

The Study on Self-consciousness in Flow

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The issue of consciousness is a core issue in flow theory. The key element of flow is concentration, which is based on self-control and the order of consciousness. Flow usually gives people a feeling of ecstasy, but this disappearance of self-awareness does not mean the disappearance of the self. Self still controls actions and thinking. The abnormality of the sense of time in flow is related to the disappearance of self-consciousness. Reflection provides the dynamic situation of behavior and helps people adjust themselves in time to achieve the optimal experience of heart flow.

Keywords: flow, self-consciousness, time consciousness, reflection

Introduction

The concept of flow was first proposed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, which describes a state in which the individual's mental power is fully invested in an activity. Flow will bring people a sense of happiness, and people in flow will be completely immersed in the joy of activities. When a person is fully engaged in coherent work, he will gain more acute intuition and higher mental clarity, so as to achieve the best performance. In Mihaly's view, fun activities have stable goals, clear rules, and challenges that match their abilities. In such activities, people tend to focus all their attention on the following challenges. Therefore, by controlling their consciousness, they can dominate their mental energy and introduce themselves into flow.

In order to achieve flow, the most important thing is to focus all attention on action and confront the mental entropy. People in flow have no time to think about anything irrelevant at present, and there is even a sense of self disappearance in perception. But the absence of self-existence in consciousness does not mean that people in the flow no longer control their own spiritual strength, or do not know all the changes in their body or heart. The disappearance of self-consciousness doesn't mean that the ego disappears with it. Even though consciousness still exists, it's just that you can't feel yourself. Mihaly sums up consciousness as a circular circle rather than a straight line. Temporary selflessness and the elimination of self-consciousness can provide self transcendence, and people will have a feeling of self expansion (Mihalyi, 2017). There is no contradiction between the order of consciousness and the disappearance of self-consciousness. Moreover, most people in the flow will feel that the sense of time is different from the sense at ordinary times. Is this ambiguity of time consciousness related to the disappearance of self-consciousness? Even in a state of selflessness, the person in the flow can still control the body's feeling in action. How is this reflection completed? Based on these problems, this paper analyzes the related problems of self-consciousness in flow.

Flow: A Rare State of Consciousness

Self control is very exhausting for people in daily life. We usually need to rebuild the order of consciousness because of the lack of concentration. Flow requires us to focus wholeheartedly, but when we interrupt a person who is experiencing flow and ask what he is doing, he will quickly pull his self-consciousness back to himself. This is a perfection of consciousness in the theory of flow. It shows that consciousness still exists during the flow, but the focus of consciousness is put on the activity. Mihaly described flow as “a rare state of consciousness”.

This state means that the part of consciousness that perceives the self is infinitely reduced and self-consciousness disappears. But the self still exists, and even still plays an important role in action. Kant established a reflection theory in order to clearly explain self-consciousness: “I realize that I am a kind of thought, which already contains dual selves, that is, the self as the subject and the self as the object” (Kant, 1985, pp. 15-20). The reflective model of self-consciousness points out that the self diverts its attention from the external object, turns to the inner domain, and “rethinks” itself.

According to Kant’s explanation of self-awareness, self-awareness is based on the difference between self and the world. The subject of self-consciousness realizes that he is the consciousness of an objective and temporal realm of reality, that is, any consciousness that exists independently of it. Self-awareness is a special instance of consciousness, which includes self in all things we are aware of. A necessary feature of self-consciousness is that self-consciousness is not only the consciousness of the existence of a specific object, even if the subject itself is a conscious subject. Self-consciousness, as one’s own consciousness, is the consciousness of the uniqueness of an individual, that is, the consciousness of the subject of this consciousness.

The proposition of self-consciousness explains the possibility of the “rare state of consciousness”, which is similar to Hume’s “concealment of the self” (Hume, 1978). So how does the self function in a hidden situation? The answer to this question lies in the realization of the uniqueness of self-awareness and finding a special way to conceive the “I” required by self-awareness. As Wittgenstein pointed out, failing to observe the self is conceptually related to observing the possibility that the self does not exist. Self-consciousness depends conceptually on the possibility of other consciousness subjects. The concept of self-consciousness depends on the possibility of the existence of other conscious subjects. The possibility of the existence of other subjects of consciousness is to make “I” meaningful. If there is no other subject of consciousness, “I” will no longer exist at the conceptual level. So “I” can think that after the flow, I have lost my self-consciousness in the previous experience. But even so, the ego can still control the mental energy and perceive changes in the body or mind.

In this case, the clarity of self-awareness is the criterion for judging whether a person has obtained flow. The key to explain this problem is not whether the self is a part of my consciousness, but whether consciousness needs a morphological structure to establish the intentional relationship between it and objects. Husserl thinks that if the self does not belong to the structure of consciousness and there is no command to connect with objects clearly, but we can still control ourselves, then “I” can only be the product of this conscious structure of consciousness. Therefore, self-consciousness is not something that only happens under special circumstances. Whenever we pay attention to conscious life, self-consciousness has the characteristics of subjectivity. So it has a basic ability to reflect itself at any time. This ability turns itself into the center and puts forward judgments and evidence related to itself. Husserl equates “inner consciousness” with reflection and “inner consciousness” with a kind of non thematic self-consciousness, which is before reflection. People

should distinguish the primitive consciousness or inner consciousness of time unity constituted by perception, and each kind of perception is the object of behavior described by Husserl. Therefore, every conscious experience has a primary object and a secondary object. When the refrigerator buzz is heard, the primary object is buzz; the secondary object is hearing. The focus of attention is the primary object, and our awareness of behavior itself is usually secondary and accidental. Husserl (1982, p. 32) concluded: "Consciousness has not only object consciousness and subject consciousness, but also internal consciousness, self-consciousness. In addition to its primary object, there are its secondary object".

On the basis of Husserl, Heidegger brings the problem into the actual life. He thought that consciousness is always the consciousness of things, so the human mind always points out to the world of human experience. For him, phenomenology is a problem beyond the self, the purpose of which is to recognize things in the world. The challenge for Heidegger is to develop a way to master these experiences as a whole. His main question is: what is the difference between seizing the course of an experience and describing it in some way? What happens when we talk about experiences? In his lecture, Heidegger gave many examples:

in an exchange visit, we read books, looked at photos, drank tea, smoked cigarettes, and then went for a walk together; the day was getting brighter and the sun was setting, which was the experience environment in which I was absorbed. In the evening I was asked: what did you do this afternoon? I talked about the visit and the walk; or at night, I thought alone, I let it drift by me, or I wrote down what happened in my diary. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 253)

What we experience in the self world constitutes the cause and effect of the flow. Self consciousness is hidden because of the uniqueness of the subject consciousness, but the self in the flow must play a great role, and self-consciousness will gradually emerge from consciousness after experiencing the flow.

Flow: A Vague Sense of Time

When people describe the experience of flow, they usually refer to the abnormal sense of time. It usually shows that time goes by faster. Some people need precise control over the time of their actions, and for them, controlling time is also a fun technique. There is a close relationship between the time consciousness and the hidden self-consciousness in the flow. To understand this association, we must first distinguish the basic difference between recessive and dominant time.

If we see a child playing with toys and he is completely lost in the game, we will find that he does not seem to have experienced the passage of time. Time is implied in the children's experience of the game, and the temporary implicit mode is always the basis of the experience. When we are immersed in a flow, the sense of time will be lost, usually manifested as the acceleration of time.

The implicit temporal model requires two key conditions: the first is the basic continuity of consciousness, which Husserl called "internal temporal consciousness". Continuous moments cannot establish a continuous experience. Only when these moments are related to each other forward or backward can the experience be integrated into a unified process. For example, when a person is giving a speech, he must not only remember what he said just now, but also pay attention to what he is saying now. At the same time, he must also consider his next situation as a speaker. The "intentional arc" that provides this connection between the beginning and the end also contains implicit self-awareness (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Therefore, the continuity of time and the continuity of basic self-consciousness are mutually unified.

The second condition is the basic motivation of spiritual life, which can be expressed by concepts such as impulse, or emotion. Different from the coherent structure, it is spontaneous or emotional oriented, which helps

self-consciousness or perception before reflection. When the basic state changes, such as the feeling of speeding up time in manic state or slowing down in depression, all prove the importance of mental state to time consciousness and self experience.

The concept of explicit time means that when a person in the flow is engaged in stable activities and is suddenly interrupted, time is divided from now on. Time goes on, but self-consciousness is magnified at this moment. The interruption of the flow may be sudden noise, other people's interference, emotional changes or physical discomfort. At this time, people are no longer in the flow. Therefore, the return of time consciousness also means the return of self-consciousness.

Therefore, for people in flow, the explicit experience of time comes from the negation of implicit time. Another difference between between recessive time and explicit time is the body. The embodiment of flow is to take the body as the object of attention. The consciousness of recessive time is unified with the perception and feeling of the body. The more time you use, the more likely you are to forget time and body. On the other hand, in the dominant temporality, the body often appears in a dominant way. For example, when you are sick, the body becomes an obstacle to the flow, and the time is slowing down.

In the process of consciousness, the time consciousness is closely related to the time consciousness. We need to distinguish the constituent dimensions of the existence of behaviors from those that allow them to appear. These behaviors are time objects existing in subjective or internal time, but they are composed of deeper subjects, that is, the absolute flow of internal time consciousness. Therefore, according to the internal object interpretation, absolute flow makes us aware of behavior. Sokolowski says:

In the perception of the world, I have also experienced my perception behavior and the feelings it constitutes. These feelings are composed of internal objects; my perception behavior can make my reaction behavior focus on the perception behavior or its feeling. Reflective behavior itself is an internal object, like all internal objects, it is the absolute flow of internal time consciousness. (Sokolowski, 1974, p. 10)

The condition of flow is that people are required to enter a state of concentration, people realize that the stream of consciousness of self is an internal continuation. Like Mihaly, Husserl compared some experiences to something flowing. "Consciousness is unified, behavior is not independent, it is a wave in the stream of consciousness" (Husserl, 1982, p. 178). We usually think that our stream of consciousness is composed of a time series of states of consciousness, which are arranged together to form a multiple discrete space object. In fact, time is considered to be a homogeneous medium in which our state of consciousness disperses and forms a series of unique sequences. In pure duration, the state of consciousness is unified. About this kind of wavy consciousness, Brough pointed out: "the flow of consciousness can not exist or present independently of the experience it constitutes, because it is only the experience of experience, without them, it's nothing" (Brough, 2008, p. 22). Therefore, time consciousness will not be hidden because of the disappearance of self-consciousness, and the weakening of self perception of behavior will not affect the flow of time.

Husserl considers the flow of time as objective movement. The flow of consciousness is not a process and the present consciousness itself is not a process. Husserl thinks that it is necessary to distinguish the structural relationship of original impression, retention and proactive. On the other hand, it should distinguish the present stage, past stage and future stage, that is, the stage of time object. The original impression, retention and preview are not related to the present, the past and the future. On the contrary, it is their combination that makes the sense of the present, the past and the future possible. Internal time consciousness is a field of

experience, an explicit dimension, which contains all three time patterns. The process of fulfilling the challenge by the person who gets the flow is a happy experience. These experiences will leave a deep impression, which is precisely because of the characteristics of time consciousness. When a person is in the flow, he can not feel the sense of time at the same time. Time becomes faster. However, this does not mean that time consciousness disappears. The relationship of three dimensions of time makes time consciousness remain. Therefore, when reviewing, he will remember the challenges of flow.

Retention and forethought provide a basic sense of the past and the future. Retention is a direct awareness of the past: consciousness that is immediately perceived after perception. It must be pointed out that retention and proactive should not be understood as the stage of a temporal object or the expected future stage. Retention and forethought are the moments that stay in the present. They retain the present past stage and the present future stage respectively. Therefore, they should not be confused with appropriate memory and expected cognitive behavior. Retention and proactive are both structural components of intentional behavior, and they grasp the past and future in fundamentally different ways. Therefore, the ternary structure of time consciousness does not operate according to the additive function, but integrates the “impression” moment of flow into the field composed of horizontal gestalt. The triple structure of time consciousness ensures the process of reflection. The process of flow is unconsciously entered. You don’t know when to start, but when you are interrupted, you will suddenly find that the feeling just now is so hearty.

Flow: An Implicit Reflection

When someone wants to experience the flow of heart continuously, they will think of doing something meaningful to enrich themselves, instead of simply enjoying themselves. Although pleasure is an important part of a high standard of life, it can not bring flow. The pleasure of flow has the property of developing forward, which is full of novelty and sense of achievement.

Mihaly has found in more than 8000 cases that attention is attracted to the activity itself when flow occurs, thus reducing the energy to monitor self-consciousness or time consciousness. Dreyfus (2004) describes a similar experience, explaining it as “the absorption of the body’s response”. He describes professional athletes running on the track, is a complete loss of self. However, the awareness of oneself may have an impact on himself, and the concerns about his body slow you down. Therefore, Dreyfus is committed to the rule of lost self-consciousness: if a person is fully committed to adapting to his environment, he cannot realize himself by being aware of his behavior.

However, when the athlete is completely immersed in the flow of cross-country running, he can still guide his legs across the boulder. Mihaly’s case shows that when this happens, people think that the individual is very important to the adjustment of the body, but they still don’t feel the self clearly. In this regard, we found that the consciousness of people in the flow seems to need a minimum self-awareness, even if they are completely immersed in it, they also need to be distracted to manage their bodies, so Dreyfus’s view can not be correct. According to Dreyfus, “in a fully absorbed response, there is not only no immersed self, but also an implicit self” (Yu, 2019, p. 3). In his view, people in flow can’t involve self-consciousness. Zahavi refuted this and thought that it was necessary to use transcendental argument to explain self-consciousness: “the self-consciousness I answered on this basis was not acquired at that moment, but the self-consciousness that I always had” (Zahavi, 1999, pp. 77-79). He used pre reflective self-consciousness to negate Dreyfus’ interpretation of self-consciousness as a form of self-monitoring. He thinks that there is a kind of pre reflective

self-consciousness, and there is no contradiction between the self-consciousness and the activity itself, because it can not represent the subject through the transmission of self. In Dreyfus' theory of expert skills, experts must experience the best experience of flow repeatedly. There are five levels of skill acquisition: novice, beginner, competent, skilled and expert. The transition between proficiency and expertise is the most important. The level of proficiency means that you already have a lot of expertise.

Flow must be based on the balance between challenge and skill. In order to complete a harder challenge, we must master the skill of completing it. Training is undoubtedly a conscious process. There are two specific reasons for using cognitive control to change and improve techniques in practice. First of all, everyone hopes to learn new and better techniques and consciously try to improve all aspects of their movements and techniques. Secondly, habitual behavior may be susceptible to sudden or unstable interference. It means that performers usually "fall into bad performance habits or face new conditions of self, and we need to correct and adjust the new environment of spontaneous performance habits" (Shusterman, 2008, p. 56). Therefore, we can only consciously reflect on the efficacy of exercise when habitual exercise fails, which is based on the continuous pursuit of flow, and constantly enter into the best experience through reflection.

In Husserl's view, reflection is a form of self-consciousness. In a sense, it depends on a transcendental form of self-consciousness. In fact, reflection is often regarded as a kind of thematic, clear and strengthened self-consciousness, which aims to gather the main intentional behaviors. The inner time consciousness is the core feature of experience. The perceptual consciousness is not the temporary unity of time, but the flow of time. It is because of this special understanding, when we concretize the behavior, the behavior is formed as a permanent object in the subjective time. The time experience is different in different states of happiness, disappointment, anxiety and boredom. The "reflection" in the flow runs through all aspects of the flow of consciousness in the whole way, and appears in a more profound way with self-consciousness in the aftertaste of the best experience.

In order to explain how the reflective consciousness is different from the relatively universal consciousness required by phenomenal consciousness, Kriegel adopts the introspective mode of "attention shift", which means focusing attention on a specific state. All the people in the flow can accurately answer the content of their actions and the reasons for them based on the implementation of skilled non reflective behaviors. When a person can answer these questions accurately, it means that these behaviors are not unintentional or unconscious.

Flow is a complex, structured and purposeful activity. People complete it carefully and fluently without considering intention. That's why Mihaly says,

although the flow experience may seem easy, it's not. He usually requires intense physical exertion or highly disciplined mental activity. This would not have happened without skilled performance. However, although consciousness continues to be effective, action follows action seamlessly. (Mihaly, 2019, p. 25)

One of the prerequisites for flow is skill proficiency. They no longer need to constantly reflect on their actions, nor do they need to constantly monitor their performance and correct them when they are not in the ideal state. This ability is only in a "dormant" state (Velleman, 1985). Just as when the carpenter was working, he went into a state of selflessness and even forgot the movements of his limbs. However, the pain of a wooden thorn stabbing into his body would make him recall his self-consciousness and give full play to his ability of self-criticism and self correction. This is a common feature of flow and daily expertise, which is considered a

function of daily coping. Heidegger's hammer emphasizes that our flow occurs in this situation, and only when the hammer strikes, can our task be reminded.

The "reflection" in the flow is the driving force of body movement, which is not contradictory to the self immersed in the activity. This not only proves that people in the flow are still conscious, but also the "reflection" in action will not interfere, slow down or interrupt the flow.

Conclusion

Consciousness is the core issue of flow theory. If you want to experience flow, you must reduce your spiritual entropy and control the order of consciousness. Mihaly concluded that in order to obtain flow, the focus of consciousness should be narrowed to clearly defined areas, while the unimportant things should be excluded, the memory of past events and the contemplation of the future should be ignored. The sense of self-consciousness should be weakened and only focus on the development of current things. Self-consciousness is based on the difference between the self and the world. Self-consciousness is a special example of consciousness and exists as the consciousness of the subject of consciousness. In the experience of flow, self-consciousness is aware of the disappearance of self-consciousness, but the self still plays a role. So although there will be a sense of selflessness, the self is not out of control, which in turn may lead to a feeling beyond the boundaries of the self. The change of sense of time is also a wonderful phenomenon of flow. With the help of Husserl's phenomenological theory, this paper explains that in the best experience of flow, time consciousness is not lost with the disappearance of self-consciousness, although it is affected by self-consciousness. At the same time, it also provides the possibility for self reflection behavior. Although flow is a kind of selfless experience, people's action and consciousness are not separated. The self can control the body's action, and even the perception of the body is more obvious. This is a person's reflection on the current activities. Having the skills to deal with challenges skillfully, and being aware of clear goals and feedback, you can get into the flow more quickly without worrying about your lack of control.

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