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Culture, History, Habit

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Abstract

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In reviewing the sociological literature on detraditionalisation, Colin Campbell notes that habit is a concept which 'whilst central to the conceptual schemas and theoretical arguments of the founding fathers of the discipline, is strangely neglected by present-day sociologists' (Campbell, 1996: 159). He might also have noted that habit is equally central to the founding concerns of a range of modern disciplines in both the cultural and social sciences. It has played a central role in the development of modern political thought, was centrally implicated in the differentiation of social psychology from both psychology and sociology, and has been equally a concept in play throughout the history of modern aesthetics, from its civic humanist origins to its postmodern formulations. There are, however, ample signs that the question of habit has received more critical attention over the intervening period. Gilles Deleuze's account of repetition and difference has played a key role here (Deleuze, 2004). Reviving the terms in which Bergson distinguished habit and memory, Deleuze's concern to establish an account of the repetition of singularities that is different from the mechanical forms of repetition he imputes to habit has been widely influential (see, for example, Grosz, 2004).[2] The revived interest in Gabriel Tarde's work points in a similar direction, given the key place that Tarde accords to practices of repetition in the role played by the relations between suggestion and imitation in the formation of sociality.[3]

The post-Foucauldian literature on liberal government has also been important in the attention it has paid to habit as a mechanism capable of distinguishing where the assumption that individuals are to be governed through their capacities for freedom should apply and where, instead, more coercive forms of rule should be brought into play (see, for example, Mehta, 1997; Valverde, 1996; White, 2005). Where the hold of habit on conduct has been judged to be unduly significant, allowing the determined aspects of personhood to trespass unduly on a capacity for the free exercise of a capacity for reflexive judgement, the shutters have been drawn on liberal strategies of rule in favour of reinforcing the mechanisms of habit as an automated form of self rule.

It is these concerns that I engage with in this paper with a view to suggesting that, contrary to the assumptions informing the literature on liberal government, habit does not always occupy the same place within the architecture of the person understood, not as an invariant psychological structure but, in Nikolas Rose's terms, as a historically mutable set of 'spaces, cavities, relations, divisions' produced by the infolding of diverse ways of partitioning the self and working on its varied parts proposed by different authorities (Rose, 1996: 301). I illustrate this concern, and examine its consequences, by examining the ways in which post-Darwinian developments in biology and anthropology shifted the place of habit by disconnecting it from its earlier association with the notion of custom and associating it rather with a new understanding of instinct. First, though, I outline more fully the place that habit has occupied in relation to the debates on liberal government playing particular attention to its currency in this regard across a range of social and cultural disciplines. I then examine the terms in which Henry Pitt Rivers distinguished habit and instinct from one another and consider the implications of the way in which he construed their interrelations within the architecture of the person for the practices of colonial governance in Australia. I conclude by considering a selection of alternative post-Darwinian constructions of the relations between habit and instinct and their implications for a more historically nuanced approach to the practices of liberal government.

Habit and liberal government

In his account of the role of character in mid-nineteenth-century conceptions of liberal government Patrick Joyce notes the complex set of concerns that clustered around the notion of habit. He attributes this to the role that this concept plays in mediating between desire and

compulsion thus allowing the subject to be fashioned as a locus of both stasis and change: 'habits are ingrained in nature, but can none the less be broken by the power of the will' (Joyce, 2003: 118). The case he has most in mind is that of John Stuart Mill whose conception of the self as being organised in terms of an opposition between the inherited weight of custom and the opposing force of the will served as the basis, in his *Essay on Liberty* (Mill, 1969), for a distinction between societies with and without history in the sense that Koselleck (2002) gives to this term: that is, the expectation that the future will be different from both the present and the past as a result of the changes initiated by subjects acting in time. It is within this new temporality and the expectation it engenders that the future will be different from the past as a result of innovative human agency that habit comes to be problematised in new ways. In Mill's case this problematisation takes the form of an the opposition between the spur to freedom and innovation that is found in liberal democracies on the one hand and Asiatic and primitive societies on the other. Interpreting the first of these as societies which had exited from history through the enforcement of custom associated with 'Oriental despotism', he construes primitive societies as ones which had not yet entered history owing to the continuing force of quasi-natural forms of repetition attributed to the primitive's occupation of a liminal zone between nature and culture.

Joyce is not alone in sensing the importance of habit to the concerns of liberal government. Mariana Valverde (1996) has discussed its relationship to the despotic tendencies that are frequently inscribed within liberal government. This manifests itself in the enforcement of habitual modes of conduct on colonised populations judged (by those who govern them) to lack an architecture of the self in which the power of the will might be exercised. Mary Poovey has shown how similar conceptions informed nineteenth-century views concerning the governance of the unskilled sections of the working classes who were judged to lack those forms of specular morality, fashioned on the model of Adam Smith's famous 'man within',[4] that were required if the hold of habit on conduct was to be loosened by subjecting it to reflexive inspection (Poovey, 1995).

It is in these ways, then, that the concept of habit has formed a part of the constructions of personhood that inform the theories and practices of liberal government, laying out the person in ways that install habit at the centre of the processes of self re-formation through which – as one of its characteristic features – liberal government aims to operate. And it occupies the centre of such processes precisely because, if the force of habit is to be broken, this can only be, as Joyce notes, with a view to installing another set of habits in its place. 'Habit,' as he puts it, 'must counter habit' (Joyce, 2003: 120) as the exercise of the will must both pit itself against habit and seek to instil a new set of routines through which conduct is regulated if the ideal of a constantly self-renovating personhood that is, equally importantly, capable of stabilising itself,[5] is to be realised so that society might continue to progress through the free activity of its subjects. Yet, if habit is thus constantly in play in the discourses and practices of liberal government, it does not function constantly in the same fashion. Joyce touches on this when he notes that, later in the nineteenth century, habit was conceptualised in new ways as character came to be conceptualised more in psychological or social terms than moral ones. To give an example: by the 1890s, habit, for Williams James, had become a 'material law' (James, 1980) inscribed in the physiological operations of the brain. And, in a related change, whereas habit, for writers like Mill, was most usually equated with those forms of repetition associated with the notion of custom, it becomes, for Lloyd Morgan (1896), something to be considered more in its relations to instinct, as a form of repetition that is hard-wired into the nervous system, in the new conceptions of the nature/culture relation produced by the post-Darwinian development of the life sciences.

A similar distinction informs Emile Durkheim's approach to habit which, owing much to Mill, he too sees as a barrier to change. Interpreting social conduct as being divided between two poles – those forms of repetitive conduct which fall under the influence of habit, and conduct that falls under the reflexive influence of consciousness – the challenge, for

Durkheim, was to counter the force of habit by bringing it under the influence of consciousness. Seeing habit as naturally the stronger force, sociology's practical social role, to be discharged through its influence on moral and civic education, is to subject habit to the regulative role of the forces of will and consciousness. This is not, Charles Camic (1986) stresses, a matter of replacing habit with habitlessness so much as the formation of new habits – the replacement of instinctual or mechanical ones by habits in which conduct is brought under the influence of consciously elaborated forms of self-control that have been shaped through processes of discussion. Yet, at the same time, Durkheim's practical engagement with habit was purchased at the price of its exclusion from the theoretical terrain of sociology. Conceding habit to the discipline of psychology as proper to its concern with forms of conduct rooted in the physiological structure of the human animal, Camic argues, Durkheim staked out sociology's claim to disciplinary autonomy on its concern with the role of moral and ideational factors – that is, of consciousness – in the organisation of social conduct.[6]

Weber's work, while different in particulars which Camic takes due note of, points in a similar direction. Recognising the force of habit as a source of inertia in traditional forms social organisation, he opens up, in his concept of *habitus*, a means of thinking a difference between habitus that are shaped entirely by tradition and certain dynamic forms of habitus which rise above the static habitus of ordinary everyday life to reshape the regularities of conduct in ways that reflect the intervention of cultural factors and thus open up the habitus to processes of dynamic reshaping of the kind required if, in Kosselek's sense, history is to eventuate. Moreover, reflecting concerns similar to Durkheim's in seeking to secure a distinctive position for sociology within the German university system, Weber, by stressing the role of culture in constituting the field of meaningful actions as the proper concern of sociology, also conceded habit proper, that is conduct unaffected by the mediation of representations, consciousness and the force of the will, to psychology.

Camic goes on to note the key role of Parsons in writing habit out of the concerns of American sociology, while noting that this was less true of European sociology. The most obvious exception here is Pierre Bourdieu whose account of the habitus, drawing on an qualifying the socio-philosophical formulations of the phenomenological tradition represented by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty and, of course, the legacy of Mauss (see Crossley, 2001), continues the trajectory of Weber's work in distinguishing the mechanisms of the habitus from those of habit. In a retrospective formulation, he thus insists that social agents 'in archaic societies as well as ours, are not automata regulated like clocks, in accordance with laws which they do not understand' (Bourdieu, 1990: 9), incorporating into the habitus the capacity for dispositions to be acquired and reshaped through experience. That said, in perhaps his most influential account of habitus in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984), this attribute of the habitus is unequally distributed, with some habitus – notably that which he attributes to the working class – having all the characteristics of habit in being rooted in the choice of the necessary.[7] Habit also figures prominently in the literature comprising the tradition of the sociology of everyday life, running from Georg Lukács to Henri Lefebvre, but here, too, it is coded negatively in the form of an opposition between utterly routinised, non-reflective, repetitive forms of social conduct on the one hand, and, on the other, the capacity that is accorded some groups to pierce the reified surface of everyday life to achieve moments of extraordinary transcendence that allow them to become self-conscious agents of revolutionary social action (Bennett, 2002).

There is also a significant connection between this literature and the parallel development of the negative coding of habit within modernist aesthetics in its commitment to the defamiliarisation or dishabituation of automated forms of perception and attention. This is most obviously true of the Russian Formalists' account of the role played by the defamiliarisation and dishabituation of habitual modes of perception in the renovation of

literary systems (Bennett, 1979). However, the same is true of how modernist avant-gardes more generally conceive their role. The mechanism of dishabituation is thus central to Bourdieu's account of the role of the first generation of the modern avant-garde in autonomising the literary and artistic fields in late-nineteenth-century France through a series of defamiliarising breaks with earlier conventionalised literary forms (Bourdieu, 1996).

I draw attention to this connection between the renditions of habit within modernist aesthetics and the sociology of everyday life for two reasons. First, it is a useful way of underscoring the close relations between the terms in which habit has been represented in the longer histories of both modern aesthetics and modern social theory. Second, it offers a means of returning to my earlier remarks concerning the relations between habit and the discourses and practices of liberal government. For modern aesthetics, considered in its relations to early formulations of the problematic of liberal government, constitutes one of the first surfaces on which habit as such – that is, habit understood as mindless repetition rather than any particular habits – first emerges as a problem. The key figure here is Shaftesbury for whom polite discourse on the beautiful was to provide a basis for political authority that depended neither on divine right nor on Hobbesian might but which aimed, rather, for the governed to be 'all sharers (though at so far a distance from each other) in the government of themselves' (Shaftesbury, cit. Dowling: 5). Polite discourse about questions of taste and judgement was to be translated into an inner mechanism of self-governance through the surgical splitting of the self that Shaftesbury effected by translating the dialogical aspects of sociable conversation into a means through which the self conducts a dialogue with, and regulates, itself by bring its many parts in harmony.[8]

Among many other restrictions, however, this capacity for self-governance via a tiered organisation of the self was restricted in its social distribution. For Shaftesbury, as an example of a discourse that Jacques Rancière (2004) has argued plays a key role in the subsequent development of modern social and political thought, from Marx to Bourdieu, it excluded 'rustics', 'plain artisans and people of lower rank' (cit Paulson, 1996: 7), and, more generally, mechanics on the grounds that the routine and habitual nature of their occupations precluded their developing such a tiered self. In this way, the aesthetico-political discourse of civic humanism installed a division between governors and governed, between those qualified to take part in a collectively self-governing polity because of their ability to reflexively monitor and modify their own conduct, and those who, bound by habit, were also bound to the rule of their more reflexive governors.

It would take me too far from my purpose here to detail how Kant works on and transforms the categories of civic humanism into the role he accords aesthetic judgement within his paradigmatic construction of the modern self in his *Critique of Judgement* (Kant, 1987).[9] But the roles he accords habit and culture are key to the particular tiering of self that Kant proposes. 'The production in a rational being of an aptitude for any ends whatever of its own choosing, consequently of the aptitude of a being in its freedom, is *culture [Kultur]*' (Kant, cit. Caygil, 1981: 389). As such, its opposite, in the account Kant offers in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, is habit:

> Habit (*assuetodo*), however, is a physical inner necessitation to proceed in the same manner that one has proceeded until now. It deprives even good actions of their moral worth because it impairs the freedom of the mind and, moreover, leads to thoughtless repetition of the very same act (monotony), and so becomes ridiculous. – … The reason why the habits of another stimulate the arousal of disgust in us is that here the animal in the human being jumps out far too much, and that here one is led instinctively by the rule of habituation, exactly like another (non-human) nature, and so runs the risk of falling into one and the same class with the beast. (Kant, 2006: 40)

Habit here operates as a liminal zone between nature and culture – installed on the cusp of the nature/animal: culture/human opposition that informs Latour's account of the modern settlement (Latour, 1993).

It can be seen from even this brief survey that habit has played an important role in the emergence of modern social, political, aesthetic and cultural theory. More than that, it has been consistently in play across these different bodies of theory, providing a crucial connecting term through which their concerns with the practices and processes of governance are brought together, condensing a set of oppositions -nature/culture, necessity/freedom – through which the inclusions and exclusions of liberal government are organised. There are, moreover, ample signs that it remains so. As both Lisa Adkins (2004) and Bev Skeggs (2004) have argued, the accounts of the tiered organisation of the reflexive self that Ulrick Beck, Anthony Giddens and and Scott Lash (1994) see as characteristic of 'advanced modernity' is now central to the operation of contemporary classed discourses in stigmatising those who are said to lack the capacity for reflexive self-monitoring that such a tiered self requires. More generally, such perspectives constitute little more than a re-run of what Nikolas Rose characterises as the founding 'historical fable' of sociology in which forms of conduct bound to the force of tradition and community gave way to modern practices of individuality and autonomy in a 'just-so' story governed by a 'single linear chronicity which, despite advances and lags, moves from fixity and uncertainty, from habit to reflexivity across all domains of existence and experience' (Rose, 1996: 304).

My more particular concern here, however, is with the role that the concept of habit has played in temporalising differences by marking the divisions between societies with a capacity for free self-making and those destined to endless repetition in the form of a past/present distinction which attributes a flat, merely mechanical, repetitive architecture organisation of 'archaic' or 'primitive' forms of personhood. My main argument here concerns the need to attend closely to the different ways in which such past/present distinctions are expressed according to variant constructions of the place that is accorded habit within the architecture of the person.

Habit, instinct, survivals

Let me now turn, in order to explore these questions, to the relations between habit and instinct in Darwinian and post-Darwinian debates in British anthropology. My interests here centre on the roles played by the concepts of habit and instinct in relation to the doctrine of survivals within the problematic of late nineteenth evolutionary anthropology, although I shall also take account of related debates in political theory and the life sciences. I take my initial bearings, though, from a passage in a set of British parliamentary papers – *Papers Relative to the Aborigines, Australian Colonies* – that was published in 1844. The passage I quote is from Lord Stanley, Secretary of State of the Colonial Office, writing to Sir George Gipps, the colonial governor of New South Wales, regarding a report that Gipps had forwarded him from Captain Gray. In his report, Gray, writing from his experience as the commander of an expedition to the interior of Australia, dwells on the lacklustre results of all the attempts that had so far been made to civilise the Aborigines. Stanley comments as follows:

> I have read with great attention, but with deep regret, the accounts contained in these despatches. After making fair allowance for the peculiar difficulty of such an undertaking, it seems impossible any longer to deny that the efforts which have hitherto been made for the civilisation of the aborigines have been unavailing; that no real progress has yet been effected, and that there is not reasonable ground to expect from them greater success in the future. You will be sensible with how much pain and reluctance I have come to this opinion, but I cannot shut my eyes to the conclusion

> which inevitably follows from the statements which you have submitted to me on the subject. (cit Anderson, 2007: 120)

But he then continues in a vein which shows, in spite of this reluctance, his determination to hold on to the hope of the Aborigines' improvability as better than the alternative that was then beginning to be broadly mooted:

> I should not, without the most extreme reluctance, admit that nothing can be done; that with respect to them alone the doctrines of Christianity must be inoperative, and the advantages of civilisation incommunicable. I cannot acquiesce in the theory that they are incapable of improvement, and that their extinction before the advance of the white settler is a necessity which it is impossible to control. (cit. Anderson, 2007: 120-121)

In her discussion of these passages in her *Race and the Crisis of Humanism*, Kay Anderson sees them as symptomatic of a moment, in the 1840s and 1850s, when colonial discourses were poised between, on the one hand, the eighteenth-century legacy of Christian salvationist discourses and the secular progressivism of Enlightenment stadial theory in which, albeit by different means, it was believed that the Australian Aborigine might be improved, and, on the other, the more typical racial discourses of the late nineteenth century. Grounded conceptions of racial divisions as being rooted ineradicably in the body, these removed the Aborigine from both the Christian time of salvation and the progressive time of civilisation and placed them instead in the dead-end time of extinction as the inevitable losers in the struggle for existence with a superior race. However, more is at stake here for Anderson than a particular set of colonial practices. Writing from the post-human perspective that has been opened up by the work of Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour and others in the challenges they have presented to those dualist ontologies separating the human and the natural worlds, she argues that Australian Aborigines provoked a crisis of representation that confounded the very terms of such ontologies. She thus compares and contrasts the ways in which the savages of the Americas had been assimilated within the conjectural and stadial histories of the Enlightenment with the quite abrupt challenge that that the late eighteenth-century Pacific voyages and the later occupation of Australia presented to such histories in the discovery of an apparently unimproved and – as experience was to suggest – unimprovable people that seemed to hover so unsettlingly on the cusp of the nature/culture dividing line as to call it into question.

One of the most important ways in which this unsettling tension was resolved, Anderson argues, was via the naturalisation of racial difference. This initially took the form – from the late eighteenth through to the mid nineteenth century – of the development of polygenetic accounts which, by construing racial divisions as the result of separate lines of development, called into question both Christian and Enlightenment accounts of human unity. While Darwin's account of evolution opened up a space in which Aborigines might be enfolded within civilising programmes by denying that racial differences were innate or constituted unbridgeable gaps, Anderson suggests that subsequent developments in anthropology placed Aborigines beyond the reach of such programmes by consigning them to the newly historicised twilight zone between nature and culture represented by the category of prehistory. As survivals of the past in the present, the difficulty that Aborigines presented was not that of being innately different but that of being too far away in time; still on the cusp of the journey from nature into culture, they represented a degree zero of human evolutionary development which meant that they had simply too far to travel across the eons of evolutionary time separating them from the properly historical time of their colonisers before the imperatives of racial competition resulted in their elimination.

So far so good. I want to argue, however, that a full understanding of the distinctive dynamics that were in play here requires an appreciation of the respects in which this construction of the

Aborigine as a survival formed part of a reconfiguring of earlier liberal accounts of the relations between habit and instinct. For, by prising these apart from one another, the doctrine of survivals installed the person in quite a different dialectic of person formation from that developed, after Kant, in which habit and instinct tended to be clasped together as a pair to which the power of culture – understood as the capacity for free self-shaping which fuels the dynamics of history – stood opposed. 'The animal creature he sets up as a foil to the human being,' Sankar Muthu argues of Kant, 'is instinctively driven. The movement from animality to humanity is one toward freedom and culture' (Muthu, 2003: 128). It is this opposition that lays out the vectors of personhood for the action of the institutions of culture which, in their classic nineteenth-century forms, are modelled as a practice that is concerned precisely to weaken the grip of habit on human conduct. Tradition, custom, habitual usage: these, in post-Kantian conceptions of culture, are the 'adversary to be overcome before we can realise our full humanity' (Ray, 2001: 16). Culture, on this view, initiates a process of self-examination through which the person extricates her- or himself from pre-reflective or unthinking immersion in habitual modes of conduct in order to initiate a process of free self-making.

The architecture of the person developed in late Victorian anthropology differed significantly in the respect, first, that it laid out the person as a series of historicised, development gradations – that is, more in the form of a slope than an opposition – and, second, that it interpreted instinct not as a pure nature opposed to culture but as an accumulating stock of conscious actions passed on into the automated forms of instinct via the mediatory role of habit. The consequence of this for Aborigines, paradoxically, was that they were depicted as having *too thin* a stock of instincts to be civilisable. Reflecting their location on the cusp of the transition from nature to culture, Aboriginal conduct is interpreted as still being guided by an original set of instincts. To the degree that these have been repeated over the intervening millennia as survivals of a never-to-be-completed moment of transition from nature to culture, so their force is increased so that they now exercise a more-or-less iron-like grip on conduct. This logic is clearly discernible in Henry Pitt Rivers's account of the reasoning underlying his anthropological collection. Following Darwin's account of the roles of habit and of the mental powers in man and the lower animals (Darwin, 1952), Pitt Rivers construes the relations between habit and instinct in animals and humans as being governed by essentially the same principles. Just as the habits acquired by animals either via domestication or via their reasoning on experience become instinctive and are passed on as such to their offspring, so similar processes are involved in the relations between the roles of the 'intellectual mind' and the 'automaton mind' in regulating human conduct.

> We are conscious of an intellectual mind capable of reasoning upon unfamiliar occurrences, and of an automaton mind capable of acting intuitively in certain matters without effort of the will or consciousness. And we know that habits acquired by the exercise of conscious reason, by constant habit, become automatic, and then they no longer require the exercise of conscious reason to direct the actions, as they did at first …..' (Pitt Rivers, 1875: 296)

The conclusion Pitt-Rivers draws from this is that 'every action which is now performed by instinct, has at some former period in the history of the species been the result of conscious experience' (Pitt Rivers, 1875: 298). This conception forms part of a mechanism of development – for both animals and humans – according to which the more that simple ideas derived from experience are passed on into the automated forms of instinct, then the freer the person is to respond to new and more complex ideas. The key hinge in this mechanism is habit, which Pitt Rivers interprets as a form of conscious learning involving the intellectual mind but which then becomes routinised via repetition. It is through habit that the lessons of experience are passed on into instinct in accordance with an accumulative logic in which the completion of one habit-to-instinct cycle frees up the space for another such cycle, leading to an ever-growing set of instinctual responses comprising the automated mind. As such, habit exercises a grip on conduct that is no less restraining than that of Mill's yoke of custom, albeit

that the mechanisms through which this restraining force are exercised are quite different. For Mill, as for Kant, instinct is equated with the animal portion of human nature as a force which may be modified in both humans and domestic animals rather than as an accumulating deposit of earlier learned forms of social behaviour (Mill, 1967: 561).

The colonial sting in the tail of this argument comes when Pitt Rivers argues that 'the tendency to automatic action upon any given set of ideas will be in proportion to the length of time during which the ancestors of the individual have exercised their minds in those particular ideas' (Pitt Rivers, 1875: 299). It is for this reason that lower animals are more predisposed toward automatic forms of action than are higher ones; because their instincts have not been modified to the same degree as those of the higher animals, then so they have practiced the same set of automated responses for longer, with a consequent increase in their hold on behaviour. The position of the Aborigine is broadly similar. Poised forever on the cusp of the nature/culture divide, the Aborigine never moves beyond simply imitating natural forms and adapting these for particular purposes (Pitt Rivers accounts for the development of stone-age tools in these terms) which are then performed repeatedly across generations. The consequence is that 'in proportion to the length of time during which this association of ideas continued to exist in the minds of successive generations of the creatures which we may now begin to call men,' then so 'would be the tendency on the part of the offspring to continue to select and use these particular forms, more or less instinctively – not, indeed, with that unvarying instinct which in animals arises from the perfect adaptation of their internal organism to the external condition, but with that modified instinct which assumes the form of a *persistent conservatism*' (Pitt Rivers, 1875: 300). For the savage and most especially, as Pitt Rivers's paradigm of savagery, the Aborigine, the problem is that the mechanism of habit has not worked with sufficient vigour to build up an accumulated stock of 'modified instincts' but only a thin layer of these which, however, due their endless repetition over millennia, have acquired an unusually binding grip on conduct.

Although, as an armchair anthropologist, Pitt Rivers wrote at a distance from the immediacies of colonial rule, the resonances of these formulations in late-nineteenth-century Australia are unmistakable. In his wonderfully probing work on the logic of settler colonialism Patrick Wolfe (1999) reminds us that it is best understood as a structure rather than event, and one that persists, taking different forms in different historical moments. Its logic, since the primary object of settler colonialism is possession of the land rather than the surplus to be derived from mixing indigenous labour with the land, is the elimination of indigenous population. In the Australian case, Wolfe argues, this structure has taken three different forms: that of frontier confrontation aimed at the annihilation of the colonial population; that of incarceration pending the Aborignes' extinction by the laws of evolution and the inevitability of their giving way before a superior race; and that of assimilation via managed programmes of epidermal and cultural integration with the white population. It is not difficult to see how Pitt Rivers's account of the role of habit among Aborigines related to the second of these strategies of elimination which was particularly influential in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century and, indeed, into the early decades of the twentieth century when, however, it also gave way to the strategy of assimilation in the context, particularly after the Federation of Australia in 1901, of the development of a national governmental project and the associated formation of what Tim Rowse (1998) calls 'an Aboriginal domain' which aimed to integrate the Aboriginal population within the state.[10]

Complicating the analysis

There were, in post-Darwinian anthropology and biology, many other 'takes' on how the perspective of evolution might best inform contemporary debates concerning the relationships between different gradations of humanity. Some of these were in the same territory as Pitt Rivers's account, and in some cases, more reductive in their formulation. Alfred Court

Haddon, drawing on his field work in the Torres Strait, tried very hard to tell a story of the evolution of design in resolutely Darwinian terms as a result of unplanned variation regulated by natural selection. He thus construed the evolution of design traits as the result of failed habit – what Philip Steadman ((1979) calls 'inexact copying' – so as to be able to present it as 'an entirely unguided operation so far as the intelligence of the human units is concerned' (Haddon, 1895: 318). Walter Bagehot's account of the 'connective tissue of civilisation' was also influential in forging a connection between Mill's account of the yoke of custom and Darwin's work. For Bagehot (1873) the habits acquired via social trainings by one generation are transmitted selectively, through the operation of the Darwinian mechanism of variation, to the next generation as a form of 'inherited drill' that is somehow lodged in the nervous system as an accumulating stock of competencies that is capable of maintaining the momentum of social evolution. Exceptions to this occur where, for whatever reason, societies fail to generate variaton and thus to provide a set of evolutionary options for selective transmission from one generation to the next. Bagehot follows Mill here in suggesting that this occurs mainly when societies fall under the influence of despotism since this destroys the democratic principle of discussion as the chief mechanism through which variation is introduced into a polity. The echoes of these concerns can be heard in the terms use by Baldwin Spencer – the son of a Manchester non-conformist liberal family, well schooled in both classical liberalism and Darwinian thought – to frame his encounters with the Arunta[11] of Central Australia:

> As among all savage tribes the Australian native is bound hand and foot by custom. What his fathers did before him he must do. If during the performance of a ceremony his ancestors painted a white line across the forehead, that line he must paint. Any infringement of custom, within certain limitations, is visited with sure and often severe punishment. At the same time, rigidly conservative as the native is, it is yet possible for change to be introduced. (Spencer and Gillen, 1899)

To account for how such change comes about, Spencer invokes the principle of discussion. However, he does so in a form that explains both how change can occur (it is prompted by the discussions of different ways of doing things that take place when different local groups meet) but at the same time be limited (these discussions are not free discussions between equals, after the fashion advocated by Mill and Bagehot as necessary to promote variation, but are dominated by the authority of male elders with the result that change is possible only within the conservative limits endorsed by those elders).

Account has also to be taken of the Romanes-Huxley tradition which, departing from neo-Lamarckian accounts of the inheritance of acquired characteristics and Darwin's own murky account of the mechanisms of pangenesis, disconnected the mechanisms of cultural development from those of natural evolution. The text in which the implications of this for evolutionary conceptions of habit and its relations to instinct are most rigorously worked through is C. Lloyd Morgan's *Habit and Instinct*. Following Darwin in interpreting instinct and habit as aspects of both human and animal behaviour, Morgan defines instinct as 'that part of human character and conduct which is not the outcome of a consciously rational process' (Morgan, 1896: 2) and habit as 'a more or less definite mode of procedure or kind of behaviour which has been acquired by the individual, and has become, so to speak, stereotyped through repetition.' (Morgan, 1896: 1). The key question he addresses is whether 'the secondary automatism of habit is transmitted by heredity, so as to give rise to the primary automatism of instinct' (Morgan, 1896: 325). Unlike both Pitt Rivers and Bagehot, however, Morgan denies any connection between these . 'Race progress', he argues, is possible because evolution has been transferred from the organism to the environment. The increment that is necessary for evolution comes about via storage in the social environment so that each new generation adapts itself in ways that are incremental across generations but without this requiring any increased native power of adaptation as an augmented set of instincts:

In the written record , in social traditions, in the manifold inventions which make scientific and industrial progress possible, in the products of art, and the recorded examples of noble lives, we have an environment which is at the same time the product of mental evolution, and affords the condition of the development of each individual mind today.' (Morgan, 1896: 340)

The chief consequence of this so far as the regulation of conduct is concerned is to shift attention away from the habit/instinct nexus that preoccupied Bagehot and Pitt Rivers and to turn it instead to the interface between culture, as stored in the social environment, and habit. There is here, then, a return to the terms of the opposition that Kant set up between culture and habit (a return that is explicit in Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* [1989]) – albeit one that remains profoundly marked by the new historical depths of evolutionary personhood that evolutionary thought had crafted (Bennett, 2004: chapter 4). The influence of these is evident in the raced and colonial exception that Morgan admits to the general logic of his argument. For when it comes to confronting the consequence of his position, he balks at accepting that the only differences between children born in civilised countries on the one hand and those born in savage or barbarian lands on the other is in the 'mental atmospheres' stored in their social environments rather than any difference in inherited natural aptitudes. There are, in this 'limit case', racial differences rooted in the still unfolding processes of natural selection that have yet to work themselves out before the savage can enter into the dynamics of intellectual and cultural evolution proper.

However, I can do more here than to signpost these as issues needing further investigation. My more general purpose has been to propose some ways in which the relations between culture, history and habit on the one hand and the practices of liberal government on the other might be opened up to more varied forms of historical analysis. A key aspect of my argument, particularly when compared to Valverde's coupling of habit with despotism as a mechanism to be invoked as an alternative to liberal government, concerns the need to pay attention to the varied ways in which habit operates as a target for governmental action within different architectures of the person. If, in Mill's analysis, the stasis of Asiatic societies is accounted for in terms of the thickness of custom, it is the thinness of instinct that Pitt Rivers invokes to account for the inertia of 'primitive' societies. Depending on how habit is placed relative to custom or instinct, and how habit-as-custom or habit-as-instinct are placed relative to culture, then so different kinds of person are laid open to governmental intervention in different ways.

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[1]   For a related discussion of habit, see Barry Hindess, 'Habit, custom and the problematics of early modern government', CRESC Research Paper no 63.

[2]   Bergson distinguishes two kinds of memory, one of which, purely automatic, carried in the motor mechanisms of the body, 'has *all* the marks of a habit' while the second, formed through the intervention of conscious representation, 'has *none* of the marks of a habit' (Bergson, 2004: 89-90). The first, as Bergson further glosses this distinction, 'follows the direction of nature', while the second 'would rather go the contrary way' (102).

[3]   For an extremely useful introduction to these concerns, see the special issue of *Economy and Society* (36 [4], 2007) on the work of Tarde edited by Andrew Barry and Nigel Thrift.

[4]   This is concept is elaborated in Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Smith, 2002). See, as well as Poovey, Brown (1994, 1997) for a discussion of the operation of this concept in Smith's work.

[5]   This concern with the role of habit in stabilising the person is particular clear in Mill's account of ethology; see Mill (0000).

[6]   This is also, for Geras (1976), the move that most distinguishes classical sociology from Marxism.

7   See Bennett (2007) for a discussion of some of the difficulties this occasions.

8   We draw here on the discussions of Shaftesbury and the more general formulations of civic humanist aesthetics in Barrell (1986), Paulson (1996), and Poovey (1994, 1994a, 1998).

9   But see, for two of the most pointed engagements with these issues, Caygil (1989) and Deleuze (1984).

10   See Bennett (2004) for a fuller discussion of these questions.

11   I follow convention here in using Spencer's spelling rather than using the corrected form of the Arrernte, since my concern is with the operation of this category in nineteenth-century Eurocentric discourses.

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