

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: PROUST AND THE DISCOURSE ON HABIT

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A la recherche du temps perdu by Marcel Proust is replete with a discourse by the principal character, the narrator Marcel, on the subject of habit (“habitude” in French). This discourse meticulously explores the ubiquitous but concealed role that habit plays with respect to the most significant aspects of life, such as emotions, cognitive processes, and aesthetic experiences, and it explicitly relates not only to the novel’s characters, but to humanity in general. The critical commentary on the novel has largely ignored this subject. This dissertation provides the only comprehensive collection and analysis of the Proustian commentary on habit in A la recherche du temps perdu.

It is not by chance that habit was deeply explored in Proust’s novel or that it has been largely overlooked by the critical commentary. Historically, philosophers have paid substantial attention to habit. Habit was a focus of controversial philosophical/psychological theories in 19th century France regarding memory and consciousness, spirit and matter. Proust’s commentary was directly related to the prominent philosophical issues of his time.

This dissertation discusses the broad meanings of habit, first as developed by Aristotle and St. Thomas; then by French essayists, through Montaigne, Pascal, and the *philosophes*; and finally culminating in the great 19th century works on habit by Maine de Biran and Félix Ravaisson. It also reviews substantial contributions on habit made by other French writers and philosophers, notably Stendhal and Alfred Fouillée. Proust's reflections on habit may thus be appreciated in context.

This dissertation then analyzes the contributions which Proust's novel made to contemporary theories on habit and argues that they were substantial. It also argues that presentations of the major themes in the novel should include, prominently, habit. For example, on the philosophical plane, Proust's theories relating to involuntary memory and time are inextricably interwoven with his theories on habit. Finally, this dissertation considers why habit fell out of the philosophical/psychological discourse after about 1930, and the extent to which Proust's novel may inform the philosophical/psychological/biological discourse in the 21st century, which is reflecting a renewed interest in habit.

PROUST AND THE DISCOURSE ON HABIT

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PROUST AND THE DISCOURSE ON HABIT

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

In the first twelve pages of Du côté de chez Swann, the first volume of À la recherche du temps perdu by Marcel Proust, there are three discussions about l'habitude,¹ all involving the narrator's, Marcel's, experiences in his own bedroom. Thereafter, the phenomenon of l'habitude is discussed and analyzed repeatedly in the novel, especially in the first two volumes, Du côté de chez Swann and À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs, and in the last two, La fugitive and Le temps retrouvé. Habitude is presented as a ubiquitous and powerful, if not, indeed, determinative, influence on virtually every aspect of human life and relationships, on intimate experiences, and on emotional and aesthetic issues. It appears remarkable, then, that in the last century, so little interest has been paid to Proust's study of habitude in this novel. Critical studies of À la recherche du temps perdu for the most part ignore the issue.

This 20th century lack of interest in Proust's pervasive analysis of the role of habitude in intellectual, social, and emotional life mirrors the general disinterest in the subject of habitude after about 1930. Thus in a sociological study published in 2001, Ego: Pour une sociologie de l'individu, the well known French sociologist, Jean-Claude Kaufmann writes: "In the 19th century, the concept [of habitude] is radiating, without doubt too much; it is utilized to treat the most diverse subjects..." (112), whereas by the end of the twentieth century he concludes that: "By an unfortunate chain in the history of

¹ English translation: habit. We retain the French word throughout this dissertation for the reasons explained directly below.

ideas, l'habitude became a given, without scientific interest, the very symbol of an obvious and even contemptible example of common sense. An intellectual treasure, conveyed since Aristotle, had suddenly been squandered" (114).²

A full understanding of the meanings of *habitude* is critical to a comprehension of the subject matter of this thesis; such comprehension is rendered more difficult because everyone thinks he or she knows what the word means, and that its meaning is uncomplicated. A habit, or *habitude*, is simply what one does regularly, or without much reflection, and there is not in modern-day dialogue any particular mystery that surrounds the subject. But contrary to this ordinary or commonsense understanding, *habitude* is an extraordinarily complicated, wide-ranging, penetrating, and contentious subject. So that Proust's ideas and his development of the concept may be understood in context, a significant part of this dissertation is devoted to exploring the meanings of *habitude* as they were utilized and evolved in France before and during the time that Proust was writing À la recherche du temps perdu. A preliminary word is in order, however, as to why throughout this dissertation we have chosen to use the French word, *habitude*, whereas this text is otherwise in English. There are two reasons for this choice.

First, we have cited and analyzed Proust's concepts of *habitude* only when he has used that word (in the original French text) or a word with *habitude* as its root, e.g. *habituel*, *habituellement*. We have not analyzed the characters or the plot with reference to that concept when not cited specifically by the narrator. Thus, for example, we do not discuss or analyze herein whether Proust relied upon habitual patterns of speech or thought in creating or describing the characters in À la recherche du temps perdu unless

² See below, p. 12, for an explanation of the source of translations of texts in French cited herein.

the narrator remarked on such patterns. Nor do we consider whether the plot in À la recherche du temps perdu is developed through repeated, habitual incidents or conduct. Thus it is only when the narrator refers to *habitude* that we take note of the text, and, as we have said, this happens throughout the novel. We have chosen to use the French word, *habitude*, in this dissertation partly to emphasize this fact: it is the narrator, Marcel, who is talking specifically about *habitude*; use of the English equivalent, *habit*, might tend to obscure that fact.

Second, we have wanted to keep the focus on this concept in its fullest and most complicated sense, and not to glide over it as is so easily done when familiarity is assumed. Thus in common parlance, references to “habit” assume only the most banal, simplistic meaning, whereas *habitude* is explored in this thesis in its several manifestations: physical, psychological, philosophical, and metaphysical. It is hoped that use of the original French term in an English text serves as a reminder of the complexity of the concept under analysis.

To understand the sense in which *habitude* is utilized in this study, one must make a very large mental leap; once made, one never returns to the reflex action of associating only the simplest signification of the word with its signifier. In fact, once that leap occurs, the meaning of *habitude* keeps expanding, and its application appears almost infinite. A superb discussion and historical review of the concept of *habitude* is contained in the recent treatise by Kaufmann (cited above); the following extracts from that treatise serve well to establish the framework within which the concept of *habitude* in Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu must be considered. (Further commentary on

Kaufmann's analysis appears Chapter VIII which casts an eye upon habitude post-Proust: its virtual disappearance and then its recent resurgence in intellectual thought.)

Is habitude really such a grand concept, asks Kaufmann (105). The answer follows:

The number of authors who, like me, have rediscovered this forgotten treasure have immediately been struck by the immensity of the gap which separates past intellectual riches and the mediocre contemporary representation of what can now no longer even be considered a concept...because habitude has irremediably become a small thing, among the most unimportant that exist. But for two thousand years it was one of the central concepts which permitted the consideration of issues with as little unimportance as the issues of action, will, consciousness, life, soul, and even God. L'habitue disappeared truly from the scene of great concepts only in the last several decades (105).

Citing Chevalier's essay, L'habitue, Essai de métaphysique scientifique (discussed below, Chapter VIII), Kaufmann describes l'habitue as the "... 'central problem around which French thought is organized...it is on the problem of l'habitue, and through which was begun the metaphysical rebirth of our age' " (Chevalier XIII; Kaufmann 106).

A review of dictionary definitions, from the most basic and concise ones to the broader ones provided by philosophical dictionaries, serves to introduce the subject of habitue in its full dimensions. We start with the definition in the standard dictionary, Le Petit Larousse, which gives no indication that habitue presents complicated and difficult

issues, still less that we are dealing, in Kaufmann's words, with a "radiating concept:"

"HABITUDE. n.f. (lat. *habitudo*). **1.** Disposition, acquired by repetition, to be, to act frequently in the same fashion. **2.** Capacity, aptitude acquired by the repetition of the same actions. *To have the habitude of driving in the night.* >*D'habitude:* ordinarily, habitually" (498).³ Le Grand Larousse universel gives a much more complete definition, which begins to sound the complexity of the subject (5102-03):

HABITUDE...1. Ordinary manner, habitual manner of acting, of behaving, of thinking, of feeling belong to an individual or a group of people; custom: *They are in the habit of eating lunch in a restaurant on Sundays....2.* Aptitude to finish easily and without specific attentive effort a type of activity, acquired by frequent practice, exercise, or experience; capacity, *savoir-faire: habit of driving. Habit of being in charge....3.* An adaptation to certain conditions which results in being more at ease with them: *Habituated to cold, to storms; habituated to suffer....4.* Repeated experience of something which creates a need in someone; addiction: *The habit of smoking, of drinking alcohol....5.* Manner of doing or behavior created in someone by a repeated action, a fold: *His first piano teacher was not good and it has been difficult for him to get rid of his bad habits.*

³ "Habit," the English equivalent, is defined similarly (Webster), (although the first two definitions refer to dress): "...3. Habitual or characteristic condition of mind or body; disposition; as a man of healthy *habit*. 4. A thing done often and hence, usually, done easily; practice; custom; act that is acquired, and has become automatic. 5. A tendency to perform a certain action or behave in a certain way; usual way of doing; as, he does it out of *habit*; 6. An addiction, as the alcoholic *habit*.... Syn: custom, practice, usage, tendency, garb, costume.."

6. *According to his habit, following his habit:* that which he does the most often. *D’habitude*, in a habitual fashion, ordinarily, in the majority of cases....

— Psychology. Manner of acting or behaving acquired by training and especially by repetition. [Applied in particular to motor activities but perhaps extended to internal activities, cognitive, intellectual, language, etc. habits.]”

habitudes...1. Manners, customs, activities common to a place, a country, etc., traditions...**2.** Aggregation of manners of an individual’s behavior: *He is not in the habit of arriving late...3.* *Someone’s habit of going somewhere:* to regularly frequent an establishment [Italics in original].

It is in the philosophical dictionaries that we begin to sound still more the depth and breadth of the subject, which allows us to meaningfully enter Proust’s discourse on *habitude*. For reasons which will appear later, it is not surprising that the older philosophical dictionaries explored the subject in more depth; nevertheless, even the one paragraph in the 2003 edition of the Larousse Grand dictionnaire de la philosophie (469) provides an entry into those realms. Giving as its sources the two basic treatises discussed here at some length in Chapter V, Maine de Biran’s Influence de l’habitude sur la faculté de pensée, published in 1803, and Félix Ravaisson’s De l’habitude, published in 1838, the Larousse philosophical dictionary nevertheless relies heavily on a “behaviorist” (psychological) model (discussed herein in Chapter VIII) which traces the fate of *habitude* post-Proust. Thus the complete discussion in the Larousse philosophical dictionary states:

HABITUDE Automatic unchanging behavior acquired by training.

In psychology, “habitude” does not have a strict meaning. At the time when scientific psychology was born, it veered away from spiritualist speculations relating to conditions whereby habitude revealed an intelligent summary of passive experiences of memory (Maine de Biran) establishing an analogy between life and mind (Ravaisson). In a clearly naturalist manner, it was deemed to be the power that supplied memory. Its usage stayed equally formless when it designated an unconscious basis for the activating knowledge of routines which are themselves structured, as in the doctrine of the subconscious (Janet).

At the same time, in experimental psychology, one speaks of “habituation” (and of dis-habituation) when a repeated *stimulus* produces less and less, indeed not at all, its normal response. In ethology, the word indicates the final familiarization of the subject with the experimental situation for the purpose of avoiding emotional interference.

We find a more thoughtful and expanded philosophical definition in the Encyclopédie philosophique universelle, 1998 edition (1108) which traces the history of the concept from Hume and the post-enlightenment philosophers, principally Maine de Biran and Ravaisson, whose work on the subject, as noted above, is explored at some length herein in Chapter V. According to the author of the article in this encyclopedia, there was no need for further discourse on habitude after the work of Maine de Biran and Ravaisson:

...the theme of *habitude* served as a vector to the rediscovery, during the first half of the [19th] century, of a metaphysical duality [of the active and the passive modes]. This duality is, with Biran, essentially subjective; it will stay that way even in his last philosophical works. In contrast, with Ravaisson, *habitude* serves to reveal not only the spheres of the active and the passive, but the two poles of Nature and Mind. The theme of *habitude* thus finished its philosophical journey and ceased being at stake (1108).

It is in André Lalande's Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie, first published in the Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie between 1902 and 1923, that we find the most expansive discussion of *habitude*, in fact two commentaries running side by side. The first commentary appears more in the nature of a definition, and the second is termed by the editors an "article." In the first commentary, the author traces the word from its Aristotelian definition, in which virtue is an important component—see Chapter IV below—referring to the standard works by Ravaisson and Maine de Biran (Chapter V herein). The author notes several phenomena associated with *habitude*, such as biological and physical adaptation; spontaneous repetition without, necessarily, consciousness, e.g. language and manners; and ease and expertness developed through repetition. He reviews the Maine de Biran distinctions between active and passive *habitudes*, the challenges thereto, and the issue of whether only animate beings can have *habitudes*. He also notes the controversy as to whether repetition is a necessary condition to create a *habitude*.

In the article appearing right below the definitional discussion, there is an extended discussion of the meanings and distinctions between the French "habitude" and

the various words in other languages with the same or similar meaning, including of course the classical languages, but also dwelling quite a bit on the German “Gewonheit” and the implied distinctions regarding disposition, will, custom, and action. The article reviews some of the subjects of interest in 19th century discussions of habitude, such as the distinction between active and passive habitudes, the degree of participation of the will with respect to various habitudes, whether inorganic matter can have habitudes—subjects explained below in our review of the development of the concept of habitude up to the writing and publication of À la recherche du temps perdu. But this short summary of the definitions of habitude in ordinary and philosophical dictionaries may serve as an introduction to the breadth of the concept: we are not talking here only about brushing one’s teeth, or having rolls with one’s dinner, or reading before one’s bedtime.

In the pages that follow, we explore in depth the large, philosophical and metaphysical manner in which Proust used the term habitude, and how that usage reflected the two thousand year heritage which had been so particularly focused in the French intellectual thought of Proust’s time. But it is nevertheless important to keep in mind always that one is continually navigating between the ordinary, dictionary-definition of habitude, or, as Kaufmann calls it, the “banal,” “common sense” meaning of the word, and the much deeper, abstract, physical and metaphysical usage of habitude. In our time, l’habitude has been largely understood only in its most narrow dimensions. As Kaufmann so well states:

All the art [of understanding habitude in its broad, philosophical sense] consists in removing it from its common sense meaning (thereby

considering habitude as a major phenomenon) without completely breaking with that common sense meaning (because its crux is effectively incorporated in the little unimportant gesture). The paradox is that habitude becomes a great concept, socially structuring individuals, because it knows how to become forgotten in the little unimportant gesture: the more it is rendered banal in the ordinariness of every day life, the more powerfully it structures that very life.

Kaufmann's emphasis in the foregoing passage was on the grandeur of the concept of habitude in a social context, but the commentary applies equally in the psychological and emotional registers, as will become evident.

In this dissertation, we seek to restore habitude to its prominent place in À la recherche du temps perdu, a restoration that reflects both the respect that the concept enjoyed when Proust formulated and wrote the novel, and the desuetude into which it had fallen for most of the 20th century. Our first task, then, was to gather and present what the narrator said about habitude (Chapter II). To our knowledge, no compilation, review or commentary on the extensive commentary on habitude throughout the novel has ever been published. No doubt many of the events and patterns described in À la recherche du temps perdu could be analyzed or explained in part by the force of habitude, but, again, we do not here imply habitude into the fabric of the novel; rather, we study the Proustian concept of habitude only by references to those passages in which the narrator himself invokes some form of the term to describe or explain the events in question, or to expound upon life in more general terms.

We then review (Chapter III) the critical commentary on À la recherche du temps perdu with a fixed focus on habitude, showing both the significant absence, indeed, at times it seems purposeful ignorance, of the major role that the concept played in the narrator's intellectual commentary, and the writings of the few commentators that did appreciate the novel's discourse on habitude, and what they thought it contributed to the novel's themes. The evolution of the concept of habitude, so that its breadth, meanings, and position in intellectual life of Proust's time is the next subject, occupying two chapters, the first treating, somewhat summarily, the development of the concept in Western thought, and highlighting the commentary of French writers and philosophers, prior to the 19th century (Chapter IV) and the second treating, extensively and in depth, the intense French intellectual focus on habitude in the 19th century (Chapter V).⁴ In that manner, the Proustian contributions to the discourse on habitude can be understood and evaluated, and that is the subject matter of the following chapter (VI). In Chapter VII, we switch our focus from the manner in which the novel contributed to the development of the theory of habitude, and its applications, to the manner in which habitude informed other prominent Proustian themes, and we thus consider whether, and to what extent, our understanding of other (and more critically recognized) central themes in the novel such as voluntary and involuntary memory, time, social interactions, and the role of art might be altered by moving back into its deservedly prominent place the novel's discourse on habitude. Finally, in Chapter VIII we look at some developments in the discourse on habitude post-Proust, discuss possible explanations of why it ceased to fascinate the

⁴ In both chapters IV and V, we have consulted only those works either written in, or translated into, French or English.

intellectual community for the better part of the 20th century, and discuss, in Chapter IX, indications of its resurgence.

With two exceptions, all quotations in English from French sources reflect my translations. The exceptions are quotations from Montaigne and from Proust: for both, citations are made to published translations, and for the Proustian citations to the translated text, the original French text is furnished in accompanying footnotes. I have, however, changed the word “habit” to “habitude” when the former appeared in the English translation, for the reasons explained above. Sometimes, as will be seen, the English translation uses words other than “habit” to translate the French “habitude.” In such cases, I have cited the English text as written, but noted when a nuance has been lost, or a meaning distorted, from that choice in the translation.

The bibliography furnishes the references to all citations and other reference material. For the French text of À la recherche du temps perdu, we have used the 10 volume GF Flammarion edition, and the abbreviations to each of these volumes are those used in that text (See Du côté de chez Swann, 6). For the Moncrief/Kilmartin/Enright translation of À la recherche du temps perdu (title translated as In Search of Lost Time), we have used the Volume numbers, and the following abbreviations for each of the six volumes: Vol I SW; Vol. II BG; Vol III GW; Vol IV S&G; Vol V C&F; Vol VI TR.

**CHAPTER II. PROUST ON HABITUDE IN À LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS
PERDU**

A. INTRODUCTION

An excellent lead into the treatment of *habitude* in À la recherche du temps perdu is furnished by the first three references thereto which occur in the first twelve pages of the novel. Each discussion involves a significant theme in the novel and a significant role that *habitude* plays in life. In the first reference, the narrator, Marcel, is recounting the experiences of falling asleep and waking when he was a child:

But I had seen first one and then another of the rooms in which I had slept during my life, and in the end I would revisit them all in the long course of my waking dream....

...sometimes the Louis XVI room, so cheerful ... sometimes, again, the little room with the high ceiling, hollowed in the form of a pyramid out of two separate storeys and partly walled with mahogany, in which from the first moment, mentally poisoned by the unfamiliar scent of vetiver, I was convinced of the hostility of the violet curtains and of the insolent indifference of a clock that chattered on at the top of its voice as though I were not there; in which a strange and pitiless rectangular cheval-glass, standing across one corner of the room, carved out for itself a site I had not looked to find tenanted in the soft plenitude of my normal field of vision; in which my mind, striving for hours on end to break away from its moorings, to stretch upwards so as to take on the exact shape of the room

and to reach to the topmost height of its gigantic funnel, had endured many a painful night as I lay stretched out in bed, my eyes staring upwards, my ears straining, my nostrils flaring, my heart beating; until habitude had changed the colour of the curtains, silenced the clock, brought an expression of pity to the cruel, slanting face of the glass, disguised or even completely dispelled the scent of vetiver, and appreciably reduced the apparent loftiness of the ceiling. Habitude! That skilful but slow-moving arranger who begins by letting our minds suffer for weeks on end in temporary quarters, but whom our minds are none the less only too happy to discover at last, for without it, reduced to their own devices, they would be powerless to make any room seem habitable (Vol. I SW 7, 8-9).⁵

⁵ “Mais j’avais revu tantôt l’une, tantôt l’autre, des chambres que j’avais habitées dans ma vie, et je finissais par me les rappeler toutes dans les longues rêveries qui suivaient mon réveil;... parfois la chambre Louis XVI, si gaie...parfois au contraire celle, petite et si élevée de plafond, creusée en forme de pyramide dans la hauteur de deux étages et partiellement revêtue d’acajou, ou dès la première seconde j’avais été intoxiqué moralement par l’odeur inconnue du vétiver, convaincu de l’hostilité des rideaux violets et de l’insolente indifférence de la pendule qui jacassait tout haut comme si je n’eusse pas été là; où une étrange et impitoyable glace à pieds quadrangulaire, barrant obliquement un des angles de la pièce, se creusait à vif dans la douce plénitude de mon champ visuel accoutumé un emplacement qui n’y était pas prévu ; où ma pensée, s’efforçant pendant des heures de se disloquer, de s’étirer en hauteur pour prendre exactement la forme de la chambre et arriver à remplir jusqu’en haut son gigantesque entonnoir, avait souffert bien de dures nuits, tandis que j’étais étendu dans mon lit, les yeux levés, l’oreille anxieuse, la narine rétive, le cœur battant : jusqu’à ce que l’habitude eût changé la couleur des rideaux, fait taire la pendule, enseigné la pitié à la glace oblique et cruelle, dissimulé, sinon chassé complètement, l’odeur du vétiver et notablement diminué la hauteur apparente du plafond. L’habitude! aménageuse habile mais bien lente et qui commence par laisser souffrir notre esprit pendant des semaines dans une installation provisoire; mais que malgré tout il est bien heureux de trouver, car sans l’habitude et réduit à ses seuls moyens il serait impuissant à nous rendre un logis habitable ” (Sw 100-01).

The sentence plays on the word itself, calling it an “habile” arranger, a force which eventually makes our lodgings “habitable.”

The passage marks the extreme sensitivity of the narrator to his surroundings, especially during childhood; the terror that overcame him from exposure to new surroundings; and the gradual relief the narrator experienced as the frightening sensations diminished. Several themes which recur in the novel are thereby sounded: the vulnerability of the child to sensation, fear, and to change; the difficulty of falling asleep when one's environment is altered, or even slightly experienced as out-of-kilter; and, generally, the consistent importance of one's very immediate surroundings to one's sense of well being. Then habitude makes its very first appearance; it rescues the child from his terror, by--according to the text--changing the aspect of the room: the color of the curtains, the noise of the pendulum, the angle of the mirror, the odor of the grass and the height of the ceiling. But of course we know that habitude is an internal phenomenon; it does not change the exterior world, but our own perceptions of same. Thus we understand that what is changed entirely is Marcel's sensation of all of these aspects of the room, so that they no longer frighten and displease him. The next sentence is the first commentary devoted only to habitude without specific reference to a situation. Habitue, the author exclaims; he both chastises and praises it, the first for the slowness with which it operates, and the second for its ultimate beneficent effect. This dual attitude toward habitue, praise and condemnation, gratitude and resentment, marks Proust's discussion of habitue throughout the novel, explored in the myriad ways in which habitue infuses and controls our lives, as we will see.

The second discussion of habitue follows hard upon the first, and occurs in the context of a lampshade that was put in Marcel's room to please and distract him, a very

beautiful lampshade with multicolored scenes of old legends, as one might find on stained glass. But the fascinating lampshade subverted its intended purpose:

...because this mere change of lighting was enough to destroy the familiar impression I had of my room, thanks to which, save for the torture of going to bed, it had become quite endurable (Vol I SW 10).

But I cannot express the discomfort I felt at this intrusion of mystery and beauty into a room which I had succeeded in filling with my own personality until I thought no more of it than of myself. The anesthetic effect of *habitude* being destroyed, I would begin to think – and to feel – such melancholy things (Vol I SW 11).⁶

These passages relate again to the toll that his immediate environment took of the narrator when he was a child, to the point where his very identity is involved, and disturbed, by change. *Habitude* is necessarily once more involved, and once more the reader understands both its force and its double nature: it operates as an anesthetic, thereby relieving pain but also diminishing sensation and feeling.

⁶ « ...le changement d'éclairage détruisait l'habitude que j'avais de ma chambre et grâce à quoi, sauf le supplice du coucher, elle m'était devenue supportable. » (Sw. 102). [Note that by translating "l'habitude que j'avais de ma chambre" as "familiar impression of my room," the translation seriously attenuates the role of *habitude* in these circumstances, where it is repeatedly addressed as a force, outside the control of will.]

Mais je ne peux dire quel malaise me causait pourtant cette intrusion du mystère et de la beauté dans une chambre que j'avais fini par remplir de mon moi au point de ne pas faire plus attention à elle qu'à lui-même. L'influence anesthésiante de l'habitude ayant cessé, je me mettais à penser, à sentir, choses si tristes » (Sw. 103).

Just a few pages later there is a third reference, more fleeting than the other two, but in a very important context: the famous good-night kiss of Marcel's mother, without which he cannot fall asleep, but which creates tension between his parents:

...for the concession which she made to my wretchedness and agitation in coming up to give me this kiss of peace always annoyed my father, who thought such rituals absurd, and she would have liked to try to induce me to outgrow the need, the habitude, of having her there at all, let alone get into the habitude of asking for an additional kiss when she was already crossing the threshold (Vol I SW 15).⁷

The role that this good-night kiss would play in Marcel's life is well known, leading to his mother's all-night stay in his room, and Marcel's belief that his life's fundamental trajectory was determined from that moment hence. But habitude, as a separate subject, has hereby gained another dimension: need. That which was habitual becomes imperative. This aspect of habitude is also critical, and is explored in other contexts.

In the first twelve pages, then, we have three references to "habitude" as a potent force in the life of the narrator when a child, references which are hardly casual, but appear very deliberate. Especially in the very first example, we see that the text not only considers habitude in a particular setting, but then separates habitude from its context to emphasize its ubiquitous application. This style will be repeated often in À la recherche

⁷ « ...en m'apportant ce baiser de paix, agaçait mon père qui trouvait ces rites absurdes, et elle eût voulu tâcher de m'en faire perdre le besoin, l'habitude, bien loin de me laisser prendre celle de lui demander, quand elle était déjà sur le pas de la porte, un baiser de plus » (Sw.106).

du temps perdu; the effect of habitude in a particular setting will be explored, and then the phenomenon of habitude will itself furnish a rich ground for the narrator's commentary. Since habitude is most often discussed directly and abstractly, as phenomenon and force, the reference is usually to the nominative form "l'habitude." Moreover, "l'habitude" is not infrequently capitalized, emphasizing the power and pervasiveness of the phenomenon. Occasionally, and especially when the effects of habitude are discussed in terms of specific practices of the narrator, or of others, the subject is broached by the use of the verb, usually in its past tense "habitué," or of the adverb, "habituellement."

The detail and particularity of the text of À la recherche du temps perdu is of course one of its most striking features, and it is in very specific contexts that the operations of habitude are addressed throughout the novel, notwithstanding the generalizations that often follow. We therefore determined to present the novel's treatment of habitude's operations in the contexts in which they arose. Not surprisingly, those contexts represent major themes in the novel: passions, or emotions; cognitive processes; aesthetic experiences. Again, not surprisingly, these categories, and their sub-topics, constantly overlap. We then consider separately the generalizations occurring throughout the novel regarding the development and operation of habitudes across numerous and diverse aspects of life. We emphasize once again that there is no strong line of demarcation between these "additional generalizations" and the observations regarding habitude in specific contexts. Finally, we consider the ultimate judgments of

the novel regarding the role that habitude plays in our lives, and the extent, if any, to which that role may be altered.

B. PASSIONS OR EMOTIONS

1. Love

Habitude plays an enormous role in the emotional relationship of two human beings to each other, and its operation during and especially at the end of a love affair are explored in depth by the narrator in the two love relationships that are meticulously analyzed in the novel: Swann and Odette, and the narrator and Albertine. The narrator starts with the proposition that, habitually, we are all indifferent to one another (Vol I SW 334; Sw. 357),⁸ but that the feeling of love changes that indifference completely, and exposes us to feelings of great joy and great suffering. (Vol I SW 334; Sw. 357). Habitudes start forming immediately in every love affair, as the behavior of each of the lovers toward the other falls into patterns (Vol I SW, 432-34; Sw. 434-35; Vol V C&F, 921; Fug. 340). Although these patterns may be painful to the lover, he feels powerless to change his behavior. Thus when Odette appeared to Swann to be unfaithful, he would spy on her; his jealousy was then resented by Odette, who reacted by keeping him at a distance. To regain her favor, Swann would buy her elaborate gifts, whereupon she would feel secure enough to engage in the type of behavior that made Swann jealous, and the cycle would recommence (Vol I SW, 432-34; Sw. 434-35). The passion of the obsessed lover becomes an “inveterate habitude” (Vol I SW 437) (“habitude invétérée”

⁸ The text in French is: « Les êtres nous sont d’habitude si indifférents.... » translated as “Other people as a rule mean so little to us....”

(Sw. 437)), and is comparable to an incurable illness. At this stage it infects every aspect of the lover's being, and contaminates or supersedes all the other habitudes of life:

And this malady which Swann's love had become had so proliferated, was so closely interwoven with all his habitudes, with all his actions, with his thoughts, his health, his sleep, his life, even with what he hoped for after his death, was so utterly inseparable from him, that it would have been impossible to eradicate it without almost entirely destroying him; as surgeons say, his love was no longer operable (Vol I SW, 438-39).⁹

The hold of habitude on love derives in great part from the physical proximity of the lover and his beloved, although when the love object obsessively occupies one's entire emotional life, as it did with Swann, then the suffering experienced from deprivation attaches not only to physical presence, but to the related habitude of continually thinking about the love object even in her absence: Swann found that he was incapable of breaking that habitude (Vol I SW 450-51; Sw. 447-49). In the loss of the physical presence of the beloved, the habitude is ruptured, and the rupture creates the most abject suffering. It is after Albertine has lived with him that the narrator experiences the acute suffering from her departure, and he ascribes that pain to the habitude he developed of leading a common life (Vol V C&F, 477-78; Pris. 463-64). The narrator observed that: "And in love, it is easier to relinquish a feeling than to give up a

⁹ « Et cette maladie qu'était l'amour de Swann avait tellement multiplié, il était si étroitement mêlé à toutes les habitudes de Swann, à tous ses actes, à sa pensée, à sa santé, à son sommeil, à sa vie, même à ce qu'il désirait pour après sa mort, il ne faisait tellement plus qu'un avec lui, qu'on n'aurait pas pu l'arracher de lui sans le détruire lui-même à peu près tout entier: comme on dit en chirurgie, son amour n'était plus opérable. » (Sw. 438).

habitude.” (Vol V C&F, 478) (« Et en amour il est plus facile de renoncer à un sentiment que de perdre une habitude » (Pris. 464)), and, explaining to Albertine why he must have her return, the narrator refers to himself as “first and foremost” (« surtout ») a man of habitude (Vol V C&F 613; Fug. 90). When a love affair results in a long term relationship, the persons involved are habituated to require the physical presence of their beloved, and suffer physical pain in their absence. Thus old age brings with it a new form of domination by the love object (Vol II BG 219; JFF 1, 265). On the other hand, the narrator also observes that in long standing liaisons, the habitudes on both sides of the relationship spawn a kind of sweetness, resembling feelings among family members (Vol II BG 54-55¹⁰; JFF 1, 128).

Habitudes form in every love relationship, and, even when the relationship is over, in some sense they form the basis of subsequent loves:

All these habitudes, which are like great uniform high-roads along which our love passes daily and which were forged long ago in the volcanic fire of an ardent emotion, nevertheless survive the woman, survive even the memory of the woman. They become the pattern, if not of all our loves, at least of certain of our loves which alternate among themselves (Vol V C&F 921).¹¹

¹⁰The translation omits the comparison with habitudes.

¹¹ « ...toutes ces habitudes, sorte de grandes voies uniformes par où passe chaque jour notre amour et qui furent fondues jadis dans le feu volcanique d’une émotion ardente. Même ses habitudes survivent à la femme, même au souvenir de la femme. Elles deviennent la forme, sinon de tous nos amours, du moins de certains de nos amours qui alternent entre eux » (Fug. 340).

It is memory and suggestion which subject the new love object to the habitudes of being in love formed by the prior love experience:

Since we know its [love's] song, which is engraved on our hearts in its entirety, there is no need for a woman to repeat the opening strains—filled with the admiration which beauty inspires—for us to remember what follows. And if she begins in the middle—where hearts are joined and where it sings of our existing, henceforward, for one another only—we are well enough attuned to that music to be able to take it up and follow our partner without hesitation at the appropriate passage¹² (Vol I SW 277).

The element of continued physical presence, even more than sensual pleasure, is critical for love to be experienced as *habitude*, and this serves to explain why suffering can not be avoided by merely making a substitute in the love object:

But above all, this anguish was incomparably more intense for a number of reasons of which the most important was perhaps not that I had never tasted any sensual pleasure with Mme de Guermantes or with Gilberte, but that, not seeing them every day, and at every hour of the day, having no

¹² Once again, the translation has omitted the key word *habitude*: « Comme nous possédons sa chanson [la chanson de l'amour], gravée en nous tout entière, nous n'avons pas besoin qu'une femme nous en dise le début—rempli par l'admiration qu'inspire la beauté—pour en trouver la suite. Et si elle commence au milieu —là où les cœurs se rapprochent, où l'on parle de n'exister plus que l'un pour l'autre—nous avons assez l'habitude de cette musique pour rejoindre tout de suite notre partenaire au passage où elle nous attend » (Sw. 313).

opportunity and consequently no need to see them, there had been lacking, in my love for them, the immense force of *Habitude* (Vol V C&F, 576).¹³

When a lover associates in his mind a particular activity with his beloved, the pleasure he derives from that activity and from engaging in it with his beloved fuse into one habitude; therefore, one can not lessen the pain of loss of the beloved by engaging in the same activity with another (Vol V C&F 747; Fug. 201-02). *Habitude* is also the key to understanding the mystery expressed by Swann in those famous lines in which he observed: “ ‘To think that I’ve wasted years of my life, that I’ve longed to die, that I’ve experienced my greatest love, for a woman who didn’t appeal to me, who wasn’t even my type’ ” (Vol I SW 543).¹⁴ The experience, according to the narrator, is hardly the exception; it is the rule, because women who are not “our type” appear non-threatening to us, and we thereby allow them to spend more time with us. The prolonged physical presence results in the formation of habitudes, which turn into attachments, and are experienced on a deep emotional level. The lover’s feelings are attached not to the objective character of the beloved, but only to her physical presence and his mental conception of her. As the lover can not dispense with her presence, her absence creates anguish (Vol VI TR 490-91; TR 433-34). What creates the suffering in love is not the

¹³ « Mais surtout cette angoisse était incomparablement plus forte pour bien des raisons dont la plus importante n’était peut-être pas que je n’avais jamais goûté de plaisir sensuel avec Mme de Guermantes et avec Gilberte, mais que ne les voyant pas chaque jour, à toute heure, n’en ayant pas la possibilité et par conséquent pas le besoin, il y avait en moins, dans mon amour pour elles, la force immense de l’*Habitude* » (Fug. 61).

¹⁴ « ‘Dire que j’ai gâché des années de ma vie, que j’ai voulu mourir, que j’ai eu mon plus grand amour, pour une femme qui ne me plaisait pas, qui n’était pas mon genre’ » (Sw. 520-21).

woman, but the *habitude*. This remarkable insight is the ultimate explanation of the two critical love relationships in the novel:

A woman who is ‘our type’ is seldom dangerous, she is not interested in us, she gives us a limited contentment and then quickly leaves us without establishing herself in our life, and what on the contrary, in love, is dangerous and prolific of suffering is not a woman herself but her presence beside us every day and our curiosity about what she is doing every minute: not the beloved woman, but *habitude* (Vol VI TR 91).¹⁵

When lovers separate, the *habitudes* of the relationship are broken. It is this rupture that creates enormous pain, and without even the beloved to comfort the lover in his suffering--a comfort he had become habituated to expect (Vol V C&F 476-77; Pris. 463). But despite the pain, there is an awakening of sensibility, as “...one’s imagination, ceasing to be paralyzed by *habitude*, has awakened...” (Vol V C&F 477); («... notre imagination cessant d’être paralysée par l’*habitude*, s’est éveillée » (Pris. 463)). It is in the first days after the parting that the suffering is greatest, as one has not yet become habituated to the state of being without the beloved (Vol V C&F 477; Pris. 463); once the accommodation to the new status is made, one has created the *habitude* of separation, and that in turn generates a state of indifference toward the formerly beloved (Vol II BG 255-57; JFF 1, 293-95).

¹⁵ « Une femme qui est « notre genre » est rarement dangereuse, car elle ne veut pas de nous, nous contente, nous quitte vite, ne s’installe pas dans notre vie, et ce qui est dangereux et procréateur de souffrances dans l’amour, ce n’est pas la femme elle-même, c’est sa présence de tous les jours, la curiosité de ce qu’elle fait à tous moments; ce n’est pas la femme, c’est l’*habitude* » (TR 433-34).

This last point is of course one of the major theses of À la recherche du temps perdu: the lover whose passion is most intense and who suffers most unbearably when deserted or rejected by his beloved will become indifferent toward that former love with the passage of time and the absence of the beloved. Habitue plays the crucial role in that process but its role is further explained by the narrator's concept of identity, the "moi" that is in love (Vol II BG, 299-301, 329-34; JFF 2, 7-9; 39-41). The narrator's explanation of the role of habitue in accustoming us to loss in love calls back the very first scenes in Marcel's childhood when he attempted to fall asleep in different bedrooms, or when his lampshade was changed:

For my reason was aware that Habitue–Habitue which was even now setting to work to make me like this unfamiliar lodging, to change the position of the mirror, the shade of the curtains, to stop the clock–undertakes as well to make dear to us the companions whom at first we disliked, to give another appearance to their faces, to make the sound of their voices attractive, to modify the inclinations of their hearts ... Not that the heart, too, is not bound in time, when separation is complete, to feel the analgesic effect of habitue; but until then it will continue to suffer (Vol II BG 339).¹⁶

¹⁶ « Car ma raison savait que l'habitude–l'habitude qui allait assumer maintenant l'entreprise de me faire aimer ce logis inconnu, de changer la place de la glace, la nuance des rideaux, d'arrêter la pendule–se charge aussi bien de nous rendre chers les compagnons qui nous avaient déplu d'abord, de donner une autre forme aux visages, de rendre sympathique le son d'une voix, de modifier l'inclination des cœurs ... Ce n'est pas que notre cœur ne doive éprouver, lui aussi, quand la séparation sera consommée, les effets analgésiques de l'habitude; mais jusque-là il continuera de souffrir » (JFF 2, 39-40).

But *habitude* works these changes only by changing our very self (Vol II BG 340); (“notre moi serait changé” (JFF 2, 40). Thus the “moi” which was attached to the love object must die with the death of a love affair, to give rise to a new “moi” who is not habituated to love the former beloved: “...(when death, and then another life, had, in the guise of *Habitude*, performed their double task)...” (Vol II BG 341).¹⁷ For *habitude* to work its anaesthetizing effect on the heart, a new “moi” must emerge out of the ashes of the old. Love is inextricably intertwined with identity, and both are shaped by *habitude*.

2. Identity

A person’s sense of self is highly dependent on his *habitudes*. Thus, for example, *habitudes* are a key element in forming the homosexual identity. The “*habitude* of feeling like a woman” (Vol IV S&G 416) (« *habitude de sentir en femme* » (SG 2, 68)) can change a person’s relationship to his own body, and while a homosexual may will his movements or actions to be masculine, his *habitude* of thinking lovingly about men changes his ability to experience a masculine corporeal identity (Vol IV S&G 416-17; SG 2, 68-69).

The novel especially emphasizes the *habitudes* inhering in a person’s relationship or interactions with his or her usual surroundings and company. When *habitude* is first introduced to the reader as a critical component of the narrator’s worldview, in the very first pages of À la recherche du temps perdu, it is in the context of the physical environment of the narrator and his sense of himself which he both takes from that

¹⁷ « ...(alors la mort, puis une nouvelle vie auraient, sous le nom d’*Habitude*, accompli leur oeuvre double);... » (JFF 2, 41).

environment and imparts thereto. The narrator's identity is attached to his surroundings, and especially to his own room; any change in that room forces an adjustment to his identity which is by nature painful. In speaking of an adjustment that he was forced to make to a room in the Grand Hotel at Balbec, after he had been living for years in Paris, the narrator says that the objects in his room in Paris had become "...merely extensions of my organs, an enlargement of myself" (Vol I BG 334) («... des annexes de mes organes, un agrandissement de moi-même... » (JFF 2, 35)), whereas the objects and smells of his new room at Balbec invaded "...almost in the very heart of my inmost self..." (Vol I BG 334); (« ...presque à l'intérieur de mon moi... » (JFF 2, 35)). The narrator speaks in the same terms when he describes his fear and anxiety at the prospect of sleeping in a new room during a visit to Saint-Loup at Doncières: his "moi" was threatened by new objects which he had not neutralized by habitual assimilation (Vol III GU 102-04; Gu I, 150-52). The same point is made with respect to the people to whom the narrator is most attached. Thus the narrator explained to his grandmother that as he is a "creature of habitude" (Vol II BG 419) (« un être d'habitudes » (JFF 2, 103)), he can not bear to be separated from loved ones. Of course, after he becomes accustomed to new persons and develops new habitudes, this separation is no longer painful (Vol II BG 419; JFF 2, 103).

In this context—identity, habitude, and familiar versus new surroundings--the narrator makes an important value judgment with respect to the role that habitude plays in our lives. So far as love was concerned, its effects were noted in detail, but neither praised nor condemned, except insofar as blame might be imputed by virtue of the real

suffering that arises from the absence of the love object. With respect to one's environment, however, and the effect of changes thereto, the narrator is more direct in terms of praise and blame, and his value system is explicit, if ambivalent: *habitude* is both extolled and condemned and, in effect, for the same reason. Thus while *habitude* preserves our identity, comforts us and allays our anxieties, is consecrated to avoid shocks to the nervous system, and while changes in our environments terrify us, such changes awaken and inspire us:

...and besides, when one becomes for an instant one's former self, that is to say different from what one has been for some time past, one's sensibility, being no longer dulled by *habitude*, receives from the slightest stimulus vivid impressions which make everything that has preceded them fade into insignificance, impressions to which, because of their intensity, we attach ourselves with the momentary enthusiasm of a drunkard (Vol IV S&G 590-91).¹⁸

Paradoxically, after the death of one's identity caused by separation from the old surroundings and from persons with whom one has been habitually in contact, one is likely to be happier (Vol II BG, 339-41; JFF 2, 40-41). But the death of that former identity caused anguish (Vol II BG 339-341; JFF 2, 40-41).

¹⁸ « ...et puis, quand on redevient pour un instant un homme ancien, c'est-à-dire différent de celui qu'on est depuis longtemps, la sensibilité n'étant plus amortie par l'habitude reçoit des moindres chocs des impressions si vives qui font pâlir tout ce qui les a précédées et auxquelles à cause de leur intensité nous nous attachons avec l'exaltation passagère d'un ivrogne » (SG 2, 209). See also Vol IV S&G 221-22; SG 1, 246; Vol II BG 398; JFF 2, 87; Vol VI TR 333; TR 317.

In fact, the replacement of the former identity, dependent on former habitudes, with a different identity is experienced as liberation, giving rise to pleasurable visions of other places and new possibilities (Vol IV S&G 581-82; SG 2, 201-02). One experiences a sweet feeling of anticipation at the opportunity to develop new habitudes which will include knowing and loving new objects (Vol III GW 103-04; Gu I, 151). The narrator goes further: habitude must be killed and one's old identity discarded in order to shock one's former senses of sensibility and to liberate new ones (Vol IV S&G 590-92; SG 2, 208-10). Clearly, we have here an important and generalized value judgment: habitude is an enemy which must be vanquished to experience growth and liberation of the self. Because of the hold that habitude has on us, one pays for that growth and liberation in the coin of anguish.

3. Pleasure

Just as there is no fine line between the issues of love and identity in discussing the place that habitude occupies in each, so there is no ideological separation between the issues of habitude, on the one hand, and pleasure, love, and identity, on the other. We have already seen that where change is involved in surroundings or immediate environment, initially there is anguish, and then anxieties become allayed, and then there is often pleasure. There is so much emphasis in the novel on the pleasure that is derived from rupturing old habitudes that the issue of pleasure, although of a somewhat more generalized or abstract order than "love" or "identity," deserves its own focus in considering the effect of habitudes on the passions and on emotion.

Habitude robs us of visual pleasure and stimulation. Thus when one is accustomed to regard a particular scene, one loses any sense of what is striking in that scene (Vol II BG 230;¹⁹ JFF 1, 273). Habitude robs us of the pleasure of profoundly experiencing the beauty that surrounds us to the point that “...if there were no such thing as habitude, life must appear delightful to those of us who are continually under the threat of death—that is to say, to all mankind” (Vol II BG 398).²⁰ Objects which have been effectively unseen by us because we are habituated to their presence become fresh and new, and appreciated, when presented in a different environment (Vol II BG 398). In fact, new surroundings are so vital to the awakening of sensibility that even a new woman will not engender strong feelings when presented in an environment to which one has become thoroughly habituated:

At least at Balbec, where I had not been for so long, I should have the advantage, failing the necessary connexion between the place and this woman, that my sense of reality would not be destroyed by habitude as in Paris, where, whether in my own home or in a bedroom that I already knew, pleasure indulged in with a woman could not give me for one instant, amid everyday surroundings, the illusion that it was opening the door for me to a new life. (For if habitude is a second nature, it prevents

¹⁹ The translation omits the word *habitude* and substitutes “accustomed.”

²⁰ « De sorte que s’il n’y avait pas l’habitude, la vie devrait paraître délicieuse à des êtres qui seraient à chaque heure menacés de mourir—c’est-à-dire à tous les hommes » (JFF 2, 87).

us from knowing our first, whose cruelties it lacks as well as its enchantments) (Vol IV S&G 208).²¹

Habitude is not entirely unalterable. It can be suppressed or changed, thus giving rise to new experiences, new sensations, and new identities. Newness is essential if one is to experience beauty and happiness (JFF 2, 22-23). When one changes one's environment and one's routines, one's habitudes become sedentary; it is only then that one may approach one's environment with aroused sensibilities and imagination:

As a rule it is with our being reduced to a minimum that we live; most of our faculties lie dormant because they can rely upon Habitude, which knows what there is to be done and has no need of their services. But on this morning of travel, the interruption of the routine of my existence, the unfamiliar place and time, had made their presence indispensable. My habitudes, which were sedentary and not matutinal, for once were missing, and all my faculties came hurrying to take their place, vying with one another in their zeal, rising, each of them, like waves, to the same unaccustomed level, from the basest to the most exalted, from breath,

²¹ « Du moins à Balbec, où je n'étais pas allé depuis longtemps, j'aurais cet avantage, à défaut du rapport nécessaire qui n'existait pas entre le pays et cette femme, que le sentiment de la réalité n'y serait pas supprimé pour moi par l'habitude comme à Paris où, soit dans ma propre maison, soit dans une chambre connue, le plaisir auprès d'une femme ne pouvait pas me donner un instant l'illusion au milieu des choses quotidiennes, qu'il m'ouvrait accès à une nouvelle vie. (Car si l'habitude est une seconde nature, elle nous empêche de connaître la première dont elle n'a ni les cruautés ni les enchantements) » (SG 1, 234-35).

appetite, the circulation of my blood to receptivity and imagination (Vol II BG 319).²²

When the narrator is “torn from” his habitudes, he knows pleasure: “...but at this moment, as on every occasion when I found myself torn from my habitudes—in a new place or going out at an unaccustomed hour—I was feeling a lively pleasure” (Vol VI TR 253).²³ The pleasure may be in the form of fantasy, and the habitude may lie in the surroundings; thus only when the narrator was in a wholly new and rural environment was he able to entertain a fantasy of a love affair with a young peasant girl which gave him much pleasure (Vol II BG 319-20; JFF 2, 22-23). But the point is often repeated--suppression of habitude is the prerequisite for the experience of high pleasure:

Lifting a corner of the heavy curtain of habitude (stupefying habitude, which during the whole course of our life conceals from us almost the whole universe, and in the dead of night, without changing the label, substitutes for the most dangerous or intoxicating poisons of life something anodyne that procures no delights), such memories would come back to me as at the time itself with that fresh and piercing novelty of a recurring season, of a change in the routine of our hours, which, in the

²² « C'est d'ordinaire avec notre être réduit au minimum que nous vivons, la plupart de nos facultés restent endormies, parce qu'elles se reposent sur l'habitude qui sait ce qu'il y a à faire et n'a pas besoin d'elles. Mais par ce matin de voyage, l'interruption de la routine de mon existence, le changement de lieu et d'heure avaient rendu leur présence indispensable. Mon habitude qui était sédentaire et n'était pas matinale, faisait défaut, et toutes mes facultés étaient accourues pour la remplacer, rivalisant entre elles de zèle – s'élevant toutes, comme des vagues, à la plus noble, de la respiration de l'appétit et de la circulation sanguine à la sensibilité et à l'imagination » (JFF 2, 23).

²³ « Mais comme chaque fois que je me trouvais arraché à mes habitudes, sortir à une autre heure, dans un lieu nouveau, j'éprouvais un vif plaisir » (TR 254-55).

realm of pleasures also, if we get into a carriage on the first fine day in spring, or leave the house at sunrise, makes us observe our own most trivial actions with a lucid exaltation which makes that intense minute worth more than the sum total of the preceding days (Vol V C&F 732-33).²⁴

Against this vision of a life released from *habitude*, the comforts of same seem pale indeed.

C. THE COGNITIVE PROCESSES

The workings of *habitude* pervade virtually every cognitive process, and determine to a significant extent how these processes work, and how we experience them. The subject is attacked on at least two levels: the ways in which *habitude* forms or modifies the cognitive processes, and the ways in which *habitude* influences our experience of these processes. The difference between these two paths is best understood by reference to concrete examples, and, as in the case with emotional processes, the

²⁴ « Soulevant un coin du voile lourd de l'habitude (l'habitude abêtissante qui pendant tout le cours de notre vie nous cache à peu près tout l'univers, et dans une nuit profonde, sous leur étiquette inchangée, substitue aux poisons les plus dangereux ou les plus enivrants de la vie quelque chose d'anodin qui ne procure pas de délices), ils me revenaient comme au premier jour, avec cette fraîche et perçante nouveauté d'une saison reparaissante, d'un changement dans la routine de nos heures, qui, dans le domaine des plaisirs aussi, si nous montons en voiture par un premier beau jour de printemps, ou sortons de chez nous au lever du soleil, nous font remarquer nos actions insignifiantes avec une exaltation lucide qui fait prévaloir cette intense minute sur le total des jours antérieurs » (Fug. 190). By translating here « voile lourd de l'habitude » as « heavy curtain of *habitude* » the translation may have sought to avoid the *double entendre*, in English, but not in French, of a reference to clothing, but in so doing missed the intertextual references in the phrase “voile de l'habitude” going back, as we will see below, to Maine de Biran and to Stendhal.

subject matter of these examples overlaps. They often focus, however, on those intellectual processes associated with artistic and aesthetic experiences.

1. Language and literature

In connection with his wish to become a writer, the narrator considers how words are chosen. He observes that the choice of words to express feelings tends to be dictated by habitude, without sufficient consideration of whether the words express our ideas with sufficient refinement. He resolves to attempt to avoid these pitfalls into which habitude directs us (Vol I SW 218; Sw. 265-66). The narrator also considers our response to language, and finds, here too, that habitude plays a deadening role. Habitue deprives words of their poetry and makes us insensitive specifically to the charms of language (Vol I SW 55; Sw. 138).²⁵ Only metaphors which are not common are enjoyed (Vol I SW 55; Sw. 138). The public, however, tends to resent new uses of language, and resents the use of language in ways to which it is not habituated:

There are certain original and distinguished authors in whom the least outspokenness is thought shocking because they have not begun by flattering the tastes of the public and serving up to it the commonplaces to which it is accustomed;...In his [Swann's] case as in theirs it was the

²⁵ Here the translation effaces the role of habitue and changes the meaning of the text. The text said: «... comme des veilles manières de dire où nous voyons une métaphore, effacée, dans notre moderne langage, par l'usure de l'habitue » (Sw 138), and the translation says: "... like those old forms of speech in which we can still see traces of a metaphor whose fine point has been worn away by the rough usage of our modern tongue" (Vol I SW 55).

novelty of his language which led the audience to suspect the blackness of his designs (Vol I SW 377).²⁶

Habitude of language hides from us the ability to see, conserve, and express the deeper meaning of things and the narrator vows to avoid falling into these traps of habitude when he enters upon his vocation of writer:

When we have arrived at reality, we must, to express it and preserve it, prevent the intrusion of all those extraneous elements which at every moment the gathered speed of habitude lays at our feet. Above all I should have to be on my guard against those phrases which are chosen rather by the lips than by the mind, those humorous phrases such as we utter in conversation and continue at the end of a long conversation with other people to address, factitiously, to ourselves although they merely fill our mind with lies—those so to speak, purely physical remarks, which, in the writer, who stoops so low as to transcribe them...(Vol VI TR 302).²⁷

²⁶ « Il y a des auteurs originaux dont la moindre hardiesse révolte parce qu'ils n'ont pas d'abord flatté les goûts du public et ne lui ont pas servi les lieux communs auxquels il est habitué... Pour Swann comme pour eux, c'était la nouveauté de son langage qui faisait croire à la noirceur de ses intentions » (Sw. 391). Here "habitué" is translated as "accustomed."

²⁷ « Et quand nous aurons atteint la réalité, pour l'exprimer, pour la conserver, nous écarterons ce qui est différent d'elle et que ne cesse de nous apporter la vitesse acquise de l'habitude. Plus que tout j'écarterais ces paroles que les lèvres plutôt que l'esprit choisissent, ces paroles pleines d'humour, comme on en dit dans la conversation et qu'après une longue conversation avec les autres on continue à s'adresser facticement à soi-même et qui nous remplissent l'esprit de mensonges, ces paroles toutes physiques qu'accompagne chez l'écrivain qui s'abaisse à les transcrire... » (TR 292).

Just as *habitude* deadens sensation, sensibility, and pleasure, then, it likewise deprives language of its originality and charm, and of its abilities to uncover and communicate the most profound meaning of our lives.

2. Reason and creativity

Habitude is an enemy of originality in thought as well as in language. Unless one puts aside one's *habitudes*, one never advances in one's ideas or enlarges one's imagination (Vol I SW 220).²⁸ Together with passion, amour-propre, and intellect, *habitude* masks our deepest impressions, and turns us toward a sterile life (Vol VI TR 299-300; TR 290). Swann exemplified this unfortunate pattern: without pursuing serious studies in a profound manner, Swann "...had grown into the *habitude* of taking refuge in trivial considerations, which enabled him to disregard matters of fundamental importance" (Vol I SW 297).²⁹ To discover truth, and to unearth deeper meanings, we must be "forced to take things seriously, tearing up each new crop of the weeds of *habitude*..." (Vol VI TR 314).³⁰ The artist especially must forswear his *habitudes* if he is to create true works of art: "Our vanity, our passions, our spirit of imitation, our abstract intelligence, our *habitudes* have long been at work, and it is the task of art to undo this work of theirs, making us travel back in the direction from which we have

²⁸ Here again the translation inadequately renders the role of *habitude* as set forth in the text. The text speaks of a « *reverie au milieu de la nature où l'action de l'habitude étant suspendue...* » whereas the translation says: "...in moments of musing contemplation of nature, the normal actions of the mind being suspended..." (Vol I SW 220).

²⁹ He had « ...pris l'*habitude* de se réfugier dans des pensées sans importance qui lui permettaient de laisser de côté le fond des choses » (Sw. 328).

³⁰ « ...à prendre les choses au sérieux, arrachant chaque fois les mauvaises herbes de l'*habitude*... » (TR 301).

come to the depths where what has really existed lies unknown within us” (Vol VI TR 300).³¹

3. Sleep, or subconscious thought

The same principles hold when unconscious thought, i.e, that produced by sleep, is involved. It is only when one changes one’s habitudes with respect to sleep that the contents of dreams change, and they become more poetic: “It is the same with sleep as with our perception of the external world. It needs only a modification in our habitudes to make it poetic...” (Vol III GW 106).³² If one takes sleep by surprise, one awakes in a new and more vibrant state of mind, with that change in identity that allows for heightened sensibility and pleasure:

However, for both these kinds of awakenings, we must avoid falling asleep, even into a deep sleep, under the law of habitude. For everything that habitude ensnares in her nets, she watches closely; we must escape her, take our sleep at a moment when we thought we were doing something quite other than sleeping, take, in a word, a sleep that does not dwell under the tutelage of foresight, in the company, albeit latent, of reflexion (Vol IV S&G 518).³³

³¹ « Ce travail qu’avaient fait notre amour-propre, notre passion, notre esprit d’imitation, notre intelligence abstraite, nos habitudes, c’est ce travail que l’art défera, c’est la marche en sens contraire, le retour aux profondeurs où ce qui a existé réellement gît inconnu de nous qu’il nous fera suivre » (TW 290).

³² « Il en est du sommeil comme de la perception du monde extérieur. Il suffit d’une modification dans nos habitudes pour le rendre poétique » (Gu 1, 153).

³³ « Encore pour ces deux genres de réveil, faut-il ne pas s’endormir, même profondément, sous la loi de

On the other hand, that double edge of *habitude* is also noted with respect to sleep: changes in sleeping patterns bring dislocation and suffering. Sleep, “a friend to *habitude*” “melts away like a vapour” when sleeping circumstances change (Vol V C&F 160); (« *Ami des habitudes...s'évanouit comme une vapeur* » (Pris. 221)).

4. Memory

The most important cognitive process in which the laws of *habitude* are examined is that of memory, including, of course, forgetfulness. In this area, the narrator takes special interest in the formation of *habitude*, as well as in its effect. The text seeks to understand the operation of memory in almost neurological terms: where and how memories get stored, and how and why they are retrieved. The thesis that is offered is quite specific, and identifies *habitude* as the primary regulator of memory: “memory itself, governed by the laws of *Habitude*;” (« *la mémoire, elle-même, régie par les lois de l'Habitude* ») (Fug. 175).³⁴ Memory has its own *habitudes*, and recalls to us our past in

l'habitude. Car tout ce que *l'habitude* enserme dans ses filets, elle le surveille ; il faut lui échapper, prendre le sommeil au moment où on croyait faire tout autre chose que dormir, prendre en un mot un sommeil qui ne demeure pas sous la tutelle de la prévoyance, avec la compagnie, même cachée, de la réflexion » (SG 2, 150).

³⁴ The paragraph which contains these observations of the narrator, cited herein at Fug. 175 and 176, has been completely omitted from the English translation (See Vol V C&F 716). The passage is very instructive of the narrator's views on the relationship of *habitude* to memory, and to identity as well. The relevant omitted paragraph states:

« C'est que les souvenirs en amour ne font pas exception aux lois générales de la mémoire, elle-même régie par les lois de *l'Habitude*. Comme celle-ci affaiblit tout, ce qui nous rappelle le mieux un être, c'est justement ce que nous avons oublié parce que c'était insignifiant et à quoi nous avons ainsi laissé toute sa force. La meilleure part de notre mémoire est ainsi hors de nous. Elle est dans un souffle pluvieux, dans le parfum de renfermé d'une chambre ou dans celui d'une première flambée, partout où nous retrouvons de nous-même ce que notre intelligence avait dédaigné, la dernière réserve du passé, la meilleure, celle qui, quand toutes les autres sont taries, sait nous faire pleurer encore.

Hors de nous? En nous si l'on aime mieux, puisque c'est la même chose ; mais dérobée à nos propres regards, dans l'oubli. C'est grâce à l'oubli seul si nous pouvons de temps à autre retrouver l'être que nous fûmes, nous placer vis-à-vis des choses comme il l'était, souffrir à nouveau, parce que nous ne sommes plus nous mais lui, de ce qu'il aimait et de ce qui nous est indifférent. Au grand jour prolongé de la

reverse order (Vol II BG 208; [“by habitude” is translated here as “usually”]; JFF 1, 256). Memory registers everything that we experience as insignificant in a place outside of ourselves (« hors de nous ») or perhaps not, but in any event existing somewhere in a realm of forgetfulness (« dans l’oubli ») (Fug. 175; (see n. 34 below)). Our intelligence can not access these memories, but some habitual aspect of the experience, object, or person may recall it to us and also recall the emotions we had that are associated with that memory (Fug. 175, see n. 34 below)--the famous *mémoire involontaire*. Not insignificantly, the first incident that triggered that involuntary memory of the narrator was his bite into the *madeleine*, which he tasted contrary to his habitude « contre mon habitude » (Sw. 142).³⁵ Thus a conscious cognitive process became a memory that was stored in a place where conscious memory could not retrieve it, and an un-habitual act connected with that memory retrieved it. In time, however, all memories fade, nothing is left, and nothing can be recalled (Fug. 176)³⁶

Habitude appears also to be the key element with respect to conscious memory and our ability to recall information. Thus after one becomes habituated to ideas, one tends to forget them (Vol V C&F 723; Fug. 182). As for new ideas which challenge old habitudes, they have a short life: a good book may appear to conquer habitude and put us

mémoire habituelle les images du passé pâlisent peu à peu, s’effacent, il ne reste plus rien d’elles, nous ne les retrouvons plus. Mon moi actuel n’aimait plus Albertine, mon moi qui l’avait aimé était mort... » (Fug. 175-76).

An editor’s note (Fug. 389) states that a part of the foregoing text was also in À l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs. (Within a Budding Grove).

³⁵ “[H]abitude” once again is omitted in the translation, rendering the phrase by “a thing which I did not ordinarily take.” (Vol I SW 60). The omission of the precise phrase used—in English, contrary to my habitude--significantly downplays the fact that the famous taste of the *madeleine* and the memories it enabled the narrator to recapture occurred only because the laws of habitude were inoperative.

³⁶ See n. 34.

in touch with a truer reality, but *habitude* returns in a very short time to overcome the experience, and place it in the category of the forgotten:

At times the reading of a novel that was at all sad carried me suddenly back, for certain novels are like great but temporary bereavements, abolishing *habitude*, bringing us back into contact with the reality of life, but for a few hours only, like a nightmare, since the force of *habitude*, the oblivion it creates, the gaiety it restores through the powerlessness of the brain to fight against it and to re-create the truth, infinitely outweigh the almost hypnotic suggestion of a good book which, like all such influences, has very transient effects.³⁷

With respect to memory and forgetfulness, then, and their relationship to *habitude*, the narrator seeks to explain how it is that we remember what we remember, and forget what we forget. Under the narrator's theories, it would seem as if we could have total recall if we had no *habitudes*, if nothing was, by rote and without reflection, deemed insignificant. But the premise of the proposition is clearly untenable in the context of the novel's discourse. As explained by the narrator, the laws of *Habitude* are inexorably fixed in the human brain.

³⁷ « Et parfois la lecture d'un roman un peu triste me ramenait brusquement en arrière, car certains romans sont comme de grands deuils momentanés, abolissent l'*habitude*, nous remettent en contact avec la réalité de la vie, mais pour quelques heures seulement comme un cauchemar, car les forces de l'*habitude*, l'oubli qu'elles produisent, la gaieté qu'elles ramènent par l'impuissance du cerveau à lutter contre elles et à recréer le vrai, l'emportent infiniment sur la suggestion presque hypnotique d'un beau livre, laquelle comme toutes les suggestions a des effets très courts » (Fug. 209).

D. THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE: CREATING AND APPRECIATING
ART

Habitude is unequivocally praised in only one context, that of work, by which the narrator means the creation of an artistic work. The reference is usually to literature. In listing the benefits of “blind habitude” (Sw. 196), the narrator conspicuously includes working:

...but they knew, either instinctively or from experience, that our impulsive emotions have but little influence over the course of our actions and the conduct of our lives; and that regard for moral obligations, loyalty to friends, patience in finishing our work, obedience to a rule of life, have a surer foundation in habitudes solidly formed and blindly followed than in these momentary transports, ardent but sterile (Vol I SW 128).³⁸

The narrator offers no offsetting considerations which might counterbalance this benefit of habitude in the context of creating works of art, but it should be understood that the foregoing commentary relates only to artistic production, not style. When an artist’s style is determined by habitude, it becomes sterile and precious (Vol II BG 178-

³⁸ « ...mais ils savaient d’instinct ou par expérience que les élans de notre sensibilité ont peu d’empire sur la suite de nos actes et la conduite de notre vie, et que le respect des obligations morales, la fidélité aux amis, l’exécution d’une oeuvre, l’observance d’un régime, ont un fondement plus sûr dans des habitudes aveugles, que dans ces transports momentanés, ardents et stérile » (SW 196). We believe “following of a diet” is a more accurate translation in the litany of good resolutions which are defeated by contrary habitudes than “obedience to a rule of life.”

The translation here has added the words “patience in” finishing work; a better translation would have omitted those words, as the point was whether or not, without “blind habitudes” the work gets done, not whether or not the performer exhibits patience. Similarly, the words “solidly formed and blindly followed” are not accurate renditions of the text, which qualifies habitudes as blind, not the performer’s methods. The differences may appear to be minor, but they are not so minor when one focuses on Habitude as a potent force, operating under its own laws.

79; JFF 1, 231). To produce artistic work, however, *habitude* is essential. When speaking of his own inabilities to work, the narrator says that he was the instrument of the *habitude* of not working (Vol II GW 196; Gu I, 227). He says that his promise to put himself to work was defeated by his everyday *habitudes*, and by the *habitude* of perpetual procrastination (Vol V C&F 106; Pris. 180). The narrator's *habitude* of putting himself in the place of others also undermined his ability to accomplish work, as, in order not to injure others' feelings, he spent time tending to social duties, rather than to work (Vol VI TR 437; TR 393). The narrator understands that "the *habitude* of being industrious" (Vol II BG 538) (« l'*habitude* d'être laborieux » JFF 2, 201) is essential if he is ever to produce a work of art.³⁹

When it comes to appreciating artistic work, however, in contrast to creating it, *habitude* becomes a formidable foe. It is *habitude* that precludes the general audience from understanding, recognizing, or responding to great works of art. The narrator discusses at length the indispensable quality that makes a work of art great, and it is originality, further explained as the ability of an artist to create his own world which is new and individual, reflective of his own inner self and his genius. This applies to literature, to painting, and to music. But it is precisely the *habitudes* of the audience that make it difficult or impossible for them to appreciate that which is new and original (Vol II BG 171; JFF 1, 225). Amateur art critics like only what they are habituated to see (Vol II BG 570; JFF 2, 227). Often, when literary critics criticize a writer for not being sufficiently concrete, what they really mean is that they are not habituated to his style

³⁹ It is interesting to note that in this one context where the narrator unequivocally praises *habitude*, we know that Proust's own *habitudes* were the very opposite of those of his fictional narrator.

(Vol II BG 172; JFF 1, 226). A work that requires that we abandon our habitudes mandates a serious effort, but carries a substantial reward (Vol II BG 172; JFF 1, 226).

When the narrator describes his efforts to understand and to enjoy the Vinteuil sonata, he relates how he had to listen to it successively, and many times, because he was battling his own habitudes which had set the limits of his ability to respond to the music (Vol II BG 141; JFF 1, 200). Each time he was led beyond his own sensibilities which had been established by habitude, he was able to seize upon something more profound, but that recognition began almost immediately to escape him. Thus the narrator's appreciation and love for the sonata grew as he battled the limits of his own sensibilities, which had been established by habitude (Vol II BG 141-43; JFF 1, 200-02).

Before we become habituated to a new world created by a writer, we simply do not understand his work. After habituation takes place, we enter into the new world created by the writer, which gives us the opportunity to understand new relationships and to be charmed by a new point of view:

The writer who had taken Bergotte's place in my affections wearied me not by the incoherence but by the novelty—perfectly coherent—of associations which I was unaccustomed [*je n'avais pas l'habitude*] to following. The point, always the same, at which I felt myself falter indicated the identity of each renewed feat of acrobatics that I must undertake. Moreover, when once in a thousand times I did succeed in following the writer to the end of his sentence, what I saw there always had a humour, a truthfulness and a charm similar to those which I had

found long ago in reading Bergotte, only more delightful (Vol III GW 446).⁴⁰

At several places in À la recherche du temps perdu, the narrator discusses why great works of art are rarely appreciated by the artist's contemporaries; instead, they are likely to be comprehended only by posterity. The theories of *habitude* in respect of art attempt to explain this phenomenon. *Habitudes* of the general public are discarded rarely, with great effort, and often with pain. Each great artist produces work which reflects a highly original worldview; by definition then, we, the contemporary audience, are not habituated to understand it. Only when we wage war with our own *habitudes* do we open the way for the recognition, appreciation, and enjoyment of original work. As new worldviews seep into public consciousness over time, they encourage the development of new *habitudes* of hearing, seeing, or comprehending, which then allows the author's, painter's, or composer's public to participate in and appreciate these artistic creations.

E. ADDITIONAL GENERALIZATIONS REGARDING HABITUDE

1. Derivation

The most obvious source of the development of *habitudes* was discussed in all of the various aspects referred to above, namely that of recurring circumstances and patterns

⁴⁰ « Celui qui avait remplacé pour moi Bergotte [un écrivain] me lassait non par l'incohérence mais par la nouveauté, parfaitement cohérente, de rapports que je n'avais pas l'habitude de suivre. Le point toujours le même où je me sentais retomber indiquait l'identité de chaque tour de force à faire. Du reste, quand une fois sur mille je pouvais suivre l'écrivain jusqu'au bout de sa phrase, ce que je voyais était toujours d'une drôlerie, d'une vérité, d'un charme, pareils à ceux que j'avais trouvés jadis dans la lecture de Bergotte, mais plus délicieux » (Gu II, 68).

of behavior that occur naturally in life. Two other sources of *habitude* are referred to in the text: childhood training, and heredity. The point about childhood training is of course obvious, as the very purpose of childhood training is to create *habitudes* in a child (Vol I SW 48; Sw. 132), but the narrator stresses its importance in the context of ideas about shame, and about good and evil. Thus the narrator was purposefully habituated by the adults who cared for him to believe that giving in to nervous impulses was particularly shameful (Vol I SW 44; Sw. 129).

Likewise, the narrator is very specific regarding the hereditary transmission of acquired characteristics, including of course those acquired through *habitude*. This was an idea that was very current in Proust's day, as we shall see later. The narrator says that « *habitude héréditaire* » is transmitted from one generation to another, although one never knows where it will show up (Vol IV S&G 128; SG 1, 167-68); in that instance, the narrator's reference is to Saint-Loup's "habitude" of making virility an ideal as does his uncle, the Baron de Charlus (TR 113).⁴¹ Certain types of habitual behavior, which do not serve the interests of the person exhibiting them, can only be accounted for by hereditary transmission:

Humanity is a very old institution. Heredity and cross-breeding have given insuperable strength to bad *habitudes*, faulty reflexes. One person sneezes and gasps because he is passing a rose-bush, another breaks out in a rash at the smell of wet paint; others get violent stomach-aches if they

⁴¹ The sentence that expresses this thought, « En prenant les *habitudes* de M. de Charlus, Robert s'était trouvé prendre aussi, quoique sous une forme fort différente, son idéal de virilité » (TR 113) is completely omitted in the translation (Vol VI TR 77).

have to set out on a journey, and grandchildren of thieves who are themselves rich and generous cannot resist the temptation to rob you of fifty francs (Vol VI C&F 201-02).⁴²

2. Operation

Again, we have reference to all of the ways in which *habitude* was shown to operate in the specific contexts discussed above. But in general, the narrator notes that after *habitudes* are formed either by custom (Vol I SW 152-53; Sw. 215-16), choice (Vol II BG 161; JFF 1, 217), or necessity (Vol III GW 159; Gu I, 196), it becomes the preferred way; the person is attached to the *habitude*. The examples cited involved the change of the narrator's family lunch hour on Saturdays, the *habitude* of living in solitude adopted by Elstir, and the accommodation of Saint-Loup to living without his mistress. In this last instance, Proust utilizes the plant and vegetation metaphor which runs throughout the novel: "And inasmuch as *habitude* is, of all the plants of human growth, the one that has least need of nutritious soil in order to live, and is the first to appear on the most seemingly barren rock, perhaps had he begun by thinking of the rupture as a feint he would in the end have become genuinely accustomed to it" (Vol III GW 159).⁴³

⁴² « L'humanité est très vieille. L'hérédité, les croisements ont donné une force immuable à de mauvaises habitudes, à des réflexes vicieux. Une personne éternue et râle parce qu'elle passe près d'un rosier, une autre a une éruption à l'odeur de la peinture fraîche, beaucoup des coliques s'il faut partir en voyage, et des petits-fils de voleurs qui sont millionnaires et généreux ne peuvent résister à nous voler cinquante francs » (Pris. 252-53).

⁴³ « Et comme l'*habitude* est de toutes les plantes humaines, celle qui a le moins besoin de sol nourricier pour vivre et qui apparaît la première sur le roc en apparence le plus désolé, peut-être en pratiquant d'abord la rupture par feinte, aurait-il fini par s'y accoutumer sincèrement » (Gu 1, 196).

Habitudes are the only certain means of fixing obligations and moral behavior, and of completing work (Vol I SW 128; Sw. 195-96). Habitudes fill our days: “The time which we have at our disposal every day is elastic; the passions that we feel expand it, those that we inspire contract it; and habitude fills up what remains” (Vol II BG 257),⁴⁴ and enable us to perform tasks that one would have thought foreclosed to us by our physical condition:

And indeed our habitudes enable us to a large degree, enable even the organs of our bodies, to adapt themselves to an existence which at first sight would appear to be utterly impossible. Have we not all seen an elderly riding-master with a weak heart go through a whole series of acrobatics which one would not have supposed his heart could stand for a single minute” (Vol VI TR 451-52)?⁴⁵

Habitudes allow us to refuse to think about dangers which we can’t control, and instead permit us to go about our daily pleasures without regard to such dangers (Vol VI TR 119; TR 147).⁴⁶

The intense force of habitude, its almost unshakeable nature, is stressed throughout, giving rise to apparent contradictions. Thus Swann so had the habitude of

⁴⁴ « Le temps dont nous disposons chaque jour est élastique ; les passions que nous ressentons le dilatent, celles que nous inspirons le rétrécissent, et l’habitude le remplit » (JFF 1, 295).

⁴⁵ « Et en effet nos habitudes nous permettent dans une large mesure, permettent même à nos organes de s’accommoder d’une existence qui semblerait au premier abord ne pas être possible. Qui n’a vu un vieux maître de manège cardiaque faire toutes les acrobaties auxquelles on n’aurait pu croire que son cœur résisterait une minute » (TR 404).

⁴⁶ Here “from habitude” is translated as “normally.”

loving surprises and novelty that even when the surprise was unpleasant and painful, yet he took comfort in the fact that life was full of unexpected developments (Vol I SW 521; Sw. 503). Since habitude is by nature obsessive, it governs us even when clearly contrary to our health and well being (Vol I SW 238; Sw. 281). Our habitudes follow us to the moment of our death, and disguise its clear signals (Vol II GW 428-30; Gu II, 54-55). Long attachments to habitude lead to acts that otherwise would be unthinkable; thus if one develops the habitude of ignoring moral considerations in respect of one's own behavior, that behavior continues to worsen from a moral point of view. The force of Habitude is unbeatable:

But in him [Charlus], as in Jupien, the practice of separating morality from a whole order of actions (and this is something that must also often happen to men who have public duties to perform, those of a judge, for instance or a statesmen and many others as well) must have been so long established that Habitude, no longer asking Moral Sentiment for its opinion, had grown stronger from day to day until at last this consenting Prometheus had had himself nailed by Force to the rock of Pure Matter (Vol VI 214-15).⁴⁷

Habitude gives the appearance of causality to two ideas which are associated with each other, although the cause and effect assumption may be illusory (Vol V C&F 679-80; Fug. 144). Habitudes invade all types of behavior, and when they are shared

⁴⁷ « Mais chez lui [Charlus] comme chez Jupien, l'habitude de séparer la moralité de tout un ordre d'actions (ce qui du reste doit arriver aussi dans beaucoup de fonctions, quelque fois celle de juge, quelquefois celle d'homme d'État, et bien d'autres encore) devait être prise depuis si longtemps que l'habitude (sans plus jamais demander son opinion au sentiment moral) était allée en s'aggravant de jour en jour, jusqu'à celui où ce Prométhée consentant s'était fait clouer par la Force au rocher de la pure Matière » (TR 223-24).

conventions, they establish social ties and become the subjects of social discourse (Vol I SW 153; Sw. 215-16).

3. The “Other”

The foregoing discourse on the operation of *habitude* derives from the narrator’s observations regarding the manner in which an individual lives his own *habitudes*. The narrator has other observations regarding how people react to the *habitudes* of others. The principal commentary here is that the *habitudes* of others have a strong tendency to deceive, because behavior of others is often interpreted as a sign of character--of intelligence, or sensibility, or morality--when in fact it may be merely a reflection of *habitude*. Examples of this phenomenon are striking. Odette, by her manner of arranging flowers, preparing tea, and inquiring about the progress of his work, was seen by Swann as having special sensibilities; these were merely *habitudes*, and not reflective of overall character (Vol I SW 510-11; Sw. 495).⁴⁸

This kind of deception is more likely to occur when the *habitude* in question, like Odette’s tea ceremony, is quite individual, and therefore is noticed by others (Vol II BG 229-31; JFF 1, 273-74). Norpois had the *habitudes* of responding immediately to correspondence, of always observing small courtesies, and of continuously seeking to please the person with whom he was conversing. These were tools of the diplomatic trade which had developed into *habitudes*, rather than signs of character (Vol II BG 11; JFF 1, 93). When the *habitudes* are acquired in childhood, by vigorous training, they

⁴⁸ Here “*habitudes*” is translated as “attitudes,” changing the meaning.

are particularly apt to be misperceived as indications of character (Vol II BG 424-25; JFF 2, 107-09). Saint-Loup fell into this category, as his strict training gave an impression of severity and condescension upon first meeting, whereas his character was quite the reverse, and the manner of greeting a stranger reflected only: “that it was simply a social usage peculiar to his branch of the family” (Vol II BG 425) (« une simple habitude mondaine particulière à une certaine partie de sa famille » (JFF 2, 108)).⁴⁹ Thus the habitudes of others have a strongly deceptive aspect, appearing as indicators of character, which they are not.

F. ULTIMATE VALUE JUDGMENT ON HABITUDE

In almost every context in which the narrator explores *habitude*, in depth or casually, he points to the opposite but inextricable effects of *habitude* upon our lives. On the one hand, *habitude* comforts us, allays our anxieties, and dulls our pain. It operates as an analgesic, an anodyne; we crave its soothing effects. On the other hand, *habitude* dulls our wits and our sensibilities, it prohibits us from reading, hearing, and seeing deeper, from experiencing new emotions, and from reaching higher truths.

Similarly, there are opposite but related effects of breaking with our *habitudes*, which usually occurs as a result of factors outside of our control. On the one hand, the breach causes insufferable anguish, and, on the other hand, we experience afterwards the delights of liberation. The anguish can not be overstated:

⁴⁹ Once more the translation skews just slightly the meaning, but importantly in respect of the point made about *habitudes*. “[A] simple social habit” would have conveyed the subtext regarding *habitudes* more accurately than “simply a social usage.”

...and now I suddenly saw a new aspect of Habitude. Hitherto I had regarded it chiefly as an annihilating force which suppresses the originality and even the awareness of one's perceptions; now I saw it as a dread deity, so riveted to one's being, its insignificant face so incrustated in one's heart, that if it detaches itself, if it turns away from one, this deity that one had barely distinguished inflicts on one sufferings more terrible than any other and is then as cruel as death itself (Vol V C&F 564-65)⁵⁰

but neither can the liberation:

Lifting a corner of the heavy curtain of habitude ... such memories would come back to me as at the time itself with that fresh and piercing novelty of a recurring season ... which, in the realm of pleasures ... makes us observe our own most trivial actions with a lucid exaltation which makes that intense minute worth more than the sum total of the preceding days (Vol V C&F 732-33).⁵¹

Was Proust's narrator neutral in his judgment, marking only the "good" and the "bad" sides of habitude? That answer would depend not only upon one's reading and interpretation of the several passages quoted or referenced herein, but also on one's

⁵⁰ « ...je voyais soudain un nouveau visage de l'Habitude. Jusqu'ici je l'avais considérée surtout comme un pouvoir annihilateur qui supprime l'originalité et jusqu'à la conscience des perceptions; maintenant je la voyais comme une divinité redoutable, si rivée à nous, son visage insignifiant si incrusté dans notre Coeur, que si elle se détache, si elle se détourne de nous, cette déité que nous ne distinguons presque pas nous inflige des souffrances plus terribles qu'aucune et qu'alors elle est aussi cruelle que la mort » (Fug. 50).

⁵¹ « Soulevant un coin du voile lourd de l'habitude ... ils me revenaient comme au premier jour, avec cette fraîche et perçante nouveauté d'une saison reparaissante ... qui, dans le domaine des plaisirs aussi ... nous font remarquer nos actions insignifiantes avec une exaltation lucide qui fait prévaloir cette intense minute sur le total des jours antérieurs » (Fug. 190). See above n. 24 for full citation.

judgment of the basic value system or message of the author of À la recherche du temps perdu. That is, if one takes as a message from the novel that the most important quest in life is to seek the highest level of Truth and Beauty, and this is achievable only through Art, then one must clearly conclude that Proust, as well as his narrator, deemed Habitude a formidable foe.

G. IMMUTABILITY OF THE LAWS OF HABITUDE

Having resolved that the purpose of his life would be to write a book, the narrator considers what the contents of that book will be:

For I had decided that this could not consist uniquely of the full and plenary impressions that were outside time, and amongst those other truths in which I intended to set, like jewels, those of the first order, the ones relating to Time, to Time in which, as in some transforming fluid, men and societies and nations are immersed, would play an important part. I should pay particular attention to those changes which the aspect of living things undergoes, of which every minute I had fresh examples before me... (Vol VI TR 355).⁵²

⁵² « Puisque j'avais décidé qu'elle [‘la matière même de mon livre’] ne pouvait être uniquement constituée par les impressions véritablement pleines, celles qui sont en dehors du temps, parmi les vérités avec lesquelles je comptais les sertir, celles qui se rapportent au temps, au temps dans lequel baignent et changent les hommes, les sociétés, les nations, tiendraient une place importante. Je n'aurais pas soin seulement de faire une place à ces altérations que subit l'aspect des êtres et dont j'avais de nouveaux exemples à chaque minute... » (TR 332).

Are the operations of habitude as described in À la recherche du temps perdu unchangeable, “outside of time,” or are they influenced by all of the temporal circumstances of life, or might the answer depend on the type of habitude discussed? Certainly the narrator’s discourse on habitude and memory is stated in terms that speak to that which would presently be called our “hard drive”--the manner in which human beings are programmed to receive, store, and retrieve information. Similarly, the process of passing on habitudes from generation to generation would be a “truth” which the narrator believed existed independently of time, although the specific habitudes inherited may depend upon temporal conditions. The habitual process whereby individuals fuse with their surroundings and the resultant deaths, successions, and alternations of each person’s identity (the “moi” of each of us) as such fusions are replaced by others, as well as the changes to each “moi” as habitudes are abandoned, blocked, or replaced--all these would seem part of an eternal order of things, as described by the narrator, although the sensitivity of individuals to these changes could vary.

One might challenge the position that habitudes of loving, and habitudes of reading novels, or listening to music, are impressed with the same inexorability as habitudes reflecting the experience of one’s identity in terms of a fusion with one’s surroundings, or the habitual processes implicated in voluntarily or involuntarily recalling particular events. Yet unless “love” is or can be a different experience than the experience lived and observed by the narrator, the laws of habitude would inevitably serve to regulate feelings as inexorably in the case of the presence and absence of the beloved as it does in all of the other life experiences discussed in the novel. It is true that,

with respect to love, the point of view expressed is that laws of habitude operate over time, in that it is the presence of the beloved over a period of time which produces a deadening of sensibility and interest on the part of the lover, and it is the absence of the beloved which initially causes the lover anguish, and then, after time has elapsed, indifference. While these events occur over time, the laws that dictate that they must happen in that manner are independent of specific persons or cultural conditions.

The “truths” regarding artistic creation and appreciation, as they relate to the operation of habitude, are likewise “*en dehors du temps*,” not reflecting any particular society or nation, or particular person. Habitudes of work on the part of the artist are essential to create great works of art, but habitudes of looking, hearing, and reading on the part of the public, even the critical public, impede their appreciation.

An analysis of the content of each discourse on “habitude,” then, leads to the conclusion that the point of view adopted in À la recherche du temps perdu with respect to the laws of habitude is that they reflect immutable truths. This conclusion is also amply supported by the style of the discourse on habitude. While the subject of habitude is broached throughout the text in the context of a very particular experience of a very particular person, the terms in which the subject is examined almost immediately take us beyond the particular. “L’habitude” is often addressed as a third party, with an independent existence, as an entity that intrudes, and must then be reckoned with. Often, in any extended discussion of the subject, the pronoun used is “we,” not “I” or “he” or “she”—the narrator is consciously and purposely telling us that habitude operates as he says, inexorably, and upon all of us. Finally, in the midst of the discourse, habitude is

often capitalized, like time and memory--indeed, possibly more often capitalized than either of those key concepts in À la recherche du temps perdu. Reading these discourses on habitude, we, who are addressed, indeed, lectured to by the narrator, tend to “lift the veil” of narration and feel we are hearing directly from the source of the narrator’s wisdom.

**CHAPTER III — THE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ON HABITUDE IN PROUST’S
A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU**

A. AN OVERVIEW: HABITUDE IGNORED OR NOTED SUPERFICIALLY

Given the prominent role of *habitude* in À la recherche du temps perdu; and the ever increasing stature of the novel in 20th century literature, the absence of any comprehensive study devoted to *habitude* in Proust is amazing, and itself merits study. Later, we tender some suggestions as to why the examination of *habitude* in the novel evoked decreasing interest during most of the 20th century, to the point of being almost totally ignored in contemporary Proust studies, but first we prove the predicate to these propositions by a review of what critical discourse on *habitude* there is and is not on Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu.⁵³ As we go backwards in time, we find more discussion of the issue—a fact which, we believe, tends to support our contention that *habitude* was a core concept in the novel.

This writer’s search in MLA for any article whose title included “habit” or “habitude” (or any derivative) connected with commentary on Proust turned up not one article. A recent work, Proust, poète et psychanalyste by Philippe Willemart contains an “Index of Concepts” which lists 74 concepts, including, of course, those that most pertain to the title. Under “H” in the listing of concepts one finds: *haine*, *hasard*, and *homosexualité*, but not *habitude*. The author says that the purpose of his book was not to confirm [Freudian] psychoanalytic theory through À la recherche du temps perdu, as was the intention, he maintains, of Jacques Rivière and Julia Kristeva, but instead “...to the

⁵³ Our survey was of necessity limited to those works published in the French and English languages.

contrary, to emphasize the contribution of À la recherche du temps perdu to psychoanalytic theory in respect of knowing the [human] being...”(9). Thus *habitude*, according to Willemart, did not appear relevant to Proust’s contribution to the study of the human being.⁵⁴ With respect to Kristeva, we note that in her study Le temps sensible: Proust et l’expérience littéraire, she specifically lists “Proustian themes” in four double-columned pages, but under “h” one finds only “*hétérogénéité*” and “*homosexualité*,” By contrast, the themes of memory and time find multiple references.

The index of Michel Raimond’s Proust Romancier, published in 1984, shows a wide range of topics considered, but even chapters such as “*La mémoire et l’oubli*,” “*Le Narrateur en chambre*,” and “*L’expérience de la passion*” consider *habitude* only in passing, or not at all. The discourse on *habitude* in À la recherche du temps perdu perhaps was encompassed and if so trivialized by the observation of Raimond that: “He [Proust] repeats one of the traditions of the French novel when he marks off, in the beads of his tale, general thoughts and maxims just as the ‘moralists’ liked to do” (266). In 1983, Jean-Yves Tadié had published Proust, le dossier: La synthèse de ce que l’on peut connaître et dire de l’œuvre et de la vie de Marcel Proust, but one finds neither in the text nor in the extensive bibliography any reference to *habitude*.

In Victor Graham’s Bibliographie des études sur Marcel Proust et son oeuvre, published in 1976, there is not one title of a work which suggests that any article or book features or includes a discussion of the Proustian thesis on *habitude*.

⁵⁴ Charles Blondel, whose work is discussed in some detail below, was firmly of the opinion that Proust did not accept Freud’s theories, either because he did not know them or because he did not credit them; in either case, Proust’s and Freud’s theories of the human personality are not compatible (187 88).

In 1940, Douglas W. Alden published Marcel Proust and his French Critics, a work which consisted of 185 pages of text and 100 pages of bibliography. Within the latter are listed 1,885 works, published in France, the French Colonies, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Monaco. This source revealed one article, published in 1927 in a Catholic journal for youth, *La Revue des Jeunes*, with the subject word, “Habitude,” as its title. The author was probably the editor, as he identified himself only as “Senex.” In “Habitude,” Senex exhorted youth to develop good habits, but always to remember that free will exists and allows one to defeat the hell that awaits those who are conquered by evil habits. The only connection with Proust was a quotation at the beginning of the article, which led the author into his subject, but neither that quotation nor Proust’s work provides any support for this particular sermon.⁵⁵ This article was the only work that we found which allegedly related to Proust and whose title referred to habitude. In 1935, Raoul Celly published an index of Proustian themes, Répertoire des thèmes de Marcel Proust, and here we find habitude amply referenced (143-44) by 20 specific references to the texts, and also by a cross reference to habitude and love.⁵⁶

Presaging, perhaps, a renewed interest in habitude, we find the subject amply referenced in a recent (1992) and comprehensive revised English translation of À la recherche du temps perdu. Thus in In Search of Lost Time, translated by Andreas Mayor

⁵⁵ The quotation was: « Sans doute cette amitié disparaîtrait, une autre ayant pris sa place (alors la mort, puis une nouvelle vie auraient, sous le nom d’Habitude, accompli leur oeuvre double)... » (Revue des Jeunes, 1927, p. 575; taken from JFF 2, 41; translated as: « Doubtless this affection too would disappear, another having taken its place (when death, and then another life, had, in the guise of Habitude, performed their double task); (Vol II BG 341) and also cited above at n.17.

⁵⁶ The Celly index mistakes that cross reference to the ninth subclassification of “l’amour,” whereas it appears in the 8th, and under that subclassification there are five additional textual references to l’habitue.

and Terence Kilmartin and revised by D.J. Enright, there is a comprehensive “Guide” (Vol VI 543-749), showing references to characters, persons, and themes. “Habit” is therein listed (718-19), with two or three references per volume, except for volume V (The Captive and the Fugitive) wherein there are multiple references; in sum the cited pages still constitute only a small fraction of the novel’s discourse on habitude.

The general texts consulted on Proust, and especially on psychological and philosophical aspects in Proust’s work, are shown in the bibliography attached hereto. Except as discussed herein, those works contain either nothing on the subject, or very general summary-type sentences or phrases. The absence of other in-depth discussion, or any discussion at all, is especially notable in those texts addressed to Proustian psychology or philosophy. For example, there appears no discussion at all in the book by Elizabeth Jackson, L’évolution de la mémoire involontaire dans l’oeuvre de Marcel Proust, although the close and important connection between involuntary memory and habitude is very explicit in the novel. Similarly, there is no mention at all of habitude in the articles on the unconscious by Jack Jordan in The Cambridge Companion to Proust (nor in any of the other essays in that collection), nor in a very early article on the unconscious authored by Robert De Traz, “Note sur l’inconscient chez Marcel Proust” and published in Hommage à Marcel Proust in 1927. Margaret Mein’s Thèmes Proustiens (1979) chooses four themes--desire, reality, the general and the particular, and heredity--but the last theme, which might well have given prominence to habitude, given Proust’s acceptance of the theory of the inheritance of characteristics acquired through habitude, focuses instead on the issue of free will versus determinism. There is only one

reference in that work to *habitude* (165), and that is to the passage wherein the narrator says that the features of our face are hardly anything other than actions which, through *habitudes*, have become definitive. This remarkable observation could have deflected attention from a focus only on the connection between heredity, on the one hand, and free will and determinism, on the other, but it did not.

Patrick Brady's book, Marcel Proust, has a chapter on "Time, Habit and Memory," which summarizes briefly and as follows some of the Proustian observations: that *habitude* dulls our sense of the passage of time; avoids painful thoughts; reconciles us with the new and the strange; effaces memory; suppresses new thoughts and feelings; effaces other selves. The litany is imprecise, inaccurate, incomplete, and superficial.

In 1976, Gilles Deleuze's Proust et les signes, was published, but, chez Deleuze, *habitude* does not fit into a discussion of the worlds which Proust explored nor of the markers of those worlds. Indeed, since that study is bent on showing that: "The essential subject, in *À la Recherche*, is not memory and time, but sign and truth..." (111), *habitude*, whose subject is process, not result, and whose markers are everywhere, but nowhere in particular, would not work importantly into the Deleuze format.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Deleuze does acknowledge here, in passing, that "...l'*habitude* exists in opposition to the force of thought" (116). In Différence et répétition, however, and without any reference to Proust, Deleuze focuses specifically on the relationships of *habitude*, memory, and time, stating that: "Habitue is the foundation of time, the shifting ground occupied by the present which is passing...The foundation of Time is Memory...[which] rests on *habitude*...(108); L'*Habitue* is the original synthesis of time, which constitutes life of the present which passes; Memory is the fundamental synthesis of time, which constitutes the being of the past (which makes the present pass)" (109).

A 1939 work devoted to Proust's philosophy authored by Sybil De Souza, La Philosophie de Marcel Proust, notes that "...the suspension of habitude liberates faculties in us which remain otherwise asleep and bring us a new and real view of things" (40), and that "[t]he necessities of practical life, the harmful effects of l'habitude suppress or obliterate our real impressions, but certain memories have secret, mysterious roads to reenter in us..." (42-43), accurately, if lightly, renders some of the narrator's observations on the analgesic effects of habitude. Germaine Brée's La conception proustienne de 'l'esprit' seeks to prove that Proust was a spiritualist, and his work essentially informed by theories of revelation and mission; habitude is referred to in passing, along with reasoning, as an element that must be broken to reach higher visions (205).

A collection of essays by well known contemporary critics in 1971, edited by Jacques Bersani, Les critiques de notre temps et Proust, turned up not one essay which stopped to consider Proust's ideas on the role of habitude in our lives. In the same year, the journal L'Arc devoted an issue to Proust but the several essays focused entirely on other subjects: even an essay entitled "Proust et la répétition" by Georges Poulet had reference not to repetition as a foundation of habitude, but to the repetition in the novel of the past in the future.

The most fruitful source of critical analysis of habitude would seem to lie in those books and articles which took as a subject Proust's psychology or philosophy, and indeed it does. Nevertheless, in comparison with Proust scholarship, and given the central place of habitude in Proust's conception of the human condition, it still bears notice that habitude is often ignored in studies devoted to Proust's psychological observations, e.g.,

Sur la psychologie de Marcel Proust by Edmond Jaloux in Hommage à Marcel Proust, or it is spoken of very casually, e.g., Benjamin Cremieux's La Psychologie de Marcel Proust. In the latter article, there are only two brief references to *habitude*, first in terms of a list of factors which makes knowing ourselves difficult (841-42) and second in the observation that "Voluntary memory conserves nothing of the past because it subjugates it, while bleaching it, to the automatism of *habitude*" (843).

B. THE FEW IMPORTANT COMMENTATORS: ZEPHIR, BECKETT, BLONDEL

Jacques Zéphir, in La Personnalité humaine dans l'oeuvre de Marcel Proust shares the view that Proust seriously deprecates *habitude* precisely because it stands in opposition to involuntary memory which is the only path by which we attain greater truths and experience our essential self. Zéphir says that Proust did not conceive of the personality primarily as would a psychologist, but rather in philosophical terms (xiv) and consequently his work must be approached on that basis.⁵⁸ Claiming that no one had as yet studied the nature of the human personality in Proust's work (5-6; but see Blondel, discussed below and articles cited above), Zéphir finds the key to Proust's conception of personality as the struggle of the self fighting against "the dissolving forces of Time" (5). In this struggle, time constantly changes the self, and the latter is struggling to "insist on

⁵⁸ Zéphir maintains, however, that Proust was not a Bergsonian (184-87), and Charles Blondel agrees. Henri Bonnet devotes an article to the proposition that Proust and Bergson disagreed with respect to major psychological issues. Elizabeth Jackson also took pains to distinguish the theories of Proust and Bergson with regard to fundamental conceptions of the self (241). Both Zéphir and Blondel stress that Proust must be understood primarily as an artist and a poet, rather than either a psychologist or a philosopher (Zéphir, 27-29), and Jackson too reminds us that in considering Proust's theories, one must always remember he had dramatic aims in mind (230).

its identity and permanence and to rescue itself from complete disintegration through the intermediary of involuntary memory and of art” (5). Zéphir sees Proust’s big contribution to the art of the novel, and to the study of the human personality, as this insistence on the continuous change of the human personality, rather than the conception of a personality which remains relatively stable throughout novels and throughout life. The role of *habitude*, then, in this scheme is to hide from us our knowledge of this multiplicity of selves: “If we never perceive this multitude of selves which form the tissue of our personality, it is because *habitude* destroys in us the sentiment of this succession of selves which continually replace each other in our consciousness, thus giving us the illusion of continuity and unity...” (189).

After thoroughly exploring the constant evolution of what he terms the “psychological self” chez Proust, Zéphir discusses that part of the self which he calls “the profound self,” and which is durable, not destroyed by time, and approachable only through involuntary memory. Thus once again *habitude* is ranged in opposition to involuntary memory, the path to truth. Our everyday actions are just a result of reflexes-- “*mémoire-habitude*” (207). Only a few times in our entire existence does our inner self react and communicate to us, enabling us to experience our real personality and our free will. But shortly thereafter, everyday existence resumes, and we are governed by the *habitudes* which are dictated by our heredity, education, and society (207). “In daily life, we find no trace of the real personality; everything is monotonous, conventional, habitual” (254).

We can not fault Zéphir's citations of the role of *habitude* in the novel, as far as they go, but it is perhaps Zéphir's central hypothesis—that Proust was more the philosopher than the psychologist—that accounts for Zéphir's neat and one-sided presentation of *habitude* in his work. *Habitude* played all of the roles Zéphir says that it played in the novel, but, as we have seen, it played so many more, all converging and diverging in sometimes contradictory fashions, that we would characterize the descriptions of *habitude* in À la recherche du temps perdu as more an ethnography than a philosophy. Given Zéphir's focus on change, self, higher truth, and involuntary memory, the positive aspects of *habitude* are ignored by Zéphir, as well as the microscopic and macroscopic reach of *habitude*'s operations.

Samuel Beckett, in Proust: Three Dialogues, interpreted À la recherche du temps perdu from a philosophical perspective, focusing on precisely those elements that Deleuze said are not the essence of the work, namely, time and memory. Like Zéphir, Beckett believed that changes in the personality, necessarily occasioned by Time, which imprisons us all, is a central concept of the novel (12-15). In this connection, *habitude* plays a key role:

But for every tumour a scalpel and a compress. Memory and *Habitude* are attributes of the Time cancer. They control the most simple Proustian episode, and an understanding of their mechanism must precede any particular analysis of their application. They are the flying buttresses of the temple raised to commemorate the wisdom of the architect that is also the wisdom of all the sages, from Brahma to Leopardi, the wisdom that consists not in the satisfaction but in the ablation of desire..." (18).

Beckett understood that *habitude* played a critical role in the Proustian conception of human behavior, and said that, with Proust, it is *habitude* that controls memory, not the reverse: thus the laws of memory are subject to the general laws of *habitude* (18). *Habitude* is a compromise between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own internal way of being (18). *Habitude* is the agreement each individual continuously makes with all objects in the world. Transition periods require an adaptation on the part of *habitude*, and are thus perilous. They necessarily involve suffering, as there occurs a grudging and painful death of the former self (18-19, 21-25). *Habitude*, on the other hand, creates a state of boredom (19).

Beckett said that in the Proustian frame of reference, it is meaningless to talk about good or bad *habitudes*, in that *habitude* by its nature dulls the senses, and can not deal with mystery (20). In one sense this is a very accurate rendition of the Proustian discourse on *habitude* in the novel, that is, in the sense in which *habitude* is shown to operate in an automatic fashion, foreclosing those mental or emotional processes or states that might lead to higher truths or greater satisfactions. In another sense, however, it is not true, because, as we have seen, Proust also recognized some every-day aspects of *habitudes*, and did indeed speak of “good” and “bad” *habitudes* in the context of, e.g., work, or manners. The difference here may lie in the different uses of the word *habitude*, one of which is highly philosophical, relating to the basic manner by which human beings react sensually, intellectually and emotionally to their environment, themselves, and each other, and the other is the more everyday use of the term, describing that which a person repeatedly does. To further complicate matters, as is evident, the two uses clearly are intimately related.

Beckett's reference was undoubtedly to the deeper philosophical sense in which habitude is perceived, the sense that relates to the actual workings of the mind. Beckett understood that the Proustian habitude is the gatekeeper of memory, the attribute that makes our memories inaccessible to us except through its own operations, which may involve the classification that habitude put upon a memory when it was stored (30-31). Proustian habitude is thus very accurately rendered by Beckett as a force independent of will, answering to its own laws, although internalized in each of us; indeed, Beckett later says that will is only the servant of habitude and memory (90).

Beckett speaks of involuntary memory as a force which "consumes" habitude, totally outside the control of the person.(33), but then later he says that involuntary memory may or may not be stimulated by the "negligence or agony" of habitude (35). Speaking of the three pillars of Proust's divinity, Time, Habitude, and Memory, in words that ring equally in the poetic as in the analytic dimension, Beckett concisely sums up the roles of each : [Time is a] "condition of resurrection because an instrument of death; Habit—an infliction in so far as it opposes the dangerous exaltation of the one and a blessing in so far as it palliates the cruelty of the other; Memory—a clinical laboratory stocked with poison and remedy, stimulant and sedative..." (35).

Of all the commentators, Beckett is foremost in according habitude the primary place that it merits in the philosophical dimensions of the novel. He does not much venture into the many other roles that habitude plays in the novel, nor into all of the diverse methods explored wherein habitude is shown to regulate, indeed direct, our emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual responses.

In our view, Charles Blondel's La psychographie de Marcel Proust provides the most complete and insightful analysis of the expansive and important role that habitude occupies in life in the world portrayed in À la recherche du temps perdu. Unlike Beckett, Blondel is focused on the psychological rather than the ontological aspects of that role; he uses the word "*psychographie*," he says, rather than the more common word psychology, because Proust did not pretend to be a scientist.

Like Zéphir and De Souza, Blondel sees habitude as the foe of involuntary memory, but he explains the relationships between these processes of life in more complex terms. Blondel shows how Proust emphasizes the analgesic and palliative effects of habitude throughout the novel:

Finally, l'habitude, whose 'most general laws' govern even the laws of memory 'weakens everything (JFF 1) and robs us in regard to everything which has affected us. 'L'habitude of thinking of them...softens the strength of our memories (Fug. 1). Because when they harden and are repeated, for the impression and the image which when new had struck us by the 'change in tone' that they had 'introduced brusquely in our sensibilities,' l'habitude 'substitutes' its pale facsimiles.' (Fug.1). In that way, our mind is an 'instrument that the uniformity of habitude has rendered silent' (Pris) and 'l'habitude (l'habitude which makes us stupid and which, during the entire course of our life, almost entirely hides the universe from us and, under cover of deep night and with unchanging ceremony substitutes something harmless and tasteless for the most

dangerous or the most intoxicating poisons of life)' throws its 'heavy veil' on everything which we feel, think, say and do (Fug. 1) (33).⁵⁹

Involuntary memory is usually triggered in the novel by a sensation, such as a view, taste or odor, or by a muscular movement, such as a misstep. The reason it occurs this way, Blondell explains, is not because there has occurred a mere repetition of the sensation or action, but because there was an important affective association with that sensation or movement, an association which is not allied with habitude. "The muscular sensation thus now holds its evocative power not from former habitudes of posture and movement with which it was formerly associated, but, like any other sensation, from the vague affective dimension in which it was at one time bathed" (25). Ordinarily, habitude works as a counter-force to the retrieval of involuntary memories; it operates to block that retrieval because without a great effort, we will not think of things to which we are not accustomed to think. Even when a sensation evokes a memory, as it did with the *madeleine*, it took an intense effort of will, of intuition, and of intelligence on the part of the narrator to recapture the entire memory which the sensation triggered (48-54). Habitude operates so as to retrieve only our usual memories:

We only remember what we have the habitude of remembering. The more habitual our memories become, the more they lose their exact association with a defined moment of our past, because they are no longer only the recall of that moment but at the same time, and perhaps especially, that of its successive evocations (41).

⁵⁹ The citations in Blondell's work are to the volumes as designated by the Gallimard edition. We have here substituted citations to the volumes, but not the page numbers, in the Flammarion edition.

The reason that involuntary memories are so vivid, and voluntary memories are not, is that the latter suffer from “the weakening actions of habitude” (37), that is, those successive evocations. Blondel stresses here what we believe to be a key point: the essentiality revealed by the involuntary memory is emotional; it is the emotions and the sensations that have been liberated (91). But Blondel’s apparent equivalence of man’s “deepest interior connections” which presumably can be reached only through involuntary memory, with a realm entirely outside of the action of intelligence and habitude is less clear, and less compelling:

Man is irremediably alone, and, at the heart of this irremediable solitude, his deepest interior connections lie outside of the action of intelligence and of habitude, the states of his soul and the outside projections from these states under the form of people, objects, and events, that he makes, these connections have no value except for him alone (86).

But it is precisely because habitude operates to hide the connections between past events or sensations, on the one hand, and emotions, on the other, that one might instead say that our deepest interior connections are exactly those formed by habitude, as Blondell himself appears to recognize only a few pages later: “...it is that habitude helps in the repetition of our emotions and the assimilations which permits language to remove from consciousness its own content and hide its origins” (91). Again a few pages later, Blondel returns to the thought that habitude and intelligence operate outside the realm of “affective connections,” in fact, separate those connections from memory that lies in our ordinary power of recall: “Here too, intelligence and habitude, for reasons of practical necessity, have given an apparent objectivity to general ideas, achieved only by stripping

them of those affective connections which relate them to involuntary memory and which in effect form a body with them in the living reality of individual consciousness” (93).

The subject is complicated, obviously, and we will explore it in depth after we have explored the extensive knowledge and debate in the intellectual community at large regarding both habitude and affective memory, and their relationship—a subject that was a major focus of intellectual inquiry at the time in which Proust conceived and wrote À la recherche du temps perdu. For the present, it is sufficient to note that the contradictions reflected by Blondel were very much a part of that debate. While there is a clear logical flow to the position that involuntary memory is triggered by a sensation which once had a strong affective connection; that habitude softens and eventually obliterates feelings; and that, *ergo*, involuntary memory can not be triggered by sensations or movements which have been often repeated, the issue is not so simple as that, and habitude operates in the novel, as we have seen, in much more complex ways. Thus, for example, habitude also creates strong affective connections, as in the narrator’s association with his own room, or in Swann’s love for Odette—indeed, in every experience of love, according to Proust’s narrator. It is precisely because habitude operates sometimes to reinforce feelings, and other times to anaesthetize or hide them, that the subject is so complex. Those complexities can not be grasped, we believe, until and unless they are first grounded in the knowledge of the history of habitude and the studies of habitude, memory, and feelings as it had developed by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Before leaving Blondel’s work, however, we should observe that he understood and brought out the very important connection between repetition and habitude in

Proust's work; indeed, he devotes one whole chapter (97-151) to "Universal Repetition." Noting that "time" has the first place in all of Proust's descriptions and psychological interpretations (97), that it transforms both the social world and the individual (103), Blondel says:

Among the multiple actions and reactions of which time is the theater and the cause, there is one to whose description and analysis Proust untiringly returns, because he sees there the origin of a number of regularities and psychological laws, and many 'truths relative to emotions, character, and customs' only explicate its mechanisms and its effects: that is repetition (108).

The first example of this repetition is found in heredity. We are marked by our relatives not only in terms of our features and voice, but by certain manners of speaking, intonations, and profound indications of a point of view on life (109). Repetitions are the fruits of heredity, are unconscious and involuntary, and relate to mental activity and to emotional reactions (110). Thus Blondel acknowledges that Proust was a believer in the Lamarckian theory of his time of the inheritance of acquired characteristics.

Other repetitions are caused by an individual's environment; several examples of these are presented (116-19). Then Blondel draws the inevitable connection between repetition and habitudes, citing those passages involving love relationships, where repetitions created invariable habitudes (126-35). This cause and effect relationship of repetition and habitude is in fact ubiquitous, extending beyond the love relationship into the core of our being: "This constant repetition to which we are condemned exercises on the state of our soul a double action, antagonistic and contradictory; it serves to make

them deeper and larger, but also to fix and rigidify them, to automate them into habitudes” (144).

From these laws of repetition, Blondel says, Proust derived a human nature (147). Could there indeed be any greater role for habitude than to form a critical, constituent, and invariable element of human nature?

IV. PRE-19TH CENTURY BENCHMARKS IN THE FRENCH DISCOURSE ON HABITUDE

A. INTRODUCTION

Notwithstanding the critical role that *habitude* plays in À la recherche du temps perdu, the reach and importance of *habitude* was not a Proustian discovery. Rather, as we noted initially, *habitude* was a phenomenon and concept deeply contemplated and developed in classical times and thereafter, reaching great prominence in French intellectual thought in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and thereafter diminishing. Proust's contributions to this concept, then, can be gauged only after its measure, pre-Proust, is taken. Similarly, a proper evaluation of the role that *habitude* plays in À la recherche du temps perdu can be made only in the context of the intellectually significant issues of Proust's time. We therefore next explore the development of the intellectual history of *habitude*.

B. THE CANONICAL FOREBEARS: ARISTOTLE AND ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Habit⁶⁰ sticketh long and fast; Second nature 'tis at last.

The couplet is ascribed by Sir Alexander Grant to “[a]n elegiac and gnomic poet of Paros, who appears to have been a contemporary and friend of Socrates” (Vol. II 231, n. 4). The same author says “[t]hat habit is ‘second nature’ we are told by Aristotle” (Vol. II 231, n. 4), citing Aristotle's De Memoria et Reminiscentia (On Memory and Recollection), ii, 16, with the text in Greek following the citation. But Sorabji (56-57) translates what appears

⁶⁰ In citing and discussing the texts originally written in Greek or Latin, wherein we used the English translations, we have not substituted “*habitude*” for “*habit*,” as some translation issues might be confused thereby.

to be the relevant passage as follows: “So if a man is moved through something old, he moves instead to something to which he is more habituated. For habit is already like nature. And this is why what we think of frequently we recollect quickly. For just as by nature one thing is after another, so also in the activity. And frequency creates nature.”

The difficulty in fixing the “second nature” citation in Aristotle lies not only in translation issues, but in profound ideological or conceptual issues regarding habit or habitude which English and other modern languages appear to convey very imperfectly.

Aristotle’s Metaphysics provides the following definitions:

‘Having’ (or ‘habit’) means (1) a sort of *actuality* of that which has and that which is had, as if it were an *action* of a sort or a motion. For when one thing makes and another is made, there is a making between them; so too the man who has a garment and the garment which is had there is a having. Evidently, it is impossible to have this having; for the process would go on to infinity if it is possible to have a having of that which is had.

(2) ‘Habit’ means a disposition according to which that which is disposed is well or ill disposed, and is so disposed either in itself or in relation to something else; for example, health is a habit, for it is such a disposition.

(3) We call ‘a habit’ that which is a part of a disposition such as we just described; consequently, the virtue of any part is a disposition.

‘Disposition’ means the order of that which has parts, either with respect to place, or with respect to potency, or with respect to kind, for there must be a position of a sort, as the word ‘disposition’ indicates (Apostle 94-95).

Francis Eterovich (274) provides the following definitions for “hexis,” plural “hexeis”:

...characteristic attitude; habit established by repeated and orderly action.

‘The dispositions [hexeis] are the formed states of character in virtue of which we are well or ill disposed in respect of the emotions [and actions]’ N.E. II, v. w-1105b 26-27 (Eterovich 274).

So too: “Virtues, then, are dispositions (hexeis), engendered in us through practices” (Crisp and Saunders 119).

But we are specifically warned by W. F. R. Hardie (103-04) that using habit to translate “hexis” creates its own problems:

‘State’, ‘disposition’, ‘habit’ – these are the words which suggest themselves as translations of *hexis*. ‘Habit’ is specially tempting as being the Latin for the Greek, and because habits, like *hexeis*, are the products of repetitive lesions, of habituation. But there are important differences between the results in different cases of learning lessons. Sometimes the learner ends with a capacity to do something which he had not been able to do at all; to drive a car or mend shoes or play a violin. Sometimes he learns to do quickly, and without attending to what he is doing, what he started by being able to do only slowly and attentively; putting on his clothes or brushing his

teeth, for example ... We tend to label as habitual, or as merely habitual, activities which are performed without effort and also without attention and care. Actions which proceed from a *hexis* are effortless but careful and attentive ... Here virtue, as conceived by Aristotle, resembles the virtuosity of the accomplished games player or craftsman. Mere drill teaches a man to do the same thing in the same circumstances without attending to what he is doing; but virtuosity, like virtue, involves doing the appropriately different thing attentively in varying circumstances. The virtuous action is second nature and not against the grain; but it is not mechanical. The agent must have knowledge and he must choose (EN [Nicomachean Ethics] II.4, 1105a31-2).

We begin, then to get a glimpse of the language issue here, as words which include or connote a set of relationships in one language include or connote a different set of relationships in another language. These issues persist, but in different terms, throughout literary, psychological, and sociological, as well as philosophical, discussions on habit.

The question of habit is importantly addressed by Aristotle in Nicomachean Ethics, in connection with virtue. Here we find other language issues, as various commentators on Aristotle's explanation of the relationship between virtue and habit "habitually" punctuate their explanations in Greek, in despair, apparently, of otherwise rendering the meaning of the text they are discussing. Indeed, after just such an exegesis, Grant tells us that:

When we meet phrases like this just mentioned, we translate them, most probably into our own formulae, into words belonging to our own moral and psychological systems. We speak of ‘moral acts,’ or “‘virtuous activities,’ or ‘moral energies.’ Thus we conceive of Aristotle’s doctrine as amounting to this, that ‘good acts produce good habits.’ Practically no doubt, his theory does come to this; and if our object in studying his theory be [Greek phrase], no better or more useful principle could be deduced from it. But in so interpreting him, we really strip Aristotle of all his philosophy (Grant, Vol I. 242-43).

Nevertheless, in an effort to communicate, commentators do frequently resort to explaining Aristotle’s concepts of the development of virtue by using the word habit.

Thus:

We may specify three different stages of opinion as to the question, Can virtue be taught? ... Aristotle ... would say, ‘Yes,’ implying, however, that the formation of habits was an essential part of teaching, and allowing also for some differences in the natural disposition of men (Grant 106-07).

In Nicomachean Ethics II.5, Aristotle raises the question whether virtue is an affection, a habit or a faculty of soul. He classifies desires and appetites as affections of the soul, ... faculties as what enable soul to be so affected ... and habits as how we are in relation to these affections ... Faculties and affections arise from nature, and since we are not praised or blamed for them, virtue can only be a habit ... Aristotle goes on to define the habit of the soul as choosing the mean of an affection relative to us....

A casual reader might well suppose that in calling virtue a habit, Aristotle holds that a virtuous person will always have the same affection. Were this the case, a virtuous person would feel the same way and do the same things all the time ... Virtue is not a habit of feeling or a habit of action. It is a habit of choice. It requires that the affections and the desires be trained to follow reason, whatever it may choose (Halper 8-9).

How do habituation and training produce virtuous dispositions? Aristotle recognizes that we find this question difficult. In EN II 4 he formulates the following puzzle. We are inclined to say both (a) that we become virtuous by doing virtuous actions and (b) that, unless we are already virtuous, we cannot do virtuous actions. The virtuous actions which produce virtue must clearly be differentiated from the actions which manifest virtue (Hardie 104).

A virtue is a disposition acquired by learning (Hardie 110).

To further complicate the issue, the most apparently relevant passage in Nicomachean Ethics, as translated by Richard McKeon, provides a different Greek word for habit, namely *ethos*. Thus:

Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name *ethike* is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word *ethos* (habit). From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature, for nothing that exists by nature can form a

habit contrary to its nature. For instance, the stone which by nature moves downwards cannot be habituated to move upwards ... nor can fire be habituated to move downwards, nor can anything else that by nature behaves in one way be trained to behave in another. Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit ... so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts (McKeon 331).

Nancy Sherman also translates “*ethos*” as habit (and both “*ethismos*” and “*ex’ ethous*” as “habituation.” (235-36, 246)) She cites the Eudemian Ethics for the following definitions and explanations (246): “ ... and anything is habituated which, as a result of guidance which is not innate, through being changed a certain way repeatedly, is eventually capable of acting in that way....” and Rhetoric for the equation of habit and “second nature”:

Through repetition an acquired capacity becomes almost natural, or second nature:

‘for as soon as a thing becomes habituated it is virtually natural. For habit is similar to nature. For what happens often is akin to what happens always, natural events happening always, habitual events being frequent and repeated.’ Rh.1370a6... (246).⁶¹

The focus of Aristotle seems not to have been on habit as a phenomenon, but on its role in relation to other subjects which were the focus of his analysis: memory,

⁶¹ Note that in this quotation, the “second nature” language is Sherman’s, not Aristotle’s.

recollection, potentiality, action, and virtue. Today we might categorize the Aristotelian discussions of habit as raising issues in the fields of medicine, philosophy, psychology, and morality. In that sense we find a link between the classical interest in habit, as reflected by Aristotle, and Proustian deliberations on *habitude*, which, as we have seen, consider its relationship to all of those disciplines. The full meanings and connotations of the word *habitude* in modern French (or *habit* in English) compared to *hexis*, *hexeis*, or *ethos* in ancient Greek are so vastly different, however, that further comparisons appear problematical. One is reminded of the definition of animals in the Chinese Encyclopedia, as reported by Michel Foucault (7) wherein, among the fourteen comprehensive classifications, one finds, e.g., those belonging to the Emperor; those that are embalmed; those that are mad; those that are uncountable, etc. At the very least, it is clear that consciousness and will, in the sense we understand those terms today, were significant components of “habit,” as it played out in Aristotle’s discussions of the relationship between habit and virtue, whereas it is the lack or diminution of will and consciousness that are the hallmarks of *habitude* in Proust and in the thinkers of his times.⁶²

The Chinese Encyclopedia example comes to mind once again in consideration of the study of *habitude* by the great philosopher and Aristotelian scholar St Thomas Aquinas who, unlike Aristotle, did focus very specifically, and at length, on habit in his monumental work, Summa Theologica. The chapter “The Intrinsic Principles of Human Acts” is divided into two subcategories, “Powers” and “Habits.” “Habits,” in turn, is broken down into two subcategories, “In General,” and “In Particular,” with the second devoted almost entirely to the issue of virtue. But the questions set for discussion in the

⁶² Chapter V explores the writings of 19th century French authors and philosophers on the subject of *habitude*.

first subcategory, “In General,” are wide-ranging, and the treatise proceeds to consider each subject by a series of sub-categorizations, as follows: first it breaks the subject down into subparts; then it asks a question relating to that subpart; then it breaks down that question into “Articles,” which are subordinate questions; then it gives the arguments on either side of the issue; and finally it purports to give a definitive answer to each subordinate question. For example, there are four sub-categories under “In General”, one of which is the “Cause” of habit. Cause is then broken down into three sub-issues; formation, increase, and corruption. With respect to formation, the following four questions are put forth as “Articles:” “Whether any Habit Is from Nature?; Whether Any Habit Is Caused by Acts?; Whether a Habit Can Be Caused by One Act?; Whether Any Habits are Infused in Man by God?” For each of these “Articles” -- which are always posed as questions -- Aquinas provides arguments supporting, respectively, negative and affirmative answers (called “Objections” and “Reply Objections”). In between these arguments are Aquinas’ analysis and his own answer, which constantly refer and rely upon the work of “the Philosopher,” i.e., Aristotle, as well as Catholic theology, and his own insights. One finds citations to numerous Aristotelian works in the many references to habit in Aquinas’ discussion,⁶³ and Aquinas thereby probably provides the most complete and authoritative presentation of Aristotle’s thoughts on habit, which, as we have indicated, were exceedingly diffuse but also focused more particularly, as we have seen, on other issues.

While the format adopted by the treatise, illustrated above, is designed to communicate ideas in a very clear and precise manner, nevertheless the modern reader

⁶³ References include: Book of Predicaments; De Anima; De Long et. Brev. Vitae; Ethics; Memory and Recollection; Metaphysics; and Physics.

still finds himself or herself confronted by the dilemma of the “Chinese encyclopedia.” In the words of Foucault (13), he or she, in reading Aquinas on habit, will be chasing the “*espace d’ordre*” in which knowledge was constituted in the 13th century.

Definitions were key to the issues posed in Summa Theologica’s discussion of habit. Thus the initial question was whether habit was a “quality,” and Aquinas’ answer is in the affirmative: health, beauty, and whiteness are examples of habits. Furthermore, in distinguishing between habits and dispositions, Aquinas says that dispositions may be lost, whereas the word “*habit* implies a certain lastingness” (795). Indeed, whiteness is not so easily lost. It is apparent, then, that the word habit was used at least in one very different sense either by Aquinas, or in his time, than by Proust and by the 19th century French philosophers that devoted great attention to the issue of habitude. But Aquinas does not confine himself to the definition of habit indicated above. Rather, he says that habit implies not only a relationship to the nature of a thing, but also to how that thing operates, so that the disposition which is a part of habit may relate also to an act (796).

One issue that particularly interested Aquinas was whether habits are susceptible of change, or, as he put it, “corruption.” The answer was complicated, in our terms, because again distinctions were made between what we would call qualities, but which Aquinas, like Aristotle, referred to as habits, because they were dispositions, for example, whiteness, or heat. Thus Aquinas concludes that habits may be changed only to the extent that one is speaking of an object in relation to an act, rather than of what, again, we would mean by reference to a quality. Whiteness *per se* does not diminish, but a white thing may become less white (812). With respect to the question of whether certain habits may be changed, Aquinas speaks in more familiar terms, because he emphasizes the

importance of repeated acts. He concludes that all habits that are gradually undermined by contrary agencies which are not themselves overcome by repeated practice of the habits are diminished or destroyed by long cessation of the practice of the habit. This conclusion holds in respect of the practice of both “science” and “virtue.” All intellectual habits may be destroyed if man does not continuously utilize his intellect to counter strange fancies:

The intellectual part of the soul, considered in itself, is above time, but the sensitive part is subject to time, and therefore in course of time it undergoes change as to the passions of the sensitive part, and also as to the powers of apprehension. Hence the Philosopher says (Phys. iv., text. 117) that time makes us forget (Aquinas 813).

That last theme strikes responsive chords in readers of Proust, underscoring the significant relationships between habitude, memory, and time.

Many of the issues which preoccupied Aquinas in respect of habit were not issues that would present themselves in modern thought. Thus later philosophers and psychologists, in wrestling with the nature and operations of habit, did not analyze, as did Aquinas, whether e.g., habit is in the body in relation to the soul, or in the soul in relation to the body; whether the soul is the subject of habit in respect of its essence or in respect of its power; whether grace may be in the soul as a habit; whether there may be many habits in one power and whether one habit may be made up of many habits; or whether there are habits in angels. The reasoning employed to resolve these kinds of issues, and the concentration on issues of “precedence” and “posteriority,” as between certain categories, generally finds little echo in modern or postmodern analyses of the functions

and functioning of habit.⁶⁴ Thus Aquinas considers the relationship of habit to power in these terms:

Habit takes precedence of power, according as it implies a disposition to nature; whereas power always implies a relation to operation, which is posterior, since nature is the principle of operation. But the habit whose subject is a power, does not imply relation to nature, but to operation. Wherefore it is posterior to power. Or, we may say that habit takes precedence of power, as the complete takes precedence of the incomplete, and as act takes precedence of potentiality. For act is naturally prior to potentiality, though potentiality is prior in order of generation and time, as stated in Metaph. vii, text 17, ix, text 13 (799).

For habit is not a disposition of the object to the power, but rather a disposition of the power to the object: wherefore the habit needs to be in that power which is principle of the act, and not in that which is compared to the power as its object (801).⁶⁵

Yet there are other issues pertaining to habit explored by Aquinas that do find more expression in later and modern analyses of habit. Aquinas investigates the relationship of

⁶⁴ But see n. 65 below.

⁶⁵ Mortimer J. Adler, writing in 1990, finds the Aquinian definitions and concepts of habit, power, and act philosophically sound. He writes: "Powers are potentialities. A habit is the first actualization of a power, determining the direction in which it is disposed to act. When the habit is operative in particular acts, we have an even more determinate actualization of the power to act. Habits are formed by the repetition of particular acts...So different habits are different acquired perfections of a certain innate or natural power to act. In other words, there can be many acts of one habit, and many habits of one power... Existentially, powers come first, habits second, habitual actions last; and in origin powers precede acts and acts precede habits... (143).

habit and will, and habit and the senses:

And yet even in the interior powers of sensitive apprehension [i.e., taking in knowledge through the senses], we may admit of certain habits whereby man has a facility of memory, thought or imagination: wherefore also the Philosopher says (de Memor. Et Remin.) that *custom conduces much to a good memory*: the reason of which is that these powers also are moved to act at the command of reason (Italics in original).

On the other hand the exterior apprehensive powers, as sight, hearing and the like, are not susceptible of habits, but are ordained to their fixed acts, according to the disposition of their nature, just as the members of the body, for there are no habits in them, but rather in the powers which command their movements (800).

We see then in Aquinas the rigid distinction or separation between reason, as a motivational or directional force of human behavior, on the one hand, and human sensory activities, on the other hand, perceived as inherently instinctual, although susceptible of direction through reason. The fundamental definition of habit, in Aquinas, or at least its *raison d'être*, appears to be as a link which connects both reason to will and will to action. Thus Aquinas tells us that the will is a rational power, which may be directed in various ways, but habit inclines it to act in a particular way; it is habit which inclines the will, and all “appetitive powers” to act, to accomplish an action (801-02). In that sense, however, habit in Aquinas, as in Aristotle, appears antithetical to its function in Proust’s time and in our own: a force which produced acts, thoughts, or emotions with either no, or very little, direction of the will, through means which bore detailed investigation and

scrutiny. (The inconsistency, however, could be explained by different meanings for the word will, e.g., if Aquinas' "will" were a directing force that automatically generated actions. Once again, language issues pervade the discourse.)

But Aquinas did stress the connection between the senses and the development of habits, a connection that was the launching pin for that very profound exploration in 19th century France of the nature, operation, and role of *habitude*. Thus he called "natural habits" those dispositions toward certain intellectual operations which come from knowledge derived from the senses (804). As examples of such habits, he offers inclinations to chastity or meekness in some individuals--reminding us once again we may be chasing intellectual "spaces of order" which are not our own. We do locate, however, in Aquinas the most important principle that it is repetition which sometimes creates habit:

...if the acts be multiplied a certain quality is formed in the power which is passive and moved, which quality is called a habit; ...

Now it is clear that the active principle which is reason, cannot entirely overcome the appetitive power in one act: because the appetitive power is inclined variously, and to many things; while the reason judges in a single act ... Therefore a habit of virtue cannot be caused by one act, but only by many (805).

The issue of whether repetition is always or generally necessary to cause habit was not so easily answered, however, given the very different uses of habit in Aquinas' exposition. Thus Aquinas finds that one act can create "habit," viewed here as an intellectual disposition, or merely an intellectual proposition. Relying on the Aristotelian

principles that the cogitative powers of the intellect, found in memory and imagination, are passive, Aquinas concludes that these powers may be overcome by an “active principle,” such as a self-evident proposition, and thus create, in one moment, a “habit” (805-06). Here Aquinas distinguishes between a “habit of opinion” and a “habit of science”

Wherefore a habit of opinion needs to be caused by many acts of the reason, even on the part of the *possible* intellect: whereas a habit of science can be caused by a single act of the reason, so far as the *possible* intellect is concerned. But with regard to the lower apprehensive powers, the same acts need to be repeated many times for anything to be firmly impressed on the memory...

Bodily habits, however, can be caused by one act, if the active principle is of great power: sometimes, for instance, a strong dose of medicine restores health at once (*Italics in original*; 806).

In these citations one sees the many different definitions of “habit” at work: a proposition in which one believes is a habit; a proposition which is “scientifically” demonstrable and hence adopted is also a habit; a belief dependent only upon memory is a habit; a pattern of virtuous behavior is a habit; a disposition of the body is a habit--and yet these various definitions, examples, and dissections of “habit” serve more to obfuscate than clarify its meaning, as the concept was used and understood from at least the 18th century to modern times.

Aquinas’ exegesis is perhaps as remarkable for what it does not say on the subject of habit as for what it does say. Despite Aquinas’ minute dissections of the operation of

“habit,” of its nature, residency, formation, susceptibility to change, relationships to qualities and practices, there appears no discussion at all as to *how* human beings generate habits. Thus the rudimentary questions asked some 500 years later, for example, as to whether habits are generated or reside in the limbs, the central nervous system, or the brain, find no echo in Aquinas. The soul/body distinction, a first principle in Aquinas’ philosophy, pervades the text. Aquinas finds it impossible to determine if “habit” is resident in both the body and the soul (797-99). As to habit’s source, Aquinas says that God has infused man with habits which are suitable to nature (806). Consequently, we may conclude that he found it unnecessary to pursue the nature and genesis of habit in any physical terms, in contrast to Aristotle, who wrote of the physical traces that memory leaves (Hardie 113):

Hence prima facie the living body is the only possible receptacle of the ‘traces’ on which learning and habituation depend. But we can go further. In the De Memoria Aristotle asserts explicitly that memory depends on physical traces. ‘We must conceive that which is generated through sense-perception in the sentient soul, *and in the part of the body which is its seat*, as a sort of picture the having of which is memory...’ (Italics in original).

These more concrete, scientific questions, in the modern sense of the term, were absent from Aquinas’ work, and in that one sense, at least, the link between Aristotle’s diffuse examinations of habit and the intense scrutiny that habit received in the post-enlightenment age is more direct and perhaps influential than the theologically oriented Aquinian analysis of the role of habit in human affairs. Nevertheless, by cumulating so many of Aristotle’s writings on habit in one place, by featuring the issue prominently, by

utilizing reason and analysis to understand the place and function of habit in human affairs, Aquinas promoted and advanced the discourse on habitude.

C. MONTAIGNE

Although we do find recognition of the phenomenon of habitude, and of its utility, harm, and nature in the works of some of the most illustrious French thinkers in the 16th to 18th centuries, habitude does not appear to be the focus of very special attention in France until the 19th century. Michel de Montaigne focused briefly on the issue in two essays, “On custom” (*coustume*), and “On experience.” The word “habitue” seems not to have been in current use in the 16th century, as Montaigne used, variously, “*l'accoustumance*,” “*la coustume*,” “*l'assuefaction*,” or “*l'usage*”, when discussing the concept, and some of those terms include collective habit, or custom, as well as individual habits. Montaigne conceded to the power of habitude, and recognized its two-edged nature: it expands one’s abilities and limits one’s horizons.

The essay “On custom” begins with observations on habitude, but soon modulates, first to laying out multiple examples of alleged practices in other lands that would appear demented or barbarian to his (and our) contemporaries, and then to a passionate plea for the status quo in respect of basic government and law. His observations about habitude, although succinct, are on the mark. Thus the opening paragraph:

That man seems to me to have very well understood the power of habit who first invented this story: that a village woman, having learned to pet and carry in her arms a calf from the hour of its birth, and continuing always to do so, gained this by habit, that even when he was a great ox she still could

carry him. For in truth habit is a violent and treacherous schoolmistress. She establishes in us, little by little, stealthily, the foothold of her authority; but having by this mild and humble beginning settled and planted it with the help of time, she soon uncovers to us a furious and tyrannical face against which we no longer have the liberty of even raising our eyes. We see her at every turn forcing the rules of nature. *Habit is the most effective teacher of all things* (Pliny)(Italics in original).⁶⁶

Characteristically discussing the issue in a very concrete fashion, piling example upon example to prove his points, Montaigne first explores, in rather neutral and even, at times, appreciative terms the domains where habit holds sway: physical dexterity and ability; effect on senses, notably hearing and smell; training of children, and “the strange impressions she [habit] makes in our souls...” (Frame 157-58). But soon appear more negative judgments, e.g.: “Habituation puts to sleep the eye of our judgment.” (Frame158). Custom and habit blend in the essay, (as they do in the word “*coutume*”), and, after pages of examples, Montaigne concludes (Frame 162): “But the principal effect of the power of custom is to seize and ensnare us in such a way that it is hardly within our power to get ourselves back out of its grip and return into ourselves to reflect and reason about its ordinances.”

In the essay “On experience,” Montaigne relates, incredulously, his experiences with children whom he rescued from beggary, to whom he provided occupations, clothing and food, who nevertheless left his service in order to return to their former life, and nothing he could do, by entreaty or threat, could persuade them to reject “the taste

⁶⁶ Donald Frame translation (155); italics in original.

and sweetness of indigence” (Vol. 3, 293)--“These are the effects of *l'accoustumance*” (Vol 3, 293), Montaigne concluded. Ruminating further, he says that the best use of *habitude* would be to accustom us to change and variation, to be flexible and not opinionated. In words that are not that far from Proust’s later invocations, he inveighs against the kind of life which is so ruled by order and discipline as to be stupid and useless (Vol 3, 294). Reflecting upon the aging process, he finds that “*la coutume*” has already become so much a part of his character that he can not free himself of it, so that “*l’usage*” adds its own weaknesses to those provided by nature (Vol 3, 294).

D. PASCAL

Blaise Pascal, on the contrary, praises *habitude*, which he usually calls “*la coutume*.” it is a way of attaining Christian belief (77-78, 123-24), and of becoming virtuous (289). The values of Pascal are never in doubt, and whatever brings one to God and grace is praiseworthy. While he states that of the three ways which can bring one to truth, reason, “*la coutume*,” and inspiration, the third must be present at some time in one’s life (122), nevertheless “*la coutume*” is a convenient way to keep the faith:

We must not misunderstand ourselves; we are automatons as well as minds; and because of that the faculty susceptible to persuasion is not our only recourse. How few things can be proved! Proofs persuade only the mind. ‘*La coutume*’ creates stronger and more basic proofs; it sets on course the automaton who brings along with it the mind, without reflection. What has proved to us that tomorrow will bring daylight and that we will die? And what is more basic than that? It is thus ‘*la coutume*’ that persuades us; that is what makes so many of us Christian, and that is also what makes Turks,

pagans, tradesmen, soldiers, etc. ... We must have recourse to it [*la coutume*'] when once the mind has perceived where truth is, in order to drench ourselves and to hold on to our belief, which escapes us at any time, because to have proofs before us at all times is not possible. We must acquire faith more easily, and that is the faith of habitude which, without violence, without art, without argument, makes us believe those things and inclines all our powers toward belief, in a way that our soul falls into it naturally. But if one no longer believes through the force of conviction, and if the automaton is inclined to believe the opposite, that is still not enough. It is necessary to believe through two means: the mind, which through reason needs only to have perceived the truth once in life; and the automaton, through '*la coutume*,' which then does not permit us to incline towards the contrary view (123-24).

E. THE *PHILOSOPHES*: DIDEROT, ROUSSEAU,
and D'AUMONT (L'ENCYCLOPÉDIE)

We find ruminations on l'habitude in the works of Denis Diderot, and of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and a rather modest five column article authored by Amulphe d'Aumont on l'habitude in the Encyclopédie, Volume 16, 1765. Neither the Diderot nor the Rousseau attitudes toward habitude are surprising, given the worldviews of each. Diderot presents a materialist philosophy in Le Rêve d'Alembert as Doctor Bordeu explains to Mlle Lespinasse, his interlocutor, how human beings function. Mlle Lespinasse asks what, exactly, is memory, and Dr. Bordeu says it is a property of the center of the nervous system ("*l'origine du faisceau*"), a sense particular to the head of

the network, like sight is the property of the eye. Therefore memory is neither in the eye nor ear, but in the center of consciousness. Mlle. Lespinasse then asks whether it is this connection between the center and the rest of the system that makes people what they are--such as D'Alembert a mathematician, and Voltaire a poet. The doctor says that it is precisely that plus habitudes which dominate (79). The physical basis of habitude is implied, but not explained. The statement, however, is sufficient to bestow upon habitude a principal place in human development, focused, it appears, on the role of habitude in education.

Rousseau's treatise on precisely that subject, Émile ou de l'éducation, casts habitude in an extremely negative role with respect to its influence on education. Rousseau tells us repeatedly that, in society, habitude usually stands in opposition to that which is natural. The central theme of Rousseau's treatise was that education should foster, rather than stifle, that which is natural to man. Rousseau concedes that there may be habitudes which conform to nature, which please us and our senses, but unfortunately, the manner in which we are educated tends to destroy those habitudes, and instead instill others whereby we concentrate on pleasing others, or being useful to the nation (37-38). Similarly, there may be habitudes which strengthen the natural maternal ties, but the practice of giving children over to be cared for by nurses prevents such habitudes from forming (24). Rousseau emphasizes the importance of developing habitudes which fortify the body, to prevent sickness (49-50):

...the return of affective sensations begins to subject them [infants and children] to the dominion of habitude; one sees their eyes turn without stopping toward the light, and, if it comes to them from one side only,

automatically turn toward that direction, so that one should take care to turn their faces away from daylight, for fear that they become squint-eyed and unaccustomed to look away. From an early age, they must become habituated to shadow; otherwise they cry as soon as they find themselves in the dark. Food and sleep, too exactly measured, become necessary to them on an exact schedule; and soon desire for both comes not from need but from habitude, or rather habitude adds a new need to natural ones; that is what it is necessary to prevent.

Most importantly, and paradoxically, he urges that one develop the habitude of being open to change:

The only habitude that one should let a child adopt is to assume none; not to lift more with one arm than with another; not to use one hand more than the other, not to eat, sleep, or move at the same times, and not to lack the power to stay alone, night or day. Prepare in advance free reign to his liberty and the use of his strengths, leaving his body to natural habitudes, putting him in the condition of always being master of himself, and of doing everything according to his own will as soon as he has one (71).

Thus while roundly condemning habitude, Rousseau also urges that it be employed to secure the goals that he is fostering: “natural” ties; health; physical strength; courage; fortitude, physical activity (46-49; 71-72; 90; 161; 176). Rousseau seems unaware of his own contradictions on this score. Thus he says in one place:

But, at an age when the heart feels nothing yet, it is important to make children perform acts which one wants them to do by habitude, while one is

waiting for them to be old enough to do them by choice and by love of good. Man is an imitator, just as are animals; the taste for imitation is by nature part of us; but it degenerates into vice in society (128),

and in another:

The attraction of l'habitude comes from the natural laziness of man, and this laziness grows when one gives in to it: one does more easily that which one has already done: the road marked out is more easy to follow. Also one can notice that the dominion of habitude is very great over old people and on people who are indolent, very small over youth and active people. Regimen is good only for people with weak minds, and it makes them weaker from day to day. The only useful habitude for children is to submit without reluctance to the necessity of things, and the only useful habitude for men is to submit without reluctance to reason. All other habitudes are a vice (207, fn.).

The final contradiction appears in Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire, wherein Rousseau describes habitude as giving pleasures over and above those which nature can provide: "When I pay a debt I am fulfilling a duty; when I give a gift I am giving myself a pleasure. Only the habitude of virtue gives rise to the pleasure which comes from fulfilling our duties; those pleasures which come to us straight from nature do not rise to that height" (124).

It is perfectly possible to reconcile all of these points of view, were they not stated in such absolute terms. Thus, as was later observed, and especially by Proust, the contradictions inhere in the very phenomenon of habitude, and it is Rousseau's

(characteristic) absolutist expression of the several aspects of *habitude* which may give rise to accusations of inconsistency.

The summing up of *habitude*, in the Encyclopédie, is terse; it is explained only in terms of its function, and its usefulness, but no attention is paid, for example, to the root causes of the phenomenon; its ubiquitous effect, or to its harmful effects so noted by Montaigne and emphasized by Rousseau. Classified under the generic subject of “*morale*,” *habitude* was defined as follows in the Encyclopédie: “...tendency acquired by the exercise of the same sentiments, or by the frequent repetition of the same actions. *L’habitude* instructs nature and changes it; it gives energy to the senses and facility and force to the movements of the body and to the faculties of the mind; it softens the sharp edges of pain” (Volume 16, 887).

The base observations of the workings of *habitude* are thus noted--observations which will be microscopically examined in the following century. The remainder of the article gives illustrations of these observations, emphasizing the forcefulness of *habitude*, and especially of those *habitudes* contracted in childhood. There is a suitable lecture on training the young in the *habitudes* of virtue, and there is the suspicion expressed that the tendencies acquired by *habitude* may be passed on from generation to generation. But it is fair to say that this entry in the Encyclopédie does not presage the major role that this phenomenon would play in the very next century. The 19th century opened with the submission to *l’Institut National* of a very long and very detailed study of *habitude* by Pierre Maine de Biran; the subject was well launched; and the 19th century closed with virtually every major French thinker or philosopher focused on the relationships between *habitude*, memory, time, spirit, and matter.

V. THE DISCOURSE ON HABITUDE EXPLODES: 19TH CENTURY FRANCE AND BELLE EPOQUE

A. MAINE DE BIRAN

The prize-winning essay of Pierre Maine de Biran, Influence de l'habitude sur la faculté de penser, submitted in 1801 in response to a question proposed by *La Classe des sciences morales et politique de l'Institut National* on October 6, 1799⁶⁷ is universally cited as the first major study on l'habitude in French intellectual thought, and that essay remains the major study on the issue, although subsequent works have perhaps become better known. The question proposed by the *Institut National* was the following: "Determine what is the influence of l'habitude on the faculty of thought, or, in other words, show the effect that frequent repetitions of the same operations produce on each of our intellectual faculties."

The panel of judges was composed of Cabanis, Ginguéné, Lepaux, Daunou, and Destutt de Tracy. Destutt de Tracy had written on the very subject posed, as well as on closely related subjects, such as instinct, sensations, and intelligence. Cabanis, a physician, had also written on these allied subjects, and especially on the physiology of the brain and other organs. Condillac and Locke were much cited by these two jury members in their own works, and it is supposed that the jury was knowledgeable regarding their theories. Thus although Maine de Biran's essay is universally cited as the first major French philosophical work on the subject of l'habitude, the facts that the

⁶⁷ Republished in Tome II, Oeuvres de Maine de Biran, in 1922. The essay of Maine de Biran was submitted in April, 1801, revised and then published in 1803. It was also republished in 1841 by Victor Cousin, who later commissioned Félix Ravaisson's work on the status of French philosophical thought for the Exposition of 1867.

issue was so prominently posed in 1799, and that it had been the subject of prior writings, is a strong indication that interest in the subject had been developing since its more casual earlier treatments.

Maine de Biran's essay was long (300 pages as published in the collected works (see n. 65, above) and the author's ideas were meticulously presented. Each subject that was deemed relevant to the topic was carefully dissected. While the essay is divided into two sections, respectively titled "passive habitudes" and "active habitudes," in fact habitudes defined as passive and those defined as active are discussed in all sections. These two sections were preceded by a 60 page introduction which analyzes each of our senses, touch, sight, etc., and their particular impact on our mental processes. In this introduction, the author discusses, analyzes, and then theorizes on how we take in information through our senses; how we think; how we remember; and the effect of frequent repetition, and the consequent development of habitudes, on each of these mental stages. Additionally, the author considers mental processes relating to sentiments,⁶⁸ not in terms of how sentiments are created, but rather how sentiments interact with intellectual processes, and how sentiments, intellectual processes, and habitudes reciprocally influence each other's development and operation. He thus interpreted very broadly the question posed.

Maine de Biran states that as one can never know first causes, they will not be further discussed. He thereby rendered unnecessary any religious discussion, and,

⁶⁸ "Sentiments" is the French word in question and the English word "feelings" may usually be a better translation. "Feelings," however has a tactile association and perhaps cuts a smaller swath than is appropriate here. Nor does "emotion" seem quite equivalent, as it speaks in a stronger register. What are referred to by "sentiments" are the qualities of fear, pity, admiration, joy, and so on — all states of emotional response, to whatever degree.

indeed, there is no reference to the authority of God in the essay. The methodology is Cartesian; each fact which commences a discussion is based on either observation or reason, the basis of which is always disclosed, and then each subsequent fact, reason, or conclusion is derived in the same manner. Form and substance are perfectly matched here: the author celebrates the human faculties of intelligence and reason, and condemns the human propensities toward error, prejudice and superstition. The mind set of the Enlightenment permeates this essay.

As noted, the long introduction serves to dissect the interplay between information received through the senses and its processing by the individual; this information will be subjected to further analysis as the essay traces the mental process beyond the first intake. A fundamental distinction is established in this introductory section between passive sensations and active sensations, and the cause of that distinction has critical importance with respect to the study of habitude and the faculty of intelligence. The basic distinction between passive sensations and active sensations is whether the will of the individual is involved; if it is not, the sensation is deemed passive; if it is, the sensation is deemed active. The will is always involved when there is movement. In Maine de Biran's analysis, movement is most often the key to determining what thought processes are occurring and the manner in which frequent repetition results in habitude and its inevitable effects.

Examples of passive sensations are the individual's feeling that he/she is hot or cold, or is smelling an odor, being touched, hearing sounds, or experiencing pain. These occur independently of the will, or of any movement. An active sensation occurs when the will directs it, as in sight, requiring eye movement; touching with the fingers;

movement of limbs; utilization of the voice; and any exercise of consciousness, that is, thinking. Maine de Biran concedes that many activities combine both passive and active sensations, especially those involving sight. He argues that sight, however, is usually a combination, because the eyes are often directed by the will to look at an object, or because touch, which involves effort, and hence will, is also involved, or because the mind determines to think about what the eyes are looking at, also an exercise of will. Similarly, hearing often involves the voice, which is a combination of active and passive sensations. Most experiences are a combination of active and passive sensations, and it can be difficult to separate out that part of a sensory experience which is passive and that part which is active,. But the author says that we will call passive sensory experiences those in which the passive element predominates, and active sensory experiences those in which the active element predominates.

All sensory experiences, passive, active, and combinations, produce impressions. When there is an impression to an organ, either passive or active, there is a change in that organ, which survives the impression. Maine de Biran calls that change a determination. Yet the determination is not defined or analyzed further than its definition--a change to an organ caused by an impression. The nature of the change is indicated only later, in the discussion on habitude. Maine de Biran then theorizes that an impression creates a physical change, and the change is located in the organs which correspond to the sensory experience, and in other organs as well.

An individual has a consciousness of all impressions. But it is only when there is movement, and hence when the will is involved, that an individual has a perception. The seat of perception is the brain, or, as it is usually called in the essay, the "cerebral

center.” The cerebral center occupies an important place in the theories of Maine de Biran. It produces images which appear and disappear like waves, without individual awareness of the effort involved in that production. It is the seat of memory as well as imagination. The object of all passions is perceived by the imagination, which is constantly changing, but revived by repetition. The brain commingles impressions from all of the senses, and associates all of these with each other and with memory. The individual’s state of mind, his “morale,” is centered in the brain, although other interior organs may affect this state. The author says that the cerebral center is not involved in actions which are purely instinctual, as distinguished from conscious. Instead, the seat of instinct is located in other internal organs, those not involved with knowledge. At another point, however, he says that in addition to the basic instincts, such as the need for food and drink, there are also moral instincts, and instincts regarding what is beautiful; the inconsistencies are obvious.

When an individual wills movement, he necessarily makes an effort; the object of his effort offers resistance, and the awareness of the resistance of the object creates a consciousness of the self as distinguished from the object—the “moi” in Maine de Biran’s terms. Maine de Biran explains how the process works with the sense of sight. Sight is directed by the will, and it meets resistance in that movement of the eye is involved. When allied to the sense of touch, the resistance is even clearer, as the organ of touch, the fingers or hand, must be willed to move; otherwise they will not. Thus the active senses call forth intelligence or knowledge.

The progression of events triggered by an active sensory experience is the following: will, resistance, effort, movement, perception, consciousness, knowledge.

There is a further and very important stage associated with this experience: memory. Where there is a purely passive sensation, the “moi,” consciousness of self, is not involved, and it is only the moi that can determine the strength of a sensation as between the present and the past. So a pure sensation can not be called back into consciousness. We can, however, remember the “sign” of a pure sensation. The idea of “signs” is a critical component of the thesis of Maine de Biran regarding thinking, consciousness, memory, and habitude. It is discussed at several key points in the essay, and it serves as an important part of his explanation of how thinking operates and how habitude influences the thinking processes.

Signs are the necessary element in the production of ideas and memory. When movements create impressions, and then perceptions, the movements become the “signs” of those perceptions. Thus the movement serves to recall the perception that was originally associated with it. When perceptions occur at the same time or in short range of each other, and this pattern is repeated, they become associated with each other by habitudes; each can then act as the “sign” of the other. Thus a perception can operate as a sign for another perception, or for several. These mental operations are cemented by habitude. It is especially when these associated perceptions occur simultaneously that they can not be separated by the individual. When they are successive, they may be separated, but they frequently give the impression of being cause and effect, which may or may not be true. This mental operation which leads easily to error is the major pitfall of habitude, and creates almost insuperable obstacles to reason, enlightenment, and progress. It is roundly condemned by the author.

Signs, and particularly articulated signs, i.e., words and language, are analyzed primarily in the context of habitude. Habitude is created by impressions which are either prolonged or frequently repeated. The impact of habitude is, however, different, depending on whether the impression is created by a passive or active sensory experience. There is one absolute rule which applies to both, and that is that the impression weakens as the experience which creates it is prolonged or repeated.

Impressions which are created by passive sensations—e.g., temperature, smells, tastes—get weaker, to the point of disappearing. When the impressions are the most passive, the effects of habitude have the least variation. Maine de Biran speculates that this is caused by an inborn tendency to recreate an equilibrium among the organs in the body, so that when one is changed by an impression, either it and/or the other organs adjust to restore the equilibrium. The description of these changes is rather lyric:

The more the relationship is disturbed, the greater the change and the more the sensation is experienced; from that it follows that the first instant where an irritant acts on an organ and increases its tone is also that where its effect is the strongest; to the extent that equilibrium becomes reestablished, or that the relationships tends to be restored, the sensations diminish, like a succession of oscillations diminishing in degree, to the point that it melts again, so to speak, in the uniform sentiment of existence (77-78).

To the extent that the organs are continuously or repeatedly stimulated, and the organs are continuously involved in restoring equilibrium, the individual more consciously experiences the necessity to restore his inner balance.

The more interesting—certainly the more complicated—processes involve habitudes developed through active sensations. These comprehend virtually our entire mental mechanisms. With active sensations, movement is involved, by definition. Movement which is frequently repeated and voluntary becomes progressively easier to perform, faster, and more precise. At the same time, effort and consciousness of the effort grow progressively weaker. The perceptions, however, increase, and consciousness of the result of the activity remains. Maine de Biran queries whether, as the consciousness of effort diminishes, the movement is performed without the direction of the central nervous system, although undoubtedly the first direction, when effort was engaged, was directed by the cerebral center. In any event, whether one is talking about limbs or mental processes, the same observation is true: they become easier, more rapid, and more precise, even as the person becomes less and less aware of the effort involved. These results of habitude apply not only to pure sensations, and physical and mental exertions, but also to “sentiments of the soul”—joy, sadness, and fear. In Maine de Biran’s words: “...facility, rapidity, indifference, there are the three concomitant results of l’habitude...” (136).

There are, however, a class of ideas and of sentiments for which this is not true, which retain their brilliance and interest although constantly repeated, and consistently familiar. This class was of great interest to Maine de Biran, and his discussion of the reasons and effects of this exception to the general rules of habitude makes a prominent point in his essay. Today we might classify persons who respond to habitude in this way as either mentally ill, or cultists, or fanatics: Maine de Biran most often used the term “exaltation” to describe the state of their cerebral center. He described the class of ideas

and feelings which do not adhere to the general rule of habitude as those which are outside the grasp of reason and perception, which are either vague and indeterminate, or rooted in superstition or ignorance, or emanating from primitive dispositions. They form habitudes, which he called fanatic, and the feelings associated with them do not weaken, but instead strengthen, from repetition. He postulated that the sensory organs attach to these ideas or feelings the very idea of the individual's existence, and thus they are constantly revived by repetition. In such cases, the brains have been over-stimulated. This can happen because either there is something external acting on the brain, or because fantastic ideas become indissolubly associated with real objects or ordinary thoughts, or because there is an internal organ that excites the brain. Usually, habitude will increase the influence of these stimulants. Maine de Biran notes that it is hard to cure persons of these kinds of illnesses, because one can not easily separate the real objects and thoughts from the delusionary ones. Exercise of the power of speech augments the exalted condition. Thus speech by its nature creates the double awareness of self—the individual is both the speaker and the listener. When a person's brain is overly excited and creates phantoms, illusions, or archetypal ideas, his power to recall them by speaking does not curb the imagination. Rather, in such cases the facility of recall, created by habitude, tends to create an imagination which has no brakes and which is prey to its own creations.

The exposition of mental processes and the formulation of habitudes with regard to active sensations has several more stages to pursue. These involve the related issues of associations, signs, and language. We have already mentioned signs in connection with impressions, perceptions and objects. Maine de Biran distinguishes between the signs

related to passive senses, which he calls signs of the imagination, and which consist of all of the associations which habitude creates among impressions, independent of the will, and signs which are associated with movements, hence will, which he deems the cornerstone of memory. Indeed, the basis of active habitudes, he says, is the use of willed and articulated signs, i.e., language.

These two types of signs, however, are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, from our birth, habitude confuses and mingles them. It hides from us the difference between simple sensory perceptions and judgment. It converts the active and voluntary signs of memory into the passive signs of the imagination. This process occurs because of the association of language with objects and then ideas, and the multiple associations made in the brain; all continuously reinforced and strengthened by habitude. In the beginning, as we learn language, habitude necessarily limits our thoughts. We no longer have to make an effort each time we associate a word with an object or idea; it becomes habitual. Language thus facilitates connections between signs and ideas. When we give a name to emotion, we can recall and recreate it. The facility and rapidity of language corresponds to the progressive weakening of effort, and hides the ties between the idea and the sign.

When active senses are called into play, the mental progression, it will be recalled, was will, resistance, effort, movement, perception, consciousness, and knowledge. Add to this progression repetition, and habitude is developed. With habitude comes memory. Maine de Biran postulates three types of memory: “automatic memory,” “sensory memory,” and “representative memory.”

Automatic memory has no necessary connection with ideas: it is a facility gained by repetition. Numbers and numerical processes are stored in automatic memory but habitudes of language are not, unless one is into either the ritualistic or superstitious mode, or a disease or condition of exaltation (all such states standing in opposition to reason), in which case they are stored in automatic memory.

Sensory memory may be close to automatic memory, but involves reactions to sounds or words. It is a memory that cannot be quantified, but since words are attached to sensory experiences and sentiments, repetitions of words associated with such sensory experiences recall the feelings associated with them, and may stimulate them. In that way, metaphors, allegories, and inversions stimulate the sensory memory. When a word which has important associations because of its repetition in a particular emotional context is heard later, it calls forth the same strong feelings, independently of the will. This is how orators move a crowd, using words like nature, virtue, honor, and God.

But the most important memory is representative memory. This is the creative function of the cerebral center, as from the time that an individual uses the signs of language, he elaborates, combines, groups, and uses words in infinite ways. He creates a new world from the world of nature. Representative memory first fixes objects by signs, i.e., words; it recalls words with their values, but not in any particular order. The cerebral center then molds these words into abstract ideas, it forms models, groups, and classifications, and gives to all of these still other signs, i.e., words. These associations are not limited, however, just to language which is ideological in content; associated signs (words) of feelings become mingled with all other signs (words); making it difficult

to separate out the components of each. Representative memory provides clearer and easier thoughts, and is the basis of human intelligence.

The cerebral center is capable of making reflected judgments, which are conclusions to which it has reasoned. It is necessary to distinguish between automatic judgments, formed without proof, but based on a memory of always having believed them, and reflected judgments, formed by evidence and then judgment, and thereafter remembered by repetition and habitude. A reflected judgment may be transformed by habitude into a reminiscence, but is nevertheless susceptible of change. As with all mental processes, repetition of representative memories makes them easier and faster to recall, converts them into habitudes. These habitudes of language hide their origin and motivation. The first fold is established when our minds extend the function of the sign of language, and then that sign always creates the same response. This process necessarily restrains the imagination.

Habitude thus accelerates and facilitates mental operations and transforms the chain of reflected judgments; it lets conclusions rest in memory as simple reminiscences. Habitude makes abstract principles a part of automatic memory, putting them outside of our reach for discussion and question. Representative memory, however, can retrace elements of a complex idea, and when interspersed with reflected judgments, acquired habitudes allow us to rapidly reach reflected conclusions. Because habitude operates so swiftly and automatically, it is difficult for us to retrace our steps in the chain that leads to judgment.

The deadly flaws of this process are evident. As indicated above, it is the essay's principal point. But before exploring that point, which concludes our exposition of the

essay, we set forth ideas tendered by Maine de Biran on the effects of *habitude* on experiences other than those that are purely intellectual, a subject in which interesting observations are made, although much less attention is paid to them than to the central issue of the effects of *habitude* on truth and error, reason and superstition .

With respect to sensations, it is noted that *habitude* has an effect, and it is negative. *Habitude* weakens the organs of our senses, perverts their instincts, submits our actions and our needs to its empire, and progressively weakens our joys. On the other hand, Maine de Biran notes that it furnishes pleasures to old people, because it reassures them as they feel weak in the face of change. There is even a fleeting reference to the effect of *habitude* on our conceptions of beauty and art. The author says that we classify as beautiful those objects which we are used to, and find it difficult to see the beauty in objects to which we are not habituated. Judgments regarding beauty are therefore ruled largely by *habitude*, by the archetypes which it has engraved on our minds. *Habitude* thus creates our pleasures and then justifies them.

At one point, Maine de Biran offers a rather whimsical “definition” of *habitude*, when he speculates that it may be nothing other than an imitation of ourselves. But he ventures some pertinent observations on what would now fall into the categories of sociology or anthropology, when, starting from the premise that the human being is by nature an imitator, he talks about customs (“*moeurs*”), and defines them as nothing other than *habitudes* held in common:

...that is why manners and religions which are grafted on *habitudes* often survive in the form of customs, and customs and manners outlast the ideas, the institutions, or the general causes which were their foundation. These

institutions unite this triple force of habitude and they alone possess the character of time and of eternity (216, n.).

Maine de Biran states that people of differing cultures associate feelings to moral qualities, and those feelings may vary from our own. Such people therefore do not acquire the same habitudes as we have. While, as noted above, he believes that there are innate moral instincts which influence the development of habitudes, those instincts may be changed, or “corrupted” by society. (229-31, n.). Shades of Rousseau, with explanation by way of habitude.

We end this exposition of the essay with a discussion of the author’s principal point: habitude is a “dual-edged sword” (10), and one edge wounds very deeply. The great harm that habitude works is that it impedes man’s ability to know truth. The word that Maine de Biran uses is “veil:”

As soon as Man looks around him, the veil of habitude descends....; but if he tries to focus his view on himself, he still remains in the presence of habitude, which continues to veil the composition and the number of its products... (10).

Thus habitude hides from us under the veil of indifference the strength of the ties which she has woven; to know these ties one must want to escape them; one must feel them loosen, and break! (102).

As ideas develop, it is difficult to separate out their order of succession. The first impressions become obscure. Habitude, created by repetition, is so strong that it makes determinative associations formed in the cerebral center, and creates illusory perceptions

in place of ones that are actually received from the senses. Habitude in language creates false analogies. Terms that were at first representative become abstract and then distorted. Habitudes of expression tend to dispense with ideas, and calcify the intelligence. But not only does habitude impede our discovery of truth and the correction of error, it is central to the process whereby error is created and perpetuated. Because of habitude, our deductions appear to us as perceptions. Faith is cemented by the repetition of the same words, and the real world takes second place to the world of the imagination. The individual comes to believe completely in that which he has said, heard, and incessantly repeated. These language repetitions become transformed into habitudes of automatic memory and sensory memory, and persuade people to commit all kinds of excesses, even to the sacrifice of their own life. The frequent repetition of articulated signs (language) changes our judgments in a remarkable manner, as well as our ideas and their relationship. Habitual, unreflected judgments operate as prejudices. Where doubt and inquiry would better serve us, we are reassured by the blind confidence habitude bestows. The effect of mistaken judgments or ideas is compounded by our obstinacy and our blindness, all reflecting the immense power of habitude. When these errors are mixed with passion, their falsity or truth is totally obscured. Maine de Biran's condemnation of the "faith" engendered by habitude is itself passionate: "Thus is born and strengthened this faith of habitude, blind faith! stubborn faith! which, to the shame of the human spirit, exercises an influence even more general than the authority of reason and all the weight of evidence!" (262-63).

Nevertheless, habitude is not all bad. There is the other edge of the sword, which Maine de Biran concedes, and not at all grudgingly. Habitude permits us to hone our

skills, to have strength and agility, to develop facility, precision, and rapidity. Habitude also creates facility and rapidity where the art of reasoning is concerned. It creates categories, methodologies, means of arranging our ideas. By allowing us to think in analogies, habitude allows us to discover new truths. Especially where language is concerned, it permits us to reason without always having to start at first principles. Habitude dispenses us from the need to re-enter into all of the details in which we first formulated our beliefs, and gives them legitimacy when they are recalled. But the warning is sounded even as the praise is bestowed: “The too rapid conversion of our reflected judgments into reminiscences is more often harmful than advantageous to our progress” (269).

Since habitude is inevitable, Maine de Biran counsels the conscientious development of good habitudes pertaining to memory, temperament, and thoughts. One should make a habitude, a need, of the clear representation of ideas and their unification with signs. Purely mechanical word successions should be avoided. Signs should reflect the conscious formation of ideas, so that one can retrace one’s ideas, and go from darkness to light slowly, and by degrees. Since one possesses the intellectual powers of reflection and comparison, one has the ability to disassemble associations which have been formed only by habitude. With these tools in hand, one can arm oneself against automatic habitudes, and one may stand ready at any time to re-examine and verify one’s conclusions. Habitude should never be permitted to close off inquiry: “But everything which passes exclusively under the domain of habitude must lose its authority under the eyes of reason” (309-10). Reason and habitude can be used constructively. Reason can suppress exaltations and out-of-control imaginations, and can make a habitude, and hence

a necessity, of attaching the correct signs to images. Reason can habitually create and retain a temperate environment for thought.

Maine de Biran cites the human penchant for inquiry and change, and new experiences, as a tool which can be used to counter the pernicious effects of habitude. He notes the difficulty in determining the line between good and bad habitudes, and in knowing at what point they change from useful to harmful. He speculates that that point may well be different for the geometrician, the metaphysician, and the poet.

Although Maine de Biran forswears at the beginning any search for “first causes,” as doomed to failure, nevertheless one finds an echo of that search in his plaintive description of the two-edged sword of habitude: “Why is it that what is gained in speed, on the surface, is so often lost in strength and depth? Why, having given wing to thought, does habitude not permit it to direct itself in its flight, instead of stubbornly restricting it to the same path?” (278). The flight referred to, we believe, is the flight towards Enlightenment.

Pierre Tisserand, the editor of the collected works of Maine de Biran, says that Condillac, Hobbes and Locke were the philosophical precursors to Maine de Biran’s theories on knowledge gained from sensation and habitude (iv), while Jean Beaufret would add Rousseau to that mix (7-8). Both stress the emphasis of Maine de Biran on physiology and observation, as opposed to pure metaphysics, and praise that emphasis as an advance in the discourse on the subject of habitude. Physiology and observation were, however, also conspicuously present in the writings of two of the jurors, Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy, on the subject of habitude. The very important point that habitude has the twin and opposite effects of making some sensations almost disappear, while making

movements and other processes easier, faster, and more precise was noted by these two jurors and, as shown, was the essence of the definition in L'Encyclopédie. But Maine de Biran's insistence that the "cerebral center," that is, the brain, is the initiator of movement, and also on the creation of active habitudes by willed effort, was a departure from the strict materialist position. (Tisserand, xx, xxv). His meticulous analysis of the process whereby active habitudes are created, and his theories regarding the means by which the body changes and adjusts to form new habitudes, launched the issue in a way which appears never to have been done before.

The more one examines Maine de Biran's methodology, the more impressive, indeed, astounding it is. He had no modern tools to measure the brain; psychological experimentation in the form we know it today was non-existent. At his disposal as aids to the understanding of how human beings function, physiologically and psychologically, were only the recorded observations of others; his own observations; and his ability to reason, step by step, very carefully, and without partiality or philosophically determined preconceptions. He did not attempt to create "systems" of (pseudo-scientific) thought, or to explain large classes of phenomena by hypothesizing the existence of inherent and universal emotions. There are neither mysterious forces in his explanation, nor passions which are presupposed and eternal. Rather, he observed a disposition to repeat, strengthened by its own exercise, and he explored how that disposition operated, mentally and physically, and in diverse circumstances; then he tendered very concrete explanations for those operations, but without any pretense that these explanations were anything other than logical deductions from observed facts. Maine de Biran did more: he made judgments, based on the stated criteria of reason and truth, on the one hand, and error and

ignorance, on the other. Besides those criteria, and a thirst for knowledge, Maine de Biran's work betrays no other agenda.

Thus Maine de Biran's work should be classified as in the Cartesian mode; it is curious that it has been classified otherwise. It has been claimed, for example, by Beaufret, especially in regard to Maine de Biran's later writings, that he turned increasingly to a religious disposition which, if not Christian, was very close to thereto (12). Jean Guitton, however, places Maine de Biran entirely in the spiritualist camp, indeed, Guitton says that spiritualism started with Maine de Biran, and his search for who the "I" is (68). Guitton sees a straight line starting from Maine de Biran to Ravaisson (discussed below) and then to Bergson, as French philosophical thought developed in the 19th century and beyond. Guitton, however, relied principally on the *Journal Intime* of Maine de Biran, not on his essay on habitude. We see no evidence of the genesis of spiritualism in the latter, and on the basis of Maine de Biran's prize-winning essay we would take issue with all of these conclusions.

B. STENDHAL

Unlike most of the 19th century commentators on habitude, Stendhal is known primarily as a novelist, not a philosopher. Nevertheless, he wrote two works in the nature of essays which became very well known, De l'amour, and Racine et Shakespeare, which are replete with discussions of the pervasive influence of habitude. His contribution to the study of habitude is not insignificant, and his judgments find their echo in Proust. With respect to literature, and the arts in general, Stendhal unequivocally condemned habitude as a stultifying and reactionary force; he found the role of habitude, in respect of love, more ambivalent.

In Racine et Shakespeare, Stendhal condemns the inability of the French to move beyond their literary conventions and understand the merit not only of Shakespeare, but of romanticism, in the literary sense. Habitude is the obstructive force, creating both intellectual and affective obstacles. It is because of their habitudes that the French fail to correctly evaluate and hence appreciate the work of Shakespeare and English drama in general, and also French works written in the romantic style. The French have the “habitude” of being flattered by other people, and hence believe in their own general superiority (20). If they were to cast off “the veil thrown by habitude,” they would see that they have no need to keep employing the unities of time and place in dramatic works (21). Indeed, those unities are no more than a deeply engrained habitude, and therefore difficult to cast off; they are entirely unnecessary to produce either profound emotion or dramatic effects (18). Likewise, the French ridicule of English plays is no more than habitude.

Habitude is the impediment to knowing oneself and to thus being able to have the most exalted experiences in the theater:

To be able to read one’s own heart, for the veil of habitude to be torn; to be able to experience moments of perfect illusion of which we have been speaking, it is necessary to have a soul/mind susceptible of strong impressions, one can not have reached the age of 40 years.

We have habitudes; strike those habitudes and we will be sensitive for a long time to the contradictions that one presents to us... (26).

The obstacle to having such profound experiences becomes even more difficult, because of vanity: “...What is worse is that we add *vanity* to sustain [the belief] that these bad habitudes have their foundation in nature” (26; italics in original).

In terms that would find a strong echo in Proust, Stendhal condemns the power of habitude to deaden our imagination, to stultify our ability to appreciate art: “Unknown to most men, l’habitude exercises a despotic power over their imagination”(65). Stendhal recounts the story of a very educated prince, whom one thought beyond narrow prejudices, but who could not tolerate anyone in his presence whose hair was unpowdered. Even brilliant thoughts coming from such a source could not capture that prince’s attention. Stendhal draws the analogy to the inability of the public to entertain artistic creations to which they are not habituated: “I see a treasure of literary tolerance in this word: l’habitude exercises a despotic power over the imagination of even the most enlightened of men, and, through their imagination, over their ability to experience the pleasures that the arts can give them.” (65).

But the other side of the coin is that people love artistic creations which are even absurd, provided only they are habituated to them: “All absurdities over the imagination of a people that habitude has conferred on them are no longer absurdities for them, and their great pleasures in these absurdities are not diminished until the fatal moment where some indiscreet person comes to say to them: ‘That which you admire is absurd’ ” (71).

Stendhal contrasts that which is habitual with that which is natural and sincere. Thus in the passage cited above, Stendhal speaks also of persons who are relieved by the new judgment of the “indiscreet” one, having previously believed that it was an inadequacy on their own part which rendered them unappreciative to the artistic work.

And he goes on to make an analogy with love, wherein a young man who is by nature sensitive and sincere fails to be moved by the artifice of women of whom his comrades are enamored; it is only upon meeting “a direct, natural, and honest woman, capable of being loved” (71) that the young man experiences the pleasures of being in love.

Pleasure is a very important theme in Racine et Shakespeare, and Stendhal inveighs against habitude as an obstacle to pleasure. His principal theme in respect of habitude is that it prevents people from appreciating that which is new, in this case, the work of the romanticists:

...the romantics do not at all conceal that they are proposing to Parisians the most difficult choice in the world: *reconsider your habitudes*. As soon as he dares desert habitudes, the vain man exposes himself to the frightful danger of remaining speechless before some criticism. Can one therefore be surprised that of all the people in the world, the French hold on the most to their habitudes? It is the fear of obscure dangers, dangers which will require a lonely and perhaps ridiculous path, that makes civil courage so rare (98-99; italics in original).

But while, in the above passage, Stendhal challenges the public to surmount their habitudes in order to appreciate romanticism, his definition of romanticism contradicts that advice. In answer to the question: “What is romanticism?” (36) Stendhal says that: “*Romanticism* is the art of presenting literary works to people which, in the current state of their habitudes and their beliefs, are capable of giving them the greatest possible pleasure” (36; italics in original). We see, then, that he is on the horns of a dilemma: as a defender and promoter of romantic works, he must promote their current ability to

please, while as a crusader against the literary establishment, he must advocate new standards for evaluation of artistic works. When *habitude* is added to the mix, as the primary reason for the difficulties such works encounter, but also as the justification for the ability of the works to give pleasure, the contradiction works itself to the surface. If one were to make a separation between the “natural” attitudes of the public and the “artificial” attitudes of the establishment, the contradiction might disappear, and there are many indications in the work that the author deeply experiences that distinction--as, for example, in the digression cited above regarding the ability of a man not blinded by vanity and current mores to appreciate the pleasures that may be offered by a sincere woman. Nevertheless, as the passages cited above also show, Stendhal sees the French public and French character as an already-formed given: formed by its *habitudes* which are mistakenly understood as grounded in nature or reason.

De l'amour seeks to dissect the phenomenon of love; how it starts; what different forms it takes; how it progresses and is experienced; how it ends; and what national characteristics it possesses. The subject inherently leads to digressions, and the author's style favors them. References to *habitude* are sprinkled throughout the text. While in Racine et Shakespeare, *habitudes* were blamed for the inability of the French to expand their artistic horizons, to appreciate drama, art, or literature which was new or unfamiliar, in De l'amour Stendhal considers the influence of *habitude* in more contexts. For purposes of discussion, we have broken them down into the following categories, but they are obviously overlapping: love; psychology and physiology; psychological differences between men and women; art (once again); sociology; and philosophy. Thus

in this work, *habitude* has a pervasive influence; it is a phenomenon which should be understood and often resisted.

In the very first discussion of love (which, for analysis, is broken down into several types), on the second page of the text, the issue of *habitude* is introduced. “*L’amour de vanité*” is analogized to the feeling one would have for a good-looking horse; it is a shallow type of love, but it can be augmented by the *habitude* of physical pleasure (28). In this kind of love, *habitude* creates a kind of friendship, based upon the feeling of security (28-29). A similar sweetness, also based upon the feeling of security and confidence, may be created even when “crystallization” dies because a woman has ceded herself to her passions and thus killed the lover’s fear of losing her. In that case, love: “...acquires the charm of a complete abandon, of a limitless confidence; a sweet *habitude* which softens all the harshness of life, and gives to pleasure another kind of interest” (39).

Habitude can also prolong love in a negative context. Thus due to *habitude*, cold loves, in general, last longer than passionate ones, but then they are no longer love, but merely *habitude* (136). *Habitude* has more influence with less noble, more selfish, minds. A proud person refuses to depend on the responsiveness of another, and so pride may kill love, but when a cold relationship turns habitually quarrelsome (“*l’amour à querelles*”) the very *habitude* of quarrels keeps the relationship in force (136-37).

Another type of love, “*la pique d’amour-propre*,” is defined as an expression of vanity: a relationship between two men, rivals in love, wherein one man confers on the other the role of judge of his own self worth (129). (Stendhal says this is a sickness which does not occur in nations which have the *habitudes* of judging actions by their

utility.) But where the rivalry occurs between a man's wife and his mistress, Stendhal sees a happy result, as it promotes in both rivals the habitude of thinking only of the happiness of the man, and thus strengthening the bonds of marriage (133). Commentary on contemporary attitudes toward such an analysis would be superfluous, but this last example serves to make the point that in the Stendhalian discourse on love, the man is the subject and the woman the object, notwithstanding Stendhal's appreciation of the importance to the love relationship of a woman's intellect.

Habitude in the discussions cited above thus plays both positive and negative roles. That variation occurs as well in other love contexts. Habitude is a significant component of the relationship between modesty or prudishness (*"la pudeur"*) and love, sometimes enhancing love but more often impeding it. Modesty is said to add imagination to love, thus bringing it to life (80), but, when broken down into "nine aspects" (85-87), the situation becomes more complex. Habitude plays a significant part in three of these aspects. Thus although modesty creates great passion in women, as they struggle to conquer a powerful habitude, "[t]he force of habitude holds sway even in moments of great passion" (85). Women who have had few lovers have not the habitude of conquering modesty, and therefore have a problem in committing themselves to passion (86). They seem to be acting contrary to their nature, and thus lacking in sincerity (86). It is therefore unfortunate but true that feminine pride and especially modesty create innumerable habitudes which make it impossible for men to act with them with the same candor with which men approach each other (87).

When one is in love, one is constantly adding a new thought to the idea of perfection that one has of one's beloved. But when jealousy is aroused, the habitudes of

the mind (“*habitudes de l’âme*”) remain. They produce then an opposite effect, and every perfection becomes “a dagger in the heart” (119). If you become only an habitude to your mistress, you have discouraged crystallization, and that promotes unfaithfulness (124).

L’habitue makes lying fashionable, but lying poisons a love relationship. If one even embellishes the truth to a woman one loves, she feels it, and then becomes cold or coquettish. If one chooses a woman with an inferior mind, there is a great temptation to lie, and then one loses respect for her. If one stays with her, it is only because of promises, or out of habitue (112).

The habitue of focusing on one’s own survival is the only antidote to love. Thus love can not be cured; one must only wait until the habitue of self interest reappears and takes hold. (140).

The difference between that which is natural and sincere, and that which is false but habitual, is a recurrent theme in De l’amour. “One calls natural that which is one’s habitual way of behaving” (112). But natural and habitual are not the same thing (113). The gaps between natural and habitual expand with the sensitivity of the individual. A cold, insensitive person is the same all the time; one finds little difference there in what is natural and what is habitual. But a sensitive man, “once his heart is moved” (113), no longer can count on habitue to guide him. He can not then follow down a path unless his feelings lead him there. (113).

Stendhal notes, however, that when one is near the person one loves, one retains the quality of being natural in respect of one’s movements, because habitue of movement is so profoundly rooted in the muscles. Thus in the physiological realm,

Stendhal appears to see an exception to his observation that there is a divergence between that which is natural and that which is habitual.

While sincerity, sensitivity, and naturalness, all allied qualities, are praised and promoted throughout the essay, for men as well as for women, the author nevertheless emphasizes that there are important psychological differences between the two sexes. L'habitude plays a significant role in that analysis. Thus Stendhal cautions that the habitude of acting frankly and fairly with men can not be carried over into relations with women. A man who acts naturally with a woman may be experienced by her as lacking in refinement (95).

By virtue of habitude, and the kind of work that a man does, he is forced to use reason, whereas women's activities which are centered on family life are not guided by reason. Women therefore do not develop the same habitudes as men in respect of utilizing reason. This distinction in terms of habitudes explains why women are guided by their emotions, rather than by reason (41).

We have already spoken of the relationship of love to modesty or prudishness (*"la pudeur"*) as influenced by habitude. In this connection, habitude is responsible for creating still more differences between men and women. While the forces of habitude dominate even in moments of great passion (85), the act of conquering the habitude of modesty creates additional and very special pleasures in women (85). The combination of habitude and modesty also creates an especially high degree of moral courage in women, manifested by resistance to a desired lover (97). Habitude works in the reverse direction with men who, especially in youth, esteem themselves by the number of successes they achieve with women (127). This behavior creates an habitude, which is

then experienced as a necessity, and the result is a male vanity dependent on conquest of women. (127).

Men are accustomed to injuries to their pride, especially if they have been in the military, but women are not. Having no habitudes of suffering such injuries, women form a poor opinion of men who put up with such insults (93). On the other hand, women become habituated to acting like lambs, by virtue of praises such as “She has a very sweet character” (206). Such praises, and the character they create, eventually result in a very boring marriage. (206).

Art, habitude, and love have a direct relationship, and the common denominators of that relationship appear to be reverie and imagination. All great poets, says Stendhal, have lively imaginations. They want to be left alone so that they may experience their delicious reveries. They fear having their attention deflected, which it necessarily is by other people. It is because of the artist’s habitude of nourishing his soul with his own reveries, and by his hatred of the commonplace, that a great artist finds himself so close to the state of being in love (55). Listening to “perfect” music can create the same feelings of happiness as being in the presence of a beloved (57). No greater feelings of happiness exist in this world (55). The habitude of listening to music, and the reverie that it produces, inclines one toward love (58). Actors are adored by the public regardless of whether they are really good looking, because habitude has acted upon the public imagination so that it endows the actors with a beauty which they may not in reality possess (60).

The forces of habitude create national or societal characteristics which transcend its effects upon only one individual. Thus in a state of revolution, manners become more

natural, and stupid conventions are destroyed. Such new attitudes can form the *habitudes* of future generations. Conventions do not favor great passions. In France, these old *habitudes* are losing their force every day, but may still last for a generation (146). In the United States, however, there is the *habitude* of reason, which is so strong that crystallization becomes impossible.

We group together here some generalizations regarding three very basic and abstract qualities whose essence is stated as rooted in *habitude*: justice, beauty, and virtue. Indeed, the last two are defined in terms of *habitude*. Stendhal says that, for him, the *habitude* of justice seems the surest way to achieve happiness (238). Beauty, he says, is the expression of character, or “*habitudes morales*” (61); as such it contains no element of passion. Virtue is “the *habitude* of actions which are painful [to oneself] and useful to others” (238).

Stendhal’s discussion of *habitude* may be fairly summarized by the following judgments which he makes in these two essays. First, Stendhal recognizes in *habitude* a strong, indeed “despotic,” psychological force. Second, he sees that it operates in varied and highly important contexts, which, in his value system, have the highest priority: love and literature. Third, he acknowledges the beneficent as well as the harmful aspects of *habitude*, but the latter far outrank the former. Fourth, he believes that the forces of *habitude* can be overcome, at least at some times and in some places, by the forces of will and intellect.

Although *habitude* plays key roles in respect of the themes Stendhal treats, we do not see any particular interest of Stendhal in the phenomenon itself. It is treated as a given; its pervasive and powerful effects are acknowledged, but Stendhal’s attention is

never deflected from the subjects on which he concentrates: love and literature. He never digresses into deeper analyses or speculations on the origin, workings, or peculiarities of the forces of habitude. His remarks on the effect of habitude on love and literature are analytical in the sense that he ascribes to habitude the actions and attitudes that he has observed. But habitude as a phenomenon in and of itself is not subjected to further analysis. There is no particular evidence that Stendhal studied or even read Maine de Biran's seminal essay (although his friend and mentor Destutt de Tracy was on the panel of judges and had written on the subject himself); his acknowledgment of the force of habitude could well have been reflective only of the same acknowledgment that prompted *La Classe des sciences morales et politiques* of the *Institut National* at the turn of the 19th century to propose for a prize winning essay the question of the influence of l'habitude on the faculty of thought. But what is noteworthy in Stendhal's work is the emphasis of the effect of habitude on the emotions, and its interaction with other aspects of character, such as modesty, vanity, pride and courage, whereas Maine de Biran's prize winning essay, in accordance with the question posed by the Institute, focused on the faculty of thought. Without dwelling on the inner workings of habitude, then, Stendhal assumed an important expansion of its domain. In that manner, Stendhal served as a significant precursor to Proust, who did analyze very deeply the workings of habitude in the emotional context, as well as in the aesthetic one.

C. RAVAISSON

Although Maine de Biran's judgments and imprecations regarding the effect of habitude on human happiness and progress lasted all through the century and beyond, if one had to choose one work on habitude which appeared to dominate the subject in the 19th century, it would more likely be De L'Habitude, by Félix Ravaisson, than Maine de Biran's essay (to which Ravaisson continuously admitted his debt). Ravaisson's work, published as a doctoral dissertation in 1838 (when Ravaisson was only 25 years old), was much acclaimed from the time of its publication to the end of the century and beyond.⁶⁹ The book was very recently (1997) republished.

De l'Habitude is a dense philosophical work which covers considerable ground in explaining the workings of the human organism. The organization of the book is not tight, and various subjects are broached and then left, to be revisited later, or not. The work itself illustrates how psychology and philosophy were considered the same discipline, as, in its broadest aspect, De l'Habitude could be considered a treatise on the nature of man, and, in a narrower perspective, on how people function. At times, the author will state various principles as "laws," with no particular proofs, except as may be assumed from scientific or other consensus. Examples of these laws, which play into the argument, are the law of inertia; the domination of spontaneity, defined as the initiation of movement, over receptivity; the intermittent nature of movement in animal life; and

⁶⁹ The thesis was republished in 1894 in the Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale (Tome 2, p. 1) with an editors' note that said: "We reprint here a doctoral thesis which was submitted to the Sorbonne in December 1838 and which has become a classic. Out of print for a long time at bookstores, difficult to find even in public libraries, it has nevertheless remained as original today as on its first day of publication 50 years ago. We reprint this magnificent work here to respond to the general wishes of young philosophers, and we particularly thank the author for his permission to do so." Ravaisson was trained in philosophy, and considered an expert on Aristotle. He held important positions in the government in the ministry of education and in the Bibliotheque nationale, and was requested, in connection with the exposition of 1867, to write a report on the state of philosophy in France in the 19th century. The report is discussed below.

the necessity of time for consciousness to exist. Thus the method of ratiocination is entirely different from that of Maine de Biran. While logic and observation are not ignored, neither do they set the limits of the discourse. Rather, there is an appeal for a spontaneous recognition on the part of the reader, which relies perhaps for validation in the desire for whole systems of thought, or concepts that are framed in imagery.

The particular focus of the book is reflected in its title: the dissertation defines *habitude*, describes how it originates, and then, in detail, how it operates. Finally, it draws very broad conclusions from these descriptions. There are neither case studies nor discussions of particular applications of the generalizations that furnish the text, and, in fact, there are very few concrete examples of *habitude*. The author clearly intended to furnish a global explanation of particular processes of the mind and of the body—an explanation which admits of no exceptions and which therefore responds to the philosophical inquiry on the nature of man.

There are several key terms or qualities which are utilized in this descriptive process. They are not so much defined as described in relation to each other. That is, in most cases Ravaisson appeared to assume that these terms would be understood in their common usage and then sought to explain their relationship to each other. Often this explanation is dependent on spatial relationships. The argument regarding *habitude* has continuous reference to these qualities and relationships, although not all of the discussion regarding the interaction of these qualities would be necessary to support the principal thesis of the book which explores the operation of *habitude* and the implications regarding human nature which may be derived from those operations. Since so much of the treatise is devoted to qualities, and they play into the argument perhaps more by

flavor than by logic, we give a short summary of these terms and qualities, and their relationships.

Two of the most important terms or qualities are Nature and Consciousness, which are said to be opposites. They are posed in a hierarchical relationship, with Nature being on the bottom, and Consciousness on top. Inside Consciousness are Intelligence, Will, Power, Effort, Resistance, Action, and Passion,⁷⁰ (but the latter is in an obscure, not distinct, form). Habitude is also in Consciousness, although, as will be seen, it eventually comes close to Nature. Other important terms are Personality, Perception, Sensation, and Freedom.

Among the more common spatial images-as-explanations is a kind of rounded belt-like form, in which opposites meet at their most extremes, and sometimes encircle other qualities, or meet at a place where another quality establishes their “common limits.” Yet were the belt not attached, each of these qualities would be at the opposite pole of the other. Thus Effort is the place which is the common limit of both Action and Passion, and also of Perception and Sensation. When Action and Passion meet, that is, at their highest levels, Consciousness disappears, and there is no manifestation of Personality. Effort is defined as an activity of the Will, which, when exercised, manifests Personality; it produces movement when Power exceeds Resistance. Habitude is the common limit where Nature and Will meet, but it is a limit which is always

⁷⁰ The translation of the French “*passion*” into the English “passion” is not adequate, and the same may be said as well to a lesser degree for some of the other terms, as the elements of mind and thought are conceived of differently. Ravaisson also frequently uses terms like “*sensation*” “*sentiment*” “*désir*” “*affectivité*”, to refer to states other than that referred to by “*passion*,” so English equivalents for “passion” are not easily come by. I take his meaning of “passion” to refer to the affective sensibilities in the broadest sense.

moving. Understanding and Will also meet at their outer limits, and in between there is movement. Another spatial image used as explanation is the pure horizontal. Examples of this are Intelligence which leads to Thought; Will which leads to Desire or Love; and Will which also leads to Freedom.

The most important spatial images are vertical and clearly hierarchical and play a critical part in the explanation of habitude, which in turn plays a critical part in the explanation of fundamental human nature. Several hierarchical images contrast the thinking functions with the non-thinking ones, such as Instinct or Nature, which are at the bottom; and then, in ascending order, Consciousness, Understanding, Will, and Freedom. Parts of this ascension are described by Ravaisson as a “spiral.”⁷¹ Other hierarchical or vertical images are the following: life is said to be superior to inorganic existence, and particularly, animal life is higher than plant life. Perception is higher than Sensation. Certain senses are higher than others, because closer to perception than sensation. Thus sight or voice would rank higher than touch. With these images and relationships in mind, one can better explore Ravaisson’s thesis regarding the origin, operation, and implications of habitude.

Habitude is defined in two ways: it is both a state of being of a living being, and a disposition in that being. It can not exist in anything inorganic, in which change, when it takes place, is mechanical, or physical, or chemical, and hence immediate.⁷² Every

⁷¹As there is much repetition in the work, and the thoughts are not laid out schematically, the images are shifting. Thus sometimes the same terms are used in both hierarchical and circular images, with qualities said to be interwoven at their limits.

⁷²This restriction is important; it was not universally accepted either before Ravaisson’s work, or after. Thus Malebranche (*Recherche de la vérité*, 1674-1675) is cited (Beaufret 88) as defining habitude as a simple phenomenon of inertia, applicable to both organic and non-organic material, with the specific example being a folded paper which keeps its fold. After Ravaisson, Léon Dumont specifically took issue

living being, no matter how simple its form, has a nature, and it tends to persist in that nature. That is a fundamental law. But when there is a change which is either continuous or repeated over time (the two terms in boldface are used throughout Ravaisson's dissertation to describe the origins of habitude), that change modifies both the nature of the being and its disposition. This is the origin and the definition of habitude. The stated preconditions to its operation, hence, are permanence, change, nature, space, and time.

There are two types of habitude, which sometimes function in diametrically opposite ways, and sometimes function according to the same laws. The first type is associated with a state of passivity of the subject, and the second with a state of activity of the subject. Ravaisson makes the distinction in those terms, and also in terms in which the stimulus from change comes from outside the body as distinguished from inside the body. The passive mode occurs when the change comes from outside the living being, and the person is less altered when changes come from outside him or her self than when he or she is the author of the changes. In a passive case of habitude, there is a gradual decrease in receptivity of the body, and the impressions coming from outside appear to lose their force. Broad examples of this category involve smell, noise, heat, cold, colors, and sounds, as well as pleasure and pain (but not all pain) induced by sensations. Feelings associated with these passive experiences likewise become diminished. But, at the same time, the need for the continuation of these newer sensations increases. This discussion closely parallels that of Maine de Biran.

with Ravaisson's reservation, claiming that habitude was also a property of inorganic matter, and using the same example of a folded piece of paper. (Dumont 321).

Ravaisson speculates on what could cause the gradual decrease in force and receptivity. He notes that one sees no change to the limbs or other organs of the body, but he says that nevertheless there must be some physical change. He believes that a center in the body serves to limit the effect of the change. That center must operate independently of other bodily processes, and it must regulate the connection between the stimulus and the reaction. By its own means, it must measure and dispense energy. It is in this center that the subject must have the very beginnings of consciousness, as it is only in consciousness that habitude could commence to function. An automatic spontaneity then penetrates and establishes itself in the passive regions of the subject, effectively creating habitude, and working outside of the regions where will, personality, and consciousness exist. This speculation as to cause is very different from Maine de Biran's hypothesis, which supposed no particular center, but a kind of automatic readjustment of all other organs once one organ was changed, so as to reestablish the equilibrium to which the body was habituated.

Activity, that is, movement, which is repeated or prolonged also creates habitude. Once created, its effect is to render the movement gradually easier to perform, more rapid and more assured. When perception is tied to movement which is repeated or prolonged, perception also becomes clearer, more certain, and faster. In these active cases of habitude, the effort necessary to produce the movement diminishes. Again, these observations follow those of Maine de Biran, and others. Unlike Maine de Biran, however, Ravaisson finds that with active habitude, unlike with passive habitude, pleasure and other feelings associated with activity do not decrease, but increase with continuity or repetition. When the action is prolonged and repeated, it becomes a

tendency or an inclination which no longer needs the direction of will or consciousness. The most common example given of active habitude is a pianist's increased facility which comes from practicing.

Ravaisson also speculates about how the changes wrought by activity come about. He believes that there must be a secret activity in the movement itself which burrows deeper and deeper into the organism, and becomes more and more concentrated therein, as it lowers obstacles to change. The tendency thus becomes more obscure, and more automatic. After a while, its privation becomes impossible to bear.

Ravaisson does not confine the workings of active habitude only to the physical sphere. Rather, he says that active habitude plays a part in moral and intellectual activity as well. When moral acts are accomplished, there is developed within the soul the inclination or tendency to repeat them. As with physical movement, this increases the pleasure of the action. Thus virtue, which is at first an effort, gradually becomes an attraction, and then a pleasure. It forms a "second nature."⁷³

Similarly, intellectual activity creates habitudes, but here Ravaisson is careful to say that this is true in both the active and passive modes. Thus sometimes understanding is activity and sometimes it is passivity. When it is passive perception which is prolonged or repeated, the thoughts become unmarked and unconscious. But when the

⁷³The phrase is ascribed by Ravaisson to Aristotle, and is quoted almost ubiquitously in discussions of habitude. Its source might instead be St. Thomas Aquinas, who, in *Summa Theologica* (811), said: "As stated in *Ethic*. vii. 10, a habit is like a second nature, and yet it falls short of it. And so it is that while the nature of a thing cannot in any way be taken away from a thing, a habit is removed, though with difficulty." The passage in Aristotle to which St. Thomas cites emphasizes equally or perhaps even more that "falling short" quality. Thus the Aristotelian text cited by St. Thomas, *Nichomean Ethics*, Bk. VII, Ch. 10 (*Introduction to Aristotle* Ed. Richard McKeon, at 463) is translated as follows: "...for it is easier to change a habit than to change one's nature; even habit is hard to change just because it is like nature, as Evenus says: 'I say that habit's but long practice, friend,/ And this becomes men's nature in the end.'" See also discussion above in Chapter IV "The Canonical Forebears, Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas."

understanding or imagination is exercised, as when the understanding synthesizes ideas and images, the process becomes easier, faster, assured, and more precise, and creates a tendency which is independent of the will.

There are other times in which passive and active habitude operate by the same methods. In both cases, automatic spontaneity is created (the definition of spontaneity being the initiation of movement) which penetrates and establishes itself outside or under the realm of will, personality, and consciousness. There must be a physical change in both instances, Ravaisson believes, although anatomy does not show it.

But even if a physical change takes place inside the person, which explains the effects of both passive and active habitude, still, Ravaisson points out, this would explain only the changes in the state of being of the subject. It would not explain the changes that have created the tendency or inclination toward the changed state. Ravaisson sees the fundamental question as: how does the tendency and inclination grow, while the will and consciousness diminish? It is his answer to that question that provides the large philosophical dimension to his work, as it hypothesizes broadly on the nature of man. In that hypothesis, habitude plays the central role. Ravaisson's hypothesis follows.

Habitude is more than an idea, it is something that has substance. While habitudes are first formed by the intelligence, they then become diffused into other organs in which inclinations are created. These inclinations take the place of will. In that respect, habitude becomes more and more like instinct, which also does not operate out of will or consciousness. Thus after a time, the difference between habitude and instinct is one of degree only, and might be reduced to zero. While habitude exists in the intelligence, it is in an obscure intelligence, in which subject and object, real and ideal,

being and thought, are all intermingled together. In what is perhaps Ravaisson's most poetic image (91):

But from the depths which seem to be forbidden, from the last and fading rays of consciousness, to the deepest part of nature, it [habitude] pulls those rays which shed light on the mystery of identifying the ideal and the real, the thing and the thought, and all the opposites which understanding separates, interwoven in an inexplicable act of the intellect and of desire.

Ravaisson says that we do not know how spontaneity is created, but in some manner power does win over resistance, thereby creating movement. That generative process appears to come from within itself, through nature or instinct. When, however, movement is voluntary, its origin and source is in desire. As consciousness and will diminish, the subject approaches the state of nature, so that the last degree of habitude appears to be indistinguishable from the state of nature. When the unity of cerebral process is not involved, there is more and more diffusion of life down to multitudinous independent centers: "In man, habitude progresses by leading consciousness, through a gradual, uninterrupted lessening, from will to instinct, and from the finished unity of the personality to the extreme diffusion of impersonality" (94). In the last stage, thinking and memory disappear. This is not the same as instinct, which never was subjected to such a process. Instinct always lay outside imagination and understanding. But habitude accomplishes this degrading process by imperceptible gradations, by making understanding and will disappear. Thus habitude moves in the opposite of a hierarchical direction. It starts in consciousness and understanding, which is freedom, and descends down to instinct: "It is this spiral which habitude redescends, and thus it is habitude

which teaches us about its origin and generation” (111). This descent is in opposition to the hierarchy of nature, in which inorganic matter occupies the lowest rank, and the spiral ascends to consciousness and then to liberty of thought. “The history of Habitude mirrors the return of Liberty to Nature, or rather the invasion of the domain of liberty by natural spontaneity” (111).

Jean Beaufret interprets Ravaisson’s explanation of l’habitude as ultimately religious and Christian:

The progress of habitude as a lowering or descent from the superior to the inferior doesn’t clarify only the dependence we have on automatic reflexes in respect of consciousness: it is the very mystery of creation that it illuminates. Each time that we adopt an habitude, we renew, as much as it is possible for man to do, something of the gesture of God when he engendered the world: it is creation which recommences! (Beaufret 25).

Beaufret analogizes the process of Ravaisson’s descent of habitude, that is the descent of consciousness and hence liberty toward nature, to the religious concept of the mind or spirit being made flesh. (25). Similarly, Frédéric De Towarnicki, who wrote the avant-propos to the 1997 edition of De l’Habitude, said that Ravaisson treated habitude as not only a psycho-physiological phenomenon, but also a metaphysical and ontological one that reaches to the very enigma of creation (10-11). Another way to put the same thought, perhaps, is that Ravaisson, unlike Maine de Biran, was looking for first causes, for an understanding of that which so separates man from everything that surrounds him that he represents a wholly different order, one that is not comparable to other things or

species and not entirely explicable. For Maine de Biran, neither mystery nor distinctive essences were necessary, either as hypotheses or as conclusions.

When philosophical learning regarding habitude was studied and disseminated later in the century, Ravaisson is sometimes cited as the follower and developer of the theories of Maine de Biran. But serious reflection reveals that this is not at all the case. The most important aspects of Maine de Biran's study stand in total contradiction to those of Ravaisson. Certainly Ravaisson utilized the observations of Maine de Biran regarding the human being's responses to repetition, but Ravaisson's analysis and objectives could not be more different than those of his Cartesian predecessor. Ravaisson sought the Answer, Systems, all of those big words which seek to unify phenomena with some philosophers' preconceptions that there is a Plan, and each piece of knowledge is part of it, and a way to discover the Whole. This idealistic view is not to be found in Maine de Biran, whose methodology is strictly materialist. Secondly, totally missing from Ravaisson is Maine de Biran's value system: reverence for truth; horror of superstition and ignorance; and moral judgments regarding the effects of habitude on our lives. Evidently, if habitude is part of the (impliedly) Divine Plan, such judgments would be superfluous, if not impious.

In addition to his thesis on habitude, Félix Ravaisson was well known for the work he produced on the status of 19th century philosophy in France—a work published in 1867 and commissioned on the occasion of the Universal Exposition held that year. In that work, he resumed not only French philosophers, but English ones as well, focusing on psychological theories, and especially the association of ideas and the relationship between ideas and memory, which he saw as fundamental to an understanding of the

workings of intelligence. In referring to his own work, he said that the author of a work on habitude submitted to the Faculty of Letters in 1838 explained habitude by the natural inclination to repeat, to imitate, an inclination that comes down to “tendencies” (La Philosophie en France 174), to the fact that everything which exists tries to keep doing that which is its fundamental self. He contrasted his own theory with that of Antoine Gratacap, whose book, Théorie de la Mémoire, published in 1865, tried to show that either memory, or the association of ideas—concepts which are almost identical—find their explanation in habitude. The latter, Gratacap said, leave “traces” which stay in the brain, which come from impressions from the outside world, or from continuous movements (Ravaisson 175). Ravaisson quotes Gratacap as follows: “When the thinking principal exercises itself spontaneously, it forms, by its own action, a propensity to act again: that is active habitude, and this habitude is exactly memory” (Ravaisson 175).

Ravaisson resumed the first half of 19th century philosophical thought into three schools: *organicisme*, *vitalisme*, and *animisme* (180-81)—schools that might otherwise be called materialist, spiritualist, and idealist. He plainly allied himself with the second, which believed that the world exists independently of our minds (thus distinguishing itself from the idealist) but that there is a fundamental distinction between matter and consciousness (thus distinguishing itself from the materialist). In that spirit, he criticized some of his contemporaries, notably Paul Janet, a materialist, who also wrote on habitude, and Auguste Comte.

Ravaisson noted a very interesting development, which was the idea that habitudes play another role, namely that they become part of the basic human identity because transmitted through heredity. He cites Spencer, Darwin, and Lamarck for that

proposition, but also notes that it was adopted by French philosophers, namely Lucas, Roulin, and Quatrefages. In fact, looking backwards at the 19th and early 20th century writings on habitude, one can discern that this offshoot of the study of habitude became one of the following three points of concentration, which are not mutually exclusive, nor are they clearly distinguishable, but they do serve as benchmarks for focusing one's own attention. Thus first, one could classify Maine de Biran's approach as primarily psychological, focusing on how people act and think, and why, with an emphasis on physiology, observation, experimentation, and introspection. Second would be a more philosophical or abstract approach, like Ravaisson's own, which concentrated on issues such as whether memory is physical or immaterial, whether inertia is a law of life which permeates the immaterial as well as the physical, whether memory is a derivative of habitude or the reverse. The third offshoot of the study of habitude would be an interest in its relationship to communal and social life, which includes the survival of the species and natural selection, a topic that for well-known reasons became more prominent in the second half of the 19th century.

D. FOUILLÉE

In 1885, Alfred Fouillée published an article in La Revue des deux mondes entitled "Memory and the Recognition of Memories" ("*La Mémoire et la reconnaissance des souvenirs*") which offered a theoretical explanation for the phenomenon of memory. The article is important in the context of our discussion on habitude for three reasons. First, Fouillée was the mentor of Alphonse Darlu who was Proust's philosophy professor at the Lycée Condorcet and who was greatly admired by Proust. (Bonnet 191-94). Citing this very article, Elizabeth Jackson stresses the Proust-Darlu-Fouillée connection, and the

similarity of some of the positions adopted by Fouillée and by Proust on the hotly debated philosophical/psychological issues of the times (237-38). Second, the philosophical discussion of Fouillée takes the theories of Maine de Biran and of Ravaisson to a different place, tying *habitude* into memory in such a way as to link past and future in the momentary experience of thought. The relationship between this connection and the experience of involuntary memory in À la recherche du temps perdu leaps to mind. Third, and even more significantly for our purposes, Fouillée's explanation of the role of *habitude* and memory and the recognition of memory stressed the overriding importance of the emotion that is associated with the acts, events, or sensations which become memories and sometimes *habitudes*.

The article states that the problem it will address is how a person knows that a thought in his mind relates to a past experience, rather than a present one. Fouillée says that philosophers in general divide on this issue in terms of those who believe that consciousness is only another dimension of matter (the mechanists or materialists), and those who believe that there is such a thing as pure mind (the idealists or spiritualists). He cites Ribot as an example of the former, and Leibniz as an example of the latter. Fouillée, however, claims to reject both positions, although in our judgment his position is a version of the materialist orientation.

First, Fouillée says that any sensation, including memory, is necessarily accompanied by movement, which means energy. Thus, he maintains that all our sensations classify themselves spontaneously, in terms of the force of our reaction to that sensation. Another, spontaneous reaction that we have, says Fouillée, is the projection of the reaction in terms of time—past, present, or future. He agrees with Ribot that memory

is a “true hallucination” (138), an interior illusion which responds to exterior reality, by casting a sensation back into a prior time. We are born, says Fouillée, with a natural aptitude to distinguish memories from perceptions, and to locate memories in time.⁷⁴

But the question still remains as to how this distinction takes place in the mind. Confusion has occurred, says Fouillée, because of the concept of the English school, and especially M. Spencer, that denies the possibility of simultaneous sensations and thoughts. Fouillée ties together memory, force, and time: an experience connects to our sensations, our feelings, and our motivations, and this is what gives it a force, and because it has a force, it necessarily locates itself in time--again either past, present or future. He gives as an example the pleasurable memory of having eaten, which is associated with sensations, and can be experienced one way for the present, that is, creating hunger, and a different way for the future, that is, forecasting pleasure. It is the degree of force of an idea which allows us to locate it in time, and all of those functions occur simultaneously. Throughout the essay, he criticizes the “English school” for denying that consciousness holds more than one thought at the same time, saying that the proposition itself denies the possibility of memory which recognizes itself as such.

Our ability to remember, whose source is hereditary, is put in motion by appetite, which has the large meaning of everything we desire:

⁷⁴ Exactly how we make the distinction between present experience and memories is still a subject of intense scientific/philosophical interest. Thus in a recent article in the New York Review of Books reviewing eight books (including Bergson’s Creative Evolution (1908) as well as Koch’s The Quest for Consciousness (2003)), the neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks says that “...a dynamic, flowing consciousness allows, at the lowest level, a continuous, active...looking...[and] at a higher level, the interaction of perception and memory, of present and past” (44). The “how” is still under investigation. Interestingly, in this article, which reviewed scientific progress and theories, the author ends with the statement: “Finally, then, we come around to Proust’s image ... that we consist entirely of ‘a collection of moments,’ even though these flow into one another like Borges’s river” (44).

Only time is the essential form of memory, and memory, being in the last analysis the consciousness of appetites, of effort, of motivating will, is as fundamental as life itself, because life is only an appetite tending to its own satisfaction by a series of degrees and moments (146).

Recognition itself is a harmony composed of a dominant note, which is the current image of complimentary but weaker notes, which are like echoes, and with a continuous pedal which forms its fundamental base. This pedal is appetite, that is to say life which tends to persevere in the pleasure of living (156).

Fouillée also defines effort as appetite, saying that true primordial and continuous consciousness is the sensation of appetite: to live is to want, and to want is to live. Effort is something which is derived from appetite.

But we not only remember, we also know when something we experience in the present is the same, or similar, to something we have experienced in the past; we have the sensation of familiarity. Familiarity, says Fouillée, is explained by the phenomenon of *habitude*. Following perfectly the well-traveled exposition of Maine de Biran, he says that *habitude* creates a lessening of resistance and effort—our actions seem to “run in a bed which has already been made” (148).

We believe that the most important and perhaps original contribution which Fouillée makes to the theory of *habitude* is his stress on the immediate nexus between *habitude* and the emotion associated with the *habitude*. Thus Fouillée says that it is *habitude*, either in a state of being born, or sometimes when it is more or less finished, which reveals itself in our consciousness by a particular feeling, and this particular

feeling is the basis of recognition. But Fouillée also recognizes the other function of *habitude*: an adaptation to one's surroundings, which he says is an attribute of the great law of universal selection. The adaptation, he says, is of power to resistance, of activity to its object: "To recognize is therefore before anything else to have a consciousness of acting with the least resistance" (149). In order for *habitude* to become conscious of itself, it is necessary that we perceive at the same time the difference and the similarity of the new and the old, the unusual and the familiar. To remember is therefore to seize at one and the same time differences and similarity, their relationship, and to compare them.

Fouillée appears to assume that *habitude* is always conscious of itself, which is clearly not the case. Indeed, one can compare in Proust's work the occasions that *habitude* made itself felt, which were almost invariably when it was being broken (as in the very first incident with the new lampshade, although it is not at all clear that the narrator as a child was aware that the pain he was feeling was the result of a breach of his *habitudes*), and the times when the force of *habitude* was not in the consciousness of the actor (as in Swann's relationship with Odette). But perhaps it is possible to read Fouillée as saying only that when *habitude* becomes conscious of itself, it creates memory, by necessarily projecting a consciousness of past and present, of their similarities and differences.

According to Fouillée, feelings of similarity and difference exist at one and the same time, and each has a force and a resistance to that force. Specifically rejecting the ideas of MM. Ravaisson and Ferri, he says that it is not necessary to have "pure mind" (152) or a purely intellectual act to make a comparison of the past and the present. Rather, that recognition happens by the repetition wherein various sensations are

disengaged from their circumstances and are fixed in memory. It is first the feeling, and then the reaction to that feeling, that enables us to recognize the resemblances between memory and perception. We see, at the same time, by a current image and by a feeble image which are similar in quality but different in intensity that which is present and that which is past; memory superimposes those two images. Recognition of memory, therefore, is a “game of interior optics” (153) which is, however, subject to illusions and illness.

Always Fouillée stresses sensation, which is inseparable from movement, hence from effort and resistance, as the basis of the recognition of memory. He says that it is not necessary to accept pure mind, as do the metaphysicians, nor totally mechanistic theories, as do the physiologists, to explain recognition as both the conservation and the reproduction of ideas. In memory, as in everything else, it is sensation which is the irreducible element. Two aspects of sensation, one which is mechanical, and the other which is mental, are invariably inseparable: both are there from the beginning. In psychology, the real elementary memory is sensation, inseparable from movement.

Fouillée’s description of the creation of memory fits exactly into the theories of Maine de Biran as to how *habitude* is created—a process which he acknowledges, without acknowledging its author. Thus he resumes the major theses of his own article by stating that, at the beginning, from the very first moment, there is some type of emotion, either strong or weak, which provokes an effort of movement. That movement, he says, mechanically creates a canal in the cerebral mass, resistance is diminished, and with resistance comes the emotion, pleasant or painful. Then, while the path is opened, consciousness feels almost nothing more than the banks of the bed by which the current

of nerve runs. Fibers establish relations between diverse cells, and intelligence must rely upon those organs of fibers. Soon, to the extent that the brain organizes itself, the path becomes easier and faster. There results a progressive lessening of effort and of the contrasts which it brings along with it, consequently of sensibility and of distinct consciousness. The currents of nerves expand without stopping, from one fiber to another, like the back-water of a torrent: “By the effect of habitude, very easy associations establish themselves between reflex movements that the first one started and which brought with it all the others. That is what happens in walking and in the automatic movements of the musician” (159). What we have here, then, is an embellishment of the ideas and descriptions of Maine de Biran. Fouillée has placed, in nerves and fibers, the connections within the body which habitude makes, and also, more significantly, has stressed the emotional association with the original action as the source of the relative force of the memory, such force being determined by our resistance, which is an interior movement.

The emotions we feel result from appetite, which is the primary mover, inseparable from the condition of being alive. From this movement evolves intellectual memory, which renews ideas without renewing the emotions and efforts which created the memories. Fouillée then groups habitude with instinct, describing them both as purely mechanical movements, created little by little by sensibility, by intelligence, and by will, in order to finish without effort the work that would otherwise have demanded effort. (The definition fits habitude well, but it is a curious description of instinct.) Fouillée says that habitude works in this manner because of the “law of economy” (160) by which we are fashioned to produce the greatest pleasure from the least effort.

We see here references to fundamental Darwinian concepts, and indeed Fouillée makes reference to “natural selection” (160) in this context and ends his article with the acknowledgment, common at the time as has been noted, of the transmission of habitude by heredity:

By acquired or hereditary habitude, the mechanical processes become more and more unconscious and finish by being purely mechanical movements; that is what happens, for example, with a pianist whose fingers function with the precision of an instrument. But does it follow that the results of these operations escape his consciousness? To the contrary...in memory, what is important is the power to bring back to the eyes of consciousness a world which has disappeared, not the natural or artificial technical means by which these ideas are conserved and associated (162).

As ideas about habitude are explored and developed, one can trace a shifting of emphasis throughout the 19th century, from man’s intellectual and reasoning functions (Maine de Biran) to his spiritual nature and origins (Ravaisson) and then further to his capacity for feeling and emotion (Fouillée). But the underlying issues regarding habitude remained unresolved, in the sense that disagreement as to basic human nature and functioning persisted, and the debates continued to rage. One finds, for example, in 1901 an article by Marcel Mauxion in the Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger, “The Real Affective Memory” (“*La vraie mémoire affective*”) wherein the author attempts to answer the question as to whether such memories can really exist, and says categorically no and categorically yes in less than 12 pages. Clearly, the issues are not

easy. How feelings, memories, time and habitudes act and react upon each other and within us were the burning psychological/philosophical issues at the turn of the 20th century. Habitude did not arrive chez Proust unencumbered.

E. BOUTROUX, JANET, BERGSON, PARODI, DUMONT, LEMOINE, RIGNANO

The various theories offered regarding memory, sensation, and habitude are analogous to, or perhaps reflective of, a general division in French philosophy in the latter half of the 19th century, at least as observed by the philosopher Émile Boutroux, who determined to write a sequel to Ravaisson's work which had resumed French philosophy up to 1867. Thus in an essay called, appropriately, La Philosophie en France depuis 1867, and published originally in 1908, Boutroux states that there was a marked change in the second half of the century, in the respect that philosophy, which had conceived of itself as unitary, spawned a multitude of positive sciences which involved research into specific fields, especially psychology and sociology (142). Moreover, each one of these sciences tended to present itself not as a branch of philosophy, but as itself a universal philosophy, one capable of resolving all problems (143). Boutroux's divisions fall into metaphysics, in which he would place Ravaisson; psychology, which was tending then to focus on all the various levels of consciousness; and sociology, launched by the work of Émile Durkheim.⁷⁵

As one reads the various essays, books, and especially the textbooks published in the second half of the 19th and of the very early 20th centuries, one is struck by the

⁷⁵ Carter writes (140) that in 1892-93, Proust's "heroes in real life remained his philosophy teachers, Darlu from the lycée and Émile Boutroux, a distinguished philosopher of science with whom he studied at the Sorbonne." In Sodom and Gomorrah (Vol. IV S&G 520-21; SG 152), at the Verdurin's dinner party, a "Norwegian philosopher" relates a presumably fictional conversation between Boutroux and Bergson.

extremely prominent place that *habitude* occupies in all discussions, whatever the author's point of view or field of concentration. The debate between the materialist and the spiritualist positions regarding the nature of thought or consciousness persisted prominently, and the phenomenon of *habitude* continued to play an important role in those discussions. For example, in a book published in 1897 reflecting lessons given to the faculty of letters in Paris from 1888 to 1894, the philosopher Paul Janet (who held the chair in Philosophy at the Sorbonne) considered at length how and why our "will" becomes activated. Do ideas come spontaneously into our minds and activate our will, or does it happen in the reverse order? If one is talking only about physiological sensations, one can define the order of movement. But doing so for thought processes is not so evident. The author concludes that the will is the middle state between the idea and the act (36) but this still does not solve the problem of the origin of the idea, or of the will. Janet cites Maine de Biran for the proposition that *habitude* is the originating factor:

At first movement was produced only in response to external stimuli, but then, by virtue of the laws of *habitude*, which are well known, on the one hand external impressions become less active, while on the other hand repetition makes them easier. The central nervous system is the distributor of movement, and at first acts only under the influence of external stimuli, but then it appropriates little by little some *habitudes*: 'it becomes capable of spontaneously creating actions, by virtue of the law of *habitude* which makes a living organ tend to *repeat by itself* movements to which an extraneous cause first incited them' (36-37; italics in original).

Janet does not find this formulation altogether satisfactory, as it does not explain how spontaneity actually causes will, only that it precedes it (37-39). He hypothesizes that there may be two wills, a voluntary one and an involuntary one (“*la volonté volontaire*” and “*la volonté involontaire*”), and suggests that only the first is real will, and the second may be *habitude* (40). Philosophers such as Gaultier avoided this kind of analysis by taking a spiritualist position, as had been developed further by Henri Bergson, who dominated French metaphysical thought at the turn of the century, namely that the products of the mind are entirely different from anything that has material or physical properties, and can not be spoken of in those terms. Bergson, in *Matière et Mémoire*, published in 1896, placed *habitude* in the category of memory, but only of an inferior quality. Thus lessons which are in memory but have been learned by rote are no more than *habitudes*: “Like all habitual bodily exercises, [the lesson] is stored in a mechanism which weakens its initial impetus, in a closed system of automatic movement, in which the same order is repeated and the same time observed” (*Matière et mémoire* 84). According to Bergson, *habitude* is a memory which is stored in the past, but the other type of memory, pure memory, is entirely different; it is stored in the present, it tends toward movement, and looks to the future (*Matière et mémoire* 86). In a book published in 1919 on contemporary philosophy, and looking back at these turn of the century authors, Dominique Parodi says that perhaps Janet and Bergson were not so far apart as it seemed then, as perhaps there is a “common conclusion” that emerges from both Janet and Bergson:

The common conclusion that comes forth is that underneath clear consciousness, but distinct from the domain of mechanistic activity, are

diverse zones of psychological life, more or less deep and existing on top of each other; they are like great abysses of which we have no suspicion; from there emerge the sources of our feelings and our desires, our inspirations and our wishes; these are different *levels* of interior life, spilling over in strange ways into the small region of clear consciousness and of the unified personality: and all of that is very Bergsonian (100; italics in original).

Other philosophers are not so easily incorporated into a Bergsonian outlook. Léon Dumont, for example, published a very long essay, “De L’Habitude,” in 1876, in the very first issue of the Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger, in which he said that habitude applies to the inorganic as well as to the organic worlds; that habitude is not a particular function of behavior which is other than consciousness, that the brain is not the only origin for activity, and consequently that habitude can reside in organs other than the mind (329, 349). Dumont saw almost all mental activity as stemming from habitude, and he saw habitude as easily created—it takes only one act to lay the germ of habitude, according to Dumont (334). Dumont stated that it was then generally accepted that memory is founded on habitude (346). Dumont cited and relied on Condillac and Maine de Biran, and “adapted” their theories to Darwin and Lamarck, believing that the struggle for survival was replayed in the struggle among habitudes, as new ones sought to replace old ones (364). Turning to the “moral” issues, that is, whether habitude is more a force for good or for evil, Dumont’s emphasis is perhaps more sociological than abstractly principled. He noted that poor customs are habitudes, and can lead to a decline in a people or civilization (365). As public opinion conforms to the habitudes of a

majority of people, it is blind to the destruction that may be caused by such habitudes, and tends to blame for its problems that which is rare or accidental, rather than that which is basic and repeated (365). It is habitudes, said Dumont, which make exceedingly difficult any large changes in society. (365).

The study of Albert Lemoine, L'habitude et l'instinct, published in 1875, a year earlier than Dumont's treatise (and a year after the author's death), is often cited; yet, despite such references, and despite the prominence of its author, a well respected member of the academy of sciences, the essay's principal thesis seems to have been neglected, or at the least shortchanged, in later discourses on habitude. Lemoine's point of view was very much at odds with Ravaisson's, and with that of the materialists as well; while not expressly Christian or religious; it took strong issue with the position that free will and moral choice were inhibited by the phenomenon of habitude.

Lemoine underscored, as did all writers on the subject, the vast sweep of habitude; contrary to Dumont's position, however, Lemoine said that habitude had no impact on inorganic matter because movement was the key to its creation (9-11). But once there is movement, in plants as well as in animals, but especially in man, habitude takes over—but so does free will. Man:

...doesn't move a limb, doesn't accomplish one act of reason or of will that habitude has no part in, although the movement may seem purely instinctive, it is habitude that plays a part in the reflected judgment, in the free decision.

With man, habitude plays so big a role that his most impressive faculties, like his most humble powers, would be useless, and human life

would not be possible, man could not exist, if habitude did not add and supplement nature (15).

Lemoine refuses to take a position on where, exactly, habitude resides, whether in the organs, or in the nervous system, or in immaterial thoughts (38). He says that: "...there is no need to imagine, as do the Cartesians, that the brain keeps the furrow through which the minds of animals, running for the first time, provoke a present idea or sensation ..." (40). Memory allows us to distinguish past, present, and future, and habitude causes us to associate memories with each other (35-38). While time abolishes ideas, as it does all other phenomena, the mind and the habitude that it has acquired remain:

Habitude is thus not the same as memory, but one can say that memory is composed of two things, of habitude and of recognition, or of reminiscence and of particular souvenirs. By reminiscence, habitude brings back the past and makes it live in the present; by recognition, on the contrary, souvenirs make the present age and turn it towards the past (40).

But Lemoine says expressly that the most important issue in any discussion of habitude is its relationship to will, because this poses the basic problems for morality and metaphysics (47). Lemoine argues forcefully that free will does not disappear by virtue of the mechanism of habitude. While habitudes may result from a person's milieu and circumstances, and his will may be thereby diminished, it is not obliterated. This conclusion is supported first by "common sense" (64) as well as by the law, which holds people accountable for their choices (64-65). But Lemoine bases his conclusion fundamentally on the argument that each repetition of an action, although made easier by habitude, nevertheless always requires movement, and hence an act of will (67-72).

Lemoine expressly disagrees with Leibniz whom he says excludes the operations of free will based upon the functioning of habitude (72):

Habitude is thus not a fatal power, in which the will that created it is annihilated; on the contrary, it is the will itself which is perpetuated through successive moments of time, which gives to the free spirit increasing strength, linking all of its passing acts to one steady cause, and giving it in advance the control of the future. Virtue is thus not the abolition of the will in an unstoppable rapture; it is the perpetuity of good will (74).

Thus it should come as no surprise that, along with Pascal, although for different stated reasons, Lemoine celebrates the beneficent effects of habitude, and minimizes its drawbacks. He notes that habitude is often stigmatized because it draws people into routines which usurp the place of reason and will. But habitude should rather be regarded as the mechanism of progress, which allows us to perfect life; when one condemns habitude, it is really weakness or laziness of the mind and the will that is at fault: “There is nothing in the nature of habitude or in its laws that can be a cause of retrenchment, sluggishness, or stagnation. It is essentially the augmentation of power; it tends to enlarge and perfect without end the human condition (77).”

In a series of essays published in the first decade of the twentieth century which attempted to sum up current scientific knowledge, Eugenio Rignano took a materialist or perhaps a quasi-materialist position, on issues involved with habitude. Rignano theorized that the basis of life was memory, which he said was itself a unique form of energy (59-61). Habitude plays a key part in Rignano’s formulation because of its roles in both the

transformations experienced by inorganic as well as organic life, which includes the transmission of acquired characteristics (84), and in the entire range of human emotional tendencies (87-139). The author finds no important differences between tendencies which are deemed innate and those which have been acquired, since the “innate” ones were acquired at an earlier time (117-18). Thus the author says that he is confirming the popular judgment that nature is nothing other than a first habitude (118).

F. THE « MANUELS DE PHILOSOPHIE » – TEXTBOOKS

The textbooks of higher education in the field of philosophy, the “*manuels de philosophie*,” furnish conclusive evidence of the prominence of habitude in the then contemporary discourse on human psychology. A useful indication of how philosophical theories regarding mental processes and habitude were disseminated to the public in the middle of the nineteenth century is found in a textbook (Manuel de philosophie), published in 1857, authored by three professors, Amadée Jacques, Jules Simon, and Émile Saissel, and “authorized by the council of public instruction.” In this *manuel* (as in virtually all others of the period under consideration here), psychology is a stated subdiscipline of philosophy. Habitude is treated therein as an aid to Memory, which is an important function of consciousness along with Conception, Imagination, and the Association of Ideas (71).

Habitude is given its own space in this textbook, in a section devoted to what we might today call the “mind-body connection,” but, as posed by the authors, the question under consideration was why our bodies obey our will. The authors note that the old explanation was simple: God created us in that manner (167-68). Without denying that

explanation, the authors seek to establish how our minds move our bodies and here habitude is given its full due:

What I say about muscular movements must be said as well with respect to operations of thought, of mind, of soul; so little and so indirect as will can be on understanding, repetition of the same effort allows the intelligence to accomplish things of which it seemed utterly incapable, and to which it was the most resistant, and gives it this power, however feeble at first, which starts from almost nothing, a limitless reach. This ability, acquired either by the soul or by the body, to itself reproduce an action, whether organic, intellectual or moral, this durable tendency to do rapidly and with pleasure that which originally was done slowly and with difficulty, that is what we call a habitude. Habitue constitutes in us a third kind of activity which comes from both the necessary faculties of our understanding and of our instincts, but doesn't confuse the two... By the power of habitue, man remakes and transforms himself; he substitutes for his primary nature a *second nature* which is his creation and his choice; happy if the choice is good; it will decide his entire life; and the powerlessness of men to change bad habits learned early in life is the first and most terrible punishment that God inflicts on them (171; italics in original).

We resume below three other textbooks, used in prominent schools, and published in many editions (see bibliography). These provide a very full picture of what was

disseminated in the lycées and the universities on the role of habitude in the psychological life of man.

Paulin Malapert divides the subject “The Active Life” into the following subchapters: activity in its various modes; instinct; habitude, will, and character. The subchapter on habitude is divided into two parts, the first called “Character, form, and effects of habitude,” and the second “Nature of habitude.” As to character and form, Malapert defines habitude as an acquired aptitude to reproduce past movements with a greater facility that makes them perfect and regular. It comes to resemble a primary reflex action, or instinct. The more that actions are accomplished through habitude, the more unconscious and not willed they will be, to the point that they may even be contrary to one’s will. It is therefore difficult to terminate or vary acts which are performed by virtue of habitude. But Malapert also adds another definition, namely an adaptation to exterior influences which have been experienced many times, such as odors, noises, physical contacts. Thus we see the two kinds of habitude explained and differentiated in much the same terms as were set forth in the lengthy study of Maine de Biran. Malapert credits Ravaissou with first distinguishing between these two kinds of habitude, active and passive (431), but, as we have seen, that is not the case. Ravaissou is extensively cited in Malapert’s chapter on habitude, e.g.:

Habitude can thus be defined, according to M. Ravaissou, as a permanent way of responding to change, caused and strengthened by the change and its very repetition. Habitude is properly the *state*, the *constitution*, the lasting transformation of a human being, resulting from modifications

which have been made to him. That is why one act is not a *habitude* (432-33; italics in original).

Malapert states that *habitude* applies to passions, ideas and intelligence as well as physical movements (434), and then, again with clear echoes not of Ravaisson, but of Maine de Biran, speaks in very strong terms of the double nature of *habitude*, emphasizing, however, much more the positive aspect than did his uncited source:

One should understand that *habitude* constitutes sometimes a tyranny, an enslavement more and more rigorous, and sometimes renders one completely in possession of one's self, and hence a liberation. It is *habitude* which establishes the continuity of our life, which links the present to the past and in the present envelops the future; it is the conservative power which, in the world of morality as in the physical world, sees that nothing is lost; thanks to it, our progress, our efforts, our conquests are consolidated... (434).

Giving *habitude* a very broad interpretation, Malapert says that it is not a particular function, but a general law of life, and a particular example of the law of inertia; it is coextensive with one's entire psychological and physiological life (433, 435). The author does not, however, believe that it applies to inorganic substances (435), and notes that in the discussions on this issue "...psychology leads us to the threshold of metaphysics...." (436).

The P.-F. Thomas textbook divides philosophy into three subsections: psychology, logic, and morals. There are four "books" in the psychology section: (1) the

life of feelings; (2) the intellectual life; (3) the active life; and (4) language and art. The chapters for the book on the active life, are: instinct, habitude, will, liberty, and character.

At the very beginning of the discussion on habitude, Thomas sets forth the two-edged sword concept: "...habitue intervenes in all manifestations of life, and in each one it exercises an influence which is sometimes fortunate, sometimes unfortunate, and never negligible" (246). The author immediately breaks habitue down into its active and passive phases, and states that the active habitues include physical, intellectual, and moral actions, giving examples of talking, thinking, and being selfish (246-47). Habitues develop either from one very intense experience, or, more often, from a repeated experience. Intellectual habitues develop in the same way that physical ones do, gradually, over time, through repetition (248). The effects of habitue are very clear: with physical habitues, a diminution of the effort necessary to achieve the effect, and the action involved becomes more rapid and easier to perform. But the same is true for intellectual habitues, such as the study of music, grammar, or mathematics. (249-50). Both the will and consciousness are diminished by habitue, and actions become automatic, and in so doing habitue makes all the conditions which brought it into existence tend to disappear. It imitates the spontaneity, certainty, and necessity of instinct, which is why it is sometimes defined as "acquired instinct" (250).

Thomas notes another effect of habitue, which is to diminish pleasure and pain, and soften emotion; thus it blunts the feelings (250). It may seem that there are exceptions to this last generalization; for example, the listener appears to enjoy certain musical works the more he hears them. But with such instances, habitue has not been triggered, because the understanding has improved with each rendition, and therefore

repetition has helped the listener to better appreciate the musical work. If, however, in listening to music or with respect to other comparable experiences, one is not concentrating on the source of the pleasure, habitude will take over and the pleasure will diminish (251). At the same time that habitude weakens our sensations, it transforms them into needs (251).

Noting that habitude has been both criticized and praised, Thomas aligns himself with the optimistic position of Malapert, and sees habitude as ultimately beneficial. Habitue is criticized, he says, because it tends to substitute for thoughtful actions those actions which are merely automatic and routine; it makes our minds and feelings less responsive to our environment (252). Education based on making us creatures of habitue misses the entire point (252). But Thomas criticizes those critics for misunderstanding the role of habitue and ignoring the clearest of facts. He concedes that habitue could degenerate into routine, destroy initiative and the pleasure that comes from challenging ourselves. But he says that the most important attribute of habitue is that it frees the will by allowing us to concentrate on things other than those which are mundane. It thus allows us to perform and enjoy without much effort the things we have learned to do (252).

Although Thomas appears to take a wholly practical approach to the question of habitue, he does restate Ravaisson's more mystical conclusion as to its nature, without further explanations. Thus he says that "The secret of habitue, like that of instinct is found in the very laws of life" (253).⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Thomas takes issue with those philosophers who find habitue in the inorganic as well as in organic life. Thomas argues that classifying habitue as a property of inorganic life would be tantamount to saying that

The third and most comprehensive of the “*manuels*” is that of A. Rey, which states that it covers the field of philosophy in preparation for all baccalaureate and masters examinations in letters, sciences, and for all universities. Book III of the *manuel* is entitled “The general functions of consciousness” and within that book (Chapter VI) is found “The function of assimilation, habitude and memory.” The author defines these subjects in the following terms: memory is the recognition and retention of those things that remain in our consciousness, thus of past matters, while habitude is the growing facility in which the reappearance of states of consciousness becomes more ingrained and less conscious (74). Almost 40 pages are devoted to the subject of habitude.

Rey speaks in terms of “laws” of consciousness, and distinguishes between that which he claims is known, hence a law, and that which is not known, hence a theory. The author says that the likelihood that a habitude will be created is increased by the following factors: the force of the first experience; the clarity of the first experience; the longer it is in duration; the more it is repeated (especially with physical movements); the more the person is paying attention while the experience is occurring; the greater the number of ties and associations with related memories or habitudes (77-79). In this connection, Rey cites to work published by a professor of physiology at the University of Leipzig, who compared the functions of the brain with respect to memory and habitude with that of other muscles, and concluded that both tend to repeat instinctively and automatically those acts that each has previously performed, admitting that consciousness is presumed in memory and habitude, while not necessarily for muscle functions (79).

immobility and death are the same as movement and life; in these aspects he clearly tends toward the spiritualist position.

There is a major reliance on physiological explanations throughout Rey's work, and he would almost certainly be classified as a materialist, rather than a spiritualist.

That designation is confirmed by Rey's own response to the question he poses as to whether there is a permanent modification to the organism as the result of a mental event. Admitting that this is an issue which has been debated and not conclusively settled, the author says he favors an affirmative answer. He believes that mental events are reflected in a physiological change in the molecules of the brain or the nervous system. When the event is repeated, the molecules do not return to their original state — hence the derivation of the saying that habitude is a second nature (82).

Rey sets forth still more "laws" pertaining to the "reproduction of memory," which, he says, is what we call habitude. They may be summarized as follows (84-85):

— 1st Law: In general, a mental event which happens only once falls into the unconscious and into the forgotten. Repetition is the first condition for reproduction and habitude.

— 2nd Law: The more an event is repeated, the more it has a tendency to reproduce itself and become a habitude. A habitude can become tyrannical; it tends to obliterate all obstacles, and in certain cases leads to illnesses, such as alcoholism, or drug addiction. This law has a capital importance in the evolution of psychological facts.

— 3rd Law: Habitual repetition diminishes the effort needed to produce it.

— 4th Law: Frequency of repetition diminishes the time necessary to accomplish an act, especially with respect to physical effort.

— 5th Law: Habitual repetition makes reproduction less conscious.

— 6th Law: Repetition weakens the emotional impact of the event which is reproduced. “Time, it is said, consoles grief. It also softens pleasure. Habitude weakens feelings” (85).

Rey furnishes a physiological explanation for this last law: since the force of a feeling depends on the energy expended to produce it, when the feeling is produced by habitude less energy is expended, and hence the feeling is attenuated. Repetition works on memory and habitude, although they are qualities of the mind, in basically the same way it works on muscles and glands, namely, repetition. The physical operations may be different, that is, molecular changes versus exercise or secretion, but the effects are the same.

Rey concedes that he has been discussing primarily biology, and he acknowledges that it is necessary to speak also of psychology when one addresses issues of consciousness. He therefore summarizes the extant ontological or metaphysical theories regarding memory and habitude, but he returns always to the scientific mode of explanation where possible. He treats memory and habitude as two facets of the same issue, and recognizes that there is more scientific or biological evidence pertaining to habitude than to memory. Rey divides the current schools of thought into those that believe that memory belongs to the mind, while habitude is a purely corporeal function, which he calls a psychological theory, and those that believe that memory is only one particular case of the functioning of habitude, and consciousness is a property which imposes itself on the characteristics of the phenomenon of habitude. He calls this second way of thinking a physiological theory. Rey places Bergson as the primary advocate of the first school, and Théodore Ribot as the primary advocate of the second school. Ribot

sees memory and habitude as a product of living tissue, and deems memory a biological fact in its essence and a psychological fact in its particular. Ribot says the basis of memory is “organic habitude” (95), the persistence of modifications in cerebral memory. The author clearly aligns himself with Ribot. He says that memory is related to habitude as a species to a genre; a memory is a series of movements of the nervous system which repeat themselves, just as a habitual act is the repetition of a series of muscular movements. Memory is a habitude of the highest part of the central nervous system (97).

Rey also resumes some of the history of the study of habitude. He says that before the second half of the 19th century, it was only the philosophers who were concerned with habitude, and they tended to explain it with reference to ideology. He classifies them as also belonging to two schools, one that considered habitude a physical and mechanistic phenomenon, resulting from the laws of matter, essentially inertia, such as the Cartesians, and others who saw habitude as an adaptive force, a proof of the subordination of matter to a spiritual principal which animated it. Into this second school he puts Aristotle, Leibniz, and especially Ravaisson. At the present time, he says that it is generally conceded that habitude is a pervasive property of life, but it is nevertheless not entirely explicable given the current state of knowledge. Rey would align himself with those that see habitude as a consequence of the mechanical laws of matter, a state of equilibrium between the individual and his environment, and especially an adaptive mechanism favored by the laws of evolution. The author stresses this last factor, with obvious reference and deference to Darwin and Lamarck. He says that habitude is not only a disposition to conserve what has been, but is also a means to adapt to what is. It is because of that adaptive ability that habitude, and its particular psychological case of

memory, can facilitate change as well as conservation. Living matter which is imbued with habitude changes itself, and progresses by creating new habitudes, although we don't exactly know how that happens. Nevertheless, habitude is not limited to a single living individual. Rey says that "there can be no doubt" (102) that certain newly developed habitudes are transmitted to one's descendants, such as temperament, predispositions, aptitudes, tastes, musical and mathematical abilities. Given Rey's otherwise meticulous distinctions between proved facts and theories, his statement is a telling evidence of how much the Lamarckian theories were accepted at the time. In fact, Rey states that heredity can be considered a "habitude d'habitudes" (103), and that heredity is only an organic memory of the species which is transmitted from generation to generation. No summary purporting to be factual rather than theoretical, by an author, Rey, who most conscientiously distinguished between these two categories, could better show how pervasive and increasingly significant the issue of habitude was in France in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Thus by the end of the century, the interest in habitude was indeed intense. It "radiated," to use Kaufmann's term, into discussions on the design and origin of the human species and its very essence, or, in more concrete terms, and from a different point of view, humanity's inherent biological and psychological mechanisms. It shed its own light on the issue of the inheritance of acquired characteristics and the survival of cultures. It provided explanations for both intellectual development and intellectual atrophy. It tackled and offered a thesis for the human attraction to cults and for addictive behavior in general. Its rays could penetrate the secrets of the mind, the body, and the soul.

**CHAPTER VI. A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU: PROUSTIAN
CONTRIBUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS TO THE DISCOURSE ON
HABITUDE.**

A. INTRODUCTION

The basic facts or characteristics pertaining to habitude as observed by philosophers or poets from Aristotle to Proust have not changed, although the frame of reference, the emphasis, the scope, the reasons, and the implications among all these observers is not the same or even consistent. But the basics are there: habitude is a powerful quality or force which manifests itself among human beings in a manner whereby, because of repetition or duration, certain sensations diminish in intensity; certain acts become easier to perform, more rapid and more accurate; certain thoughts or intellectual processes become more automatic; and certain patterns of behavior become more resistant to change. Furthermore, the force or quality of habitude works in such a way that a human being is disposed in the future to experience, perform, or undertake the sensations, acts, thoughts, and patterns to which he or she has become inured in the past in the same manner, to the point of needing to do so. It follows that there is a strong resistance to change of habitudes once they are established.

While the above might serve as a core definition or description, as we have seen the range of commentary on the nature of habitude extends far beyond this core. Thus we have placed the human being at the epicenter of our definition, whereas he does not necessarily occupy that place in the definitional and descriptive discourses on habitude in Aquinas, nor in some of the 19th century philosophers who saw habitude in rocks and paper, as well as in men and women. But to the extent habitude takes hold of people, its operations and its effects are uniformly described. Where Proust has gone, however, and

where no one before him appears to have gone, is to have delved so deeply, exactly, and explicitly into the operations of this phenomenon among a fairly extensive group of persons who made up the world of his novel as to have engendered a whole new perspective on the operation of habitude in every important aspect of human behavior. We submit that the insights that such a meticulous analysis has provided, albeit fictional, ring truer and deeper than those yielded by philosophical treatises or psychological theories. Specifically, Proust furnished the first very thorough analysis of the extraordinary impact of the phenomenon of habitude on our emotional or passionate life.

B. COMPARISON OF THE PROUST AND PRE-PROUST DISCOURSE ON HABITUDE

Let us resume how the discourse had evolved in France, including Aristotle and Aquinas as part of western patrimony, before Proust wrote À la recherche du temps perdu. The “second nature” appellation, attributed to Aristotle, was so much a part of the discourse on habitude as not to call forth much thought—indeed, it would fall into the category of those habitual language expressions which Proust noted tend to destroy ingenuity. As we have shown, it is Aristotle who, save Proust, considered habitude with respect to the greatest range of human endeavors. Even so, the Aristotelian discussion of habitude was focused on the connection between habitude and virtue. Except for the observation in Physics, cited by Aquinas (and noted above), that unlike habitudes of the intellect, those of the passions can not resist the passage of time, there does not appear to have been any commentary in Aristotle (at least as we have followed the discourse necessarily from secondary sources) on the role of habitude in the passionate or emotional life of man. Answers to the questions of when, how, why, and in what

measure habitudes of the passions die away with the passage of time awaited À la recherche du temps perdu.

By according habitude a major place in his Summa Theologica, and collecting so many of the writings of Aristotle on this subject in one place, Aquinas may have laid the basis for the prominent place that habitude came to assume in philosophical studies, exemplified in 19th century France by the “*manuels*” which furnished the required texts of French higher education. Aquinas’ perspective was God-centered. His issue was how to attain the kingdom of heaven. Consequently, the discourse centers on virtue and morality which are said to provide entry. In Aquinas’ world, man’s place in the vast universe must be considered only against the framework of the Originator and his purposes: hence habitude is investigated primarily in terms of how it serves those purposes. At times, the Aquinian focus bears down on Man, and we then find a reasoning which resounds in modern terms--instinct, appetite, will, sensory activities--facets of behavior which relate to continuous or repeated actions or sensory perceptions, and hence to habitude. But Aquinas’ worldview, purposes, and postulates are so completely out of the range of Proust’s world that one may safely conclude that neither expands the other’s analysis of the role of habitude in this world or in the next.

With Montaigne, we enter a contemporary frame of reference, and find posed therein, in all of its splendor, the dilemma of habitude:

She establishes in us, little by little, stealthily, the foothold of her authority, but having by this mild and humble beginning settled and planted it with the help of time, she soon uncovers to us a furious and

tyrannical face against which we no longer have the liberty of even raising our eyes. We see her at every turn forcing the rules of nature (Frame 155).

Montaigne, like Proust, externalizes an internal quality, *habitude*, for the purpose of excoriation. Montaigne's ultimate judgment on *habitude*, like Proust's, is strongly negative. While Montaigne's sweeping condemnation includes all aspects of *habitude*'s sway, it is nevertheless fair to say that his emphasis is upon *habitude*'s stultifying effects upon reason, which was, indeed, the dominant theme of the *philosophes* and certainly of Maine de Biran. Indeed, it is precisely because *habitude* can instill faith over and above reason that it was praised by Pascal, thus adding a negative argument, as it were, to the appreciation of *habitude*.

Although we find interest, curiosity, and acute observations regarding *habitude* in the writings of the *philosophes*, these works do not indicate a particularly concentrated interest in that phenomenon. Rather, we find *habitude* taking its customary ancillary role there, if not to virtue or faith (although Rousseau leaned also in those directions), then, with Diderot, to anti-idealist or anti-religious explanations of the phenomenon of man, and, with Rousseau, to anti-“natural” adaptations forced upon us by society. Yet both Rousseau and Diderot presage issues which will become the subject of intense interest and debate in the next century: the nature of human consciousness, of memory, of time, of energy or force, of intellectual development, of heredity, of education. But as inclusive as is this list, we see one notable omission: there is no particular or concentrated attention paid yet to the effect of *habitude* upon passions or emotions. Certainly the subject is broached in the observation of the Encyclopédie that *habitude* “softens the sharp edge of pain,” which could include emotional as well as physical distress. But at

the dawn of the 19th century in France, it appears that Montaigne's observations regarding the impossibility of weaning beggar children from their milieu is the most direct and perceptive statement of the workings of *habitude* on the nature of human emotions.

So detailed, explicit, thorough, painstaking, logical, indeed brilliant, was Maine de Biran's work on *habitude* that it is ironic to commence a discussion of that essay by stating what it discussed rather lightly, but for our purposes that de-emphasis is basic to our thesis: there was relatively minor discussion on the effect of *habitude* on man's emotional constitution. Indeed, the title of the essay, the very subject set for examination, directed the issue away from such an investigation: Influence de l'habitude sur la faculté de penser, to think, not to feel. And that is what Maine de Biran's 400+ page essay is about. We see here, however, for the first time an effort to understand how it happens that *habitude* plays such an important role; to what extent parts of the body other than the brain are involved, and if so how, and how does the brain work so that *habitudes* take hold. Maine de Biran did not, however, ignore the relationship between *habitude* and emotional life. We state the propositions on that subject which can be derived from his essay in what we believe to be ascending orders of originality.

First, Maine de Biran explores the connections between *habitude* and feelings in the context of pleasure and pain, which directly follow from a description of sensory experiences. Here he makes the basic point that *habitude* usually weakens both, and creates needs outside the control of reason.

Next, he shows the connection between feelings and moral qualities, that is, that certain determinations with respect to moral thoughts or behavior have attached to them

strong feelings, which become habitudes of feelings, and, when shared by a community, become customs and manners. This point is vintage Maine de Biran: for him, there is a direct opposition between passion and reason, and the former subverts the latter. When feelings, through habitudes, become customs, they may outlast their original causes, and thus control a community despite the lack of any current justifications.

Third, and most interestingly, Maine de Biran explores two contexts in which habitude does *not* weaken our feelings, but rather strengthens them. His first context is at the same time obvious and highly original. Thus Maine de Biran notes that there is a class of ideas outside the realm of reason and perception, either because they are vague, or rooted in superstition, or emanating from primitive dispositions. (He does not state whether religious ideas fall into this category.) Maine de Biran called “fanatic” the habitudes formed by repetition of such ideas or behavior. He speculated that they are caused by an over-stimulation of the brain. The stimulation of the sensory organ by such ideas, language, or acts, grows with their repetition, and the habitudes that are thus formed create stronger, not weaker, responses in the individual. Maine de Biran theorized that the reason for this chain of events is that the individual has attached to these ideas or feelings the very idea of his existence. We see here a possible root of Proust’s idea that the “moi” is indissolubly a part of one’s habitudes. We note at the same time the *vast* distinction between Maine de Biran’s theory and Proust’s namely, that Proust saw this condition as universal, rather than as inhering only in people who are fanatics, in exalted states, or with “diseased” brains—unless, of course, we are all fanatics as Maine de Biran would define them, in so far as our habitudes may stand in utter opposition to reason, and our emotions gain force with repetition.

The second context in which Maine de Biran noted a connection between habitudes and feelings, while not restricted to a class of persons that one would deem abnormal, nevertheless is closely related to the first context, because it involves heightened, not diminished, feelings occurring through repetition and the formation of habitudes. Specifically, Maine de Biran noted that where certain words are associated with strong feelings, such as virtue, honor, or God, repetition calls forth heightened emotions, and this occurs independently of the will. Maine de Biran pointed out the rhetorical uses of this phenomenon. Thus in this context, as in the prior one, reason is pitted against emotion in that when reason is involved, habitude dulls the sensory reactions to specific language, but where emotion is involved, it heightens them.

We return later to the Proustian/Maine de Biran axis regarding the complicated and curious connections between habitude and the passions. For now it is sufficient to note that one finds several seeds in Maine de Biran regarding those connections which took root in À la recherche du temps perdu. We turn now to other seeds in Maine de Biran's essay which flourished in Proust's novel.

That habitude, as a value, has two sides, one positive and the other negative, was not new. Directly preceding Montaigne's ringing condemnation of habitude was his apocryphal story of the woman who could carry a full-grown cow because she had carried him daily since birth. Habitude was alternately praised and excoriated by Rousseau as well. The very definition of habitude contains the core reasons for this "double-edged sword" evaluation: by facilitating, through repetition, the performance of both basic and complicated tasks, mental and physical, habitude is an indispensable asset; by creating dispositions and needs which blind us to the necessity for change, it stands as

an impregnable barrier to progress. While Proust's ultimate value judgment, as we have seen, like his predecessors (Montaigne, Rousseau, Maine de Biran) weighs in on the negative side, he goes further than any of them in the domain of passions or emotions. It is Proust alone who excavates the extraordinary emotional distress, indeed, agony, when changes to *habitudes* are inevitable.

Finally, we note in Maine de Biran both a particular characteristic of *habitude*, and language describing this characteristic, that form part of the Proustian theme on *habitude*: the manner in which *habitude* hides from a person his own nature, his true self; she "veils" those patterns of thought and behavior that she has created. Compare, for example:

As soon as Man looks around him, the veil of *habitude* descends ...; but if he tries to focus his view on himself, he still remains in the presence of *habitude*, which continues to veil the composition and the number of its products... (Maine de Biran 10).

Thus *habitude* hides from us under the veil of indifference the strength of the ties which she has woven; to know these ties one must want to escape them; one must feel them loosen, and break! (Maine de Biran, 102)

with:

Lifting a corner of the heavy veil⁷⁷ of *habitude* (stupefying *habitude*, which during the whole course of our life conceals from us almost the

⁷⁷ As we have noted, the translation actually says "curtain" of *habitude* for which we have substituted "veil"; the French word was "*voile*." The expression "*voile de l'habitude*" has the important history we have traced of which the translators may have been unaware.

whole universe, and in the dead of night, without changing the label, substitutes for the most dangerous or intoxicating poisons of life something anodyne that procures no delights), such memories would come back to me as at the time itself... (Vol. V, C&F, 722-23).⁷⁸

We have already noted that the veil metaphor is found twice in Stendhal's Racine et Shakespeare, and the possibility that Stendhal was familiar with Maine de Biran's seminal work, which was published 20 years before Racine et Shakespeare. Stendhal inveighed the French public to cast off "the veil thrown by habitude," to free themselves from insisting on the unities in dramatic works, and he cited that veil again as obstructing both self-knowledge and the ability to experience moments of perfect illusion. Stendhal's ideas respecting the barrier that habitude poses to understanding and appreciating new artistic forms finds a strong refrain in Proust's novel, which did more, however, than just say it; rather, as shown above, Proust meticulously analyzed how newness and originality make great art and, at the same time, resist comprehension and appreciation because of the powerful and ubiquitous influence of habitude. Stendhal's assumption that the public could will the disappearance of their own habitudes shows that, if he were familiar with Maine de Biran's essay, he did not take its teachings to heart--or perhaps he willed himself not to.

If Proust and Stendhal are on the same page, so to speak, with respect to the effect of habitude on the public's ability to see, hear, or understand important new art forms or

78 «Soulevant un coin du voile lourd de l'habitude (l'habitude abêtissante qui pendant tout le cours de notre vie nous cache à peu près tout l'univers, et dans une nuit profonde, sous leur étiquette inchangée, substitue aux poisons les plus dangereux ou les plus enivrants de la vie quelque chose d'anodin qui ne procure pas de délices), ils me revenaient comme au premier jour... » (Fug. 190).

works, they are in different worlds on the subject of *habitude* and love. Nowhere is Proust's contribution to the theory and understanding of the role of *habitude* more original, indeed, more astounding, than on the subject of love. Stendhal's discussion of *habitude* in that context is shallow and banal. In flitting from one type of love to another, Stendhal notes at times the effect of *habitude* on its course, but his idealization of "natural and sincere" love in opposition to "false" love and his association of *habitude* with the latter make impossible any meaningful comparison with Proust, who said, unflinchingly, that the cause of misery in love: "...is not the beloved woman, it is the *habitude*" (Vol VI TR 491) (« ce n'est pas la femme, c'est l'*habitude* » (TR 433-34)).

A rare commentary in contemporary criticism on Proust's interest in *habitude* is found in the forward by Frédéric de Towarnicki to the 1997 republication of Ravaisson's seminal 1836 work, De l'*habitude*. Pointing out the contradictory effects of *habitude*, which are its core definition, De Towarnicki cites Proust (13): « Et si ces effects de l'*Habitude* semblent contradictoires, dira Proust, c'est qu'elle obéit à des lois multiples » (the citation is to A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs).⁷⁹ Further, De Towarnicki concludes his forward with these words (24): "The influence of Ravaisson was both important and diffuse, and also difficult to measure. One guesses, for example, that it is found in the works of Marcel Proust, who met Ravaisson shortly before his death."

Certainly it is a fair guess that, as Ravaisson's essay was well known, and his work much admired and republished in 1894, Proust knew that it existed, and may have read the text. That supposition is given additional support by one of the poetic images

⁷⁹ English translation: "And if these effects seem contradictory, Proust would say, it is that they obey the multiple laws of *habitude*."

that Proust uses, wherein *Habitude* (capitalized in the text) is reduced to “Pure Matter” with just a smidgeon of “Mind”:

...the practice of separating morality from a whole order of actions ... must have been so long established that *Habitude*, no longer asking Moral Sentiment for its opinion, had grown stronger from day to day until at last this consenting Prometheus had had himself nailed by Force to the Rock of Pure Matter ... Yet I have perhaps been inaccurate in speaking of the rock of Pure Matter. In this Pure Matter it is possible that a small quantum of Mind still survived (Vol. VI TR 214-15).⁸⁰

Except for this image, however, wherein Proust does play with the notion of *Habitude* reducing itself almost to instinct, one is struck more with the differences than with the similarities between Proust’s and Ravaisson’s treatment of *habitude*.

Ravaisson’s essay was exceedingly abstract; Proust’s novel is exceedingly concrete. Contrary to almost every other commentator on *habitude*, Ravaisson gave almost no examples of the operation of *habitude* in any particular context. This is more than a difference in style; it is a central difference in focus. Ravaisson painted with a broad brush, focusing on the First Causes of *habitude*, and what that implied with respect to the origin of mind and matter. Proust painted with tiny strokes, focusing on how and why we think and feel and act as we do in all of our multitudinous byways of thought and action. We do concede that Ravaisson’s essay put Man at the center of his study, and

⁸⁰ « ...l’habitude de séparer la moralité de tout un ordre d’actions ... devait être prise depuis si longtemps que l’habitude (sans plus jamais demander son opinion au sentiment moral) était allée en s’aggravant de jour en jour, jusqu’à celui où ce Prométhée consentant s’était fait clouer par la Force au rocher de la pure Matière ... Pourtant j’ai peut-être inexactement dit: rocher de la pure Matière. Dans cette pure Matière il est possible qu’un peu d’Esprit surnageât encore » (TR 223-24).

considered habitude in Man's specific functions and qualities, such as intelligence, will, power, effort, resistance, action, and even passion. No sooner, however, are such categories met in the essay but they are put in relation to each other in hierarchical terms, implying value judgments on their Godliness, although the deity is not named as such. But in what other sense is "freedom" "superior" to "will," or the latter "superior" to "understanding," or, indeed, "life" "superior" to "inorganic existence?" These hierarchical states have all to do with the fundamental point of the work, which was to postulate a reason for why habitude exists in the human species, and Ravaisson's reason is that it exists to imitate in reverse the very manner in which man was created, i.e., by some form of Supreme Being or Higher Consciousness. Symmetry and pattern inevitably imply Mind. By meticulously, but always very broadly, and without regard to specific cases, describing how habitude works in man's physical and mental processes, Ravaisson cuts a mid-path between the materialists and the idealists: habitude is controlled in the body, so there must be physical changes which occur therein to cause the observable effects, but the control exists in a "center" which is consciousness, and which is not quite material. If this explanation leans even by centimeters in the materialist direction, the angle is soon corrected, because the fundamental reason that habitude works is that it becomes diffused into other organs just as instinct is diffused, thus mimicking the act of creation. In Ravaisson's words: "The history of Habitue mirrors the return of Liberty to Nature, or rather the invasion of the domain of liberty by natural spontaneity" (111). It is such thoughts that have led commentators to the obviously correct conclusion, as we have noted, that Ravaisson's explanation for the phenomenon of habitude is ultimately religious and Christian; indeed, De Towarnicki also commented that Ravaisson's

explanation of habitude reached to the very enigma of creation. We do not find in Ravaisson any important philosophical underpinnings for Proust's study of habitude, although, as shown above, there is one striking poetic image which brings Ravaisson's work to mind.

The 1885 essay of Alfred Fouillée, "Memory and the recognition of memories," discussed above, may well have furnished fecund philosophical roots for Proust's study of habitude.⁸¹ Having said this, however, it is necessary to bear in mind always that the philosopher is not the poet, and vice versa. The subjects that interested Fouillée were the subjects richly explored in À la recherche du temps perdu: emotion, memory, time, and habitude, and it is Fouillée who appears to have been the first to link all in a direct manner in his search for the precise causes of the phenomena of habitude and of memory. The question that Fouillée posed was how it is that we have the recognition that we are remembering something, which of course implies that we know that something happened in the past, not the present. Fouillée finds the explanation in habitude, and in the well-known lessening of sensory experience that comes from repetition. It is the different measure of sensation, and consequently of resistance to sensation, and of emotion, that are experienced in the process of recollection, compared to the levels of sensation, resistance, and emotion when an event is happening to us currently, that permits us to make the distinction between the experiences of memory and current experience. Innately, we seize these differences instantly. It is these same differences in degree or measure that enable us to make the distinction between the present and the future, when we are forecasting something in our minds. But the key to all these differences in

⁸¹ As noted above, Fouillée was the mentor of Alphonse Darlu who was Proust's very respected philosophy professor at the Lycée Condorcet.

measure, according to Fouillée, is “appetite,” by which he means the emotions associated with our desires.

À la recherche du temps perdu was not a philosophical exegesis, and it would be forced and faulty to attempt to show direct parallels between Fouillée and Proust. Nevertheless, as Fouillée appears to have set in motion the idea that passion or emotion was the key element in providing the impetus to memory, and as the recognition of such memories creates habitudes, the basis was laid for looking at the reverse side of that proposition, namely, how habitudes create passions or emotions which become inseparable from their possessor. Proust’s world furnished the laboratory for that investigation.

Issues regarding time, memory, and habitude were, as we have repeatedly shown, in the foreground of intellectual thought in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were hotly debated, on their own terms and also as part of the pervasive and multi-century confrontation between religious and secular explanations of the universe. While Proust side-stepped this last issue, the importance of these issues to the author of À la recherche du temps perdu is evident. In that sense, Fouillée’s essay was a precursor of themes in the novel, but in no way did it preempt any of the contributions that Proust made to our understanding of the ubiquitous operation of habitude in our daily lives.

As we follow the theories, learning, debates, and teachings regarding habitude among the philosophers, popularizers, and professors at the turn of the century, we find ourselves more and more distanced from the investigations and analyses of habitude by Proust in the world of his novel. The philosophers/psychologists concentrated especially on how habitudes came into being: we knew, for centuries, that repetition was the

immediate cause, but why and how repetition produced habitude continued to puzzle and intrigue these thinkers. The relationship between memory and habitude occupied a prominent place in these discussions; one could imagine each as the cause or the condition precedent of the other. Was habitude a subcategory of memory (one stored in the past), as per Bergson, or was memory a subcategory of habitude (as species is to genre) as per Ribot and Rey? And what were the implications of those opposite conclusions? What is the relationship between will and habitude, not in respect of the diminution of the former as the latter takes hold--that we knew--but in respect of the formation of each. How does will arise to instigate the repetitions that form habitude? How does habitude persist in spite of contrary will? Why do we remember, and how do we recall memories, and what part does the will play in all of these functions? And does it really clarify or obfuscate the investigation into how we appear to generate, all by ourselves, our thoughts, memories, and actions to speak of a willed will and an unwilled will ("*la volonté volontaire*" and "*la volonté involontaire*" (Janet 40)). We see of course that it is only a very short distance between that concept and the famous willed and unwilled memories of Proust ("*la mémoire volontaire*" and "*la mémoire involontaire*").

While our discussion has focused on the psychological aspects of theorizing about habitude, will, time, and memory, the ramifications of these theories for the nascent fields of sociology and evolutionary biology were well understood, and part of the discourse. The "*manuels de philosophie*" kept all of these issues in the forefront of intellectual thought during the time Proust was a student, and well after. The unsettled nature of these issues and their continued prominence must have been very stimulating for all who

puzzled over the human condition. This was the world that Proust inherited as he came of adult age.

Whether Proust was especially “influenced” by a Fouillée, a Janet, or a Bergson, or by any particular one of the eminent authors of the textbooks studied in the schools during Proust’s student years, the important consideration is that the nature and operations of will, memory, time and habitude were the critical and fascinating issues of Proust’s time. It is the more remarkable, then, that against this backdrop of eminent philosophers, Proust’s contributions to understanding the nature and operations of habitude were so original.

C. CONTRIBUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS TO THE DISCOURSE ON HABITUDE IN À LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU .

The subjects of the discourse on habitude in À la recherche du temps perdu were principally the narrator and Swann. Remarks about the habitudes of others occurred not infrequently; nevertheless it was in the lives and thoughts of the narrator and of Swann that the phenomenon was most scrupulously observed and reported. But while the discourse was specific to particular persons, the text is at pains to make clear that the narrator is generalizing about a phenomenon whose power and scope extends far beyond those particular subjects. The message is conveyed in several ways. The text moves seamlessly from the particular to the general, as, for example, it flows from descriptions of the relationship of Swann and Odette to ruminations about the nature of love. It addresses habitude directly, personalizing it, paying it homage, seeming to remonstrate or negotiate with it. In this spirit, the text often capitalizes habitude, and salutes it with a respectful “Oh,” or “Ah.” The text uses the pronouns “we” and “us” after it has

discussed *habitude* in a specific context with respect to a specific character, emphasizing especially that the enslavement of those characters was not unique, but was part of the human condition. We have here, then, not a treatise whose proofs rely upon the writer's impersonal, generalized observations, reasoning, or experience, but rather a laboratory, in which the very specific thoughts, feelings, and actions of diverse fictional characters (principally two) are explored, with the object of determining how and why they think, feel, and act as they do. But the creator of this laboratory is the author, and from the diversity that he creates in his invented universe, he draws forth certain generalizations, applicable not only to his characters, but, so the narrator tells us, to us, the readers, that is, to the real world. Proust was not unaware of his methodology, and of its analogy with the scientific laboratory: "The impression is for the writer what experiment is for the scientist..." (Vol. VI TR 276).⁸² This methodology itself is an innovation, and an important contribution to the study of *habitude*.

Thus before À la recherche du temps perdu, the commentaries and studies made observations, or drew conclusions, based upon the writings of others, or upon their own generalized observations of the real world, or by utilizing traditional deductive processes, including hypothesizing where necessary. Some of these studies involved scientific observations, others were philosophical in nature, relying upon abstract reasoning. Towards the end of the 19th century, as philosophy divided itself into the more specific studies of culture, society, and psychology, we find *habitude* examined in a context of looking for patterns in species, genres, and various cultures, and in behavioral experimentation. But nowhere do we find a study of *habitude* such as the one made in À

⁸² « L'impression est pour l'écrivain ce qu'est l'expérimentation pour le savant... » TR 272.

la recherche du temps perdu: a study which turns over and over and over one or two individuals' lives, and the lives of their friends and associates, to determine with great specificity and precision the role that habitude played, acting according to its own "laws," in the lives of these characters and by necessary and stated extension, the lives of all human beings.

Of course, neither the Proustian laboratory nor its subjects were real: all was fiction. The ultimate judgment, then, of the truth or speciousness of Proust's study of habitude rests entirely with the reader. There is no proof of his conclusions regarding the manner and extent of how habitude governs our loves and our lives, there were no experiments, there were no surveys and interpretations thereof; there was not even a philosophical exegesis, starting from first principles, and drawing successive conclusions.⁸³ We have not forgotten, of course, that there was an intellectual treasure, in the words of Jean-Claude Kaufmann, of commentary on the ubiquitous and powerful force of habitude, and that that proposition does not rest solely upon the dissections and investigations undertaken in Proust's fictionalized laboratory. But as we go deeper and into specifics, we are persuaded, if at all, of that force, of its ubiquitous effect, of its frightening dominion, of our ignorance of its control, only by the degree to which we respond to Marcel's observations about himself and Swann, and their lives and worlds.

⁸³ This methodology was purposeful. As Proust stated in the celebrated passages regarding literature in the last volume, Le temps retrouvé, "For it is only out of habitude, a habitude contracted from the insincere language of prefaces and dedications, that the writer speaks of 'my reader.' In reality every reader is, while he is reading, the reader of his own self. The writer's work is merely a kind of optical instrument which he offers to the reader to enable him to discern what, without this book, he would perhaps never have perceived in himself" (Vol VI TR 321- 22); (« L'écrivain ne dit que par une habitude prise dans le langage insincère des préfaces et des dédicaces, mon lecteur. En réalité, chaque lecteur est quand il lit le propre lecteur de soi-même. L'ouvrage de l'écrivain n'est qu'une espèce d'instrument optique qu'il offre au lecteur afin de lui permettre de discerner ce que sans ce livre, il n'eût peut-être pas vu en soi-même » (TR 307)).

The task of persuasion, then, was formidable. In this reader's experience, a formidable success was achieved.

We have frequently stated that Proust's most notable contributions came with respect to the interplay of the passions and habitude—a subject that seemed to be far secondary in the benchmark works on habitude. We have shown in the text that, again and again, the narrator explains and insists that the fabric of love is nothing other than habitude; that the feelings of connection, admiration, desire, physical and psychological need, all of this is only a result of habitude, and in the end is nothing else. The feelings are hardly thereby minimized or trivialized: Swann's love for Odette is surely one of the more dominating and obsessive passions in all of literature. Yet, in the end, the narrator tells us, what made Swann suffer in love, and what makes us suffer in love “is not the woman, it is the habitude” (TR 434).

It is by the classical methods of forming habitudes that the feelings of love are engendered—repeated association. Physical presence, at least to develop the habitude, is essential. Afterwards, the mind may take over and the habitudes are reinforced by repeated, obsessive, thoughts about the love object. Even a new love does not have the advantage of creating its own habitudes: we are so programmed by the habitudes developed in our prior love that our love song, that is, our experience of the passion, is only a reprise.

Connection between a human being and some outside stimulus is necessarily the starting point for the development of habitude. It could be a smell, a series of sounds, a sight, a person, objects of any sort, actions that the person performs, thoughts that themselves make connections. In À la recherche du temps perdu, there is no significant

event--indeed, there is practically no event at all--upon which the narrator dwells that is not primarily an event of feeling, of emotion. It is not only physical love that stirs the narrator: it is his intimate surroundings, it is the names of people and places, it is the landscape, it is a painting, it is a sonata, it is a novel, it is a peasant girl, it is the narrator's own fantasies about people and places. Not only, then, is habitude an integral part of our emotional landscape, an ingrained manner in which we (in large part unknown to ourselves) react to every facet of our environment, but these emotional habitudes are the fabric from which our lives are woven. Nothing exists outside of them, unless, and until, by virtue of will or circumstance, they are broken. But then, of course, new ones form and take their place. It is in the intermittences of these habitudes that life may be lived on a different and much higher level.

If we look, for example, at the instances described in Chapter II, above, in which habitude plays out in the cognitive or artistic ranges, we see that feelings are inseparably connected to the narrator's experience. The discussion of habitude's deadening sway over language and literature makes not only the point that new ideas are stifled by repeated expressions and well-worn literary conventions, but that our pleasure from the literary and linguistic experience is highly diminished when the conventions are continuously respected. This point is made over and over in discussions of our enjoyment of creative work in all fields. In music, for example, the narrator's pleasure multiplied as he forced himself to conquer his own listening habitudes (Vol II BG 141-42; JFF I, 200-01). Even with respect to dreams, produced through a non-rational cognitive process, we derive pleasure only to the extent our dreams are new (Vol III GW 106; Gu I, 153).

Proust did not ignore the more everyday aspects of habitude, those that may take hold without much thought or feeling. These may involve choices regarding tasks, obligations, even moral attitudes. Nor did Proust fail to observe one of the principal points of the Maine de Biran essay, namely, that by forming habitudes of reasoning, one is automatically and unknowingly led to prior conclusions whose basis may be suspect or wrong, as the middle propositions have dropped out, and hence, as Proust said, the cause and effect assumption may be illusory (Vol V C&F 679-80; Fug. 144). But the most significant and novel contributions made to the study of habitude by À la recherche du temps perdu were the propositions that habitudes form, persist and dominate our emotional lives; that we live largely in ignorance of this self-infestation; and that we suffer absolute anguish from breaking the bonds of our core habitudes, even as that rupture liberates and potentially elevates us to greater pleasure.

Let us enter now the thicket of memory, and its relation to habitude, the subject which most intrigued the philosophers and psychologists of Proust's day. Proust takes a stand: habitude is a first cause, and memory is ruled by its laws (Fug. 175).⁸⁴ Memory develops its own habitudes, that is, we remember what we are used to remembering. The text expressly finesses the issue of whether everything that happens to us is stored in our memory; that is, the narrator says he does not know (Fug.175). One of the "memorable," indeed, famous themes in the novel is the resurgence of memories, supposedly long forgotten and inaccessible, by the chance act or sensation with which they had a past connection.

⁸⁴ See n. 34 .

The most famous of these involuntary memory associations, of course, is the narrator's tasting of the *madeleine*, which recalled to him whole sections of his childhood that had previously been lost. In that example, the taste of the *madeleine* was the trigger sensation, and it recalled a time when that sensation was experienced often. The memory, then, was of a habitual sensation, that sensation had not been experienced for years and so the habitude had been ruptured; once the sensation was again experienced, but only "against habitude" (Sw 145),⁸⁵ the memory, theretofore unavailable, surfaced.

But this pattern does not hold true for the other instances of *mémoire involontaire*, most of which occur in the last volume, Le temps retrouvé.⁸⁶ Before those instances, however, but after the time of the *madeleine*, specifically in Sodome et gomorrhe, the narrator experiences "living reality in a complete and involuntary recollection" (Vol IV S&G 211); («...*je retrouvais dans un souvenir involontaire et complet la réalité vivante* » SG I, 237). He has arrived for the second time at Balbec, and, in a state of exhaustion, is taking off his boots, when he is filled with the divine presence of his grandmother, who on his first visit to Balbec had ministered to him when he was similarly overcome with "distress and loneliness" (Vol IV S&G 211; SG I, 237). Until that time, identified as more than a year after her death, he had been unable to recreate in his mind either his grandmother or his profound feelings of love for her. It is only because of the complex of similar sensations involved in the two instances that involuntary memory, the only kind

⁸⁵ See Vol I SW 60 and n. 35.

⁸⁶ There is an instance of *mémoire involontaire manquée*, as it were, in À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs, II, wherein the narrator, on a drive with his grandmother and Mme de Villeparisis, sees three trees, which fill him with a feeling of joy whose origin he can not trace. It is as if, he says, they were concealing something which his mind could not grasp because he was not alone. The narrator is suffused with emotion, but frustrated by his inability to seize the mystery of the memory which seemed to him to embody the highest truth and happiness (Vol. II BG 404-408; JFF 2, 91-94). This incident is discussed further in Chapter VII below.

of memory connected with intermittences of the heart and with a higher reality, came into play and restored to the narrator his total experience of his beloved grandmother.

The last volume is devoted in large part to a party given by the Prince and Princess de Guermantes, and it is at that event that a succession of chance events, quite small in themselves, brought back a succession of memories, apparently forgotten. These events are actually no more than momentary sensations, and each one serves as a trigger of recall. The recollection, or memory, however, is more expansive than the particular sensation; indeed, the recollection brings back into mind the people, scenes, events, and/or sensations, experienced at and around the time that the original sensation was experienced, just as the biting into the *madeleine* brought back the narrator's childhood when at Combray. In each instance, the memory is recalled because there is an association of the present sensation with a past sensation. In each instance, the experience of recall and association engenders feelings of great joy in the narrator. Habitude is discussed by the narrator when recounting these involuntary memories, but the role that habitude plays is an absent one; that is, it is explained by the narrator that the reason that the past memories were recalled is because the trigger act producing the same sensation as that experienced in the past is not presently habitually performed: habitude would operate so as to render involuntary memory inaccessible.

The first experience of *mémoire involontaire* in Le temps retrouvé is the narrator's tripping on the paving stones outside the Guermantes' coach house, which recalled to him a time when he tripped on uneven stones when he was in Venice. At the Guermantes, he was overcome with a sense of great happiness, to the point of feeling that he was indifferent toward death. He determined to try and understand why that memory

caused such an overwhelming joyful sensation. As he waited in a sitting room for a concert to end, a servant made a noise, knocking a spoon against a plate. Again, the narrator was flooded with happiness, and his association was with a row of trees that he had seen in a railway carriage when it was stopped in a wood; the noise of the spoon recalled the noise of a hammer pounding against a train wheel during a repair. The next incident followed rapidly, after the narrator was taken into the library, still waiting for the end of the concert; there was food served to him, and, as he wiped his mouth with a napkin, the particular kind of stiffness of the napkin recalled to him a very similar towel with which he had wiped his face in front of his hotel in Balbec. Once more, he is suffused with a feeling of great joy. Putting all of these experiences together, the paving stones, the spoon against the plate, the napkin, and remembering the similar experience with the *madeleine*, the narrator deduces that it is pure sensation (touch, sound, and taste) which enables one to experience at one and the same time the past and the present. The narrator further deduces that the feeling of happiness, and indifference to death, occurs because one experiences on an affective level a liberation from Time.

A further incident of *mémoire involontaire* follows upon these three. The narrator hears a sharp noise of water running through a pipe, which recalls to him the long whistles of vessels which approached Balbec, and he not only recalls the dining room scene at Balbec but actually feels (Vol VI TR 267) “not only an echo, a duplicate of a past sensation that I was made to feel by the noise of the water in the pipe, it was that past sensation itself;” (« *Ce n’était d’ailleurs même pas seulement un écho, un double d’une sensation passée que venait de me faire éprouver le bruit de la conduite d’eau, mais cette sensation elle-même* » (TR 265).

It is this succession of events, and the (wholly secular) epiphany they produce, which leads the narrator to believe he can and will fulfill his chosen vocation of being a writer, to reveal the truths that stand outside of Time. In that endeavor, habitude is his foe:

The work of the artist ... is a process exactly the reverse of that which is at every moment being accomplished by vanity and passion and the intellect, and habitude too, when they smother our true impressions, so as entirely to conceal them from us, beneath a whole heap of verbal concepts and practical goals which we falsely call life (Vol. VI TR 299-300).⁸⁷

Our vanity, our passions, our spirit of imitation, our abstract intelligence, our habitudes have long been at work, and it is the task of art to undo this work of theirs, making us travel back in the direction from which we have come to the depths where what has really existed lies unknown within us (Vol VI TR 300).⁸⁸

I was surrounded by symbols...and to the least of these I had to restore the meaning which habitude had caused them to lose for me. Nor was that all. When we have arrived at reality, we must, to express it and preserve

⁸⁷ « Ce travail de l'artiste...c'est exactement le travail inverse de celui que à chaque minute quand nous vivons détourné de nous-même, l'amour-propre, la passion, l'intelligence, et l'habitude aussi accomplissent en nous, quand elles amassent au-dessus de nos impressions vraies, pour nous les cacher entièrement, les nomenclatures, les buts pratiques que nous appelons faussement la vie » (TR 290).

⁸⁸ « Ce travail qu'avaient fait notre amour-propre, notre esprit d'imitation, notre intelligence abstraite, nos habitudes, c'est ce travail que l'art défera, c'est la marche en sens contraire, le retour aux profondeurs où ce qui a existé réellement gît inconnu de nous qu'il nous fera suivre » (TR 290).

it, prevent the intrusion of all those extraneous elements which at every moment the gathered speed of habitude lays at our feet (Vol VI 302).⁸⁹

If we put the now six incidents of involuntary memory together, we note some interesting similarities and some interesting differences. The outstanding similarity is the one stressed by Proust--it is a sensation that triggers involuntary memory. The other important similarity is that the trigger sensation has not been experienced since the time that the original sensation or sensations had been felt. The important difference between these various incidents is that the original sensation could have been one that was repeated, and hence at the time habitual, like eating the *madeleine*, or hearing the steamers whistling at Balbec, or perhaps wiping his face with a certain kind of towel at Balbec, or it could have happened only once, like being lovingly attended to upon arriving at Balbec, stumbling in Venice, or hearing the hammer of a wheel upon the train while it was stopped for a repair. Therefore, the habitual nature, or unique nature, of the original sensation is not relevant: both habitual and non-habitual sensations experienced in the past may provide instances of involuntary memory at a later time, provided only a sufficient time elapses between the last time the original sensation occurred and the triggering sensation. Thus sensations which were at one time habitual, as well as sensations experienced one time only, may be stored outside of our conscious memory, and they cannot be recalled by us by choice.

⁸⁹ « Il me fallait rendre aux moindres signes qui m'entouraient...leur sens que l'habitude leur avait fait perdre pour moi. Et quand nous aurons atteint la réalité, pour l'exprimer, pour la conserver, nous écarterons ce qui est différent d'elle et que ne cesse de nous apporter la vitesse acquise de l'habitude » (TR 292).

One may ask why it is critically important, if involuntary memories are to come back to us, that the trigger sensation be not habitual. The obvious answer, according to the Proustian conception of *habitude*, is that *if* the memory could be summoned at will, we would not experience that fusion of past and present which projects us outside of Time. Once again, it is the breaking of *habitudes*, of doing things outside the realm of the routine, which provokes unexpected rewards. We note that in this one context, that is, the chance retrieval of involuntary memories, joy, not suffering, is involved when *habitudes* are broken. But here, it is a negative aspect of *habitude* that is involved, that is, it is the fact that the triggering sensation is not habitual which recalls the forgotten experience, which then generates the intense feeling of joy. Here too, the catapulting event happens outside of our intentions, or, if we intend the act, it is not because we intended the consequence of bringing back buried or abandoned memories. Once more, although in an entirely different context, the Proustian laboratory has furnished more of its particular type of “evidence” that breaking *habitudes* is one of the best things we can do for ourselves.

We do not believe that Proust’s discussion of memory, will, and *habitude* lends itself to a theoretical system which answers the basic questions posed by the philosophers of his day. The important philosophical or psychological postulates realized by the narrator from the succession of his involuntary memory experiences in Le Temps retrouvé are these: memories that are habitually recalled may be summoned at will; others come back to us only by chance. Associative sensations trigger the latter. A fusion of past and present sensations on an affective level liberates us from the domination of Time, which otherwise dulls all of our sensibilities. If memories may be

habitually recalled by the will, then *Habitude* will operate once again as a general anesthetic, closing off from us the possibilities of experiencing this liberation from Time. The foregoing series of propositions is not a philosophical system, nor an answer to the burning philosophical questions of the day. Rather, it is a description of emotional life as it is impacted by memory and habitude.

In this connection, it is important to remember what Blondel and other critics have said: Proust was a poet, not a philosopher. We are reading a novel, not a treatise. Thus it is entirely possible that the narrator's description of his experiences of *mémoire involontaire* was a literary device, rather than a description of the human condition. That present sensations recall past sensations is surely not a "discovery" which awaited the narrator's bite into the *madeleine*. That such a bite could generate years of the most detailed memories heretofore forgotten is more beautiful than *vraisemblable*. While we, the readers, probably do not feel that a great hoax is being perpetrated upon us by the author, as we read, in Le temps retrouvé, of this succession of involuntary memories, following one upon another by chance, each one, minor in itself, evoking a string of exceptionally happy times in the past life of the narrator, it is only because we have willingly suspended our disbelief that such a personally cataclysmic event occurs from a stumble, from the sound of a spoon upon a plate, from wiping one's mouth with a napkin. If we, the readers, are swept away by the narrator's enthusiasm for his discovery that he has now really found and can fulfill his vocation, it is by the author's poetry and by our choice, not by either his or our critical reason. On the other hand, the narrator once again makes a very persuasive case for acting outside of habitude.

**CHAPTER VII. THE PLACE OF HABITUDE IN A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ON
A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU**

A. INTRODUCTION

We have referred at the outset to the two related but very different definitions of habitude that infuse À la recherche du temps perdu and all other texts which pursue the study of that phenomenon: first, the everyday, common-sense, banal definition, i.e., that which is done routinely, as an automatism, without a particular act of will; and second the profound, pervasive, and highly philosophical definition, i.e., the associations and actions of human beings which, by virtue of repetition, alter the relationships between sensation, will, intellect, ability, and need, and also form the context for social, and perhaps hereditary, behavior. Throughout the novel, habitude is referred to on both of these levels, and its influence and power in both domains is pervasive.

When habitude is considered in the novel in the more philosophical terms, it plays a determinative role in our lives. This occurs on two levels. On the highest, most abstract level, habitude is a critical component of abstract concepts such as time, memory, and reality. On a less abstract level, it is a critical component of life's major issues, such as love, work, and sexual orientation. As we have shown, the role that habitude plays in virtually every major theme of the novel is explored, and, in each, that role is major. At every level, the Proustian world operates according to the "unsuspected defensive power of inveterate habitude" (Vol V C&F 888)⁹⁰ and the novel can not be fully understood and appreciated without a comprehensive acknowledgment of that power.

⁹⁰ « ...grâce à l'insoupçonnable pouvoir de l'habitude invétérée... » (Pris. 315).

B. HABITUDE IN AN EVERYDAY CONTEXT

We have not heretofore presented the very many instances of the first, commonplace uses of *habitude* in À la recherche du temps perdu, as it is the intense analysis and discussion of the deeper meaning of the phenomenon in the novel that primarily holds our interest here. By definition, the use of *habitude* in this banal sense does not enhance our understanding of the phenomenon of *habitude*. Yet in considering the role that *habitude* plays in the novel as a whole, and hence its importance in the Proustian worldview, this common sense use of the term should not be ignored. One sees its use especially in the actions of the various characters, expressing *habitudes* which fix those characters in the reader's mind. For example, Swann had a "habitude of addressing in terms of gallantry, to pay [a woman] delicate compliments which most society people were incapable of understanding" (Vol I SW 484)⁹¹; Bergotte had a mystifying *habitude* of repeating, daily, his call of duty upon a relatively remote acquaintance who was ill (Vol III GW 447; GU 2, 69); Aunt Léonie had a *habitude* of thinking aloud, without regard to who may be listening (Vol I SW, 68; Sw 148). (Aunt Léonie in particular, according to the narrator's grandfather, was marked by "odd and unaccountable *habitudes*" (Vol I SW 238); (« des *habitudes* bizarres »; Sw 281)).

Other everyday *habitudes* were important markers of personality, such as lying, which was habitual with Odette (Vol I SW 413; Sw 418-19); M. de Charlus (Vol IV SG 480; SG2, 119); and Bloch's uncle, M. Nissim Bernard (Vol II BG 485; JFF 2, 156). Albertine had the *habitude* of making others repeat what they said, so as to appear more

⁹¹ « Swann, habitué quand il était auprès d'une femme avec qui il avait gardé des *habitudes* galantes de langage, de dire des choses délicates que beaucoup de gens du monde ne comprenaient pas... » (Sw. 474).

interested in them than she really was (Vol II BG 668; JFF 2, 306). The efficient and unsentimental partnership between the Duke of Guermantes and his wife was facilitated by the Duke's habitude of making all decisions that might appear ungracious (Vol III GW 790, Gu II, 343) and his exceedingly selfish character was disguised by his general habitude of unfailing politeness (Vol III GW 571; Gu II,169).

Robert de Saint-Loup is a character especially delineated by his habitudes. In the narrator's first meeting with Robert de Saint-Loup, the latter's manner of greeting is purely habitual, and unique, as he at first ignores the person to whom he is introduced, then stares at him intently, and then treats him with unusual courtesy:

After I had seen him repeat the same process every time someone was introduced to him, I realized that it was simply a social usage peculiar to his branch of the family, to which his mother, who had seen to it that he should be perfectly brought up, had moulded his limbs ... they were a thing devoid of the moral significance which I had at first ascribed to them, a thing purely acquired, like that other habitude that he had of at once demanding an introduction to the family of anyone he knew... (Vol. II, BG, 425).⁹²

De Loup's character is repeatedly described in terms of characteristics which are specifically stated to be habitudes. Such characteristics are courtesy and modesty (Vol VI TR 77; TR 113); easy confession of mistakes, claiming them to be purposeful (Vol VI

⁹² « Quand je lui eus vu refaire chaque fois qu'on lui présentait quelqu'un, je compris que c'était une simple habitude mondaine particulière à une certaine partie de sa famille et à laquelle sa mère qui tenait à ce qu'il fût admirablement bien élevé, avait plié son corps ; c'était une chose dénuée de la signification morale que je lui avais donnée d'abord, une chose purement apprise, comme cette autre habitude qu'il avait aussi de se faire présenter immédiatement aux parents de quelqu'un qu'il connaissait...» (JFF 2, 108). Note how the translation substitutes « social usage » for « habitude mondaine. »

TR 68; TR106); effacement before others; and generosity (Vol VI TR 226-27, TR 232-33). As for the narrator himself, he consistently presents himself as a “man of habitude” (Vol II BG 419; JFF 2, 103), the “instrument of habitudes...” (Vol III GW 196; Gu I, 227). He writes to Albertine: “As you have told me often, I am first and foremost a man of habitudes” (Vol V C&F 613).⁹³

Habitudes in this everyday, banal sense not only mark our personalities and our characters, individualize our actions, speech and gestures, but they determine our physiognomy, fill our time and consequently usurp our lives:

The features of our face are hardly more than gestures which force of habitude has made permanent” (Vol II BG 667).⁹⁴

The time which we have at our disposal every day is elastic; the passions that we feel expand it, those that we inspire contract it; and habitude fills up what remains (Vol II BG 257).⁹⁵

...habitude so fills up our time that we have not, after a few months, a free moment in a town where on our first arrival the day offered us the absolute disposal of all its twelve hours...(Vol IV S&G 697).⁹⁶

We lived a day-to-day life which, however tedious, was still endurable, held down to earth by the ballast of habitude...(Vol IV C&F 476).⁹⁷

⁹³ « Vous me l’avez dit souvent, je suis surtout un homme d’habitudes » (Fug. 90).

⁹⁴ « Les traits de notre visage ne sont guère que des gestes devenus, par l’habitude, définitifs » (JFF 2, 305).

⁹⁵ « Le temps dont nous disposons chaque jour est élastique; les passions que nous ressentons le dilatent; celles que nous inspirons le rétrécissent, et l’habitude le remplit » (JFF 1, 295).

⁹⁶ « Outre que l’habitude remplit tellement notre temps qu’il ne nous reste plus au bout de quelques mois un instant de libre dans une ville où à l’arrivée la journée nous offrait la disponibilité de ses douze heures... » (SG 2, 292).

Thus in the most everyday sense, *habitude* plays a pervasive role in life, one that requires recognition and, if one adheres to the judgments of the narrator, a large degree of censure.

C. THE PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES: TIME, MEMORY, AND REALITY

In one sense, it is curious that there is so much critical discourse on the overarching Proustian theories: voluntary and involuntary memory, time, and reality, since the narrator expounds and explains these theories with great care. One might make a good case for the proposition that no further explanations are necessary. We begin by restating the propositions in their simplest form.

Our intellect and our will control our voluntary memory and we remember what we are used to remembering. Although our sense of ourself keeps changing with time, we can not by an act of will or intellect experience our own past selves. The greatest joy that we may experience occurs if and when we are able to recapture our past self, and have it fuse with our current self. This joy gives us a sense of the infinite, of a life outside of time. That joy may never occur, but if and when it does, it is because of an involuntary memory, which is stored somewhere but can not be recalled by an act of will or intellect. That involuntary memory was triggered by a current sensory perception which recalled a prior sensory perception, and thereby brought back the actual feelings experienced by a former self. This experience results in an exhilarating, joyous fusion of selves, a feeling that existence is independent of time. The artist's work is to recapture the experience triggered by involuntary memory so as to attain a profound reality which is otherwise lost.

⁹⁷ « On vivait un au jour le jour, qui, même pénible, restait supportable, retenu dans le terre à terre par le lest de l'habitude...» (Pris. 462).

We find no reference to habitude in that restatement, and, indeed, there usually is not, or else only a passing reference, as we have shown. But in fact, the text makes clear that there is another element which plays the most critical role in our lives with respect to ever attaining that very fusion, that feeling of reaching a profound reality and a state of independence from time which makes, in the narrator's words, death irrelevant (Vol VI TR 257; TR 257). That element of course is Habitue, a force so strong and so pervasive that it "habitually" blocks us from experiencing the deeper reality, the exalted state.

The narrator returns again and again to this issue: profound emotion is experienced, profound reality is understood, the feeling of existence outside of time and the joy it produces are reached, only when Habitue is suppressed, overcome, or otherwise inoperative. We recapture the essence of a past love experience only when Habitue has not completely obliterated a rejected memory:

Now the memories of love are no exception to the general laws of memory, which in turn are governed by the still more general laws of Habitue. And as Habitue weakens everything, what best reminds us of a person is precisely what we had forgotten (because it was of no importance, and we therefore left it in full possession of its strength). That is why the better part of our memories exists outside us, in a blatter of rain, in the smell of an unaired room, ... wherever, in short, we happen upon what our mind, having no use for it, had rejected...Outside us? Within us, rather, but hidden from our eyes in an oblivion more or less prolonged. It is thanks to this oblivion alone that we can from time to time recover the person that we were, place ourselves in relation to things as he

was placed, suffer anew because we are no longer ourselves but he, and because he loved what now leaves us indifferent. In the broad daylight of our habitual memory the images of the past turn gradually pale and fade out of sight, nothing remains of them, we shall never recapture it. Or rather we should never recapture it had not a few words ... been carefully locked away in oblivion... (Vol II BG 300-01).⁹⁸

When our inner habitudes are suppressed, an external stimuli, even a change of weather, may generate an exalted state:

Within our being, an instrument which the uniformity of habitude has rendered mute, song is born of these divergences, these variations, the source of all music: the change of weather on certain days makes us pass at once from one note to another. We recapture the forgotten tune ... These modifications alone, internal though they had come from without, gave me a fresh vision of the external world. Communicating doors, long barred, reopened in my brain...With my whole being quivering around the vibrating string, I would have sacrificed my dim former existence and my

⁹⁸ « Or, les souvenirs d'amour ne font pas exception aux lois générales de la mémoire elles-mêmes régies par les lois plus générales de l'habitude. Comme celle-ci affaiblit tout, ce qui nous avons oublié (parce que c'était insignifiant et que nous lui avons ainsi laissé toute sa force). C'est pourquoi la meilleure part de notre mémoire est hors de nous, dans un souffle pluvieux, dans l'odeur de renfermé d'une chambre ou dans l'odeur d'une première flambée, partout où nous retrouvons de nous-même ce que notre intelligence, n'en ayant pas l'emploi, avait dédaigné, la dernière réserve du passé, la meilleure, celle qui, quand toutes nos larmes semblent taries, sait nous faire pleurer encore. Hors de nous ? En nous pour mieux dire, mais dérobée à nos propres regard, dans un oubli plus ou moins prolongé. C'est grâce à cet oubli seul que nous pouvons de temps à autre retrouver l'être que nous fûmes, nous placer vis-à-vis des choses comme cet être l'était, souffrir à nouveau, parce que nous ne sommes plus nous, mais lui, et qu'il aimait ce qui nous est maintenant indifférent. Au grand jour la mémoire habituelle, les image du passé pâlisent peu à peu, s'effacent, il ne reste plus rien d'elles, nous ne le retrouverons plus. Ou plutôt nous ne le retrouverions plus, si quelques mots...n'avaient été soigneusement enfermés dans l'oubli...» (JFF2, 8-9).

life to come, erased by the India-rubber of habitude, for a state so unique
(Vol V C&F 23).⁹⁹

The stimulation can be visual:

All of a sudden, the sun would colour this muslin glass, gild it, and gently disclosing in my person an earlier young man whom habitude had long concealed, would intoxicate me with memories, as though I were in the heart of the country amidst golden foliage... (Vol V C&F 3);¹⁰⁰

or a noise or scent:

But let a noise or a scent, once heard or once smelt, be heard or smelt again in the present and at the same time in the past...and immediately the permanent and habitually concealed essence of things is liberated, and our true self which seemed...to be dead...is awakened and reanimated... (Vol VI TR 264);¹⁰¹

Or an observation of nature which fuses with paintings one had believed forgotten:

⁹⁹ « En notre être, instrument que l'uniformité de l'habitude a rendu silencieux, le chant naît de ces écarts, de ces variations, source de toute musique : le temps qu'il fait certain jours nous fait aussitôt passer d'une note à une autre. Nous retrouvons l'air oublié dont nous aurions pu deviner la nécessité mathématique et que pendant les premiers instants nous chantons sans le connaître. Seules ces modifications internes, bien que venues du dehors, renouvelaient pour moi le monde extérieur. Des portes de communication depuis longtemps condamnées se rouvraient dans mon cerveau...Frémissant tout entier autour de la corde vibrante, j'aurais sacrifié ma terne vie d'autrefois et ma vie à venir, passée à la gomme à effacer de l'habitude, pour cet état si particulier » (Pris. 116-17).

¹⁰⁰ « Le soleil tout à coup jaunissait cette mousseline de verre, la dorait et, découvrant doucement en moi un jeune homme plus ancien qu'avait caché longtemps l'habitude, me grisait de souvenirs, comme si j'eusse été en pleine nature devant des feuillages dorés... » (Pris. 101).

¹⁰¹ « Mais qu'un bruit, qu'une odeur, déjà entendu ou respirée jadis, le soient de nouveau, à la fois dans le présent et dans le passé, réels sans être actuels...aussitôt l'essence permanente et habituellement cachée des choses se trouve libérée et notre vrai moi qui parfois depuis longtemps, semblait mort, mais ne l'était pas entièrement, s'éveille, s'anime... » (TR 263).

It sometimes happened too, however, that the habitudes which bound me were suddenly abolished, generally when some former self, full of the desire to live an exhilarating life, momentarily took the place of my present self ... [I] had taken an unfrequented path through the woods. For a moment the barren rocks by which I was surrounded, and the sea that was visible through their jagged gaps, swam before my eyes like fragments of another universe; I had recognized the mountainous and marine landscape which Elstir had made ... The memory of them [two paintings of Elstir] transported the place in which I now found myself so far outside the world of today... (Vol IV S&G 581).¹⁰²

The stimulation may even be the sight of people whom one had not seen for a long time, and whose true meaning had been erased by habitude:

I was surrounded by symbols (Guermantes, Albertine, Gilberte, Saint-Loup, Balbec, etc.) and to the least of these I had to restore the meaning which habitude had caused them to lose for me. Nor was that all. When we have arrived at reality, we must, to express it and preserve it, prevent the intrusion of all those extraneous elements which at every moment the gathered speed of habitude lays at our feet (Vol VI TR 302).¹⁰³

¹⁰² « Pourtant il arrivait aussi que les habitudes qui me retenaient fussent soudain abolies, le plus souvent quand quelque ancien moi, plein du désir de vivre avec allégresse, remplaçait pour un instant le moi actuel ... j'avais pris dans les bois une route sauvage ... Un instant, les rochers dénudés dont j'étais entouré, la mer qu'on apercevait par leurs déchirures, flottèrent devant mes yeux, comme des fragments d'un autre univers: j'avais reconnu le paysage montagneux et marin qu'Elstir a donné pour cadre à ces deux admirables aquarelles ... Leur souvenir [des deux tableaux d'Elstir] replaçait les lieux où je me trouvais tellement en dehors du monde actuel...» (SG 2, 201-02).

¹⁰³ « Il me fallait rendre aux moindres signes qui m'entouraient (Guermantes, Albertine, Gilberte, Saint-Loup, Balbec, etc.) leur sens que l'habitude leur avait fait perdre pour moi. Et quand nous aurons atteint la réalité, pour l'exprimer, pour la conserver, nous écarterons ce qui est différent d'elle et que ne cesse de

The newness restores the sense of time: “Time which by habitude is made invisible and to become visible seeks bodies...” (Vol VI TR 342);¹⁰⁴ the fusion of past and present selves, possible only through the suppression of habitude, creates this profound reality:

...when one becomes for an instant one’s former self; that is to say different from what one has been for some time past, one’s sensibility, being no longer dulled by habitude, receives from the slightest stimulus vivid impressions which make everything that has preceded them fade into insignificance... (Vol IV S&G 590);¹⁰⁵

and the vocation of the artist is to reveal this process:

The work of the artist ... is a process exactly the reverse of that which ... is at every moment being accomplished by vanity and passion and the intellect, and habitude too, when they smother our true impressions, so as entirely to conceal them from us, beneath a whole heap of verbal concepts and practical goals which we falsely call life Our vanity, our passions, our spirit of imitation, our abstract intelligence, our habitudes have long been at work, and it is the task of art to undo this work of theirs, making us travel back in the direction from which we have come to the depths

nous apporter la vitesse acquise de l’habitude » (TR 292).

¹⁰⁴ « ...le Temps qui d’habitude n’est pas visible, pour le devenir cherche des corps... » (TR 323).

¹⁰⁵ « ...et puis, quand on redevient pour un instant un homme ancien, c’est-à-dire différent de celui qu’on est depuis longtemps, la sensibilité n’étant plus amortie par l’habitude reçoit des moindres chocs des impressions si vives qui font pâlir tout ce qui les a précédées... » (SG 2, 209).

where what has really existed lies unknown within us (Vol VI TR 299-300).¹⁰⁶

We can not will involuntary memory, clearly. But what does lie within our power, perhaps, is the ability to challenge our habitudes, to “undo” their work; to pursue the tickling in the mind from a noise, a scent, or a view and recapture its source. For in Le temps retrouvé, the narrator makes clear that he forced himself to pursue the source of the sudden feeling of exhilaration, to recapture the original sensations, and so to currently experience a past self. The same point is made even more forcefully in the negative, as it were, when the narrator is driving with his grandmother and Mme de Villeparisis toward Hudimesnil and sees three trees which appeared to him familiar, although he had not been in that place before, and can not at the moment recapture the connection of those trees with his past, because: “...if my mind was thus to collect itself, to gather momentum, I should have to be alone” (Vol II BG 405).¹⁰⁷ The opportunity for the *mémoire involontaire* experience is lost. The importance of the loss can hardly be overstated:

I recognized that kind of pleasure [of recognizing the connection of the three trees with a past sight] which requires, it is true, a certain effort on the part of the mind, but in comparison with which the attractions of the

¹⁰⁶ « Ce travail de l'artiste ... c'est exactement le travail inverse de celui que à chaque minute ... l'amour-propre, la passion, l'intelligence, et l'habitude aussi accomplissent en nous, quand elles amassent au-dessus de nos impressions vraies, pour nous les cacher entièrement, les nomenclatures, les buts pratiques que nous appelons faussement la vie ... Ce travail qu'avaient fait notre amour-propre, notre passion, notre esprit d'imitation, notre intelligence abstraite, nos habitudes, c'est ce travail que l'art défera, c'est la marche en sens contraire, le retour aux profondeurs ou ce qui a existé réellement gît inconnu de nous qu'il nous fera suivre » (TR 290).

¹⁰⁷ « Mais pour que mon esprit pût ainsi se rassembler, prendre son élan, il m'eût fallu être seul » (JFF2, 92).

indolence which inclines us to renounce that pleasure seem very slight. That pleasure, the object of which I could only dimly feel, which I must create for myself, I experienced only on rare occasions, but on each of these it seemed to me that the things that had happened in the meantime were of little importance, and that in attaching myself to the reality of that pleasure alone could I at length begin to lead a true life (Vol II BG 405).¹⁰⁸

And when, the road having forked and the carriage with it, I turned my back on them [the three trees] and ceased to see them, while Mme de Villeparisis asked me what I was dreaming about, I was as wretched as if I had just lost a friend, had died myself, had broken faith with the dead or repudiated a god (Vol II BG 407-08).¹⁰⁹

In delivering this message, both by the “*mémoire involontaire manquée*” in À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs, cited above, and later by those experienced in Le temps retrouvé, the novel borders on the messianic.¹¹⁰ There appears at the very least an invitation to the reader to make the very determined and serious effort that is required to trace those first faint sentiments of recognition, of déjà vu, heard, tasted, or smelled, to their origins and experience the exalted pleasures of an experience out of time.

¹⁰⁸ « Je reconnaissais ce genre de plaisir qui requiert, il est vrai, un certain travail de la pensée sur elle-même, mais à côté duquel les agréments de la nonchalance qui vous fait renoncer à lui, semblent bien médiocres. Ce plaisir, dont l'objet n'était que pressenti, que j'avais à créer moi-même, je ne l'éprouvais que de rares fois, mais à chacune d'elles il me semblait que les choses qui s'étaient passées dans l'intervalle n'avaient guère d'importance et qu'en m'attachant à sa seule réalité je pourrais commencer enfin une vraie vie » (JFF 2, 92).

¹⁰⁹ « Et quand, la voiture ayant bifurqué, je leur tournai le dos et cessai de les voir, tandis que Mme de Villeparisis me demandait pourquoi j'avais l'air rêveur, j'étais triste comme si je venais de perdre un ami, de mourir à moi-même, de renier un mort ou de méconnaître un dieu » (JFF 2, 94).

¹¹⁰ A contemporary author, Botton, has made a great success in using À la recherche du temps perdu as a messianic text, but the lessons are prosaic.

D. THE PROCESS OF HABITUDE IN THE FABRIC OF LIFE

There is, in À la recherche du temps perdu, a realm between banal experience and the sublime experience of an existence outside of time; indeed, that realm constitutes by far the greatest part of the text. In that realm, as Proust explores the passions, thoughts, and aesthetic experiences of the narrator and the other characters in the novel, habitude continues to wield its enormous influence. We have just shown that habitude is a marker of individuality. We showed at length in Chapter II that habitude is the key component, sometimes by its presence, sometimes by its absence, in virtually every important human experience, indeed in one's very sense of one's own identity. Despite this microscopic and macroscopic presentation of the ubiquitous presence and influence of habitude, the narrator does not dwell very much on the source of its power. There is speculation regarding that source, but no definitive attempt to explain it.

It is not the origin of habitude that is unknown. At various points in the novel, the narrator cites inheritance, parental training, custom, choice, and necessity as the immediate origin of specific habitudes. For the habitudes which we have inherited, one could argue that no further explanation is required--if a personality may be pre-formed, then the existence of those habitudes is self-explanatory. On the other hand, while training, custom, choice and necessity result in the adoption and repetition of actions or attitudes, to explain how and why such actions and attitudes then become habitudes, with all the force and power which the novel repeatedly ascribes to them, we must rely upon the following metaphor which suggests that habitude is formed by a strong emotion which results in a channel in the brain: "All these habitudes, which are like great uniform high-roads along which our love passes daily and which were forged long ago in the

volcanic fire of an ardent emotion...” (Vol V C&F 921).¹¹¹ This metaphor recalls the theories of Maine de Biran and of his followers, who believed that an action created a path in the brain; when that action is repeated, the path deepens or strengthens, thereby facilitating and encouraging further use.

The text, however, avers forcefully that once we have acquired a *habitude*, it has a physical reality, it is physically a part of us. Thus our “organs” accommodate to *habitudes* (Vol VI TR 451-52; TR 404); they “become atrophied or grow stronger or more subtle according as our need of them increases or diminishes” (Vol IV S&G 303).¹¹² The narrator explains Berma’s ability to project life and energy on the stage, although dying, by reference to the adaptation, through *habitude*, of the organs of her body to her craft:

And indeed our *habitudes* enable us to a large degree, enable even the organs of our bodies, to adapt themselves to an existence which at first sight would appear to be utterly impossible ... Berma in the same way was an old campaigner of the stage, to the requirements of which her organs had so perfectly adapted themselves that she was able, by deploying her energies with a prudence invisible to the public, to give an illusion of good health troubled only by a purely nervous and imaginary complaint...” (Vol VI TR 451-52).¹¹³

¹¹¹ « ...toutes ces *habitudes*, sorte de grandes voies uniformes par où passe chaque jour notre amour et qui furent fondues jadis dans le feu volcanique d’une émotion ardente » (Fug. 340).

¹¹² « Les organes s’atrophient ou deviennent plus forts ou plus subtils selon que le besoin qu’on a d’eux croît ou diminue » (SG 1, 314).

¹¹³ « Et en effet nos *habitudes* nous permettent dans une large mesure, permettent même à nos organes de s’accommoder d’une existence qui semblerait au premier abord ne pas être possible...La Berma n’était pas une moins vieille habitué de la scène aux exigences de laquelle ses organes étaient si parfaitement adaptés

Once inside us, in our very organs, *habitude* controls our actions, our morality, our very character: "...for *habitude* forms the ... character of the man ... in succumbing too often to pleasure, to laziness, to the fear of being put to trouble, one traces for oneself, on a character which it will finally be impossible to retouch, the lineaments of one's vices and the limits of one's virtue" (Vol II BG 178-79).¹¹⁴ We are powerless to escape that control; "we can never free ourselves" from the "continuous weft of *habitude*." (Vol V C&F 121); («...c'est cette trame continue d'habitudes dont nous ne pouvons pas nous dégager») (Pris. 191)).

The pleasures that the narrator derives emerge especially from what he sees; these descriptions are one of the great delights of the novel. The narrator does not prize friendship, and, still less, love. For his visual pleasures to occur, *habitude* plays a critical role, but in a negative sense, that is, by its absence or suppression. The sights and delights are afforded by nature or by art, or by both:

These pleasures of nature (intensified by the suppression of *habitude* and indeed by my physical hunger), were infused... (Vol II BG 135).¹¹⁵

If we press for a definition of what their admirers [the admirers of art] mean by the epithet [wonderful], we shall find that it is generally applied to some unusual image of a familiar object, an image different from those that we are accustomed to see, unusual and yet true to nature, and for that

qu'elle pouvait donner en se dépensant avec une prudence indiscernable pour le public l'illusion d'une bonne santé troublée seulement par un mal purement nerveux et imaginaire » (TR 404).

¹¹⁴ «...car l'*habitude* fait aussi bien...le caractère de l'homme,...comme en cédant souvent au plaisir, à la paresse, à la peur de souffrir, on dessine soi-même sur un caractère où la retouche finit par n'être plus possible, la figure de ses vices et les limites de sa vertu » (JFF 1, 231).

¹¹⁵ « A ces plaisirs de nature (qu'avait la suppression de l'*habitude*, et même la faim) la perspective émotionnante ... se mêlait...» (JFF 1, 195).

reason doubly striking because it surprises us, takes us out of our cocoon of habitude, and at the same time brings us back to ourselves by recalling to us an earlier impression (Vol II BG 570).¹¹⁶

...one's sensibility, being no longer dulled by habitude, receives from the slightest stimulus vivid impressions which make everything that has preceded them fade into insignificance, impressions to which, because of their intensity, we attach ourselves with the momentary enthusiasm of a drunkard (Vol IV S&G 590-91).¹¹⁷

...there had descended Habitude, which cuts off from things which we have witnessed a number of times the root of profound impression and of thought which gives them their real meaning)... (Vol VI TR 97).¹¹⁸

This last quotation adds another critical component to the equation: the qualities of mind.

A new sight will not delight the viewer unless the viewer's mind is significantly engaged:

It could have been arrested only by the appeal of some reality that addressed itself to my imagination, as might have done ... a picture of Venice ... or some general element, common to several aspects and truer than they, which, of its own accord, never failed to awake in me an inner

¹¹⁶ « Si on cherche à préciser ce que les amateurs désignent dans ce cas par cette épithète [admirable], on verra qu'elle s'applique d'ordinaire à quelque image singulière d'une chose connue, image différente de celles que nous avons l'habitude de voir, singulière et pourtant vraie et qui à cause de cela est pour nous doublement saisissante parce qu'elle nous étonne, nous fait sortir de nos habitudes, et tout à la fois nous fait rentrer en nous-mêmes en nous rappelant une impression » (JFF 2, 227).

¹¹⁷ « ...la sensibilité n'étant plus amortie par l'habitude reçoit des moindres chocs des impressions si vives qui font pâlir tout ce qui les a précédées et auxquelles à cause de leur intensité nous nous attachons avec l'exaltation passagère d'un ivrogne » (SG 2, 209).

¹¹⁸ «...l'habitude était venue qui retranche aux choses que nous avons vues plusieurs fois la racine d'impression profonde et de pensée qui leur donne leur sens réel...» (TR 128).

spirit, habitually dormant, the ascent of which to the surface of my consciousness filled me with joy (Vol V C&F 378).¹¹⁹

Thus we see again the double-edged nature of *habitude* as it relates to our bodies and our physical experiences: by infusion in our very organs, it enables us to accomplish feats which would otherwise be impossible (Berma's dying performance brings to mind Montaigne's peasant woman who carried the cow), but only by suppression or absence does it allow us to keenly experience visual beauty. In the second case, and perhaps in the first as well, the mind, the imagination must be deeply implicated.

We have said before that Proust created his own laboratory wherein he examined, through fiction, the real world. We have argued that in that laboratory, he advanced the understanding of the phenomenon of *habitude* and of its ubiquitous role in our lives. It is time that Proust's significant contribution to that understanding be recognized, but a second recognition is also required, namely, an acknowledgment of the highly significant role that *habitude* played in Proust's social laboratory, that is, in À la recherche du temps perdu. This second recognition should add to the appreciation of the novel, but not necessarily change any particular interpretation. Thus in urging this recognition, we are not promoting any "ism" at all; the novel can continue to be viewed through any prism that the reader or commentator chooses. We do insist, however, that the novel can not be fully appreciated if, under any optic, the significance and importance of the role of *habitude* remains unacknowledged in the world and world view offered us by Proust's recapture of lost time.

¹¹⁹ « Elle n'eût pu être fixée que par l'appel de quelque réalité s'adressant à mon imagination, comme eût pu le faire ce soir une vue de cette Venise ... où quelque élément général, commun à plusieurs apparences et plus vrai qu'elles, qui de lui-même éveillait toujours en moi un esprit intérieur et habituellement endormi mais dont la remontée à la surface de ma conscience me donnait une grande joie » (Pris. 389).

CHAPTER VIII - PROUST ON HABITUDE IN THE 20th CENTURY

A. INTRODUCTION

The several volumes of À la recherche du temps perdu were published between 1913 and 1927 (some after the death of Proust in 1922), at the height of intellectual interest in the phenomenon of habitude. Soon thereafter, it went into not so much of a decline as a disappearance. Jean-Claude Kaufmann identifies Jacques Chevalier's De l'habitude, published in 1929, as the last comprehensive work on the issue before it dropped out of sight (106-08). Kaufmann painstakingly and, we would add, brilliantly, analyzes the reasons why habitude so suddenly vanished from center stage. Since, at its peak, the study of habitude invaded the fields (as we now know them) of biology, physiology, psychology, and sociology, as well as philosophy, it would be useful to consider developments in each and all of these disciplines in order to completely understand why further study of the phenomenon of habitude was not effectively pursued during the remainder of the century. Such a pervasive quest is beyond the scope of the instant exercise. Moreover, since Kaufmann's sophisticated inquiry into the disappearance of habitude as a subject of broad intellectual interest yielded what we believe to be the salient reasons, we may furnish much of the explanation by merely resuming here Kaufmann's study. We do, however, interpolate and add our own observations, particularly in areas other than the sociological aspects of habitude, which was Kaufmann's primary, although not exclusive, focus. Finally, we consider whether, at the beginning of the 21st century, the Proustian analysis of habitude has been superceded or is otherwise outdated.

B. HABITUDE AS OF 1929: JACQUES CHEVALIER'S *DE L'HABITUDE*

Chevalier begins his essay by placing *habitude* at the epicenter of the most critical issues in philosophy and science: relationship of mind and body, adaptation of the organism, the conscious and the unconscious, the will, learning, and virtue (1). He identifies *habitude* as:

...the central problem around which French thought is organized, from Maine de Biran to Ravaisson, from Ravaisson to Boutroux, to Bergson, to Edouard Le Roy, [the] problem was addressed before them by Lamarck, and, before Lamarck, Malebranche, Pascal, and Descartes had given it the most vigilant attention: it is with the problem of *habitude* that the metaphysical rebirth of our age began (XIII)¹²⁰

Chevalier notes initially some of the conflicting effects of *habitude* that the narrator of *À la recherche du temps perdu* more meticulously described: on the one hand it functions as an obstacle, clouding the mind, but on the other hand it provides efficiencies which liberate the mind (5). Chevalier reviews the definitions of *habitude*, classically starting with Aristotle, proceeding through St. Thomas and Ravaisson, and culminating in language comparisons, including Sanskrit, Greek, German and Latin (12), and discussing the different nuances of the word in the various languages. Chevalier makes a point of specifically disagreeing with both Aristotle and Ravaisson as to whether *habitude* can be a property of inorganic as well as organic matter (18-20): he insists that it is both, giving as an example a fold in a paper or material, and pointing out that in French, “*contracter un pli*” means to acquire a *habitude* (26-27). But he says that he will call an inorganic

¹²⁰ Cited in Kaufmann (106).

habitude a habitus--a term not presently unfamiliar to students of sociology, and a term about which Kaufmann has much to say. A large part of Chevalier's study is devoted to a predominant scientific debate of the late 19th century and early 20th centuries—whether evolution proceeded only by mutation and natural selection (Darwin or the neo-Darwinians), or whether the use of organs favored their inheritance and the disuse their eventual loss (Lamarck).¹²¹ Chevalier believed he had found the solution to the conflict between the followers of Lamarck and those of Darwin: it is, quite simply, a recognition of the Divine plan. Thus to the dilemma of vestigial but unused organs, Chevalier relies not only on the (sometimes inconclusive) evidence that they were, at one time but no longer, used, but on the proposition that such organs are evidently intended for future use (77-78). This explanation is, of course, an application of Chevalier's underlying assumptions, which are openly stated at both the beginning and especially at the end of his essay: evolution, and its handmaiden habitude, are a reflection of the Mind of the Creator.

Chevalier says that Lamarck's conception of life and evolution is at bottom a psychological one: "...it consists ... in the assimilation of living operations in habitual acts, and consequently it poses memory, effort, consciousness, and will as the principles of life..." (85). But Chevalier disagrees, and offers his own definition of habitude: "We therefore arrive at this conclusion which is of major importance for the definition of habitude, of its nature and of its exact reach: exteri

or influences and habitudes which result from them are modifications, but not creative forces; they diversify existing types, they do not bring forth new types" (89).

¹²¹ This issue is discussed further below.

Chevalier agrees with the Darwinians that mutations “may appear to explain the immense diversity of appearance in living forms” (90), but says that the form of the mutation must “pre-exist” (91-92). Chevalier insists that habitudes do not get transmitted (114), and that adaptation occurs because non-adaptable species die out (115-18).

Having solved the problem of evolution, Chevalier next tackles the mind/body dilemma, and here *habitude* conveniently takes two forms: habitudes of the body, and those of the mind. The habitudes of the body afford: “...the possibility of easily accomplishing predetermined gestures, in an infinite number, by virtue of the expected dispositions of the organism and in particular of the nervous system, and by virtue of exercise which creates paths and makes them easily responsive to stimulation” (157). This is a definition, but does not explain how an “expected disposition” comes about, or how “exercise” creates those “paths” (“*frayages*”), which are also undefined. In short, little light has been shed, or conceptual advancement made here, towards an understanding of how and why “the body” develops habitudes. As for the habitudes of the mind, we are told that they command memory and will, can be unleashed or held in check by the brain, but when repeated, result in the facilitation of acts (165). It is because of these different abilities, Chevalier says, that *habitude* can either promote only routine and repetitive experiences, or can be inventive and liberating. Again, we are not much further advanced by these “explanations.”

We would take the position that Chevalier’s purpose in writing this book was to utilize the then much debated scientific issues regarding evolution, for which *habitude* was a lynchpin, to further a religious agenda. Thus Chevalier says that both the Lamarckian and Darwinian explanations fail because there was obviously a “Mind”

which organized the machine that is man, and put it into motion, and that Mind fashioned each organ to its use (135). On the biological front, and the mind/body distinction, Chevalier insists that there is an ultimate distinction here; that biology does not reduce to physics, nor psychology to natural science (6); and that free will remains firmly in place. It is in the service of free will that habitude finds its natural domain: “When [reason and will] maintain everything in order, habitude, in its place and proper functioning, serves only to perpetuate through time the intuitions of the mind and the decisions of the will; it is the organ of continuity for intellectual life” (190). The Christian orthodoxy is in full sway here, as Chevalier maintains that the “habitue of the mind” is the struggle to use our free will to elevate ourselves above ourselves, in search of the Good and the Beautiful (227). We finish not far from St. Thomas; instead of reflecting on the habitues of angels, we are asked to admire the “prehabitues” which allow persons to receive “habitual” grace, and to endow human will with God’s will (245).

Kaufmann says that Chevalier’s essay on habitue, which he describes as: “...very learned and analyzing in critical fashion the latest scientific discoveries” (108), placed habitue in an essentially metaphysical and spiritual context, thereby contributing both to the substitution of the word “habitus” for “habitue” in respect of concrete, physiological phenomenon, and also to the decline of non-metaphysical interest in habitue (108). But for the actual death throes (“*l’agonie*”)(108) of the concept of habitue, Kaufmann has two contemporaneous and complementary explanations, to which we now turn.

C. TRACING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HABITUDE POST-CHEVALIER

Kaufmann shows how two movements, one in the field of experimental psychology, and the other in the field of evolutionary biology, grew in the early twentieth century, and, together, buried the concept of *habitude* as that concept had developed for centuries. The first movement involved the founding of the school of behaviorism in psychology (109-10), and the second involved advances in molecular biology (111-12). The effect of these two new developments was the reduction of the broad concept of *habitude* to its everyday and essentially banal meaning of individual, daily routines. That reduction effectively removed the philosophical and physiological fascination that had been part of the study of *habitude* since classical times.

The school of behaviorism was founded by John Watson in the second decade of the 20th century (109). Watson wanted to develop a new “science” of psychology, based only on laboratory experiments and observation, which would center on behavior but draw conclusions based only on objectively observable conduct (109). Watson’s experiments focused on observable learned behavior, and its results were publicized using the concept of “*habitudes*” as the consequence of such behavior. For example, Paul Guillaume’s book, La Formation des habitudes, completely ignored the study of *habitude* as that concept had been analyzed for “more than two thousand years” (110).¹²² As Kaufmann puts it, the school of behaviorism effectuated a “double reduction” of the [former] concept of *habitude*: the new concept lacked completely the notions of both complex consciousness, and of social context, two elements that were core to the larger

¹²² Guillaume’s study relies almost entirely on experimentation, especially with animals, and the author says (76): “Conclusions drawn from animal experiments apply in large part to the formation of human *habitudes*.”

concept of habitude.¹²³ The old concept was no match for the new, given the prevalent currents of scientific thought:

Between the philosophical concept and the new habitude as worked through in the laboratory, the contest was unequal. On the side of the concept, there was an outsize ambition which had difficulty in making itself clear-cut, which was hazy ... and reinforced by metaphysical extrapolations; on the laboratory side, there was the force and authority of a new science, the practical efficiencies in learned behavior. Habitue as an unimportant automatism or as a biological-type reflex was incontestably the winner. Moreover, it had a weighty ally: common sense (110).

The second and conclusive reason Kaufmann assigns for the eviction of the grand concept of habitue from intellectual discourse was the decisive swing in the field of environmental biology from the position that acquired characteristics may be inherited (referred to as the Lamarckian position) to the position that they may not (referred to as the Darwinian, neo-Darwinian, or Weismann position). The Lamarckian position was a commonplace during the 19th century, as noted by Samuel Butler: "...until very recently, and especially until Prof. Weismann's expositions, the proposition which I have to defend [i.e., the inheritability of acquired characteristics] is one which no one till recently would have questioned" ("The Deadlock in Darwinism" 377). Professor August Weismann's treatise, The Germ-Plasm, A Theory of Heredity, which maintained that such inheritability was impossible because the cells of inheritance, the so called germ cells or

¹²³ "I define personality as *the sum of activities that can be discovered by actual observation in behavior over a long enough time to give reliable information. In other words, personality is but the end product of our habit systems*" (Watson 220; italics in original).

germ plasm, were separate and not influenced by other cells of the body, had been published in 1893. In the same Butler essay, “The Deadlock in Darwinism,” which was translated into French by Valéry Larbaud and published in 1922 in the Nouvelle Revue Francaise under the title “*La vie et l’habitude*,” Butler conceded that “The orthodoxy of science, therefore, must be held as giving at any rate a provision of support to Professor Weismann....” (“The Deadlock in Darwinism” 379).¹²⁴ But Butler pointedly did not agree:

According on the other hand to extreme Charles Darwinians and Weismannism, habit, effort and intelligence acquired during the experience of any one life goes for nothing. Not even a little fraction of it endures to the benefit of offspring. It dies with him in whom it is acquired, and the heirs of a man’s body take no interest therein. To state this doctrine is to arouse instinctive loathing; it is my fortunate task to maintain that such a nightmare of waste and death is as baseless as it is repulsive (389-90).¹²⁵

¹²⁴ The title of the translated essay, “*La vie et l’habitude*” was the title in translation of a book by Samuel Butler, originally published in December, 1877 and then republished in 1910. This was one of three books that Butler published on evolution. Life and Habit was intended as a direct challenge to the Darwinian position that random mutation and natural selection accounted completely for evolutionary changes. The author explicitly favored the earlier Lamarckian position. In Life and Habit, Butler also cited and discussed at length the theories of the French philosopher, Ribot, on habitude (see above), thus showing that the issues were joined on both sides of the channel. Butler’s thesis in Life and Habit was that need creates habitude; habitude creates memory; memory is contained in cells and especially in the impregnated ovum; hence habitudes are hereditary and evolution comes about as a result of a creature’s or organism’s need which is perceived at some level of its intelligence. The central place of habitude in Butler’s explanation of evolution, and the rejection of his position when the Lamarckian theories were ultimately rejected in the 20th century, provide additional support for Kaufmann’s thesis as to why habitude fell from grace after about 1930.

¹²⁵ As with Chevalier, there seems to be a religious basis for Butler’s position, although it is not explicitly stated. It brings to mind the observation of J.B. Haldane, cited in Continenza (174) to the effect that teleology is like a mistress to a biologist; he cannot live without her but he is unwilling to be seen with her in public.

Despite, however, Butler's "loathing," "Weismannism" carried the day. This firm rejection of Lamarckian theory, Kaufmann says, tolled the death knell for habitude in its grand philosophical posture: "...habitue was dragged into the tomb along with the heredity of acquired characteristics" (112).¹²⁶

The two causes assigned by Kaufmann for the dizzying ("*vertigineuse*") (112) fall of habitue both speak in the psychological register. Behaviorism furnishes a mechanism for explaining the actions of human beings, and, as noted by Kaufmann, while it does not reject habitue as a motivational factor, it reduces its scope to unimportant dimensions. The firm rejection of inheritance as a tool for interpreting behavior likewise cuts the scope of habitue's influence to each generation, considered separately. But neither of these theories would necessarily end an interest in habitue as a significant explanation of persistent and often counterproductive behavior—e.g., Swann's passion for Odette—although, certainly, a fall from intellectual or theoretical grace can encompass more than its direct underpinnings. We would add to Kaufmann's two causes a third cause, at least with respect to human cognitive and emotional behavior, and that cause is the ascendancy of Freudian psychology in the 20th century, especially after the 1930's.

There can be no real argument that Freudian psychology, and its various offshoots and offspring, dominated the field of psychology in the last two thirds of the 20th century. Not only was habitue, as it had been understood and explored before Freud, not a particular subject of interest in the Freudian worldview, but it did not fit in with the way that ideology explained the workings of the mind, both conscious and "unconscious."

¹²⁶ Butler's essay, however, in the Larbaud translation, continues to carry weight on the philosophical importance of habitue. Thus citing to that essay, Deleuze says: "Samuel Butler has shown better than anyone that there was no other continuity than that of habitue, and that we had no other continuity than that of our thousand composite habitues, forming in us many superstitious and contemplative identities..." (*Différence et répétition* 102 and n.1).

Moreover, the psychoanalytic school tended to preempt other approaches in the field—at least those approaches which did not accord to the basic Freudian presuppositions the status of truth.

Freudian explanations for human behavior were reducible to several basic postulates: (1) that the interaction of two basic instincts, the death instinct and the libido, “gives rise to the whole variegation of the phenomena of life” (Freud, Outline 6); (2) that three sexual phases of childhood, which were termed oral, anal, and phallic, were the necessary and significant stages of development of the human personality (Freud, Outline, 10-11); and (3) that the “id,” the silent, irrational control center of behavior, lies in an unconscious area of the mind which contains repressed and hence ordinarily irretrievable matter. (Freud, Outline, 19-20). In practice, and in consideration of the case histories published by Freud as validation of his theories, Freudian psychology tended to concentrate on symptoms of pathology, rather than patterns of normalcy in the social context.¹²⁷ The “proof” of Freudian ideology is to be found in the subjective appreciation of analysand and analysee in the transaction on the analytic couch.¹²⁸ Thus the content, the process, and the proofs for Freudian psychological theories left no room for exploration in other more concrete and more objective terms the relationship between mind and body, the derivation of thoughts and actions. Habitude, in psychological terms, involves many levels of consciousness and subconsciousness, rather than one

¹²⁷ Thus, for example, the celebrated Freudian “repetition-compulsion” does not relate to the observed need to repeat habitual behavior, but to the alleged compulsion to repeat repressed materials which “always have as their subject some portion of infantile sexual life—of the Oedipus complex, that is, and its derivatives... (Freud, Pleasure Principle 602).

¹²⁸ “... ‘clinical validation’ of Freudian hypotheses is an epistemic sieve; as a means of gaining knowledge, psychoanalysis is fatally contaminated by the inclusion, among its working assumptions and in its dialogue with patients, of the very ideas that supposedly get corroborated by clinical experience.” Crews (14) citing Grünbaum.

“unconscious” which is of interest primarily as the repository of repressed, traumatic experiences. The examination of habitude required analysis and observation of sensory experience, of the relationship of movement and associations, of will, effort, and memory, all issues which were either foreclosed by Freudian-based psychoanalysis, or subsumed under postulates which focused on other causes and dynamics. Thus habitude received, as it were, a third blow: it was rendered substantially irrelevant to mainstream psychological theory.

D. HABITUDE IN SUBSERVIENT AND THEN INCOGNITO STATUS

Habitude, under its own name, did not entirely disappear from the philosophical scene after Chevalier, although its glory days had clearly been eclipsed. For example, there is a discussion of habitude under its own name in Paul Ricoeur’s treatise Philosophie de la volonté, published in 1949, in which the philosopher seeks to redefine and explain habitude, with, in our opinion, much less success than his predecessors. At one point he appears to be criticizing the view that habitude is an obstacle to progress (clearly Proust’s view, and that of a long line of his predecessors) on the ground that it is overly romantic: “...a certain superficial romanticism willingly sees in habitude a principle of sclerosis and challenges everyday banality with explosions of freedom, as if one could reach the beginnings of consciousness by opposing its functions...” (268), but he also criticizes the behaviorists in the next succeeding observation: “...new empirical psychology, for different reasons, also emphasizes the fact of automation; it is the methods they employ which do violence to the doctrine...” (208).

Ricoeur says that this latter empirical approach reduces everything to a primitive kind of automatic response which is inadequate to explain the relationship of will to

habitude. But his own attempts seem equally unsatisfactory; while speaking at length of habitude as an acquisition resulting from knowledge and power, in the end he explains it by citing to Ravaisson's theory that habitude unites the polar opposites of the thinking process (280)--a metaphysical explanation heavily dependent upon posited spatial relationships of functions as explanatory of their operation.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, writing in the same decade as Ricoeur, is more concrete, but no more enlightening regarding the derivation and operation of habitude. Merleau-Ponty uses the example of a typist who can type automatically but can not recite the letters on the keyboard as proof that habitude is neither consciousness nor automation, but a "knowledge that is in the hands, which may be delivered only by a bodily effort..." (168); habitude does not exist either in thought or in the body as an objective fact, but only in the body as a mediator of the world (169). Merleau-Ponty uses the concept of habitude to challenge fundamental philosophical definitions or understandings of objectivity and knowledge: "The acquisition of habitude as a repositioning and renewing of bodily patterns gives great difficulty to classical philosophies which always conceive of a synthesis as an intellectual synthesis" (166). Thus habitude did not entirely disappear from the philosophical or sociological register in this mid-twentieth century decade even though, as Kaufmann notes, its penumbra was much reduced.

While still in reduced play in the philosophical register, there is ample confirmation of Kaufmann's thesis that it disappeared from the sociological scene. In 1988 John D. Baldwin writes:

Modern sociology has created overly cognitive theories that are of limited value since they neglect habit and other noncognitive elements of

behavior. This is ironic since Comte, Durkheim, Weber, Ronnies, Veblen, Simmel, Sumner, Mead and other early social theorists did deal with habits. Beginning some seventy years ago, the classic position was for the most part abandoned (52).¹²⁹

Similarly, Charles Camic, writing in the same decade as Baldwin, seeks to:

...trace the idea of habit back to the period when it was a standard and valued item in the conceptual idiom of modern social theorists; to demonstrate that Émile Durkheim and Max Weber both used the concept extensively when confronting the central problems that organize their sociologies, and then to provide a sociological explanation for the demise of habit..." (1040).

Camic concluded that:

...the concept of habit was long a staple item in the idiom of Western social thinkers ... but that, during the early decades of the 20th century, the term was intentionally expunged from the vocabulary of sociology as American sociologists attempted to establish the autonomy of their discipline by severing its ties with the field of psychology, where (esp. in connection with the growth of behavioralism [sic]) a restricted notion of habit had come into very widespread usage (1077).

Kaufmann traces the use of *habitude*, both as word and concept, in the work of persons, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber, who were developing theories of cultural transmission (114-16). He notes a tendency among the

¹²⁹ Baldwin gives as one reason for this abandonment the "reaction against psychological theories that overemphasized habit..." (52) which appears to be a reference to the Watson school of behaviorism.

latter two authors to use the word in its reductive, banal sense, as referring only to the individual and not to the social context (116-17). Kaufmann says that it was Pierre Bourdieu who effected a final separation between the meanings of *habitude* and *habitus*, conferring on *habitus* the rich heritage of *habitude*. This separation had a partial genesis in the original difference between the Greek words “*hexis*” and “*ethos*” (see discussion in Chapter IV A, above), although the correlations are not exact (117-18). While various social scientists continued to mention *habitude* in the social context (Mauss, Mead, Elias, Berger, Luckmann), the concept as so noted was extremely reductive (119-26). Kaufmann says that the “real” *habitude* did indeed reappear, and in a social context as well, but under a different name: *habitus*. Kaufmann refers to this rebaptism as Bourdieu’s brilliant stroke (“*coup d’éclat*”) (127).¹³⁰

Rather than introducing a new concept with *habitus*, Kaufmann charges that Bourdieu was reintroducing only the old *habitude* in disguise:

When Charles Camic (1986) says that l’*habitude* disappeared from sociological preoccupations at the beginning of the century, he is partially wrong to the extent that the thoughts thereon were pursued in a masked

¹³⁰ While Kaufmann includes Marcel Mauss as one of the social scientists who, “after a detour in latin” (120), continued to use the term ‘*habitude*’ to include both collective and individual phenomenon, a recent work by Michèle Richman cites Mauss as “initially” eschewing *habitude* in favor of the Latin *habitus* because it is more inclusive, having “connotations more complex than the French *habitude* and encompass[ing] the interaction between mind, body, and milieu.” (Richman 149). Richman cites to the meanings of *habitus* intended by Aristotle which, as we have shown, are a classical source for later exegeses on *habitude*. The citations by both Kaufmann and Richman accurately render the Mauss text (first published in 1934, that is, pre-Bourdieu) which indicates that the author wishes to avoid any inference that individual actions stem only from inner, biological and psychological stimuli; rather, they include in important fashion “the social element. Everything, the whole, is conditioned by the three elements [biological, psychological, social] indissolubly mixed.” (Mauss 369). Before the 20th century, however, *habitude* was never considered an automatic and solely biological and psychological phenomenon. Utilization of the Latin word, *habitus*, in these circumstances serves only to support the Kaufmann thesis that, in fact, neither one nor the other is more “inclusive”: they both describe the same phenomenon. *Habitus*, given Bourdieu’s *coup d’éclat*, is now the preferred term when the focus is on the sociological aspects of *habitude*. See also sources cited below, pp. 224-26.

fashion. He is right in respect of that which concerns the most visible: *habitude* became very small, it disappeared from indices, it was utilized only ... in its common sense meaning. When in the 60's Pierre Bourdieu became interested in the question of dispositions, the dominant impression was that of a conceptually deserted field ...: the old *habitus* and the great *habitude* had been forgotten... François Héran (1987) has shown how...Bourdieu is secretly a faithful heir, having retaken and resubmitted, in a manner to please today's tastes, the philosophic "treasure:" *habitude* ... Pierre Bourdieu was afraid, above all, of the reductionist force that *habitude* carried with it. 'I have also said 'habitus' especially *not to say* 'habitude.' (*idem*, underlined by the author).¹³¹ One senses that the word makes him shudder. The oblivion of the past and the use of the latin allowed the indulgence of the dream that one was starting from scratch and on a good note: offer a beautiful and large concept, cleansed and clear. On this point he unquestionably won: the Bourdieusian *habitus* rapidly established itself on the short list of star concepts in sociology (128).¹³²

The thrust of François Héran's essay was that Bourdieu's use of "habitus" as a thematic sociological concept was actually an unacknowledged use of the operative

¹³¹ The quotation is attributed to a 1992 work by Bourdieu at p. 97, listed in Kaumann's appendix as Bourdieu, P., Wacquant L. Réponses. Pour une anthropologie reflexive. See bibliography below which also shows the publication of the same volume in English.

¹³² That Bourdieu's "habitus" is a continuation of the Aristotelian *habitude* did not escape others' notice. Thus in the Larousse Grand Dictionnaire de la Philosophie (469), "habitus" is defined as follows: "The term *habitus*, in the Aristotelian tradition, means either a practical disposition ... or an intellectual one ... In either case, the term "habitude" still contains a distant echo of the concept of *habitus*, wherein medieval Aristotelian philosophical followers explored at length the origin and the real subject matter of our intellectual acts. The term *habitus* is also known by a new use in political sociology (in particular with P. Bourdieu);...."

philosophical concept of “habitude,” as that term had been variously used and defined by Aristotle, St. Thomas, and others. Héran focused especially on the work of the phenomenologists, Edmund Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, as developers of the concept of habitude in the same sense that Bourdieu was using it to explain the relationship of an individual to his particular culture. Héran says that although Bourdieu derided the school of phenomenology, he borrowed heavily from it (402-03).

Kaufmann asserts that several decades later, there was a “spectacular rebirth of the hexis-ethos, under the form of Bourdieusian habitus” (131). A large part of Kaufmann’s essay consists of a profound analysis of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Kaufmann claims that there were actually two such concepts, and that they were very different. Kaufmann’s focus is on the transmission of social or historic memories, thoughts, and actions, and the relationship of the individual to this social context. Nevertheless, habitude in its original sense has a role to play there. Thus Kaufmann says that both habitus and habitude belong in the most general category pertaining to patterns which are registered in unconscious social memory. Habitudes may be more specifically defined as operational patterns which are inside a person. He suggests that the term “incorporated operative patterns” (“*schèmes opératoires incorporés*”) (157) might be accurate, but it is too heavy. Habitude remains the simplest and best expression, and has a distinguished history. While its disadvantage is that it can be confused with the routine and unimportant gesture, which is its common sense usage, it nevertheless registers social memory as well as individual patterns (157). Kaufmann continues to analyze habitudes in both the individual and social context, considering individual consciousness, mental processes, interiorization, and cerebral functions. At one point his theories regarding the

latter approach those of Fouillée, as he explores the intimate connection between movement and thought (173).

Indeed, when one considers the following definition of *habitus* given by Bourdieu, despite its density (not to say impenetrability), one would be at pains to differentiate it from Kaufmann's definition set forth above and other definitions of *habitude* we have already encountered encompassing or emphasizing "dispositions," when applied in a social context:

... the principle of this construction [of the objects of knowledge] is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions.

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bourdieu, The Logic of Practice 52, 53).¹³³

In any event, our point here is that Kaufmann's study once more takes up and focuses particularly on the issue of *habitude*, and expands our understanding of that

¹³³ In an apparent effort to explain Bourdieu's *habitus* in simpler terms, and to distinguish it from *habitude*, Pierre Mounier (41) writes:

"This 'ensemble of lasting dispositions' which guides action, spontaneously adjusting it to the objective conditions where it may be carried out, is what Bourdieu calls *l'habitus*. *Habitus* and not *habitude* to emphasize that it is not an automatic mechanism of pre-established methods of repetition, but rather a "generating principle" in which results of action can not be deduced automatically from the objective conditions of its production."

The distinction thus relies on a reductionist definition of *habitude* which its rich history does not justify.

complex phenomenon. Indeed, in a chapter entitled ‘Patterns which have been inscribed in objects’ (180-83) (“*Les schèmes objectivés*”), we see once again the lampshade in Marcel’s childhood bedroom, as Kaufmann describes the mingling of individual and social memory, the construction thereby of a familiar space, and the formation of individual habitudes with a direct connection to social memory. All that is missing to complete the lampshade experience is the emotional component so beautifully supplied in À la recherche du temps perdu. Kaufmann’s most perceptive and elegantly reasoned study brings habitude once more high above ground in the field of sociology and social psychology.

E. IRRELEVANCE AND RETREAT OF THE “DEATH KNELL” FORCES

Historical discourse has a way of moving on, and what was once important seems less so one hundred years later. Thus the fact that habitude was subsumed and reduced by behaviorism, which aroused great interest in the early part of the 20th century, or fell with the defeat of the Lamarckian school, at about the same time, or became invisible as the Freudians appropriated the mind-body connection, seems highly irrelevant at the start of the 21st century. Yet it is worthwhile to pause a moment and take stock of each of these death knell movements, if only to note that those barriers to a resurgence of interest in the functioning of habitude with respect to the cognitive and emotional processes no longer exist.

It seems fair to say that the behaviorist school of psychology, while still alive, is somewhat marginal. “Psychology remained behaviorally oriented until the 1960s when the stated subject matter changed again. Psychology became the science of cognitive

processes and the mainstream rejected behavior as its subject matter” (Lee 9). Behaviorism was “on the way out, at least in Britain” by the 1950’s (Baddeley 13).¹³⁴

Similarly, there has been renewed interest in the transmission of *habitudes* by heredity, although not in the Lamarckian sense. Proust’s narrator clearly adopted the thinking of his times, which was that *habitudes* are transmitted by heredity, and one would never know when a given trait would emerge (Vol IV S&G 128; SG 1, 167-68). Heredity was its own category of *habitudes*: “*habitude héréditaire*” (Vol IV S&G 128; SG 1, 167-68). The narrator’s examples of hereditary transmissions encompass both allergies, which both sides of the neo-Darwin/Lamarck controversy should have no trouble in accepting, but also psychological states which would clearly have been acceptable only on the Lamarckian side of the controversy:

Humanity is a very old institution. Heredity and cross-breeding have given insuperable strength to bad *habitudes*, faulty reflexes. One person sneezes and gasps because he is passing a rose-bush, another breaks out in a rash at the smell of wet paint; others get violent stomach-aches if they have to set out on a journey, and grandchildren of thieves who are themselves rich and generous cannot resist the temptation to rob you of fifty francs (Vol VI C&F 201-02).¹³⁵

¹³⁴ “...behavioral psychology, and its associated concepts of conditioning and reinforcement, has been on the decline in psychological science” (Robins 311).

¹³⁵ « L’humanité est très vieille. L’hérédité, les croisements ont donné une force immuable à de mauvaises *habitudes*, à des réflexes vicieux. Une personne éternue et râle parce qu’elle passe près d’un rosier, une autre a une éruption à l’odeur de la peinture fraîche, beaucoup des coliques s’il faut partir en voyage, et des petits-fils de voleurs qui sont millionnaires et généreux ne peuvent résister à nous voler cinquante francs » (Pris. 252-53).

But it appears that the furious debate which started in the 19th century, and appeared to end in the complete defeat of the Lamarckian position in the early 20th century, may not be over yet. Thus there has apparently emerged what might be called “neo-Lamarckians;” for example, Jean Piaget who was unwilling to agree with the “current opinion” (Le comportement 176) that “chance and selection are sufficient to explain everything” (Le comportement 178) in evolution. Piaget does not “deny that certain evolutions could have resulted from chance and selection in the usual senses of that word” (Le comportement 179), but Piaget put forth a different thesis, to the effect that when three conditions exist, namely, an intention in an individual member of a species to effect a change in its or his environment, a change in that individual’s behavior in order to effectuate that intention, and an internal change within the individual necessary to effectuate the behavioral change, there may be a genetic change (179-87). According to Continenza (1986), Piaget showed that: “Behaviour precedes the formation of organ. Both behaviour and organ formation are products of selection but they are also products of genetic assimilation and of phenocopy which *mimic* the Lamarckian action of environment.” (184; italics in original). To the same effect, Erwin Schrödinger said (22-23):

Without changing anything in the basic assumptions of Darwinism, we can see that the behaviour of the individual, the way it makes use of its innate faculties, plays a relevant part, nay, plays the most relevant part in evolution. There is a very true kernel in Lamarck’s view, namely that there is an irrevocable causal connection between the functioning, the actually being put to a profitable use of a character—an organ, any

property or ability or bodily feature—and its being developed in the course of generations and gradually improved for the purposes or which it is profitably used. This connection, I say, between being used and being improved was a very correct cognition of Lamarck's and it subsists in our present Darwinistic outlook, but it is easily overlooked on viewing Darwinism superficially. The course of events is almost the same as if Lamarckism were right, only the 'mechanism' by which things happen is more complicated than Lamarck thought. (Partially cited in Continenza at 184-85.)¹³⁶

The same point was made very recently (2003) in an article by Lynn Helena Caporale, titled "Foresight in Genome Evolution," and published in American Scientist, which focused on "biochemical mechanisms that affect mutation" (234). Commencing her discussion with references to Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, and acknowledging the subsequent orthodoxy regarding the random nature of mutation, with natural selection completing the evolutionary cycles, the author concludes that:

...some potentially useful mutations are so probable that they can be viewed as being encoded implicitly in the genome. As we examine our genomes and those of our fellow creatures, I anticipate evolutionary theory will evolve to include the understanding that under selective pressure, the probability of different classes of mutation can change, with consequences for survival (241).

¹³⁶ See also Piaget, Biologie et connaissance, where the author says (339): "In actual studies on variation, the accent is less and less put on random mutations ... and more on the genetic recombinations at the heart of a genotype or of a pool filled with multiple controls."

It is also obvious that Freudian orthodoxy no longer dominates the field of psychology; it continues to have its adherents, but one could argue they have been effectively sidelined. In a 1998 article entitled “Psychological Science at the Crossroads,” Richard W. Robins and his co-authors identify four current major schools in psychology: “the psychoanalytic, the behavioral, the cognitive, and the neuroscientific” (310). Freud is not dead, he says (311), but his influence is felt more in the “broader intellectual community” and in the “humanities” than in current psychological scholarship. The authors find that the cognitive school ranks first at the present time, but that the increasing contributions of neuroscience need to be integrated into mainstream psychology, as that is where future advances may lie (313).

There have been enormous advances in the fields of genetic study and pharmacology that marginalize or refute the psychoanalytically-explained causes of many deviant behaviors and their talking cures. Behavioral genetics, for example “has been widely accepted by psychologists in the past decade or two as a means for understanding the etiology of mental illness as well as normal development” (Di Lalla 3). One of the pioneers of behavioral genetics, Dr. Irving Gottesman, in an essay published this year, pointed to a still newer discipline involving research into human traits and behavior, “epigenetics,” which “investigates factors that regulate (i.e., turn on or off) gene activity” (Gottesman 220). Psychopharmacology is a new discipline, studying the interrelationship between mood disorders, mental illness and body chemistry, and focusing on the cure of mental disorders or illnesses with drugs and medicines (Mario Maj et al., eds.). New classes of specialists, bridging the divide between psychology and (medical) psychiatry,

are burgeoning.¹³⁷ Toward the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, there has been such a proliferation in schools of psychiatry, and even of psychoanalysis (see, e.g. Buckley, 1-2, 15-17), that their practitioners “wonder if there still exists a real psychoanalytic community and if, throughout the world, those that practice in the unconscious still desire to communicate and speak outside of their respective schools” (Roudinesco 38). The study and research into the fields of cognition, recognition, and memory in the last twenty-five years have literally exploded; see, e.g. Gardiner and Java, 165-68; 184-88; Johnson and Hirst, 241-86. Thus the appropriation of the mind-body connection by psychoanalytic orthodoxy, and its offshoots, which contributed to the suppression of the centuries-old interest in habitude, has itself become, at the least, shattered and peripheral, if not, indeed, outmoded. In any event, it no longer occupies sacred ground.

¹³⁷ See e.g. “Mood Disorders: An Overview”; Abstracts Submitted to the Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association May 30-June 4, 1998, Toronto, Canada; Newsletter of the CPA Section on Psychopharmacology, Volume 6, November 1, 2003 p. 1.

**CHAPTER IX. CONCLUSION: PROUST AND HABITUDE IN THE
21st CENTURY**

In some ways nothing has changed since Proust wrote: "...stupefying habitude, which during the whole course of our life conceals from us almost the whole universe, and in the dead of night, without changing the label, substitutes for the most dangerous or intoxicating poisons of life something anodyne that procures no delights..." (Vol V C&F 732-33);¹³⁸ or since Maine de Biran observed: "But as soon as Man looks around him, the veil of habitude descends...; but if he tries to focus his view on himself, he still remains in the presence of habitude, which continues to veil the composition and the number of its products..." (10); or even since the pre-Aristotelian couplet warned that: "Habit sticketh long and fast; Second nature 'tis at last." In other ways, there have been huge advances in all of the relevant fields, and especially the scientific ones. We have tools and methods to measure the functioning of the nervous system; to penetrate into some of the areas of the brain and slowly unearth its secrets; we have mapped the human genome and are deep into experiments testing the relationship of genes, indeed the proteins within genes, to behavior; we have opened up the fields of psychology and psychiatry, and orthodoxies of whatever persuasion no longer dominate those fields; similarly, tenets grounded in faith have not the authority they once had. The inquiry into the causes and processes of human behavior are more open for study and debate now, without presuppositions, than they were in the 20th century years following the publication of À la recherche du temps perdu.

¹³⁸ « ...l'habitude abêtissante qui pendant tout le cours de notre vie nous cache à peu près tout l'univers, et dans une nuit profonde, sous leur étiquette inchangée, substitue aux poisons les plus dangereux ou les plus enivrants de la vie quelque chose d'anodin qui ne procure pas de délices... » (Fug. 190).

Moreover, many of the social issues that are of particular interest today involve behavior that is intimately linked with habitudes, whether more physical, or mental, or, more likely, some combination of the two. Problems of drug addiction, for example, fall into this category. We do not diminish the roles that economic, social, physiological, and political factors play here, but, nevertheless, one of the core issues in seeking solutions to these problems is how to use the will, human effort, to change habitudes. Similarly, obesity, a very current and serious issue, involves many of the same issues as drug addiction, and most especially, the difficulties in substituting new habitudes for old ones. In less objective and more subjective terms, the intense interest in the last century, especially among perhaps the more affluent classes, but surely not restricted to them, in changing various aspects of their own behavior, or their emotional reactions, of relationships, of their fundamental enjoyment of their own lives speaks directly to the issues and problems inherent in habitudes. The desire for change in all of these respects is itself a validation of the Proustian insistence that it is in the breaking of habitudes that we experience the most profound joy.

Margaret E. Gray (93, n. 1) says that: “The invocation of Proust in analyses of scientific studies of memory has become quite trendy...recent examples include a discussion of scientific advances that emphasize the importance of network, associative activity in memory, but that nonetheless...argue for the ‘laying down’ of static, unchanging ‘memories’....” That author argues that Proust’s narration makes associations between otherwise non-associative events, and then refers to those memories either with or without those associations, thus “recontextualizing” the memory, which raises the question of whether the memory is actually a representation of what was, or is itself

another fiction (79-86). The interplay between science and art is in full play here. And if Gray's interpretation is correct, and if Proust's observations are correct, we have presented science with still more riddles to solve in the 21st century, e.g., how is it that memories get changed? We have also presented the social sciences with still more issues, e.g., do we want to control the processes that change our memories, and, if so—and this is a problem that would presumptively include both the hard and the soft sciences—how do we retain memories in their original form? As we have seen, there is no real separation between questions involving memory and habitude; whichever one “precedes” the other; a habitude could not exist without some form of memory. There is always some degree of “consciousness” implicated in performing or experiencing the panoply of habitudes that suffuse and regulate our lives.

The issues are too vast to admit of solutions, but we may respectfully hope for continued knowledge and enlightenment. Besides the reader's pleasure that derives just from the elegance of Proust's prose, and besides the reader's pleasure in living, vicariously, in those times and among those complex, sometimes repugnant, but always interesting characters of À la recherche du temps perdu, there remain the narrator's monologues, addressed to the reader. These monologues may be one-sided; and by the nature of the reading experience the reader has no opportunity to engage the narrator in a dialectic discussion. But Proust made a point of saying:

For it is only out of habitude, a habitude contracted from the insincere language of prefaces and dedications, that the writer speaks of ‘my reader.’ In reality every reader is, while he is reading, the reader of his own self. The writer's work is merely a kind of optical instrument which

he offers to the reader to enable him to discern what, without this book, he would perhaps never have perceived in himself. And the recognition by the reader in his own self of what the book says is the proof of its veracity, the contrary also being true, at least to a certain extent, for the difference between the two texts may sometimes be imputed less to the author than to the reader...In order to read with understanding many readers require to read in their own particular fashion, and the author must not be indignant at this; on the contrary, he must leave the reader all possible liberty, saying to him: 'Look for yourself, and try whether you see best with this lens or that one or this other one' (Vol VI TR 321-22).¹³⁹

In this very personal context, it is as if time stood still. Whatever science has discovered since 1922 regarding association of thoughts, acts, and memories, or whatever it may discover in the future, each of us has personal relationships, objects, goals, entertainments, pleasures, and patterns which form the intimate and social contexts of our lives. À la recherche du temps perdu remains, all these years later, a direct challenge for each of us to every one of the habitudes that inform if not, indeed, control our lives. The comfort of repetition or the exhilaration of change: who possesses the will capable of making that choice? Marcel, the narrator, did; Swann did not. Their choices are fixed in time.

¹³⁹ «L'écrivain ne dit que par une habitude prise dans le langage insincère des préfaces et des dédicaces, mon lecteur. En réalité, chaque lecteur est quand il lit le propre lecteur de soi-même. L'ouvrage de l'écrivain n'est qu'une espèce d'instrument optique qu'il offre au lecteur afin de lui permettre de discerner ce que sans ce livre, il n'eût peut-être pas vu en soi-même. La reconnaissance en soi-même, par le lecteur, de ce que dit le livre est la preuve de la vérité de celui-ci et *vice versa*, au moins dans une certaine mesure, la différence entre les deux textes pouvant être souvent imputée non à l'auteur mais au lecteur... Mais d'autres particularités...peuvent faire que le lecteur a besoin de lire d'une certaine façon pour bien lire; l'auteur n'a pas à s'en offenser mais au contraire à laisser la plus grande liberté au lecteur en lui disant: 'Regardez vous-même si vous voyez mieux avec ce verre-ci, avec celui-là, avec cet autre' » (TR 307-08).

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