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## Research Article

Guido Seddone\*

# The Conception of Habit as a Stage of Hegel's Naturalistic Theory of Mind

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**Abstract:** This contribution aims to address the nature of the normative in Hegel's theory of habits and to highlight that social practices are the outcome of natural and biological characteristics related to the homeostasis of the organism and to the common biological features of the individuals of the same species. This should point out that habits and human practices have a concrete biological background and are the outcome of humans' eagerness to inhabit the world through socially codified activities. The contribution deals also with the relation habits have with the self-conscious life and human world history.

**Keywords:** habits; Hegel; Hegel's theory of habits

Hegel's conception of mind in the *Encyclopedia* represents an exceptional contribution for understanding the mind-body relation and, particularly, the organic character of the cognitive functions. What Hegel proposes is to conceive of the human mind as a faculty that is developed within the biological evolution of the organism and as a function integrated in the organic living whole of the subject. He deals, therefore, with a soft version of naturalism as he claims that cognitive capacities are strictly connected with natural requisites and maintain a permanent relation with the natural dimension of the organic. Mind is the outcome of a crossed stratification of nature and cognitive dispositions because there is no stage of cognitive activities that can be considered as separated or totally emergent from their natural premises. The rational criterion of Hegel's naturalism is the idea that nature is a system of grades (*System von Stufen*) (Hegel, 1830, § 249) in which the idea and freedom represent the last step. However, this step can only be achieved by a natural organism having developed an organization of its own life based on self-consciousness and on the "Notion" [*der Begriff*]]. Mind is, hence, an embodied faculty, determined by this embodiment and permanently related to this condition. In the *Encyclopedia* Hegel undertakes an analysis of the different levels of the cognitive disposition by starting with those that are mostly connected to the organic dimension of life in order to highlight that the highest level of life is freedom, which is attained by a dialectics between the organic requisites and the very pursuit of the mind. In this narrative, habit occupies a very important position for it is placed after the sentient faculty of the body and introduces the actual soul, i.e. the condition in which the soul conceives of its body as its own *other* and distinguishes itself from the outside environment, becoming an individual subject (Hegel, 1830, § 411). The notion of soul in the Hegelian conception of the mindful disposition is intended to correspond to the classical notions of anima and ψυχή in the ancient philosophy. Therefore, it is not a fully rational and self-conscious disposition because it is not based on a conceptual activity; it is rather much closer to sensibility and to what animates individual agency and behaviour. The

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\*Corresponding author: Guido Seddone, University of Parma, Georgetown University, Washington D.C.,  
E-mail: guido.seddone@icloud.com

soul is what humans share with animals because also animals have an individual agency and autonomously interact with the environment by being aware of their own acting and movements. It is very close to the sentient disposition and establishes a subjective relationship and connection with it by defining individual subjectivity as the inner dimension in which feelings can be embodied. However, humans' soul can also be widely shaped and evolved by means of the acquisition of practices and uses. The definition of individual human agency is refined and improved by virtue of the acquisition of habits, in which the soul is trained to accomplish specific tasks and activities that are socially acknowledged. The human soul is, hence, a question of training the sentient faculty to incorporate feelings, have a self-feeling, attain a bodiliness and, eventually, acquire skills and competencies necessary for the formation of the individual subject to inhabit the world by means of shared practices and norms.

In this contribution I intend to deal with Hegel's naturalistic conception of habit and to highlight the fact that habit is the first cognitive faculty in which the individual becomes able to distinguish sensation from autonomous subjectivity, inwardness from exteriority. I will defend the thesis that mind is an embodied faculty attained both within and by means of the body and by distinguishing the mind from the body, and that this attainment takes place in the habit and before self-conscious life. I will also maintain that the emergence of the autonomous faculties of thinking and acting are strictly connected to the organic dimension of feeling and to its disposition to substantiate a sentient connection to the outside environment. Finally, I will give an account of the specific role of habit in Hegel's theory of mind and explain why it is placed in a very preliminary level of the self-conscious life.

## 1 The mutual dependence of the organic and the self-conscious life

Hegel's theory of mind is based on the analysis of the natural and biological requisites of the cognitive faculties and on the permanent and mutual dependence that mind sets up with the body. Although it comes out as the counterpart of nature because of their own different logical features, the emergence of the cognitive dispositions is based on the biological substratum, which is natural. Hegel explicitly distinguishes nature from spirit when he affirms that the former is "permanence of otherness" (Hegel, 1830, § 247) whereas the latter is understood as a reflexive disposition yielding a "return from otherness" (Hegel, 1807, 105). In fact, mind is the disposition by which rational beings develop a notion about nature and grasp reality under an inferential order of concepts and categories of thinking. On the contrary, nature is merely the object of thinking, the pure *other* of the concept, though it bears the subjective identity of the concept by virtue of the organic prerequisites of the mind. Therefore, spirit undertakes a permanent relation with the otherness of nature and its effort consists in attaining the speculative identity by contemporaneously handling the conditioned dimension of nature. Although spirit is the truth of nature and the opposite of the otherness, i.e. identity, its presupposition is nature itself,<sup>1</sup> because mind is only possible as emerging from the biological characteristics of a living organism. The fundamental formal and logical difference between nature and spirit consists, hence, in the fact that spirit is the concept of nature, namely the inward notion, the identity of an external object and the negation of its independence and has nature as its premise. This kind of relation has its natural actualization in the biological organism, which is organized through an internal closure and self-governance of its own biological patterns. Hegel is aware that the biological characteristics of life represent the natural prerequisites of mind since he affirms that "life, or organic nature, is the stage of nature at which the concept emerges, but as blind, as unaware of itself and unthinking" (Hegel, 1816, 586). The organism has, following Hegel, the peculiarity to have a specific representation of its own biological patterns, which also encompasses the outer world and the relation the former has with the latter. The self-awareness of its own organization before the external world is what makes the organism autonomous and active in comparison to the determinateness of the physical objects. This special kind of organization is called by Varela and Maturana "operational closure" (Varela, 1979, 55-60 and E. Thompson, 2007, 44-45), i.e. a self-referential and internal network of relations defining a biological system as an autonomous and

1 Hegel (1830), § 381: "mind has for its presupposition the nature, of which it is the truth and for that reason its absolute prius."

self-generating and self-preserving unity. The constitution of the mind is, hence, based on the organic functions as a whole and not on the functions of a singular organ, the brain, considered and observed as an isolated tool. The particular features of the self-conscious species determine what kind of relation the cognitive dispositions have with the body and how the mind organizes the practical and ethical dimension. In Hegel's version of naturalism, mind is, hence, not the result of emergent natural dispositions, but rather the result of a permanent mutual dependence it has with the organic dimension of life since it cannot be disembodied. Mind and the self-conscious life are the outcome of what I call a crossed stratification between mind and nature, a concept that explains the fact that mind occupies and exerts its power over the body by conceiving it as *other* and by facing and accepting its limits and features. What develops from this interdependence is the practical, social and historic dimensions of the norms, values, institutions representing the spiritual achievement of the human species and its different civilizations. However, they are understandable if we explain them as actualizations of a "wider context of vital description" (M. Thompson, 2008, 59) of a species or a life-form determining the practical features of every individual of that species.<sup>2</sup> Mind is the result of this crossed stratification between mind and body because what a species can achieve is based on the natural features of this form of life and not on ideal or transcendental definitions of it. Self-conscious life is established by the possibilities of the organic nature of those specific living individuals defining their form of life by means of the way of self-consciousness (Pinkard, 2017, 31). In fact, freedom's mind is not absolute, but rather a relational property determined by the movement of positing itself and another. In the individual ambit the body represents the *other* of the subjective mind and mind's organization is substantiated by the relation it has with this other. This dependence is mutual because a mind without a body would be an abstract faculty, whose constitution and characteristics would remain unknown and not investigable, while a body without a mind would lack the control of the living functions. We can therefore state that every living being is a mind intended as the internal pattern of its biological functions of the organism, although only the human mind is self-aware. As we will see in this contribution, habits represent the early stage in which mind becomes aware of the body by means of the incorporation of feelings and the development of skills and practices. This "awaking of the I", as Hegel calls it (Hegel, 1830 § 412), is possible by virtue of the social character of habits that establish forms of practices on the basis of the inner balance of the organism. Animals do not evolve a second nature and their mind does not become aware, but it still remains the core of the animal life since it controls sensations, feelings, movements and adaptation. The mind-body relation is also permanent because the constitution itself of the mind depends on organic characteristics of the body and it cannot be actual without the natural requisites. Hegel's version of naturalism is based on the fact that mind is the result of this crossed stratification between mind and body and every cognitive disposition should be thought with regard to this peculiarity.

## 2 Feeling and mind: the role of habit

In the *Encyclopedia*, habit is placed in a very early level of the self-aware life and can be properly interpreted as the power or mastery exerted by the subjective mind over the body by means of a mechanism of self-feeling (Hegel, 1830, § 410). As I have already claimed, Hegel conceives of the cognitive dispositions as integrated within the biological life of an organism and as finalized to maintain its homeostasis, i.e. inner balance, health and life (Merker, 2012, 158). This self-preservation is what determines the organism's normative domain, i.e. a system of internal regulation of the biological functions, through the different faculties of the subjective mind including the acknowledgment of the bodily feelings and emotions. Feeling is in fact a very natural disposition of the organism because it is related to the sentient faculty and is the result of a chemical and physical stimulation on the sense organs, which react by transmitting chemical stimuli to the brain. Nevertheless, the spontaneity of the organism, i.e. its feature to have an inner and

<sup>2</sup> M. Thompson, (2008), 57: "...if a language contains any representation of members of the yet narrower class of *organisms* – 'actual objects' for which actuality takes the form of *life* – it must also include a battery of what we may call 'life-descriptions'. Such would be, for example: representations of parts as organs or 'members'; representations of particular sorts of goings-on as vital operations...".

representational dimension on the basis of its own end, entails a normative evaluation of these stimuli aiming at an autonomous organization and classification of them. Thus, the spontaneity of life overcomes the passivity of the sentient faculty, which is also based on biological characteristic, and establishes a self-aware competence over the body that I call normative bodiliness. Such normativity is shaped by the autonomous capacity of the living organism to set up a relation with the outside environment by incorporating feelings and sensations and not letting them become separated from the mind. The individual mind requires, in fact, an operational closure and control over body and feelings by rendering inner what it is originated outwardly. Mind's control over feelings is fundamental in order to preserve the autonomous features of the living organism, which is an autonomous and normative system of pursuits, ends and practical achievements facing the independence of the external reality. Moreover, although feeling is what establishes the individuality of the sentient subject as it requires becoming aware that a sensation is one's own sensation and not a mere physical phenomenon,<sup>3</sup> self-feeling itself does not only represent awareness about one's own body, but rather mastery over a practical and contextual situation. Self-feeling is, hence, what substantiates individuality by marking the border with the outside environment and normatively managing sensations by establishing individual subjectivity. While feeling is properly what a body perceives by an external stimulation, self-feeling represents the inner and autonomous act of managing the sentient faculty in order to gain the control of the body. Since living beings build a normative control over the inner dimension of their own organism, they are also required to manage the feelings produced by sensations coming from outside. In this way, they extend their control over the environment by self-incorporating the sensations and creating a practical context of uses and habits. The normative bodiliness impacts the outer surrounding as far as it represents the ambit where the biological and practical life of the subject takes place and where the subject becomes able to transform the external reality into a practical context. In fact, the body is not merely the tool by which feelings are perceived, it is also the practical instrument for inhabiting and experiencing the external reality. Therefore, bodiliness represents the normative condition by which the subject trains its own body to adequately act in the perceived world and spreads its normative effort by creating a system of rules and habits. Following Hegel, the organism is primarily a practical being that acts within an environment by virtue of its own internal design and normative ends, and it is expected to establish conducts and practices fulfilling its own normative characteristic. This kind of appropriateness over the bodily dimension of feeling can be seen as the bridge between the outer and the inner domain of the organic. This bridge is built by means of habits and rules, which train the body to act and develop a practical surrounding in which the natural ends of the subject can be pursued and attained. Mind's reaction to feeling is, hence, the autonomous reaction of subjectivity appropriating the exteriority and otherness of feeling by putting it into the normative sphere of the practical life. Hegel describes in these passages the compelling transition from the biological to the practical life of the organism, claiming that these two domains are very close and interdependent. Two methodological aspects are central in the Hegelian theory of habit: first, his naturalistic conception of mind as a faculty or activity determined by natural prerequisites, and second, the idea that the practical life is based on the theoretical disposition of the mind to develop a concept about reality. Both aspects highlight that cognitive dispositions are part of the natural attitude to evolve a practical life by norms connected to the biological organism subjected to its own internal holistic design that it strives to preserve and reproduce. This points out that the mind-body relation is conditioned by both natural requirements and the practical demand to establish a practical

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<sup>3</sup> Hegel (1830), § 403: "The feeling individual is the *simple ideality*, subjectivity, of sensation. What it has to do is to *posit* its substantiality, its merely *implicit* fulfilment, as subjectivity, to take possession of itself, and to become for itself as the power over itself. As feeling, the soul is no longer a merely natural, but an inward, individuality; its *being-for-self*, which in the merely substantial totality is only formal, is to be liberated and made independent."

context where the living being can act and thrive following the normative characteristic of its own body.<sup>4</sup>

What actually does Hegel mean with the notion of habits? They represent a mechanism of self-feeling, i.e. the self-incorporation of particular feelings into the universal being of the soul and the consequent production of practices and rules.<sup>5</sup> Since these are the determinacy of feeling, they transform the nature of the body into a second nature, that is into the condition in which dispositions are not merely given but autonomously produced.<sup>6</sup> Human practices and habits are therefore the outcome of the embodiment of feelings, and are determined by means of a subjective disposition to self-preserve and organize the practical domain. Therefore, in order to set up practices, habits and second nature, a crucial role is played by the subjective striving to attain a practical domain in which the desiderata and demands of the living subject can be satisfied and fulfilled. With habits humans are able to properly evolve the practical dimension by incorporating feelings and give them expression, and to share these practices with beings of the same species.

### 3 The social characteristic of habits and the naturalistic definition of social practices

Habits are definitely social beliefs and common forms of practices, and they are shared among members of the same species or genus [*Gattung*]. What is compelling in Hegel's theory is the fact that they are not shared by means of mere social interaction, but rather on the basis of the same biological pattern that members of the same species naturalistically have in common. As we have already seen, the homeostasis of the organism represents the natural ground of normativity because it determines the internal representation or design of every organism of a given species and the norms it must follow for fostering self-maintenance and -preservation. This also changes the nature of the external world by rendering it the practical domain the organism can inhabit and experience according to its own internal normative and biological scheme. This natural premise is evidently shared with individuals of the same species and the autonomous development of habits and rules represents the evolution of the species as historical entity. I obviously intend the human or self-conscious species, although the discourse about habits can also be extended to the organism of other species. In fact, the behaviour of every organism is consistent with the biological operational closure and self-organization fixing the internal design and the normative homeostasis of its form of life. However, human life has the characteristic of being self-aware and developing sophisticated habits and behaviours that are integral parts of the evolutive history of the human species. Whereas other species evolve natural dispositions, humans also evolve culture and social practices by means of negativity, namely by negating natural conditionings and determining a concept of itself as an act of freedom (Ng, 2017, 118,129). Therefore, habits in self-conscious life assume the connotation of second nature, can be socially transmitted and determine the evolution of the human species as a cultural and historical achievement. Habits are, hence, a stage of the self-conscious life in which social practices are defined on the basis of natural requisites shared by individuals of the same self-conscious species. Consequently, the determination of them is a social matter because they have an impact on the practical life of those individuals.

<sup>4</sup> Hegel (1830), §410 Z: "Between the mind and its *own* body there is naturally an even more intimate association than between the rest of the external world and mind. Just because of this necessary connection of my body with my soul, the activity immediately exerted by the soul on the body is not a *finite*, not a merely *negative*, activity. First of all, then, I have to maintain myself in this *immediate* harmony of my soul and my body; true, I do not have to make my body an end in itself as athletes and tightrope walkers do, but I must give my body its due, must take care of it, keep it healthy and strong, and must not therefore treat it with contempt or hostility."

<sup>5</sup> Hegel (1830), § 410: "This self-incorporation of the particularity or bodiliness of the determinations of feeling into the *being* of the soul appears as a *repetition* of them, and the production of habits appears as *practices*. For, since this being is, in relation to the natural-particular material that is put into this form, abstract universality, it is universality of reflexion: one and the same item, as an external plurality of sensation, is reduced to its unity, and this abstract unity is *posited*."

<sup>6</sup> Hegel (1830), § 410 R: "Habit has rightly been called a second nature: nature: *nature*, because it is an immediate being of the soul, a *second* nature, because it is an *immediacy* posited by the soul, incorporating and moulding the bodiliness that pertains to the determinations of feeling as such and to the determinacies of representation and of the will in so far as they are embodied"

The connection between habits and sociality depends on the fact that the acquisition of the former can be shared by individuals of the same species by virtue of the common natural and biological characteristics they share. Language, for example, is a practice for which humans can be trained because they can socially interact through vocal communication, what individuals of other species cannot because of a natural gap. Human beings organize and self-incorporate feelings and experiences in a similar way and share the possibility to achieve same skills and perform same practices. Since habits are universal ways of the soul, i.e. ways in which the individual soul incorporates feelings by evolving general rules and practices, individuals of the same species are able to share them and to institutionalize common forms of life. Consequently, there is a strict relation between the natural constitution of the soul by feelings' self-incorporation and the establishment of social habits and practices, which is rooted in the peculiar homeostasis of the human organism. The singular individual can be, in fact, trained into practices that are universally codified by rules and symbols and socially transmitted by means of linguistic communication. The human organism is, therefore, naturalistically shaped for the evolution of habits that can be considered as a second nature, i.e. a nature posited by the natural disposition of the soul to incorporate feelings and mould the bodiliness.<sup>7</sup> This natural disposition to establish a mechanism of feeling by evolving the autonomous and internal dimension of the soul is what makes habits the outcome of the aesthetic attitude of the human beings to organize and autonomously incorporate the sensitive and emotional dimension of their bodies through codified practices. While other animals do not change the naturalness of their body and its condition of otherness, human soul is able to engrave sensations into the dimension of practices and rules and to reorganize the externality and otherness of sensation into habits, by which individual of the same species can be trained and educated. The peculiar feature of mind activity is properly the “return from otherness” (Hegel, 1830, 105) caused by nature, i.e. its capacity to grasp reality by the adequate codification of practices and beliefs, and in the emergence of habits we can see how soul incorporates the particularity of feelings by producing general forms of action, which can be shared with similar individuals. Sociality and second nature are, hence, the outcome of the spontaneous activity of the mind, which evolves norms on the basis of the general form of life of the human species. This species and its evolutive and dynamic history determine the natural background on which practices, values and rules are developed, and this underlines the strong connection between life and practice that recently has also been highlighted by thinkers like Philippa Foot (2001) and Michael Thompson (2008). The link between life and practice shows that the practical dimension is not based on transcendental principles of acting, but rather on principles connected to the general and immanent attitude of the agents and defining goodness and evil for a specific form of life. This general and immanent attitude is the requisite necessary for overcoming the particular moment of the natural subject and achieving shared forms of practices defining the human species beyond its natural requisites and through a historical and contextual denotation. In Hegel's philosophy habits represent the first step of subjective spirit in overcoming nature as “permanence of otherness” (Hegel, 1830, § 247) and the first definition of practices that can be shared by virtue of their universal character of norms of acting and believing. They are the result of the soul's capacity to incorporate the body's feelings and to mould them into universal practices characterizing a social group and eventually the human species itself. The connection between life and practice defended by Hegel and recently by M. Thompson (2008) highlights the fact that our species cannot be exclusively described by means of biological requisites and characteristics since it determines itself through practices that are autonomous acts of actualized freedom and emancipation from nature's otherness.

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<sup>7</sup> Hegel (1830), § 410: “The *natural* qualities and alterations of age, of sleeping and waking, are immediately natural; habit is the determinacy of feeling ... made into something that is natural, mechanical. Habit has rightly been called a second nature: *nature*, because it is an immediate being of the soul, a *second* nature, because it is an immediacy *posited* by the soul, incorporating and moulding the bodiliness that pertains to the determinations of feeling as such and to the determinacies of representation and of the will in so far as they embodied.”

## 4 Habit as a practical, partially self-conscious disposition

As we have already seen, habits pertain to the dimension of life and are the result of feelings' self-incorporation and the evolution of universal practices. However, they do not render individuals free because they only pertain to the domain of soul, which is a natural faculty, and not to the realm of the self-conscious life.<sup>8</sup> In fact, in habits man's mode of existence is natural and connected to the sensitive dimension of life, and the only difference from the natural condition is that it fosters a second nature in which humans can be trained and embedded. This represents the great limitation of habit that is too close to nature and otherness for complete actualization of the self-conscious life, which requires the freedom of thinking achieved through the Idea, the adequate notion, the perfect representation of the necessity of reality and the emancipation from its conditionings. Habits cannot either be connected to the ethical domain in which the adequate values are contained in the ethics of one's own community and foster the preservation of the community itself by moulding the particular interest in favour of a general will. In contrast to the self-conscious ethical life, habits pertain to the natural soul's mechanism of the body's self-incorporation and, therefore, they do not yield liberation from natural sensations. Hegel seems here to underestimate the role of habits in favour of a formal conception of ethical norms; in fact, he also highlights that habits can be wrong and untrue because they reply practices in which one has been trained and which one does not critically acquire. They are properly behaviours by which sensations take the form of externality, but they are not the realization of an ethical substance by which the spirit or essence of a people or genus is actualized. However, the externality of habits represents the possibility for the soul to give expression to its feelings and sensations by signs, practices and symbols socially codified. Language, gestures, the posture of body, physiognomy, etc. are codified ways by which the soul expresses itself deploying the body as an instrument of externalization and occupying a social and shared stage. A soul trained in habits is a free soul since it is able to socialize and to communicate to other individuals its own sentiments and feelings, although it is not a free consciousness because it has not yet achieved the "idealization" of these practices. In fact, consciousness and particularly self-consciousness is the result of the experience of the contradictions of reality; in other words, it is the outcome of the dialectical experience of the oppositions it undergoes for achieving free actualization. Its characteristic is negativity, that is, the disposition to sublimate otherness's independence and to overcome the conflicts within reality through a speculative attitude, and it establishes with the context a relation based on freedom. In contrast, the soul incorporates the body and exerts a control over its own *other*,<sup>9</sup> but it does not bear a dialectic attitude towards reality based on the certainty of itself. Performing habits, the soul voluntarily<sup>10</sup> actualizes its self-feeling through bodiliness, namely performing through the body practices, activities and rules incorporating and expressing inner feelings and emotions. In doing so, the soul intuitively itself in the body and conceives of it as an other over which it applies its power and control. Habits are also defined by Hegel as the "higher awaking to the I" (Hegel, 1830, § 412) because they represent the determinacies of the soul, namely the codified way in which the soul expresses and externalizes its concrete self-feeling. However, this is not yet self-consciousness, but rather a very early step towards self-certainty and negation of otherness' independence that Hegel will tackle in

<sup>8</sup> Hegel (1830), § 410: "In habit man's mode of existence is natural, and for that reason he is unfree in it; but he is free in so far as the natural determinacy of sensation is by habit reduced to *his* mere being, he is no longer different from it, is indifferent to it, and so no longer interested, engaged, or dependent with respect to it. The unfreedom in habit is partly just *formal*, pertaining only to the being of the soul; partly only *relative*, in so far as it really arises only in the case of *bad* habits, or in so far as habit is opposed by another purpose; the habit of right in general, of the ethical, has the content of freedom."

<sup>9</sup> Hegel (1830), § 412 Z: "Whereas in the sphere of *merely sentient* soul the self appears, in the shape of the *genius*, as a power acting on the embodied individuality *only from outside* and at the same time *only from within*, at the stage of the soul's development now reached, by contrast, the self has, as we showed earlier, *actualized* itself in the soul's *reality*, in its *bodiliness*, and, conversely, has posited being within itself; so that now the self or the I *intuits its own self* in this *Other* and is *this self-intuiting*."

<sup>10</sup> Hegel (1830), §411 Z: "Now just as the *voluntarily* embodiments of the mental discussed here become through habit something *mechanical*, something requiring no particular effort of will, so too, conversely, some of the *involuntary* embodiments of what is sensed by the soul considered in §401 can also take place with *consciousness* and *freedom*. Above all the human *voice* belongs here; when the voice becomes *speech*, it ceases to be an *involuntarily* expression of the soul. Similarly, *laughing*, in the form of *laughing at*, becomes something produced with *freedom*."



the following chapter of the *Encyclopedia on the Phenomenology of Mind*. As much can be said about the relation between habits and world human history: both are a historical and dynamic actualization of the human mind and self-conscious life, although habits cannot be explained by means of an unitarian and coherent idea of historical development. In fact, whereas history has, following Hegel, the logical form of human civilization and is formally determined as an act of actualized freedom and by negation, namely by means of the primary characteristic of self-consciousness to negate external conditioning, habits are not subjected to an idealistic or logical scrutiny. They represent different forms of body incorporation and actualization of the human soul and, therefore, they cannot be understood as outcome of a unitary and coherent development, but rather as different practices that can share some kind of affinity.

## 5 Conclusion

In this contribution I dealt with Hegel's theory of habits and claimed that it is part of his naturalistic version of the mind-body connection. Although habits do not represent the free expression of the self-conscious life because they are acquired in a mechanical and repetitive way, they can be regarded as the awaking of individuality, because through them the subject can voluntarily perform general and socially codified practices and activities by training and mastering its own body. In speaking, for example, humans do not merely emit sounds, but rather linguistic symbols that they are trained to use in order to have a speech. This is a form of freedom, although it is not the freedom arising from reflexion and dialectical thinking. In spite of this limitation, Hegel's theory of habit supplies us with a compelling conception on human codified practices, their connection with feelings and the soul, their irreducible social and sharable character, the relation to the question concerning the genus and the human history, etc. It is also very compelling how he accounts for their emergence from the organic nature of the normative, which he considers related to the homeostasis of the biological individuals, their pursuits and natural ends.

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