of material processes ("to build," "to create") fulfills the rationalizing function described by Patala et al., 2019. The analysis confirms that this maneuver allows the metaverse to be made tangible, pivoting it from abstract commercial speculation to a useful and necessary physical infrastructure. In this way, the company legitimizes its project by appealing to a technical utility that promises to overcome the limitations of physical reality, concealing the ideological nature of this transformation.

Regarding the third objective, which sought to deconstruct visionary foresight, the findings suggest that the company's narrative projects a technological determinism through the use of future time. It is concluded that this strategy is not limited to predicting the evolution of the internet, but rather colonizes the social concept, eliminating alternatives and normalizing digital immersion (and the surveillance inherent in it) as the next logical step in the history of technology.

Finally, addressing the fourth objective regarding the identification of the institutional shield, it has become evident that appealing to experts and regulatory frameworks operates as a mechanism for externalizing ethical responsibility. The study concludes that a fundamental paradox exists: while the discourse promises users unlimited creative freedom, corporations take refuge in regulatory authority to mitigate perceived risk, thus validating their business model before its social impacts can be audited.

Overall, and in response to the central research question, the conclusion is that Meta's institutional discourse functions as a mechanism of legitimization that would favor the establishment of its own regulatory frameworks prior to social and governmental debate. Far from being a neutral proposal for innovation, the findings reveal how Meta's institutional narrative tends to present the private management of the digital experience within a framework of community collaboration, thereby

consolidating the social acceptance necessary for the expansion of surveillance capitalism.

It should be noted that this study is limited to an analysis of the brand's founding moment, without covering the subsequent evolution of the discourse or its reception by audiences. Future lines of research could contrast this corporate narrative with the company's most recent technical documents to assess whether the legitimization strategy has changed in the face of public scrutiny or the advancement of regulations within the European framework.

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