

# *Philosophical Analysis of the Theme of Life Community in the Avatar Series Movies*

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**Abstract:** This paper aimed to analyze the philosophical implications of the theme of life community presented in the Avatar series movies. Based on the detailed analysis of Avatar series movies, this paper discusses the importance of life community theory to human survival and development by using related theories of psychology and philosophy. Through research of the relevant literature and analysis of the movie content, the paper concluded that the movie effectively awakened people's consciousness of life community by presenting a harmonious, interconnected, and diverse coexistence world, making us realize with profound philosophy that it is significant to arouse the consciousness of life community. In order to create a better world, humans should re-examine their role in nature, abandon the human-centered thinking, embrace true nature within the framework of a life community, consider the survival of other forms of life and rationally recognize and apply science and technology. Finally, this paper suggested that recognizing the importance of life community can help to build a harmonious social environment and inject new hope and vitality into the future development of humanity.

## 1. Introduction

Humans are facing a serious crisis of survival, with global warming, declining biodiversity, population explosion, nuclear war, and other issues intensifying, bringing unprecedented challenges to human life and development and posing serious threats to human survival and health. However, so far, humans have not fully understood the severity of the survival crisis they are facing. This is due to a series of factors, including a lack of recognition of the true nature and scale of the threat, cognitive biases, and a tendency to underestimate the possibility of irreversible consequences. The "Avatar" series of movies effectively awakened people's consciousness of life community by presenting a harmonious, interconnected, and diverse coexistence world. The movie shows the civilization form of the Na'vi people and how they connect themselves with nature to create a life community. Under this common survival order, they maintain the balance among different species and respect, learn from, and protect each other, thus constructing a beautiful new world. Avatar series movies also make people realize, with profound philosophy, that it is of great significance to

arouse the consciousness of life community. The coexistence of multiple forms of civilization and the harmonious coexistence between nature and human beings are also the only way for human beings to survive and develop sustainably in the future.

## **2. Humans Should Take a Step Back and Reflect on Themselves**

### **2.1. Humans Should Re-examine Their Role in Nature**

In human cognition, humans always pride themselves as the center of all things, thus producing many sci-fi movies with this theme, expressing that humans can change the world and even the whole universe with their intelligence and creativity, giving audiences a sense of motivation and confidence to inspire them to desire to change themselves and the world to achieve success. For example, the popular sci-fi films such as "The Matrix" and "Interstellar" have explored the concept of humans using their intelligence and creativity to change the world and even the universe. The Avatar series of movies presents a new world where Na'vi people and the planet of Pandora are interconnected, prompting viewers to re-examine the value and meaning of life. The characters, plants, and animals, as well as the scenes shown in the movie, are all distinctively portrayed, allowing the audience to experience the unity formed by the connection of all things.

Greek philosopher Aristotle proposed the theory of holism, that is, that all things are unified and interconnected and cannot be divided [1]. Modern philosopher Whitehead also proposed a similar view, believing that there is a symbiotic relationship between all things, and that they interact with each other to form a unified whole [2]. As can be seen from the above point of view, everything is interrelated and inseparable, and there is a symbiotic relationship between them, which affects each other and forms a unified whole.

### **2.2. Humans Should Abandon the Human-centered Thinking**

In terms of the history of human development, since the time of the Greek philosopher Plato, it has been believed that humans are the only creatures in the universe with the ability to reason, so they are the only ones who have the right to decide their own lives and shape the world [3]. This view was later developed by the Roman philosopher Cicero, proposing that humans are the only species with the ability to comprehend the universe and their place in it [4]. René Descartes believed that humans were the only creatures with the ability to think and make choices, and that the universe was designed for them [5]. In short, this human-centered thinking emphasizes the position and role of humans in nature, believing that humans can control nature, and that other creatures in nature exist to serve human needs. This ideology holds that humans are more important than other creatures in nature, and thus humans have the right to shape nature into a form suitable for them.

Psychologically, human-centred views arise from human characteristics. According to British psychologist Sores (2015), human-specific intelligence, self-consciousness and rational thinking are the basis of human-centred views, as they enable humans to recognize themselves, understand their position and role, and determine their lives [6]. Furthermore, American psychologist Perry (2012) argued that human-centred views are influenced by environmental factors. In the field of religious belief, humans are viewed as the core species of the universe, the special creation of God, so they have the right to decide their lives; in the cultural traditions, humans are viewed as the species with the highest wisdom, so they have the right to shape the world; in the political structure, humans are viewed as the species with power, so they have the right to determine their future [7].

In the Avatar series, human beings are portrayed as the dominant species, believing that they are superior to the Na 'vi, the indigenous species of Pandora. The people in the movies think that the Na

'vi people are primitive and inferior, and do not believe that they have the same rights as human beings. Human-centrism emphasizes the importance of humans and believes that other species should obey humans and only serve the functions of human interests in the ecosystem. However, it ignores the value of other species, thus causing serious damage to the ecological environment and affecting the sustainable development of humanity.

On the other hand, in modern history, Anthropocentrism has gradually lost its credibility, while non-anthropocentrism has moved towards the center of human vision. Taylor and Schwertz, biocentrists, put forward that "all living things have the right to enjoy dignity, value, and a noble role" [8]. According to Aldo Leopold and Arne Naess, the eco-centrists, the proper object of human moral concern should be the entire ecological system rather than just the individual organism, and the value of nature should be fully recognized [9]. It can be seen that the non-anthropocentrism still originates from a human perspective of caring for the earth, and its essence lies in broadening the scope of moral consideration to non-humans, thus indicating a distinction between humans and the environment.

In the movie Avatar 2, Jake Sully, a former navy soldier, has permanently been turned into an "Avatar" with a mixture of earthling and Na'vi genes, and has married Neytiri, the daughter of the head of the Omaticaya tribe. Jake has completely adapted to his new body and patriarch's identity, and has had three children with Neytiri, and adopted Grace's daughter Qili. This family has established a good relationship with other creatures on Pandora. When their children explore in the forest, they don't interfere with their lives and take the principle of minimum interference to ensure that the balance of the forest is maintained. In this way, nature can return to balance, thus achieving the goal of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. The anthropocentrism theory induces a negative environmental attitude and behavior, which is harmful to the living environment of the earth. Therefore, discarding the human-centered mindset and realizing the truth of coexistence between humans and nature is necessary for meaningful action in terms of environmental protection and species conservation.

### **3. Reassessment of the Value of All Kinds of Life**

#### **3.1. Pay Attention to the Individual Value: Diversity and Conditionality**

In the movie Avatar 1, the humans from Earth come to Pandora, thinking that human interests are more meaningful and worth satisfying, so they exercise their authority in the "rare" rich mine where the Na'vi live, reveling in the acquisition and conquest of nature in order to get economic benefits and deprive people of what they deem unimportant life. The current crisis is largely attributed to the devastation of the entire ecosystem, thus it is essential to value the diversity of species, acknowledge the individual values, comply with the laws of nature, and not allow human subjectivity to interfere with the natural order. Zhuangzi, a philosopher in China, proposed in the article "On the Homology of Things" that human beings should regard other creatures in nature as their companions, so as to demonstrate their unique virtues. He pointed out that loaches keep digging the riverbed, and although their labor has no practical significance, they still work tirelessly, which shows their high perseverance; Monkeys always try their best to fulfill their own needs, which reflects their wisdom; Elk and centipede have strong self-control, although they have great desires, they can still restrain themselves; Crows have excellent aesthetic ability, and they will choose the most beautiful fruit to eat; Owls have keen vision and can easily find small prey at night. Zhuangzi used this series of examples to remind human beings to give full play to their unique advantages, instead of thinking too highly of themselves and treating other creatures as their subordinates or slaves. He emphasized that human beings should realize that each creature has its own unique abilities and respect other creatures. The existence of any life between heaven and earth

embodies its unique significance, and its value does not need to be determined by another life. No matter living or non-living, all things have the same value of life. Therefore, it's important to prove the value of individual life according to the actual situation and opportunity of the development of all things, that is, to pay attention to the individual value. All things can only exert their values in a specific occasion.

Immanuel Kant, a philosopher, put forward that "the value of an individual depends on their ability, thus making it possible for them to exert their value" [10]. For example, eagles can dive in the air and overlook the branches, unlike other birds that can fly higher; Spiders can weave fine webs, unlike ants that can carry heavy objects; Pigeons can remain stable during long-distance flights, unlike swallows which can turn flexibly.

Qiao Qingju pointed out that defining "value" as the usefulness of things to people is actually replacing value with the practical value of things. In the anthropocentric thinking mode, it is impossible to ask whether things have intrinsic value, since only people are considered to have intrinsic value [11].

### 3.2. The Fairness of the Law of All Things

The law of the existence of all things should be treated fairly. In order to create a better world, it is essential to adhere to the principles of justice and equality, as well as to recognize and respect the existence of different species. Philosopher Zhuangzi believed that even tiny creatures such as ants and mustard seeds, although seemingly insignificant, provide an important environment for ecological balance and integrity. Modern ecology teaches us that human activities have disrupted the balance of natural ecosystems, leading to the endangerment of some rare species, which could cause serious harm to global ecology. Species diversity is the basis of the ecosystem, and they are an important part of the ecosystem, participating in and maintaining the stability of the ecosystem. All species should be treated equally and a balanced relationship between humans and nature should be maintained for a harmonious coexistence.

The Na'vi people live in harmony with nature, and everything becomes an interactive and closely connected whole. In the construction of the life community, the respect of the Na'vi people for life is of great significance. In order to save Jake, Neytiri had to kill a Snake Wolf. Although she saved people, she was very angry, because the death of the Snake Wolf was caused by Jake's ignorance of the rules of the Na'vi people, which was an unnecessary death. The princess felt guilty. She stroked the Snake Wolf's body and asked for its forgiveness. In the eyes of the Na'vi, killing is a bad thing. They also hunt, but they will strictly limit the number and objects they hunt. The Na'vi people believe that when you are alive, your body and spirit are symbiotic with the forest, and when you die, you are integrated with the forest, and whether you are alive or dead, you are a part of this forest. Everything is closely related to this forest. Therefore, death and killing should be regarded with awe and the rules of the forest should be respected.

In Avatar 2, there is a huge and highly intelligent marine life called Tukun. Tukun kills the marine life that was chasing Jake's son, thus saving his life. Children also communicate with Tukun using sign language and become friends. Tukun is shown to be an exceptionally intelligent being with deep feelings and a sophisticated form of communication. Tukun's mother was deeply respected by the oceanic people, and before she passed away, she created many musical pieces which brought joy to the oceanic people. For many years, people have centered themselves to understand and measure the importance of things. Now, to comprehend the value of all life, it is necessary to go beyond the self, to see the diversity of life value, the conditional value of individuals and the fairness of the law of all things.

## 4. Reflecting on One's Position in the Global Community of Life and Returning to the Natural Truth

### 4.1. Embracing True Nature within the Framework of a Life Community

As humans, it is important to strive to reestablish connection to the natural world and embrace inherent nature within the life community. The theory of life community first appeared in the 1980s. It is based on the United Nations Declaration on Sustainable Development. Its main idea is that all species are interconnected in a life community, and that all individuals are part of this community, with close relations between them. The relationship between human beings and other species, especially between plants and animals, should be understood within the framework of a life community. On Pandora, the Na'vi people are connected with the soul tree of Eywa through nerve ties, forming a huge neural network, enabling the transmission of information, energy, or communication with each other. When holding a major religious ceremony, the Na'vi people will also surround the soul tree, connecting with each other, connecting their nerve ties with the roots of the soul tree, and shaking their upper bodies together to form an interactive network structure.

The concept of life community aims to seek the decentralization of human beings, but at the same time, it does not regard other life as tools to realize value, nor does it pursue ultimate absolute equality. It recognizes the importance of life and emphasizes the connection, integration, and symbiosis of fates. The Chinese thinker Confucius proposed that "Heaven and Earth have a way, follow it and prosper, oppose it and perish". He emphasized that human beings must obey the laws of nature in order to promote social development [12]. The philosopher Laozi said, "The Way can be spoken of, but not the ultimate Way". He emphasized that people must respect nature in order to achieve a harmonious life [13]. According to Zhuangzi, a thinker, human beings don't need to stand in a higher position, overlooking and observing everything in the world, and they are never in the center of everything, so that human beings can be completely integrated into a more grand cosmic background.

In the 17th century, the British philosopher John Owen believed in "The Theory of Natural Rights" that human beings do not possess the spirit of all things, but are an equal species. They should not put themselves in a higher position to look upon all things, but should view themselves objectively, with humility rather than from a superior stance [14]. John James, a British philosopher, described the position of human beings in nature in his book *The Nature and The Gods*: "The human being is not in the center of the real world, but on the edge." He further explained, "The real world cannot be regarded as something that can be fully controlled by humans, nor can it be put under human control" [15]. These viewpoints all point out that human beings are not the center of the universe. In the movie *Avatar*, the Na'vi people, although not knowing what a community of life is, can still follow the ancient belief of the Virgin Mary, respect nature, respect life, and pay attention to communication and mutual understanding, thus making themselves have higher moral standards than intruders from outer space. They often say that "I see you" means understanding and respect. Unfortunately, without the concept of life community, this kind of understanding and respect will become extremely difficult. Today's human beings are a typical example.

### 4.2. Considering the Survival of Other forms of Life

In addition, human beings need to face up to their position in the community of life and reflect on their behavior boundaries. The environment and the creatures living within it can be shaped by human action. This power has both positive and negative aspects, and how to use it depends on us. Facing the two major problems of survival and development, the fate of human beings and other forms of life is intertwining in an unprecedented way. Therefore, it is worth reflecting on whether

human beings should take into account the survival of other forms of life and ecosystems when meeting their own survival needs. Should consideration be given to the development of other forms of life and the balance of the ecological environment during the process of human development?

As David Orr pointed out, it is undeniable that the choices made by humanity have the potential to cause immense harm or incredible good, and it is not an overstatement to say that the future of the planet is dependent upon such choices [16]. It is important to be cognizant of the fact that in the global ecosystem, humans are but one of the many forms of life, and to recognize the inherent worth of all other life forms, as well as to recognize the limitations of human capacity.

## **5. Rational Recognition and Application of Science and Technology**

### **5.1. Technology Has Both Positive and Negative Impacts on Society**

Science and technology, as an important part of human civilization, plays an increasingly important role in today's society. With the rapid development of technology, it can provide more convenient life services for people, such as online shopping and online consulting, which greatly satisfy people's daily needs. It can improve people's quality of life, for example, by adopting energy-saving technology to reduce energy consumption, improve energy utilization, improve the environment and protect natural resources, thus making people's lives safer and more comfortable. But at the same time, it also brings many negative impacts to human survival, polluting and destroying the environment, bringing social problems, and affecting people's normal lives. Would the contents described in the Avatar series not happen if the humans on earth still stayed in the primitive society? Without highly developed technology, humans would not be able to fly across the vast space to plunder resources from Pandora's planet. Interpreting the progress of science and technology is not so simple to solve real problems.

In addition, although technological development has brought material wealth to human beings, it has also caused spiritual damage, manifested as changing people's cultural values, questioning traditional moral standards, and generating self-inflation psychology. First of all, the development of technology has led to the change of people's traditional cultural values. The popularity of the Internet has encouraged people to consider more the economic benefits brought by technological development rather than the values of traditional culture. Li, Jianhua pointed out in his article "The Influence of Science and Technology Development and Its Influence on China Traditional Culture" that "the development of science and technology has changed people's values and made traditional culture suffer a great impact" [17].

Secondly, the development of science and technology has questioned the traditional moral principles. The progress of science and technology has made people pay more attention to material interests, rather than to public order and good customs in morality and ethics. This has caused people to lose their moral grasp. For example, people's understanding of marriage and family relations has changed, which may even lead to family breakdown [18].

Thirdly, due to the development of science and technology, people have more and more powerful abilities, which makes them think they can do anything. This inflated psychology makes some people become arrogant and no longer be under any control. Taoism in China said: "Those who have machinery must do things organically, and those who have organic things must have an organic mind." Rosenberg said: "Strictly speaking, science itself is unbiased, but it can be abused to support a certain ideology or viewpoint, and it can also be used to support or safeguard specific social interests" [19]. In the Avatar series, Colonel Miles Quaritch is a typical example of human self-inflation. Without high-tech weapons, he would not dare to attack and despise the Na'vi people or hunt down Jake Sully. When he looked down on the Na'vi people scattered in the smoke of tear gas and missile explosions, he was unmoved and thought that killing bugs was no different. This

reckless and uncompassionate behavior is due to the reliance on high-tech weapons.

## 5.2. Enhancing the Ecological Cultivation of Individuals

Due to the harm that science and technology have caused to humanity both physically and mentally, some people have started to doubt and even oppose it. Bertrand Russell, a British philosopher, once suggested that the development of science and technology may bring harm, which may be irreversible and even lead to the demise of mankind. Therefore, he believed that mankind should stop the development of science so as not to bring greater harm to the future world [20]. In this day and age, although the development of technology may bring about some problems, there is no need to completely abandon technology. Technology itself is not the cause of human crises; the real danger comes from the people who use technology. British philosopher Immanuel Kant said: "Technology itself will not bring harm, only human abuse will" [21]. Robert E. Williams, an American psychologist, put forward that "only a change in mind and way of thinking can bring about changes in personal world outlook, values, lifestyle and major decisions" [22]. He believes that strengthening the cultivation of individuals and social ecology can bring about the essential and revolutionary changes of the life community.

Therefore, it is particularly important to enhance the ecological cultivation of individuals in the construction of the human social life community. By combining the elements of scenery, sound, smell and other elements in nature with one's own heart and senses, people can better understand nature, find resonances related to their own heart, and bring ecological experiences with empathy for all things. Allen Goodstein, an ecological psychologist at Harvard University, once pointed out that the experience of natural environment is "a deeper way of thinking based on paper consciousness. This is an inner intuition, so that people can feel the power of nature and understand it more deeply" [23].

In addition, cultivating one's heart and mind requires coordination and adaptation to the external environment. In *The Analects*, Confucius emphasized "following the way of Heaven", advocating people to pursue the principles of nature rather than desires that go against natural laws. He also stressed "tranquility of the heart", believing people should abandon the pursuit of interests and desires, allowing the environment to change while keeping their hearts unmoved. Lu Hongshu, a neo-Confucian scholar, pointed out in his book "Philosophy under the Riptide" that "personal cultivation is to make one's inner and outer environment live in harmony in order to achieve the realm of harmony between man and nature" [24]. On the other hand, Nietzsche also put forward that "the laws of nature are supreme, and any desire needs to be bound by nature" [25]. Rather than giving up on interests and desires that violate natural laws, it is emphasized that harmony with nature should be pursued. No matter how the external environment changes, one must stay firm in their convictions and not be swayed by external temptations. This "inaction" actually contains the highest level of "initiative", which is the highest realm of cultivating the mind.

In the extremely high level of ecological cultivation, people's hearts have gained freedom, and they can accept life and death with a natural attitude. In Plato's "The Republic", it is pointed out that people should achieve freedom and autonomy in an orderly state, and should accept the natural state of life and death, and act in accordance with the natural law, that is, the "harmonious natural law". [26] Lin Yutang once pointed out that, accepting that life and death are intertwined is key to living peacefully and with ease [27]. The thinking of "following the natural cycle" enables people to understand and accept the changes in life and death. In the framework of ecological cultivation, people can view their existence as an integrated whole that includes the interaction between humans and the natural environment. Therefore, people are more likely to accept the changes of life and death, and they can integrate their lives into nature to achieve harmonious coexistence between

humans and nature.

With the development of technology, human beings have gained the power to change the world. To face the future, people need to have unprecedented insight. On a micro level, those who possess high ecological literacy and keep everything in mind will not destroy nature, hurt other forms of life or damage the ecological environment for the sake of immediate interests. On a macro level, human beings need to go beyond themselves and regard the earth as the future home, to practice the concept of life community with higher ecological literacy, and to realize the harmonious coexistence of technological development and ecological protection.

In the "Avatar" series of movies, the "Avatar" is derived from Indian philosophy and is generally translated as "incarnation", that is, God descends to the earth in human or other animal forms to save humans from danger. This artificial life form is created by mixing human and Na'vi genes, which have the appearance of Na'vi, but can be controlled by a human brain neural network that matches its genes. In the movie, Jake Sully is an incarnation, and as a human, he chooses to die in his disabled human body and be reborn as an Avatar to make Pandora his home after leading Na'vi to defeat the invaders. This plot in the movie reminds people that only with high rationality and wisdom, and the practice of the concept of life community with higher ecological cultivation, can they become their own savior in the future.

## 6. Conclusions

The new world presented in the "Avatar" series provides us with an important framework for reflection, with the theme of the life-community embedded in it bringing the relationship between humans and all things to a new level. Driven by technological progress, humans should rethink themselves and their relationship with nature, recognizing the value of each life form in the natural world, including themselves. Only when humans shift their attention away from themselves and towards the surrounding world can they truly experience the concept of life-community, reminding us to appreciate the beauty of nature, protect the environment, respect life and foster the harmonious development of the organic ecosystem. The concept of life-community advocates that humans return to nature, think about the responsibility they should bear in the life-community, rationally recognize and apply science and technology, strengthen their own cultivation, and empathize with all things. In today's human society, which is in a critical juncture, recognizing the importance of this theme can help to build a harmonious social environment, solve human society crises with the right values, and inject new hope and vitality into the future development of humanity.

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