

The Spread Contrast of Buddhism and Psychology in the Network Age

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Abstract: The spread of religion and science is a competition, and it is also an issue that scholars have been paying attention to for a long time. The relationship between the two influences the world pattern and social changes. Therefore, it is worthy of in-depth discussion in the Network age. This paper selects Buddhism as the representative of religion and psychology as the representative of humanities and social sciences, and initially explores the similarities and differences in the communication methods of the two in the network age, as the first practice under this grand topic.

1. Introduction

The main predecessor of the contemporary fast and convenient Internet was the limited and secret ARPANET. No one expected this TCP/IP protocol developed in 1974 by Robert Kahn from Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of US Department of Defense and Vint Cerf from Stanford University defined the prototype of the method for transmitting information between computer networks for the next half century or even a century. On January 1, 1983, ARPANET changed its network core protocol from the network control program to TCP/IP protocol. The technology used by ARPANET (such as TCP/IP protocol) has become the core of the future Internet. The process of soliciting opinions on amendments adopted by it has always been the mechanism used to develop Internet protocols and standards. The Internet Engineering Task Force established in 1986 and the Internet Society established in 1992 played an important role in the selection of computer network technical plans and the establishment of Internet protocols and standards. Tim Berners-Lee, who works at European Organization for Nuclear Research, launched the world's first web browser and first web server at the end of 1990, which promoted the creation of the World Wide Web and enabled the rapid development of Internet application. Nowadays, communication between people becomes more convenient, and the collection of information becomes more efficient. The research on the spread of religion, philosophy, and psychology in the network age is natural and inevitable. Since Buddhism is a typical case of religion and psychology is the most influential branch of philosophy, they are naturally comparable. The humanist psychologist Maslow once talked about his core concepts of "self-transcendence" and "peak experience": "Self-transcendence are generally more prone to have a profound 'religious' or 'spiritual life' consciousness. This is true whether in theological or non-theological sense. Peak experience and other transcendent experiences can actually be regarded as religious or spiritual experiences. [1]" Many psychologists have also had considerable exchanges with Buddhists. Maslow once specifically commented on the words and opinions of the Japanese Zen Buddhist Suzuki Teitaro Daisetsu. In the networked age, what is the difference between the specific communication, application methods and communication effects of the two? This is the focus of this paper.

2. The Spread of Buddhism in the Network Age

Buddhism has a history of more than 2500 years. In terms of the progress of media technology, it can be divided into three periods: spread orally, writing and printing, and network communication. From the perspective of the grand historical category, the development of media technology and the progress of Buddhism spread complement each other, which make them unique [2]. The spread of Buddhism firstly was the recitation and memory of Buddhist monks in the early ages, then it

became the preservation of the scriptures written on the bay leaf. After that, it was spread by the text imprints on sheepskin and silk, and finally, the mass printing and dissemination of Buddhist scriptures after the popularization of printing. In modern times, the emergence of the Internet, a new medium, broke the situation of writing and printing as the most effective medium for the spread of Buddhism. As a new type of communication media in the information age, network has completely changed the traditional mode of Buddhist spread [3]. The advantage of network communication breaks the limitations of oral communication and writing and printing communication. The former will gradually reduce reliability due to the difference and degradation of memory ability, while the latter is overly dependent on the production and transportation of physical media, which requires huge capital and time costs. Therefore, as the main carrier of Buddhism, the networking and electrification of Buddhist scriptures is the focus of Buddhism network communication. In China, the Treasury of Chinese Buddhist Scriptures alone has completed the online electronic text entry of more than 4,000 Buddhist scriptures including *Tripitaka*. Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association was established on February 15, 1998. Its purpose is to provide free electronic Buddhist scriptures database for non-profit use by all people. As the most important document database for Buddhist academic research, CBETA electronic Buddhist scripture database has collected scriptures such as *Taisho-pitaka*, *Jiaying Tripitaka*, *Fangshanshi Scripture*, *Zhaocheng Tripitaka of Jin Dynasty*, *Yongle North Tripitaka* and works of scholars Yin Shun and Lu Chan. Secondly, contemporary Buddhism, which uses network as a powerful communication tool, has surpassed the limitations of scriptural communication in content, and has discovered newer interactive content and learning methods, with interactive social characteristics. The communication between the disseminators and recipients of Buddhism information in the pre-network era was one-way. On the contrary, network communication has the characteristics of interactive communication: Stylites can be connected to the Internet and cultivate themselves together according to the same religious doctrine. The interactivity of network shields the monopoly of the right to speak. Everyone communicates equally. Many believers can express their opinions freely without being restricted by their actual status. Advances in media technology have maximized and optimized the active functions of Buddhism [4]. For example, the establishment of many spontaneous Buddhist online forums, with different audience groups for research and training, also opened a dedicated area for debating scriptures, making the grand occasion of the “uncovered conference” in the era of Emperor Liang and Emperor Wu in China slightly reproduced. In terms of cost, the cost of Buddhist network communication is low, but it's fast. It only needs a very low cost to maintain and operate. What's more, other network tools such as BBS and chat rooms even have lower costs. The digital spread of online media requires only the conversion between information and digits to ensure the simultaneous sharing of information among netizens, which ensures its timeliness. The spread of Buddhism online can also travel through space. The dissemination of Buddhism in the era of oral, writing and printing is basically centered on the gathering of eminent monks, while the spread of online Buddhism breaks the concept of physical space, regardless of region or border, Internet citizens can access information without barriers through computers and networks. In the era of oral communication, the limited information of the communicator limits the amount of information available to the audience. In the era of writing and printing, readers can only passively receive information due to the limitation of layout, length and number of prints. The amount of information spread on the Buddhist network is theoretical infinite. On November 4, 2019, at the 2019 Digital Buddhism Forum held in Ningbo, China, the famous Buddhist Master Yan Can said with joy: “In this information age, it is the best time, choice and direction for Buddhist culture to embrace Internet”, “The spread of Buddhist culture with the help of the Internet must embrace this new media era and embrace a more beautiful new era of human civilization.” In addition, in terms of content design, the online Buddhist information presented by web pages can utilize the non-linear design of the website's organizational structure, allowing web users to freely choose and switch reading content among hyperlinked web pages according to their interests, which can improve audience's freedom and expand the amount of information.

3. The Spread of Psychology in the Network Age

The rise of natural sciences promoted the independence of psychology from philosophy and the use of scientific methods to carry out psychological research. From the very beginning, science and technology have been closely related to the birth and development of psychology. Without Wundt's scientific experiment and paradigm, psychology will always be a mysterious black box that cannot be accurately described. In the early days, psychologists used simple mechanical equipment to study human perception and memory, such as the Ebbinghaus's memory experiment. The development of computer technology since the 21st century has promoted the development of cognitive psychology. On the one hand, logical operations have brought people the inspiration of thinking and cognition. On the other hand, the AI technology simulates a large number of repetitive human brain calculations, such as the cognitive processing strategy of pictures, and the sorting of shopping tendency. It has promoted the application of psychology to a new height. Brain imaging technology brings us into the door of cognitive, emotional, and social neuroscience. Therefore, psychology has always been technology-driven and has a clear technical orientation. As of January 2021, the number of global mobile phone users was 5.22 billion, the number of Internet users was 4.66 billion, and the number of social media users was 4.2 billion. Especially in 2020, an average of more than 1.3 million new users joined social media every day, which is equivalent to about 155,000 new users per second. As the Internet continues to penetrate into life, the boundaries between online and offline are becoming increasingly blurred. The Internet not only provides us with a new tool, but also creates a new way of behavior and interpersonal interaction, which makes the psychology research methods and content in the Internet age change.

The first thing that this change brings is the rapid and convenient research methods. A long time ago, psychology researchers used telecommunications to collect data. However, this data was not systematic and lacked standardization, and the input and archiving brought a huge workload. Later, at the end of the 20th century, scholars began to use the Internet to carry out psychological research, for example by sending emails. Although there were many shortcomings, such as the lack of interview-style case investigations, this method resulted in larger sample sizes and eliminated the trouble of entering data, which showed considerable advantages. The current online research methods are even more diverse. China has more mature online questionnaire survey websites such as Wenjuanxing and Diaochapai. These websites have not only facilitated psychological research in the form of questionnaires, but also formed a mature business profit model. This is essentially a shift of psychology research methods from offline to online. Although only the form of test implementation is changed, there are many benefits. Not only can you save materials, you don't need to enter data, but you can also match the sample in size and scope, and dynamically adapt to the previous test results. In particular, real-time feedback can be provided to participants, which provides participants with a strong motivation to participate.

As a science rather than philosophy or common sense, psychology is widely spread among the public through its application, that is, the extension of research behavior and research results. The extension of research results, such as self-service psychometric questionnaires and rapid assessment scales, is often the most important way for the network spread of psychological knowledge. Scales like Self-Rating Depression Scale (SDS), Symptom Checklist 90 (SCL90), Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SAS) are currently the most popular psychological self-help tools on the Internet. Many people for the first time actively try to understand psychology because of the problems reported by these scales. Finally, as a highly private social space that can be anonymized and de-identified, Internet provides people who are suffering or likely to suffer from psychological problems the last fully safe place. In various online communities and chat tools, groups in need of psychological help are more willing to exchange these knowledge, experiences and perceptions than ordinary psychologists. In particular, the rise of online streaming media has enabled psychological knowledge to achieve one-to-many communication that can only be achieved in professional training institutions or colleges on a larger scale. More importantly, this communication is not restricted by occasions. It even requires only one smart device which can be connected to the network. Online communication framework which is simple, low-risk, and easy to detach from

significantly has reduced the cost of interpersonal communication. AI algorithm judges the user's preferences based on the user's past behavior, avoids information that contradicts the individual's own beliefs, which can reduce the risk of individuals contacting information. It, potentially or unintentionally, leads to the focus of consciousness, which greatly improves the effect of learning.

In short, the Internet, especially mobile devices, has excellent data storage, sensing, positioning, visual input and output, audio input and output, touch and motion input and other capabilities, which is convenient for psychological research. Permitting, collecting data, uploading data, reporting tasks, and payment can all be automatically run by APPs. Computer scientists are already using this method to collect a large number of users' behavioral data. Such research is a development trend. Geoffrey Miller (2010) believes that the skills to develop Apps that are specific for psychology will be as hot as the use of fMRI 20 years ago. Network technology also makes it possible to collect, organize and analyze massive amounts of data, which may eventually lead to a new subdivision of psychology--Psychoinformatics.

The application of psychology in Internet products is also increasing, which provides significant benefits for the spread of psychological knowledge. People are increasingly actively seeking to understand the application of design psychology, advertising psychology, consumer psychology, etc. in Internet products. This is a new trend in the spread of psychology.

What needs to be mentioned in particular is that the current popular group psychotherapy has benefited a lot from the acceleration of the network process today. This type of psychotherapy adapts to the current fast-paced life, focusing on social adaptation and interpersonal relationships. In terms of subdivision, humanistic psychology was first born in the United States in the 1950s and has a pivotal position in the field of psychology [5]. The research object of this theory is a total personality, and advocates people-oriented, focusing on personality health and the manifestation of human values. The theory of humanism came into being in the atmosphere of the second existentialism that prevailed in the 1940s and 1950s. Therefore, although it is called "psychology", it is actually widely known as a philosophical school. As Sartre said: "Existentialism is a kind of humanitarianism." It is mainly active among philosophers and psychologists, and it is easier to be known to the public in the form of psychotherapy in social communication. Humanistic psychological counseling was born in the 1960s, focusing on building a harmonious counseling-visit relationship. It includes reality therapy, encounter groups and other kinds of therapy methods [6]. In the process of psychotherapy, it is necessary to assume that people have the potential for self-realization and self-improvement, and use non-directed methods to make the subjects realize that the future can be chosen by themselves. It is precisely because in this field, it is believed that psychological counseling skills are important, but more important is the attitude of the counselors. During treatment, the potential of the subjects to be treated needs to be fully tapped, and the problems can be solved through the subjects' efforts. The way of organizing psychotherapy is more flexible, preferring to spread information on the Internet, rather than the inefficient one-to-one way that the psychoanalysis school demands with absolute confidentiality, absolute quiet environmental conditions. The group therapy of humanistic psychology promotes the treatment process efficiently through group experience based on sincere communication, such as growth groups and self-affirmation training groups.

4. The Similarities and Differences of Spread between Buddhism and Psychology in the Network Age

From the above, it is clear that the spread of Buddhism in the network age is beneficial in all aspects, from paper media to electronic media, from the limitation of occasions and locations to unlimited time and space, from a single form to multimedia aggregation, and from extreme limited audience extends to a wide range of potential believers [7]. The depth of communication is also in line with the current social needs. It not only has the common-sense popularization that meet the cognitive level of ordinary people, but also has high-end communities that provide information and debate for researchers and practitioners. It is even more exciting that people in the Buddhist circle have already realized the tremendous power of network. Online lectures have become a new trend

for young people to learn about and understand Buddhism. For example, Master Hui Lu from Taiwan, China, pays special attention to the network communication of Buddhist knowledge. The spread of Fo Guang Shan's "Mundane Buddhism" thought is more carried forward from the Internet [8]. The spread of psychology is also greatly benefited by network. Its positive aspects are the same as the spread of Buddhism, but it is narrower in the spread target, and is more inclined to people who need psychology rather than the general population. Professional psychology knowledge is impossible to be spread to the crowd indiscriminately in a relaxed environment like religious knowledge, and the effect will be greatly reduced.

5. Conclusion

Through the research, it is found that the spread of Buddhism and psychology in the network age has conformed to social needs and technological development. However, psychology, as a systematic empirical science, is difficult to change the academic style in inertia. Only a very small number of experts and scholars can understand the impact of the network age on the development of psychology and respond positively. On the other hand, most people in the Buddhist circle have realized the opportunities in the network age very early. They have made novel attempts, and gotten rich returns.

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