

An Analysis of the Subjectivity Dilemma of Virtual Practice

Jingying Wang*

School of Marxism, Xi'an Siyuan University, Xi'an 710038, Shaanxi Province, China

*Corresponding author: Jingying Wang, 2519916941@qq.com

Copyright: © 2023 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract

In the Internet age, virtual practice has become the essential mode that people apply in their economic and social lives. Based on the theoretical connotation of virtual practice, this paper analyzes the problem of subjectivity dilemma in virtual practice and then proposes the leading causes of the problem: the diminution of the subjects' self-regulatory ability, the weakening of their independent consciousness as well as the loss of their self-transcendence ability. According to these points, from the perspective of Marxist philosophy, we should consider the following aspects in solving the problem: enhancing the subjects' moral cultivation, putting more emphasis on their education in virtual society, and improving the integration of the real society and the virtual society.

Keywords

Virtual practice
Virtual subject
Subjectivity dilemma

Online publication: November 25, 2023

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, due to the rapid development of Internet technology, human production activities and lifestyles have been pushed to an unprecedented new pattern. The whole society has entered the virtual era: from the purchase of daily needs to the operation of work, human practice has undergone major changes in line with the trend of information technology. The influence of virtual practice on social life is not only manifested in daily life but also has different degrees of influence on other aspects of human beings, such as the ways of communication, existence, and thinking. This new way of practice has enabled human

society to make a leap from reality to virtual reality. However, it should be noted that although virtual practice has promoted the development of human personality and the status of human subjects, on the other hand, due to the particularity and spontaneity of human thinking, disorder often occurs in virtual activities, and the status of subjectivity is faced with the possibility of resolution. It brings the dilemma of antinomy trans to the development of the main body. Therefore, the study of the dual role of virtual practice on the development of the subject is a positive response to the challenge of the information wave to human development in the current era^[1].

2. The subjectivity dilemma of virtual practice

2.1. Subject in virtual practice

The virtual practice subject cannot be said to be the derivative of the real practice subject, nor can it be confused with the real practice subject. In real society, people's different social relations will produce multiple identities, an ordinary social person may be called a "dad," "lover," "teacher," etc., but its different identities have certain characteristics, that is, relative stability, limited, authenticity, reality. In the real world, people on the same social network are transparent about each other's identities. However, in the virtual world, once people register their identity on the network, the identity can be changed according to their own preferences and other subjective will, and the identity information is converted into an electronic text, that is, numbers, words, and symbols are used to describe the virtual subject. This autistic process directly leads to the virtual identity of the virtual subject. Its identity is virtual, uncertain, and fluid. This virtual identity is completely shaped according to the will of the real practice subject, which is the personality expression of the real practice subject, so that the personality embodiment of the virtual practice subject identity is enhanced, while the sense of identity is reduced.

2.2. Object in virtual practice

The object of virtual practice can no longer be defined by the conventional object of practice, but is a special and virtual relational reality^[2]. This relational reality, combined with the human brain with the assistance of virtual technology to complete the organically unified self-movement, "finally in the 'actual utility' to confirm the virtual practice to the subject of the creation of the virtual reality of the object." Obviously, the virtual practice object has many subjective factors, and it abandons the traditional communication form of single or separate "subject-object" and "subject-subject" of the practice object, and does not have the passive and dominated status in the past. In other words, the virtual practice object is "the product of man's will and conscious activity." In the virtual world, human beings no longer have to be constrained by the

natural world, and through virtual technology, they can achieve purposes and activities that cannot be achieved in the real world. In the process of human-computer interaction, each virtual practice has a rich individual form, which can be the subject role, and at the same time, as the sender of a certain message, it can also be the recipient of other people's information. Therefore, "in virtual practice, the subject and the object have reached a high degree of unity, which is the extension and sublimation of real practice"^[3].

3. Analysis of the causes of subjectivity dilemma in virtual practice

3.1. The expansion of the subject's subjective reduces its self-discipline

With the rapid development of network technology, the operability of virtual practice activities is becoming more and more simple. Coupled with the characteristics of virtual practice, subjects will abandon the real world and indulge in virtual practice. Virtual subjects satisfy their sense of accomplishment and honor by creating virtual characters in the virtual world and accomplishing achievements that cannot be achieved in the real world. People strengthen their cognition of themselves through the virtual role in the network, but they cannot control the virtual role, so the subject will gradually indulge in the virtual world, in order to replace the sense of achievement lacking in the real world.

The 51st Statistical Report on the Development of Internet in China released in March 2023 shows that by December 2022, the number of Internet users in China has reached 1.067 billion, an increase of 35.49 million over December 2021, and the Internet penetration rate has reached 75.6%^[4]. Naked data showed that the network has become like air, many people said that they will not feel safe if they leave the network, and will lose contact with the outside world if they leave WeChat, QQ, and other instant messaging software. Internet addiction is common among teenagers. They are in the stage of curiosity and exploration of the world, and their ability to distinguish right from wrong is weak. In addition, it is easier to gain a certain status in the virtual world to fill the emptiness and loneliness brought on by adolescence, and that leads to mistakes that are hard to undo.

3.2. The alienation of the subject weakens its sense of autonomy

The object in the virtual world is actually invented and designed by people. It is the designer who constructs a new world with digital form through some technical means. Here, all kinds of behaviors that cannot be realized in the objective world can be accomplished, surpassing the limits of the human body and crossing the objective existence of the real world. If one wants the sea to flow in the sky, the sea can flow in the sky; if one wants the night to last forever, one can make the sun never rise^[5]. It can be said that the virtual practitioner is the “God” who shapes the world and creates the soul in the virtual world. Therefore, in the virtual society, the subject can completely take off the “mask” in the real society and act with the most real ideas, so as to realize the complete freedom that cannot be realized in the real society^[6]. This makes people returning from the virtual society to the real society form different degrees of psychological gap. Therefore, the practical subject will often put the ideals and aspirations that cannot be realized in the real world into the virtual world, enjoy the satisfaction and sense of honor brought by the virtual society, and thus obtain unlimited freedom in spirit and consciousness^[7].

However, often in this illusory beauty, people cannot be down-to-earth based on objective reality, excessively pursue personality liberation and soul freedom, and confuse the relationship between themselves and the object. In the virtual society, they are “going against the rules”^[8], and the achievements created also become a false bubble, simply following the “social human” in the virtual world, and completely becoming the slave of the virtual world. This is the real loss of freedom, but the virtual practice subject is often not self-aware.

3.3. The imbalance of the relationship between the subject and the intermediary blunts its creative ability and loses its self-transcendence ability

In the current virtual society, the Internet exists like air, people are used to working and learning with the help of the network, and “no thinking” or “not thinking” has become the norm of people, and even become a sign of the times. There is the issue of whether this “convenient” way of acquiring knowledge is the right way. If a person does not have his own thinking, he will not have leisure in the true sense. The kind of

life without contemplation is not what a person with subjectivity has^[9]. The development of the current virtual social Internet is changing and making progress with each passing day, and in the face of these new things in various forms, the subject is easy to lose the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. People communicate and contact with the outside world through the Internet for a long time, and the individual image in the virtual world is in the form of various digital symbols^[10]. It seems that this digital image makes the subject feel more secure, and this behavior is also more likely to lead to the one-sided impression produced when the subject communicates with the subject.

4. The ways out of the subjectivity dilemma in virtual practice

4.1. Strengthening the subject’s moral cultivation to improve the subject’s self-discipline ability

“Under the umbrella of symbols, people can escape the sanctions of public opinion and interest mechanism, so it is more necessary to carry out self-disciplined moral education”. The virtual world is an open and free world; compared with the real world, the virtual world is more difficult to control and formulate rules, coupled with the hidden and mobility of the virtual subject itself, which makes the virtual world more likely to breed the risk of crime. Therefore, if we want to solve this problem fundamentally, we must start from the subject itself, strengthen self-moral education, and consciously abide by moral norms^[11]. In this kind of virtual world where freedom is the main living atmosphere, the subject’s self-restraint is particularly important. Morality is based on the self-discipline spirit of human beings. Consciously observing network ethics and social norms is the bottom line that every virtual practice subject should abide by.

At the same time, strengthening the subject’s moral cultivation must improve the subject’s self-restraint ability. Only when the self-restraint ability is improved and the intention and purpose of their practice are clear, can they consciously resist all kinds of bad temptations in the network, consciously regulate their words and deeds, and make correct value choices to promote their own better development in the network environment with both good and bad^[12].

4.2. Strengthening the subject's education to enter the virtual society and improving the subject's cognition of virtual practice to enhance the subject's consciousness of autonomy

Although it is virtual, it is not completely impossible to be known in the virtual society, so a correct understanding of the virtual society is the only way for the subject to enter the virtual society^[13]. The method to correctly spread and popularize the double-sided nature of virtual society can be carried out from two aspects: the mainstream media of society popularizing education and the subject's active learning of the basic knowledge of the virtual world. The subject should pay attention to the role conversion between the virtual world and the real world, avoid confusing the boundary between the virtual world and the real world, and prevent the subject from substituting the behavior in the virtual world into the real world, resulting in an irreversible situation. Secondly, it is necessary to educate subjects to correctly understand and treat all kinds of network information. "In every moment of our lives, the flood of information is crowding out our time, blocking our thinking, and eroding our capacity for meaning"^[14]. In fact, in the face of all kinds of fresh network information, people's production and life have been invaded by this information, the subject can be promoted to form correct values through education, and choose the most suitable information for their own effective information according to their own needs. In addition, education can also improve the subject's ability to reprocess information, so that this network information is completely for their own use to achieve their own new development using the network.

4.3. Strengthening the integration of virtual practice and real practice, and improving the subject's self-transcendence ability

The subject should clearly realize that no matter how developed the virtual practice is, it can never replace the real practice. The development of virtual practice is also

based on the progress of real practice. If real practice does not provide a good technical support and realistic background for virtual practice, the development of virtual practice can only be stagnant^[15]. It is necessary to test the results of virtual practice through real practice. Therefore, the subject is not only a self-existing individual, but also an individual in real society and virtual society. On the contrary, many people in the current society only covet to enjoy the convenience and freedom brought by the virtual society, ignoring the communication in the real world. After a long time, it is more difficult to find their own basis in the real world, and ultimately cannot return to and enter the real world^[16-18]. The virtual world cannot replace the real world, the subject cannot escape the difficulties and frustrations of the real world through virtual practice. Therefore, the subject should actively participate in practical activities, seek happiness and meaning of life in the real world, transform the technology and knowledge learned in the virtual society into the motivation of life in the real world, and constantly exert their own subjective initiative and creativity to achieve self-transcendence^[19-20].

5. Conclusion

Driven by the rapid development of the Internet and artificial intelligence, the development of virtual practice has been like an arrow on the string, and the combination of virtual practice and real practice will also become the main practice mode of social development in the future, which will elevate people's subjective status to a deeper level. However, it is inevitable that the subjectivity status of human beings will be dissolved accordingly. Therefore, to re-examine the subjective position of human beings in virtual practice, the perspective of Marxist philosophy is helpful to solve this problem, balance between the real world and the virtual world, and make the virtual world truly become an effective springboard for realizing the free and comprehensive development of human beings.

Funding

School Project "The Subjective Dilemma of Virtual Practice" (SYM2335)

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Chen Z, Hong G, 2004, Reflection on the Paradox of Humanistic Spirit in the Digital Era. *Nanjing Journal of Social Sciences*, 2004(02).
- [2] China Internet Network Information Center, 2023, CNNIC Releases the 51st “Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development,” viewed December 5, 2023, cnnic.cn/n4/2023/0302/c199-10755.html
- [3] Guo Z, 2011, *Philosophy of Subjectivity: An Interpretation of Human Existence and Its Meaning*, China Renmin University Press (CRUP), Beijing.
- [4] Hong B, 2008, Marx’s Thought of Subjectivity: Meaning, Methods and Dimensions. *Journal of Fujian Provincial Committee Party School of CPC (Fujian Academy of Governance)*, 2008(08): 25–29. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1008-4088.2008.08.004>
- [5] Marx K, Frederick E, 2012, *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works in Three Volumes*, People’s Publishing House, Beijing.
- [6] Sang Y, Zhou Z, 2004, On the Formation, Essence and Significance of Virtual Thinking Mode. *Journal of Liaoning Normal University (Social Science Edition)*, 2004(02).
- [7] Song C, 2017, Reconstruction of Subjectivity in the Dilemma of Internet Ethics. *Social Sciences in Yunnan*, 2017(03).
- [8] Zhang M, 2006, Analysis on the Nature of Virtual Practice. *Journal of Huazhong University of Science and Technology*, 2006(01).
- [9] Zhang H, 2018, A Philosophical Perspective on Virtual Practice. *New Horizons from Tianfu*, 2018(02).
- [10] Zhang W, 2011, The Dilemma of Network Subjectivity and Its Coping Strategies. *Journal of the Party School of Harbin Committee of CPC*, 2011(02).
- [11] Chen Y, Yin D, 2001, *New Technological Revolution and Social Development*, People’s Publishing House, Beijing.
- [12] Du C, Li Y, 2000, Virtual Reality: A New Field of Practice. *Study on Dialectics of Nature*, 2000(11).
- [13] Jiang Q, 2002, *Experience Economy*, Social Sciences Academic Press (China), Beijing.
- [14] Li C, A Brief Discussion on the Basic Characteristics and Value of Virtual Practice. *Tianjin Social Sciences*, 2000(6).
- [15] Li L, 2002, *Virtue Under the Mouse*, Jiangxi People’s Publishing House, Jiangxi.
- [16] Heim M, 2000, *Metaphysics of Virtual Worlds*, Shanghai Scientific & Technological Education Publishing House, Shanghai.
- [17] Negroponte N, 1996, *Being Digital*, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, New York.
- [18] Wei C, Li P, 2003, Virtual Practice and its Philosophical Significance. *Journal of Xiangnan University*, 2003(3).
- [19] Zhang M, 2002, *Virtual Practice Theory*.
- [20] Liu T, 2010, On the Internet Culture System from the Interaction Perspective of Technology and Culture. *Chinese Journal of Systems Science*, 18(1).

Publisher’s note

Art & Technology Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.