



The AI XR Martin Luther Avatar as a Theological and Ethical Experiment

GoNeDigiTal Conference:
After Babel – Digital Theology and
Contextualities

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The AI XR Martin Luther Avatar

- Goal: To translate Luther's message into the present, enabling direct interaction with Martin Luther
- Experiment: Exploring How AI Can Be Used to Proclaim and Teach the Gospel
- The AI XR Martin Luther premiered on YouTube on Reformation Day (October 31) 2023, engagement of the audience via YouTube Live Chat
- Media coverage by Germany's national radio Deutschlandfunk, Vatican News, and WDR television



Insights from the Premiere

- High interest and curiosity from the audience and media
- General perception: What Martin Luther would say today → Immersion
- Testing the Avatar's limits: From jump-starting cars to dealing with antisemitism
- Relevance for (Protestant) religious and history education

Why Martin Luther?

- Recognition and identification through the Cranach portrait
- Avatar modeling based on Cranach's depiction
- Extensive text corpus of Martin Luther and secondary literature about Martin Luther (in ChatGPT's LLM) available



Avatar Design: Authenticity versus Historicity

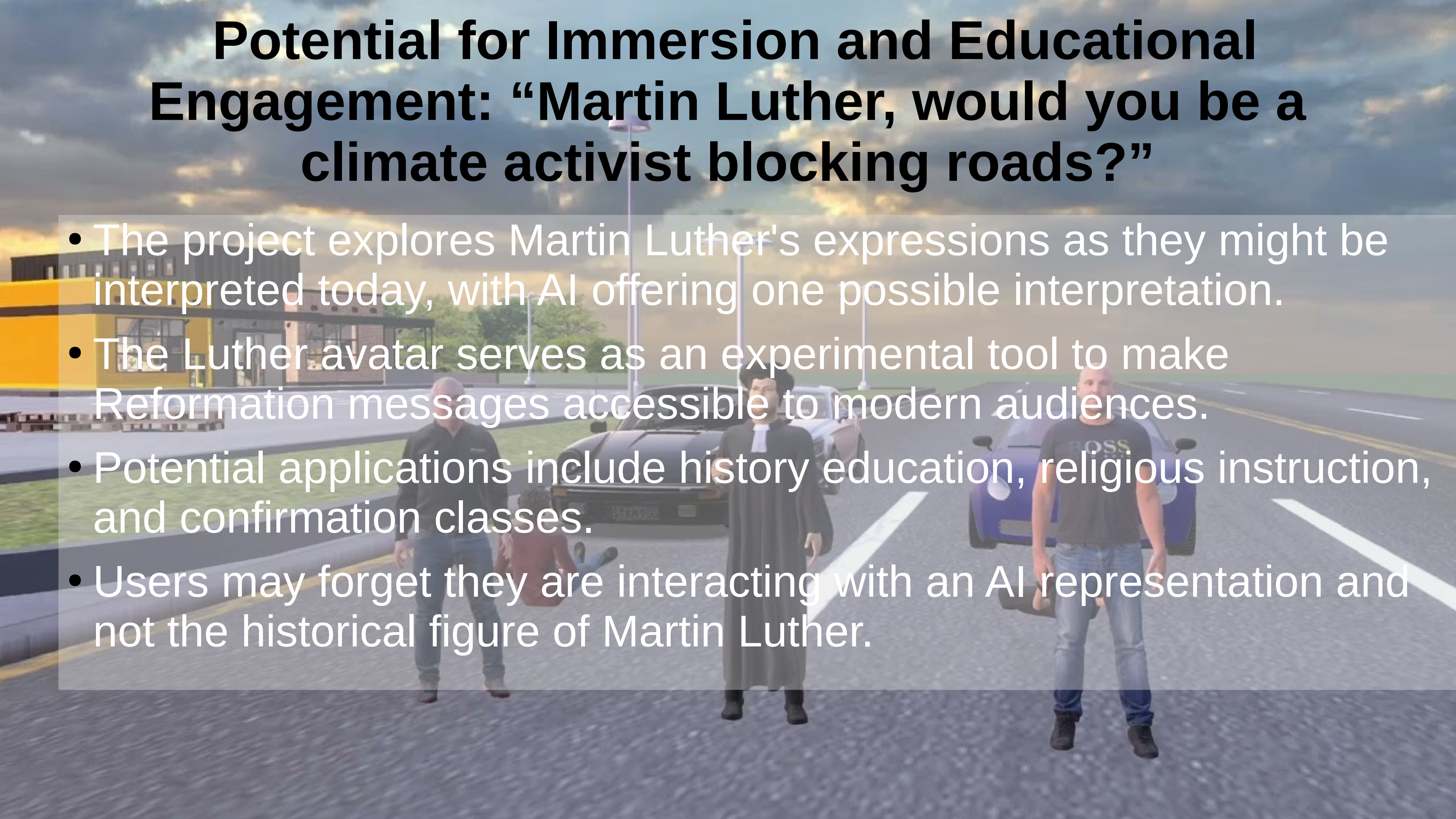
- Early versus late Luther
- Attire: Historical Lutheran chasuble or Prussian clergy robe (19th century) with united bands – recognizable as a Protestant pastor.
- Size: Average size of today or the 16th century?
- Language: Saxon pronunciation or High German?

Challenges

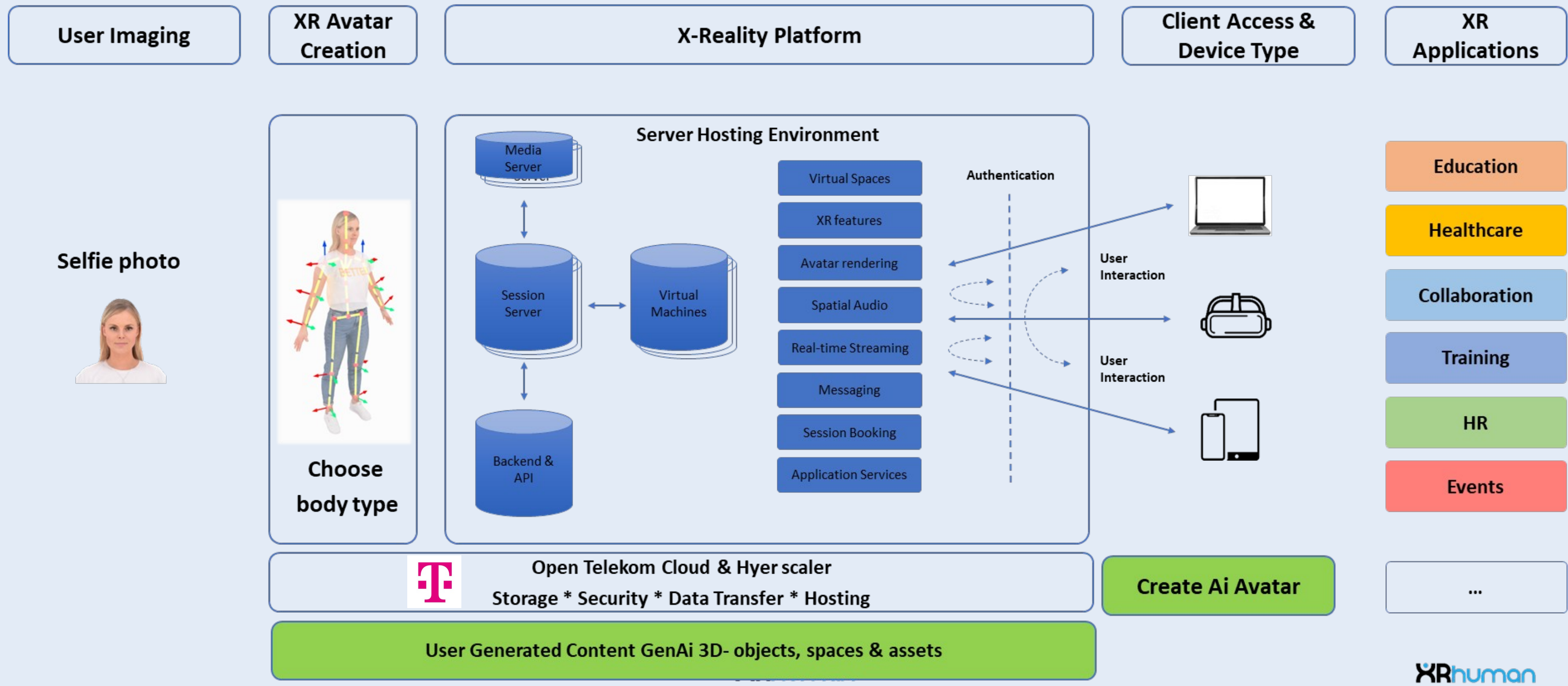
- Handling controversial statements by Luther (Antisemitism, Peasants' Wars)
- Prevention of the spread of antisemitism through prompts and manual filtering (at the premiere)
- Emphasis: AI provides a possible interpretation of Martin Luther
- Transparency through the publication of prompts
- Development of media literacy by addressing these issues

Potential for Immersion and Educational Engagement: “Martin Luther, would you be a climate activist blocking roads?”

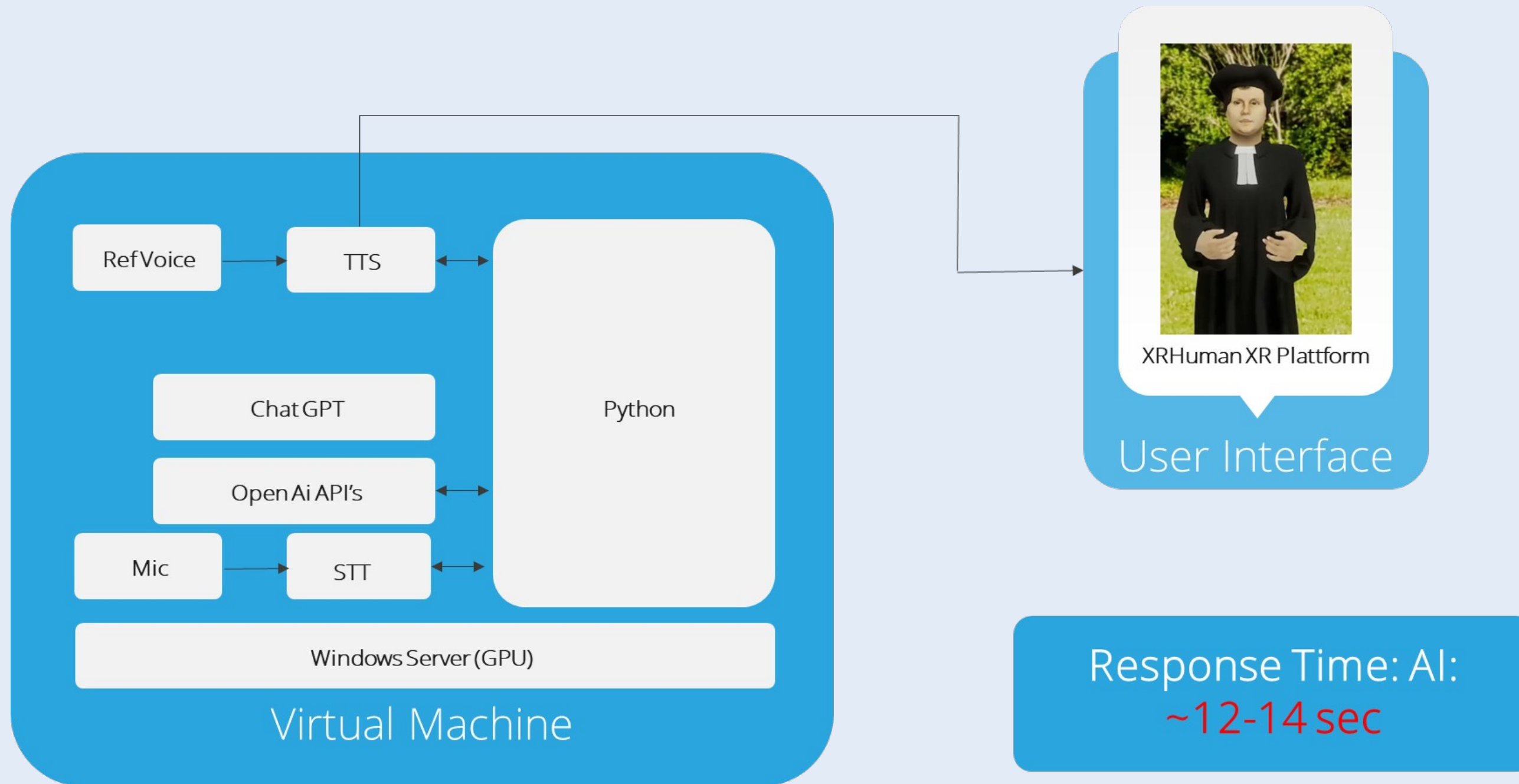
- The project explores Martin Luther's expressions as they might be interpreted today, with AI offering one possible interpretation.
- The Luther avatar serves as an experimental tool to make Reformation messages accessible to modern audiences.
- Potential applications include history education, religious instruction, and confirmation classes.
- Users may forget they are interacting with an AI representation and not the historical figure of Martin Luther.



Technical Background: XR & Avatars as a Service



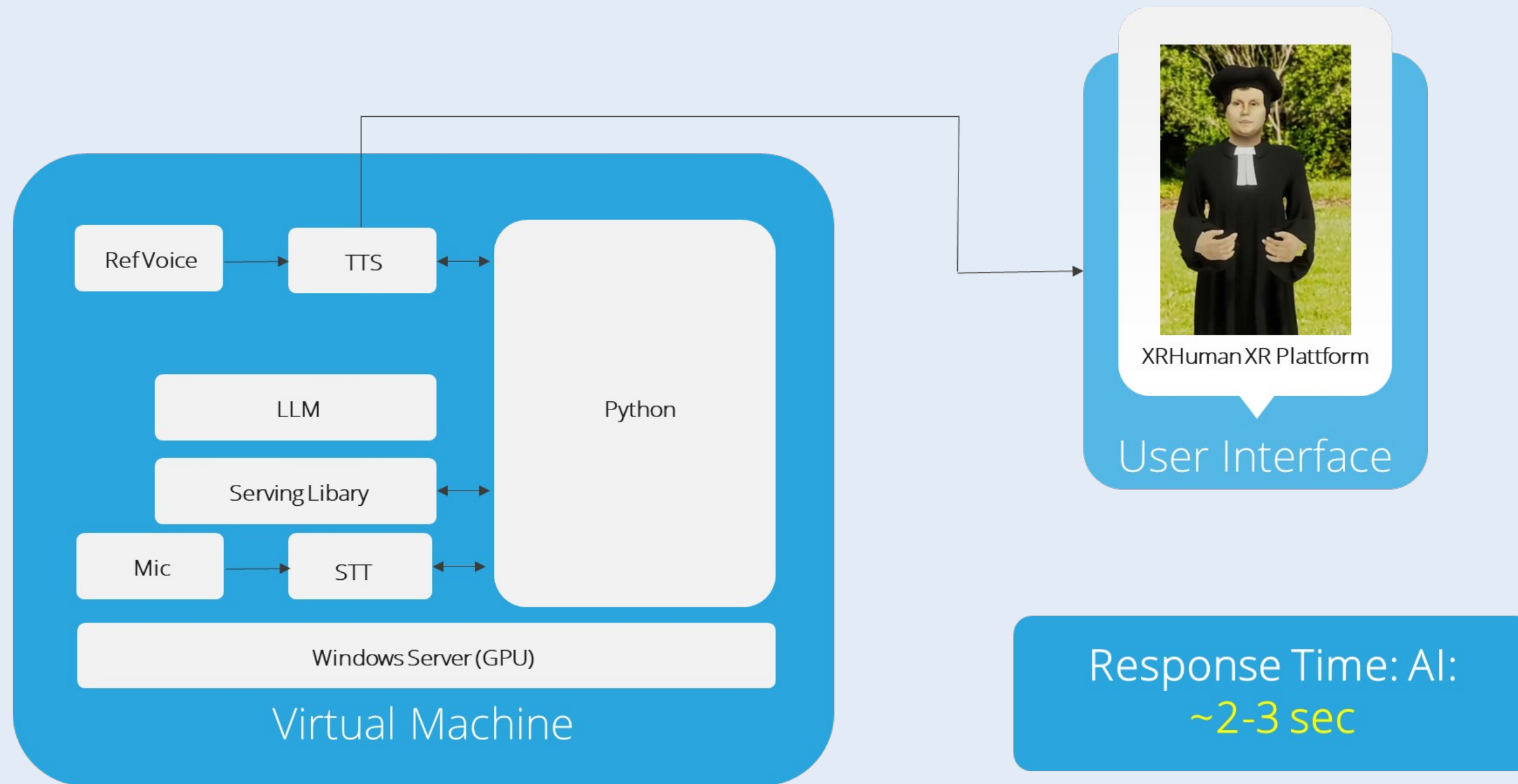
Tech Stack & APIs Open Ai



Advantages:

- Market leader
- Mature LLM models
- Integration of foreign languages
- Easy access

Tech Stack: Open Source and OTC



Advantages:

- Low latency
- Cost advantage when scaling
- GDPR compliant
- Data sovereignty
- Transparency
- Easy access

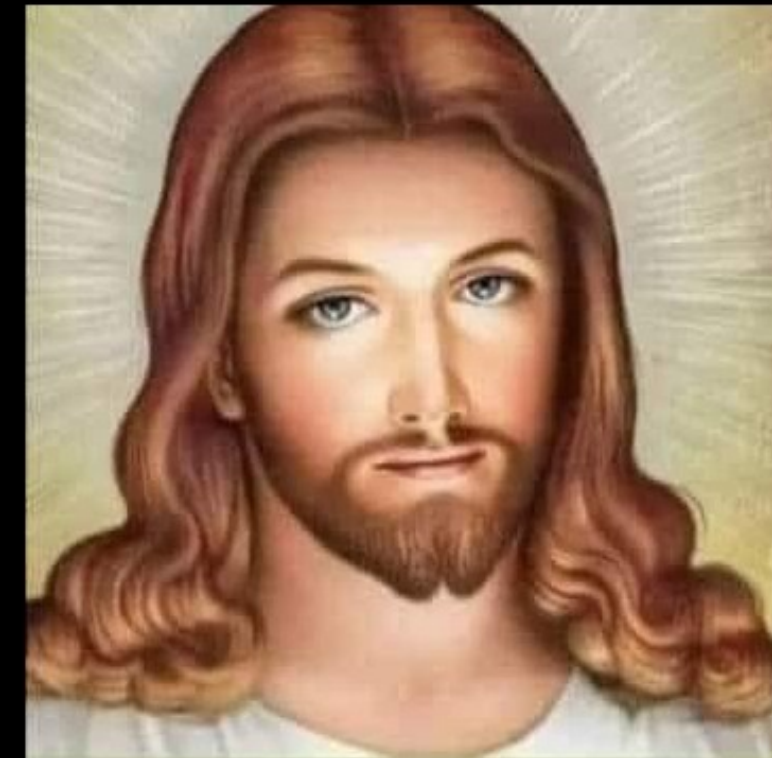
Project Development

- Replacing the Metaverse client with a browser
- Choosing an LLM and uploading training data
- Evaluating the LLMs
- Implementing safeguards against unwanted responses from the avatar
- Integrating XR
- Offering the Martin Luther Avatar as a service

Ownership and Representation of an Avatar's Personality

- A key ethical issue is the ownership and representation of the avatar's personality.
- In this experiment, the AI was programmed to exclude antisemitic responses, aligning more with modern Protestant ethics while omitting controversial aspects of Luther's later years.
- This programming approach allows the avatar to potentially represent various theological positions within Lutheranism, such as pro or anti-LGBTQAI+ stances.
- This raises complex questions about the ownership and portrayal of historical religious figures today: Who owns an avatar and who can define the avatar's personality?
- Who controls the fine-tuning process of the AI? The programmers, the community, pastors, or the denomination?

From Martin Luther to Jesus?



COLONIZER JESUS vs HISTORICAL JESUS

- WHITE
- CHRISTIAN
- PATRIOTIC
- JUSTICE THROUGH RETRIBUTION
- DIED FOR YOUR SINS
- SENDS SINNERS TO HELL
- SILENT IN THE FACE OF OPPRESSION
- CONDEMNS SINNERS
- ENDORSES CHURCH AND STATE
- A KING
- UPHOLDS TRADITIONAL FAMILY UNIT
- ENDORSES HOLY WAR

- MIDDLE-EASTERN BROWN SKINNED
- JEWISH
- COLONIZED BY ROME
- JUSTICE THROUGH RESTORATION
- KILLED BY CHURCH AND STATE
- FRIEND OF SINNERS & OUTCASTS
- LIBERATES THE OPPRESSED
- CRITIQUES RELIGIOUS PEOPLE
- SUBVERTS EMPIRE
- HOMELESS MAN & CHILD REFUGEE
- HAD HALF SIBLINGS
- NON-VIOLENT

A Jesus Avatar?

- Technically feasible, theologically challenging.
- What is the avatar's skin color? Black or white? What about size and physiognomy?
- Which sayings of Jesus/data about Jesus are the basis for the LLM? Ipsissima verba? Red letter verses? Words of Jesus derived from historical-critical research? Or secondary content, for example, from sermons about Jesus?
- Who controls the Jesus avatar?
- WWJD? Traditionally, praying means communicating with God. Can interacting with the Jesus avatar be considered prayer?

Thank you



Partners & Team

Live Demo of XR AI Martin Luther – Please bear in mind:

- We use ChatGPT for this demo through an API to provide easy access to English. This significantly increases latency compared to AI that runs on the same cloud server as the avatar and uses streaming technology.
- To prevent the avatar from interacting with other conversations occurring in the metaverse, it needs to be activated. A green halo indicates readiness; yellow means listening; blue signifies thinking; red indicates responding.
- Transmission via Zoom may reduce the quality of video and audio.

