

On Lu Xun's "Spectator" Image and Its Reflection of Social Phenomenon and Thinking

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Abstract:

This paper explores the image of the "Spectator" in Lu Xun's works and the social phenomenon it reflects. It portrays the collective image of Chinese society at the time as indifferent bystanders, characterized by intellectual numbness and a lack of courage and responsibility. It also reflects the helpless, evasive, and compromising attitudes of intellectuals in response to reality. Although times have changed a lot, the "Spectator" psychology still exists to some extent in modern society. In today's increasingly fierce competition at home and abroad, the "Spectator" is not conducive to the construction of a powerful socialist modern country. Through the analysis of Lu Xun's "Spectator" image, the inner characteristics of the "Spectator" image, the realistic support of the "Spectator" image and its tragedy, the author draws out the alerting effect of the "Spectator" image on modern society, and thus explores the value pursuit from the "Spectator" to the walker. The author analyzes the ways to pursue the values of an active participant (or "walker") by focusing on enhancing contemporary citizens' public consciousness, emphasizing educational guidance in schools, and ensuring institutional support from the government. The author calls for constant vigilance and self-reflection, urging people to continually improve their moral character and cultivate a spirit of humanistic care.

Keywords: "Spectator" image, psychological characteristics, realistic tragedy, Walker value

1. Introduction

Lu Xun was a well-known writer, thinker, revolutionary, educator, artist, calligrapher, and Democracy Fighter, as well as an important participant in the

New Culture Movement. He is one of the founders of modern Chinese literature. Lu Xun devoted all his life to cultural criticism and social criticism. His works are full of reflection and exploration of the national spirit, and they deeply reveal the hypocrisy

and cruelty of feudal culture, the complicated features of human nature and all kinds of maladies and injustices in social reality. Among them, the image of „Onlookers“ is a very representative group in his works, which not only vividly depicts a common mentality of the society at that time, but also deeply reflects the nature of some social phenomenon. In Lu Xun’s work, “Spectators” are indifferent people, „Onlookers“ or even scoffers at the misfortunes or tragedies of others. They do not directly participate in events, but appear as bystanders, and enjoy some kind of psychological satisfaction or pleasure from the pain of others. The images of „Onlookers“ are depicted in many works, such as *Medicine*, *The True Story of Ah Q*, *Blessing*, etc., the villagers watching Ah Q being paraded through the streets in *The True Story of Ah Q* are all typical “Spectators” images [1]. Since ancient times, „Onlookers“ have been around people. In the process of socialist modernization, „Onlookers“ have increased social contradictions, hindering social progress. This paper explores Lu Xun’s “Spectator” image and the social phenomenon it reflects and reflects on the “Spectator” behavior in today’s society through the characteristics of such “Spectator” as numbness and lack of responsibility. It is of great significance to encourage and advocate people to pursue the value of walkers and build a healthy social atmosphere.

2. Lu Xun’s “Spectator”

2.1 Lack of Compassion and Sense of Justice

A striking feature of Lu Xun’s “Spectator” is his lack of compassion and sense of justice. These “Onlookers” are not only bystanders of social events, but also the concentrated embodiment of social indifference and numbness. In Lu Xun’s works, there are often scenes where a group of people gather to witness an unfortunate or tragic event, yet they show no sympathy or concern for the victim. Instead, they view the situation with indifference or even derision.

Each unfortunate encounter of Kong Yiji, in the eyes of the hotel crowd, is good material for making fun of. The “Spectators” came from all walks of life, including the bosses of Xian Heng Inn, the wine warmers, the short-clothed gang (representing the working class), and the long-clothed gang (representing people of higher social status). This widespread representation reflects the universality of the “Spectator” phenomenon. Not only do they show no concern for Kong Yi ji’s tragic fate, but they also lack a basic sense of compassion and justice, unwilling to

offer him any help. Instead, they satisfy their vanity and sense of superiority through ridicule and humiliation.

2.2 Self-isolation and Mental Numbness

Lu Xun’s depictions of the “Spectator”’s self-isolation and spiritual numbness are profound and vivid. As Lu Xun wrote in *The Powerful Persuasion under the zero-degree narration -- on the narrative effect of the Chinese and foreign-focused perspectives* the public display depicts a scene in which a patrol officer parades a criminal with a rope in the hot sun. On the surface, it is written that the “Criminal” is “Shown to the public”, but in fact, it achieves the effect of exposing the viewer’s numbness in the front of the reader [2].” In the scene of public display, every „Onlooker“ is an isolated individual, they do not communicate and care, only to push and laugh at each other. “The maniac”, described in *the “Maniac” awakening and Lu Xun’s self-criticism*, “Knew that his eldest brother was a cannibal, that he was the brother of a cannibal, and that even if he was eaten he could not change the fact that he was the brother of cannibal” [3]. Unable to change the reality, he saw the cannibalism around him but ignored it, continued to live a Zombie life, and never dared to stand up against it and change it. The author reveals the indifference and numbness between people in feudal society from the perspective of Madman.

2.3 Lack of Courage and Commitment

Lu Xun’s “Onlookers” often choose to stand aloof and lack the courage to stand up for others’ misfortunes and sufferings. They do not want to participate in the rescue or the action of resistance, but are content as a bystander, watching the misfortune of others. At the same time, they lack a sense of responsibility for their actions. They are unwilling to accept the consequences of their actions, and when faced with the need to take responsibility, they often choose to shirk or shirk their responsibility. “Compared with Xianglin, who fought in the face of misfortune, the Zombie and ignorant people of Rouhe are not only pitiful, but even more hateful,” wrote Wang Changfu in *The Selfishness and indifference of human nature under the Slavery of feudal thought in blessing*. Faced with the sufferings of Xianglin, such as the loss of a husband, and a son, and the inability to remarry, these „Onlookers“ showed no sympathy and pity, but chose to watch coldly [4]. They lack the courage to speak up or offer help, for fear of getting into trouble or harming their own interests. The indifference, numbness and even ridicule of the „Onlookers“ is a sign of their lack of courage and responsibility.

3. The Inner Quality of the “Spectator” Image

3.1 The Psychological Mechanism of Self-protection

The psychological mechanism of self-protection is an important aspect of the inner character of Lu Xun’s “Spectator”. This psychological mechanism is primarily exhibited by „Onlookers“ when faced with a complex social environment and the suffering of others. In order to avoid personal harm or becoming entangled in difficult situations, they adopt a passive coping strategy. While these psychological mechanisms allow the „Onlookers“ to maintain a relatively stable mental state in such environments, they also result in a lack of sympathy and concern for the suffering of others. “They may be shocked to see the misfortunes of others, but they will never empathize with them, nor dare to offer help, nor do anything to set them on fire; they will only reinforce their inner shields,” Lu Xun writes in *Looking at history as a mirror -- an analysis of the “Spectator”* in his novels [5]. Faced with the darkness and injustice of society, the “Spectator” is afraid of being involved in the whirlpool of events, fearing that he will also suffer blows and injuries, so he chooses to turn a blind eye in order to protect himself, this kind of behavior actually stems from the inner fear and the feeling of helplessness.

3.2 The Inability to Change the Status Quo

Lu Xun’s society is one of oppression and exploitation, with the underclass suffering and lacking the resources and capacity to change the status quo. Without the ability to change the status quo, „Onlookers“ often choose to compromise and comply in exchange for temporary peace or to avoid greater conflict. “In the novel, Ah Q is obsessed with the ‘spiritual victory method’ and often uses self-deception to get rid of humiliation and failure,” Yu Zhaoping wrote in *The True Story of Ah Q from the perspective of Lu Jie Lu* [6]. As a representative of the people at the bottom, in the face of social oppression and bullying, Ah Q chose the “Spiritual victory method” to comfort himself, through self-deception, his failure and humiliation into a kind of illusory victory and satisfaction. This kind of compromise and obedience, although it alleviates the pain in Ah Q’s heart to some extent, also makes him lose the courage and strength to resist and change the status quo. The “Spectator” mentality also reflects a sense of helplessness and powerlessness, because in a dark and unfair social environment, ordinary people will feel insignificant, and even if they stand up against the status quo, it

will be difficult to change the status quo in the end.

4. The Realistic Support of the Image of “Spectator” and Its Tragedy

4.1 The Malpractice of Feudal Educational Values

The appearance of “Spectator” comes from the malpractice of the education system and values in feudal society. In his analysis of the “Spectator” mentality in modern Chinese literature -- *taking Lu Xun’s characters as an example*, Lu Xun wrote that most of the “Spectators” in his articles were cold, dull and closed-minded. They are at the bottom of society, uneducated, monotonous and unfree life, deeply poisoned by feudal thought [7].

Feudal ethics emphasized hierarchy, the order of seniority and inferiority, and moral norms such as “three principles and five virtues”, These kinds of educational values lead to indifference and estrangement between people, which makes people lack the spirit of sympathy and mutual help. The formation of “Spectator culture” in China has something to do with the feudal autocratic system for thousands of years, as well as the enslavement education of “Each person should sweep the snow in front of his own door, regardless of the frost on others’ tiles”, then formed the National “Spectator” Psychology [8]. This kind of education not only deprives people of independent thinking ability, but also makes people used to blind obedience and obedience. In addition, feudal education often only paid attention to the inculcation of knowledge and the training of skills, neglecting the cultivation of students’ humanistic qualities and moral concepts.

4.2 The Oppression and Exploitation of the Semi-colony

A nation’s cohesion and cultural spirit are not static, the formation and development process will be affected by political and economic, and finally will show the national spirit of the whole [7]. The oppression and exploitation of Semi-colony is an important historical background factor for the formation of “Spectator culture”. Under this social formation, the majority of the population lives in poverty and hardship, people are struggling to make a living, often focusing only on their own survival, lack sufficient time and resources to focus on the fate of others, and suffering and unhappiness of others is indifferent.

Under the Semi-colony system, People’s political rights and freedoms are severely restricted and they are unable to express their views and demands or change their destiny through legal means. This sense of political powerlessness

leads people to develop a negative, passive psychological state. At the same time, intellectuals often lack independent status and development space, can not play their due role in society. In the face of oppression and exploitation, intellectuals often choose to escape and paralysis, become bystanders and outsiders, it is difficult to really participate in the practice of social change.

5. The Image of “Spectator” Warns the Modern Society

In the fast-paced, high-pressure modern life, people are often busy with their own affairs, ignoring their concerns and attention to others. Some people may choose to stand aloof, or even mock or satirize, when they see someone in distress or distress. In modern literary works, many nameless “Spectators” occupy an important position in the stories with their unique personalities. These “Spectators” seem to have disappeared with the times, but to some extent, the „Onlookers“ in social life, Weibo Hot Search, also seems to be taking the initiative to assume the role of „Onlookers“ [9]. The “Spectator” mentality still exists, which harms the healthy development of society.

5.1 Aggravate the Intensification of Social Contradictions

The callous attitude of the onlookers makes the victim feel more helpless and hopeless, which not only aggravates the psychological trauma of the victim, but also may lead to more serious social problems. The sensational “Little Yueyue” incident, the incident triggered a new round of moral discussion and reflection in the society: “This is indeed a heart-wrenching accident, only two years old of life, may have withstood a number of vehicles run over, but cannot withstand the world so indifferent” [10].

The indifference and numbness of the “Spectator” not only makes the victim feel isolated, but may also trigger more people’s dissatisfaction and anger. Furthermore, the proliferation of “Spectator” behavior will also contribute to the unhealthy trend in society. When some illegal acts or undesirable phenomenon cannot be stopped and corrected in time, criminals will take advantage of the opportunity. Criminals may engage in illegal and criminal activities with greater impunity, thereby undermining the normal order and stability of society.

5.2 Hinder the Progress of Society

The existence of the “Spectator” image weakens the sense of responsibility and social cohesion of citizens. “Onlookers” are often indifferent and bystander attitudes in the face of social events and will gradually lose to the social public affairs attention and participation consciousness.

This lack of responsibility will not only affect the growth and development of individuals, but also the progress of the whole society has a negative impact. A lack of social cohesion makes it difficult to form common values and goals, thus hindering the progress and development of society as a whole.

“Spectator” psychology may also inhibit social innovation and development. In the innovation process, daring to try, and dares to explore the spirit is an important factor. However, when most people choose to be “Onlookers,” they may be skeptical or averse to new things, a conservative mindset that limits their imagination and creativity, so as to restrain the innovation ability and development potential of society.

6. From “The spectator” to “The walker” the Way of Value Pursuit

6.1 To Overcome the “Spectator” Mentality and Enhance Public Awareness

When faced with difficulties or challenges, most people will choose to stand aside rather than take responsibility. This “Spectator” mentality often stems from the fear of failure, taking risks and so on.

People can understand the living conditions of different groups of people through a variety of ways, and learn to put themselves in others’ shoes. In daily life, through reading, watching documentaries and participating in public welfare activities, people can understand the life and plight of different groups of people, enhance their sympathy and care for others, and actively participate in social affairs.

Taking an active part in social activities is an indispensable link in cultivating a sense of citizenship. By paying attention to hot social issues and public issues, people can learn about relevant policies, laws and regulations, and actively participate in community building, environmental protection, charitable donations and other public welfare activities within their capacity.

6.2 School Education Helps the “Walker” Value and Cultivate the Sense of Responsibility

“School is the main place for students to receive scientific and cultural knowledge and systematic moral theory, so it is also the main position of responsibility education” [11]. The school can train the student’s sense of responsibility by means of curriculum setting, teaching reform, campus culture construction and home-school cooperation.

Schools should pay attention to the use of heuristic teaching and Project-based learning methods to stimulate students’ interest and initiative in learning. At the same time,

schools can create a positive campus cultural atmosphere by holding various campus cultural activities, such as theme speeches, debate competitions, and voluntary services, letting students feel the power and charm of traveler value in participation.

Furthermore, Schools need to strengthen the communication and cooperation between parents, and pay attention to the growth and development of students. At the same time, actively with the community, enterprises and other social institutions to establish links for students to provide more practical opportunities and platforms for students to grow in practice.

6.3 Improve the Social System and Build a Secure and Stable Society

Government departments need to constantly improve the social system to create a more fair and secure social environment. When the legal rights of every citizen are protected, People's fear and sense of powerlessness will be reduced, so that people will actively contribute to the development of society. Besides, addressing disparities in income, education, health, and access to opportunities is crucial. Governments should implement policies that reduce poverty, provide quality education and healthcare, and ensure equal rights and opportunities for marginalized groups.

Government departments also need to broaden the channels for public opinion feedback and protect people's right to supervise. When people's demands are guaranteed, people's sense of happiness of being the master will be enhanced, so that they can better participate in social affairs and form public responsibility and awareness.

Therefore, the government should adhere to the people-centered development concept, and constantly improve the social system to create a safe, stable, fair and just social atmosphere.

7. Conclusion

The image of „Onlookers“ in Lu Xun's works reveals and criticizes the morbid psychology of Old Chinese society. These „Onlookers“ are not only bystanders of social events, but also carriers of social morbid psychology. This kind of mentality not only aggravates social indifference and estrangement, but also hinders social progress and development.

In modern society, although the material conditions have been greatly improved, but „Spectator“ psychology still exists to a certain extent. The emergence of „Onlookers“ is the product of comprehensive factors such as individuals and society. „Onlookers“ have an important influence

on the development and progress of society. So people should constantly enhance personal moral cultivation and the spirit of humanistic care, to avoid becoming indifferent, insensitive bystanders. Secondly, school education should cultivate students' civic awareness and sense of responsibility in various ways, make them establish correct world outlook and values, and encourage them to actively participate in social construction. At the same time, government departments need to strengthen the rule of law, improve the power supervision mechanism, effectively protect the legitimate rights and interests of every citizen, eliminate people's fear and sense of powerlessness. Finally, as a member of society, people should actively participate in the social public welfare, with practical action to care for others, help others, to jointly create a more harmonious, civilized and progressive social environment.

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