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The balance of subjectness in virtual space

Abstract: The concept of subjectness balance is described and defined. Its connection with approaches to psychological balance is outlined. The features of subjectness balance in virtual space are presented, and the main aspects of this process are identified.

Keywords: subjectness, balance, balance of subjectness, disbalance of subjectness, virtual space, psychological balance, theories of balance, technologies.

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Баланс суб'єктності у віртуальному просторі

Анотація. Описано концепт балансу суб'єктності та дано відповідне визначення. Окреслено його зв'язок з підходами до психологічного балансу. Наведено особливості суб'єктного балансу у віртуальному просторі, а також визначено основні аспекти цього процесу.

Ключові слова: суб'єктність, баланс, баланс суб'єктності, дисбаланс суб'єктності, віртуальний простір, психологічний баланс, теорії балансу, технології.

The virtual space has already become an integral part of life for many, influencing various aspects of personal subjectness and social interaction. In the virtual space, there are opportunities to realize one's subjectness and its limitations or losses. Maintaining a balance of subjectness is particularly relevant with the widespread integration of various large language models (LLMs, AI) into all spheres of human life, as they often take the initiative in interactions. Therefore, it is important to study the impact of new and existing technologies on personal subjectness and to develop approaches to maintain its balance, as this is necessary for maintaining mental health and the sustainable, harmonious development of the individual.

The balance of subjectness in the virtual space is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects of personality and social interaction. Subjectness involves the conscious choice of one's goals and the specific activities to achieve them,

including behavior, as well as the conscious maintenance of life and psychological balance. Probably, the balance of subjectness is always a positive state, but in reality it all depends on the context and point of view.

Approaches to psychological balance include concepts such as wisdom (prudence), equilibrium, psychological well-being, psychological stability, congruence, and resilience. These concepts mostly describe the path from disharmony to harmony through self-balancing, resulting in balance (Price, 1962; Price, Harburg, Newcomb, 1966; Sternberg, 1998; Tsyuman, Nagula, Adamska, 2022). The most well-known balance models are Heider's Balance Theory, symmetry, and cognitive dissonance (Heider, 1946; Zajonc, 1960). More modern approaches to psychological balance, such as the Theory of Psychological Optimization, propose ways to optimize psychological well-being to achieve optimal performance and quality of life (Rachmad, 2022). We believe that psychological balance is closely related to the balance of subjectness.

The balance of subjectness is the optimal state for an individual to realize their own subjectness, achieved through harmony between various components (Meshcheriakov, 2019) and mechanisms of subjectness (Smulson et al., 2021; Smulson, Meshcheriakov, Nazar, Dityuk, 2023). The phenomenon (effect) of balancing subjectness may be one of the leading mechanisms of subjectness. Clearly, for the effective realization of subjectness, its balance must be dynamic: different components and mechanisms will be engaged in varying proportions and sequences for each situation, goal, strategy, task, activity, behavior, etc., and the individual's involvement will vary. Thus, the more developed the subjectness and personality, the more components need to be balanced.

The topics of subjectness disbalance and other disorders are closely related to the balance of subjectness, but their exploration is not the aim of this work.

Being in the virtual space adds certain nuances to the balancing process. Here are a few aspects that require conscious choice and timely switching by the individual:

1. Subjectness and Reactivity: In the virtual space, it is easy to become a passive consumer of content, which can lead to a loss of subjectness. Balancing active participation (following one's interests both generally and in the virtual space; creating content, interacting) with passive reaction to what happens (following others' interests; passive consumption, conformity) helps maintain subjectness and control over one's time, energy, and health. Developing critical thinking, media literacy, and self-regulation skills are important for effective personal subjectness and efficient use of the virtual space.

2. Self-Identification, Identity, and Authenticity: In the virtual space, users can create different images of themselves and exhibit different behaviors, which can affect their self-identification and identity, leading to a split not only between the real and virtual "Self" but also among multiple virtual "Selves." To maintain overall subjectness balance and personal integrity, it is important to preserve authenticity to avoid conflicts between the real and virtual "Selves."

3. Self-Development and Stability: Continuous self-improvement is important, but it is equally important to appreciate what has already been achieved. This helps avoid feelings of dissatisfaction and stress and ensures necessary periods of rest.

4. Social Interaction and Isolation: Virtual platforms, messengers, and social networks provide opportunities for a wide range of social interactions (from

maintaining existing relationships to creating new ones; and promoting one's brand or ideas). However, there is also the possibility of virtual self-isolation and avoiding communication and interaction with others.

5. Psychological Comfort and Discomfort: The virtual space can be a source of both support and stress. It is important to create acceptable conditions for communication and self-expression to avoid negative impacts on mental health. At the same time, prolonged psychological comfort can lead to a decrease in "subjectness tone".

6. Real and Unreal; Valuable and Non-Valuable: In the virtual space, imaginary constructs are easily created and spread, often lacking value for many but consuming significant time and resources, thereby dissipating subjectness.

7. Development and degradation. Virtual environments provide many opportunities for learning and self-development. But in modern times, the line between development and simplification (regression) is often so blurred that it becomes difficult to identify a specific direction of the subject's path. (In this context, it is impossible to refrain from mentioning the currently fashionable subculture of Quadrobers). In addition, it is impossible to predict in advance the positive and negative consequences of the acquisition of certain knowledge, competencies, and decisions by the subject. Therefore, it is important to use the possibilities of virtuality for personal growth, which corresponds to the goals of the subject.

8. Individuality and Fashion (Conformity): In virtual spaces, as in reality, trends and fashions often change. On one hand, belonging to a certain community requires sharing and adopting its ideas and values. On the other hand, this leads to a noticeable loss of individuality. The issue of subjectness here lies in how the choice between these polarities is made: consciously and subjectnessly or unconsciously and conformingly. Balancing between trends and contexts can also be challenging. On one hand, they constantly change, and on the other, falling out of them can rapidly increase the gap in understanding with others.

In addition to the aforementioned aspects, which often relate to the non-virtual world as well, there are technological aspects exclusively tied to virtuality, such as the emergence of large language models (LLMs, AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR). These technologies open new possibilities for interaction in the virtual space between individuals and virtual personas, between subjects and artificial subjects, and between users and virtual assistants (and virtual partners). These (and other) technologies affect the subjectness of the individual in such a way that without sufficient mastery of them, the individual will be forced to be in the position of the object. For instance, chatbots can direct the course of conversations or even choose them, turning users into passive consumers. Moreover, certain combinations of technologies can lead to situations where choices are very limited or even nonexistent. This is a form of "delegating" subjectness, at least until artificial subjects emerge. Therefore, it is important to understand and consider how these technologies impact users' subjectness and their ability to maintain balance.

Thus, the virtual space has become an integral part of life, influencing personal subjectness and social interaction. It provides opportunities for realizing subjectness but can also limit or even lead to its loss. With the integration of large language models (LLMs, AI), it is important to study their impact on the subjectness and develop approaches to maintain its balance. The balance of subjectness involves the conscious

choice of goals and activities, leading to an optimal state for realizing subjectness and, in turn, psychological balance.

Maintaining the balance of subjectness is one of the key factors for personal success and effectiveness, as well as for harmonious development and mental health preservation in the modern digital world.

Further research may focus on the development of concepts, strategies, technologies, and tools for maintaining the balance of subjectness in virtual space. Studies of the individual, group, and mass balance of subjectness look promising. Subjectness disbalances and other disorders are also waiting to be studied.

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