HABIT'S PATHWAYS

REPETITION, POWER, CONDUCT

TONY BENNETT

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PATHWAYS

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS Durham and London 2023

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Aimee C. Harrison
Typeset in Garamond Premier Pro and Degular
by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Bennett, Tony, [date] author.
Title: Habit's pathways : repetition, power, conduct / Tony Bennett.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2023. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2022060444 (print)
LCCN 2022060445 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478024989 (paperback)
ISBN 9781478020394 (hardcover)
ISBN 9781478027331 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Habit—Political aspects. | Habit—Social aspects. | Politics and culture. | Political culture. | Power (Philosophy) | Political socialization. | Political sociology. | BISAC: SOCIAL SCIENCE / Sociology / Social Theory
Classification: LCC HM621 .B4525 2023 (print) | LCC HM621 (ebook) | DDC 306.2—dc23/eng/20230419
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022060444
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022060445

Cover art: Philip Guston (1913–80), *Painting, Smoking, Eating*, 1973. Oil on canvas, 197 × 263 cm. Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. © The Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

There are, in some chapters, boxed texts outlining different Scenes of Habit associated with the positions taken by some of the most influential writers on the subject.

A good deal of the historical literature on habit that I discuss speaks of "man" as a generalized stand-in for the human without registering any differentiation of gender. I have retained this usage as part and parcel of the discourses under discussion rather than correcting it in the light of current critiques.

When I italicize passages in quoted texts I am, in all cases, following the original.

When quoting consecutive passages from the same source, I usually only give the author and date of the source following the first quotation and, thereafter, only the relevant page number. Where I quote a number of such passages from the same page, I give the page number after the last passage quoted.

Where I draw on earlier work I have published on habit, I indicate this in an endnote.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been interested in habit for quite some time in the context of both individual and collective research projects through which I have incurred many intellectual debts. My interest was initially prompted by my work on the history and theory of museums when, exploring the role played by anthropology in relation to the practices of museums in colonial contexts, I first came across the doctrine of survivals. This attributed the "backwardness" of "primitive peoples" to their perpetuation of an original set of habits marking their transition from a state of nature. As I have since learned, this doctrine has itself exhibited a remarkable capacity for survival in the continuing role it has played—well into the twentieth century—as an influential version of habit's conception as a form of uninterrupted repetition. I found out a good deal more about habit's colonial histories in a collective project—Museum, Field, Metropolis, Colony: Practices of Social Governance, funded by the Australian Research Council—that I convened shortly after joining the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University in 2009. It was in examining the role of museums in practices of colonial governance across a range of national contexts that I first came across John Dewey's work on habit and its relations to the Boasian tradition in anthropology. My thanks, then, to my coresearchers in this project—Fiona Cameron, Nélia Dias, Ben Dibley, Rodney Harrison, the late Ira Jacknis, and Conal McCarthy—for the insights I gained from the immensely collaborative spirit in which our research was conducted. I owe a special debt to Ira Jacknis for the generosity with which he shared his unparalleled knowledge of the work of Franz Boas.

Around the same time that I first became interested in museums, I developed an interest in the sociological tradition that went under the heading of "the critique of everyday life." Prompted initially by the influence this tradition had exerted on the currency of resistance theory in cultural studies, I was led to a different appreciation of its construction of the relations between habit and repetition by the feminist critiques to which it was subjected. My thanks, then, to Rita Felski and Lesley Johnson for first awakening my interest in the need for a more critical probing of the role of habit in this tradition and, indeed, in sociology more generally. And my thanks to Elizabeth Silva for the work we did together in pursuing this line of inquiry in the context of the Open University's National Everyday Cultures Program in the early noughties.

It was through this program that Elizabeth and I entered into a productive collaboration with Mike Savage, Alan Warde, and Modesto Gayo from the University of Manchester and David Wright from the Open University in the Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion project. Funded by the United Kingdom's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) over the period 2003–6, this project rekindled my interest in Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus and the intricacies of its relationship to the concept of habit. This was also true of the later project—Australian Cultural Fields: National and Transnational Dynamics, funded by the Australian Research Council—which, in probing the relations between cultural fields, cultural capitals, and habitus in Australia, allowed me to extend and deepen my acquaintance with Bourdieu's work on habitus. I am especially indebted to Greg Noble in this regard for constantly nudging me toward a more nuanced appreciation of the intricacies of this concept. But I owe a debt, too, to the other members of the research team: Michelle Kelly, David Rowe, Tim Rowse, Deborah Stevenson, and Emma Waterton from the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University; David Carter and Graeme Turner from the University of Queensland; Modesto Gayo from the Universidad Diego Portales in Chile; and Fred Myers from New York University.

The collaboration between the Open University and the University of Manchester in the Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion project led to a more extended collaboration between the two institutions in the ESRC-funded Centre for Research on Socio-cultural Change. I am grateful to Mike Savage, as the leader of this initiative, for involving me as one of the Centre's directors, for the opportunity this presented of developing a five-year program in collaboration with Patrick Joyce called Culture, Governance and Citizenship.

Working with Patrick and other colleagues in this theme, particularly Francis Dodsworth, contributed significantly to the development of my interest in the relations between habit and freedom associated with its enrollment in practices of liberal government. I am particularly indebted also to Nikolas Rose, with whom Patrick, Francis, and I collaborated in organizing an ESRC-funded program of workshops called Government and Freedom: Histories and Prospects. Apart from the stimulation of Rose's critical rethinking of the relations between government and freedom, the workshop program brought together many scholars who have made signal contributions to contemporary engagements with habit and from whom I learned a great deal. I record, in particular, my debt to the work of Mariana Valverde in this regard.

The same was true of the 2010 workshop I co-organized with Greg Noble and Megan Watkins from the Institute for Culture and Society, Francis Dodsworth, and Mary Poovey from New York University. This undoubtedly broadened my horizons regarding the scope of concerns encompassed by the concept of habit with probing contributions from Lisa Blackman, Nick Crossley, Simon Lumsden, and Melanie White. My thanks, too, to Clare Carlisle and Elizabeth Grosz. Although neither of these was able to attend the workshop in person, they contributed agenda-setting papers to the special double issue of *Body and Society* (19, no. 2–3) that came out of the workshop in 2013. Although the approach I take in this book differs significantly from those taken by Carlisle and Grosz, it is one I should not have been able to develop without the stimulation that their work has offered.

I am, however, more immediately indebted to the other members of the research team—Gay Hawkins, Greg Noble, and Ben Dibley from the Institute for Culture and Society and Nikolas Rose from King's College, London—for the Assembling and Governing Habits project. Funded by the Australian Research Council from 2017 to 2021, this examined different ways in which habits are assembled by, and made actionable on the part of, a range of governing authorities. Apart from giving me the opportunity to extend my reading of the literatures concerned with the relations between habit, power, repetition, and conduct, my approach to these questions was enormously enriched by this team of collaborators. I owe special debts to Gay for her work on the infrastructures of habit; to Greg for once again pushing me on the concept of habitus; to Ben for his critical engagement with the work of Gabriel Tarde and crowd theory more generally; and to Nikolas, whose work on the neurosciences and, before that, on the history of the psy disciplines has helped to shape my thinking on habit in many ways. I also owe particular debts to Gay

for her critical reading of chapter 5, to Nikolas for his assessment of chapter 6, and to Greg for his critical review of chapter 7. And a special thanks to Ben for reading a draft of the whole book and for the comments on many points of detail, as well as on the book's overall argument, that he offered. And my thanks to the many participants in the two workshops organized by the project for the insights I derived from their contributions. I have also, in the case of Carolyn Pedwell, learned much from her work on those aspects of habit's histories in which we have shared a long-term interest. I am also grateful to Ian Hunter and Susan Zieger for their comments on an early draft of the introduction, and to Ian and Susan for their critical reading of chapters 4 and 2, respectively. I am also indebted to Susan for her work on various aspects of the relations between habit and the histories of addiction and slavery on which I draw in parts of the book.

Special thanks, too, to Kenneth Wissoker from Duke University Press for his exceptional guidance and support in shepherding my initial proposal and then my text and its revisions through Duke's commissioning and review processes. These had some unexpected but, in the end, productive ups and downs, and I am grateful to Ken for guiding me through them. My thanks, too, to Ryan Kendall and Kate Mullen for their supportive advice and assistance through these two stages. And my particular thanks to Ihsan Taylor and Brian Ostrander for their helpful guidance through all stages of the production process. I especially appreciate the rigorous copyediting of my manuscript at the outset of this process.

I am also grateful to the three anonymous reviewers commissioned by Duke University Press for their thoughtful and probing comments on the book's conception. These prompted me to rethink aspects of the structure I had proposed for the book and to be clearer, both in my own mind and for the reader, regarding my aims. I am especially grateful for the encouraging spirit in which reviewer 1 and reviewer 3 responded to the manuscript and proposed productive lines of revision. I am grateful, too, to Simon Chambers for his assistance in tidying up various technical aspects of the text.

Finally, even though it's getting to be something of a habit, I acknowledge my incalculable debt to my partner, Sue, for her support throughout the writing of this book, and for her critical reading of its various drafts. I doubt I should have kept on track otherwise.

Introduction

HABIT—THEN AND NOW

HABIT HAS BEEN A SUBJECT of intellectual debate and political contention—and usually both together—since its initial conception in the Western tradition of classical philosophy. In being reinterpreted across a succession of intellectual traditions—Christian theology, early modern philosophy, and the empirical sciences, from eighteenth-century physiology to the contemporary neurosciences—accounts of what habit is and what it does have invariably formed a part of how it should be acted on in order to be guided or directed to particular ends. These questions have also prompted a further set of issues concerning whose habits should be acted on, by whom, and with what authority. There have been many periods in which such matters have been more or less settled and when, accordingly, the debates over habit's meaning and direction have been relatively muted, just chugging along in the background. But there have also been times when habit has become a hotly disputed topic as both the terms in which it should be understood and what should be done to or with it are sharply contested.

Ours is such a time. While subject to variable interpretations, habit has always been understood to constitute, as a part of its definition, a form of unthinking repetition. As such, habit is now, and has been for some time, at the forefront of a whole set of politically urgent questions. The exigencies of climate change put the role of unthinking repetition on the line in a variety of ways ranging across our daily travel routines and forms and degrees of energy consumption. A related set of ecological concerns flag the significance of the unthinking repetitions that often characterize practices of littering and waste disposal more generally. Then there are the unthinking habits of white privilege that have become key matters for concern in critical race theory, just as feminist thought and queer theory have sought to disrupt the unthinking repetitions that underpin dominant forms of gendered behavior. In a different register, the increasing presence of automation has generated a range of concerns centered on the roles played by unthinking repetitions across human and machinic forms of action: the role of automation in new forms of labor discipline, for example, alongside the development of new ways of collecting and acting on our habits through computational forms of governance. The list could and, as my argument unfolds, will be extended. What matters for now is just to note the extraordinary range of contemporary political concerns that foreground questions of habit and are responsible for the marked upswing of interest in the topic that has been evident over the last three to four decades. This upswing of interest has been characterized by marked disagreements as habit's repetitions have been cast in a multitude of different roles, some negative and disabling, others positive and generative, in being conscripted as both the target and agent of different political projects.

My primary purpose in what follows is to contribute to the current debates regarding these contested theories of habit and their practical implications by placing them in the context of habit's longer histories and disputations. I do so by pursuing two main lines of argument. The first is to propose a set of principles for interpreting the relations between habit's intellectual and political histories that will illuminate how habit has been implicated in the exercise of varied forms of power. This involves considering the different ways in which habit has been interpreted across a range of discourses, and how the capacities that have been attributed to it have informed the practices of different institutions and apparatuses. The different constructions that have been placed on the relations between habit and repetition are of pivotal significance in this regard. These vary from habit's conception as a mechanism through which the repetition of the same is reproduced to its interpretation

as an aspect of the processes through which repetition, when viewed as a dynamic force, generates difference. There is, articulated across these contrasting views of habit, a related set of differences: between habit's conception as a chain or fetter and its conception as a liberating force giving rise to a capacity for freedom. In interrogating the relations between these different accounts of habit, I argue that what is at issue in habit's varied histories are a set of contests between different authorities—ethical, scientific, theological, and philosophical—regarding the means by which conduct should be governed and the ends to which its governance should be directed.

My second line of argument brings this perspective into a critical dialogue with what is arguably the most influential account of habit in contemporary critical theory: the tradition that, taking its cue mainly from Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (2004), has rehabilitated habit. In disputing the view of habit as a negative form of repetition that held sway in the early postwar period, this tradition has restored earlier understandings according to which habit serves as a positive mechanism in enabling change and transformation at both the individual and societal levels. This rehabilitation has largely taken place through a revival of interest in a distinctive lineage of French thought—Maine de Biran, Félix Ravaisson, and Henri Bergson are its main representatives—on which Deleuze drew. This lineage adopted a critical relationship toward the interpretations of habit that had been proposed, from the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, across a range of new scientific disciplines: physiology, psychology, evolutionary biology, and neurology, for example. In doing so, it drew on earlier conceptions of habit—those associated with selected aspects of both Christian theology and early modern philosophy—in order either to rebut or to lend a different inflection to the programs for the governance of conduct that followed from the accounts of habit that these disciplines had proposed.

The intersections between these two sets of concerns define the historical coordinates—the relations between "habit then" and "habit now"—of my inquiries. The intellectual histories I consider are mostly limited to the contentions over habit's conception that occurred across the nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries but tilted toward the issues at stake in the debates over "habit now." However, I also look back to some earlier episodes in habit's histories in view of their bearing on these later developments. These include the role that habit played both in medieval monastic culture and in the broader forms of pastoral government that were brought to bear on the laity by the Catholic Church, as well as the challenges to these associated with

varied forms of dissent. They also include John Locke's account of the part played by habit in the constitution of the liberal subject in view of its long-standing influence on subsequent conceptions of habit's role in facilitating the acquisition of new capacities.

In addressing these aspects of habit's intellectual histories, I constantly have in view their relations to how habit has been put to work politically. I intend *political* here in its broad sense, referring to the uses to which habit has been put across a spectrum of institutions whose practices are involved in the direction and governance of conduct, rather than limiting it to the role of state actors. While the rehabilitation of habit that has followed in the wake of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* has not denied these political aspects of habit's histories, it has rarely paid them systematic attention. As a counter to this, I draw chiefly on Michel Foucault's work to foreground the respects in which interpretations of habit have always constituted operative parts of machineries of power. In doing so I discuss how the practical consequences of the place that habit has been accorded in such entanglements have varied historically across the different types of power that Foucault distinguished while, at the same time, taking account of the respects in which these have overlapped and influenced one another. This requires a consideration of the ways in which the positive accounts of habit associated with its role in the constitution of liberal subjects have been accompanied by limitations that legitimize habit's conscription as a mechanism for varied forms of the illiberal governance of others. This has been, and still is, true across relations of class (the factory system, the current algorithmic governance of labor); gender (the differentiation of gender roles according to different degrees of susceptibility to habit's repetitions); and race (from the role of habit in the ordering of slave labor to its role in the biopolitical underpinnings of colonial forms of governance).

In opting to pursue these concerns through the concept of "habit's pathways," I was guided, initially, by Sara Ahmed's use of the concept of pathways in *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* (2019). This alerted me to the possibilities of using habit's pathways as a point of entry into the interacting intellectual and political histories constituted by the varied ways in which different authorities have treated habit as a means of acting on the conduct of specific populations in order to lead or direct them, or induct them into leading themselves, along specific trajectories. While I had come across pathway metaphors in the literature on habit in my earlier reading on the subject, I was surprised at how productive the concept proved when rereading key texts in the field. This was partly because of the virtual omnipresence of pathway metaphors,

but more significantly because of the roles they have been accorded in the strategies through which leading writers on the subject have differentiated their positions from those of others. Such readings of habit's pathways—of their form and direction, of who should be led along them, of who should be left just where they are, and who should do the leading—constitute the summative signatures of different theories of habit. I shall, then, be concerned with habit's pathways for the insight they offer into how competing authorities have vied with one another in their interventions into habit as a discursive and institutional site for contending political figurations of the relations between repetition and conduct.

My purpose in pursuing these lines of inquiry is not to propose a new version of habit's pathways. I shall rather suggest a way of thinking about habit that is both more limited and more expansive than particular constructions of its pathways: more limited in that it does not prescribe a course for the direction of conduct; more expansive in that it provides a means of engaging with the role habit has played, and continues to play, in struggles and contestations over the conduct of conduct.

So much for a rough overview of my concerns. However, it will be worthwhile to flesh out these bare bones of the argument by looking at some examples of habit's pathways, and how I propose to navigate them, before offering a road map to the route I take through the following chapters.

Navigating habit's pathways

In *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*, Bruno Latour sings the praises of habit as "the patron saint of laid-out routes, pathways, and trails" (2013, 265). Imagining a "lost hiker who has to hew out his own path," and who has therefore to hesitate at every step, wondering which way to go, Latour casts the relief such a hiker feels on coming across "a trail already used by others" as a moment of encounter with "the extraordinary blessedness of habit: he no longer has to choose . . . he knows what to do next, and he knows it without reflecting" (265). Without habit, he continues, "action would no longer follow any course. No trajectory would ensue. We would constantly hesitate as to the path we should take" (266). Latour is by no means alone in drawing on the imagery of routes, pathways, and trails to identify habit's positive qualities. Indeed, he acknowledges his debt to William James, who, in his *Principles of Psychology* ([1890] 2007), also counted habit's unthinking repetitions as a blessing in enabling the acquisition of new competencies via the physiological legacy of the grooves they inscribe in the passages of the nervous system.

Although the pathway analogy has been regularly invoked in the accounts of habit developed in Western intellectual traditions, it has not always been interpreted so positively. Sigmund Freud, for one, was skeptical. While welcoming in theory the order produced by the mechanism of "repetition-compulsion by which it is ordained once and for all when, where, and how a thing shall be done so that on every similar occasion doubt and hesitation shall be avoided," he argued that this was constantly frustrated by an "inborn tendency to negligence, irregularity, and untrustworthiness" that only constant and laborious training could overcome (Freud 1994, 25). The blessedness Latour attributes to habit can equally prove to be a curse for others. Helen Ngo thus interprets the bodily habits of white racism that are "called upon readily and effortlessly in navigating encounters with the racialized 'other'"—flinching, turning away, crossing the street, panic—as ones whose ease arises from their unchallenged rehearsal as parts of a repertoire of responses that has become sedimented in white corporeal schemas (2017, 23). And the value that, in the passage I have cited, Latour places on the elimination of hesitation is not universally endorsed either. Indeed, for Pierre Bourdieu, it is precisely the moments of hesitation that are introduced when routinized practices coded into the habitus are interrupted by "'blips'—critical moments when it misfires or is out of phase"—that open up the possibility of marking out a new path for conduct (2000, 162).

Nor are the directions in which habit's pathways point always forward looking. If, for Latour and James, habit's pathways facilitate an onward journey, they have just as often been invoked to describe circuitous routes that bend back on themselves to return to their point of departure. It is this conception that Georges Perec invokes in his account of somnambulism exemplified by the "robotic actions" of "a man asleep": "It is one ceaseless and untiring circumambulation. You walk like someone carrying invisible suitcases, like someone following his own shadow. A blind man, a sleepwalker. You proceed with a mechanical tread, never-endingly, to the point where you even forget that you are walking" (2011, 187). The endless repetitions of habit's pathways may equally inscribe a backward trajectory for those obliged to tread them. It is the potential reduction of the workingman to an animal that thus informs the account offered by James Phillips Kay (later James Kay-Shuttlewoth) of the mechanization of labor in the early development of the factory system: "The dull routine of a ceaseless drudgery, in which the same mechanical process is incessantly repeated, resembles the torment of Sisyphus—the toil, like the rock, recoils perpetually on the wearied operative. The mind gathers neither

stores nor strength from the constant extension and retraction of the same muscles. The intellect slumbers in supine inertness; but the grosser parts of our nature attain a rank development. To condemn man to such a severity of toil is, in some measure, to cultivate in him the habits of an animal" (1832, 8).

In other accounts, habit's pathways describe a descending spiral. This was the case in late nineteenth-century conceptions of addiction in which the loosening of the controlling force of the will associated with drunkenness described not just a downward course for the individual but, when transmitted via hereditary mechanisms, a degenerative pathway for succeeding generations (Zieger 2008, 204–5). This stood in contrast to the positive force that was attributed to habit's pathways in post-Darwinian evolutionary thought, as the advances registered along habit's pathways by one generation were viewed as being passed on to the next as an accumulating "second nature" that both was informed by and contributed to the development of culture and civilization. But if this collectivized the yield of habit's pathways, it did so only for some peoples. For the anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor, the rituals of "primitive peoples" constituted the withered "survivals" of earlier habits that had become so fixed through endless repetition that they had kept their "course from generation to generation, as a stream once settled in its bed will flow on for ages" (1871, 1:61).

The currency of the pathway as a metaphor for habit can, Clare Carlisle has argued, be traced back to Nicolas Malebranche's late seventeenth-century conception of how habits are formed through the connections that practice establishes between "traces" within the brain whose repetitions make easier their future performance. It is a metaphor, she argues, that "conveys a sense of the temporality of habit" (Carlisle 2014, 25). This is not said to dispute the evident spatial dimension of the pathways that Latour, for example, invokes. But even here, where pathways take the form of routes laid out across the land or grooves carved within the body's nervous system, a sense of time is implicit. Such pathways require repeated movement across their course in order to be maintained through time. But if, like a path, habit constitutes an unconscious archive of past practices in bearing the trace of their passage, it also, Carlisle argues, looks forward, anticipating the beckoning future of the second nature that is the outcome of the ease generated by its repeated actions. This is, however, only one of the forms of temporality associated with habit's pathways that—depending on the authorities that order and superintend those pathways, on the different directions in which they are made to point, and on who is assigned to travel along them—articulate past and present in a range of

markedly variable forms. They might, as Carlisle suggests, beckon a future of increasing ease and grace. But they might equally well portend a graceless degeneration into vice and misery, or an unending daily grind of repetitive toil.

It is, then, the different directions in which invocations of habit's pathways point that serve as my points of entry into an analysis of habit's political histories as constituted by the varying ways in which discourses of habit, and the apparatuses in which these have been deployed, have formed critical components in the exercise of different kinds of power. My concerns in these regards are with those discourses in which habit is figured in the singular—with *habit*, which has a history of specific theoretical uses, and not *habits*, which has a looser and more colloquial usage—while also taking account of their overlaps and interrelations. I shall thus consider both habit's positive interpretations as an enabling mechanism that facilitates the acquisition and development of new dispositions, and those that stress its negative connotations as a disabling form of automatism. There is, on the one hand, a remarkable continuity to how these different interpretations of habit—usually presented as deriving from Aristotle's distinction between, respectively, *consuetudo* and *hexis* (or *habitus*)—have been caught up with one another in the subsequent development of Western thought. This was true, initially, of their usage in Christian theology and then in early modern philosophy but also, from the early eighteenth century onward, of the accounts of habit developed across a range of new empirical disciplines: physiology, psychology, sociology, neurology, and the neurosciences. On the other hand, the positions that these two aspects of habit have been assigned—as well as those that straddle the relations between them—and the roles that they have played relative to one another have proved to be remarkably pliable depending on the shifting discursive, political, and institutional contexts that have conditioned their deployment in the exercise of different forms of power.

Excavating habit's histories

The range of such variations far exceeds the scope of any single study. My purpose is the more limited one of examining selected episodes in the overlapping political careers of these two aspects of habit's conceptualization. I can best outline the historical scope of my inquiries by means of the Google Ngram on the distribution of English-language texts addressing the subject of habit across the period from the sixteenth century to the present (figure I.1). This highlights three general tendencies. The first is the notable rise of

I.1 Google Ngram, citations of *habit* in the English-language corpus, 1500–2008.

interest in the subject registered in the early to mid-seventeenth century with then, toward the century's end, a tailing off of interest bottoming in the early eighteenth century. The second is the steady ascent of interest, discernible from the mid-eighteenth century, leading to unprecedented levels of engagement with the topic toward the end of that century. And third, while high levels of interest are maintained more or less throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, a steady decline is discernible from the 1920s through to the end of the century, when a slight lift in the level of engagement is evident.

In their commentary on this figure, Xabier Barandiaran and Ezequiel Di Paolo (2014) stress the respects in which, before the eighteenth century, theology and philosophy constituted the primary—indeed, virtually the only—disciplines engaged with the topic. While there had been a continuing interest in the subject within Christian theology from the period of the late Roman Empire and through the medieval period, it became a hotly contested subject during the Reformation when the roles habit had played in earlier directive forms of pastoral government were challenged by Protestant reinterpretations of the forms of agency it might be called on to perform in relation to more individualized forms of self-government. These concerns were paralleled by, and later gave way to, the varied roles that were accorded habit in the accounts of the formation and constitution of the self that were proposed in the founding texts of modern philosophy: those of René Descartes and John Locke, for example. The subsequent ascendancy of philosophy over habit's interpretation was unchallenged until the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when it was subjected to what were sometimes far-reaching reinterpretations prompted by new developments across a range of empirical

disciplines: most notably, especially at first, physiology, psychology, neurology, and evolutionary biology, but also, as the century developed, sociology and psychoanalysis. None of these disciplines established a complete break with earlier philosophical and theological conceptions of habit; to the contrary, the conclusions they drew from the experimental evidence they produced were often overdetermined by the influence of preexisting conceptions of habit's place in the makeup of persons and the social consequences that followed from this. By the same token, however, philosophical accounts of habit have been obliged to consider its interpretations by these new disciplines, sometimes with a view to refuting or discounting them, but more often in order to find some accommodation between them and the legacy of earlier philosophical conceptions of personhood. It is this insertion of habit within a vastly enlarged intellectual terrain, one in which habit's conception was highly contested by competing intellectual authorities, that accounts for the consistently high levels of interest in the subject evident throughout the nineteenth century.

I will come back to the reasons for the declining interest in habit over the greater part of the twentieth century in chapter 1. Suffice it to say for now that my historical interests center principally on how habit was caught up in the intellectual to-and-fro between selected tendencies in nineteenth-century evolutionary thought, psychology, physiology, neurology, and sociology and parallel tendencies in philosophy. I shall also register how these exchanges were inflected in specific directions by the legacies of earlier periods of habit's conceptions in theology and philosophy. My concern throughout these historical excavations is to explore how the roles accorded habit along the pathways they uncover formed a part of the exercise of different forms of power over the direction of conduct.

These excavations are not ordered in the form of a chronology. My primary focus initially is with the nineteenth century, and it is from the perspective of the nineteenth-century debates that I look back at earlier moments in habit's intellectual and political histories to identify how these continued to reverberate within its later shifting political functions and uses. But I also, in a genealogical spirit, tilt my discussion of the political dimensions of habit's earlier histories toward a range of the positions habit occupies within the politics of the present, particularly as registered by the uptake of interest in the subject that has been evident since the closing decades of the twentieth century. This reflects the renewed attention that habit has received in the neurosciences; its increasing prominence across diverse currents of con-

temporary critical theory, particularly in feminist and critical race theory; and its increasing salience to matters of practical governmental concern ranging from climate change through waste management to urban transport flows in which questions concerning the relations between repetition and conduct are in play. Habit, in other words, is now a subject at issue across a range of contemporary intellectual tendencies and in relation to a wide range of governmental and political issues. The past-present relations I orchestrate, then, concern the light that previous contentions over habit might throw on its role across a range of contemporary debates.[1]

I pursue these questions via three main lines of argument. The first considers how conceptions of habit as a form of repetition that constitutes a pathway (or flow or course when aquatic analogies are invoked) have been related to the ways in which various kinds of authority (religious, philosophical, scientific) have sought to direct the conduct of selected populations. Such pathways might mark a positive developmental trajectory, ranging from Christian conceptions of habit as a pathway to virtue superintended by varied forms of pastoral authority, through to contemporary accounts of becoming in which habit is figured as a road to freedom that we are beckoned to follow under the guidance of philosophers. In other accounts—especially those in which it is tangled up with the concept of reflex action—habit marks a circuit, assigning its bearers to a treadmill of repetition whose effects are reinforced by coercive mechanisms: those of automated systems of production, for example. Or, where habit's pathways mark a spiraling descent into addictions, they also open up the prospect of return journeys along which their victims might be led back along the path to "normality" by therapeutic or medical authorities.

How these pathways are constructed—to come to my second argument—depends on how habit is placed in relation to other aspects of what I have called "architectures of the person" (T. Bennett 2011b): the senses, the will, reflexes, instincts, the nervous system, the brain, and consciousness. Habit is never figured by itself. What it is, the capacities or limitations that are attributed to it, how these might be acted on and by whom: these have all varied depending on how habit's relations to what have proved to be equally mutable components of personhood are construed. These aspects of habit's definition also have a crucial bearing on how it has been—in its variable singular forms—distributed across different populations and, relatedly, across the relations between humans and animals. Most usually reserved, in its positive definition, for dominant classes, races, and genders, it has been, in its negative forms, most usually associated with subordinate groups. This has often been

part and parcel of their being approximated to "the animal," which has typically served as the foil in relation to which the ordering of habit's distribution across human populations has been effected.

My third strand of argument considers how these different aspects of habit discourses have operated in the context of different kinds of power. I take my cue here from the debates generated by Foucault's analysis of the principles informing the exercise of the main types of power that he distinguished: pastoral, sovereign, disciplinary, governmental, and biopolitical forms of power, as well as the operations of liberal forms of government. I shall also examine the different roles that habit has played in the circuits of capital across the different forms for the direction of free and enslaved labor associated with the factory and plantation systems, as well as its distinctive role in the dynamics of settler colonialism.

The "wayward tradition"

In relating these historical lines of argument to contemporary debates, I explore their bearing on those versions of habit's pathways associated with its recent rehabilitation. The declining interest in habit in the twentieth century went hand in hand with a primary emphasis on its negative versions. This was particularly true, in postwar social and cultural theory, of the role accorded habit as a stifling and dulling form of repetition that characterized the internationally influential tradition in French sociology of the critique of everyday life. The marked increase in the degree of intellectual engagement with habit evident in the closing decades of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, by contrast, has been accompanied by a shift of emphasis toward its interpretation as a positive and enabling capacity. This has been prompted by a number of developments. The influence of Deleuze's reevaluation of habit—or, more accurately, the habit of acquiring habits—as a form of repetition that is generative of difference has been significant. This, allied with the influence of Ravaisson's work occasioned by the recent English translation of his *Of Habit* (2008), has given rise to a significant reengagement with what Elizabeth Grosz (2013, 219) has called the "wayward tradition" of habit theory. According to Grosz and its other advocates (Carlisle 2013a, 2014; Sinclair 2011a, 2018), this tradition—running from Maine de Biran (1929) through Ravaisson and thence, via Bergson (2004), to Deleuze—has given rise to a third view of habit in which the tension between its negative and positive definitions is reconciled by the conception of "the duality of habit,"

according to which its positive and enabling qualities depend on and flow out of its purely mechanical repetitions.

This rehabilitation of habit has undoubtedly been productive in prompting the need to rethink earlier terms of debate that had become somewhat ossified. My primary concern, however, is to explore how, in celebrating habit's pathways for their emancipatory possibilities, this tradition—just as much as the accounts of habit it is pitched against—constitutes a bid to bring conduct under the guidance of distinctive forms of intellectual authority. I pursue this line of argument in relation to the role that the wayward tradition has accorded the concept of indetermination as a moment when the determining power of causal forces is said to be temporarily suspended, thereby opening up the possibility for prereflective forms of habitual behavior to be redirected along the pathways of elected courses of action. This is a well-worn trope in the history of habit discourses, where it has usually been deployed as a means of marking a distinction between those who are said to have the capacity—through the operation of an interval of indetermination—to temporarily pause the force of causal determinations in order to bring their behavior under reflective review and redirect it, and those (variously, children, women, the enslaved, laborers, and Indigenous peoples) who have been denied this capacity. Its distinctive role in the wayward tradition consists in how it has enabled that tradition to both take on board the findings of empirical disciplines while also trumping them by invoking other forms of authority—usually philosophical or aesthetic—cast in the role of freedom's guides. The result is a structure that, in some of its formulations, revives aspects of the virtuous position that was accorded habit in medieval Christian theology, where it marked out a pathway, superintended by the pastorate, for humanity's progression toward salvation and grace while, in other formulations, invoking the authority of the mystic through which the authority of the pastorate was later challenged.

Habit has also been positively revalued as a result of the renewed attention accorded to the work of Gabriel Tarde (1903). Prompted largely by Latour (2002), this has focused on the positive role that Tarde accorded the habit-imitation nexus in the constitution of social life, in contrast to its condemnation as a negative and limiting force in the Durkheimian tradition of sociology. John Dewey's (2002) discussion of habit has also enjoyed a significant revival as a resource for recent progressive engagements with habit's pathways. In engaging with the Dewey and Tarde revivals, I examine how the versions of habit's pathways that informed their work resonated with the

allocation of different populations to different stages along those pathways that characterized the contemporary racial discourses on which they drew. In the case of Tarde, I look at the two different pathways that are opened up by his account of, on the one hand, the role of genius in the development of germ capital and, on the other, the role he assigns the repetitions of automated labor. With regard to Dewey, I take issue with the tendency of a good deal of the recent literature to abstract what he said about habit from his parallel concern with the role of two other forces—impulse and intelligence—that he ranged alongside habit as the key determinants of human conduct. By probing his account of the pathways that emerge from the relations between habit and impulse, I show how these resonated with the values of American individualism in the stress he placed on the role of impulse as a drive to innovation, in contrast to the inertia that he invoked to account for the survival of savages in the present.

A reader's road map

While the concerns I have identified run throughout the book, there are differences in the degrees of stress and emphasis accorded them in different chapters. In chapter 1 I elaborate more fully the theoretical and methodological settings I have outlined to this point. I do so initially by taking a closer look at the increasing interest in habit and its rehabilitation under the influence of Deleuze's positive reevaluation of repetition. My main concern, however, is to offer a more extended discussion of those aspects of Foucault's work that I draw on, placing particular store in his discussion, in *Punitive Society* (2015), of the historical transformation of habit's conception associated with the shift from its place in David Hume's account of the passions to its subsequent role in discourses and processes of normalization. In elaborating the implications of this argument, and its relations to Foucault's more general principles of archaeological and genealogical analysis, I take issue with a tendency of a good deal of the habit literature to attribute a distinctive force or power to habit. I contend, instead, that habit's political histories have been made up of the variable force that has been attributed to habit in the contexts of the different discourses and apparatuses in which it has been put to work in and across different regimes of power.

It is these histories that are my main concern in chapters 2 to 4, which, exploring various episodes in the history of "habit then," dig deeper into what I call the habit archive. Chapter 2 thus focuses on the role that disciplinary

and biopolitical deployments of habit have played in shaping the circuits of capital constituted by the exploitation of different forms of labor. I revisit the debates occasioned by Eugene Genovese's (1976) differentiation of the forms of discipline associated with the plantation economies of enslaved labor from E. P. Thompson's (1991) account of the time-work discipline of the factory system. I also relate these concerns to Kyla Schuller's (2018) discussion of the role of sensibility in the racial and gendered aspects of sentimental biopower in the American School of Evolution. The chapter then considers those evolutionary versions of habit's pathways that have played a significant political role in settler-colonial societies in assigning "primitive peoples" to an endless repetition of the first steps along those pathways.

My concerns in chapter 3 initially center on the role that the discovery of the reflex arc in the late eighteenth century played in reconfiguring habit as a form of involuntary repetition disconnected from any controlling influence on the part of the mind, will, or reason. This was not the first interpretation of habit as a form of automatism. But it was distinctive in its inscription of habit's automaticity within a new conception of the body's neurophysiological architecture. By way of underscoring their distinctiveness, I review the respects in which these new conceptions of habit differed from, while also retaining aspects of, the role Locke assigned habit in relation to the dynamics of the association of ideas. Habit's role in these dynamics contributed to the construction of pathways along which the self-governance of the liberal subject might proceed. Nineteenth-century conceptions of "unwilled" habits, by contrast, figured habit as part of a negative dynamic of degeneration that could be countered only by acting on its conditioning milieus rather than through the reasoned direction of the will attributed to liberal forms of subjectivity.

In concluding chapter 3, I outline how those thinkers who drew on the new sciences of physiology, psychology, and sociology in the approaches they proposed to counter the downward dynamics of degeneration often took issue with the forms of authority over habit's pathways that had earlier been exercised by the Christian pastorate. But even where the authority of the pastorate was contested, its form was often replicated. This, I argue in chapters 5 and 6, is an aspect of habit's interpretation within the wayward tradition. As a prelude to these concerns, chapter 4 looks at the role accorded habit in Christian theology as a central mechanism in the governance of souls. It does so through the lens of Foucault's discussion of the role of "the conduct of conduct" in the forms of governance associated with "the archaic model of the

Christian pastorate" (Foucault 2007a, 110). In considering the place of habit within the techniques of pastoral government, I look at the role it played as a significant aspect of the stratification of social orders in medieval Europe. I then also consider the various forms of counterconduct that, in the late medieval period, disputed the role accorded habit in the techniques of pastoral government.

The rival authority of the mystic is given particular attention in view of the role this figure played in the work of Bergson. It thus forms a pivot into my concerns in chapters 5 to 8, where my focus shifts to the influence of habit's historical legacies on the contemporary debates constituting "habit now." Chapter 5 initiates these concerns by examining a range of positions that, rather than interpreting habit's pathways as describing a continuous course, stress the force of moments of interruption that, in stalling habit's repetitions, open up the prospects for unfolding pathways of becoming. In looking first at Bergson, I identify the respects in which, in displacing those versions of evolutionary thought that interpreted habit as part of a continuous path of progress, he installed a conception of habit's pathways that restored the power of spiritualized forms of authority to guide conduct across and through their ruptured course. I then go on to discuss the use that Grosz makes of Bergson's critical engagement with post-Darwinian social theory in her own reading of Darwin's work. In annexing the "nicks in time" that she attributes to the mechanisms of social and sexual selection to a feminist politics of difference, she interprets habit's repetitions as a mechanism of change that prepares us for a change yet to come. In reviewing what strike me as the shortcomings of Grosz's position, I draw on the lines of criticism developed by Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer in which they chastised Bergson for neglecting the role of institutional and discursive forces in shaping, regulating, and directing habit's repetitions.

In taking her cue from William James, Catherine Malabou likens habit's pathways to rivers or streams, currents carved in our neural passageways, and, like James, she is primarily concerned with the possibilities opened up when their course is interrupted by the operation of synaptic intervals. In contrast to the limited forms of plasticity that James attributed to such intervals, in *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* (2008) Malabou celebrates the radical possibilities that are opened up by the spaces, gaps, or cuts that she imputes to them. She has, however, since qualified this position in *Morphing Intelligence* (2019). My primary concerns in chapter 6 are twofold. First, I place the explosive possibilities Malabou initially attributed to neural plasticity in the

context of broader debates concerning the implications of contemporary developments in the neurosciences for the position to be accorded our plastic brains in the relations between practices of social governance and practices of the self. I then consider Malabou's position in *Morphing Intelligence*, where, drawing on contemporary debates in the field of artificial intelligence and the work of Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Bourdieu, she distances herself from the Bergsonian legacy that informed her earlier work. No longer characterized by ruptural departures from its past course, the pathway in which habit is thus inscribed has an accumulating logic as intelligence converts past habits into projects oriented toward an extension of the continuum of life.

Malabou is not the first to see significant connections between the work of Dewey and that of Bourdieu. The subject was one that Bourdieu commented on. It is also one that has been taken up in recent forms of "habit activism," in which habit has been mobilized as a part of progressive feminist and antiracist politics. Shannon Sullivan's work has been especially important in the critical use it has made of Dewey's work in this regard. In chapter 7 I therefore orchestrate a three-way conversation: first, between Dewey and Sullivan via Sullivan's critical engagement with Dewey's work in her discussion of the habits of white privilege (Sullivan 2006); second, between the roles accorded different kinds of a socialized unconscious in relation to versions of habit's pathways that we find in the work of Sullivan and Bourdieu; and third, between the temporalities informing the pathways we find in Dewey and Bourdieu. In discussing Dewey, I consider how his account of the relations between habit, impulse, and intelligence constitutes a pathway that escapes the pull of what Dewey called the "routineer's road" to mark a course of innovation, but one that leaves behind those whose racial constitution has perpetuated the grip of an original and unmodified set of habits. Alert to the limitations of Dewey's work so far as questions of race are concerned, Sullivan looks instead to W. E. B. Du Bois's socialized version of the unconscious in examining the "transactional unconscious" that she argues governs the practices of white privilege. The pathway white subjects must travel to pull free from the habits of white privilege is consequently one that, like the Freudian unconscious, follows a course of tricks, evasions, and self-delusions. A similar set of tricks and evasions informs the different versions of habit's pathways that Bourdieu invokes in his account of the archaic habitus responsible for practices of male domination, in contrast to those whose habitus—characterized by blips, misfirings, and mismatches—opens up collective trajectories that break (relatively) free from the force of the past.

Finally, in chapter 8, I conduct four "probes" that, highlighting different ways in which the relations between habit, repetition, and power have been conceived in recent debates, prepare the ground for a way of thinking about habit capable of accommodating the contestations over how conduct should be directed that have been enacted across the different versions of its pathways I discuss. For my first probe, I go back to Latour's hiker to show how, in his broader discussion of habit, Latour repeats a key shortcoming that continues to haunt theories of habit: their oscillation between positions spread across the opposition between the conception of habit as an endless repetition of the same and its conception as a dynamic generator of new and free capacities, without paying due regard to the political rationalities informing the different ways in which habit has been enlisted in the governance of conduct. My second probe takes a closer look at the role that Deleuze accords exemplary forms of authority—those of the mystic—in guiding his own version of habit's pathways, in which it is the habit of contracting habits, enacted at the cellular level, that constitutes the basis for the formation of the self. I then look at the place that habit has been accorded in the operations of contemporary forms of digital automation and algorithmic governmentality. In doing so I also consider some of the synergies that have been developed between Deleuze's later work—particularly his account of "societies of control" (Deleuze 1992)—and Foucauldian governmentality theory in the roles accorded habit in post-disciplinary forms of power. To close chapter 8, I return to probe an issue I broach at the end of chapter 2 by considering the politics of habit associated with contemporary forms of "emergency governance" and their contestation through the strategies of "slow emergencies." I do so by reviewing the contentions occasioned by the coercive forms of habit management imposed on the habits of selected Indigenous communities in Australia introduced by the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act of 2007.

These probes prepare the way for my discussion, in the conclusion, of a conception of habit as a form of determined indeterminacy that accounts for the diversity of the positions it has been accorded within the plural and contested politics of repetition that have been enacted across the histories of its different pathways. As to what I mean in referring to this as "the arbitrariness of habit," well, that's best left until we get there, except to say that it is a position I derive by extrapolating the implications, as I see them, of a passage in Bourdieu's *Pascalian Meditations* (2000).

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. I do so with a primary focus on the Anglophone and French literatures and the exchanges between them. This is an artificial limitation, as both of these literatures have been significantly influenced by other national traditions. The influence of German thought—from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz through G. W. F. Hegel to Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger—has been especially important in this regard. However, the French and Anglophone connections have been particularly strong with regard to the issues I examine over the period I am mainly concerned with. For what it's worth, the Google Ngram for *l'habitude* follows a roughly similar pattern to that for *habit*: increasing sharply toward the end of the eighteenth century and maintaining high levels throughout the nineteenth century, then dipping in the twentieth century—but by no means so much or so sharply as for *habit*—and then showing a very sharp rise from 2000 to the present. These differences probably reflect the attention accorded habit within the French phenomenological tradition throughout the twentieth century.

CHAPTER ONE. POWERING HABIT

1. Parsons's argument here extended Weber's exclusion of crowd behavior from the field of social action proper on the grounds that its imitative logic did not meet the requirement that social action be meaningfully oriented toward others. See Borch (2012, 109–10).

2. Rita Felski has offered a trenchant critique of this aspect of Lefebvre's work, noting also its connection to his view—along with that of Julia Kristeva—that the strength of women's association with repetition emphasized "their connection to