

Rethinking Habit and Habit Cultivation

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Abstract: Habit is on the wane in the discourse of education theory, although it still maintains great vitality in everyday discourse. It is fair to say that habit as a concept has been distorted by behaviorism. To remove the impact of behaviorism, we need to review and reconstruct the concept of habit. Habits shape “self” and also nourish virtue. Habits concern mind and body, which means they feature “corporeal nature” and “mental nature”. When in action, habits seem to exhibit a double law, but in effect follow a single law. Education plays an important role in habit formation. Education is the environmental factor of habit formation and it cultivates habits through earnest practice and careful deliberation. In addition, education is also an important approach to habit change.

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Habit: A Distorted Concept

The sayings that “man is a rational animal” and that “man is a political animal” are deeply rooted among the people. Because of that, John Dewey’s following remarks may sound abrupt and unconventional: “Man is a creature of habit, not of reason nor yet of instinct” (Dewey, 2012, p. 78). Habit, although advocated by Dewey, is still on the apparent wane in the discourses of ethics and education. Unlike

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its invisibility in academic discourse, habit is frequently encountered and mentioned in everyday discourse. This shows that habit remains an important dimension of human life and that it is still of great vitality. Now that habit itself is not on the wane, there must be some reason for its invisibility in the academic sector.

The word “habit” used to have glorious associations. Habit was another name for morality or virtue. Aristotle put habit on a par with morality and virtue, holding that “moral excellence comes about as a result of habit” (Aristotle, 2003, p. 35). “When the problem arose for us (his students) whether habit or theory was better for getting virtue...Musonius (Rufus) thought habit to be more effective” (Sparrow & Hutchinson, 2013, p. 52). Thomas Aquinas even deemed habit a quality hard to fade and a defense of temperament (Sparrow & Hutchinson, 2013, p. 66). As is known, education in ancient times was almost a synonym for moral education, or to say, education was all about moral education. It was precisely because habit was another name for morality or virtue that habit was at the core of education as a moral cause, or that habit used to be a “keyword” of education.

The wane of habit in ethics and education has something to do with Kant’s moral philosophy, which has had a far-reaching influence. Habit failed to impress Kant, according to whom, “Habit is a physical inner necessitation to proceed in the same manner that one has proceeded until now” and “habit deprives even good actions of their moral worth because it impairs the freedom of the mind” (Bernstein, 2015, pp. 19-20). Kant highlighted the importance of reason and free will and restricted the concept of habit to mechanical repetition. His view has had a substantial impact on the attitude towards habits from the academic circle. Since the Age of Enlightenment, anything that contradicted human reason became an object to be eliminated. Even so, there have been many philosophers after Kant attaching great importance to habit. For example, Dewey openly proclaimed that “man is a creature of habit”.

What has formed a fatal blow to habit is behaviorism. Early behaviorist John Watson described habit as a behavioral pattern “formed through the repeated association of stimulus and response pairs” (Ko, 1998, p. 365). Similar definitions of habit from the perspective of behaviorism have distorted the concept of habit in several senses. First, habit has been behaviorism bonded. In its intellectual history, habit has always been intertwined with action, activity and behavior. Yet, habit has seldom been restricted to a behavioral scope. Terms such as “habit of mind”, “habit of soul”, “habit of feeling” and “habit of emotion” are not rare. Behaviorism, however, tends to limit habit to a behavioral scope and identifies habit as the equivalent of behavioral habit. That is how habit has been pushed to an externalized state of being irrelevant to one’s mind. This behavioristic narrowing of habit has been retained in today’s practice of education. The fact that expressions such as “behavioral habit formation” are frequently heard is clear evidence of the continuation of behavioristic narrowing in the practice of education. Second, behavioristic externalization of habit is not limited to a behavioral approach. Prior to the emergence of behaviorism, habit-environment relevance was seldom

negated, but habit was deemed a subject's habit, which means subject came first in habit formation. Behaviorism understands habit as a repeated response to external stimulus. Thus, habit comes from an external stimulus. Behaviorism has overturned the relative positions of subject and external stimulus, with subject losing its dominance to external stimulus in habit formation. External stimulus now comes first, the reactive subject second. Third, habit is mechanized. Behaviorism regards habit as a repeated association of stimulus and response pairs, and even attempts to mark such a repeated association with neural circuits, resulting in the ossification or solidification of habit, depriving habit of its previous role as a "middle-way" between "stability and change" and thus losing its intellectual vitality and interpretive force.

The reason why behaviorism could be in fashion for a time does not lie in its theoretical stringency, but in its reflection of scientific thinking in the humanities and social sciences (psychology, education, ethics, etc.). Although behaviorist fallacies have been cleared in many academic fields, the impact of behaviorism remains among scholars either consciously or unconsciously. Whenever opportunities arise, behaviorism will re-appear and exert its influence. Dewey's understanding of habit included criticism against behaviorism. Yet given that behaviorism was still ascendant in his era, Dewey's criticism could not be complete. The limitation of his time, coupled with his emphasis on action from a perspective of pragmatism, made it impossible for him to entirely eliminate the distractions of behaviorism. After Dewey, academics overall have tended to avoid using the already distorted concept of habit, rather than criticize and settle accounts with the behaviorist concept of habit.

Behaviorism's distortion of habit is also reflected by the fact that the behaviorist concept of habit "inspires" social control and educational control. Now that habit is a repeated response to external stimulus, the invention and enhancement of external stimulus should gain an expected behavioral pattern from targeted populations. Michel Foucault's related research reveals that discipline training through body control is an ancient exercise which has not been in massive practice until modern times. In such a disciplined training system, the "ghost" of the behaviorist concept of habit is ubiquitous. Although habit is made invisible in educational and academic discourses, it is common for schools to develop students' habits through external stimuli to guide them in doing what they are supposed to do. The invisible, formative influence of the behaviorist concept of habit in the practice of education does harm to both the cause of education and individuals in their growth stage and also imposes an even more notorious reputation on habit to further distort this concept.

Habit Vs. Self and Virtue

In spite of behaviorism's serious distortion of habit, habit remains vigorous in everyday life and education. Accordingly, it is necessary to save and protect the concept of habit, namely, to restore the "original appearance" of this concept by re-clarifying habit's relationships with self

and with virtue, its corporeal and mental attributes and laws of formation.

Habits Shape Self

Saving the behaviorism distorted concept of habit can start from dealing with the relationships between habits and self. Habit is limited by behaviorists only to the behavioral scope, which is wrong. Instead, habit is an identifier of self. Man is a complex multidimensional existence that has a body, thoughts and feelings. This is man's universality. How can one man stand out from the crowd and become the "special one"? What makes one an identifiable independent existence? Perhaps the first answer that comes to mind is body, because every human body is unique. Yet, there is no such thing as pure body, as each human body is invariably combined with a human mind, without which man would be reduced to nothing but a "walking corpse". And there would be no need to identify a "walking corpse", however different it is in shape. Although feelings and thoughts vary from one man to another, such feelings and thoughts, which are implicit, changeable and fragmented, can hardly form an identifiable yard stick. Habits, which are precisely at the juncture of body, thoughts and feelings, can piece together those fragmented human "thoughts" and "activities" to form a consistent and stable existence. "A sense of self comes from the unity and continuity of habits developed over time. It is their habits that help agents achieve a degree of consistency and stability. Were it not for the continuity and inter-connection of habits, Dewey suggests, the lives humans lead would be reduced to a loosely gathered bundle of activities" (Pratten, 2015, p. 1038).

This sense of self, shaped by habits, does not repel such dimensions of human nature as body, thoughts and feelings, but is the result of those dimensions. When Dewey said that "man is a creature of habit, not of reason nor yet of instinct" (Dewey, 2012, p. 78), he did not deny man's basic instinct or human reason. Instead, he meant that such dimensions of human nature could not be the identifiers of human existence unless manifested through habits. Man has a variety of basic instincts, but basic instincts are not identifiers unique to man in general or any individual in particular. Only through habits can basic instincts become a power unique to man or any individual. For example, anger, which is an instinctive emotion, cannot be deemed an identifier of any individual. Only an emotional habit with a personal touch can become such an identifier. It is often said that man is a rational animal. Yet, reason does not come out of thin air, but is based on previously formed habits. In addition, rational activities can also shape habits.

As the saying goes, habit is second nature. If so, what is man's first nature? Apparently, man's first nature should be the physiological instincts that man is born with. According to common sense, the first nature should outweigh the second nature, as the first is supposed to be original and fundamental while the second be derivative. When it comes to human nature, however, habit as man's second nature is more fundamental and is an identifier of being human. From the perspective of individuals, what shapes a sense of self is not the first nature, but the second nature. Habit as the second nature is integrated with self to form an organic whole and therefore

is part of self. It is true that what shapes a sense of self is not one particular habit, but bundles of habits. After all, as the old saying goes, “one swallow does not make a spring”. Likewise, one single habit cannot shape a sense of self, which is instead shaped by man’s living lifestyle organically incorporating a variety of habits.

Habits create a way of living in this world. Only when fragmented and elusive human “thoughts” and “activities” are pieced together to form habits, can one acquire a sense of identifiable self which differentiates oneself from others. “I” through the eyes of others is a consistent and stable existence formed by habits. In this sense, man connects with others and takes root in this world through habits. Also, man interacts with the environment through habits. It is impossible for one to constantly think about how to understand and create the environment one is living in. Under such circumstances, habits, which are formed through man’s interactions with the environment, become a means of man-environment interactions and man’s way of life. Thus, it is through habits that man connects with others and takes root in this world.

The unity of habit and self is also manifested in the non-objectification of habit. Man is an existence with consciousness and self-consciousness. Compared with consciousness, self-consciousness, being the “consciousness of consciousness”, is more advanced and later developed. No one is born with self-consciousness. The formation of a child’s self-consciousness is marked by an ability to say “I”. Before a child is able to say “I”, his or her developing self is already there. This developing self is a dynamic habit structure. From a perspective of individual development, habits come before self-consciousness. Habits are constructing a sense of self before man realizes “self”. George H. Mead posited that there is a subjective “I” self and an objective “me” self. The subjective “I” self mainly comes from experiences and habits, while the objective “me” self is primarily my image through the eyes of others. According to Mead, children already have a subjective “I” self which is based on habits before being able to see themselves through the eyes of others. This subjective “I” self is not themed or objectified. It is a hidden self, based on which children perceive the world and themselves through the eyes of others (Crossley, 2001, pp. 143-149). Habits, which are prior to self-consciousness, once formed, tend to hide under consciousness and integrate with “self” to form an organic whole. “Habit is about self and is generally not objectified into one’s consciousness but is integrated with self to sense and objectify other things” (Sparrow & Hutchinson, 2013, p. 237). Man, as a rational and emotional existence can feel and think about other things and objectify them. During this process of objectification, there should be a subjective “I” self which mainly consists of pre-existing habits standing opposite to the object. The idea that man is a rational being has a far-reaching impact. As a result, the importance of rational choice is often emphasized. Yet, one’s habits are the part closer and more fundamental to oneself, and therefore are more representative of oneself than conscious choice (the relationship between choice and habits is to be elaborated later in this paper). Of course, habits which hide under consciousness can also rise to the level of consciousness to become the object of reflection. Such a rise to the level of consciousness,

however, is not unconditional and it only occurs when habits are prevented from working properly, or when habits are pointed out or reminded by others.

Habits Shape Virtue

Before being distorted by behaviorism, habits were valued because they played an indispensable role in shaping character and virtue. Aristotle's view that virtue mainly comes from habits has been influential. Man is a moral being. For thousands of years, humans have been exploring the secrets to the formation of virtue. During this exploration, few people could ignore the existence of habits. Indeed, habits and virtue share too much in common. First, neither virtue nor habits are objective knowledge; rather, both are combined with man himself (herself) to form a disposition or a state of being. Were virtue objective knowledge, the trajectory of virtue formation would have been much clearer. The fact is, however, much of virtue-related knowledge has nothing to do with people's true moral character. Such a fact has directed us to explore the essence of virtue from habits, which do not belong to objective knowledge. Second, virtue and habits are closely related to practice and implementation. Aristotle said, "We become just by doing just things, moderate by doing moderate things, and courageous by doing courageous things." Likewise, we also form certain habits by doing certain things. Third, both virtue and habits are closely related to environmental influence. Man, as a social animal must take root in the real world, or else he/she will not be able to survive. Taking root in the real world, a prerequisite for man to enter society, means accepting the basic moral presuppositions, habits and customs which have been established by older generations. Such basic moral presuppositions, habits and customs are all hidden environmental factors which exert an indirect subtle influence on the newborn. The newborn unconsciously form their moral character and habits under such a subtle influence. Fourth, both virtue and habits are related to the past and at the same time concern the future. Neither virtue nor habits come from nowhere. Instead, both are the results of past experiences and can act on the present and the future.

What role do habits play in virtue formation? According to Dewey, character is formed by habits and is the interpenetration of habits (Pratten, 2015, p. 1038). Dewey's concept of character here is apparently different from individual morality or virtue and is closer to one's temperament or personality. After all, if the "character" here refers to virtue, the argument would be logically inconsistent as there are many habits which are irrelevant to morality and which have no direct link with virtue formation. Nevertheless, Dewey's view is still thought provoking and helps presume that virtue is the interpenetration of one's various morality related habits. William Ockham classified habits into types, namely, moral, intellectual and sense appetitive habits. It is noteworthy that behavioral habits, which are more familiar to the public, were not identified as a separate category by Ockham, according to whom behavioral habits are nothing but the practice of the above three habits (Fuchs, 1952, p. 5). Irrespective of whether such a classification is persuasive, virtue is clearly more closely related to moral habits. From a Deweyan perspective,

virtue is a moral disposition and character formed through the integration of various moral habits. Admittedly, intellectual habits and particularly sense appetitive habits are not entirely irrelevant to virtue as they constitute the basis or background of the formation of man's virtue.

Thus, virtue concerns habits, although it is still not certain whether habits also include or are based on other habits apart from moral habits. When someone is believed to bear a certain virtue, he or she is supposed to have corresponding habits to practice that virtue. For example, if someone is considered to be honest, he or she has the habit of being honest in thinking and doing. In an honesty test, an honest person will automatically think and do honestly. Without the habit of being honest, honesty as a moral character is nowhere to be found and is impossible to prove. It is thus fair to say that virtue without the support of habits is abstract, illusory and undeliverable. Yet, that virtue cannot do without habits does not mean virtue is all about habits. In addition to habits, virtue also concerns other factors, such as thinking and judgment, which do not affect habits' role in virtue constitution. On the one hand, habits lay the basis for thinking and judgment. Man's abilities to think and judge do not come out of thin air. Such abilities to some extent also rely on habits. On the other hand, thinking and judgment are also habitual and can develop into habits.

Now that virtue is sure to concern habits, man can cultivate virtue through habits. Thus, habits form a major approach to the cultivation of virtue. Regarding this, Aristotle said, "It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference" (Aristotle, 2003, p. 37). It can be inferred from such words that Aristotle considered habits to be an exceptionally important approach to the cultivation of virtue. In his view, virtue does not come from nature, nor does it contradict nature. What virtue represents is human efforts and improvements. The acquisition of virtue is by no means easy and it requires painstaking efforts. Still, through habits, virtue becomes desirable, natural and stable. Aristotle's words also indicate another possibility of the relationship between habits and virtue, that is, negative habits may deprive man of virtue. In general, habit is a neutral concept, which can be either positive or negative. Positive habits can shape virtue, while negative ones can destroy it. This is exactly where education can help, as the mission of education is to enable the young to form positive habits and to correct negative ones.

Habits: A Matter of Mind and Body and Their Laws of Formation

Habits' Corporeal Nature and Mental Nature

Where do habits lie? Body or mind? Behaviorism removes the intellectual part of habits and restricts habits to physiological and even muscular responses. Evidently, habits in a behavioral sense are about a human body without a soul. Such an interpretation of habits is quite different from previous interpretations. Although Aristotle emphasized habits' activity, he also held that

habits are the continuous and flexible disposition or state of soul and that habits herald their holders' feelings and action styles (Sparrow & Hutchinson, 2013, pp. 127-128). Lucius Seneca also held that habits are the power for reason to govern passion and that habits are manifested in the forms of thinking modes and mindsets (Sparrow & Hutchinson, pp. 41-43). Thomas Aquinas did not deny the relationships between habits and the human body but considered the soul to be the only abode of habits. According to Aquinas, the human body cannot be directly habituated, because the nature of the body can hardly be changed. Only that part of the body related to the soul can be habituated. In Aquinas' view of habits, reason is the key because habits can be formed only when emotions and desires are subordinated to reason. It seems that habits are directly related to actions. But in fact, it is habits, which lie in the soul, that govern actions (Sparrow & Hutchinson, pp. 68-71). Most theorists on habits in the pre-modern era, such as David Hume and Ravaisson considered the soul, or mind, to be the abode of habits.

The saying that habits are purely about the mind does not entirely accord with man's intuitive perception. There are so many habits that cannot be separated from the human body. Even man's innermost habits of thoughts and feelings tend to have physical manifestations. Georg Hegel's solution to this problem is to understand habit as a combination of soul and body. Habit is the result of the embedment of body in soul, the direct possession of body by soul, and the direct representation of soul in body (Gao, 2011, p. 66-76). Hegel's thought-provoking interpretation of habit relates habit with both soul and body and considers habit to be a force that combines body with soul. Yet, Hegel considered such "embedment" to be from outside to inside. Habits approach the soul from the body before directly manifesting in the soul. This interpretation reverses the soul-based theory of habits, according to which the manifestation of habits in the body is just the externalization of the habits of the soul.

Unlike Hegel who attempted to combine soul with body, Merleau-Ponty directly identified the human body to be the abode of habits. He said, "Habit has its abode neither in thought nor in the objective body, but in the body as mediator of a world" (Sparrow & Hutchinson, p. 200). According to Merleau-Ponty, habit is first of all a body memory. Different from recollection, which is a non-continuous, past-oriented mental image (imagery) memory, this body memory is a continuous, future-oriented action (non-imagery) memory. Recollection comes from conscious activities, while habitual body memory comes from the conscious and unconscious accumulation of previous activities. Without body, there would be no such thing as habit or the concept of the past. Habit is an extension of the past to the present through the body. Merleau-Ponty understood habit as a corporeal schema, which is "an incorporated bodily know-how and practical sense and a perspectival grasp upon the world from the 'point of view' of the body" (Crossley, 2001, p. 123).

Merleau-Ponty's understanding of habit as a corporeal schema became a school of its own and initiated the phenomenological horizon on habits. Yet not all habits are "corporeal". The body is not the only abode of habits. Merleau-Ponty's understanding of habit came from the

accumulation of his previous activities in his body, and now serves as a pre-reflective basis of comprehending present context and dealing with present matters. He did not touch upon man's previous thinking activities, which have no chance to disappear and still stay there today. By contrast, Edmund Husserl's concepts concerning typification and pairing reveal how habits which were formed through previous thinking activities can work in present activities. Language is a system of typification. In this sense, language is also a system of habits. Whenever a language is spoken, corresponding habits function (Crossley, 2001, p. 131). For example, once we have a concept of volume-weight relevance, our body will automatically exert a force proportional to the volume of an object when we are about to lift it. As a result, we may try to lift what looks like a heavy object, only to find it to be very light and subsequently tumble backwards. This example shows that even such a mental habit as typification is also combined with body to form a habit featuring mind and body in harmony.

Mind-body dualism has been a lasting ideological concept throughout intellectual history. Debates over the abode of habits are the very manifestation of such a concept. Man is an integral existence. Theoretically, man's mind and body can be analyzed separately. In reality, however, mind and body are inseparable and are combined as an organic whole in a real person. It can be concluded from the above analysis that the abode of habits can be body, as well as mind. Habits that take mind as their abode mainly belong to mental activities, which, however, are not entirely irrelevant to physical activities. These mental activities, which are also partially the accumulation of physical activities, are sometimes embodied in postures and physical activities and therefore are of a corporeal nature. Habits that take the body as their abode mainly belong to activities that blend mind with body. These blended activities are not entirely irrelevant to mental activities, either. They are also the non-reflective premises of present mental activities and therefore are of a mental nature (as opposed to a corporeal nature). To some extent, corporeal activities are also a mental nature; mental activities are also a corporeal nature. The abode of habits is not purely body or mind, but the combination of body and mind in human life.

Habit Formation: A Double Law or a Single Law

Félix Ravaisson believed in a double law of habit, a law describing two related empirical regularities. "The continuity or repetition of passion weakens it; the continuity or repetition of action exalts and strengthens it. Prolonged or repeated sensation diminishes gradually and eventually fades away. Prolonged or repeated movement becomes gradually easier, quicker and more assured" (Crossley, 2001, p. 144). According to Ravaisson's explanation, passion or sentiment is a sensation which comes from changes in man's mental and physical experiences. Repeated sensation orients sense organs to the stimulus and prepares them for it, gradually reducing the novelty of the stimulus and the sensory intensity. The intrinsic mechanism lies in the force of inertia. In contrast, repeated action strengthens itself, makes it more proficient, and eventually develops into a "quasi-instinct".

It is easy to understand that the habituation or repetition of action strengthens it and its implied emotion and character. For example, man's habit of caring for others can automate the act of caring and make it a "quasi-instinct". Accordingly, its implied sentiment will develop into a quality, which is an important part of moral character. It is not difficult to understand that the continuity or repetition of passion or sentiment weakens it. For example, a person may be shocked by the first tragic event he or she encounters. As times goes by, however, having witnessed more tragic cases, one will become accustomed to tragedy. This is what is known as compassion fatigue. What really matters is the revelation of the very tragic event that triggers compassion fatigue. Habit is an accumulation of life experiences. The habituation of an object means that object has left its mark on one's mind and body. One's emotional habituation of tragedy also means previously witnessed tragic events have left their marks on one's mind and body. It seems as if man no longer has a response to others' suffering. But in fact, the response is already shown both mentally and physically. That is, man stops showing due sympathy to the suffering of others. In this sense, Ravaissan's double law should be questioned. More specifically, although the continuity or repetition of passion weakens it, the opposite of such a passion is simultaneously developed in mind and body.

The understanding of Ravaissan's double law of habit can be deepened in three dimensions, which respectively are the differentiation of action and passion, the differentiation of activeness and passiveness, and the differentiation of positive value and negative value.

The first dimension, i.e. the differentiation of action and passion has already been discussed in the preceding part of this paper. The second dimension is the differentiation of activeness and passiveness. Accordingly, action can be either active or passive. The continuity or repetition of active action (whose attached sentiment is also active) strengthens it and its attached sensation, while the continuity or repetition of passive action automates action and at the same time eliminates the negative sensation initially arising from the passive action. The automation of passive action means this action, along with its attached value, has been built in man's mind and body and become part of human life. The automated passive action, which has seemingly disappeared, continues to exist in a hidden form. Take the score-based rating system at school as an example. This system was designed to stimulate students' initiative for learning and assess their performance. In the beginning, some students were resistant to it. Such resistance, however, gradually disappeared. Eventually, the score-based rating became the deeply rooted and merited norm. Also, sensation can be either active or passive. The habituation of active sensation, whether it is positive or negative, can strengthen itself. This is to say, habitual active care (positive) can strengthen care, while habitual active discrimination (negative) can strengthen discrimination. The habituation of passive sensation, whether it is positive or negative, can strengthen itself as well. Habitual passive care (positive), namely, care from others can strengthen the receiver's psychological implication of care. By contrast, habitual passive feeling (negative) (which refers to the feeling that a negative event is attached to, such as man's feelings for repeated occurrences

of tragedy, not man's original prompt response to the negative event) can strengthen the psychological implication of indifference and cruelty and eliminate man's original response (such as anger, pain and sympathy). In short, habitual passive feeling indulges an indifferent and cruel heart. The third dimension is the differentiation of positive value and negative value. For both sensation and action alike, if they are positive and moral, their continuity or repetition, or even accumulation in the sub-consciousness can strengthen positive and moral sensation and action. If they are negative and immoral, however, their continuity or repetition can generate double effects. On the one hand, negative and immoral sensation, action and value may be strengthened to form a mind-body structure; on the other hand, man's original resistance to negative and immoral sensation and action may be weakened.

The three-dimensional analysis indicates that the so-called double law is in fact a single law because the continuation or repetition of either sensation or action invariably strengthens itself. The nature of being a single law is directly perceived in terms of active action, positive sensation and positive value, in which the so-called double law or double effect of habit does not exist at all. The double law of habit can only be perceived in terms of passive action, negative sensation and negative value, in which man's action, sensation and value can be both strengthened and weakened. Nevertheless, such a double law is essentially a single law. After all, passive action, negative sensation and negative value are strengthened. What is indeed weakened is man's resistance to and boycott of them. Take compassion fatigue as an example. A tragic event is associated with the feelings of indifference and cruelty. As man gets accustomed to similar events, such feelings become more and more accepted, while man's compassion, which is resistant to indifference and cruelty, is increasingly exhausted. The existence of a double law of habit in the habituation of passive action, negative sensation and negative value should be attributed to the fact that man is an autonomous moral agent. Passive action offends man's autonomy, for which reason it is resisted; while negative sensation and value violates man's morality and therefore naturally gives rise to opposite sensation and response. Yet none of these human nature-based powers can resist the power of habit and all of them will be eliminated by habit. Such a fact further highlights how strong the power of habit is.

The Role of Education in Habit Formation

Given the direct links between habits, self and virtue, the importance of habit cultivation is self-evident. Habit's corporeal and mental attributes, along with the basic law of habit formation, can help explore the role of education in habit cultivation and how to cultivate habits through education.

Education: An Environment for Habit Formation

Many habits which benefit our life are formed through education. Education plays a central

role in habit formation. According to Dewey, the purpose of education is to cultivate habits that can make individuals better fitted in to the environment (which is also what he called growth) (Dewey, 1989, p. 44). In reality, many habits are acquired through education; in theory, education is an activity of habit cultivation. Given that, the position of education in habit formation should be investigated.

As the greatest philosopher of habit studies (Sparrow & Hutchinson, p. 220), Dewey had a unique understanding of habit. Unlike many scholars who approached habit only through the subject of habit, Dewey indicated the power of the environment in habit formation. He compared habit to breathing, which is always considered a physiological function. Yet, without air, breathing is simply a mission impossible. Breathing is in fact a mechanism of organism-environment interaction. The same is also true of habit, which is combined with the power of the environment. Right at the beginning of habit formation, the factor of the environment becomes involved. Man is not an isolated being, but a social animal. One is supposed to consider others when thinking or doing anything. Others, in turn, would express their opinions and exert their influence on what one thinks or does. Any activity which is likely to develop into a habit has been under the influence of the environment and other people right from the beginning.

Another role of the environment in habit formation is to inspire habits. Habits are formed at the request of the environment. In order to survive in a given environment, man must adapt himself or herself to it by understanding the requests from the environment and enabling stable interactions with it. For example, upon graduation from primary school, a student is expected to meet new schoolmates and teachers and adopt new methods of learning in a new middle school. Many habits which the student formed in primary school are not applicable in middle school, where the new environment presents new requirements. The student must form various new habits to help himself or herself meet these requirements and also to develop stable interactions with the new environment. Thus, the environment is the force that enables the formation of new habits and the changing of old habits.

Education (school education) is not an unrestrained environment, but a transformed environment with specific missions. Regarding this, Dewey had a brilliant exposition. According to Dewey, school is not an indiscriminate copy of the social environment. Instead, “(it should) provide a simplified environment. It selects the features which are fairly fundamental and capable of being responded to by the young. It is the business of the school environment to eliminate, so far as possible, the unworthy features of the existing environment from influencing mental habitudes. It is the office of the school environment to balance the various elements in the social environment, and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born” (Dewey, 1989, pp. 20-21). Such an environment is of special significance to habit formation. First, now that school is an environment built in accordance with students’ capabilities and development needs, such an environment is conducive to forming habits which can satisfy the younger generation’s growth

needs. Such an environment is designed to help students cultivate corresponding habits adaptive to their age and development stage. Unlike the unrestrained social environment, the simplified environment that school provides does not unconsciously present various requirements of habits, but consciously and intentionally focuses on some requirements of habits which are urgently needed by this age group of students and which are vital to their future development. Second, school as an environment exclusive of the worthless has had certain social activities screened out. Both this screening and the aforementioned simplification represent school's habit preference. Simplification highlights the habits that school hopes to form in the younger generation, while screening highlights the habits that school tries to prevent them from forming. If school indiscriminately copied social life without any transformation and screening, there would be no need for school. Third, such an environment remains the place where the younger generation can form habits essential for removing restrictions on their personal lives, broadening their scope of life, and even preparing themselves for real life in an anthropological sense. Man grows up in a particular community in a particular region, for which region-specific and community-specific habits are inevitable. The environment of school does not repel such basic habits but rather strives to transform and improve these habits in the process of education to form habits adaptive to a broader scope of life.

Man is a finite existence and has no superpowers. No environment (not even one that is actively constructed for a certain purpose) can guarantee that each and every link is exquisite enough, or that each and every negative factor has been eliminated. The same is also true of the school environment. On the one hand, the school environment cannot completely consider all links, although it is actively constructed. On the other hand, the interactions among these links may exceed the designers' expectations and exert unexpected impacts even if those links are actively designed. For example, schools normally separate students into classes and assign teachers in accordance with a set of system specifications. Yet, the interactions between students and between students and teachers far exceed the control range of that set of system specifications. In this sense, the mission of excluding the worthless, which was advocated by Dewey, is not likely to be truly accomplished because many more worthless items can emerge during the process of school construction and even during the process of excluding the worthless. In short, an environment is invariably faced with spontaneous and unrestrained factors and is unable to totally eliminate all negative and immoral influences, even if the environment has been transformed and actively constructed.

Thus, even such a transformed environment as school cannot guarantee that all formed habits are positive. This is an objective fact which should not be used to deny the significance of habit formation at school, or to advocate a nihilistic attitude towards school. If the basic moral character advocated at school is positive, students are willing to accept its various requirements for related moral habits. School may also showcase some negative habits, which are nothing to be afraid of. After all, school as a transformed environment is an active activity through which

negative habits formed on and off campus can be examined, reflected and criticized. A person without experiences and habits cannot be admitted for such a training of rational reflection as rational thinking or reflection is based on substantial experiences and habits.

Education: Cultivating Habits Through Earnest Practice

For habit formation, education is not just an environment, but also an active mechanism. Education is an activity that enables interactions between educators and students. The specific content of these interactions are subject to the growth needs of students. Even so, educators to some extent still play a dominant role. Through these interactions teachers can guide and shape students and enhance their perseverance. During this earnest practice habits are formed. Earnest practice of interactive activities for the purpose of habit cultivation is based on the theory that these prolonged and repeated activities can automate themselves and inject their value and sensation into students' minds and bodies. By practicing an activity, its value and sensation will be "embedded" in one's mind and body and become an "immediate existential being", i.e. habit. Take the habit of being polite as an example. Earnest practice of being polite during the interactions between teachers and students can make politeness a habit and make it part of the lives of teachers and students. Thanks to its definite efficacy, earnest practice is preferred in education, particularly moral education, and is adopted in the cultivation of students' senses of justice and fairness, respect, care and benevolence.

In the areas of education and culture, earnest practice is a word with positive values and is generally associated with meaningful activities. This intuitive association is not without foundation. After all, education aims to equip the young with conscience and civility. Accordingly, education is supposed to make students do good deeds, and save them from wrongdoing. Yet man is a finite existence. So is education, which is run by man. This finiteness can also be manifested in earnest practice. For example, educators may insist on students' practice of what they believe to be good (but in fact not necessarily good) for students. We can leave aside the value judgment that is attached to earnest practice and approach the role of earnest practice in habit formation from a methodological perspective. According to the single law of habit, for both active and passive action and sensation alike, earnest practice and repetition result in their "embedment" in mind and body. To improve the relative correctness of earnest practice, educators and educational institutions must acquire a habit of "constantly reflecting on one's own habits". In general, decent education normally requires students to earnestly practice what is good (positive) for them. It is just that what decent education believes is positive can turn out to be negative, which is why the habit of "reflecting on one's own habits" is so important.

The word "practice" in "earnest practice" should be understood in a broad sense. "Practice" here covers mental activities, as well as verbal activities. The mind-body dualism, which separates mind from body, and which sees mind and body as independent beings, remains hugely influential. In fact, man is an organic whole of mind and body. Except for tendon reflex,

each of man's external actions involve psychological activity. Although psychological activity is not necessarily converted to external action, it is inseparable to external action. Psychological activity, or inner work, is based on previous activities (previous actions and habits in particular) while psychological activity, which usually draws support from vivid "action pictures", is an imaginative activity. It seems to be a common practice to separate what one says from what one does, or to even set the two against each other. Indeed, what one says is one thing; what one does is another. Yet at the same time, the two are inseparable. In many cases, saying is doing. For example, for those in need of comfort, a heart-warming greeting can be quite soothing; for those who are mentally vulnerable, a hostile or malicious remark can form a huge blow. At school, where knowledge and ideas are spread, oral exchange (verbal activity) becomes a primary activity. What one says usually reflects what one thinks, has a lot to do with what one does, and thus contributes to one's temperament.

Evidently the so-called earnest practice is not simple repetition of a certain action. Earnest practice in education refers to, above all, man's persistence in an activity. This persistence should be viewed holistically, not separately. What education focuses on is not a particular behavioral habit, but a holistic person's activity. Through such earnest practice, students can cultivate "holistic habits" and shape their sense of self and virtue. It should be noted that the cultivation of holistic habits does not prohibit the use of specific actions, experiences and verbal expressions as helpful means. For example, the practice of neat writing is a specific action which can help students strengthen attention and patience while forming a good writing habit.

It is not easy for educators to cultivate desired habits for students, who may refuse to cooperate. Effective approaches to earnest practice involve no complicated procedures. Yet, this does not mean it is an easy job. First, earnest practice should satisfy the students' growth needs. As Aristotle put it, "Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us". When it comes to education, students' growth needs are the very "nature". The minimum requirement is not to be contrary to this "nature". A higher requirement is to meet students' growth needs and actively cultivate positive habits necessary for their growth. Education based on students' natural abilities encounters less resistance; education irrespective of their natural abilities suffers more resistance. Second, earnest practice is a bilateral matter. Education concerns interactions between two generations. If educators impose earnest practice on students by command and regard it as the only way to cultivate students' habits, what they are doing is not education but dictatorship. Although dictatorship may work for a while, it will face resistance from students sooner or later. Even if students eventually give in, what they will acquire is a habit of dictatorship, rather than habits they are supposed to acquire by dictatorial means. Education is not about "doing what you are told". Rather, education is about making educators themselves an example and guiding students' earnest practice through interaction. Of course, teachers and students have different roles, for which reason their respective items of earnest practice are not necessarily the same. Still, they share the same ethos of earnest practice. Moreover, various

morality related practice items transcend one particular role and are required to be done by both teachers and students. Third, proper restrictions are necessary. Students in their growing process can develop multiple impulses and encounter various temptations, which they cannot resist on their own. That explains why proper restrictions are necessary. Such restrictions may come from their schools, teachers, as well as peers. In reality, education is full of undue arbitrary restrictions. Because of that, restrictions have become a sensitive topic in the study of education, with their positive meaning rarely endorsed. It has to be pointed out that restrictions are also an effective means of developing such abilities as reason and self-discipline.

Education: Cultivating Habits Through Thinking

Existing habits tend to be unconscious and can operate automatically without involving consciousness. Due to such a feature, habits are often set against thinking and the role of thinking in habit formation is ignored. Thinking is essentially not opposite to habits. Habits constitute part of rational activity (intellectual activity) such as thinking, which is based on certain habits. Conversely, thinking is a key link in habit formation and habit change and thinking itself can develop into a habit, i.e. the habit of thinking. Some habits come from earnest practice with conscious effort, while others come from unconscious accumulation of life experiences. Presumably, unconsciously formed habits should outnumber consciously formed habits, as a majority of habits are formed unconsciously. Habits which are formed unconsciously come into play unconsciously. This feature of being unconscious brings man significant convenience and freedom. Perhaps the only problem, however, is such unconsciously formed habits include negative habits, as well as positive ones. The significance of thinking can be understood in two aspects. First, thinking brings existing habits into consciousness. In this way, man can distinguish positive habits from negative habits and stick with positive ones and drop negative ones. Second, thinking helps sensible decision-making, which in turn helps the formation of a new habit.

Aristotle attached great importance to the role of deliberation in the formation of positive habits (virtues). How can positive habits be formed? Aristotle's answer is Mesotes (the Mean). To this end, we should avoid two extremes, guard against things that we can easily indulge in, and guard against the pleasant or pleasure, for we do not judge it impartially (Aristotle, 2003, p. 56). Deliberation is the key to the formation of positive habits. Deliberation is a moral character (and also a habit) whose composition is by no means simple. Deliberation concerns previously formed unconscious habits, and also thinking ability or habit shaped in everyday life. A child or juvenile without life experience or habit accumulation cannot expect to acquire the quality of deliberation, as deliberation is a fruit which grows on the "tree of life's experiences". Yet, this does not mean man with rich experiences automatically acquires deliberation. What really matters to the acquisition of deliberation is thinking ability or the thinking habit. Avoiding extremes is a prerequisite for the formation of positive habits. Going to extremes also means

moving away from positive habits. The problem is how to determine one is going too far or not far enough. In this regard, experiences and reflection are essential for an impartial judgment. Guarding against things that one can easily indulge in, and against the pleasant or pleasure is also based on accumulated experiences and a reflective ability or habit.

Deliberation's important role in the formation of positive habits and virtues can serve as the basis for direct moral education. On the whole, habits and morals are spontaneously and naturally acquired, which means they are unconsciously and non-forcibly developed. Such learning can cultivate benevolence and improve moral standards. Yet, such learning is nothing more than spontaneous and hazy absorption of nutrients from the social environment and is still far behind the acquisition of educated and critical "fine morals". One can only expect to reach a higher moral level by combining unconscious learning (the basis) with active moral learning which is guided by specialized moral education. None of the historical figures well known for their high morals achieved their moral greatness only through spontaneous self-enlightenment. Rather, their moral accomplishments should be attributed to the combination of subjective efforts and guided self-cultivation. Lawrence Kohlberg must be well aware of this law, which enabled his discussion of moral dilemmas. Kohlberg proposed dilemma discussion as an effective approach to moral education. John Dewey elaborated indirect moral education as the basic form of moral education, while Kohlberg expounded the significance of direct moral education as a supplement to indirect moral education. Both direct and indirect forms are indispensable to positive habit cultivation and moral education. The two complement each other, rather than repel each other.

Hannah Arendt understood thinking as a dialogue separated from the outside world and carried on by the mind with itself without sound. "Since Plato, thinking has been defined as a soundless dialogue between me and myself; it is the only way in which I can keep myself company and be content with it" (Arendt, 2011, p. 7). Such thinking is based on memories and is past oriented. It is reflection of what has already happened, and what has already been said and done. Dewey's deliberation is more of a rehearsal of the future and is future oriented. "Deliberation is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action" (Dewey, 2012, p. 117). Arendt's thinking and Dewey's deliberation offer two different interpretations of the concept of thinking. Their respective interpretations are in two opposite directions, with one being past-oriented and the other being future-oriented. Nevertheless, both interpretations are conducive to the formation of positive habits. The past-oriented thinking is about rethinking and re-organizing the past, ruminating on one's life, and making unconscious habits conscious. Habits, unconscious habits in particular, can economize the power of life, save vitality and enable man to think and act at a minimum energy cost. Habits, whether positive or negative, acquire their own "will" once they are formed. Then habits try to avoid their subject's control and may turn into their own opposite. Past oriented thinking is a habits targeted preventative mechanism, which ensures that man can enjoy the benefits of habits and at the same time saves man from being controlled by habits and being trapped by an unconscious mechanical

way of life. Future-oriented thinking (deliberation in Dewey's words) concerns contradictions and conflicts between habit and environment, between habit and habit, and between habit and impulse. Existing habits cannot help settle such contradictions and conflicts. Multiple imaginative choices and corresponding effects can facilitate a mental rehearsal to identify the best option. In short, Arendt's thinking is about rumination on existing habits, while Dewey's deliberation is about choice of new habits. Evidently, the different interpretations of thinking are both of vital importance to habit formation and change.

Education: A Major Process of Habit Change

Man is a creature of habits. For man, habit formation is critical; so is habit change. According to Dewey, social custom as a collective habit is an artery of society. The solidification of social customs results in "social arterial sclerosis" featuring social rigidity and stagnation (Dewey, 2012, pp. 64-65). If social custom is an artery of society, habit is an artery of individuals. The solidification of one's habits can also result in "individual arterial sclerosis". Human life is a constant process of habit formation and breaking. If man keeps forming habits without breaking or changing any, he or she is sure to become increasingly rigid and eventually collapse. Consequently, it is necessary for society and individuals alike to break and change habits.

It is an inevitable trend for the young to inherit and learn existing habits from the older generation, as man is born in a world with existing habits. Yet, such habit inheritance and learning are not enough for the young, who also need to form habits of their own. The formation of new habits by the next generation creates an opportunity for social progress. Both habit and social custom as a collective habit feature continuity, which means they are difficult to be changed once formed. For example, a propensity for violence and war can grow out of an aggressive instinct; a selfish and material desire can grow out of a possessive instinct. Such negative habits and unhealthy tendencies need to be undone or eliminated through education. In history there have been many similar negative habits and unhealthy tendencies widely adopted under the cover of human instincts. There is nothing wrong with human instincts. It is the malicious use of instincts that is to blame. Negative habits can be stubborn once they are formed. Even so, every new generation has an opportunity to overcome them. Education itself is an activity specially designed to help the young to battle against human vices, evoke goodness, resist existing evil temptations, and form new positive habits of their own. Thanks to education, man is saved from being led to the point of no return.

Students who are studying at school are already bundles of habits. These bundles, one after another, form a basis and also a starting point of education. Without these bundles of habits, there is no way to begin education. From the students' perspective, habits which were already formed during their preschool years now serve as media to help them perceive the school environment and education. Also, based on these existing habits, they can better feel and think at school. From the educators' perspective, students' existing habits are mixed with positive and negative

ones. One major task of education is to consolidate their existing positive habits and correct their negative ones. Education is of course not all about habit consolidation and correction. Priority should be given to the cultivation of new habits. Every child communicates with the world based on their own situation. Family influence matters, but what is even more important for a child's development is "self-expansion". In this regard, education tries to communicate with each and every one from the standpoint of mankind. Education aims to equip students with a variety of habits which transcend the moment, a particular region and personal preference, and which will enable them to expand their horizons and gain a global perspective.

Habit change does not come easy. Habit is about preference. Changing a habit is going against one's preference. Consequently, habit change can bring discomfort and even pain, even if what is changed is a negative habit. Habit is formed through man's interactions with the environment, for which habit contains environmental elements. One effective way to change a habit is to start with the environment. School is an environment different from home and society. For children who reach school-age, the beginning of school life marks a significant change in their growth environment. This significant change in turn brings change to their habits. These school age children are new members of society. As soon as they enter school, they begin to change many of their habits which have been formed at home and in their local community, and gradually form many new habits under the guidance of the school. During the process of education, school and its teachers can also help students correct their negative habits by changing certain small or micro-environments when needed. Such a micro-environment can be a fiercely competitive class, in which students are prone to be mutually wary and exclusive. The most effective way to correct such a negative habit is not moral teaching but change of the competitive environment. In addition, school as a formal educational institution can have their own preferences, which become an environmental factor of students' habit formation. The solidification of a school's preferences can result in the solidification of its students' habits. For this reason, school as a conscious educational institution should possess the abilities of constant self-reflection and self-improvement. Such self-reflection and self-improvement concern its vitality and, more importantly, the change and development of students' habits.

Another way to change habits is to help students move unconscious habits into the conscious range. One's habits are integrated with oneself. Normally, it is difficult to objectify habits and make them noticed. One's will can hardly exert any impact on unconscious habits, to say nothing of changing them. To have some habits changed, one should first of all include them into the conscious range. The mission of education, especially humanistic education, is to help the young understand themselves. On a macro level, education should be based on students' own experiences to expand the depth and breadth of human culture. This process of education involves examination of students' habits and reflection on human culture, both of which objectify habits and make them noticed. On a micro level, teachers as education guides can directly highlight students' negative habits and make unrestrained habits visible to students. The habits

of the young are invisible to themselves. And such invisibility is exactly what education can start with. Education is supposed to “dispel the mist” by macro- and micro-means to enable students to see their hidden habits which are not known to themselves. The inclusion of unconscious habits into the conscious range is only the first step towards change. Just like habit formation, habit change is a lasting ongoing process which requires patience and perseverance. During the process of habit change, educators should provide sufficient support and assistance for students, and also consciously cultivate their perseverance and willpower.

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