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롤플레이팅 게임에서의 자아 정체성에 관한 연구 - 라캉의 정신분석학을 중심으로

A Study on The Self-identity in Role-playing Games - Focused on Lacan's Psychoanalysis

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요약 오늘날 롤플레이팅 게임은 '제9의 예술'로서 초현실적인 주제와 사회적 이슈를 반영해나가고 있으며, 플레이어는 스토리텔링과 게임의 진개를 통해 자신의 역할을 설정, 수행해나간다. 이에 연구자는 롤플레이팅 게임 속에서 주체가 라캉의 '거울 단계'의 메커니즘과 같이 자아의 정체성을 설정한다고 주장한다. '플레이어'로서의 주체가 게임에 대한 해석을 통해 게임의 질서 속으로 이동되고, 게임이 부과하는 욕망에 의해 구조화된다. 롤플레이팅 게임의 몰입적 경험과 정서적 유입은 인간의 근원적인 욕망을 부상시키게 된다는 것이다. 본 연구에서는 라캉의 정신분석학을 바탕으로 욕망하는 주체가 게임의 플레이어로서 대치된 욕망에 근접하게 되고, 자아 정체성이 변화하게 됨을 규명하고자 한다.

주요어 : 롤플레이팅 게임, 정신분석학, 라캉, 거울 단계, 실세계

Abstract As today's "ninth art", role-playing games recognized by most players due to their surreal themes and sustained reflection on social diseases. Through precise control of story-telling and game visuals, players develop an avatar identification during role-playing game. Based on Lacan's mirror stage theory, a new self-identity mechanism is established under the guidance of role-playing games. As a "player", the subject's interpretation of himself is shifted by the game order, and the subject identifies with the role-playing game while at the same time being structured by the desire of role-playing game. The immersive experience and emotional guidance of role-playing games all point to the most instinctive human desires. The psychoanalytic theory from Lacan's perspective explains the source of players' desire, and the expression of players' desire in the game. It also plays an important role in the emotional rendering and identity aspects of role-playing games. This paper is to establish that role-playing games do have an impact on the player's self-identity through a Lacanian psychoanalytic reading of role-playing games.

Keywords : Role-Playing Games, Psychoanalysis, Lacan, Mirror Stage, Real

I. Introduction

Since the first video game "Tennis for Two" released in 1958, video games have been fully

transformed into a modern industrial model. Nowadays, video games have penetrated into entertainment, education, science, technology and other industries, have become an inseparable part of social life. "The so-called video game is a program

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suitable for computer operation, which takes the computer as the carrier and quantifies the creativity and ideas of the game makers through the reasonable pure numbers of computer language. For players, it can bring them physical exercise or psychological pleasure. And it enables the game individual to give reasonable feedback to the player's instructions. Only such an electronic program can be called a video game [1]." As the industry has evolved, video games have been subdivided into a variety of categories (ACT, RTS, MMO, SLG, etc.). Video games are also gradually transitioning from commercial attributes to cultural connotations. From the initial game (Spacewar) to today's "Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom ", video games have always maintained their original elements to bring players excellent audio-visual experiences again and again.

"RPG" is short for Role-Playing Games. In an RPG, the player takes on one or more roles in the game world and complete the main task and side task according to the story. In terms of gameplay, players play a role in a realistic or fictional world. The player is responsible for taking on the role and developing the character through a number of actions under a structured set of rules [2]. Unlike other types of games, the core of role-playing games lies in "playing the role". Role-playing games often have a fixed choice of theme (e.g., the Baldur's Gate series chose Call of Cthulhu as its theme) or mood (e.g., the DragonQuest series chose "Braver's Adventure" as a medium to express the thrill of the journey, the friendship of companions, and trammels). Players manipulate a virtual character to act in the digital space and experience the story arranged by the production company beforehand. During the game, the subjective feelings of the player do not exist as "Me". Players will be fully immersed in the game's environment during playing. In this process, the player is removed from the physical world and lives as a "protagonist" in the game's story. In other words, RPG stories are made for "protagonists",

rather than "player".

As one of the most important elements in the Phenomenology of Spirit and even in Hegel's philosophy, the "independence and dependence of self-consciousness" has a key influence on Lacan's subjectivism. The master-slave dialectic states that the subject and the Other should be interdependent in existence, and the Other party, after separating from one party, is difficult to prove its subjectivity. The master-slave relationship demonstrates that subjectivity is dependent on social relations. The theory also points out that in a specific slavery relationship, the existence of the Other is precisely to reflect the construction of the subject [3]. The concept of the Other under Hegel's theory was expanded by Lacan to include human beings and elements of material reality beyond. Being in the Web 3.0 era, we are also experiencing the mirror stage under another law, namely video games. By interacting with in-game avatars, individuals perceive the avatar as a social entity identical to themselves, narrowing the distance between them and the avatar, experiencing a fusion of ego and avatar, and connecting the virtual and real egos. This process is called avatar identification in psychology [4]. Players under avatar identification experience surrealistic content that is inaccessible to in reality through the mirrored architecture of ego in a fictionalized space and in a game order in an equivalent virtual environment.

Identity from Lacan's perspective is not the subject's perception of ego, but rather the "I" that attempts to be recognized by others. Human desires do not generate meaning in themselves, but rather compromise with others, striving to make others agree with their efforts. Role-playing games provide a brand-new visual medium to show others. Role-playing games provide a mirror (screen), the Other (protagonist), and the Big Other (built-in game rules that players need to follow). As a video game focus more on storytelling than gameplay,

role-playing game players are more likely to develop avatar identification. In the process of playing, players deeply immerse themselves in the storytelling and symbolic rules of the game through the mirror image behavior of the avatar in the game. The process of perceiving a game is not a unilateral information output from the game to the player. The players, as information decoders, produces an alienating identification with the game content. During the game, players first receive information about the game and are constrained by the order of games (Such as areas of the map that cannot be explored, NPCs or enemies that cannot be interacted with, etc.). When confronted with a new game, players build their own unique set of perceptions and understandings based on their own perceptions (Such as in the Fire Emblem series building teams and strategies with your own understanding). But this understanding is not exclusive to the player, who is affected by the "built-in desire in game" in the process. This process of understanding is closely related to the player's identification.

This paper aims to analyse the cognitive shifts in the "role-playing game & player" dichotomy on the basis of Lacan's mirror stage theory. Through Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, we can fully decode the flow of desire between game and player, and the construction of identity on top of that.

II. Mirror Stage of Lacan

2.1 The Obliterated Subject

The famous line "He does not know that he is dead." in the movie "The Shrouded Isle" has been praised by film critics as an excellent expression of the character's confused emotions and deep psychology. Its core implies a Lacanian tragic subject. Lacan, with his slogan "Return to Freud", was not faithful to Freud's traditional theoretical framework. Lacan rewrote and reversed Freud's claims, using the "Alienated Signifier" as a theoretical basis to

consolidate his subjective concept under the mode of deconstruction. Drawing on the theories of Saussure and others, Lacan gradually refined his subjective argument that the essence is "death".

In 1807, Hegel introduced the master-slave dialectic in his book "The Phenomenology of Spirit". This theory was subsequently internalized by Lacan as one of the theoretical cornerstones of subjectivism. The master-slave relationship demonstrates the basis for the existence of subjectivity between the subject and the Other. Proves that only by being attached to social relationships can the existence of the subject be established. Lacan agrees with Hegel's theory and proposes the formation of "ego" as the subject "wearing the specular image of other". This model denies the autonomy of the subject to a great extent. "I don't think there is any such thing as an autonomous, ubiquitous, universal form of subject. I am skeptical and even hostile to that kind of subjectivity. On the contrary, I believe that the subject was established in slavery and domination [5]. " Foucault's remarks further deny the existence of subjectivity. Zhang Yibing, a Chinese Lacanian scholar, describes the Lacanian subject as "an empty mummy wrapped in a cloth of symbolic words". Lacanian subject is a tragedy from the beginning, a kind of "obliterated subject".

The Cartesian philosophical view of "Cogito, ergo sum" has had a significant impact on the Lacanian subject. Lacan refutes this theory without reservation. On the Lacanian view, Descartes' "Cogito" subject is a misidentification. The "Cogito" subject only accounts for the existence of the subject's materiality, but cannot point to the reality of the "I" thought. Behind this misidentification, there is an imagined identity structure, as known as the "unconscious". The Lacanian view of the unconscious is an extra-subjective structure of otherness that lends itself to the subject's presence in order to convey. From this point of view, Lacan solidified his concept of the "unconscious subject (Es)". "The unconscious

subject is the discourse of the Other. (Lacan.)" Lacan categorizes the linguistically based symbolic order downwards, using Saussure's semiotic concept to locate the "existence" of the subject - that is, the subject does not exist. Rather than establishing a metaphysical conception of consciousness, as Jung did, Lacan pointedly obliterated the subject. From the beginning, it was a scam, in which the subject chose meaning and abandoned survival to achieve the existence in the material world. Lacan established his subject of emptiness based on various philosophical viewpoints, which is an indescribable emptiness.

2.2 Me in the Mirror

The mirror stage is one of the most important components of Lacan's theory, and the theory explicates the source of the infant's desire in the pre-symbolic stage. After birth, infants have no control over their limbs, which creates a subjective feeling of "lacking". At the same time, infants realize that their surroundings are perfect. Driven by the primitive desire to pursue perfection, infants devote themselves to the "specular image" reflecting their own image and assimilate with it.

According to the laws of physics, specular image is an inverted image located externally and disconnected from the subject. There is a dual master-slave relation between the specular image and the subject in Hegelian philosophy. Lacan uses the word "specular image". Although it is reversed from left to right outside of "me" and disconnected from ego. However, because it reflects my overall image, Lacan wants to describe it as a spiritual matrix to ensure its continuity and unity [6]. Confronted with the premise of "the anxiety caused by the realization of one's own absence", the infant enters the specular image and takes the first step in order to establish its own subjectivity. The specular image is not "ego", it is an independent existence. In the unconscious process, the infant and the specular image choose to merge to alleviate anxiety. It was precisely the infant

who chose to enter the mirror, and from this moment on, the subjectivity embarked on the path of being thrown away.

In his later years, Freud observed his grandson constantly throwing and retracting the wire entanglement board, while making "ooh-" and "da-" noises out of his mouth. Due to his mother's constant absence, Freud's grandson had to live his life in an environment separate from his mother. Freud believed that there was a link between the child's behavior and the mother's absence. The child regarded the winding board as a substitute for his mother and threw it out to relieve anxiety caused by the mother's absence. In this process, the child thinks he eliminates his mother's presence, but in fact attaches his own subjectivity along with his mother to the winding board and throws it along with him. Lacan claimed that the unconscious is an external, othering structure. The infant is unconsciously written as a subject and speaks as an "unconscious subject" in the course of its behaviour. Mother is an extremely special other symbol, functioning as both other and the Other. Lacan calls it the mOther. Mother writes her absence into the infant's subject as the Other through the unconscious, expressing a material reality that Freud observed as "the wire entanglement board game". The wire entanglement board game can be understood as the child's process of relieving anxiety, but also represent the absence of his own subjectivity.

2.3 Desire and "the Other"

The subject and the mirror are not in a constant dual relation; the Other plays a decisive role in the ambiguous and fragile symbiosis between subject and mirror. From the beginning of the mirror stage, the subject is faced with two kinds of "misrecognition" - the misrecognition of the subject and the specular image, and the misrecognition of desire and the Other. Lacan does not judge the rightness or wrongness of desires, but rather advocates desire as

the source of all physiological behavior. Desire is not a psychological force, but an essence in the existential sense. In the infant–mother dual relation, the infant misrecognizes the specular image from mother. This misperception may stem from the sense of oneness with the mother in the embryonic state, as well as the separation anxiety and crippling anxiety that arise after the umbilical cord is cut off. Babies think that “specular image” (which can be understood as a mother at this stage) is themselves, invisibly shifting the desires of others into their desires. In this process of alienation, there is a misunderstanding between desire and the Other. Desire in Lacan’s case is ultimately a “transfer” in the real world, through which logos can truly realize its purpose. The psychoanalytic theory of desire, taken as a whole, is essentially a shelving of the “meaning” of the existing world[7]. The desire in Lacan’s sense builds a bridge between reality and specular image, and through the construction of imaginary relationships, the “self–appeal” can be described in words that can be relayed by the outside world.

ego is an integrated product of the internalization of the Other’s desires in the guise of a need for subjectivity. While Freud divided human instincts into the instinct of life and the instinct of death, “ego” under Lacan’s concept tends to interpret life instincts more. The mother’s inability to discern her infant’s material needs in the face of the infant’s cries directly results in the infant’s desires not being met. Driven by the instinct to survive, the infant must give expression to his or her desires using language that their mother can fully interpret, that is, using the language of Other. Due to the use of the language of Other, the infant expresses desires that are not fully consistent with the subject’s demands. ego is a thing, a virtual thing that is constantly created to satisfy the requirements of subject unity, and an effort made to resolve certain unavoidable scarcity, absence, and incompleteness in human existence[8]. In the reflection of the specular image of the Other, ego

thinks it expresses the subject’s desire, but in reality, it is the desire of the Other wrapped in the outer garment of the Other.

III. Psychoanalytic Expression in

“Persona 5”

Persona is a self–developed IP by the Japanese game company ATLUS. The first work in the series, “Persona”, was released on September 20, 1996. The series is widely recognized by players at home and abroad for its unique modern artistic composition and reflection on social phenomena. The series has been released up to its fifth generation, “Persona 5”, the latest in the series. It is also widely recognized as the most influential work in the series. Unlike long–established Japanese national role–playing games such as “Dragon Quest” and “Final Fantasy”, Persona series focuses on reconstructing the core of Japanese culture in a modern art form.

Identity is not a singular concept in which desire plays a key role. Desire, in the broadest sense, is one of the core elements of Persona 5. Amamiya Ren, the male protagonist of the game, has two faces: as a high school student and as a member of “the Phantom Thieves”. As a high school student, he is taciturn and looks like a standard Japanese high school student. After awakening the “persona” in the inner world, Amamiya Ren is transformed into a sharp rebellious figure wearing a mask and a windbreaker. The facial expressions also become exaggerated or even ferocious. The before–and–after comparison shows that “mask” is a key performance indicator within the game. Masks play several functions in the game: the transformation of character images, the opportunity to activate special abilities, and the symbolic function of the character personality. The signifier of mask refers to the Lacanian subject. Lacan advocates the constant absence of the subject and thinks that the subject is

essentially empty. The subject in the Lacanian context is "the void covered by signifier", which can be transformed into "the void covered by the 'persona' " in game expression. The transformation of the protagonist involves the process of "appearance of the 'persona' → tearing off the 'persona' → transformation of the 'persona' into a special ability". The appearance of the "persona" symbolizes the absence of the subjective perception of the protagonist to the subject. "Tearing off the 'persona' " refers to the subject's rebellion against the Other. Under Jung's theory, persona is inherently a disguise to maintain social existence. The removal of this' survival signifier by the subject himself symbolizes the subject's identification with the structure of the Other and attempts to break it down. After "tearing off the 'persona' ", the mask will become an "inhuman image standing behind the role". Such as the special ability "Arsene" behind the protagonist. This materialized product takes into account the image of the Other and the specular image function. According to Lacan's theory, all subjects are structured by others, which disproves their existence in the master-slave dialectic opposition relationship. The "persona" serves as a key performance indicator within the game, replacing stereotypes within the framework of common sense and providing the game with a Lacanian psychoanalytic functional role.

The Lacanian model of the subject can be summarised by the term 'misrecognition'. Concepts such as the "unconscious subject" and the "signifier subject" are products of the misidentification of the alienated nature of the subject. Doubts about subjectivity are questions that every individual tries to resolve throughout his or her life. Persona 5 deconstructs and reproduces the subject's existence from Lacan's point of view. Most of the protagonist groups in the game are "problem children" in a broad sense. Past experiences, family of origin and other issues have contributed to their current status of being excluded and isolated. Let's take the

protagonist Amamiya Ren as an example. In the background story, Amamiya Ren came to the aid of a woman who was sexually harassed, causing the perpetrator to be injured, and he was charged with "intentional injury" through the exercise of power. Because he was a minor, he was forced to move into a strange new environment. The story of "Persona 5" that we experienced is exactly the process of the redemption of Amamiya Ren. According to the plot background, as well as the previous experiences and current difficulties faced by the protagonist in the early stages, at this time, Amamiya Ren does not interact with anyone else and only mechanically follows social order. The protagonist in this stage is not in the presence of any subject. In the palace of the original antagonist Kamoshida, Amamiya Ren awakened the "persona". As mentioned earlier, the "persona" will be presented in a position of "standing diagonally behind the character". According to the original text in the game, the "persona" reflects the "inner rebellion of the character" and is separated into the image display of the material world. This "originating from the subject and detached from the subject" mode of existence balances the Descartes "cogito" subject and the Lacanian subject. "Arsene" originates from Amamiya Ren's unconsciousness and can be regarded as a symbolic expression of Amamiya Ren's unconsciousness. "Arsene" is the embodiment of the protagonist's thinking. From this, the phrase 'I think, therefore I am' can be rewritten as 'Arsene is here, therefore Amamiya Ren is existed' in the game environment. There is a fundamental difference between Descartes' "cogito" subject and Hegel's master-slave dialectic, that is, the presence or absence of the Other. "Cogito" emphasizes the subject's thinking about itself, and the existence of the subject can be inferred through the "thinking process". The design of "persona" breaks this theoretical framework. As a symbolic expression of Amamiya Ren's unconsciousness, "Arsene" functions as a proxy for the Real and at the same time serves

as an independent other that testifies to the existence of Amamiya Ren's subjectivity. It is an expression of reproduction that balances the Lacanian subject with the Descartes subject.

Above that, Persona 5 deconstructs the Lacanian subject and makes a new interpretation. Lacan places concepts such as "desire" and "Thing" in the depths of human unconsciousness and advocates the unconscious operation logic of the subject based on three functions (Imaginary, Symbolic and Real). At the same time, Lacan constructed a model of "the subject centered on nothingness" based on his own, claiming that "the subject is nothingness itself". Applying the concept of Lacan to Persona 5, through symbolic expressions such as "persona", "Arsene", and "palace", it can be concluded that "Amamiya Ren does not exist". As players, the "protagonist identification" we have experienced is undeniable, but what we get in the process of disproof layer by layer is the conclusion of the conflict of opposites. This is a representation of the deconstruction significance of Lacan's theory in "Persona 5". Based on Descartes' "cogito" mode of subject existence, Amamiya Ren can regain his subjectivity in the game order. After concretizing from a "persona" to an independent individual, "Arsene" transformed from a "specular image" to an "other" identity. Amamiya Ren is not non-existent, the symbolized object that results from the stripping away of its inherent nothingness is "Arsene". Amamiya Ren, who awakens his "persona" in the "palace" that refers to the unconscious space, has completed three unsolvable propositions that can't be answered all his life through the image of "Arsene": the recovery of subjectivity, the deconstruction of the mirror stage and the filling of nothingness. The "Persona" in "Persona 5" is not a mechanical adaptation of Jungian theory, and its artistic expression of the signifier flow has already deconstructed the ultimate proposition under Lacan's theory.

At this point, we can confirm the existence of the

theoretical epitome of psychoanalysis in Persona 5. The process of awakening "persona" is the cognitive embodiment of the mirror stage. Infants, as the subject, construct the integrity of the subject through their eyes. In the image projection of other in the mirror, the ego begins to generate associative identification with the imagery of the specular image's words and actions. This identification is based on the subject's understanding of the image of the Other, and they examine themselves from the perspective of the Other. From this examination, the subject confirms their existence, resulting in this Gestalt imaginative identification psychology [9]. Persona 5 expresses many psychoanalytic ideas in a visual way. Identity under the Lacanian concept is actually identification with the Other. In the context of the game that is, the player's identification with the game. During playing, player experiences the expression of desire in the game and turns to identify with it. This process of identification is precisely what Lacanian psychoanalysis emphasises as the identification of the Other. The Lacanian concept, it is expected that those who agree with the concept will devote themselves to seeking their subjectivity. Persona 5 gives its answer, which is to find the "persona" hidden deep inside. In other words, guided by role-playing games, players can identify themselves and achieve the existence of the subject under the Lacan concept.

IV. Self-Identity by Persona 5

The concept of Lacan psychoanalysis provides us with a perspective on understanding the essence of self-identity. Self-identification in the Lacanian sense is an identification based on the Other. When subjects fall into imaginative relationships, they often establish self-identity through misrecognition. Lacan's theory of the "mirror stage" describes the process of identification by "projecting the image of the Other onto oneself and thus identifying with this mirrored

other". The avatar of role-playing games provides the raw material for mirror recognition. In specific game scenarios, the subject can establish a sense of identity by controlling virtual characters. This kind of overlooking from God's perspective makes it easier for the subject to project himself into the game character and perfect the image of the Other through the game experience.

Playing games is a binary dialectical state. The "game-player" dichotomy connects to the Hegelian master-slave dialectic. The player sees the game as the Big Other, with whom he or she produces an identification under the intersection of desire. Lacanian psychoanalysis demonstrates the dynamic existence of the subject and the other through the transference of desire. It is in this process that identification emerges. In order to gain the approval of the Other, the subject will make many efforts. Same during the game. The most intuitive manifestation of this is the numerical increase in the game. Increasing the value of a character will give the player an intuitive experience of "getting stronger", creating a sense of identification with the character and further promoting the desire to play the game. Again, this is an act of identification. Through video games, the subject can experience various roles and identities in a surreal virtual world, facilitating the subject to perceive themselves more clearly. In the process, the subject can recognize that self-identity is constantly evolving and constructed, rather than a static entity. This is consistent with Lacan's point of view, that is, self-identity is a constantly changing process, which is shaped by interaction and identity with others. The experience of role-playing games can help the subject better understand this complex and profound psychological phenomenon, and help the subject to generate avatar identification, and then develop into self-identity.

4.1 Cognition of Avatar

Saussure's linguistic structure emphasizes the

arbitrariness of signifier and signified, and constructs a basic model of symbols. Lacan proposed the priority of signifier on this basis, which reversed the priority expression of signifier. Under the premise that the signifier takes precedence over the signified, players become passive receivers and generate egos in the process of alienation from the game avatar. Rheingold has stated the following about avatar identification: "We reduce and encode our identities as words on a screen, decode and unpack the identities of others. The way we use these words, the stories (true or false) we tell about ourselves (or about the identity we want people to believe us to be) is what determines our identities in cyberspace [10]." Rheingold's argument articulates the basic process of avatar identification, the material-level manipulation of the avatar by the player. Avatar can be understood as special mirrors in video games. In the specific spatial and temporal field of the game, the player is like a baby dancing in front of mirror, cognitive learning about the new world of games. Role-playing games do the opposite in detail. Through pre-set fixed narrative lines, players manipulate their characters while being counter-structured by the Other order within the game. Most role-playing games on the market today (including Persona 5) have a fixed linear narrative structure. It is difficult for players to exert subjective initiative in deconstructing the large framework of the plot. Role-playing games transform free-state Internet avatars under the concept of Rheingold into non-free-state avatars structured by a specific framework. Such as Amamiya Ren, the protagonist of Persona 5. These avatars are fixed products of the innate game order, and players can only perform behavioral operations on them, and it is difficult to change the appearance and personality of the characters.

The anchoring of avatars does not mean that players can only become marionettes in role-playing games. In the game process, players face a

completely new elevated surrealist world. This world is not connected to the material world we are in, and we need to regain meaning for the signifier in the world of role-playing games. Saussure's linguistic theory only elaborates on the constitutive model of symbols, pointing out the process of transforming the signifier into symbols and generating meaning. Saussure's theory only provides a consequential explanation of the signifier of the material world. Under the framework of symbolic principles in role-playing games, players face the process of reacquiring the signified. Lacan proposed the concept of "signifying chain" in this regard, believing that meaning arises from the chain sliding of signifiers. Players need to restructure, slide, and anchor the signifier chain to gain meaning. For example, there are a large number of psychoanalytic proper nouns in the game "Persona 5" (persona, shadow, desire, etc.). As a universal game for the masses, Persona 5 creates a space where players can access meaning through the construction of a signifying chain. Take the concept of "shadows" in the game as an example. "Shadow" is a hostile target wandering in the map, and players will be forced to enter the battle if they come into contact with "Shadow". "Shadows" stand on the opposite side of the protagonist's team from their physical position, while the player makes operational choices about the protagonist's team in battle. In the process of this game, the signifying chain of "me-protagonist-enemy opposite the protagonist-shadow" is established, and the signifier of "shadow" is anchored on the signified of "enemy". This process of acquiring meaning is referred to by players as a "sense of substitution". "Sense of substitution" is an extremely important part of role-playing games. The sense of substitution, as a result of interactivity and feedback to players, plays an extremely important role in their avatar identification. There is a certain overlap between the sense of substitution and Lacan's "mirror stage" theory, both of which show the process of

recognizing the Other as ego in part or in whole. Avatar identification is both a process and a result. By identifying with in-game avatars (characters such as the protagonist), players take the first step towards self-identification in game.

4.2 Persona

The spatiotemporal field in which video game players are located is no longer a traditional reality, concept, or spiritual world, but more like a "fourth world", independent and inherently regular cyberspace [11]. The role-playing game with a strong plot takes a single narrative structure as the framework, and in the course of the game, players can experience the pleasure process of "cultivating-promoting-defeating enemies-winning" to fill the gap of anxiety. In the game "Persona 5", there is a numerical cultivation mode of traditional role-playing games, which enhances various indicators of intuitively quantified characters through numerical values such as "level". Quantification is an extremely parameterized system that can drive players to take action with the most intuitive and visualized future benefits. At this point, Persona 5 did not jump out of the framework of traditional role-playing games. Players can infer the operational logic of Persona 5 based on their understanding of the concept of role-playing games in the material world through a simple tutorial. This is also one of the functions of game classification. Players develop alienated identification with the game's classification labels before playing, and wear these colored glasses called "Persona".

As we play we also watch ourselves play; video games are by turns, and even simultaneously, participatory and spectatorial. Thus it is more accurate, or at least more inclusive, to speak of the avatariation relation: a "structure of seeing" in which the subject, acting on its desire to see itself as other, pursues its reflection in the imaginary like a cat chasing its tail[12]. The subject is similarly subjected to the gaze of the game's constancy during play.

Restricted by the internal order of the game, players can only take actions within the range allowed by the game rules. For example, five attribute values need to be improved in the protagonist of "Persona 5", but the number of daily actions of players is limited, and only some values can be improved. This type of 'restricted freedom' is the reproduction space for players under the rules of the game. Based on Lacan's "mirror stage" theory, players will choose the values that are more in line with their ideal egos to cultivate during the role-playing game process according to their actual situation. To become absent to itself by permitting a fictional character to "stand in" for it, or by allowing a particular point of view to define what it sees. The operation of the suture is successful at the moment that the viewing subject says, "Yes, that's me," or "That's what I see. [13]" Kaja Silverman's perspective illustrates the process of exerting alienating sexual identity in players. Role-playing games such as Persona 5 fully give players initiative in some aspects, giving them the power to shape their avatars into their ideal egos. The players are thus subjected to a process of alienation, identifying with the proxy image of their ideal egos as game avatars.

Lacan proposed in his argument for the existence structure of the unconscious subject that the unconscious subject is the discourse of the Big Other. This structural relationship is still valid in the dual relation of "player-role-playing game". The game does not simply exist as the Other, and its preset game rules act as the function of the Big Other. The essence of humanity is not impulses, but hostages, hostages of others[14]. Based on the desire to play games, players are also stared at by the game. In this gaze relationship, the player is given an image that is pre-positioned in the game and generates avatar identification with it, which is precisely the "persona" that role-playing games give to the player.

4.3 Invasion of Real

Since the Renaissance, the focus of the interpretation power of artistic works has shifted towards decoders. This history of cultural deconstruction against authoritarianism continued, and is deconstructed as the interpretation of "reader freedom" by philosophers such as Sartre and Roland Barthes. Kafka once commented on the relationship between the author and the work as follows: "The truly independent life of a book is only manifested after the author's death, or more accurately, some time after the author's death, because these bloodthirsty people will still fight for their book after their death. Then the book slowly became lonely and could only rely on its own heart. [15]" "On this basis, Roland Barthes defined" author authority "as a far-fetched attachment to classic reading. Roland Barthes points to the proliferation of linguistic meanings and the unknowability of the author's psyche as a way of emphasizing the impossibility of the reader's interpretation of the author's intended content, i.e., "the author is dead."

Although Roland Barthes proposed the concept of "the author is dead", the audience's perception of their decoding initiative needs to be internalized in theory. Cognitive structures within the framework of social common sense are more inclined to favor the role of games as a unilateral influence on people. Due to the framework of the Big Other, which is limited by common sense, most players find it difficult to perceive their initiative in interpreting game works. Compared to other art forms such as novels and films, role-playing game players are directly involved in the game within a narrower space of reflection in the face of the non-internalization process of theory. Through point-to-point manipulation of characters in the game, players identify with digital avatars like "babies dancing in front of the mirror". For example, in the game "Persona 5", players can independently arrange the daily itinerary of the protagonist Amamiya Ren, and they can get different degrees of rewards based on the itinerary. The growth

trajectory, ultimate ability and even the most intuitive numerical performance of the protagonist varies from player to player. Players will recognize the digital avatar (role) under the framework of game order (the Big Other) on the premise that "this is the archive of my play". This seems to reflect the subjective initiative of players, which is Roland Barthes' theory of "the author is dead". And this avatar identification is not a completely voluntary behavior of the player. The game induces players to engage in purpose-driven physical behaviors through short-term goal guidance (tasks, rewards, etc.). Lacan explores the misrecognition and obliteration of subjectivity in his theory of the mirror stage in which he considers the ego as the subject wrapped in a specular image. The "ego" presented in the material world under the Lacanian conception is not the subject, but the symbolization of the Other and the expression of the desire of the Other. Players playing role-playing games are strictly constrained by the game order, molding their ideal egos in a limited space. The unconscious subject is the speech of the Big Other, and the restriction of the game order on players is precisely the expression of the desire of the game in the position of the Big Other. As the ninth art, games incorporate the understanding, desires, and even ideology of the producers, and are handed over to players through the game as a carrier. Role-playing games, with their strong storylines, can bring players a deeper sense of substitution than other categories. With strong avatar identification, players shift from "identifying and expressing the desire of the Big Other in the material world" to "identifying and expressing the desire of the Big Other in the role-playing game." Under this guidance, the initiative is quietly exchanged and handed over to the game by the player himself. In other words, what players express in the game is not the desire of the subject, but the "desire of the game."

The significance of Persona 5 lies in the symbolization of the process by which "the game's

built-in desires are transferred to the player and expressed by the player". In this process of "semi-compulsory expression", the player compulsorily experiences the outflow of desire in real. Man's desire is the desire of the Other. Players can understand the operational logic of their own desires by collaborating with the artistic expression of the game through empathetic experiences. Taking the enemy "Kamoshida" in the early stages of "Persona 5" as an example. Kamoshida, as the villain in the game, refers to the original sin of "lust". Kamoshida arbitrarily corporally punished and sexually harassed students on campus as a teacher. The protagonist and his party found the representative of their desire (monster boss) in the "palace" and defeated it. In the process of challenging "Kamoshida", players can identify with the protagonist through his abhorrence of the villain's actions. Under Lacan's view, social law has a constant gaze on the subject and expresses the desire of the Other with the subject as the medium. During the game, the player personally experienced Kamoshida's evil behavior towards the students using an avatar, and substituted themselves into it by avatar identification and experiencing it on-site. Compared to other genres, role-playing games give players a stronger sense of substitution with their strong narrative. Players in the game believe that they have seen the wickedness of Kamoshida and dislike his actions. The truth is that the game wants the player to hate Kamoshida, so it carefully prepares the plot, graphic expressions, and other visual content (e.g., the heroine's best friend jumping off a building, a student who has been physically punished, etc.) to realize the player's hatred for Kamoshida. What is expressed during the game is not one's desires, but the desire that the role-playing game, as the Big Other, hopes the player to express.

The player's efforts within the game (breaking levels, killing bosses) are intrinsically aimed at gaining the approval of the in-game character. That

is, the recognition of the avatar (mirror image). While video games are just an inert product of the material world, characters in them do not communicate with the player. But the gaze relationship is not one that requires a tangible material entity. The player gains the gaze of an "imagined other" through the process of playing. That is, a kind of general player thinking that "I passed the barrier, I should be commended". The responsibility for this gaze is naturally borne by the game in the "game-player" dichotomy. Gaze, apart from the flow of desire, represents a transfer of power. The game begins to gaze at player as he seeks recognition from this imagined Other. Under the gaze of constancy, the desires of the game, the realm of the real, are able to invade the player's will and affect his or her identification. *Persona 5*, with its excellent storytelling, allows the real of the game to invade players' unconsciousness, promoting players to develop identity based on the game order.

V. Conclusion

As one of the most critically acclaimed role-playing game titles of the last decade, *Persona 5* guides the player through the workings of the conscious and unconscious mind with a great deal of psychoanalytic intent. Many of the designs within the game visualise obscure psychoanalytical concepts such as desire and the unconscious. Through psychoanalytic readings of the games themselves, we are able to understand the ways in which role-playing games work on player identification. During the player's play, the player first develops knowledge and understanding of the game. In this process the player's perceptions are combined with game content and reproduced as the signifier chain exclusive to each player. But the games all possess the production team's orientation, that is, the desires built into the work of the game. The player's play of the game, or identification with it, is invaded by the

game's Real. This is an unavoidable and irreversible process. Not that the process is negative. Players still have their own basic judgement as subject. If the in-game ideology is too distorted, players will naturally not sit still. If we want to implement it in the material world, there are still cases available. An example is *The Last of Us Part II*, a role-playing game developed by Naughty Dog. It continues the worldview and plot characters of its predecessor, *The Last of Us*. Joel Miller, a beloved protagonist of the previous generation amongst the gamer community, was instead mistreated with a golf club by the character he saved in the opening section of *The Last of Us Part II*. This incident caused a great storm in the gamer community, with a large number of gamers taking to the Internet to denounce the game's developer, Naughty Dog, and the writer of this work, Neil Druckmann. Presenting this case here is not an argument that in-game awareness guidance is harmful. Quite the contrary, *The Last of Us Part II* is a strong testament to the built-in desires that exist in the game. It's difficult to analyse what purpose the developers and writers had in mind for such a design, but the player's anger is a product of the desires at play within the game. Players engage in in-depth content experiences from the expressive side of the game, being expressed by the real of the role-playing game while satisfying their hedonistic pleasures. In the process of alienation, they generate avatar identification and feedback it into their structure. Role-playing games exist as an expression of their own desires, while role-playing games can influence a player's self-identity. Role-playing games offer players a deep immersive experience with their surreal themes and unique narratives. Through Lacanian psychoanalysis, we are able to gain insight into the workings of desire and the identity of the subject. Identity is not a product of subjective expression, but an affirmation of the image of others. Man's desire gets its meaning in the desire of others. Role-playing games provide just such a medium of

identification. In the dialectical mode of binary, players are able to rely on role-playing games to establish their own identification.

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