

HABIT AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

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In a curious example of habit in “Talk to Teachers,” James offers praise for “a number of accomplished Hindoo visitors at Cambridge.” He notes that whereas the American body and face express a lack of grace, over-intensity, and anxiety, the Hindu body and face express an imperturbable tranquility. In short, James describes, rightfully or not, an American temperament and one he judges to be causing “national harm.” His example is of a *collective* habit producing a deleterious effect upon a *social institution*. This connection between habit and society is furthered in *The Principles of Psychology*.¹ Habit, at bottom, rests upon a straightforward neurological principle that remains as true today as it was in his day. Neurons lay down new paths to create repeatable behaviors. From this mundane neurological claim, habit will rise up to the summits of society and social institutions. He concludes in the chapter *Habit* that “[h]abit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society, it’s most precious conservative agent (Vol. 1, “Habit,” 125).”

In this essay, I’ll show that James in *The Principles* ascends toward these expanded claims from low-level neurology. In the process I will resist a tendency in the literature on *The Principles* to treat James as a physiologist (its about the body) or as a phenomenal physiologist (its about how the body feels for one).² Neither physiology (as natural, automatic, modular happenings) nor phenomenology (as how the experience is for one) is robust enough to capture the striking fact that habit, in the cases that matter, must include institutional facts. In addition, by steering away from facts of neurology and how one’s experience is for one will aid understanding a third of *Habit* that exhorts practical advice on how to overcome moral defects and promote moral advancement. Habit, for James, can raise an individual or nation to heaven or plummet one to hell.

James’s examples help draw out distinctions among a variety of habits. And these differences will be crucial as he builds the chapter toward his concluding maxims as well as elucidating the role of habit in society. He begins with what he labels a simple habit. Such a habit is akin to a folded piece of paper. Once set in a malleable medium, the fold/habit is more readily realized. The metaphor is telling. Eijah Woods of *Lord of the Rings* fame has what James calls a simple habit. Woods is a nail biter. Like all habits, nail biting involves “concatenated discharges in the nerve-centres (Vol. 1, “Habit,” 112)”. For simple habits, this is all that is of interest. Two ideas are central. First, it is not that Woods is a nervous person. The habit need not be a sign of further traits of the person, traits we would judge to be appropriate or inappropriate. Second, the “hobbit’s” habit of biting nails need not occur in a well-defined context as the biting of nails occurs in many diverse contexts. That is, the events that bring about a simple habit are so varied they resist classification. Even if one could enumerate classes of precipitating causes, such classification would carry little interest. The behavior alone is sufficient to capture the habit.³ Contrast with the slightly more complex habit of putting on (or failing to put on) a seatbelt. Sitting in a car precipitates the behavior. Sitting in a movie theatre, dinner, seminar, or a wide variety of seated circumstances does not bring about the habit. Nail biting, snuffling, and

James's other example of putting one's hand in their pockets will not entail a link to kinds of causes. The context remains irrelevant. Only the actualized behavior is required to comprehend a simple habit. Consider again that to automatically put on one's seatbelt is potentially beneficial for one and less so for those that do not. A simple habit centers on features within a creature without being bogged down by kinds of causes or whether a habit expresses something of value. Simple habits are like a dump reflex arcs, applicable to biological creatures with a sensory system.

James relates a story by the Father of Modern Magic, Robert Houdin, to illustrate mastery as another form of habit. Houdin practiced to the point that he could juggle four balls while reading a book aloud. To develop proficiency in a skill, one works to eliminate attention. The performance crystallizes when mastered and the need to attend to the step-by-step mechanics dissipates. In short, motor aptitude takes the place of conscious direction. Thirty years latter, with no further practice, Houdin managed the same feat with three balls (Vol. 1, "Habit," 122). The focus on skills, as a kind of habit, gets across the core notion that as a habit entrenches within the nervous system, attention lessens (Vol. 1, "Habit", 121). Proficiency economizes attention. Other cognitive resources become free to either enhance a skill or, as in this case, entertain another activity. Mastery, unlike simple habits, has an important *psychological* character. Should Houdin close his eyes, the balls will fall to the floor. Some amount of attention remains.⁴

James's discussion of skills quietly sidelines a common position of his day: habit is nothing more than complex mechanism in a biological creature. The formal argument against this mechanistic stance is provided in Chapter 5, "The Automaton-Theory." With respect to habits, the automaton theorist would argue that all habits, including their genesis and maintenance, could be accounted for at the level of neurology. Namely, all habits are simple habits and psychological terms would then be extraneous. James's response in "The Automaton-Theory" shows that a nest of complex neural connections must inevitably be explanatorily inadequate. James writes,

The dilemma in regard to the nervous system seems, in short, to be of the following kind. We may construct one which will react infallibly and certainly, but it will then be capable of reacting to very few changes in the environment - it will fail to be adapted to all the rest. We may, on the other hand, construct a nervous system potentially adapted to respond to an infinite variety of minute features in the situation; but its fallibility will then be as great as its elaboration. We can never be sure that its equilibrium will be upset in the appropriate direction. In short, a high brain may do many things, and may do each of them at a very slight hint. But its hair-trigger organization makes of it a happy-go-lucky, hit-or-miss affair. It is as likely to do the crazy as the sane thing at any given moment. A low brain does few things, and in doing them perfectly forfeits all other use. The performances of a high brain are like dice thrown forever on a table. Unless they be loaded, what chance is there that the highest number will turn up oftener than the lowest? (Vol. 1., "The Automaton-Theory," 143)

We must have an ability to edit from vast arrays of sensory information to account for intelligent behavior (Vol. 1, "The Automaton-Theory," 142). The rejection of the Automaton-Theory rests on the idea that some form of selective filtering must take place in order to generate useful habits. For suppose we are nothing but a cobweb of vastly interconnected neurons. How would one account for the variety of intelligent actions a creature may perform in terms of the vast amount information provided to a sensory system? One cannot, James argues,

unless one has a principle of selection to filter out irrelevant information from the vast array. As mastery demonstrates, directed attention is important in the development and realization of certain types of valuable habits. Our ability to select opens the door to forms of habit that are psychological and of value. Note that the value is for the person, as opposed to the species. One learns a habit, whereas instinct requires no first performance for it to be ingrained.

James, however, clearly intends to mark off habit as a distinctive form of psychological phenomena. The term 'consciousness' in *The Principles* is specialized. A passing glance at the index will reveal that under the term 'feeling' one reads "synonym for consciousness in general in this book." And for the term 'thought', the initial entry reads "synonym for consciousness at large." James uses these two terms to indicate something that he is labeling 'consciousness' without thereby supposing two kinds of consciousness (Vol. 1, "The Methods and Snares of Psychology," 185-186). Therefore, the term 'consciousness' does not exclusively or always signal that there is a what it is like or phenomenology. That is, James's use of the term 'consciousness,' and its cognates, will not fit neatly into modern conceptions of consciousness as requiring that there be something it is like to be conscious coupled with a form of immediacy or direct awareness. In addition, our modern conception of consciousness is one form of mentality. Thought, desire, and some even argue sensory quality, may fail to have anything it is like to be in such states and remain part of psychology. Instead, the term 'consciousness' in *The Principles* is a term to cover the topic of psychology. It is "[t]he [p]ursuance of future ends and the choice of means for their attainment [that] are thus the mark and criterion of the presence of mentality in a phenomenon (Vol. 1, "The Scope of Psychology," 21)." James augments this broad account of consciousness with his notion of selection. As James writes, "Accentuation and Emphasis are present in every perception we have. We find it quite impossible to disperse our attention impartially over a number of impressions (Vol. 1, "The Stream of Thought," 273)." And selection is not limited to what is useful for the species.⁵ It is evident in reasoning, aesthetics, and ethics (Vol. 1, "The Stream of Thought," 276). Selection is our keystone.

James describes the form selection within a habit in two apparently contrastive ways. The following quote, "*habit diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed* (italics in original: Vol. 1, "Habit," 119)", naturally suggests a residual spark of something it is like for one to reside within a habit. Like a dimmed light, an experiential element remains in a habit no matter how faint. This would read into James's term 'consciousness' a contemporary notion involving at minimum a qualitative experience one is aware of.⁶ For example, to learn to juggle, one must work to pay attention to hand position, ball trajectories, when to move the hands, and toss a ball. All of these bodily movements (hands, arms, eyes) are reflectively attended to and directed until mastery economizes on our attention. The prior quote might indicate that one nonetheless remains actively attentive to the experience. James suggests otherwise. Rather than viewing "consciousness" as only active, one views "consciousness" in a dispositional sense as well. For example, the successive movements when a talent such as juggling is mastered are "*sensations to which we are usually inattentive, but which immediately call out attention if they go wrong* (italics in original: Vol. 1, "Habit," 123)."⁷ James builds into the notion of sensation a feature beyond neural activation of a motor response (Vol. 1, Habit, 122). The added factor cannot be self-awareness of one's ongoing experience because one is inattentive to, or cannot account for, one's success in the skill. Still, the process remains psychological because one *could* report on the performance when failure occurs. That is, one is poised to

notice, either by thought or feeling, failure. Habit, of the relevant kind, must therefore involve psychological dispositions. Phenomenology falls by the wayside.

To treat James's account of habit dispositionally has a number of advantages. For one, dispositions are all over the place and cut through the physical, neurological, psychological, and societal realms. Volcanoes, bees, presidents, and nations can variably be described in terms of dispositions. James then has continuity of explanation from folded paper, to simple habits, to mastery, and beyond. For two, dispositions center on possible movement or behavior rather than occurrent states. A vase remains fragile even if it has not yet shattered. One remains charming even when asleep. Thirdly, James intends habit to cut across the psychological divide as well. Habit helps to organize such functions as perception, memory, and reasoning.⁸ Lastly, treating habit as a disposition helps to lessen a common criticism of James's treatment of habit as a law of nature. Certainly his description casts habit as robust phenomena.⁹ But the phenomena are not law-like in being insurmountable. Rather, they exhibit an enduring physical property – namely dispositions.

James reprints a tale from Huxley's *Elementary Lessons in Physiology*.

There is a story, which is credible enough, though it may not be true, of a practical joker, who, seeing a discharged veteran carrying home his dinner, suddenly called out, 'Attention!' whereupon the man instantly brought his hands down, and lost his mutton and potatoes in the gutter. The drill had been thorough, and its effects had become embodied in the man's nervous structure (Vol. 1, "Habit," 125).

A number of features are important. First, the habit is firmly established. Second, the habit is sensitive to rather narrow environmental conditions. If "attention!" is appropriately called out, then the veteran will come to attention. Yelling "var uppmärksam!" will have no effect though "attenzione!" might even when the veteran knows nothing of Italian. Similarly, riderless cavalry-horses in battle may come together at the trumpeting of Rally on the Chief (Vol. 1, "Habit," 125). This kind of habit is sensitive to physical features appropriate to one sensory system (i.e., auditory) and fall within narrow and well-specified auditory properties. Namely, having well-defined antecedent conditions is a feature of a different class of habits and a feature that will remain of interest. Furthermore, the two examples show that a class of habit carries with it the notion that the realized behavior may not be suitable in all circumstances. The practical joker as well as our amusement rests on this fact: the conditions of appropriate behavior will be narrower than the conditions that elicit the behavior. What is of interest for these habits is not the genesis, but the underlying perception of the event. Calling a soldier to attention in a dining hall or playing Rally on the Chief in a parade may embarrass the veteran but not the horse. That is, though both man and horse recognize the sound that elicits the behavior, only the man recognizes that one is not now in an appropriate military context. How or what one perceives is important in that the perception of something is of something as something.

James tells us that habit "keeps the fisherman and the deck-hand at seas through the winter." Bears fish through stormy seasons as well. Both bear and deck-hand perceive the catch *as* fish. The physical features within the perception of these two different contexts involve a fishy presence. Nothing in the perception of the physical features, however, will account for why the fisherman can see the fish *as* money and the bear cannot. We, along with the fisherman, recognize fishing as an occupation. The bear does not have an occupation nor does it perceive its fishing behavior as an occupation. The notion of *perception as* is key to understand the role of habit within society. It will help to see that

the same notion, *perception as*, is prominent in James's theory of emotion as well.

Contrary to common sense, James's theory of emotion interchanges two of the three main phases in an emotional experience.¹⁰ Common sense suggests that the perception of the exciting fact leads to the emotional feeling, which then triggers bodily changes. James switches the second and third: each occurrence of emotional feeling corresponds to a unique orchestration of bodily changes, and so, the perception of the exciting fact, rather than the feeling, causes the relevant bodily changes. James states that the feeling of bodily change *is* the emotion. To leave this as a literal identification of his position will have difficulties effectively distinguishing pathological and non-pathological cases as feeling remains in both. As James claims that it's a virtue of his theory that it does (Vol. 2, "The Emotions," 1073) he will need to rely on something other than feeling. In brief, James supposes a conceptual link between the perception of the exciting fact and the feeling of bodily changes in the normal cases. By associating emotion with feeling, James unifies pathological and non-pathological cases as the feeling remains. The pathological cases are just those for which the conceptual link between the perception and feeling is severed. However, one understands the varied emotions according to the normal cases, not the pathological ones. And in the normal cases, for both the coarser and subtler emotions, the perception of the exciting fact is seeing an object as exciting.¹¹ The psychic fringe of emotional feeling serves an epistemic function. The felt fringe indicates interest, and may leave silent any other relations. However, the feeling of indignation or of fear is a feeling of *indignation* or of *fear*, not because of its experiential aspect, or simply because it's a feeling of bodily changes. The feeling connects to the perception of the exciting fact. And though the feeling is a feeling of bodily changes, the felt experience serves as a reliable guide that disposes one toward the content of the perception of the exciting fact. With this chain of connections, James can readily claim that his theory can account for pathological and non-pathological cases. When the feeling of fear is simply a feeling of bodily changes,¹² no ground is available to distinguish between the pathological and the non-pathological. When we presuppose perception of something as something in the normal cases, one can then make sense of James's assertion that it's a virtue of his theory that it does distinguish between normal and abnormal emotional feelings.

In "The Physical Basis of Emotion," published four years after *The Principles*, James explicitly asserts the perception of the exciting object isn't simply the perception of an external object.¹³ In the article, James addresses an objection raised by critics David Irons and W.L. Worchester. They claim that it's not seeing the object as such that produces the emotion. For seeing a bear in a zoo, in a circus, in a photograph, from afar, while sufficiently armed, etc., fails to generate an emotion. James is quick to the point: "A reply to these objections is the easiest thing in the world to make ... As soon as the object has become thus familiar and suggestive, its emotional consequences, *on any theory of emotion*, must start rather from the total situation which it suggests than from its own naked presence ("The Physical Basis of Emotion," 206)." The perception of the exciting fact selects some aspect of the total situation as being vitally important.¹⁴ By conceding that the perception isn't simply of an exciting object, it's one perceived as an exciting object, James retains the strength of his position. Accepting this aspect of common sense, that it's the respect in which one perceives something that generates an emotion, doesn't tell against his main thesis: perceiving the object as an exciting object brings about the bodily changes and without those bodily mechanisms, there would be no feeling of bodily changes.

Consider now this explosion of examples from the chapter on habit.

[Habit] alone is what keeps us all within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the envious uprisings of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and the deck-hand at seas through the winter; it holds the miner in his darkness, and nails the countryman to his log-cabin and his lonely farm through all the months of snow. (Vol. I, "Habit," 125)

Removed from consideration are creatures that are only bundles of natural, automatic, modular happenings. These examples require social creatures. More importantly, they involve creatures with established social institutions. These habits include money, calendars, economic class, as well as cultural renditions of disgust and hardship. Natural, automatic, modular happenings in a creature cannot capture, nor would one think they could, societal facts. Nor would raw experience of the physical world be sufficient. A creature may spontaneously collect silver discs; to form a custom of collecting coins requires social institutions.

Money has power. A number of complex factors no doubt co-mingle to create and maintain the power associated with a socially created object.¹⁵ At minimum, the ability of money to direct and influence behavior requires a declaration from a social institution, such as the US Treasury, that a certain kind of paper or coin count as currency. Communal activity among citizens is required as well. The people need to think of a certain kind of paper or coin as currency. When Zimbabwe's inflation hit 100,000% in 2008, the citizens, at some point, collectively no longer thought of the Zimbabwean dollar as having the power to purchase goods. The paper lost the function of currency despite the efforts of Zimbabwe's social institutions. The power of collective activity that demotes or sustains an object's social function is of a special sort. Compare money use with the use of tools in animals. A crow can learn to bend wire into a hook to fetch food. Other crows watching can learn the trick as well. The crows may even see the hook as a tool – serving a function. But the hook serves that function in virtue of physical properties. Money serves as currency in virtue of mental acts – our collectively assigning a type of paper as having the function it is assigned to have. Communal activity accounts for why green paper in the United States is used in the way it is used. If asked for a reason one can appeal to the power money has independent of an explicit agreement to assign green paper with such a role. Furthermore, the day-to-day use of currency that maintains the power of money does not require one to be phenomenally alive to the paper as money. Our unreflective dispositional mental acts contribute to the further performance of maintaining the power of money. Scam artists rely on such social facts. With our attention dimmed or misdirected, our day-to-day behavior may too readily treat a poorly constructed counterfeit as real.

Both habit and instinct for James remain at the core unreflective reactions to an environment. Instinct suggests that the reaction cannot be compensated for and habit suggests that the response may be acquired or lost. The difficulty is to explain the formulation of a new habit within a nervous system. Still, to treat habit as nothing but learned instinct leaves much to be desired. For James, we choose our habits. As such, the law of habit (i.e., dispositions) entail ethical implications. The hell a person endures in this world as a result their habits, is a hell they made for themselves (Vol. 1, "Habit," 130). What one lacks is a healthy wariness of how one's innocuous choices today may lead to ethical implications tomorrow. James's plea in "Habit" in both *The Principles* and

Talks to Teachers is that the young be wary of themselves and realize their malleable minds will solidify into being a kind of person.¹⁶

James offers four heuristics in *The Principles* to aid in the cultivation of appropriate habits. Taken together, the maxims point to the need for strenuous effort, conscious attention, and circumspection. In ridding oneself of an unwanted habit, the effort and attention are on doing something else and the circumspection is awareness of what one must do so as not to spring to life the unwanted habit. What one pays attention to is not one's subjectivity. What it is like to have the unwanted habit and how one's present actions are for one will fail to be informative. Rather one needs to suppose or imagine what needs to be the case in the world to foster the genesis of a desirable habit while extinguishing the undesirable one. And one does this by knowing what kind of person one is and that some dispositions may frustrate our endeavors.

In the chapter on habit from *Talks to Teachers*¹⁷, James writes from the summit. Gone are the technical aspects with the central message delivered upfront. He tells the reader right off "our virtues are habits as much as our vices. All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits—practical, emotional, and intellectual—systematically organized for our weal or woe, and bearing us irresistibly toward our destiny, whatever the latter may be." The talk rehearses the maxims present in *The Principles* and adds a new one. James writes, "[d]on't preach too much to your pupils or abound in good talk in the abstract." The acquisition of desirable habits requires work. Having good intentions or gaining factual knowledge will be insufficient to aid students in living better lives. The teacher needs to inculcate worthwhile habits. To do this, James implores teachers to get the student to act. The body, as with emotion, is the sounding board of habit. One must act to induce a habit. One must act with explicit attention to details. The teacher must get the student "to think, to feel, and to do." The additional maxim reinforces the notion that conscious attention, strenuous effort, circumspection advance the development of valuable habits.

The inculcation of worthwhile habits demands a special kind of attention. Though it is attention toward oneself, one observes oneself from a distance. This is not introspective observation where one attends to the immediacy of an experience. Instead, one focuses on how one tends to be. One aims to see how one's dispositions may hinder present good intentions. James relates the following story in *Talks to Teachers*:

I remember long ago reading in an Austrian paper the advertisement of a certain Rudolph Somebody, who promised fifty gulden reward to any one who after that date should find him at the wine-shop of Ambrosius So-and-so. 'This I do,' the advertisement continued, 'in consequence of a promise which I have made my wife.'

For Rudolph, a simple declaration to his wife will be insufficient to insure his behavior will change. The declaration needs to be public. Second, Rudolph must know of himself he will inevitably find himself purchasing alcohol in the wine-shop. Rudolph knows his present resolve will soften. The potential loss of a sizable sum creates an independent safeguard. In short, Rudolph has guarded himself from himself because he knows himself from a distance.

James's advice on how one cultivates worthwhile individual habits extends naturally to collective habits that support social institutions.¹⁸ To illustrate, take the administrative head of an organization, whether it be a department chair, president of a Parent Teacher Organization, or chairperson on the board of directors for a non-profit organization. The chair has power. She has that power in virtue of policies and procedures of an institution and the acceptance of

that assignment by its members. Explicit policies and procedures, however, need not be essential. For example, even when policies require a secret ballot among members to select the chairperson, as long as she declares “I’m the chairperson” and others agree, explicitly or implicitly, she has the power associated with the chair. The tacit agreement is important. One continues as chair not in virtue of all members thinking daily, “Lo, the chair.” Rather, each member has formed dispositions to treat her as such. Agreement in the form of dispositions, that is, habits, maintains the continuation of that societal role as well as the social fact of who is the chair.

Now suppose one wants to dethrone the administrative head.¹⁹ It won’t do to pay attention to one’s experience as such or to extinguish one’s own thoughts that express the idea that this person is the chair. Rather, one cultivates dispositions to behave that would fail to acknowledge the person who is the chair as the chair. James’s advice is of that nature. First, one focuses on establishing new habits to replace the old. Second, one must form a behavioral strategy that would have the effect of circumventing present behavioral tendencies. One needs to take a distant view of themselves, and others, to see what conditions would fail to promote the continued acceptance of the person as the chair. Whether this strikes one as devious will depend in part on whether the reason for acting is simply to satisfy one’s desire that the present chair not be who it is. Others, however, will be responsive to reason. As with moral habits, societal habits are open to reason where the reason expresses what is of value.²⁰ One might note how the chair fails to live up to the institution’s mission statement or goals. As an appeal to reason, the focus is on obligations. The reason also expresses an existing habit of acceptance of the role of the institution of which the role of chair is embedded. Should one convince others of the importance of the goals of the institution— to have a sufficient number of members *to think* – one needs the members to be appropriately motivated, *to feel*. And lastly, one needs the members *to act* in the appropriate manner habitually. Difficult indeed because to undo habits that support societal institutions and processes requires herculean effort beyond what an average person could do. One might do better to wait for the next vote. And so, institutional “[h]abit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society, it’s most precious conservative agent (Vol. 1, “Habit,” 125).”

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NOTES

¹ My concern is on the nature of habit within *The Principles*. I lean on other texts only in so far as they help clarify the general position within *The Principles*.

² E.g., in *Reflections on The Principles of Psychology: William James After a Century*, the editors write in the "Introduction" that a common theme emerges from the independent essays: "This theme concerns the tension between the role of experience (or phenomenological data) within a scientific psychology, and the viability of a materialistic (biologically reductive) account of mental life."

³ What will be missing is an understanding of how the simple habit was acquired.

⁴ To treat habit as "just another name for the law of association by contiguity" (See Malone (1990)) fails to capture needed distinctions among habits James is at pains to describe.

⁵ This too helps to differentiate habit and instinct.

⁶ By a contemporary account I mean the claim that consciousness has the following two features: First, consciousness involves qualitative character. Second, the qualitative character is its own evidence – that is, one is aware of the qualitative character non-inferentially.

⁷ James clearly intends to mark the term 'sensation' as something beyond mere neuronal activity that initiates a motor response (Vol. 1, "Habit," 122).

⁸ The initial paragraph of the chapter on habit in *The Briefer Course* makes explicit that the notion of habit is not an additional psychological phenomenon but a fundamental one – present in the "association of ideas, perception, memory, reasoning, education of the will, etc. etc."

⁹ In *Talks to Teachers*, James takes to task the criticism that he made habit impossible to transgress.

¹⁰ His theory of emotion marks a significant departure from the general agreement with common sense *The Principles* exhibits. James writes that he "shall have no hesitation in using the language of common-sense through-out this book (Vol. 1, "The Automaton-Theory," 147)."

¹¹ See Paul Redding's *The Logic of Affect* for a similar claim.

¹² Gerald E. Myers, in "William James's Theory of Emotion," argues for the view that the feeling of fear is nothing more than the feeling of bodily changes. I disagree. Such an interpretation needs to explain James's distinction between pathological and non-pathological cases.

¹³ Matthew Ratcliffe, in "William James on Emotion and Intentionality," claims that James's view is not an object as perceived but simply the external object causing the perception (185). From "What is an Emotion," he offers the following citation as evidence: "... the emotion is nothing but the reflex bodily effects of what we call its "object", effects due to the connate adaptation of the nervous system to that object." Unfortunately Ratcliffe omits the 'if' proceeding 'the emotion', leaving a different reading of James's view. More importantly, the relevant text fails to appear in *The Principles*.

¹⁴ That every object that excites an instinct excites an emotion (Vol. 2, "The Emotions," 1058) is immaterial. For James, the number of instincts implanted in humans out stretch those implanted in other animals as instinct slides between reflex action and habit (Vol. 2, "Instinct," 1056, ft. 34) and are "implanted for the sake of giving rise to habits (Vol. 2, "Instinct," 1022)."

¹⁵ I am indebted to John Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality* and *Making the Social World* in framing how James's notion of habit as the most conservative agent in society connects to social ontology. James's position as outlined is consistent with Searle's independently of whether James would endorse it.

¹⁶ James's examples in "Habit" are not of the traditional vices and virtues. A virtue no doubt if one thinks there are no virtues or vices (See, for example, Harman (2000) or Ross & Nisbett (1991).

¹⁷ This chapter on habit, like the *Briefer Course* chapter, condenses Chapter 4 of *The Principles*. Unlike the *Briefer Course*, much of the chapter in *Talks to Teachers* is original.

¹⁸ I do not address whether James's latter work expands upon the notions of habit and institutions. It is worth noting an 1890 letter to Giulio Ferrari, translator of the Italian edition of *The Principles*. James writes, "I have become exclusively occupied with metaphysics, and to some extent with sociology" (Vol. III, "The Text of *The Principles of Psychology*," 1579).

¹⁹ An administrative head is unlike an alpha wolf. She need not be wary of daily *physical* challenges to her dominance by members.

²⁰ One might say that positive moral habits (virtues) express what ought to be of value and negative moral habits (vices) express what ought not to be of value.