

Study of Social Alienation on Digital Platforms from the Perspective of Marx's Theory of Communication

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ABSTRACT

The rise of digital platforms has profoundly transformed the spatial structure, media forms, and organizational patterns of human interaction. On the one hand, it has broken through the constraints of time and space, expanding the possibilities for social members to express themselves, connect, and collaborate; on the other hand, under the combined influence of the logic of capital, algorithmic power, and data ownership, it has given rise to new forms of alienation in social activities. Marx's theory of communication, taking real human beings and their social relations as its starting point, reveals the intrinsic connections between communication and production, between forms of communication and social relations, and between the freedom of the subject and alienated domination. It thus provides a crucial theoretical framework for analyzing social alienation on digital platforms. Social alienation on digital platforms is not merely a side effect of technology, but rather the result of platform capital organizing, extracting, and monetizing attention, data, and emotional relationships. This alienation manifests primarily in the digitization of communicative subjects, the quantification of social relationships, the spectacle-ization of social content, the fragmentation of social time, and the stratification of public social spaces. To address social alienation on digital platforms, it is necessary to uphold a people-centered value stance and foster a concerted effort across platform governance, algorithmic regulation, data rights protection, digital literacy cultivation, and the reconstruction of real-world communities. This will drive digital communication away from the logic of capital accumulation and back toward the free and comprehensive development of human beings.

KEYWORDS

Marx's Theory of Communication; Digital Platforms; Social Alienation; Digital Labor; Algorithmic Governance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital platforms has profoundly transformed the spatial structure, media forms, and organizational patterns of human interaction. On the one hand, it has broken through the constraints of time and space, expanding the possibilities for social members to express themselves, connect, and collaborate; on the other hand, under the combined influence of the logic of capital, algorithmic power, and data ownership, social activities have taken on new forms of alienation. Marx's theory of communication, taking real human beings and their social relations as its starting point, reveals the intrinsic connections between communication and production, forms of communication and social relations, and the freedom of the subject and alienated domination. It thus provides a crucial theoretical framework for analyzing social alienation on digital platforms. Social alienation on digital platforms is not merely a side effect of technology, but rather the result of platform capital organizing, extracting, and monetizing attention, data, and emotional relationships. Its primary manifestations include the digitization of communicative subjects, the quantification of social relationships, the

spectacle-ization of social content, the fragmentation of social time, and the stratification of public social spaces. To address social alienation on digital platforms, it is necessary to uphold a people-centered value stance and forge a concerted effort across platform governance, algorithmic regulation, data rights protection, digital literacy cultivation, and the reconstruction of real-world communities, thereby steering digital communication away from the logic of capital accumulation and back toward the free and comprehensive development of the individual.

With the widespread application of mobile internet, big data, artificial intelligence, and algorithmic recommendation technologies, digital platforms have become a vital arena for modern daily interaction. Moments feeds, short-video platforms, Weibo, instant messaging apps, interest-based communities, live-streaming rooms, and group communication tools collectively form a 24/7 online relational network. People use these platforms to express views, maintain intimate relationships, access information, participate in public discourse, and project their self-image; they also use them to consume goods, produce content, accumulate prestige, and acquire social capital. Digital platforms seem to make interaction more convenient, widespread, and immediate; yet, at the same time, an increasing number of users experience anxiety, loneliness, comparison, performance, addiction, and relational fatigue: “likes” have become a substitute for emotional validation, follower counts serve as an external measure of self-worth, algorithmic recommendations shape preferences, data profiling presets identities, and social relationships are drawn into the competition for traffic and commercial conversion. While digital platforms “connect everything,” they may also trap people in a new web of alienation.

Existing research has examined digital interaction, digital labor, and social media alienation from perspectives including communication studies, sociology, psychology, political economy, and Marxist theory. Zhang Jianyun notes that “digital interaction is a new form of interaction realized through big data and internet technology systems; it is characterized by virtuality, immediacy and ubiquity, and has the potential to drive human interaction to new depths.” [1] This assessment reveals the historical progressiveness of digital interaction. However, it is insufficient to understand digital interaction solely in terms of technological convenience. Digital platforms are not neutral tools for interaction but rather socio-technical systems embedded in mechanisms of capital accumulation, data governance, and algorithmic distribution. Through interface design, recommendation mechanisms, traffic rules, and business models, platforms transform human expression, emotions, attention, and social networks into data resources that are recordable, computable, predictable, and tradable. Consequently, social alienation on digital platforms has become a critical issue for understanding the predicaments of contemporary interaction.

This paper aims to conduct a systematic analysis of social alienation on digital platforms within the framework of Marx’s theory of interaction. First, it elucidates the fundamental implications of Marx’s theory of interaction and its methodological significance; second, it analyzes the generative logic of social alienation on digital platforms; third, it reveals its primary manifestations and real-world harms; and finally, it proposes possible pathways for overcoming social alienation on digital platforms. The core argument of this paper is that social alienation on digital platforms is neither an individual problem caused by people’s “inability to use technology” nor an inevitable fate of digital technology itself, but rather the result of digital technology reorganizing real-world communicative relationships under the logic of platform capitalism. Only by situating digital platforms within the context of real-world social relations can we truly understand and overcome their alienating tendencies.

2. THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPLICATIONS OF MARX'S THEORY OF INTERACTION

2.1. Interaction as the Mode of Existence of Real Human Beings

Marx's theory of interaction is not a "theory of interpersonal relations" in the abstract ethical sense, but rather a category of historical materialism grounded in real human beings, real productive activities, and real social relations. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels pointed out that "what people are depends on their production—both on what they produce and on how they produce it." [2] This indicates that interaction is not a social behavior externally superimposed upon people, but rather the fundamental mode through which human beings, as social beings, are formed and developed. In terms of content, interaction encompasses both material and spiritual interaction. Material interaction manifests as concrete activities such as production, exchange, division of labor, and collaboration; spiritual interaction manifests as the exchange of language, ideas, emotions, culture, values, and meaning. The two are not separate. Spiritual interaction always unfolds on the basis of specific material production and social relations, while material interaction also requires the support of symbols, meanings, and institutions. It is precisely through this process of interaction that humans cease to be isolated natural individuals and become real subjects situated within a specific network of social relations. Therefore, understanding social interaction on digital platforms cannot be limited to the question of "how technology changes the way we chat"; rather, we must recognize that digital platforms are reshaping the very nature of human existence. Platforms not only alter what people say, how they say it, and to whom they say it, but also how they are seen, evaluated, connected, and organized. Interaction on digital platforms has become a crucial component in the production of contemporary social relations.

2.2. The Interconnection between Forms of Interaction and the Development of Productive Forces

In Marx's view, forms of interaction and the development of productive forces possess an intrinsic unity. The development of productive forces drives the expansion of the scope of interaction and the transformation of modes of interaction, while changes in modes of interaction, in turn, promote or constrain the development of productive forces. [3] From transportation, printing, and the telegraph and telephone to the internet, every technological revolution in media has expanded the temporal, spatial, and subject-matter scope of human interaction, while also altering social organizational structures. The emergence of digital platforms is precisely a significant outcome of the modern transformation of forms of interaction. Relying on technologies such as cloud computing, mobile devices, algorithmic recommendations, data storage, and intelligent matching, these platforms have drastically reduced the costs of interaction, making real-time interactions between strangers, cross-regional collaboration, and collective expression possible. The progressive nature of digital platforms lies in their ability to break free from the traditional reliance on geographical space, personal connections, and centralized media, thereby granting ordinary individuals unprecedented opportunities for expression and the capacity to connect.

Yet Marx's theory also reminds us that progress in forms of interaction does not automatically equate to human freedom. Every form of interaction exists within specific relations of production and power structures. When new tools of interaction are dominated by the logic of capital, they may no longer serve the free association of subjects but instead become new instruments of control. The alienation inherent in digital platform social interaction arises precisely from this contradiction: while technology expands the scope of interaction, social relations may deepen dependency; while everyone appears to have the freedom to express themselves, in reality, expression is re-filtered by traffic metrics, commercial interests, and algorithmic rules.

2.3. Alienation: The Inversion of Social Relations and the Loss of Subjectivity

In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx offered a classic analysis of alienated labor, pointing out that the products of labor, labor activity, human essence, and interpersonal relationships can all be transformed under capitalism into alien forces opposed to the worker. Alienation is not merely psychological discomfort, but a social process in which the objectification of human essential powers leads to their domination of the individual. Applying this theory to the analysis of social interaction on digital platforms reveals the following: when users post content, express emotions, maintain relationships, and engage in interactions on these platforms—activities that appear to be free socializing—they are, in fact, constantly producing data, attention, and commercializable networks of relationships. These digital resources, generated by users' social activities, are collected, processed, analyzed, and monetized by the platforms. Through algorithmic recommendations, ad placements, and traffic allocation, they in turn influence users' cognition, emotions, and behavior. The platform relationships and data products created by the subject are transformed into external forces that dominate the subject. Therefore, the root of social alienation on digital platforms does not lie in “excessive online entertainment,” but in the capitalization, datafication, and instrumentalization of human social capabilities. Human social relationships no longer manifest primarily as mutual understanding, shared living, and free association, but as quantifiable metrics such as traffic, tags, rankings, followers, exposure rates, and commercial value. The purpose of interaction has been inverted: relationships that should serve people now, in turn, require people to serve the platform's growth.

3. THE GENERATIVE LOGIC OF SOCIAL ALIENATION ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

3.1. The Logic of Platform Capital: From Relationship Connections to Value Accumulation

Digital platforms have entered daily life under the guise of “connection,” but their commercial operations extend far beyond providing convenience for interaction. Platform companies typically generate profits through advertising, commissions, subscriptions, live-streaming tips, content-based e-commerce, and data services; the foundation of these revenues lies precisely in users' continuous online presence, ongoing interaction, and the data they consistently generate. Users' clicks, dwell times, likes, comments, shares, follows, private messages, purchases, searches, and browsing patterns all serve as crucial raw materials for platforms to build user profiles and make commercial predictions. Domestic scholars Xie Fangfang and Yan Lianfu have also analyzed the concept of “digital labor” from the perspectives of audience labor, immaterial labor, and material labor relations, pointing out that the unpaid activities of internet users constitute a crucial foundation for platform profitability. [4] From this perspective, the social alienation of digital platforms manifests primarily as the laborization of social activities. Users may believe they are merely “scrolling,” “chatting,” or “posting,” but in reality, they have already been incorporated into the platform's value production chain. The distinctive feature of the platform's capital logic lies in the fact that it does not directly command users to labor through traditional factory discipline, but rather stimulates their active participation by appealing to their desires for pleasure, convenience, social interaction, and self-expression. The more freely users express themselves, the more rich data the platform can obtain; the more actively users interact, the more the platform can increase user retention; and the more anxious users are about being seen, the more the platform can drive them to continuously produce content. The appearance of freedom and the substance of domination are strangely intertwined on digital platforms.

3.2. The Logic of Algorithmic Power: From Autonomous Choice to Passive Shaping

Algorithmic recommendations are a key mechanism by which digital platforms organize social interactions. By analyzing user data, they predict user interests and push specific content, connections, and products to users. While algorithms improve the efficiency of information matching and reduce search costs, they conceal a new power structure: what users see, what they ignore, whom they encounter, and by whom they are evaluated are increasingly influenced by platform algorithms. Algorithmic power does not always manifest in coercive forms; rather, it often operates by “understanding you.” Based on users’ past click and dwell records, it continuously reinforces existing preferences, immersing users in a highly personalized information environment. Over time, users’ interests appear to originate from themselves, yet in reality, they have been repeatedly fed and shaped by algorithms. This gives rise to a phenomenon of “voluntary arrangement” on digital social platforms: while users continue to swipe screens and select content, the range of choices has long been predetermined by the system. More importantly, algorithmic recommendations typically serve the platform’s growth objectives. Content that generates more engagement—such as views, comments, and shares—is more likely to be recommended. Content that is emotionally charged, highly polarizing, clearly labeled, visually stimulating, and strongly consumption-oriented is often better suited for platform dissemination than content that is complex, rational, moderate, or requires deep reflection. Consequently, public discourse may be squeezed out by emotional expressions, deep engagement may be replaced by instant reactions, and users’ judgment may gradually become dulled by algorithmic conditioning.

3.3. The Logic of Data Possession: From Traces of Interaction to Digital Assets

Human interactions always leave traces. In traditional societies, these traces often took the form of memories, written texts, physical objects, or relational experiences; in the era of digital platforms, however, these traces are transformed into structured data. Platforms can record when users log in, how long they stay, what they view, what they like, with whom they interact, their emotional tendencies, and their spending power. Once this data is centrally collected and analyzed, it becomes a vital resource for platforms to conduct commercial forecasting and behavioral intervention. The logic of data ownership creates an asymmetry of power in social interaction. Users contribute data yet find it difficult to truly understand how it is collected, used, shared, and monetized; they rely on platforms for social interaction yet struggle to participate in the formulation of platform rules; and while their social relationships are transformed into data assets by the platform, they are often unable to convert this value into their own rights and interests. Consequently, people on digital platforms are not merely consumers or content producers, but digitized subjects who are continuously read, categorized, and governed. This also explains why social alienation on digital platforms is so insidious. Unlike traditional labor exploitation, which manifests as explicit working hours and wage relationships, it infiltrates entertainment, self-expression, and relationship maintenance. The more users immerse themselves in the convenience of social interaction, the more likely they are to overlook the fact that their social activities are being absorbed and restructured by the platform.

4. MAJOR MANIFESTATIONS OF SOCIAL ALIENATION ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

4.1. The Datafication of Social Actors: Humans Reduced to Sets of Labels

Marxism holds that the essence of humanity is not an abstraction, but the sum total of real social relations. Human beings are complex, historical, and evolving social beings. Yet on digital platforms, individuals are often reduced to a set of quantifiable tags: age, gender, location, interests, spending

power, active hours, emotional tendencies, political views, aesthetic preferences, and relationship strength. Platforms use these tags to identify, predict, and influence users.

The danger of the digitization of the subject lies in its reduction of human richness to manipulable variables. A person's authentic life experiences, value choices, and complex emotions are folded into profiling models. The more a platform "understands" a user, the more likely that user is to be fixed within a specific identity framework. For example, individuals who frequently view certain types of content are continuously fed similar content; over time, the subject is shaped by algorithms into the form they predict. People no longer merely use platforms; they are reproduced within the platforms' classification systems. The digitization of the self also induces the externalization of self-identity. Users confirm their self-worth through metrics such as page views, likes, comments, shares, and follower counts. When these external metrics perform poorly, users are prone to anxiety, shame, or disappointment. Self-evaluation shifts from internal standards to platform metrics, and subjectivity is thus quietly taken over by data indicators.

4.2. The Quantification of Social Relationships: Emotions Transformed into Visible Metrics

Digital platforms transform many social relationships-which were originally ambiguous, nuanced, and not fully quantifiable-into clear, visible numerical metrics. Features such as likes, follows, followers, engagement rates, closeness scores, online status, and visit history make relationships visual, comparable, and rankable. While this quantification mechanism enhances the efficiency of social interaction, it diminishes the rich meaning inherent in the relationships themselves. In real-world interactions, silence may signify trust or alienation; a single greeting may carry little or great weight. On platforms, however, emotions are often encoded as simple actions: a "like" signifies approval, a lack of reply implies indifference, unfollowing signifies a break, and sharing signifies support. Complex emotions are compressed into low-cost symbols, and people's judgments of relationships increasingly rely on platform cues. Social relationships thus exhibit the characteristics of "metrically defined intimacy." Furthermore, the quantification of relationships fosters comparison and competition. Users not only care about their own relationships with others but also compare who receives more likes, who has more followers, and who is more popular. Interaction shifts from mutual recognition to mutual observation, and from relationship maintenance to image competition. While platform-based socializing appears to expand connections, it may actually intensify loneliness, because individuals are not facing specific others but rather a system of metrics that constantly demands performance and comparison.

4.3. The Scenography of Social Interaction: Real Life Rewritten as a Presentable Image

Digital platforms encourage people to showcase their lives, but the lives on display are often no longer life itself, but rather images that have been selected, edited, and curated. Selfies, travel, studying, fitness, reading, romance, parenting, work, and even pain and anger can all be transformed into shareable content. To gain attention, individuals actively adjust their modes of expression to align with the platform's aesthetic standards and traffic-driven logic. This "scenification" does not imply that all displays are false, but rather that life is increasingly organized in a manner deemed "suitable for display." As people go about their lives, they already consider in advance how to take photos, what captions to write, and how to elicit engagement. Life is no longer merely recorded; it is reshaped by the platform's logic of dissemination. The "online persona" on social media is a concentrated manifestation of this trend. To maintain a specific image, individuals constantly produce content that meets expectations, even suppressing their true feelings. The "scenification" of social interaction also leads to the performativization of emotions. Happiness must be proven, hard work must be displayed, and even sadness may be packaged as a source of traffic. Interaction shifts from the sharing of genuine experiences to the accumulation of image capital. People watch one another but may not truly meet;

they interact but may not truly understand. Digital platforms thus become vast showcases of relationships-brightly lit, yet potentially causing real connections to grow cold behind the glass.

4.4. The Fragmentation of Interaction Time: Free Time Appropriated by Platforms

The alienation of social interaction on digital platforms is also manifested in changes to the structure of time. Through notifications, continuous push notifications, endless scrolling, trending lists, short video streams, and instant feedback mechanisms, platforms constantly fragment users' attention, keeping them online during these fragmented moments. Users who originally intended to spend just a few minutes online may end up consuming vast amounts of time within algorithmic recommendations. From a Marxist perspective, free time is a crucial condition for the comprehensive development of the individual. Human development requires rest, reflection, learning, creativity, and genuine interaction. Yet platforms compete for user attention through designed mechanisms, converting free time into monetizable online duration. While users believe they are simply passing the time, they are actually drawn into the production process of the attention economy. Time no longer belongs to the individual but becomes fuel for platform growth. This fragmented appropriation has dual consequences. On the one hand, it makes it difficult for people to engage in deep, sustained thinking, and public discourse is more easily dominated by quick, superficial expressions; on the other hand, it causes people to lose the ability to be alone amid constant connectivity and to feel mentally exhausted from continuous interaction. While digital platforms offer abundant social opportunities, they may undermine the individual's capacity to truly engage in relationships and reflect on life.

4.5. The Segregation of Public Interaction: The Shared World Divided by Algorithms

Digital platforms have expanded the space for public expression, but they have also brought about issues of segmentation and polarization. Algorithmic recommendations match content based on interests and stances, easily pushing users into spaces where similar viewpoints congregate. While interest-based communities can foster a sense of belonging, they may also create information silos, causing individuals to encounter fewer differing viewpoints and complex facts. The healthy development of public discourse requires shared facts, rational discussion, and communication across differences. However, within platform mechanisms, emotional, label-driven, and factionalized expressions are more likely to gain traction. To gain acceptance within a group, users may exaggerate their stances; to boost engagement rates, platforms may amplify controversial content. Consequently, public discourse shifts from a collective pursuit of truth to group emotional mobilization, and from rational discussion to identity-based confrontation. This segmented alienation affects not only individual cognition but also social cohesion. Different groups form closed narratives within their respective information environments, increasing the cost of mutual understanding. Digital platforms, which should promote universal interaction, may instead create new divisions through algorithmic distribution.

5. THE REAL-WORLD HARMS OF SOCIAL ALIENATION ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

First, social alienation on digital platforms erodes individual autonomy. Users' preferences, judgments, and expressions are continuously shaped by algorithms; self-identity becomes dependent on external metrics; and individuals gradually transform from active communicators into objects of recommendations, evaluations, and data-driven governance. Human freedom does not vanish under overt coercion, but dissipates amid convenience, entertainment, and instant feedback. Second, social alienation on digital platforms undermines genuine social relationships. While platforms lower the cost of connection, they do not necessarily improve the quality of relationships. A flood of low-cost

interactions may replace deep communication; likes and emojis may substitute for genuine care; and public display may crowd out private intimacy. People are surrounded by more relationships but do not necessarily gain more understanding. The expansion in the quantity of interactions creates a tension with the decline in the quality of relationships. Third, social alienation on digital platforms exacerbates consumerism and the cult of traffic. Through advertising, e-commerce, live streaming, and influencer marketing mechanisms, platforms transform social relationships into consumption pathways. Recommendations from friends, shares by influencers, emotional resonance, and identity formation can all become vehicles for inducing consumption. Individuals' desires are constantly stimulated through social interactions, and they affirm their identities through consumption. Interaction is no longer merely an exchange of meaning; it has also become a lubricant for the circulation of commodities. Finally, the alienation of social interaction on digital platforms impacts the cultivation of core socialist values and the development of public culture. If public spaces are dominated by the logic of traffic, serious issues are easily trivialized, value-based discussions are prone to becoming emotionalized, and the shared ideals and sense of public responsibility among members of society may be weakened. Therefore, criticism of the alienation of social interaction on digital platforms is not about opposing technology or platforms, but rather about promoting a return to the correct direction of serving the people, serving society, and serving the all-round development of the individual.

6. PATHWAYS FOR OVERCOMING SOCIAL ALIENATION ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

6.1. Upholding a People-Centered Stance to Reshape the Value Standards of Digital Interaction

To overcome social alienation on digital platforms, we must first establish correct value standards. Digital platforms must not rely solely on user engagement time, interaction rates, commercial conversion rates, and capital returns as evaluation criteria; instead, they should prioritize the free and comprehensive development of the individual, the health of social relationships, and the quality of public culture. Platform development should shift from “traffic first” to “interaction quality first,” from “stimulating retention” to “promoting understanding,” and from “commercial monetization” to “public responsibility.” The fundamental concern of Marx’s theory of interaction lies in the liberation of real human beings. The progressiveness of digital interaction should ultimately manifest in the enhancement of human agency, the enrichment of social connections, and the improvement of communal life. If digital platforms merely keep people online longer without enabling them to live more freely, rationally, and with greater dignity, then such technological progress is one-sided.

6.2. Strengthening Platform Governance and Regulating the Exercise of Algorithmic Power

The governance of social alienation on digital platforms cannot rely solely on individual self-discipline, as platform rules, algorithmic mechanisms, and business models possess structural power. The state and society must regulate platform behavior through institutional development, promoting algorithmic transparency, data compliance, and the fulfillment of platform responsibilities. The “Provisions on the Administration of Algorithm-Based Recommendations in Internet Information Services” explicitly require the standardization of algorithmic recommendation activities, the protection of the lawful rights and interests of citizens, legal persons, and other organizations, and the promotion of the healthy and orderly development of internet information services. [5] This provides an institutional basis for governing algorithmic power. Specifically, platforms should be encouraged to provide users with clearer explanations of recommendation logic, more convenient options to disable personalized recommendations, and more effective appeal mechanisms; strict oversight

should be exercised over behaviors such as inducing addiction, creating anxiety, excessively collecting personal information, and using algorithms to implement unreasonable differential treatment; and platform rules involving public opinion, the protection of minors, labor rights, and the public interest should be subject to rigorous review. Algorithms are not inexplicable black boxes, nor should they become a shield for capital to evade responsibility.

6.3. Improving Data Rights Protection and Correcting Data Inequality

Data is the foundation of digital platform operations and a major source of social alienation on these platforms. The establishment of systems for personal information protection and data security is of great significance for safeguarding the rights of data subjects. The Personal Information Protection Law of the People's Republic of China emphasizes the protection of personal information rights, the regulation of personal information processing activities, and the promotion of the reasonable use of personal information; while the Data Security Law of the People's Republic of China establishes provisions regarding the regulation of data processing, the safeguarding of data security, and the promotion of data development and utilization. These systems provide a legal framework for the protection of rights in digital interactions. In practice, we should further strengthen users' rights to know, consent, access, rectify, delete, and port their personal data, and restrict platforms from excessively collecting and misusing data. Regarding the value generated by users through their social interactions on platforms, we should also explore more equitable mechanisms for revenue distribution and the recognition of rights. Only by transforming the unequal structure-where users contribute data yet lack control, while platforms possess the data and exclusively reap the benefits-can we fundamentally alleviate digital alienation.

6.4. Enhancing Digital Literacy and Strengthening Critical Thinking Skills

While institutional governance is undoubtedly important, building the capacity of individuals is equally indispensable. The occurrence of social alienation on digital platforms is linked to some users' lack of algorithmic awareness, data literacy, and media critical thinking skills. Improving digital literacy involves not merely teaching people how to use software, but also helping them understand how platforms operate, how algorithms make recommendations, how data is utilized, and how traffic shapes expression. Ideological and political education and Marxist theory education in higher education institutions should actively address the new challenges of the digital age. For young people, we must guide them to correctly recognize the dual nature of social interaction on digital platforms: they should neither simply reject digital communication nor blindly worship platform technology; they should make good use of digital platforms to expand their learning, expression, and public participation, while remaining vigilant against the worship of traffic metrics, emotional manipulation, consumerist enticements, and anxiety over one's online persona. Through theoretical education, case studies, and practical training, we can strengthen young people's sense of agency and their ability to make value judgments in the digital space.

6.5. Rebuilding Real-World Communities to Promote Healthy Online-Offline Interaction

Digital interaction cannot replace real-world communal life. People need physical presence, emotional companionship, public participation, and genuine collaboration. To overcome the alienation inherent in digital platform socializing, we must promote the integration of online interaction with the building of offline communities. Schools, communities, labor unions, youth organizations, cultural venues, and public service institutions should provide more authentic, open, and equal spaces for interaction, helping people transition from purely online interactions back to shared practical activities. Real-world communities are not the antithesis of digital platforms, but rather the foundation for the healthy development of digital interaction. When people possess stable

relationships, public participation, and a sense of belonging in real life, they are less likely to treat platform metrics as the sole measure of self-worth or to be swayed by algorithmic emotions. Digital platforms should serve as an extension and supplement to real-world interaction, rather than becoming an alternative world that devours real-world relationships.

7. CONCLUSION

Social alienation on digital platforms is a significant issue in the transformation of human interaction in the digital age. Marx's theory of communication teaches us that communication is not an isolated psychological act, but the unfolding of real social relations; digital platforms are not neutral technological vessels, but socio-technical systems embedded in the logic of capital, algorithmic power, and data ownership. While digital platforms expand the scope of communication, enhance the efficiency of interaction, and enrich forms of expression, they may also lead to the datafication of communicators, the quantification of relationships, the spectacle-ization of content, the fragmentation of time, and the stratification of public space. Therefore, criticism of social alienation on digital platforms must not descend into technological pessimism, nor should it remain confined to moral exhortations directed at individuals. The real issue lies not in whether people should use digital platforms, but in the logic by which these platforms operate, whose interests they serve, and what kind of social relations they shape. To overcome the alienation of social interaction on digital platforms, we must adhere to the Marxist stance, viewpoint, and methodology, understanding digital interaction within the context of real-world production relations and social relations. Through platform governance, algorithmic regulation, data rights protection, the cultivation of digital literacy, and the building of real-world communities, we must drive digital platforms to transform from tools of capital accumulation into media for the free association of people. Digital technology itself holds immense potential to expand social interaction, promote collaboration, and enrich public life. The crux of the matter lies in ensuring that human capacity for interaction is not devoured by platform capital, that human emotional relationships are not governed by data metrics, and that people's free time does not become a resource for generating traffic. Only by ensuring that digital platforms truly serve the people's central role and the all-round development of the individual can digital interaction shake off the shadow of alienation and become a vital force for social progress and civilization in the new era.

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