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## REFERENCES

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- 1 Cambridge University Press has recently published a new paperback edition of *Habits. Pragmatist Approaches from Cognitive Science, Neuroscience, and Social Theory*, edited by Fausto Caruana and Italo Testa, making this volume available to a wider readership. This is good news, given the important contribution which this volume makes to the current debate on recent trends in cognitive science, social theory, and pragmatism, as well as the high quality of the papers it includes.
- 2 The editors' ambitious goal is not simply to gather a great number of good articles concerning scholarship on habits across different research fields. The volume reflects an explicit cultural strategy which is strongly supported by the two editors, Fausto Caruana and Italo Testa, and which consists in the claim that in cognitive science, neuroscience, and social theory alike a similar and convergent turn is occurring from methodological individualism, representationalism, and intentionalism to more embodied, externalist, and ecological views of the mind and agency. More impressively still, the editors propose to make use of a pragmatist-inspired conception of habit as a key way to develop an alternative paradigm, namely to support the trend to move

beyond the core idea that the individual mind is responsible for cognition and agency through the mediation of alleged interior representations, intentions, or even computational processes.

- 3 The rival philosophical perspective is clearly indicated in Caruana and Testa's introductory essay and further brought into focus by a series of papers included in the book. The reader can easily recognize a cluster of features that could – and should – be overcome by adopting a new approach to cognition and action gravitating around a broadly pragmatist account of habits. These features are: methodological and ontological individualism, both in the philosophy of mind and in social theory; brain-centrism and the neuroscientific view that perception is processed independently and prior to cognition; the representationalist assumption in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science that the mind processes information about the world through internal contents; the philosophical legacy of intentionality as a specific quality of the mind allowing it to connect with objects in the world; and, finally, the idea within social theory that models of social agency result from the association of primarily independent individual actions.
- 4 For sure, it is original to parallel turns that are occurring in different fields of research, and it is challenging to make use of habit as a hinge concept. It remains to be assessed whether the concept of habit is robust enough to support the whole operation. So, let's briefly consider the contents and structure of the book.
- 5 The volume explores the meaning and role of habits in neuroscience, cognitive science, and social theory along three main directions of inquiry, corresponding to the three main parts of the book. The latter is not primarily intended to be a contribution to the pragmatist scholarship on habits, although it includes some important papers by outstanding scholars in the field. Rather, the use of a view of habits inspired by Classic Pragmatism is instrumental – in the best sense of the term – as the volume “pragmatically” considers the impact of this concept on some major fields of research.
- 6 The first part of the volume chiefly focuses on the sensorimotor embodiments of habits, and includes papers suggesting a pragmatist perspective in neuroscience (Shulkin), as well as the claim that there is a close relationship between habits and the self even on a neuronal level (Northoff). In the second place, this first part of the book focuses on habits and emotions by exploring the case of laughter, which is seen to lie at the intersection between emotional mirroring and the development of social habits (Caruana), and more generally by considering the mutual dependence between emotive habits and social conditions (Hufendiek). The third section of the first part tackles the issue of habits' peculiar intelligence through a couple of contributions on habits and skills (Miyahara-Ransom-Gallagher on the one hand, Cappuccio-Ilundáin Agurruza on the other).
- 7 The second part of the book deals with habits' enactment in the mind and the world. A first section highlights the connections between habits and actions through a paper dealing with the opacity of habitual, embodied agency (Brinker), and another one comparing James's, Merleau-Ponty's and Nishida's views of habits (McKinney-Sato-Chemero). The second section features a contribution on the peculiar intelligence of habits (Hutto-Robertson), a criticism of intentionality (Steiner), and a reformulation of the enactivist theory of linguistic bodies in terms of habits (Cuffari). This second part of the book ends with papers discussing moral habits as scaffolding moral life (Johnson) and supporting moral virtue (Rockwell).

- 8 The third part of the volume approaches habits from the point of view of social theory, through a first section on the significance of habits for enculturation (Menary), a pragmatist account of habits reinforced by Russian psychology (Turner), and an original investigation of the peculiarities of habits in the final years of human life (Sullivan). The second section provides an inquiry into habits and artifacts as sites of enculturation (Fingerhut), as well as an attempt to integrate habits within the account of aesthetic experience revolving around mirror neurons and embodied simulation (Gallese). The volume ends with a last section suggesting the opportuneness of a shift in social theory toward methodological and ontological interactionism (Testa), a discussion of habits as patterns of interactions (Frega), and a final contribution on habits and social reproduction within the feminist debate (Gregoratto-Särkelä).
- 9 This rich and varied series of contributions provides some interesting and often fruitful characterizations of habits that, while not always converging, seem to shape a common view, involving some central features.
- 10 Most of the contributions assume a basically holistic conception of habits, along the lines traced by Barandiaran and Di Paolo, thereby opposing the associationist perspective. Habits are not considered to be the result of a mere repetition of sequences of stimuli and responses, as is instead the case with Behaviorism and English Empiricism. In the organicist tradition, habits are alternatively seen as “ecological, self-organizing structures that relate to a web of predispositions and plastic dependencies both in the agent and in the environment” (Barandiaran & Di Paolo 2014).
- 11 More specifically, most authors adopt a clearly interactionist view of habits, developing John Dewey’s original insight that habits are functions of the organism as well as of the environment (Dewey 1922/1988). Habits, in other words, are seen as characterizing personal behavior insofar it does not depend on any alleged autonomous intention or even purely individual dispositions and attitudes, but rather results from the combination of resources coming from the individual agent, as well as from the environment, the social context, and the cultural milieu where human actions and practices are formed and take place. Habits appear to be essentially interactive at multiple levels, primarily from an ontological point of view, as well as on the methodological level.
- 12 Social interaction is a pivotal feature in the conception of habits espoused by most scholars participating in the project: basically, according to this perspective, individual behavior is continuous with already established practices and common ways of acting and doing things, and cannot be assumed to be primarily independent and isolated from the social background it is embedded in (Testa, Frega). The third part of the book particularly stresses the importance of this insight for bringing about a change of approach in social theory and the social sciences.
- 13 The volume – particularly in its second part – also provides some outstanding insights regarding the peculiar intelligence of habits beyond the now common dichotomy between the notion of automatic, mindless coping with the world and the idea that human actions are always intellectually mediated and planned through explicit inferential processes. Habits are seen as structuring heedful performances insofar as they involve a form of sensitivity to the context that is part of the habit itself – or at least of some kinds of habits (cf. Miyahara-Ransom-Gallagher, Cappuccio-Ilundáin Agurruza, Hutto-Robertson).

- 14 Hence, the balance is good as regards to the main challenge taken up by this book – fostering the development of a new paradigm based on the concept of habits, so as to promote a profound overhaul of neuroscience, cognitive science, and social theory. Of course, a new theoretical framework cannot simply revolve around one main concept: it should be integrated with an array of diverse and flexible concepts and tested in relation to common everyday issues and problems.
- 15 These are directions that can already be detected in many contributions. For example, Georg Northoff proposes an innovative inquiry into habits and selfhood, focusing on their shared capacity to stabilize and to provide unity and continuity to human experience. Fausto Caruana sheds a new light on the issue of laughter, which continues to puzzle philosophers, psychologists, and anthropologists. Maria Brinker emphasizes the structural opacity of habits as a medium of human behavior, including heedful habits. Pierre Steiner formulates a radical criticism of intentionality and corrects some possible misunderstandings in the adoption of the concept of habits in post-cognitive cognitive science. Shannon Sullivan puts in the foreground the neglected issue of habits in old age through an approach that is far from obvious.
- 16 I have mentioned only a few of the stimulating insights offered by this Cambridge volume, based on my own “standing predilections” (i.e. my own habits, according to one of Dewey’s definitions of this concept). Nevertheless, the articles gathered in this volume are all noteworthy and will not fail to meet the (specialist and personal) preferences of a diverse readership.
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