Existential Habit: The Role of Value in Praxis[1]

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Abstract: This exposition focuses on purposeful behaviours as efforts toward self-actualization. I introduce habit as a set of value-based behaviours that is different than the typical habit of physical movements. Each of those praxis is controlled by cognition driven by values – both personal and societal, and their following habits are the result of complex learning. I will then elaborate on three important topics: (1) awareness and efficacy with respect to habit, (2) collective habit, and (3) implications of existential habit on the individual's as well as the society's wellbeing.

Keywords: awareness, efficacy, praxis, value.

Existential Habit: The Role of Value in Praxis

We often hear the word habit to describe a lot of human behaviours. We use it so easily and extensively to describe things we do that tend to be repetitive. It goes from behaviours such as regularly coming to class late to waking up at certain hours every day. It also refers to how we normally do something: how we take notes, how we read, how we eat, and so on. In other cases, habit also talks about how we deal with others or problems; for instance, we may have heard things like someone's habit is to pick a fight with others.

Repetitions are to be found in every individual: they influence how we think, act, and respond to stimuli. Of course, repetition is not always a good thing. We, after all, know the term bad habit. It refers to thoughts, acts, and responses that are useless or even prevent individuals to achieve their goals. Nevertheless, the fact that these patterns exist despite not always being helpful proves that there is some reinforcing mechanism behind them. This suggests there must be something to gain from keeping this kind of behaviours. With that consideration in mind, I define habit as repetitive and seemingly automatic behaviour that is directed toward a goal. This definition is also aligned with those offered by other authors (see: Camic 1986; Verplanken and Orbell 2003; Verplanken 2006; Neal,

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Wood, and Quinn 2006; Saling and Philips 2007; Wood and Neal 2007; Neal and Wood 2009; Gardner 2012).

Using that definition, there are three major requirements needed to categorize something as habit. Those are behaviours, repetition and *automation*, and finally, direction as well as goal (e.g Verplanken and Aarts 1999; Aarts and Dijkterhuis, 2000; Neal and Wood 2009; Middleton 2011; Gardner 2012). Behaviour is a set of verbal and non-verbal acts coming from *automatization*. These behaviours are what we can rather objectively observe. They are also the unit analysis of most studies regarding habit.

Repetition and *automatization* are the ways in which acts are carried out over and over in many settings. Different scholars tend to emphasize different parts of this process. Some believe that behaviours should be repetitive and done quite frequently, while others believe the *automatization* part to be the more significant one. Nevertheless, I would argue that the two of them are inseparable. Using the learning principle, repetition of associated response – as a result of reinforcement – would yield in conditioned behaviour. Only after behaviour is acquired, the *automatic process* can take place. It is said to be automatic because it will be the most likely way an individual would act or react in a certain situation. In other words, *automatization* refers to an individual's reaction time, or to the most natural thing the individual is compelled to do; although in many cases, an individual does not always follow through.

Nevertheless, especially in complex behaviours, there is always a goal behind every behavioural assimilation causing *automatization*. In spite of short reaction time, there is an underlying cognitive process facilitating habitual behaviours. It means, habit is not automatic, but rather seems to be automatic.

Lastly, the third component of habit is the direction and goal of behaviours. Every behaviour has a goal; hence, it is done in certain ways in order to be achieved. From efficiency, pleasure, or simply harm-avoidance, there are many reasons why we constantly behave the way we do. This kind of reasons, on the existential level – on what makes us who we are as persons, is what I am going to elaborate on.

Before we go there, however, I would like to point out the types of habit related to the purpose of behaviours. The first one is physical habit or habit of movement. The goal of this habit is to increase physical mastery of a task, in which such mastery can become a distinguishing feature of an individual (see: Matiegka 1921; Laban and Ullmann 1971). It can be seen in factory workers whose movements are so fast and accompanied with incredible precision. Another example of physical habit is the one happening in sports in which athletes often develop some habitual techniques that are unique on their own (see: Gupta and Mahalanabis 2006; Shilling 2008). Lochte, an elite Olympic swimmer, for example, would swim on his back following the turn on freestyle to decrease the amount of drag. That habit is purposely done to minimize the drag and consequently maintain the propulsion speed. In other words, that habit will

increase his swimming efficiency. Of course, in the end, that efficiency is hoped to increase his chance of winning the race.

The second type of habit is a little more complicated than the first one. In the previous example, we can see that athletes develop certain physical habits in order to win the competitions. Now, let's compare that example with another one. Imagine an individual who treats everything in life as a competition. That individual would repetitively think, act, and respond toward most stimuli in a competitive way because winning is such an important thing for them. In some way, that individual may define life as a constant competition.

From these examples, we can see how the two types are essentially different. The first one focuses on one specific behaviour for one specific purpose that is not pervasive. It is less likely to affect every other aspect of one's life. In the latter, I would offer to use the term 'existential habit,' a type of habit which is driven by something essential in an individual's life. Habit, in this context, is not always a single repetitive behaviour as in physical habit. This kind of habit is directed toward a goal of meaningfulness in an individual's existence. The behaviours presented are consistent across situations depending on what *value* the individual signifies the most. This type of habit will have more complications and will be applied in more aspects of life. It contains sets of behaviours from the same category that happen in many settings. We often call it pattern of behaviour; however, we have to remember that not all pattern of behaviour is habit. In this context, the type of patterned behaviour we are going to discuss is that of praxis. In general, praxis is behaviour intended for some goal.

To some extent, such patterned behaviour is similar with the concept of personality. Personality itself is patterned functions interacting in a way that makes individuals unique (Hall and Lindzey 1961; Allport 1961; Deaux and Snyder 2012). It means individuals with certain personalities tend to think, feel, and act consistently across situations.

Personality makes us appear as we are; however, it doesn't decide why we do things the way we do or want things that we want (Bilsky and Schwartz 1994). In this case, we can observe an individual's patterns of behaviour without being able to conclude the type of personality one has, although some habits may be easier to adopt by certain personalities or some personalities may result in some habits (Eysenck 1973). In conclusion, we must keep in mind that personality and habit are two different things.

First, habit is more superficial than personality. Habit is something brought out in the form of acts; while personality doesn't always come out as behaviour (Ouellette and Wood 1998; Wood 2017). In this case, even if I have a certain habit, it doesn't mean that I have a certain personality; however, if I have a certain personality, chances are high that I would behave in a habitual way. The second difference is that habit always serves a sense of purpose while personality, as a function, keeps the individual's dynamic the way it is. Meanwhile, even some insignificant habit like waking up late at noon has a

purpose, such as to enjoy more sleep, do more work at night, or simply to avoid some activities in life.

Although personality and habit are intertwined, personality does not give habit – especially, existential habit – a direction it requires. It does not give habit any reasons explaining the way things are done. It does not provide habit with any goal. At the same time, habit needs something else that would give it a sense of direction of what to achieve (Allport 1961; Aarts and Dijksterhuis 2000; Pakizeh, Gebauer, and Maio 2007). That something is value, which I will explain further on.

Habit and Learning

To some extent, value and habit are results of learning, both operant and social ones. Both value and habit come from our own experience regarding what feels good and what does not; hence, we would increase behaviours resulting in good feelings (Mowrer 1960; Daniels 2001; Dezfouli and Balleine 2012). Tantrums, for example, can be seen as an individual's learnt habit. It increases an individual's enjoyment – as in getting what's wanted. It could also be a result from our observation of others' behaviours (Bandura 1969; Mezirow 1997; Ouellette and Wood 1998; Crossley 2001). In this example, the individual might know that tantrum was efficient in getting what one wanted because someone else did it. Or, in a different example, we may believe that money is good, because everyone else gives weight to it.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that learning is crucial in habit, it is noticeable that some habits are easier to adopt than others (Wood 2009). Researchers attributed it to our brain's hedonistic function which aims to maximize immediate pleasure (e.g.: Holbrook and Hirchman 1982; Dewey 2002; Grabenhorst and Rolls 2011; Berridge and Kringelbach 2015). It means that some stimuli become more efficient reward reinforcing behaviours than others. This is consistent with Spranger's (1928) belief that economic and aesthetic values will be easier to adopt because they focus on survivability and pleasure that are more innate than the needs for truth and understanding (theoretic values).

From an evolutionary point of view, our behaviours would first aim to ensure our survivability. We only do things that will help us continue on living while avoid things that might do us any harm. After that, we would start to think about the pleasure aspect of things. The same happened in social settings: being in a social group provided a higher chance of survival due to the division of labour and safety in number (Brewer and Caporael 2006). The smaller amount of work people had to do individually provided more time to explore other aspects in life such as arts. As life progressed, our needs diversified and we ended up living with different purposes in life. In other words, it is suggested that human evolution affects the development of values which inherently interact with

people behaviours (Axelrod 1986; Krebs and Davies 2009; Simmie and Martin 2010).

Value in Habit

Before we talk about how value would affect an individual's habit, let us first review what value is. Value is defined as sets of guidelines/directions toward *the essential* in life (Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey 1960; Hofstede and Bond 1984; Maio and Olson 2000; Rohan 2000; Maio et al. 2006; Rokeach 2008; Schwartz 2013). Given humans' tendency toward self-actualization as the premise, every behaviour is somehow directed toward it (Ryff and Keyes 1995; Reker 2000; Reker and Woo 2011). Since every behaviour is directed by value, every act toward self-actualization is also based on the values one has. Ideally, those behaviours are conducted in the most effective and efficient ways toward that goal (Makowski 2017). Nevertheless, we shouldn't forget that what is deemed essential in life is different for each individual. It means, everybody is looking for different things in life; hence, their behavioural attributes are different as well (Spranger 1928; Allport 1961).

This dynamic between value and habit is moderated by cognition as the basis of praxis. Value is considered to structure our cognition, in a sense that cognition is always influenced by the values an individual holds. As much as we want to believe otherwise, as human beings, our perception is always clouded by our standards and ideals embedded in cognition. Analogically speaking, values would act as glasses that filter how we perceive the world, defining and prioritizing all stimulus presented; and eventually shape how we assess and behave in life (de Dreu and van Lange 1995). This system explains why individuals with different beliefs would react quite differently in the same situation (Schreiber et al. 2013).

As certain values become predominant, their presentation would be more obvious as well. They will show in both our overt and covert behaviours with some specific and consistent themes. A set of consistent behaviours resulted from an individual's values is what existential habit is. It's not always the *same exact behaviour* done over and over in one specific situation or condition. Instead, it represents *thematic behaviours* that seem to be automatically directed to serve a certain value domain.

Although it looks simple, the actual underlying process is not simple at all. The dynamic of how value transformes into behaviours can be seen in stages. First, our ideals, whether we realize it or not, will decide what it is that we want in life. These ideals are what we consider the most important; and consequently, they affect everything that we do (Bruner and Goodman 1947; Carter and Schooler 1949). These ideals are also accompanied by a set of standards. What differentiates ideals and standards is that ideals refer to the desired conditions or achievements while standards refer to minimum requirements (Campbell et al. 2001). Both of them are the baseline of our perception (Postman, Bruner, and

McGinnies 1948). It means that there are two functions happening simultaneously here: we are chasing ideals while comparing everything to standards.

Most of the time it is obvious that we have some recurrent patterns that we use to notice everything. These patterns are also found in how individuals evaluate stimuli by comparing every stimulus they perceive (including social ones) with the ideals and standards they have (Wood 1989). For example, when we are meeting someone, each one of us will notice and evaluate that same person differently. Some of us would evaluate that person by how good they look or how educated they appear. Some may evaluate that person based on how kind and warm he/she is, how generous, how rich, and so on. This is the second stage of existential habit; the ideals and standards we have define what and how we evaluate everything.

Following evaluation, the third stage is decision making followed by behaviour. Although individuals evaluate everything, they don't always do something about it (Restle 1961). Not doing anything can be a choice taken when an individual is facing some kind of stimulus needing action (Glasser 1999). In a way, of course, not doing anything can be a behaviour on its own; besides, in situations in which actions are unnecessary, the decision not to act is inevitable. For instance, when we see someone in the street, we may evaluate that person; however, that is how far we would go. It is unnecessary for us to approach that person and state our opinion. But, if we were asked our opinion about the person we just saw, we would decide whether or not we should make a comment. Further, our comment or our silence will be the behaviour following the stimulus.

Just like in the previous example, we should remember that everything that happens in real life always happens in a context. Although our own values would affect how we perceive, evaluate, and eventually react toward a stimulus, we cannot dismiss the society's role in the process. Everything we perceive, we would evaluate against the societal values and norms. From that evaluation, we would then decide which action to take. We might do something, following our own value or the societal value, depending on the situation and on how significant our personal value is in the context.

Now that we established that an individual's habit is profoundly affected by value, it is time to assert the two categories of value. Based on where they come from, those are individual/personal value and societal value (Bernard, Gebauer, and Maio 2006). Societal value works quite the same as personal value, except that it belongs to society. To some degree, societal value pressures individuals to conform to their desirable behaviours. Conversely, despite society playing a huge role in an individual's life, the individual would not necessarily internalize societal value as their own. The individual will evaluate their own value and its accordance with societal value.

In some situations, our personal value becomes so significant that societal value doesn't seem to matter at all. We may even deviate from society's

standards and ideals, just because we believe – or even feel like – it is the right thing to do. In other situations, we may let societal pressure take over and behave according to the society's desirable state, while inhibiting the way we normally or *automatically* behave. In such cases, those behaviours are not habit; the individual only behaves so in that specific situation alone. Unless, of course, those deviations of habitual behaviours are actually a detour helping individuals to achieve their goal in the long term. Or, if such deviations from the personal value driven habit are repeated over and over, that individual may, to some degree, internalize the societal value as their own.

Now that we can see how value – both personal and societal – affects our behaviours through cognition, we can draw a limitation of habit in this existential context. This is how we could assess whether or not certain behaviours of an individual would fall into the existential habit category. We know that in order to categorize behaviour as habit, it must possess the three components of habit stated previously. Those same standards also apply to existential habit, in addition to value driven behaviours ('value driven' being the operative phrase). It means that both personal and societal value can be the foundations of those praxis. It doesn't really matter which value actually motivates the individual's habit; it is existential habit, as long as those value driven habits consist of behaviours, repetition and *automaticity*, as well as direction and goal. That being said, it is justifiable to conclude that existential habit is not always self-directed.

With this claim, we should also exclude repetitive behaviours with little to none implication to the meaning and purpose in life. Biologically driven behaviours – such as dependence, addiction, and impulsive behaviours – although they are repetitive and as if driven by the pleasure principle, are not existential habit. They should not be even considered as habit (Perkins 1999). Those behaviours are not regulated by cognition, they're often not choices, and they are driven by the brain's more primitive function.

On that note, existential habit is limited strictly to those behaviours repeated, somewhat automatically, across settings toward an essential goal in life that must be motivated by value. Of course it would then depend on how we define value. For example, if an individual keeps doing something he dislikes but is required by others, it might not be his/her life goal, but he/she keeps doing it because he/she fears to be left behind. On that case, his/her behaviours might be caused by the social-dependency value according to which he/she believes that he/she lives for the sake of others. It is also possible that this repetitive behaviour is simply motivated by fear; however, if that is the case, it is also possible that the same fear is value driven. Although this would be an interesting enigma to discuss, we are not going into its details here.

Going back to the topic of our discussion, from a value-actualization perspective, other behaviours – especially if repetitive – that aren't aligned with the individual's value should be considered deviations. They are deviations

because, even though they are repetitive, they might not be the most *automatic* thing to do. In another words, these behaviours are not habit. Nonetheless, should these deviations occur more and more often, this could potentially suggest changes in the individual's philosophical structure of cognition. When this happens, things such as shifting in value, conflict, and anomie would often be inevitable. I will try to explain these implications in the next section.

As mentioned earlier, there are two sources of value – societal and personal. In this context, we know existential habit mostly refers to personal value even though it would constantly be on a par with societal value. There are two possible extreme scenarios here. First, both personal and societal value are aligned with each other; and second, the personal value is against the societal value. To some degree, personal and societal value would manifest discrepancy.

In an ideal world, personal and societal value are in sync. In this case, the individual's life goal will go in the same direction with the society's goal; hence, they are going to accommodate each other. There should not be any significant problem here because the pressure from the societal value would reinforce one's own habit. The problem is, even though such an ideal condition is longed for, in our post-modern world, where everyone can aspire to be anything, such a fitting model will be hard to find. That being said, the next best scenario will be that in which the individual's value and habit are not in sync with the societal values, but they are not conflicting with societal values. If the individual's value and habit are consistent enough, the individual should be able to focus on their own effort toward their goal without harming society's goal. Nevertheless, they may feel neither supported nor barred in the process. Lastly, there is also a scenario in which both personal and societal value are conflicting; to some extent, this could not go on indefinitely, without one harming the other. Of course, discrepancy is not always present in every situation. One can feel that their value is conflicting with the societal value in some aspect of life, but not other.

When such conflicts happen continuously, as mentioned before, the following choices are possible. First, the individual can choose to hold on their personal value and deviate from societal value. Second, one's personal value can shift so they can conform to societal value and do as the society desires. Third, one can stick to the status quo where this conflict is not resolved and eventually resorts to the state of anomie. Of course, each of these choices would have its own consequences. For example, significant deviation from societal value may result in social exclusion, total conformity can result in blind devotion swallowing the individual's sense of individuality, and anomie can lead to confusion. All of these could eventually impact on the level of the individual's – and potentially – society's wellbeing.

Awareness and Efficacy

In this exposition, habit is seen as behaviours directed specifically toward a goal that should contribute to the individual's meaning making process. In many ways,

this concept is strongly aligned with action theories' praxiology. This happens because humans' actions, as purposeful beings, are always motivated by their ideals – or by what they believe to be their ideals. There are two major concepts related to the purposefulness of existential habit that need to be discussed here. Those are awareness and efficacy – effectiveness as well as efficiency.

Awareness refers to the degree to which individuals know the habit that they have, the goal, and what causes it (Silvia and Duval 2001; Verplanken and Orbell 2003). Efficacy, on the other hand, refers to the quality of the sets of behaviours in achieving the goal (Marley 2000). Both effectiveness and efficiency will intervene with the internal regulation of the habit itself (Wood and Neal 2007; Vohs and Baumeister 2016).

In habit, understanding self-awareness will help us understand the individual as a whole. In general, this kind of awareness is important for any individual in order to function well in life (Brown and Ryan 2003). The inability to be self-aware would hinder one's effort toward self-actualization because one may not be able to correctly evaluate the efficacy of their own actions (Taylor and Brown 1988; Townley 1995). Therefore, it will be hard for them to adjust their actions toward an intended goal. There are two types of awareness to be discussed in this context: awareness toward the behavioural aspects of the habit and awareness toward its value.

To some degree, individuals being unaware of themselves, of their cognition or behaviours, is normal (Natsoulas 1998). The same unawareness is also what makes it appealing for us to get to know who we are even more. As a result of learning to understand ourselves, we are becoming more integrated individuals (Terrace and Metcalfe, 2005). Of course, there are many reactions following when new information about ourselves is acquired. For example, if we point a bad habit to a friend, she might respond in different manners. First, she might say that she didn't know or didn't think she behaved like that. Second, she might say that she couldn't help but behaving like that. Lastly, she might say that she knows she did it and she intended it, which is suggesting that she is aware of the value and the consequences of her bad habit.

The first and second responses would suggest that she lacked awareness of her own habit. The difference between them is that in the first case, she wasn't aware of the habit at all, while in the second case, she simply wasn't aware of the goal – or the value – of such behaviour.

Now that we have established the role awareness plays in habit, let us see how efficacy would come into play. Of course, as humans, it comes naturally for us to put our efforts in the most effective and efficient way toward our intended goal (Makowski 2017). Effectiveness refers to a degree in which habit is actually moving toward its goal, while efficiency is the optimization of resources an individual has in moving toward the desirable goal. Efficiency can be measured by how immediately and how easily these habits are performed while getting

any results. In this context, what we seek to know is the effect of behaviours on the bigger goal – human wellbeing.

It is clear that some habits can be effective and efficient at a given time, but they would potentially harm the individual in the long run. The same mechanism also applies in value-driven habit because the nature of value would interfere with the individual's worldview. Some values might put little to none emphasis on the future, while others would fixate on it. This mechanism also dictates how individuals define the self-actualized version of themselves, their meaning in life, and eventually their ideas of wellbeing. With that in mind, it is wise to consider these aspects before deciding whether or not one's habit is bad or good. In this context, a bad or good habit is categorized solely by its efficacy toward the goal – and the individual's perception toward the attributes of the goal – instead of the realistic consequences of his/her behaviour.

As we can see, habit is directed toward a goal whether or not we are aware of it and whether or not its behaviours are effective and efficient. Ideally, these aspects should interact in a dynamic which is beneficial to the individual. At the same time, individuals who are aware of their own value, goal, and behaviours should be able to regulate their behaviours in a more effective and efficient way. Because they know what they want in life, they would do things more purposefully (Karoly 1993; Schwarzer 2014). With such awareness, they will be able to evaluate both their environment and their position in a certain situation in a more realistic manner. They will be able to consider whether or not their own value and behaviour would be suitable – or at least acceptable – in society (Wrosch et al. 2003). Additionally, they also understand the reciprocity between their own value and habit and those of society.

Understanding all this helps them make more informed decisions on what actions to take. For instance, if they should behave according to their habit, or they should deviate from it for the time being. Those actions might be a detour from an individual's goal – it means, they might be inefficient; however, they are thought to be effective in serving one's goal in the long run. In this case, it can be concluded that the individual has developed a certain degree of personal maturity where their own value-bound identity would be integrated with the societal value (Chickering and Reisser 1992).

Nevertheless, as stated previously, it is also possible that individuals may not be aware of their own value. In consequence, individuals can just behave habitually to follow the societal value they perceive or to follow what everyone else is doing (Spranger 1928; Hollander 1958; Liebrand et al. 1986). In such a case, we would not always know which one of these will affect the individual's habit as well. I would argue that such behaviours could still be categorized as habit coming from the individual's perception of the societal value. This could possibly be the case more often than we would like to admit. Many of our behaviours – and even habit – result from our perception of societal ideals and

standards. This supports the previous claim in which existential habit is simply societal value driven habit – instead of being personal value driven habit.

Especially in cases of unawareness, the societal values might replace the personal ones. In this case, the individual is simply unaware of his/her own value; hence, he/she behaves somewhat automatically using the guidelines of societal value. There is no conflict between the two types of value, because the individual knows only one value – the societal one; hence, habits based on societal value would emerge somewhat easily as well. To some degree, internalization of societal value occurs. There are many scenarios that can happen in this process; for instance, the individual feels compelled to do something just because it feels mandatory. Nevertheless, the perfect scenario to hope for would be that in which the individual develops an understanding on why those behaviours considered mandatory are good for him/her. When the individual completely takes in societal value along with his/her considerations as their own, that individual has also developed awareness.

The question is, what happens if many people in a society adopt the same habit. For instance, if everyone in a society gives weight to money and believes that everything is to be done to get more of it. In his context, collective habit becomes possible and could be described as certain habits adopted by the majority of people in a society in which the direction or goal and the associated behaviours would be the same. For example, they would all monetize everything. Given that habit is a result of learning (Mowrer 1960; Dickinson 1985; Yin and Knowlton 2006; Lally et al. 2010; Lally, Wardle, and Gardner 2011), the concept of collective habit would make sense because it is caused by social learning happening in many individuals sharing the same culture, time, and space.

Collective Habit

At the end of the previous section, I mentioned the possibility of habit shared by many individuals in a society. The term I proposed to use was collective habit – or to be precise, collective existential habit, since this kind of habit is also driven by values. It refers to habit seemingly adopted by the majority of people in a group. Despite the term 'collective,' this habit does not necessarily involve cultural value. Instead, it embodies each individual's own values – or perceived societal values – that happen to be similar with the others' values in the group. Since what is socially desirable is not always happening in reality, I find it difficult to accept that, in this case, we could talk about cultural value.

Every society has a set of desirable goals. The problem with ideals is that, often, they are not reflected by actual behaviours. This explains how, on an individual level, discrepancy between the individual's ideal and their real self is inevitable; this effect is enhanced in collective settings where our involvement would increase our positive evaluations and decrease the negative evaluations of the in-group. Perhaps, it is simply hard for us to believe that the group we belong to is not as good as we thought it should be. Or maybe, we believe that we are

unique compared to everyone else in the group, that we think and act differently than everyone else. Just like in Hardin's tragedy of the commons (Hardin 1968; see also: Dietz, Ostrom, and Stern 2003), we fail to predict others' behaviours in the same situation we are. At the same time, others are also prone to this cognitive fallacy and everyone ends up in the same or worse situation than before.

I will explain the case of cultural and personal value shared by many using the following example. Let us imagine a society claiming to give weight to friendliness, warmth, and tolerance. They believe that they value those attributes the most and those attributes should be reflected in their behaviours. They expect people from their society – including themselves – to be friendly, warm, and tolerant. Unfortunately, in reality, they might not actually behave that way. Instead, they may still act friendly, but only when they need something or expect something in return. They might appear warm but act hostile behind others' backs, or even be friendly to in-groups while being hostile to out-groups. If that situation occurs, and observably, a lot of individuals of that society behaves in spite of the cultural values they think they believe in, then their collective existential habit is significantly different than what it should be.

As this could be the case, it is important to understand why such situations can happen in the first place. In this context, I will discuss a few possibilities that could explain this behaviour from the value point of view. First, this behaviour can be traced back to the lack of awareness in addition to mistrust in the societal values; that could be caused by some fallacy in their collective self-presentation. Here, individuals fail to notice their real societal value. Consequently, despite internalizing the real societal value and behaving accordingly to it, they hold on to the desired or ideal societal value. In other words, the discrepancy between the real societal value and the ideal societal value goes unnoticed.

The second possibility is when there are a lot of deviant individuals. When this happens, individuals from the in-group may seem to adopt two different values. Some would stick to the ideal value and behave accordingly, while the others would not. Should these deviants adhere to the same value and behave similarly, collective habit can form. This can especially happen in sub-cultures in which members tend to behave similarly but differently than the mother culture.

The last argument I would provide for this case is related to anomie. In an anomic state, individuals do not seem to have any guidelines to their behaviours. Therefore, these individuals may conform to others' value-based behaviours and/or habit based on values – and not to their own.

Collective habit, i. e. individuals behaving similarly because they share the same or a similar value, is not necessarily a bad or a good thing. As mentioned earlier, most of the time, we cannot judge if a cognition is bad or good. What we can judge is the actual effect of behaviours resulting from the cognition itself. This means that conformity itself should be good when it is directed in a way beneficial for the collective wellbeing – which is the goal of every society

(Tolbert, Lyson, and Irwin 1998; Orfield 2009; Hall 2013). Keeping this in mind, we should give more attention to the conformed habits and their consequences in society.

I am aware that this claim seems to contradict my previous point regarding the individual's habit – stating that the individual's existential habit is projected for the individual's subjective wellbeing alone. Nonetheless, the same principle is inapplicable for collective existential habit because society aims to the objective wellbeing of its people. In order to achieve that, social responsible acts – including conformity to some degree – from its members is demanded. The next question would be what kind of conformity people adopt.

In a perfect world, individuals should be conforming to the standards and ideals of the society – also known as ideal conformity. Unfortunately, ideal conformity is not always possible as we often adhere to situational conformity. Situational conformity here refers to actions in which we conform to others' behaviours only because many people do so, despite our awareness that such behaviour is not the right thing to do. As for the latter, we should remember, those behaviours cannot always and straightforward be classified as habit; however, should those conforming behaviours occur repeatedly, we might be justified to classify them as habit.

Implications

As we all know, habit is a crucial part of life. Its behaviours are actually the representation of the structure of our mind. The fact that a pattern of behaviours can be traced suggests a specific neural activity regulating it. It is consciously conducted, even if it seems to be automatic and thoughtlessly done. What makes it different than other consciously taken actions is that habit – due to its repetition in its forming process – seems to skip all the metacognition process. In habit, we are simply not aware nor thinking about the very effort of thinking. The previous section has explained how reinforcement plays an important role in habit. Habit, after all, is a set of behaviours resulted from numerous types of learning. The principle of habit acquisition is the same with that of Pavlovian learning; conditioned response stays despite omitting the conditioning stimulus.

There are two things to revisit regarding the implications of existential habit in life, and how it affects the individuals themselves and the society. As stated earlier, the goal of living is to achieve self-actualization, and the acts of doing so will give meaning to life itself. Along the road, there will be one important variable we must not overlook, that is wellbeing – both personal and social (Reker, Peacock, and Wong 1987; Zika and Chamberlain 1992). Needless to say, wellbeing and the act of becoming have to go side by side.

The act of self-actualization is pointless if an individual fails to be at peace with him/herself. Should this scenario happen, it will be hard for the same individual to find meaning for his/her existence; and without meaning, there will be no actualization (Gallagher, Lopez, and Preacher 2009; Keyes 2010). At the

other end, a well individual will have a sense of purpose of what he/she aims in life. Without it, the feeling or state of wellness will not last.

This is where habit comes into the equation. Individuals with the *right* habit will behave purposefully toward self-actualization. Here, 'right habit' is defined as habit that is effectively directed toward the individual's goal. In this case, habit doesn't necessarily have to be efficient, it just needs to serve the purpose first. Of course, it will be better if habit is efficient as well; however, in many cases, an individual's lack of awareness inhibits its efficiency.

As stated before, individuals possessing awareness are better at regulating their behaviours. They evaluate the stimuli along with the consequences for every actions they might take. Their decisions are based on whether or not the behaviours will assist them toward a desirable end. On the opposite side of awareness, lacking awareness is a threat on wellbeing; for example, it can prevent an individual to behave effectively.

This threat to wellbeing is not only addressed toward the individual alone, but also toward society. As social beings, almost all our actions will impact others (Stern, Dietz, and Kalof 1993; Prilleltensky 2001; Coleman 2009). For example, an individual who litters would impact the cleanliness of the environment. Littering is done because it is easy and fast in fixing one's problems, but it is bad for the environment because it potentially increases diseases and makes the environment uncomfortable to live in. Let us revisit the aggression case for another example in a different context. Take a person who keeps on behaving aggressively when facing situations they don't like. People who are close to them will eventually have to deal with their aggressive behaviour. The aggressive person might yell when given advice, or be really upset when asked to wait, and so on. While as a social being, that individual actually needs the people who try to regulate his/her behaviors, his/her actions will cause a huge amount of pressure toward the others and they might leave him/her for good.

From these two examples, we can see how habit can affect others and why it should be regulated. We can also see that not all habits are actually effective toward a desired goal. Of course, in the end, it is important for individuals to be aware of the habits – and values – they have. Not only this awareness would help in regulating their habit, it will also help them adjust or change the habits they have.

Because value and the existential habits it creates are fundamental in life, most of the time, changing habits is not an easy task. The beliefs and the tendency to behave in a certain way are written in our brain, such that changing these requires changing our brain structures (O'Doherty 2004; Schreiber et al. 2013). Basically, this mechanism is the same with any other learning mechanism which connects synapses and changes the structure of the brain. Potenza (2013) states that individuals with different values and habits have different brain structure activation, indicating different habits. However, we should keep in

mind that, because these habits are the result of learning, they are always susceptible to change.

Another thing we must evaluate in changing habits is behaviour and its underlying cognition. Essentially, what we aim in changing habits is to eradicate a present habit and to replace it with a more effective one (e.g Prochaska, Norcross, and DiClemente 1994). This will be a lot more difficult in existential habit because it derives from a process which is more prominent and more fundamental in an individual's cognition which shapes his/her whole world. Consequently, it may not be possible nor necessary to change an individual's values (Nie and Andersen 1974; Beutler and Bergan, 1991). Instead, what is needed is the increasing of an individual's self-awareness regarding their values as well as habits. In other words, individuals should reflect on the reasons prompting them to do things the way they do, on their own standards and ideals, as well as on whether or not their way of doing things is helping them move toward their desirable goals. This kind of understanding will help individuals regulate their behaviours related to their own values (Wong 2010).

Conclusions and Further Research

The main intention of this paper was to theoretically and philosophically elaborate on how value can affect our habits. I started by defining what habit essentially is. I continued by briefly explaining the role of learning in habit formation and its motivation, and I introduced value in the equation. Two types of value have been suggested to affect existential habit: personal and societal value. Thus, habit takes form as patterned behaviours intentionally directed toward what is important in an individual's life and because individuals have different values, they will have different habits. Besides different values, each individual would have different degrees of awareness, as well as of efficacy regarding their values and behaviours, which will make their habits even more diverse.

Furthermore, there are a lot of aspects to cover when discussing existential habit, such as: when values affect habits, how these habits affect our wellbeing, or how we regulate them in real life. There are also a lot of variables linked to the concept that we can explore further, such as awareness, efficacy, and value-habit consistency. Additionally, the list of variables related to the concept of existential habit includes personality and wellbeing. We can also study existential habit from the individual as well as the societal perspective.

As a general conclusion, we would need to start by operationalizing the existing types of value and by comparing them to the individual's actual behaviours. So far, it has not been explained in this paper what *kind of values* should be used when investigating existential habit. What I had in mind were the categories or types of values theorized in Allport's Study of Values based on Spranger's *Lebensformen*. Despite a lack of numerous studies conducted on this topic, I find this construct interesting. The motivation of this interest is that this

particular construct already specifies six universal values possessed by everyone and states that one of these would be predominant in an individual's life. According to this view, one value will be the primary value and the others will be subsidiary. Moreover, in assessing an individual's existential habit we must consider personal values that are universal, i. e. values that should be able to cover all aspects of life for each individual, as it goes with the premises that value affects all behaviours across all settings. Another thing we need to consider when talking about value is the construct's ability to stratify all its components or dimensions. It is easier to understand this claim by means of an analogy with EPPS: in EPPS, we are able to see which need is the most significant, which needs are less significant and which need is the least significant. Moreover, we can see which needs will be supporting that significant need and how those needs will interact in many aspects in life (Dicken 1959; Piedmont, McCrae, and Costa 1992).

Moving on from which construct of value should be used, we must study further the two types of value mentioned previously, and consider how personal and societal value would affect an individual. Taking into consideration that the individual's personal value and the societal value are not always synchronized, and that the individual is aware of this, we find four ways in which value affects habit. The first one is when both are in sync and understood by the individual; hence, the individual's habit will most likely fit what is socially desirable while catering to one's own purpose. The second one is when the individual is aware of his/her own value but unaware of the societal value; hence the habit can deviate significantly from what is socially desirable. Third, when the individual is aware of the societal value but not of his/her own value; hence, his/her habits might be more inconsistent and inefficient. Lastly, when the individual is unaware of both values, or he/she is in an anomic state – as it happens when the individual is aware of both values, but is unable to choose. In the end, this condition will also be related to the individual's social identity, which is an important topic in social studies.

From then on, we will be able to pinpoint how value – as the baseline of cognition – will affect perception, evaluation, decision making, behaviour, and eventually habit. We will thus be able to assess how and what kind of learning takes place in the acquisition of existential habits, including how social cognition would play a part in it, and we will be justified in approaching personality and value as two different concepts which are intertwined and influence each other.

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