On the Accelerationist Critique of the Problem of Capitalist Modernity

Haoyu Liu

College of Marxism, Hubei University, Wuhan, 430000, China

Abstract: The acceleration has contributed to the development of capitalism, but it has also exacerbated the series of problems of modernity, such as the destruction and alienation of people by capital. People are increasingly becoming the appendage of the accelerated development of capital, forced to follow the one-way run of accelerationism, losing the domination of speed as well as human subjectivity, embodied in the loss of control over the time of life. Capital's domination of people in the modern era is also reflected in the accelerationist control of time, which has exacerbated the problems of Western modernity such as consumerism, objectification, landscape society, cultural hegemony and unidimensionality. The alienation caused by acceleration is not only manifested in the contradiction between the acceleration of society and the process of modernity, but also in the conflict between the quality of life and the shortage of time. Acceleration on the one hand promotes the development of society, and on the other hand creates and exacerbates a series of serious problems. Consumerism is internalised and externalised into people's values more quickly through acceleration. The network virtual landscape society makes alienation and consumption develop rapidly both in the real and virtual world through acceleration, resulting in the double acceleration of capitalism's slavery to people, who are not only difficult to get rid of acceleration in the real world but also controlled by accelerationism in the virtual world.

Keywords: Capitalism, Problems of modernity, Accelerationism, Alienation

1. Introduction

The question of capitalist modernity mainly refers to the "industrialized world" in Giddens' sense, including modern social life and organization mode. The question of capitalist modernity refers primarily to the 'industrialised world' in Giddens' sense, including modern modes of social life and organisation, and he takes the theories of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and others all as critiques of modernity.

The acceleration has contributed to the development of capitalism and the realization of capitalist modernity, but it has also created and intensified a series of problems of modernity, such as order, economy, and climate problems. The acceleration of capital society has intensified the development of problems such as consumerism, objectification, and virtual landscape society. It could be argued that the world run by capital forms social time, which in turn controls individual time. The bourgeoisie's enslavement of people in modern times is reflected in the ubiquitous control of time. Many Western scholars have analyzed and criticized the acceleration phenomenon, and eventually proposed the acceleration theory.

The current study of acceleration theory is mainly represented by Rosa, who examines the relationship between social acceleration and modernity from the perspective of modernity. He discusses the phenomenon of acceleration phenomenologically and analyzes the causes and results of the emergence of accelerationism. With regard to the relationship between modernity and accelerationism, it can be said that the process of development of capitalist society itself manifests itself as a process of acceleration, yet this acceleration is not unconditional. Problems such as the economic crisis are problems that arise in the process of acceleration, and are also contradictory manifestations of acceleration and alienation proposed by Rosa, which are determined by the inherent contradictions of capitalism, and cannot be eradicated by merely relying on the resonance and co-frequency of culture and politics proposed by Rosa. The root lies in changing the relations of production.

Rosa reviews the discussion of acceleration-related elements in classical and modern social theories. For example, Marx and Engels' discourse on material relations and changes in social relations, Weber's reference to the capitalist spirit's emphasis on time, and Zimmer's suggestion that tension and acceleration are the core of modernity. Rosa classifies Marx's critique as a functional critique and distinguishes
between normative and ethical critiques, and he discusses his own critique as a temporal contextual critique on the basis of absorbing and drawing on the three critiques.

The accelerationist theory proposed by Rosa mainly focuses on the acceleration of the whole social time system, involving three different categories, namely the acceleration of technology, the acceleration of social change and the acceleration of the rhythm of life [1]. Although the time system does not have ethical and political overtones, it regulates, controls and determines people's modern society and life. and social time is kidnapped by the operation of capital. Social time is kidnapped by the operation of capital, and while modern people are no longer governed by the capitalist ethics of the past, they are inseparable from the institution of time. This temporal system is the "logic of social acceleration", because the current temporal system is governed by the logic of capital acceleration, which forms part of modernity. Capitalism accelerates the objectification, oppression and subjugation of human beings in everyday life, through the virtual landscape world and the real world. The reality that personal time is increasingly squeezed by work time has led to a continuous decline in the quality of life, even at the expense of health and life, resulting in the constant occurrence of situations such as overworked death. Thus capitalism has become the culprit of the good life by accelerating consumerism and the objectification of human beings, while the length of life and the satisfactory pace of life have been used as an important criterion for the experience of human happiness, the quality of urban life and the evaluation of the progress and backwardness of the country.

2. Modern accelerationism's control of human time

In Hybrid Reality, Parag and Ayesha Khanna point out that modern society has moved from a stage where humans and technology co-exist to a stage where humans and technology co-evolve. The speed of evolution is as important as its content, and technology accelerates the running of time. On the one hand, technology brings convenience for human beings to save time. on the other hand, people need extra time to learn and adapt to the development of technology. And in general, people's free time has not increased but decreased, and the reduced part is occupied by technology.

The contradiction of capitalist modernity is reflected in the relationship between modernity and accelerationism, where acceleration and modernity are both closely linked and contradictory. Accelerationism itself is born with the logic of capital production, so that capital controls the speed of modernity, which in turn dominates the speed of time for man, and accelerationism links man and the operation of capital closely through modernity. Rosa points out that acceleration is embodied in four aspects of modernity: structure, culture, self-relations and nature relations, and of course in its own unique logic of development. The process of modernity is a systematic process, including cultural rationalization, social structural differentiation, the development of the subject as individualization, and the development of natural relations as a process of instrumentalization. Modern systemic processes increasingly show the contradictory side of them. Rationalization manifests itself in the external bondage of erosion of sensory resources, and all of man's daily life is being governed by capital-run concepts such as consumerism. The instrumentalization of nature leads to the destruction of the human living environment, the history of nature is integrated into the history of capitalist development, and nature becomes the object of capital operation and plunder. The process of individuation is accompanied by a tendency to eliminate the loss of individuality. The individual being the individual formed by the internalisation and externalisation of capital, or the individual shaped through the omnipresent hegemony of culture. Structural differentiation is accompanied by the disintegration of society due to the absence of a center. Accelerationism is both one of the manifestations of modernity and a unique characteristic of development, namely the contradiction between accelerated social development and social stagnation. On the one hand, the law of acceleration has a decisive effect on social development in three main forms: science and technology, social change and the three dimensions of the rhythm of life, which ultimately lead to the poverty of individual free time. The aspect of the law of acceleration and social stagnation is divided into five dimensions: stagnation limited by natural speed regulations, islands of deceleration of an extra-worldly nature, slow down or stagnation due to social dysfunction, ideological aspects and purposeful, conscious deceleration, cultural and structural crystallization and stagnation.

The manifestation of accelerationism in modernity also lies in the emergence of a zero-sum game and a negative-sum game between technological development and time management. It makes people fall more and more into a kind of Sisyphus' dilemma and a vicious circle of Protestant ethical traps. The work and consumption become human purposes, losing human subjectivity and the joy of life. The time is controlled by capital and the good life is difficult to achieve. This is in line with what Zimmer said about the increasing tension in life, Weber's emphasis on wasting time as a sin in the Protestant ethic, and
Marx's judgment that what is solid is dissipating. Along with the popularity of virtual scenes, such as the Internet. People are caught up in false desires and consumption in false environments, kidnapped by the double objectification and double consumerism of the virtual and real worlds.

The role of accelerationism in determining social development is manifested first of all in goal-oriented technological acceleration. It includes the accelerated form in terms of organisation and management, as well as the material form in terms of transport and communication, such as cars and computers. And the biological form in terms of biotechnology, such as transplants. The acceleration of technology has changed the experience and regulation of time and space. Time and space have become faster and smaller than before, and time and distance have been significantly reduced compared to before.

The Law of Acceleration's contribution to modernity is secondly manifested in the acceleration of social change, mainly in the form of changes in social practices as a whole. These include: attitudes and values, fashions and lifestyles, social relations and obligations, groups, classes, environments, forms of social discourse, practices and habits, are all changing at a continuously increasing rate [2]. Rosa invokes the concept of the shrinking of the present tense to express change, and thus he explains acceleration as the increasing rate of decline in the trustworthiness of experience and expectation, while the temporal interval defined as the interval of time defined as the 'present' is shrinking [3]. This is used to measure stability and change in institutions, politics, occupations, technology, aesthetics, etc. That is, the rate of decline, and confirmed by empirical facts. Social change is no longer regular, purposeful and directed, but becomes random and fragmentary, what Rosa calls wild change. We are no longer sure that history has a direction. Everything, from piracy to democracy, is what can happen in the world, and it all appears and disappears in fragments [4].

The third aspect of accelerationism is the acceleration of the pace of life, which is mainly reflected in the general sense of time scarcity in the perception of time in Western society. This is the most obvious aspect of accelerationism according to Rosa, and it is the core of the accelerated pace of life. Rosa defines it as the increase in the amount of action events or experience events in a given unit of time [5]. He argues through both subjective and objective aspects, subjectively mainly by personal ground experience and objectively by investigating the reduction or compression between the time of action and the time of experience. Compared to the past, people are touching or dealing with more spatial things, the total amount of things is increasing, and technological acceleration provides for an increase in the number of things. People are touching or dealing with more spatial things than in the past, the total volume of things is increasing, and technological acceleration is providing for an increase in the volume of things. But overall, the rate of growth in the volume of things exceeds the rate of science and technology acceleration [6]. This has led to more time constraints than in the past, as well as to an acceleration of the pace of life, and thus to what can be positioned as an accelerated society.

Accelerationism, especially social and technological acceleration, is a consequence of a competitive capitalist market system [7]. In modern society, competition has generalized to all aspects of society and has become a central principle of modernity. Culturally, the culture of accelerationism lies in the fact that modern society in general has abolished the culture of the other shore. Because people can only experience their lives on this shore of the world. There is a certain tension between the limited time of individual life and the infinite time of the whole world, and the only way to enrich the limited time of individual life is through constant accelerationism. Accelerism is also facilitated by factors such as the division of labour and the differentiation of social functions. Rosa points out that in late modern societies, technological acceleration, social acceleration and the accelerated pace of life have become self-contained and self-driven, and can be sustained without external impetus.

The constant cycle of accelerating technology, society and the pace of life causes acceleration in all aspects of social life. Competition, growth in the volume of things, and acceleration are interlocked in a cycle that constitutes the core of acceleration. Of course, there are still elements of society that maintain the same speed or even slow down, but overall it is a state of acceleration. Acceleration as a whole also has more advantages than disadvantages, but the problems that arise cannot be ignored. There is a structural disparity between acceleration and deceleration, and modernity is also a process toward acceleration. Accelerationism, as an "implicit normative force," is to some extent a form of accelerated totalitarianism. With regard to the relationship between acceleration and deceleration, Rosa emphasises that the relationship between the two continues to develop following the dialectical movement between the productive forces and the relations of production as proposed by Marx. Thereafter, he proposed that acceleration is more important than deceleration, and that the power of acceleration is preferred between the two. In terms of the contrast of forces, no type of deceleration can counteract the oppression of acceleration, and deceleration can only exist as a limitation, a side effect of acceleration.
3. The establishment of the critical theory of accelerationism

Rosa's theory of modernity differs from Hegel's and Marx's alienation, as well as from Weber's disenchantment, Lukács' Verdinglichung, and Camus' absurdity. Rosa's theory of modernity is one of social acceleration, acceleration that leads to forms of alienation in five aspects of human life: space, objects, action, time, and the self. People voluntarily do something that people do not really want to do themselves, that is, they change forced labor into voluntary labor. People are harnessed by the power of capital and have to be voluntarily tied to capital and consumption in order to survive and live.

As the fourth generation of German Frankfurt School, Rosa's critical theory also signifies the relationship between successive generations of German critical theory. While emphasizing the importance of not contradicting the original intentions of Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas and Honneth. Rosa suggests that there is no epistemological truth of an ahistorical nature, and that all theoretical analyses are necessarily closely related to the transformation of forms of social practice [8]. Critical theory should not only focus on the ruptures and changes in the process of social production, but also on the actors' own (negative) feelings, beliefs, and actions. In this way it is possible to pass judgment on the existence of alienation and suffering, and the best entry point for critical theory lies in these sufferings not human nature or essence, but the suffering caused by society, and the resulting critical analysis of the relationship between the idea of the good and actual social practices and social institutions [9]. He advocates turning the core of critical analysis to the political impediments, structural impediments and social impediments between people and the good life.

Rosa is a descendant of Honneth, and he is also concerned with the issue of the good life. Honneth proposes that what prevents us from living well is the distortion of the structure of recognition. Habermas argues that it is the structure of communication, Rosa proposes a theory of acceleration based on exploring the temporality of recognition and communication. He re-gives a new understanding of alienation, emphasizing that acceleration leads to a new alienation, to a totalitarian form of alienation. Rosa also introduces the concept of ideology and false demand.

The theory of resonance is based on Honnett's theory of recognition, which Rosa presents as the institutional condition for proposing and securing resonance. On the basis of Honnett's recognition theory, resonance arises and the subject receives support from the world and the conditions for self-realisation. The resonance between man and the world requires space and also has different forms, and Rosa distinguishes between different spatial forms as resonance axes. There are three main different axes of resonance: (1) Horizontal resonance, such as family, friendship, democratic political institutions, etc. (2) The vertical axis of resonance, such as the form of resonance between man and nature, man and religious gods, man and the arts. (3) The diagonal axis of resonance, mainly in the form of the connection between man and matter, such as schooling, etc.

He proposes that there are two kinds of social relations, a positive one of resonance and a negative one of alienation. Rosa's solution to contemporary accelerationist alienation is his resonance theory, which proposes that the pursuit of resonant situations can solve the problem of the crisis of temporal collapse. The theory of resonance is the connection between the person as subject and the external environment in response to each other. Resonance differs from echo in that it is a process in which different voices echo each other, with both sides retaining their independent voices without being occupied and dominated by the other, and in which the subject comes to understand the external environment and thus adjusts itself. Rosa suggests that modern society is characterised by dynamic stability. Meaning that to maintain its institutional structure, its social status quo, it must constantly grow, accelerate and innovate. Without growth, innovation, there will be unemployment, closures, cuts in government revenues, with the result that health and education can no longer be funded, and eventually the political system will lose legitimacy - as is the case in Europe and China.

In the negative sense of alienated relations, Rosa uses the alienated meaning of Jaeggi, also a disciple of Honnett, namely relations lacking relations. Thus empathy is also understood as a relational relationship. Alienation and empathy are not contradictory relationships. Rosa suggests that alienation is a precondition for resonance, and the resonance should not be overdeveloped. The ideal state is one in which resonance and dissimilation are in constant dialectical transformation. He believes that the main reason currently preventing the establishment of the resonance axis is the growth society and the logic of promotion created by an accelerating society. Namely the pursuit of quantitative growth, university rankings, national GDP rankings, etc. This logic has indeed improved lives, but it has also caused major problems. Rosa therefore developed the concept of a "post-growth society", which emphasises qualitative improvements rather than purely quantitative growth.
Acceleration creates alienation that destroys resonance. The turning point between acceleration theory and resonance theory lies in the exploration of the new alienation. Rosa simply suggests that alienation is inevitable, and therefore he does not seek to conceive of life without alienation, but only to capture the moment of life without it. His attempts to explain the process of transformation of production and consumption, the transformation of forms of identity and cultural politics from early modernity, through classical modernity, Ford modernity to late modernity.

4. Manifestations of modernity's alienation: functional, normative and moral critiques

Rosa uses temporal contextual analysis as the basis of critical theory, focusing primarily on time as a central constituent of society. The functional critique is based on Marxian criteria, namely the critique that the Western social system will ultimately fail and become unworkable. The normative critique is divided according to norms and values, distinguishing between moral and ethical critiques. Moral criticism focuses on social relations and the justice of distribution, while ethical criticism focuses on the beauty and success of life, or the possibility of happiness [10]. Rosa's ethical criticism focuses on alienated life and false consciousness.

In terms of functional critique, Rosassism focuses on the functional problems caused by the desynchronization of accelerationism. The main problem is between the "social world" and the "world outside of society", such as the regeneration of natural resources at a rate much lower than the rate of human consumption. It also manifests itself in the different speed patterns in the social sphere, such as the emergence of symptoms such as depression and overwork as a consequence of personal time overload and increasing stress. In response to the accelerationism of society, young people have even developed the ability to multitask. Early modern and classical modern politics were the forces that drove social change, but Rosa suggests that late modern politics was the force that hindered social acceleration. It manifests itself in de-regulation, de-privatization and de-rule of law. Culturally, there is no longer a stable transmission of cultural norms and knowledge between generations, social stability and continuity is undermined, and the reproduction of culture is in danger of fracturing.

In terms of normative critique, accelerationism as a potential socio-temporal norm possesses a totalitarian nature. On the one hand people interact and communicate in a wider time and space than ever before, and on the other hand people are largely free from social, religious and cultural norms. This situation is mainly ensured by the accelerationism behind it. Strict time rules are used to force people to take action to get things done. In traditional societies, religious ethics had a certain mechanism of hope and salvation even in the case of incomplete completion. However, this is not the case in modern society, which has contributed to conditions such as depression and death from overwork. Therefore, Rosa suggests that the temporal norm has a totalitarian nature, that is, they exert pressure on the subject's will to act and there is no escape, and that the norms of time are so ubiquitous that it is difficult to criticise them or fight them.

In terms of ethical norms, accelerationism goes against the ideal connotation of modernity. The core of modernity is generally understood as the autonomy enjoyed by the individual, which contains and supports the connotations of individuation and pluralism. Accelerationism and autonomy on the one hand complement each other, with autonomy ensuring the achievement of goals in the case of acceleration, and social acceleration increasingly developed in the effort of autonomy. In late modern society, however, this belief has changed and accelerated society has ceased to be a liberating force and has instead become a force and pressure for enslavement. Both individual autonomy and democratic autonomy have come to be dominated by acceleration, and it is difficult to achieve individual dreams and social justice on this basis. In late modern society, on the one hand, the autonomy of the actor is acknowledged or promised to remain, while on the other hand the possibility of achieving this autonomy is becoming less and less possible. Hence, the emergence of what Rosa calls alienation.

Rosa's idea of alienation means the subject is not forced by other people or external elements to do what he or she wants to do, but does not "really" want to do it. He acknowledges what Marx calls the alienation of people from their labor, from their own productions, from nature, from the social world, and from themselves as a result of Marx's model of capital production. On this basis, Rosa presents the content of his alienation: spatial alienation, material alienation, action alienation, temporal alienation, self-alienation and social alienation.

In terms of spatial alienation, Rosa mainly uses alienation to refer to the structural distortion of the relationship between the self and the world. As the human body is in the midst of space, in a socially accelerated situation, the subject's objects of social interaction are not limited by physical distance.
People who have intimate relationships may not be physically close. This is also true in the processing of things, where spatial location has become increasingly unimportant, hence Rosa's proposal of the alienation of space. This refers to a sense of alienation from space, where the mobility of people creates a disconnection from physical space. This includes the alienation of the person from the physical and material environment, the alienation of the person from the environment they are in, and the alienation between the person and the objects they use. From the alienation of space and then refined to the alienation of objects, the alienation between people and produced and consumed objects has changed with the increase of replacement speed, and the moral and symbolic consumption of objects has prevailed over physical consumption. Moreover, the intelligent nature of objects has created a gap between people and objects in terms of use. The cultural knowledge, practical knowledge and experience of people are becoming less and less valuable under the acceleration of society. The alienation between people and objects is that people are increasingly unable to use objects skillfully and correctly. The subject therefore feels guilty and anxious, and this alienation of objects and people will become more and more serious.

In terms of action alienation, alienation is created between people and objects due to the alienation between technological products and tools. In addition to objects, people have difficulty in grasping the direction of things in terms of decision making, and many choices in life show alienation from people, who cannot foresee the consequences of their decisions. Rosa's connotation of alienation itself means that people actively do things that they actually do not want to do inside. In the network era, people are disturbed from all aspects of the network and are unable to focus on what they are doing. It is also a manifestation of the alienation of action caused by competition and acceleration, and in the process, people tend to forget what they really want to do. In relation to temporal alienation, Rosa proposes the concept of an internal experience of time, or subjective temporal contradiction. This means the inverse ratio between the time experienced and the time remembered [11]. In late modern society, a temporal pattern of short experience or short memory emerges, as people engage in a fractured, isolated vein of activity, and these isolated actions and experiences cannot be meaningfully linked together. This is what Benjamin calls rich in experience but very inexperienced, which leads to the inability to absorb the experience and time spent in action and experience into a full life, and thus to self-alienation.

In terms of self-alienation and social alienation, Rosa means the divide between people and space, time, actions, experiences, objects, and products. There is too much contact and interaction between people, but no further intimate connection and establishment of relationships. It is also difficult to create a sense of self and identity, to establish self-identity, existence value, and thus self-alienation. This is because people's self-identity and value establishment are based on their relationship with actions and experiences, which include temporal and spatial relationships, material relationships, and world relationships. The events that people experience, the choices they make, the people and things they know are the basis for establishing their values and identity in life. And as a result of temporal alienation, spatial alienation and action alienation, people become self-alienated and socially alienated in terms of establishing their self-worth. Depression, death from overwork, and a host of other social problems also occur.

Rosa focuses excessively on the dangers and shortcomings brought about by acceleration, while ignoring the advantages and opportunities. His concept of alienation is also somewhat ambiguous and does not develop philosophical connotations. He mainly analyses and critiques the theory of the acceleration of time, emphasizing that the world and the intrinsic nature of man produce alienation, rather than focusing on the intrinsic nature of man itself. In late modern society, the subject usually compensates for the alienation of man and the world with consumption, and both the critique of alienation and the critique of consumption are motivated by the starting point of the good life. The enforced norms caused by the speed, competition of the Late Modern create alienation of the subject's behavioural and experiential patterns, and there is no idea or system of regulation that resembles a religious forgiveness mechanism. The ultimate mistakes and failures are internalized in the individual, who is increasingly unable to relate to the world at large, and the relationship between self and world becomes distorted and deformed. On the impact of accelerationism, virilio suggests that the acceleration in the face of a common reality that not only overtakes us in a tyrannical way, but completely exalts itself beyond (surpasser) any objective evaluation, and therefore beyond any comprehension [12].

5. Conclusion

Rosa critiques capitalist modernity through capitalism's acceleration and alienation of time. He emphasizes the pursuit of quantitative growth along with qualitative improvement and points out the concept of post-growth society. For alienation theory, Marx's alienation mainly refers to the inversion of
the relationship between object and subject, where the object negates the subject in the process of subjectification. Rosa expands the connotation of alienation, by which he means a relationship that lacks a relationship. It is expressed in people pretending to love what they do not like, and human autonomy is kidnapped not only in reality but also in virtual space, especially with the problems of modernity brought about by acceleration. Man's mastery over life and time is controlled by the logic of capital and by the omnipresent acceleration of time, hence the need to focus on human subjectivity and to emphasise the nature of time in the service of man.

Accelerationism has caused a series of problems for capitalist societies. Focusing on Rosa's theory enables advance knowledge of the problems caused by accelerationism, as well as prevention and proposed solutions. Rosa's theory does not focus on the aspect of the relationship between politics and acceleration, but mainly explores it through the relationship between economy, life and acceleration. Although Rosa's understanding of acceleration is analysed in sociological and phenomenological terms, acceleration itself follows the connotations of physics and is not given a deeper meaning again. And the solution of resonance is only an adaptation and compromise to acceleration, not a radical cure.

References