

Hutchison's View on Happiness: A Philosophical Antidote to Accelerate the Era and Introversion

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of rapid evolution in modern society, the acceleration of globalization and the pace of life are becoming increasingly apparent, accompanied by a general decline in individual happiness. In response to this challenge, there are two opposing trends in society: positive evolution and avoidance of stagnation. However, both strategies have failed to effectively enhance individual true happiness. This paper conducts an in-depth study of the happiness perspective of 18th-century philosopher Francis Hutcheson, examining how his theory offers a novel approach for contemporary individuals. It suggests a return to a natural state of benevolence, advocating for the practice of public kindness and cultivation of inner virtues as pathways to genuine happiness and contentment. By cross-analyzing Hutcheson's theory with the current phenomenon of social acceleration and involution, this study aims to provide a philosophical antidote for individuals grappling with an accelerated era and internalization.

1. Introduction

In the era of accelerating society, individuals find it difficult to be independent from social competition. Internal competition has become a prominent feature of this era, with many people seeking to surpass and strive to become the so-called "king of competition", while others choose to abandon competition and use lying flat to avoid pressure. But whether it's involution or lying flat, individuals cannot obtain true happiness from it. They are described as those who cannot win and cannot lie down completely. The real world is neither an inward rolling wave nor a lying cradle. The clearest way is to step out and seek a third path.

Francis Hutcheson, an 18th-century British philosopher, was the founder of emotional ethics in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment. In his view, happiness is the satisfaction of human desires, which is not only an individual's inner satisfaction but also involves realizing the desire for the happiness of others. In his view, happiness is the satisfaction of human desires, which is not only an individual's inner satisfaction but also involves realizing the desire for the happiness of others. In Hutcheson's theory of happiness, moral senses have the perceptual ability to perceive the kindness and evil of objects, guiding us to pursue public kind. By cultivating sympathy and love for others, we can achieve self-happiness while achieving universal happiness. In the context of accelerating and internalizing society today, Hutcheson's concept of happiness is undoubtedly a philosophical antidote, helping introverts and lay flat individuals find a third path beyond their extreme state. This paper aims to use Hutcheson's text research to cross-analyze his theory of happiness with the phenomenon of social acceleration, to find a way to settle down in the era of social acceleration and help people establish a healthier and more positive view of happiness.

2. Social Acceleration, Involution, and Lying Flat

2.1 Social Acceleration and Anxiety

The modern industrial society has suddenly accelerated human history. German critical theorist Hartmut Rosa defines acceleration as "the rate of decline in the trustworthiness of experience and expectation continues to increase, while the time interval defined as the 'present' continues to shrink."

The fact is the same, on the one hand, the acceleration of various aspects of society, and on the other hand, the compression of time and space. The individual experience of living in an accelerating era is particularly evident, from big life events like getting married and having children, to small life trivialities like eating and sleeping, all aspects of life have been accelerated. Individuals seem to be constantly racing, attempting to complete predetermined tasks within the allotted time while also balancing multiple roles and responsibilities. All of this makes the subject perceive an unprecedented compression of time. The Red Queen in *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* said to Alice, "In this country, you must run non-stop to stay in place." At this moment, it becomes concrete.

Accompanied by the accelerating era comes anxiety that permeates the air. Anxiety seems inevitable, regardless of gender, age, occupation, or even work or study: middle-aged people may feel anxious about supporting their families, while elderly people may feel anxious about encountering death; Students are anxious about academic performance, while office workers are anxious about career development, and so on. Anxiety is everywhere, and the causes of anxiety are diverse. Anxiety seems to have become an unavoidable part of life, a habitual state of life. Moreover, people also exaggerate their anxiety and amplify the anxiety of others on social media. Anxiety becomes a social attribute, which leads people to make two behavioral choices in social competition: "involution" and "lying flat" [1].

2.2 Internal Competition and "Stagnant Competition"

Wherever there are people, there is competition. Resources are limited, and to obtain more, everyone must compete with others. Competition can promote social progress. Emperor Qin Shi Huang unified the six states and brought ancient Chinese society into feudal society. This kind of competition is not a problem, what is problematic is another form of "zero-sum game" competition, internal competition. Internal competition itself is not a problem, the essence of internal competition is to improve oneself. However extreme internal competition makes its competitive methods disorderly and inefficient. The internal competition among ordinary people relies on desperately squeezing colleagues, even if it exhausts oneself, it also involves crushing others. This kind of internal competition is an irrational and vicious competition that results in a decrease in overall happiness at the cost of eliminating competitors. Most people who often engage in internal competition delude themselves into seeking immediate results through flattery, but in the end, they not only fail to achieve their goals but also fall into a state of being unable to involution. Human energy is limited. The zero-sum game of internal competition results in a disproportionate return on investment for the participants, making it meaningless for them to engage in any amount of competition. Also, the psychological exhaustion of those who engage in internal competition, as well as the indifference to social relationships and the erosion of the overall interests of society. Extreme involution is not advisable [2].

2.3 Lying Flat and "Not Lying Flat"

Lying flat is not about being lazy in the world, true lying flat is about maintaining a calm mindset, being insensitive, not internal friction, and not being entangled. That is to promptly stop internal consumption and shift energy towards more valuable things. However, most people who lie flat cannot achieve a peaceful mindset and instead enter a state of "not lying flat" - they may accept lying flat in their concepts, but still unconsciously follow traditional success templates in their actions, such as continuously improving work efficiency, increasing learning and skill acquisition. The contradiction leads to a mental wavering, wanting to escape this state of life but unable to escape social expectations, ultimately resulting in a mental breakdown. What tires them is not this state itself, but the wavering mentality. Lying flat without achieving a completely peaceful mindset is also a form of internal friction, and the consequences are no different from internal competition [3].

3. Overview of Hutchison's Theory of Happiness

3.1 Overview of the Concept of Happiness

3.1.1 The Definition of Happiness

Hutchison pointed out that "happiness refers to any pleasant feeling or the continuation of this feeling," but this is not his complete definition of the term happiness. In ancient Greece, Plato established the foundation of humanistic theory through the ternary structure of cognition, emotion, and will. Hutchison placed Plato's "will" under emotions, believing that human nature is composed of emotions and reason. But emotions are not only the essence of human beings but also the reasons and prerequisites for all human behaviors. Hutchison refers to the reasons or reasons that drive human behavior as "driving reasons." Emotions are the prerequisite for all human driving reasons. Emotion comes first, and purpose comes second. No purpose can precede all emotions, so there is no driving reason that precedes emotions. Whether it is love or hate towards oneself or others, they all arise before the behavioral purpose arises. Hutchison further pointed out that sentiments or instincts should be regarded by humans as the ultimate goal of life, rather than rational or contemplative activities.

Emotions, as the essence of human beings and the prerequisite for all human "driving behaviors," are inevitably the basis of any human behavior. Hutchison proposed the proposition that "there exists an instinct or desire in human nature that makes them desire happiness". He further explained that the correctness of this proposition lies in the emotion or instinct of human beings to pursue happiness, rather than in the reflection on their rationality and the proposition itself. Hutchison pointed out that people construct very abstract universal concepts in philosophical research, such as infinite kindness. However, these abstract concepts cannot become the purpose of human emotions, nor can they prove that individuals possess this abstract concept, nor can they prove that this concept itself possesses a certain emotion or instinct. Hutchison acknowledges that although these abstract concepts cannot replace the role of emotions, they present a greater purpose to human rationality, which is to "satisfy self-love or friendly emotions to the fullest extent possible within the scope of omnipotence, and to enable us to attain greater kindness without being satisfied with smaller private or public kindness." While satisfying private kindness, humans expand their goals to public kindness. Hutchison emphasized that benevolence, which targets public kindness or the kindness of others, transcends all emotions and occupies a dominant position in human nature. Benevolence refers to the desire for the happiness of another person. However, the role of abstract concepts is limited to this. In summary, in Hutchison's view, happiness is based on the satisfaction of the desire for benevolence and the pursuit of public kindness or the kindness of others [4].

3.1.2 The Core Concept of Happiness Concept

3.1.2.1 Beyond Self-love and Pursuing Benevolence

Hutchison believed that self-love is not a means of personal kindness, only the human instinct for kindness is a means of personal kindness. If our desire for an event is solely based on self-love, then the desire to have that event cannot eliminate the discomfort caused by desire, nor can it become a means to achieve personal kindness. On the contrary, innate kindness towards any event will stimulate its kind intentions and positive desires, and this kind of genuine kindness is the highest happiness and the key to achieving personal kindness. Therefore, Hutchison proposed the methodology of the concept of happiness, which states that the constant pursuit of public kindness is the most likely way to enhance one's happiness. In this view, the degree of benevolence is directly proportional to the level of happiness, and true self-happiness and satisfaction come from an individual's contribution to others. When an individual's behavioral motivation is not self-love, but the ultimate benevolence, focusing on public kindness, can we achieve the highest happiness? In addition, based on public happiness, Hutchison believes that it is everyone's responsibility to engage in professions that contribute to public happiness. He proposed that there is no distinction between high and low professions and that the ultimate goal of work is for the public happiness of society. As long as one is responsible for their profession, it is a contribution to promoting public happiness, which is moral [5].

3.1.2.2 Beyond Material Desires and Pursuing Virtues

For a calm mind, the truth and perfection of virtues, as well as their satisfaction, do not depend on external success, but on the inner temperament of the soul. Compared to general desires, most of life's misfortunes come from the desire for certain pleasures, such as wealth and power, luxury, and fame. Moreover, the human soul cannot sustain any enjoyment derived from external senses, and material desires are constrained by accidental events. Therefore, external sensory pleasure is not a necessary means of constituting happiness. The highest happiness of a person lies in fully enjoying the maximum satisfaction that their nature desires and can obtain. The generation of desire is accompanied by discomfort, and only the most noble desire in nature, which is the desire for universal happiness, is usually calm and completely free from any mixed discomfort. It means that moral senses guide us to pursue a desire or emotion for peaceful and universal happiness. The calm and universally happy emotion is called virtue. Virtue is a universal behavioral intention that promotes public kindness and expresses emotions towards rational individuals. "The most perfect virtue exists in calm rather than passionate kindness," which includes learning to restrain and restrain oneself, holding a moderate attitude towards wealth, and maintaining humility [6].

3.2 The Path to Happiness

Hutchison proposed his concept of benevolence based on Shaftsbury's philosophy of "humanity is benevolent, and public welfare is virtuous.". He proposed that the moral sense is an innate perceptual organ that can perceive and judge moral objects. He, like Shaftsbury, believed that "virtue" lies in universal benevolence and the pursuit of social and public interests, while "evil" refers to self-love and the resulting actions that harm social and public interests. The moral senses praise the former and dislike the latter. The role of moral senses is not influenced by personal interests, just as people still express disgust towards unethical behavior that occurred hundreds of years ago.

In addition, Hutchison believes that the emotion of benevolence can directly determine moral behavior. As a moral motivation theorist, he believes that any moral behavior is caused by emotions. Every behavior that we understand as moral kindness or evil is always considered to originate from a certain emotion directed towards the rational subject. Everything we call virtue or evil is either an emotion or a behavior derived from it. The kindness or badness of an action does not depend on its consequences, but on the emotional motivation that triggers the action. The main purpose of Hutchison's above conclusion is to establish a moral concept of benevolence and oppose selfishness. Hutchison opposes Hobbes' view of self-love as the source of action, believing that all virtues of human behavior should come from benevolence rather than self-love. Self-love cannot explain why we develop feelings of love and hate towards behaviors that were unrelated to our interests a hundred years ago. Hutchison further emphasized that benevolence is pure emotion, essentially disregarding interests, and an understanding of benevolence from the perspective of self-love and self-interest is incorrect. He opposes the idea that people love others out of self-interest, which is as absurd as saying that one can love a murderer for self-interest. Hutchison regards benevolence as the core and motivation of social virtues, drawing a clear boundary from self-love orientation. He proposed a famous proposition for this universal benevolence: the act of the greatest kindness is the act that causes the greatest action of the greatest majority, and vice versa is the vilest action.

3.3 The Guarantee of Happiness

3.3.1 The Existence of Moral Senses

The core issue of Hutchison's moral philosophy research is to find the existence of a universal order in nature that can promote human happiness. In his view, "the purpose of all thinking is to find the most effective way to promote human happiness," and moral senses are the universal order that promotes human happiness. Moral senses are the foundation of moral judgment, and through the judgment of moral senses, benevolence can become the emotional foundation of morality. We can refer to the fourth type as the moral sense, through which we perceive the kindness or badness of our own or others' virtues. Moral sense is an innate sense of human existence that precedes knowledge. It has a natural perceptual ability to perceive kindness and evil. Hutchison proposed that when the

moral senses perceive an object as evil and feel uncomfortable, out of the desire for a happy state, this discomfort will make individuals intentionally prevent or remove the object; When an event or object is perceived as kind by moral senses, the resulting sense of happiness will make individuals desire to obtain or continue it.

So what kind of emotions will make moral senses approve? What kind of thing would cause moral sensory pain? Hutchison proposed that natural kindness or evil, interests, religion, customs, or education are not moral motivations, and innate ideas and noble behavioral motivations are also unrelated to moral senses. Excluding all the above, Hutchison believes that morality is only related to certain human emotions and behaviors governed by these emotions. The root of morality is related to human instinct, which existed before reason had an impact on humanity. It drives us to love others like ourselves, and this is benevolence. Benevolence is the only object of praise for moral senses. All human virtues stem from benevolence, and this selfless benevolence towards the happiness of others is the foundation of moral senses. The moral sense based on benevolence provides a guarantee for happiness, and the pleasure of virtue is the greatest happiness that humanity can obtain. The subject of happiness judgment is the innate moral sense that humans possess, and the moral sense is the source of human spiritual perception of kindness and evil. It is destined to control all other abilities [7].

3.3.2 Rationality Training

The construction of human nature makes emotions extremely susceptible to the influence of ideas. "Once we form a concept of an object or event, we will have desires or hatred towards them, so emotions must be very dependent on the ideas formed based on the quality, preferences, or effects of things presented to our minds.". The influence of ideas on emotions is multifaceted, whether kindness or bad, but if we lose control of ideas, emotions will lead individuals towards evil. "Once we lose control of imagination and opinions, our emotions will inevitably follow them and fall into recklessness and foolishness. Careless observers will think that our behavioral intentions are useless and evil.". The negative effects brought about by this concept are beyond human control. Only by training rationality can the negative effects of ideas or the combination of ideas be eliminated, thereby ensuring the happiness of the human soul. Training rationality is about removing heterogeneous concepts that are unrelated to emotions and focusing on emotions. Only pure emotions are true emotions, representing an individual's true views on various emotions and behaviors. For example, by training rationality, people who live extravagantly will also view simple life as satisfaction. Secondly, by training rationality, people will find that "public happiness, as the object of benevolence, is indeed only a very uncertain object.". Unable to provide happiness to humanity. Therefore, the realization of happiness cannot be entrusted to the realization of public happiness. What people can do is pay attention to the inner world and focus on cultivating an emotional order based on kindness within. In terms of happiness, by training rationality, not only can we ensure the purity of emotions, but we can also focus on cultivating inner virtues. "The happiness of virtues is the perfection itself, independent of external objects and directly perceived by people."

4. The Antidote to Accelerating the Era and Internalizing the Concept of Happiness

4.1 Pursuing public kindness and the kindness of others

"Moral senses" link the happiness of others with self-happiness. "If a subject also has moral senses but does not intend to link personal happiness with public happiness research, they will inevitably feel increasingly unhappy permanently. This unhappiness is realized through the neglect of personal interests when serving the public, or when they only pursue personal interests, they will experience permanent regret and dissatisfaction with their character through moral senses.". This unpleasant feeling may stem from neglecting personal interests when serving the public, or from regret and self-dissatisfaction experienced through moral senses when simply pursuing personal interests. With the intensification of social competition and the alienation of interpersonal relationships, individual behavior is increasingly inclined to meet individual needs, while ignoring the important role of others'

well-being in personal achievement. Hutchison proposed that individuals should be viewed not only as rational and emotional beings but also as social beings. Compared to the pursuit of personal kindness, individuals with moral senses are more inclined to pursue public kindness. Individuals in society not only seek material success and personal glory but more importantly, establish deep connections with others and achieve emotional satisfaction. Therefore, the knowledge that links private interests with the study of public kindness seems necessary for maintaining constant satisfaction of the mind and preventing the alternation of seemingly opposite desires. True happiness and satisfaction come from the pursuit of happiness for others and the contribution to public kindness.

Competition is ubiquitous in a highly internalized society, from the workplace to academia, from the economy to social interactions. Individuals often fail to distinguish which competitions are truly valuable, leading to blind participation. However, according to Hutchison's theory of happiness, moral senses can enable individuals to evaluate whether competitive behavior meets the standards of public kindness through their internal moral intuition. The assessment is based on whether it promotes overall well-being and maintains fairness and justice. For example, a competitive environment aimed at innovation and improving production efficiency may be seen as useful as it drives technological progress and the growth of social welfare; On the contrary, if competition only leads to zero-sum results, such as excessive involution in the workplace, causing employees to make meaningless efforts for small advantages, then this competition may be seen as useless. Secondly, moral senses can also help individuals understand the long-term impact of competition and make more responsible choices. While considering the short-term benefits that competition may bring, moral senses prompt individuals to consider the long-term impacts of these behaviors on society and the environment. For example, competition between enterprises may drive the production of low-priced products, but if such competition comes at the cost of sacrificing environmental standards and labor rights, moral senses will alert the ethical issues of such practices. Finally, moral senses emphasize the importance of moral self-reflection in individual decision-making. By cultivating the ability to evaluate oneself morally, individuals can not only recognize and participate in beneficial competition but also avoid competitive behaviors that may cause harm to themselves and others. This kind of self-reflection ensures the moral virtues of individual behavior and also helps to build a more harmonious and sustainable society.

In summary, Hutchison's moral sensory theory provides individuals with a powerful tool to help them make wise and ethical competitive decisions in complex modern societies. While pursuing success, individuals should constantly examine their behavior and choices through their moral senses, ensuring that these behaviors not only enhance their sense of happiness but also promote public interest and the happiness of others [8].

4.2 Focus on Inner Virtues

In today's society, the challenges faced by individuals are not limited to the choices of involution and lying flat, but deeper challenges lie in the blind pursuit of material desires and the scarcity of the inner world. People who actively join the internal competition often pursue their desires based on honor, wealth, and power. They mostly see wealth as a means of realizing their desires, but "wealth usually has a small increase in the happiness of the owner.". Perhaps endless involution will give individuals a large amount of wealth and temporary happiness, but in the long run, a large amount of wealth will only weaken their moral senses, and the barren mind can only be used to pursue trivial things, And those who do not gain wealth in internal competition will only fall into a period of self-doubt and fatigue faster. On the other hand, lying flat is a low-desire, low-consumption lifestyle that helps individuals rest under heavy pressure. However, it is accompanied by a conscious reduction in social and material enjoyment. Although material enjoyment may not bring true happiness, it can bring temporary pleasure. Socializing is a human emotional need. Lying flat may seem like a resistance to severe involution, but in reality, it has little effect on enhancing happiness.

"There is no such certainty in human affairs, that is, a person can ensure that they have a permanent object that satisfies any desire." Imagine whether the satisfying desires provided by involution and lying flat are both limited. Contrary to all desired objects that rely on external existence, virtue itself

is an object that depends on the emotions or behaviors of the subject itself. The pursuit of virtue does not come from the pursuer's interests or self-love or some motivation related to his interests. The composition of virtue lies in benevolence or the pursuit of public kindness, and the happiness of others is uncertain, so public desires are always unsatisfied. Nevertheless, the pursuit of virtue remains the most stable and enduring source of happiness at present. Going beyond inner turmoil and lying flat, pursuing inner virtues, and having a peaceful mindset is the third way of life that accelerates the times [9].

4.3 Returning to the Natural State of Benevolence

For Hutcheson, moral philosophy is like the various abilities of the sun and the earth that enable plants to grow naturally, naturally leading people to a state of happiness. He referred to this ideal social state as the "natural state" of humanity and described it as follows: "The natural state is a human state that most effectively encourages people to train all their talents and desires... The natural state means the common state of humanity or the most perfect state that they can obtain through natural intelligence.". In this natural state, humans exhibit an instinctive social desire, which is not driven by the pursuit of profit or happiness, but rather by the natural need to construct and maintain social life. Benevolence - a deeply ingrained quality in human nature, not only drives individuals to transcend self-interest and care for others but also makes people popular and trustworthy partners in society. This kind of kindness and sociality is the key to curbing internalization.

In the era of acceleration, competition and efficiency are often placed above social interaction and individual happiness, leading to indifference in interpersonal communication and simplification of interpersonal relationships into the exchange of interests and competition. However, Hutcheson reminds us that this is not what our nature is for. As a natural existence and the driving force of virtuous behavior in human nature, we should play its role, pay attention to the happiness and suffering of others, and satisfy this emotion on its own. Hutcheson believes that God endows humans with the instinct of benevolence to promote the formation of society and to seek and achieve deeper levels of individual and collective happiness through social interaction. Therefore, in this fiercely competitive era, it is even more important to return to this fundamental human nature and build a healthier and more harmonious social environment by cultivating kindness and sociality [10].

5. Conclusion

In today's rapidly advancing society, internalization is becoming increasingly severe. Some individuals seek to leverage a slight advantage to succeed in competition and opt to remain competitive; others grow weary of the pervasive social competition and choose to adopt a passive stance to avoid it. However, neither approach brings them relaxation or happiness. Therefore, inspired by Hutcheson's happiness concept, a third path emerges - to revert to a state of natural benevolence while striving for altruism and inner virtues, thereby fostering a healthier social environment.

Firstly, Hutcheson's moral senses not only help individuals make wise and ethical competitive decisions but also promote the pursuit of public kindness and the kindness of others, thereby enhancing the overall harmony and well-being of society and increasing individual happiness. Secondly, Hutcheson's emphasis on individual virtues can effectively alleviate the pressure brought about by internalization. In his view, virtues are not only the foundation of moral behavior but also the key to achieving long-term personal happiness and sustainable social development. Finally, Hutcheson's natural state provides an example of a way of life for individuals to achieve social and individual happiness by cultivating loving relationships with others. This state encourages individuals to go beyond their interests, focus on public kindness, and seek broader social harmony through active interaction and relationship-building with others.

In short, Hutcheson's concept of happiness serves as a philosophical antidote to foster a deeper understanding and response to the accelerating times and internalization phenomenon. By emphasizing the importance of moral senses, promoting the cultivation of virtues, and advocating for a natural lifestyle, Hutcheson's theory not only aids individuals in achieving a more authentic self and profound happiness but also offers theoretical support for constructing a more harmonious and

healthy society. These theoretical and practical guidelines hold significant importance in understanding and enhancing the relationship between individuals and the public in modern society, as well as in fostering a happier and more sustainable social environment.

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