

# The Essence of the Digital Society behind the Wuhan University Scandal—A Postmodernist Perspective<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** Recently, the Wuhan University false accusation incident has gone viral online, sparking a wave of social discussions and derivative works. This paper argues that the incident and its subsequent developments are not merely a public opinion crisis, but rather a concentrated manifestation of the inherent contradictions and dilemmas within the evolution of the information society. Drawing upon Lacanian-Žižekian psychoanalysis, Foucaultian and Byung-Chul Han's theories of power, and Baudrillard's critique of simulacra, this paper offers an in-depth analysis of the Wuhan University incident and the underlying mechanisms of the information society. It further proposes preliminary solutions to address the existential crisis stemming from the nihilistic state of the information age.

## 1 Introduction

Amidst the surging tide of information flow in the digital age, the iterative evolution of internet technology has reshaped the information ecosystem. While empowering the public with heightened cognitive and comprehension abilities, fostering more rational discourse, the very fragmentation and anonymity of information dissemination have also given rise to a unique phenomenon: online public opinion. The Wuhan University Library incident—a conflict between individuals surnamed Yang and Xiao that escalated through online dissemination and sustained public scrutiny—stands as a quintessential example of this information ecosystem at work. In this incident, the individual labels (attributes) of Yang and Xiao, the continuous diffusion of fragmented information across the online sphere, and the shifting allegiances and strategic interactions among netizens based on differing stances collectively formed this complex social interaction landscape.

Existing research often tends toward single-disciplinary perspectives. If confined solely by prior studies, one will never break through the barriers. However, by dismantling

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<sup>1</sup> This article was translated from Chinese into English with the assistance of DeepL Translator ([www.deepl.com](http://www.deepl.com)). The authors have thoroughly reviewed and edited the translated content for accuracy and academic tone.

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disciplinary boundaries and employing interdisciplinary thinking—integrating philosophical speculation with sociological empirical analysis—new momentum can be injected into research.

This paper, grounded in psychoanalysis and postmodern sociocultural critique, employs qualitative research methods. Through critical examination of the Wuhan University false accusation incident, it seeks to explore the operational logic and fundamental characteristics of the information society.

Baudrillard's "Theory of Simulacra" reveals the usurpation of reality by symbols; his dialectical analysis of ideology offers unique insights into exposing its essential patterns within social mobility; Foucault's "discourse power" analyzes the rule logic of the online sphere; however, existing research merely combines philosophical speculation with a sociological perspective, struggling to provide a comprehensive explanation of the complex mechanisms at play in this incident within the intricate context of the information society.

This paper takes the incident as its entry point, introducing a critical, interdisciplinary perspective that bridges philosophy and sociology. It leverages philosophy's fundamental inquiry into the relationship between symbols and reality to deconstruct the logic behind the substitution and reconstruction of simulacra symbols that sparked real-world controversy. Simultaneously, it employs a sociological lens to conduct an empirical examination of "power operating through symbols," analyzing the microcosm of the social structures underlying discursive power. Through this interdisciplinary lens, it explores the intrinsic logic linking ideological construction, discursive power struggles, and the alienation of symbolic society. It attempts to offer new insights into the interplay between information ecosystems and cultural transmission mechanisms in the information age, penetrating the fog of the virtual world to clarify the trajectory of individual cognition and the restructuring of social exchange. This work provides a multidisciplinary theoretical reference for future research in similar online domains.

## 2 Literature

### 2.1 Theoretical background

In *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Žižek elaborates on the mechanism by which ideology functions: when a fissure appears in the symbolic order, the subject finds itself unable to navigate that rupture and thus turns to ideology. Through ideology, the subject transforms the antagonism of the real into an antagonism with the Other. This antagonism serves to conceal the fissure in the real.

The current ideological fragmentation on the internet precisely aligns with Žižek's analysis of ideology. By examining the Wuhan University incident, we may glimpse the unspeakable real and the contradictory realities of contemporary society.

Foucault's "theory of power" can be mirrored against Lacan's "Theory of the Big Other." Both share similar concepts of the "decentralized subject" and "internalized normativity," with their greatest divergence lying in differing ethical stances. Building upon the earlier identification of the illusory mechanism of ideological self-suturing, Foucault's theory enables a counter-analysis of the power principles sustaining capitalist society.

Foucault's *History of Sexuality* was grounded in the theory of the disciplinary society. Decades later, Byung-Chul Han proposed the meritocracy society within the neoliberal era. This paper attempts to construct a "History of Sexuality" based on the meritocracy society, using the opposition between sexual repression and sexual liberation as an analytical framework. It seeks to overcome Han's simplistic negation of the disciplinary society by establishing a parallel structure between the two.

Starting from a fundamental difference between the internet and reality—the distinction between symbols and symbolized reality—this analysis establishes that discourse constitutes the subject of the internet. One of its basic logics is the principle of contestation for discursive power. It focuses on analyzing the nature of multiple discursive centers within the internet and the specific mechanisms through which they produce truth. Subsequent sections provide a theoretical analysis grounded in Baudrillard's theory of simulacra.

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard describes the evolution of images within information networks through these stages: representing reality—embellishing reality—concealing reality's absence—disassociating from reality—becoming reality itself. Thus, images become progressively abstracted and detached from reality as information society advances. Yet in this very detachment, they transform into reality itself—the simulacrum—as an extreme abstraction.

With reality supplanted, truth and falsehood become conflated, reconfigured through a unidimensional lens and presented before our eyes. This presentation is not static but an autonomous, self-propelled movement driven by the self-fulfilling and self-reinforcing logic of hegemony, wherein signs reproduce themselves.

Baudrillard's postmodern critical theory holds revolutionary practical significance for examining the operational logic of the internet and the ontology of the information society: the emergence and development of the internet have pushed the abstraction of the symbolic self to its zenith. The virtual nature of user profiles on online platforms further intensifies the separation between the symbolic world and the real world. The rise of meme culture and viral trends enables simulacra to self-reproduce within the information society as its medium. Thus, the applicability of Baudrillard's critical theory manifests in an unprecedented manner in this era.

In the concluding theoretical analysis, starting from Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum, a fundamental exposition of the operational mechanisms and ontological logic of the information society will be presented, aiming to define a reasonable position for the information society.

## **2.2 Timeline of the Wuhan University Scandal**

### **Phase One: Public Outcry Phase**

October 11, 2023: Yang publicly posted an article titled “Regarding the Sexual Harassment I Experienced at Wuhan University Library” on a WeChat public account, accusing Xiao of sexual harassment. This quickly drew widespread online attention.

In the following days, numerous users claiming to be Xiao's high school classmates emerged online, alleging that Xiao had engaged in similar misconduct during his high school years.

### **Phase Two: University Response and Online Conflict**

October 13, 2023: The university imposed disciplinary action on Xiao in accordance with its regulations.

On October 17, 2023, Xiao's family presented medical documentation in his defense. Online discourse continued to intensify.

On March 21, 2024, several favorable articles about Xiao appeared, laying the groundwork for subsequent public opinion polarization.

### **Phase Three: Judicial Intervention and Public Sentiment Shift**

On July 25, 2025, the court dismissed Yang's lawsuit, ruling the sexual harassment allegations unfounded.

On July 27, 2025, Yang's subsequent remarks triggered a backlash, with sympathy for Xiao gaining mainstream traction.

### **Phase Four: Public Opinion Polarization and Event Diminishment**

August 1, 2025: Netizens questioned the “March press releases,” intensifying public division.

The university did not publicly rescind Xiao's disciplinary action, and the incident gradually faded from public attention.

### 3 Theoretical Perspectives

#### 3.1 On the Role of Ideology in the Wuhan University Incident

The Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have one language. This is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing they plan will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world.—  
—————Genesis, The Holy Bible

##### 3.1.1 *The Two Sides of the Struggle: How Ideologies Are Constructed and Reinforced*

Ideology is not false consciousness, but rather the unconscious framework that constructs social reality and organizes social pleasure. It can be said that without ideology, there is no such thing as social reality. By providing a narrative, ideology tells us who we are, what we desire, who our enemies are, and who has stolen our pleasure.

In the narrative supporting Yang, “resisting patriarchy” and “victims of sexual harassment” become exalted objects of ideology, elevated to an absolute dimension. They argue that in a gender-unequal, “male-charming” society, women face greater difficulty in accusing men, and “speaking out” undoubtedly requires immense courage. Therefore, such accusations should be given priority credence, and systemic oppression warrants greater vigilance than isolated false accusations. They denounce the “patriarchal society,” where men are deemed potential perpetrators, and some women are also accused as ‘accomplices’ or “male-charmers.” Here, they cast “patriarchy,” men, and certain women as the Other—the entity that steals their pleasure. This narrative of the weak confronting the strong stokes hatred toward the Other while fostering intense collective solidarity. (1)

In contrast, the narrative criticizing Yang presents a starkly different picture: “procedural justice” and “rational citizens” are elevated to lofty ideals. They argue that “extreme feminism” and “false accusations” pose grave dangers, demanding adherence to procedural justice and evidence-based principles. “Pastoral feminism” and “identity politics tyranny” become the Other. They contend this Other undermines social fairness and threatens male safety. This narrative derives satisfaction from exposing the “hypocrisy” and “evil realities” of pastoral feminism, defending “social rationality,” and resisting “political correctness.”

As a concrete event, the Wuhan University incident was cast into a symbolic order where “unconditional belief in the victim” and “presumption of innocence” instantly became contradictory, ineffective entities—unable to be fully symbolized. The subject of this incident feels anxiety in the absence of meaning, urgently questioning: “Who is just?” “Who am I?” They desperately need ideological intervention to fill this void, giving rise to the two ideologies mentioned above. After ideological intervention, they are no longer confused individuals but become subjects with identity and a “just cause.” They invest emotion in the event, deriving pleasure from it, so that even after false accusations are proven, many subjects refuse to abandon their positions—their investment in their stance far exceeds their concern for truth. Yet this lofty object remains an empty construct. What keeps us clinging to ideology

is the process of battling the “other,” a process that reproduces ideology and binds the subject firmly to it.

### **3.1.2 *An Event as an Omen***

Against the backdrop of global gender discourse and public opinion, the Wuhan University incident erupted. As previously noted, this exposed a structural clash between the politically correct principle of “unconditional belief in the victim” and the judicial freedom principle of “procedural justice.” The Yang case served as an omen, laying bare contradictions suppressed in our daily lives and presenting them in their most acute form, compelling everyone to take sides.

This harbinger has torn apart the symbolic order. Neither side can fully “digest” this incident. Adopting the “believe the victim” narrative leaves false accusations as an embarrassing residue that undermines its absolute legitimacy. Adopting the “procedural justice” narrative, meanwhile, leaves the prior sexual harassment incident as its residue. This approach also fails to adequately address the progressive protection for structurally disadvantaged groups that political correctness seeks to safeguard. This also exposes the absence of a grand other. Even if courts render judgments, they cannot resolve ideological conflicts. Even if media suppresses the heat, it cannot eradicate the differences between the two sides. A uniformly consistent order simply does not exist. As long as ideological confrontations persist, such signs will continue to emerge.

### **3.1.3 *As a shield against the real world***

We find ourselves in a traumatic transitional zone where the old patriarchal order has failed, yet a new contract—based on political correctness—cannot be universally established. The function of public debates is not to symbolize the real, but to avoid confronting the true trauma of the real. This incident’s eruption reveals the real within the existing order, yet the real’s antagonism is insoluble, inducing anxiety and fear. Yet the function of public disputes lies precisely in transforming insoluble antagonism into resolvable “conflict”—into a moral war against blameworthy others:

“It’s all because those radical feminists destroyed social trust.”

“It’s all because those male-power maggots oppress women!”

These ideologies locate an Other, transforming an insoluble problem into one solvable by defeating specific enemies through moral warfare. This avoids confronting the terrifying possibility that the problem may be fundamentally unsolvable. Naturally, within this process, we also observe how ideology provides subjects with ideological gratification (moral satisfaction, a sense of belonging). This euphoria compensates for negative emotions when confronting the real, allowing immersion in meaningless righteousness to evade the actual thing. Moreover, in the reproduction of ideology, endless symbols are produced. Both ideological camps seek to digest the event through their own symbolic systems, forcing it into frameworks they can comprehend—using thick blankets of symbols to cover the cracks of the real.

## **3.2 Sexual Repression, Discourse Truth, and Power in the Internet**

Through the case study of the Wuhan University Library incident, we have uncovered the operational mechanisms of ideology and discursive power within real-world contexts and specific domains. However, to truly grasp the essence of the online public sphere, we must transcend individual incidents and engage in theoretical, in-depth analysis. Subsequent texts examining “sexual repression, discursive truth, and power in the internet” will draw upon

theories from Byung-Chul Han, Michel Foucault, and others. This approach will transform the experiential insights from specific incidents into theoretical analyses that illuminate the structures of social power.

### *3.2.1 The Dual Operation of Spiritual Power and Life Power in the Reproduction of Sexual Repression*

The internet appears to exhibit an excessive fixation on gender narratives. Take the Wuhan University Library incident as an example: at its core, it is no different from a typical case of mistaken reporting, yet it unexpectedly garnered far more social attention than usual. The incident's prolonged escalation and its constant overlay with grand narratives—such as “academic misconduct,” “national security,” and “class conflict”—stem from a deeper motive: to co-opt these grand narratives to artificially elevate the influence of the gender narrative. The fact that the clamor to revoke Yang's degree far outweighs calls for accountability from the involved professors clearly illustrates this point.

Yet this excessive attention starkly diverges from reality. In actual life, we seldom encounter romantic love narratives or sharp gender conflict narratives; more prevalent is the loneliness and exhaustion of gender relations within a meritocracy. Thus, the “sexual liberation” of the internet and the sexual repression of reality form a paradoxical parallel structure.

At this fault line, the traces of the operation of spiritual power, as articulated by Byung-Chul Han, become clearly discernible. This theory aims to “diagnose and describe contemporary neoliberalism...criticizing and rewriting the biopolitical discourse paradigm of Foucault and others” (2). If we set aside reality for a moment, it seems we should be entering an era of sexual liberation—with the conclusion of the era marked by the debate between Foucault and Freud over sexual repression, and the rise of neoliberalism. From state policies on family planning, to the romantic content orientation in the entertainment industry, to consumerist narratives like the “520 Shopping Festival” and the popularity of various emotional mentors and emotional science, all suggest the arrival of an era of sexual liberation.

Yet, as Byung-Chul Han observes, “Clever and friendly power does not directly oppose the will of submissive subjects; instead, it controls their will under the guise of benevolence... It strives to generate and exploit positive emotions, coaxing rather than prohibiting... It trusts people to self-organize and self-optimize, thus eliminating the need to suppress resistance.” Unnoticed, a dense ideology encouraging romantic relationships has taken root. This petit-bourgeois narrative portrays the “perfect romantic partner” and the “perfect romantic self” as performance metrics, “compelling him to constantly enhance his efficacy... never reaching a resting point where reward is attained” [3]. Our expectations for partners and ourselves are perpetually raised, deepening romantic anxiety and sexual repression. Ultimately, we fall into a trap of self-optimization: mistaking forced participation in capitalist alienated labor and consumption (such as overworking to buy homes and cars, or using “520 Shopping Festival” spending as emotional expression) for selfless devotion to love. (5)

Thus, spiritual power achieves its goal of “capitalist realization of power governance” through a triple control mechanism: optimizing workers into self-exploiting merit subjects, circumventing the impact of romantic life on work efficiency, and obstructing class mobility through consumerism. When our anxieties about marriage and romance, along with sexual repression, find no outlet, individuals turn to romantic entertainment commodities—such as the idol industry and anime/manga culture—for solace. These very commodities, however, are among the architects of our predicament. Thus, spiritual power completes its self-referential logic loop by perpetuating sexual repression.

“The right to life and the right to the spirit do not exist as distinct entities within governance practices; they often coexist and function in tandem” [1]. The exercise of

biopower relies on panoptic mechanisms, whose core principle is the power technology of “being visible yet unknowable” [4]. The excessive focus on gender topics online embodies this “visibility,” while the loneliness and exhaustion in real-life relationships reflect its “unknowability.” Extreme feminist discourse is actually quite rare in reality, yet the internet creates an illusion of its overwhelming presence (e.g., the Douban group “77w Life”). Take the Wuhan University Library incident as an example: most extreme feminist statements “supporting Yang” failed to establish an effective discursive center, with comment sections instead dominated by opposing voices; Even when such discourse manages to establish a discourse center, it is swiftly reported and deleted. Ultimately, it survives only as decontextualized “screenshots” within opposing narratives—becoming a “constitutive exception” in a Žižekian sense, deliberately highlighted and attacked.

Though potentially illusory, its structural power remains undeniably real. This traps moderate feminists in a double bind. Faced with the dominant discourse, private voices are either co-opted by it or captured by opposing narratives. Either outcome inevitably silences them through ideological entanglement. The proliferation of “Although... but...” sentence structures—such as “Although I am also a woman, I oppose Yang”—reflects a desperate attempt to evade this false discourse center used as a target. (6)

Conversely, under the relentless operation of biopower, an increasing number of “false accusations” of sexual harassment (such as the Zhang Wei case and the “Chasing Wind Xiao Ye” case) receive excessive attention online. This forces men to navigate public spaces under the surveillance of a “conscious and persistent state of visibility,” [4] perpetually compelled to tread carefully to maintain ambiguous boundaries in interactions with women. Similarly, women endure constant anxiety from hypervigilance toward men, and certain “false accusations” emerge precisely from this pressure. The exposure and reversal of such incidents further deepen the panoptic surveillance mechanisms and sexual repression targeting both genders, thereby completing the self-logical loop of the power of life in reproducing sexual repression.

Ultimately, the internet systematically reproduces sexual repression through the collusion of spiritual power and the power over life: the former generates internalized, pervasive anxiety about marriage and romance through performance-driven, marriage-encouraging ideology; the latter transforms this anxiety into external, structural suspicion and opposition through the panoptic surveillance mechanism targeting both genders, thereby solidifying the entire mechanism of sexual repression reproduction.

### *3.2.2 The Construction of Discourse Truth and Discourse Subjects in the Internet through Discourse Power*

Discourse is not a neutral medium; it “determines which theories and practices prevail during a given period” [5]. In traditional investigations of social events, the emergence of truth typically follows a linear model: as research deepens and factual evidence accumulates, the truth gradually surfaces. Even when “reversals” occur, they stem from preexisting doubts about the conclusions.

However, unlike symbolized reality, the internet is directly composed of symbols. Discourse power does not merely “alienate” truth; it directly constructs “truth”—the truth of discourse. From the public outcry sparked by Yang's WeChat post to the reversal following the first-instance verdict, and then to the further escalation of controversy over Wuhan University's academic misconduct and the Douban lifestyle group exposure, research into internet hot topics reveals that the emergence of “truth” follows a distinct, stepwise model. This model relies on the suppression of factual evidence by discursive power and the active construction of discursive truth.

Discourse centers are entities exercising discursive power, primarily categorized as

platform discourse centers, narrator discourse centers, and reteller discourse centers (e.g., mainstream media, opinion leaders), each carrying specific ideological biases. Among these, platform discourse centers are particularly distinctive. Various platforms have become background discourse centers through their content formats (such as short videos, long videos, or text-image combinations), as well as by establishing big data push mechanisms and performance metrics like creation incentives.

Taking the Wuhan University Library incident as an example, Yang initially became the primary narrative discourse center by publishing “Regarding the Sexual Harassment I Experienced at Wuhan University Library.” This established the initial discourse truth, triggering overwhelming public support for Yang. Although private discourses already existed online questioning the sufficiency of evidence in Yang’s article and pointing to her past misconduct (such as voyeurism and academic misconduct), these remained fragmented and failed to form a discursive center. Completely suppressed by discursive power, they could not challenge the established truth.

Only when mainstream media or opinion leaders, bolstered by the foundational platform discourse center, appropriated, integrated, recontextualized, and ideologized these fragmented, suppressed private discourses did a new retelling discourse center emerge. Within its sphere of discursive power, this center performatively produced a new discourse truth. At this point, the factuality of those appropriated fragmented private discourses recedes into secondary importance. Their function lies more in bolstering the new discourse center’s authority—even when they contradict the discourse center’s stance. Subsequently, the new discourse center, exercising its power, gradually supplants the old discourse center in the contest for audience recognition, thereby establishing the new discourse truth as the sole discourse truth. With the demise of the old discourse center, the fragmented private discourses it once appropriated are once again suppressed.

The struggle for discursive power is often accompanied by the emergence of cyberbullying. Take the Wuhan University Library incident as an example: Xiao and his grandfather developed PTSD due to cyberbullying and ultimately passed away, while Yang remains trapped at the center of cyberbullying to this day. Cyberbullying and its embodied consequences not only illustrate the violent intrusion of the internet into reality but also reveal the surrender of human subjectivity to discursive power. A thought experiment offers counterevidence: Suppose an individual registers both a primary account and multiple secondary accounts, using the latter to perpetrate cyberbullying against the former. Since the perpetrator cannot achieve identity identification with the primary account—the true target of the cyberbullying—they will not experience somatization from the violence.

The split between “user-account” constitutes the fundamental fragmentation of the internet subject. The disconnection between the two leads to the alienation of subjectivity: the account becomes the user’s “cyber prosthesis,” subsequently transformed into private discourse. In interactions, the content of private discourse holds greater immediate significance than the account’s identity. Thus, the true subject of the internet is discourse, and what discourse power captures is no longer private discourse but the alienated subjectivity of the individual.

Lacan noted that “the real manifests itself at the break in the chain of signifiers.” Today, “impersonation and trolling” tactics disrupt the coherence of established signifier chains by generating “unreliable discourse.” When metaphors and metonymies accumulate within private discourse, and when “irony,” “post-irony,” “meta-irony,” and even “hyper-irony” intertwine to saturate cyberspace, the consensus between spectators and speakers regarding specific meanings is deconstructed. This offers internet speakers a form of modified solution.

It is evident that both the truth of discourse and the subjects of discourse within the internet are fundamentally products of the operation of discursive power. They rely on the dynamic interplay, iteration, and suturing between different discursive centers. Through the

appropriation, integration, and authorization of symbols, discursive power continuously adapts the so-called “truth” via retrospective construction, thereby profoundly revealing the essential operational mechanism of “truth politics” within the online public sphere.

### **3.3 A comprehensive look at the Digital Society through the Wuhan University Scandal from Jean-Baudrillard’s perspective**

The preceding discussion centered on sexual repression, discursive truth, and power within the internet, analyzing the operation of spiritual power and biopower alongside the construction of truth through discursive power. The following section will employ Baudrillard's theory as a lens, moving from concrete power mechanisms toward a philosophical contemplation of totality. It will situate the Wuhan University incident within the broader context of the information society, exploring deeper philosophical propositions such as the hyperreal ontology and the symbolic world. This leap in thinking—from the concrete to the abstract, from experience to theory—enables us to transcend the superficiality of online discourse and delve into the essential laws governing the information age. Subsequent sections will employ Baudrillard's theoretical framework to deconstruct the operational logic of the information world as reflected in the Wuhan University incident, analyzing the complex interplay between simulacra and reality, as well as the dynamics of symbolic consumption and meaning production within the public sphere.

#### ***3.3.1 Maps Above the Territory: The Surreal Ontology of the Wuhan University Incident***

The Wuhan University incident underwent multiple twists and turns as partial truths and lies intertwined during the course of public opinion fermenting. In reality, online discussions and disputes surrounding the Wuhan University incident have transcended the event itself—the online version of the incident has become a phenomenon independent of the actual event. Truth no longer matters; indeed, truth itself has lost its capacity to validate itself within such debates. The discussions surrounding this incident have become the only authentic element of the entire affair.

After Yang posted her account of being “sexually harassed” online, evidence purporting to prove Xiao's capacity for such behavior—and evidence purporting to prove Xiao Mou's character—began circulating. Yet none of these details had been mentioned prior to this.

Baudrillard once cited this parable: The empire's cartographer drew a map encompassing everything within its borders. It grew vivid with the empire's rise and faded with its decline. Our world is described and represented by such a map. Moreover, this map no longer rests upon our reality; it is no longer a mirror or imitation of reality. It hovers above reality, affirming its own hyperreality. (7)

Thus, the development of events themselves is largely shaped by the evolution of online discourse surrounding them. Indeed, we might even say: without the progression of online discourse, such events could never have reached their current outcomes. Online discourse, netizens' emotions, the intensification and eruption of gender conflicts—these virtual phenomena continuously expand and extend their boundaries among people. Meanwhile, the reality we regard as sacrosanct is, paradoxically, rooted in this very virtuality. From this, we can confirm one thing: the information society no longer requires—at least superficially—reality as its foundation. It can achieve self-affirmation through its own development—the map is producing itself.

When reality must take root within virtual extensions, when the world of simulacra produces itself, reality too reproduces itself within simulacra. In the self-organizing internet society, within the meticulously crafted illusory narratives of media conglomerates, amid the

relentless ascent of stock market red lines—under the hegemonic strategy of global capitalism as a system—reality is manufactured. Thus, from an ontological perspective, the Wuhan University incident exists as hyperreality. All online events first manifest as hyperreal simulacra before existing as reality.

Truth gradually loses its legitimacy within this dynamic. In an alienated world, truth is fragmented, dissolved, and ultimately fabricated and recreated by ideology. Truth no longer matters. The supreme being (God) that served as the origin of all logic in modernity has now been supplanted by media myths. The information world has become more real than reality itself. Thus, truth and falsehood become indistinguishable. The simulation composed of simulacra becomes the sole reality, while truth itself is buried beneath appearances, becoming an indelible ghost within the simulacral world.

### *3.3.2 The Overflow of Symbols and Discourse Hegemony: The Proliferation of the “False Accusation” Meme in the “Post-Wuhan University Era”*

This year (2025), the Wuhan University incident suddenly went viral online, accompanied by a flood of derivative works and repetitive commentary on the matter. In videos and posts touching on gender conflicts, gender differences, libraries, or Wuhan University, discussions—whether directly related or tangentially connected—to the false accusation incident flooded comment sections. The incident's reenactments for entertainment purposes also became a prominent theme in short-video creation for a period .

Admittedly, discussing and critiquing events is part of netizens' lives. However, the endless references and allusions to this incident online have clearly exceeded the bounds of normal internet discourse. Viewed through the lens of “The Development Logic of Meme Culture from the Perspective of the Society of the Spectacle,” the revolutionary potential of the “Wuhan University incident” as a pop-culture element has been dissolved by the mainstream ideology through the endless reuse of memes. It has itself become part of the ruling system of the society of the spectacle. This inevitable tragic outcome plays out endlessly in internet society. This suggests that such discussions and critiques are not systemic reflections on the regime but merely symbolic resistance. This symbolic resistance conceals genuine structural contradictions, preserving the logical coherence of the entire system.

The simulated world of simulacra hovers above reality, its authenticity only confirmed through its own evolution. This overflowing feast of symbols reflects netizens' fear of the structural contradictions exposed at the margins of the symbolic realm. In its final developmental stage, the image conceals nothing; it becomes reality itself, leaving nothing behind. Thus, the simulacrum conceals the stark reality of humanity's complete separation from the authentic world. Through excessive symbolic production, it dissolves and reconstructs the nihilistic reality leaking from the edges of the symbolic realm.

This constitutes a strategy of domination, expelling all contradictory discourses beyond the world's boundaries. It renders us incapable of imagining any genuine opposition to itself, thereby establishing a totalizing hegemony of discourse. From online media and social activities to the pervasive fabric of daily life, this hegemony exerts profound control. To sustain its legitimacy and cement its rule, the sign must perpetually reproduce itself, using an overflowing surplus of symbols to mask the structural rupture between reality and appearance. Through this process, the hegemony reinforces itself, progressively supplanting the real until it ultimately becomes the real.

### ***3.3.3 The Ventriloquism of Evil: The One-Dimensional World and the Scandal Beyond It***

Having recognized the rupture between reality and the world as we know it, we must now consider how this world we perceive has become estranged from—or even contradictory to—reality, and how truth emerges from this estrangement and rupture.

Returning to Marx's logic: since humanity's inception, people have been ruled and dominated by alienating forces. Productive activity endowed humans with the capacity to transform nature, yet as production efficiency increased, humankind progressively escaped nature's grasp only to become increasingly dominated by the very things it produced. Within this logic of alienation, objects steadily intensified their rule over humans, culminating in capitalist society where objects (capital) achieved total domination over people. The more humans produced everything, the more they discovered the surrounding world separating from themselves, the more it revealed its alien nature. This separation fragments human existence into disjointed fragments. Through ideological restructuring, these fragments coalesce into a phenomenal world utterly subservient to capitalist ideology. Suspended above reality, this world conceals truth while dissolving itself through relentless abstraction. Material production is expelled from this world, thereby dissolving reality itself. Thus, the authenticity of reality becomes obscured, and truth ceases to matter. All negative elements are expelled from this simulacrum world. The ideology symbolizing Christian "supreme goodness" achieves absolute domination, while its negating elements are declared non-existent "evil"—no longer mentioned, even unimaginable. (10)

Precisely because the absolute "goodness" of ideology denies the existence of all opposing elements, the negativity expelled from the world is liberated from its subordinate relationship to "goodness," thereby gaining a measure of freedom. Within the fissure between appearance and reality, the expelled "evil" begins to speak through ventriloquism. The "Arctic Catfish" incident and the "Huang Yang Dian Tian" earring scandal tear away the bourgeois veil of sentimentality, allowing the 'corruption' scandals to be narrated by the corruptors themselves. Thus, we lose the ritualistic mechanism of denunciation and exposure—a rejection of meaning itself, a fierce and violent mockery of the rules of the "good" game. The exposure of the Wuhan University scandal, the university's damage-control disciplinary measures, the revelation of Yang's thesis fraud, and Xiao's advisor's disregard for facts in her "girls help girls" defense—all these events self-expose and mock the corrupt state of the education system and the distorted construction of gender issues in society. We discern a sharp commonality: none of these incidents occurred for reasons deemed "legitimate" in the current context. This constitutes a rejection of the "meaning" created by hegemony itself.

Thus, scandals do not originate within the world as we know it, but emerge at the margins of the simulacrum world. They are the logical inevitability of discursive hegemony's development. As truths spoken by the perpetrators themselves, they become the system's rejection of its own self-creating game, exposing the hypocrisy of the symbolic world—our world is not a real one.

### ***3.3.4 Death Long Resurrected: The Nihilistic Essence of the Information Society as Revealed by the Wuhan University Incident***

Through the analysis in the preceding three sections, we find that the essence of the Wuhan University incident is surreal. Its very existence and operation fundamentally stem from a symbolic world suspended above reality. Emerging as a scandal at the periphery of this hypocritical world, it dissolves itself through its own expansion and extension, transforming into surplus discourse that reinforces the symbolic world's own rule from the opposite side

of this world. Its development follows a Hegelian dialectical movement. Beneath the complex manifestations of gender, power, and ideology, it ultimately points to the fundamental struggle between humanity and objects that has persisted for millennia.

This paper argues that the occurrence of the Wuhan University incident was a logical inevitability. Its emergence and evolution symbolize both the revelation and concealment of the void behind the simulacrum. Disguise always pretends to be something, while the simulacrum conceals its state of being nothing. Under this logic, the sign replaces reality through self-affirmation. Reality dies as itself, while the simulacrum, as reality, has long been resurrected. The information society, on one hand, serves as the carrier of signs and discourse, enabling the simulacrum's existence. On the other hand, it functions as a holistic world, obscuring the void and fractures of reality.

Thus, the information society itself possesses no inherent meaning; its significance can only be realized when functioning as a vessel for simulacra. It serves as an intermediary, linking humanity to the originally elusive and intangible realm of ideology, materializing that ideology. This enables symbols—as carriers of ideology—to transcend material production and achieve self-reproduction.

We might even assert that the information society itself is nothingness.

## 4 Conclusion

This paper takes the Wuhan University Library incident as its core subject of study. Through an interdisciplinary lens, it delves into the ideological construction within the online sphere, the dynamics of discourse power struggles, and the inherent logic of symbolic social alienation.

First, by examining the ideological contest within the incident, it reveals how the two opposing groups supporting and criticizing Yang constructed “sublime objects” and “others” to form contrasting narrative frameworks. This demonstrates the pivotal role of ideology in filling cognitive gaps and binding group positions, simultaneously highlighting how this incident, as a social symptom, exposed the structural contradiction between the political correctness of “believing the victim” and the principle of “procedural justice.”

Subsequently, the analysis focused on the operation of power within the internet, examining how spiritual power and life power conspire to reproduce sexual repression: the former generates internal anxiety through a performance-oriented ideology of marriage and romance, while the latter transforms this into external gender opposition via a panoptic surveillance mechanism. It also elucidates the logic by which discursive power constructs “truth” and ‘subjectivity’—where competing discursive centers, through negotiation, integration, and substitution, shape a hierarchical “discursive truth” that leads subjects to cede power.

Finally, drawing on Baudrillard's theory for a philosophical reflection on totality, it argues that the Wuhan University incident transcends its specific context to become a microcosm of the surreal essence of the information society—where symbols supplant reality through surplus production, and the information world achieves self-affirmation as a simulacrum carrier. Its operational logic fundamentally embodies the simulacrum's usurpation of reality and its inherent nihilism.

In today's era, a highly representative discursive opposition exists within subcultures: the clash between otaku discourse and real-life discourse. On the surface, this appears as a group-versus-group conflict. Yet deeper analysis reveals that the concept of “real-life” not only originated in the early 21st-century subculture forum 2channel, but also that forming a stable, continuously employed “real-life” group comparable in scale to the otaku community during Japan's “Lost Decade” was fundamentally impossible. Thus, the “real-life” group is a constitutive exception actively established by the anime/manga/games (AMG) community.

The narrative of whether real life is fulfilling has long been avoided, yet it has received excessive attention under the backdrop of an economically high-pressure society, further breeding an environment of ideological pressure. To counter this ideological pressure, the overwhelmingly dominant otaku community was compelled to establish a discourse centered on the pejorative term “real-life fulfilled” while relentlessly emphasizing the dichotomy between the two. Once this false discourse center successfully leveraged its genuine structural power to co-opt relatively positive-living groups, it could silently embed this dichotomy into the symbolic system. At this point, the naturally derogatory “real-life” group is easily undermined, while the anime/manga subculture deftly seizes the actual power of discourse.

Faced with an information society that has detached itself from reality and operates independently according to its own logic, the logic governing the survival and activities of actors within it inevitably differs. This divergence is precisely the root cause of cyberbullying and the worthless proliferation of meme elements. This difference can be traced back to identity recognition—specifically, the fundamental disparity between online and real-world identity recognition. Yet we can also observe that although the informational society no longer derives its logic from reality, the identities formed within it profoundly influence self-identity in the real world. This may well constitute the mechanism enabling cyberbullying to take root.

In summary, this paper deconstructs a singular event through multiple dimensions to reveal the interactive patterns of power, discourse, and ideology within online discourse. It reflects the deep-seated social landscape of the information age—where symbols become alienated and reality is reconstructed—exposing the hollow essence beneath the rich and varied surface of the information society. This forms a multi-layered critical understanding of the information society. This discovery of the information society's essence introduces a new perspective: examining social phenomena arising from human-internet interactions and digital governance strategies through the lens of identity discourse. Subsequent research will focus on exploring two dimensions of social identity, thereby deepening our understanding of the information society's essence and its relationship with humanity.

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