
FRANK SCALAMBRINO

University of Dallas

fscalabrino@udallas.edu

FROM A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE RECIPROCAL NATURE OF HABITS AND VALUES TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE INTERSUBJECTIVE GROUND OF NORMATIVE SOCIAL REALITY

abstract

In this article I take a phenomenological approach to clarify the concept of habit and advance the discussion of the relation between habit and social reality. This approach clarifies what may be referred to as Aristotle's understanding of the reciprocal nature of virtue in regard to the virtuous agent. Reading virtue, then, as a kind of disposition which determines the value system in which an agent participates, a phenomenological understanding of the intersubjective ground of social reality emerges. This advances the discussion of the relation between habit and social reality with a more robust understanding of normativity.

keywords

Rule of distribution, act of distribution, egalitarianism

Introduction

Rather than follow Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) and examine habit as constrained by historical and sociological conditions (cf. Bourdieu, 1977), this article examines the habitual grounds of lived experience, through a phenomenological analysis, toward drawing conclusions regarding persons and social reality. This will not be the first phenomenological analysis of social reality. The perhaps two most prominent examples are Alfred Schutz's *The Phenomenology of the Social World* and James Ostrow's *Social Sensitivity: A study of habit and experience*. However, this article differs from the above examples by incorporating the notion of a reciprocal nature between habits and values. Though this notion may be seen in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, its exploration through phenomenological analysis can advance the discussion of the relation between habit and social reality. For example, Ostrow was concerned to provide a phenomenological disclosure of an intersubjective ground to social reality. Stated as a question: how is an individual's lived experience constituted such that the meaning of experience is determined in relation to a social reality? Ostrow's "intersubjective ground" here points to an understanding of individuals as themselves socially constituted. Beyond the awareness, however, of an intersubjective ground as a condition for the possibility of each individual subject experiencing itself as a subject, questions remain concerning the normativity of social reality.

In other words, though two persons, as individuals in a social encounter, may have access to a reflective awareness of each other as subjects by way an intersubjective ground, questions regarding the normativity of social reality pertain to how the social meaning of a situation is determined. Such questions are complex. On the one hand, the very fact that social meaning is social indicates that the meanings determined must extend beyond any one individual subject. On the other hand, the freedom of each individual in a social encounter extends to the determination of meaning. Notice, this is the case even within the context of the suggestion that all meaning is social. One person may determine the meaning of a social transaction differently from another, though both determine the meaning of the transaction as a social transaction.

What is at stake, then, in this article may be referred to as the problem of the intersubjective ground of normative social reality. Just as an account of social reality would not be complete without taking normativity into

consideration, normativity, it seems, can neither be simply reduced to an intersubjective ground nor to individual freedom. Interestingly, normativity does not reduce to an intersubjective ground because of individual freedom, and normativity does not reduce to individual freedom because of the intersubjective ground of meaning. Hence, this article addresses the individual freedom pole of the problem by examining the role of habit in social transactions at the level of persons, and it addresses the intersubjective ground of meaning pole of the problem by examining the role of values in determining social reality.

This article provides a robust account of the intersubjective ground of normative social reality through a phenomenology of the reciprocal nature of habits and values. It may be considered robust in that it provides an account of normativity through an understanding of the habitual grounds of lived experience, rather than attempt to reduce normativity to either personal creation or some non-personal intersubjective ground (e.g. language or a vague notion of empathy). Moreover, this approach differs from those which, despite the existential, social, and historical constraints which may be associated with “roles”, advance a version of “social role embodiment” to account for the intersubjective ground of normative social reality. Hence, this article provides a habit-centered reading of social reality, and given its approach to uncovering the relation between habit and values, this article affirms the value of phenomenology.

Aristotle and Habit-Centered Social Reality

Taking Aristotle’s understanding of the virtuous person as a point of departure, it is possible to see social reality as habit-centered. In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle identifies virtue with practice. That is to say, a person becomes virtuous by repeatedly performing virtuous acts. This not only indicates habit as the ground of virtuous activity but also points to the role of habit in determining social reality.

Of all that may be meant by the term “habit”, what I mean here, following Aristotle, is a disposition or tendency resulting from the development of human capacities. The idea is simply that in order to perform actions humans must actualize the capacities involved in the performance of such actions, and through the process of repeated actualization a kind of fluency develops. This fluency may be characterized in contrast to earlier moments in the process of its development by noting that the fluency entails a kind of “momentum.” That is to say, in contrast to earlier less developed moments, a tendency to perform actions related to the now developed capacities has emerged. On the one hand, this tendency makes the performance of actions more efficient, since it allows for relevant actions to be performed with

less intervention by the (now practiced) agent performing the action. On the other hand, this tendency ensures that actions related to developed capacities are more likely to be performed than actions related to undeveloped capacities.

This seems to be precisely Aristotle's understanding of habit and the tendency to perform virtuous actions. According to Aristotle,

This, then, is the case with the virtues also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and by being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly (Aristotle, 2009: 103b14-18).

Notice, "our transactions" with others are not merely the result of our virtues. Rather, since virtue is grounded in habit, social transactions contribute to the reality of social life by influencing future transactions. On the one hand, this points to a reading of Aristotle's practical philosophy as more habit-centered than decision or logic-centered. On the other hand, this leads us to ask the question: Is social reality somehow grounded in the habits of the society's individuals?

As habit-centered, Aristotle emphasizes that deciding to be brave does not, of course, make one brave. Similarly, realizing that to be brave would be the logically correct way to handle some social transaction does not, of course, make one brave. Though these may be straightforward conclusions, when social commentators overlook such realities they misrepresent the human and personal realities of the situation. As this article will show, because the habits influencing social reality reside at the level of the (first-person) individual, phenomenology is the appropriate method for showing these human and personal realities in social situations.

To answer the question, then, yes. Social reality is somehow grounded in the habits of the society's individuals. Yet, without providing a phenomenological analysis of how habits relate to social reality, it may be difficult to see why habit is more important than other logical alternatives such as advertising or the collective adoption of social goals. This is not to say that advertising or the collective adoption of goals is not influential to social reality; rather, this is to say phenomenologically, and along with Aristotle, that individual personal habits are more primordial than advertising or the collective decision to pursue a goal.

Hence, what needs to be examined phenomenologically is the relationship between persons and values. Phenomenological analysis will show the

primordial nature of habit in relation to values by revealing that values are not simply aspects of the natural environment to be chosen from like apples at the market. Rather, it is as if habit conditions the horizon of experience. What this means is that though the meaning of a social situation may be determined in many *possible* ways, the tendencies of the habit-grounded-dispositions of the participants in the situation limit the set of logically possible meanings. Aristotle illustrates this insight in the *Nicomachean Ethics* by convincingly arguing that persons may be understood in terms of different character types, and these character types indicate a relation between lived experience and the meaning of a social transaction. That is to say, the possible meanings to be determined in a social transaction are limited precisely by the dispositions constituting the lived experience specific to each character type. A phenomenological analysis of the dispositional nature of the lived experience of persons in relation to values, then, will properly situate values in relation to habit.

**Disclosing
States of
Affairs: The
Reciprocal
Nature of
Habits and
Values**

An excellent example of a phenomenological analysis of persons in relation to values may be seen in the work of Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977). So, though the following analysis may not be unique regarding values, it may be unique in regard to my connecting values with habit and my phenomenological characterization of the results. On the one hand, the reciprocal nature of habits and values was already seen by Aristotle, and arguably perhaps Plato (cf. Plato, 1997). On the other hand, von Hildebrand's phenomenological approach to understanding value allows for the more mysterious aspects of this reciprocal nature to emerge. Therefore, this article builds on a combination of insights found in the work of Aristotle and von Hildebrand toward phenomenologically illuminating the primordial ground of habit in relation to social reality, specifically from the perspective of the person in relation to values.

Performing a social transaction in accordance with a value or set of values, as Aristotle taught, strengthens the habit of performing future transactions similarly. Further, the practical freedom of an agent situated in social transactions seems to suggest the habitual reinforcement of multiple, and even conflicting, values to hang in the balance. In other words, an understanding of habitual momentum does not exclude personal choice in social transactions. Yet, if it is possible for the agent to determine the meaning, i.e. identity, of a social situation differently depending on the values involved, then how exactly are values involved in social situations? Phenomenological analysis responds to this question in a twofold way. First, this question calls for a discussion of disclosure. Second, it calls for

a discussion of the relation between evidence determining states of affairs and an agent's situating of a social transaction. Disclosure points to the determination of experiential truth. That is to say, the lived experience of a situation can be taken as disclosing the truth of what is present to the experiencing agent. This is different from the truth that relates to logical operations. Briefly put, logical truth should stand regardless of the content of the experience an agent may have. However, truth in terms of phenomenological disclosure depends on the content of the agent's experience.

If I take myself to be in the presence of a horse, then the question may be asked as to whether the essence of horse is intuitively fulfilled. In other words, I can imagine a horse because I have an understanding of what a horse is essentially. However, to say that my lived experience discloses a horse to me, if true, means that I have experiential content related to the immediate environment that fills in the essence in question (in this case a horse) such that a horse is experientially present to me. This is often called "intuitive fulfillment" by phenomenologists since it is my intuitions of the environment that count as evidence for or against the essence with which I understand myself to be presented (cf. Husserl, 1983: §138).

Now, social transactions are more complicated than the question of whether there is a horse in front of you or not. Yet, the phenomenological process through which the identity of the social transaction is disclosed to an agent will essentially function in the same way. Since an agent's action in a social situation is inextricably tied to the agent's lived experience, prior to and including its understanding of the identity of the social situation it is experiencing, social transactions are complex in that they include the consideration of multiple disclosures. In phenomenological terminology, each of the multiple disclosures may be thought of as parts contributing to the identification of a whole meaning, and thus the agent's disclosure of this whole meaning is called the present "state of affairs" (cf. Husserl, 1973: §17). Social transactions depend on an agent's disclosure of a state of affairs, since intuitive fulfillment of mere parts of a situation are insufficient.

Notice, intuitive fulfillment of mere parts of a situation would mean merely disclosing the meaning of the parts without determining the meaning of the relations among the parts. Insofar as social transactions depend on understanding the meaning of the state of affairs as a social transaction, then social transactions are complex in that they necessarily include the consideration of multiple disclosures. Now, though much could be said regarding the phenomenological understanding of states of affairs, for the purposes of this article I will discuss the relation between intuitive

fulfillment and habit and the relation between values and essences in determining the meaning of social reality.

Because, for example, the identity of a social situation depends in part on how the participants tend to act socially and are disposed to act socially, some of the intuitive fulfillment of a social situation may be described as “carried into” the situation by the very presence of the particular agent(s) in question (cf. Scalabrino, 2013a). This, of course, points generally to habit as contributing to the intuitive fulfillment that discloses the identity of a situation. That is to say, the habits of individuals in a social situation contribute to determining the meaning of the social situation. Yet, just as the truth of disclosure depends on the actual intuitive fulfillment, the possible lived experience of a situation is constrained as to the various kinds of states of affairs it can be. These constraints regarding kinds point to the presence of essence.

For example, at the moment an agent is experiencing freezing weather on the North Pole, it is not possible for that agent, at that time, to have the lived experience of a beach exemplary of the essence of an Italian island. The agent may have an essentially Italian island in mind; however, the intuitive fulfillment will not provide evidence for the lived experience of such an essence. This constraint works in the other direction, so to speak, as well. That is, though an agent may have intuitive fulfillment potentially providing evidence for the lived experience of some essence, if the agent is not capable of grasping the essence, then the agent will not live the experience of that essence. Though perhaps an agent in a social situation could be taught to understand the situation in a way essentially different from the way(s) it currently understands it, missed opportunities and follies of youth provide ample examples of agents not understanding the state of affairs in which they were situated.

Hence, *the essential ways states of affairs may be intuitively fulfilled point to a multiplicity of ways a social situation may be lived*, i.e. a multiplicity of ways lived experience may disclose the truth of a situation. This is the result of a phenomenological analysis of meaning determination in social transactions, and it may be taken as a point of departure from which to consider the reciprocal nature of habits and values.

In the same way that the framework of this result shows how intuitive fulfillment can allow for the determination of different states of affairs from out of an intuitively constrained set of essences, so too this framework reveals the way in which values contribute to the lived experience of a social situation. Consider the following from von Hildebrand,

It is plainly nonsensical to say of acts of charity or justice that in speaking of their value we only refer to such a point of view of motivation; for *evidently* [emphasis added] the value discloses itself as a property of these acts (Hildebrand, 1953: 79).

Beyond thinking of values as motivations, phenomenological analysis reveals values as essentially related to the acts in which a social transaction is identified as charitable or just. In other words, just as it is the case that if an agent is to reinforce its habitual relation to a specific kind of lived experience, then it must be able to disclose a state of affairs so as to live that kind of experience, so too if an agent is to reinforce its habitual relation to acting in accordance with a value or set of values, then it must be able to determine the meaning of a state of affairs in light of such values. The distinction may be subtle; however, there is a difference between being motivated by values and having the kind of disposition that allows one to determine the meaning of a situation in terms of some value or set of values. In fact, von Hildebrand himself points to “the *disposition* to recognize something superior to one’s arbitrary pleasure and will [emphasis added]” (Hildebrand, 1969: 10). *Here, then, is the reciprocal nature of habits and values.* Recall, as noted above, though the meaning of a social situation may be determined in many *possible* ways, the tendencies of the habit-grounded-dispositions of the participants in the situation limit the set of logically possible meanings. Now we see that this limiting of the set of logically possible meanings involves, beyond habit, the essential values accessible to the person with which to determine the meaning of a situation. Hence, to act in accordance with values, as essential properties of acts, an individual’s habit-ground must condition the horizon of the experience in such a way that a person experiences the state of affairs as one in which the set of possible actions to be performed essentially involves such values. Though Aristotelian virtues and social values may not be isomorphic, values may still be understood as grounded in habit regarding individuals. Recall, also from the above section on Aristotle, values too may be understood as habit-centered. For example, deciding to be charitable and being charitable are different, and this is the case even when sound logic calls for a charitable act. Hence, just as the habitual reinforcement of a disposition to disclose a state of affairs influences future disclosures, acting in accordance with some value or value system reciprocally affects the agent so as to influence the future disclosure of situations as calling for such value-laden acts. Lastly, notice that though the habitual determination of meaning in terms

of values influences the agent's present and future acts, like essences values are intuitively fulfilled in determining the meaning of states of affairs; they are not part of the intuitions related to the environment with which the fulfilling is accomplished. This insight provides an entry into the more mysterious aspects of the reciprocal nature of habit and values. First, we should ask: what is a value? Second, we may come to understand why von Hildebrand characterizes values as "spiritual", and how the presence of values may involve "grace."

We often characterize something as having value, and we may mean this in multiple ways. For example, we may declare a beverage to be valuable, and notice it may be valuable in multiple ways. It may be valuable due to the pleasure it provides us in consuming it, or it may be valuable as a charitable gift to someone. As von Hildebrand maintains, we may understand value as subjectively contingent or as transcendentally absolute. A person may be motivated to act, then, in regard to a value, so long as the person is able to determine the meaning of a situation as one in which the value applies. In determining a state of affairs a person is then able to respond to the presence of values, and von Hildebrand refers to this as a value-response (cf. Hildebrand, 2009: 206; cf. Hildebrand, 1973: 47).

On the one hand, values are essential properties of acts (cf. Hildebrand, 1953: 79). This was noted and discussed above. On the other hand, values transcend that of which they are essential properties. For example, it may be a non-essential property of some coffee mug that it is blue. Yet, the property of being blue transcends the coffee mug insofar as there are other objects which participate in the property of being blue. However, there is a difference which is quite important here between values as essential properties and qualities, such as being blue, as accidental properties, and this difference relates to the possibility of self-transcendence in von Hildebrand. That is to say, by responding to absolute values as essential a person is able to transcend a tendency to respond to subjective and relative values as accidental. Finally, this understanding of the difference between absolute and relative values and absolute and relative value-responses allows us to ask: in determining the meaning of a social transaction, how does an absolute value become present as a value to potentially be intuitively fulfilled?

Interestingly, this question would be at home in Book II of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* where he wonders how "moral virtue" is acquired. On the one hand, Aristotle and von Hildebrand are in clear agreement regarding the reality of a transcendent pleasure experienced by persons being virtuous, and this is intimately related to von Hildebrand's discussion of

self-transcendence. On the other hand, though there is, of course, value in teaching children to consider what von Hildebrand calls “absolute values” in social transactions, Aristotle’s ethics reminds us that as “a condition of the possession of the virtues knowledge has little or no weight, while the other conditions count not for a little but for everything, i.e. the very conditions which result from often doing just and temperate acts” (Aristotle, 2009: 1105b1-5). Hence, we may now arrive at an answer to the above question by contextualizing values in von Hildebrand’s terms of “spirituality” and “grace.” That the presence of absolute values grants the person to whom they are present the possibility of self-transcendence through a kind of absolute participation, the mysterious nature of their origin may be characterized as a gift, and this points to “grace” (Hildebrand, 1953: 18; cf. Scalabrino, 2014). Finally, recognizing this grace as perfecting the nature of a person toward dwelling in a self-transcendent communion with absolute values, speaks to the “spiritual” nature of the values and persons (cf. Hildebrand, 1953: 167; cf. Scalabrino, 2013b).

Phenomenology and the Difference between Real and Abstract Distinctions

Now that habit as the primordial ground, from the perspective of the person in relation to values, has been established, the question of how to identify the relation between the agent and habit needs to be addressed. Addressing this relation phenomenologically interestingly hearkens back to a Scholastic notion of the difference between real and conceptual distinction. In perhaps more contemporary language this may be seen as the difference between a real and an abstract distinction. For example, though two properties of a thing may not be distinct in reality, they may be distinct when taken in the abstract. In other words, the circularity of a real ball is not really distinct from the presence of the ball in question. However, taken abstractly circularity may be contemplated as distinct from experience of the ball.

The question under consideration, then, is how to understand the distinction between habit and the lived experience of *the person*. Just as the notion of person may be thought to unify the two terms which are here abstractly distinct, i.e. habit and lived experience, understanding habit and lived experience as not really distinct provides more depth to the understanding of a person in a social transaction and to the understanding of the reciprocal nature of habit and value. This concern, then, to illustrate that habit and lived experience are not really distinct is quite similar to a concern held by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) in relation to the results of phenomenological analysis. For example, in his *History of the Concept of Time* Heidegger was concerned “to show that intentionality is a structure of lived

experience as such and not a coordination relative to other realities, [i.e.] something added to the experiences taken as psychic states” (Heidegger, 1985: 29).

The similarity between Heidegger’s concern and ours may help guard against mistakenly considering habit as really distinct from the person having a lived experience of social reality. As his above quote suggests, Heidegger is aware that a phenomenological analysis provides access to aspects of lived experience as if those aspect were separate in reality. However, beyond the abstract awareness of separate aspects of lived experience such as essences, intuitive fulfillment, habits and value-responses, from the perspective of the social reality of a person in a social transaction, such aspects are not really distinct. In other words, to consider habit as really distinct from the person having a lived experience of social reality is to confuse abstract and real distinction. This is to say that the primordial ground of habit influencing the values with which the person determines how to identify the state of affairs and act in a social situation precisely *is* the person in the situation. Further, the reinforcement of the habit of the person is the reinforcement of the presence of the values enacted in the very construction of social reality.

Since an awareness of the difference between real and abstract distinctions will help clarify the concluding parts of this paper, briefly consider one more example from the history of philosophy. Recall one of the telltale signs of the virtuous person in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* is the absence of the awareness which accompanies the lived experience of the ethically-incontinent person. This is because the virtuous person is in the habit of being virtuous. How then may we understand such a function of habit in which potential meaning determinations of a social situation are kept absent from the virtuous person’s awareness? Insofar as we may characterize what is absent to the virtuous person as the tendency to indulge in relative values of self-satisfaction, the function of habit in the virtuous person may be seen as contributing to what von Hildebrand called “self-transcendence.”

A brief consideration of Henri Bergson’s (1859-1941) characterization of habit memory, then, may provide further clarification regarding the real function of habit in self-transcendence. According to Bergson, the uniqueness of habit memory, i.e. its primordial nature, is such that “it no longer *represents* our past to us, it *acts* it; and if it still deserves the name of memory, it is not because it conserves bygone images, but because it prolongs their useful effect into the present moment” (Bergson, 1929: 93). Here, Bergson may be seen invoking a distinction between a kind of declarative memory, which

preserves bygone images, and a kind of procedural memory, which may be said to “act” insofar as there is not a real distinction between it and its agent. Put negatively, the habit memory of the virtuous person “acts” in such a way that potential meaning determinations remain absent from the person’s horizon of experience. Put positively, the habit memory of the virtuous person “acts” in such a way as to maintain a relation to absolute values as essential for determining the meaning of social reality. In this way, the reciprocal nature of habit and values conditions self-transcendence. It is as if the agent’s presence in a situation unfolds from its habit-ground (cf. Scalabrino, 2012a). Hence, it is by way of analysis that the agent and its habitual way of being seem distinct; yet, in terms of the person in the social situation, the agent is not really distinct from its habit.

Logic-Centered Normativity

With the above phenomenological analysis of an agent in a social situation, the relation between habit and value in determining an agent’s lived experience of the state of affairs of a social transaction has been accomplished. It is now possible to examine how a logic-centered reading of normative social reality diminishes the actual role of habit in relation to social reality (cf. Scalabrino 2012b). The difference between a logic-centered and habit-centered reading of normative social reality will hinge on different understandings of the universality and necessity of the determined meaning of a social situation. Normativity here, of course, refers to the manner of determining the identity of a situation such that the situation would be acknowledged necessarily and universally as such. Robert Brandom has provided what may be seen as a logic-centered reading of normativity. Consider Brandom’s characterization from his *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*,

the synthesis of a rational self or subject: what is responsible for the [normative] commitments ... has a *rational* unity in that the commitments it comprises are treated as *reasons* for and against other commitments, as normatively *obliging* one to acknowledge some further commitments and *prohibiting* acknowledgement of others [Brandom’s emphases] (Brandom, 2009: 14).

To begin, notice that Brandom’s emphasis on the agent in a social situation as rational is not exclusive to either the logic or habit centered understanding. For example, the virtuous agent for Aristotle is rational (Aristotle, 2009: 1103a1-10). Further, an agent may be rational and still have a primordial habit ground. Next, that a situation has a rational unity

with commitments influencing future actions and future commitments, again, is not exclusive to a logic-centered understanding. The example here being that two different individuals can understand the same situation differently, and yet both may have commitments extending into the future which rationally relate to the determined meaning of the present social situation. For example, this may describe exactly what happens when the vicious and the virtuous do business with one another.

At this point, then, we might ask just how the logic-centered and habit-centered differ. The difference is that the logic-centered understanding takes the identity of the situation to be universal and necessary for all possible participants insofar as a set of possible ways to identify the situation can be listed along with the manner in which each extends through its commitments into the future. This extending into the future, then, from a logic-centered understanding suggests the presence of a kind of essential map of social norms. Lastly, this map of social norms is taken to be a map of social reality. The assumption being that no rational agent would be able to see the situation differently than some way that appears on this map, since this map outlines all the rationally possible ways situations may be identified. Historically changing social norms may then be seen as merely affirming different configurations of this map.

Now, it should not be surprising to find that a logic-centered understanding seems logically valid. However, phenomenological analysis brings us to a different understanding of the necessity and universality of a situation's identity. In fact, the following quote from Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) seems to speak directly to this different understanding.

Necessity as an objective predicate of truth (which is then called a necessary truth) is tantamount to the law-governed validity of the state of affairs in question. [However, a] natural equivocation leads us to call every general truth that itself utters a law a necessary truth. ... It would have been better to call it the explanatory ground of a law, from which a class of necessary truths follows (Husserl, 2001: 146).

Further, Husserl clarifies that the “equivocation consists in the fact that we call laws which are the source of necessity necessary” (Husserl, 1996: 220; quoted in Mulligan, 2004: 397). In other words, the goal is not to try to understand how a rational agent might determine the identity of a situation differently from any of the possible rational determinations available. The goal is to see the rational necessity as crystallizing around the identity of a situation determined in the lived experience of an agent. In this way,

different agents, determining the identity of a situation differently, may both be seen as rational and with rational obligations relating to the identity of the situation as they determined it.

To see the identity of the situation from the logic-centered understanding as a rational determination by a rational agent makes the situation seem as though every social agent as rational should have access to the normative map of social reality. However, as the habit-centered understanding emphasizes, agents in social situations are not identifying the state of affairs by choosing from a series of rational possibilities (like choosing apples at the market), rather the habit ground of each agent brings a disposition to determine states of affairs essentially in accordance with various values. That there is a “law-governed validity of the state of affairs in question”, according to Husserl, points to a rational agent’s ability to understand the *necessary* commitments and obligations extending into the future from the current social situation *without necessitating* that the situation was to be identified as it was. Hence, phenomenological analysis reveals the extension into the future of commitments and obligations to be, though rationally constellated, dependent upon the habit ground of the agent.

How Habits Make Social Reality Present

Notice that the conclusion drawn in the above section is not foreign to Aristotle’s understanding of the influence of an agent’s dispositions in its understanding of a social transaction. That is to say, a state of affairs may be determined differently by different agents, and the difference depends on the values carried into the lived experiences by habit with which the state of affairs, and thereby the meaning, of a situation is determined (cf. Aristotle, 2009: 1109b). From the perspective of a phenomenological analysis the points to synthesize, then, include the habit-centered understanding of social norms and the primordial habit ground of the agent as merely abstractly distinct from its lived experience. *Out of this synthesis a phenomenological understanding of the intersubjective ground of social reality emerges.*

The question affirmatively answered at the beginning of this article asked: Is social reality somehow grounded in the habits of the society’s individuals? The above phenomenological analysis provided support for the affirmative response by revealing a more robust understanding of normativity, arguing for a habit-centered understanding over a logic-centered understanding. In this way, social reality emerges not from the rational individuals of a society relating to the rational commitments and obligations of their social transactions. Rather, social reality emerges from an intersubjective ground to be understood as constituted by the habits of each individual in the

society. The habits, as indicated above, are to be thought in their unity with lived experience as indicating the very persons of the society in question. The persons of a society, then, constitute the normativity of their society by the values their habits sustain. This habit-centered account of normativity is more robust than the logic-centered. For example, the indication of the logic-centered account that normativity entails rational obligations and commitments does not account for the presence of, or difference between, absolute and relative values in the determination of social reality. Hence, following the habit-centered account we may speak of a phenomenologically revealed intersubjective habit ground sustaining a society's norms such that the lived experiences of the persons in the society may be seen as making social reality present. This "making present" is to be understood in terms of phenomenological disclosure as stated above.

To be clear, nothing in this article should be understood as denying an agent's ability to make rational choices. Moreover, that action is grounded in habit does not mean that there is a passive dimension to action. This points back to Husserl's concern, noted above, to not "call laws which are the source of necessity necessary." In other words, through phenomenological analysis we gain access to the conditions for the possibility of experience, and insofar as rational action involves rational consideration of the content of experience to which action is related, then the elements examined through phenomenological analysis are of a prior ontological order from the elements considered in performing a rational action.

What I mean by "prior ontological order" is that phenomenological analysis regards an understanding of what is necessary to have an experience in which rational action may take place. For example, one person may rationally deliberate whether to charge another person interest on something borrowed. To charge interest may be rationalized, and there need not be anything passive about the actions which subsequently entail obligations, etc. However, in regard to the conditions for the possibility of an experience as a social transaction, a person cannot rationally deliberate whether to charge another person interest unless charging interest is a practice of which the person is aware. Yet, this need not be characterized in terms of being ignorant or having knowledge. In the language of von Hildebrand, it is as if in the latter situation the value of charging interest does not condition the horizon of meaning for the person. Hence, the person is neither tempted to nor can have a value-response to a value which is absent from the horizon essentially informing the determination of a social transaction's meaning (cf. Aristotle, 2009: Bk VII, esp. 1146b17-21). Rather, a more robust understanding of normativity and rational choice may

be seen in a way similar to Aristotle's discussion of the role of habit in regard to the virtuous person. That is to say, understanding that an agent's habit ground is more primordial than the rational structure crystallizing around each determined state of affairs, provides a more robust understanding of the state of affairs within which a person conducts a social transaction. Showing your citizens the logic of how they are rationally obligated and committed to a set of actions is less likely to change social reality than would a change to the habits of those citizens.

Conclusion This article provides a phenomenological analysis of social reality. After phenomenologically examining the reciprocal nature of habits and values at work in the disclosure of states of affairs, this article provided a habit-centered reading of social reality. The habit-centered reading was contrasted with a logic-centered reading to emphasize the manner in which the former provides a more robust understanding of normativity. The article culminated, then, by showing how the reciprocal play of habits and values determines social reality in the lived experiences of societal persons. Hence, this article moved from a phenomenology of the reciprocal nature of habits and values to an understanding of the intersubjective ground of normative social reality.

REFERENCES

- Aristotle. (2009). *Nicomachean Ethics*. R. Crisp, Tr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bergson, Henri. (1929). *Matter and Memory*. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer, Tr. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. R. Nice, Tr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brandom, Robert. (2009). *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*. Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. (1985). *History of the Concept of Time*, Prolegomena. T. Kiesel, Tr. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Husserl, Edmund. (1983). *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, F. Kersten, Tr. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, Edmund. (1973). *Logical Investigations*. J.N. Findlay, Tr. London: Routledge.
- Husserl, Edmund. (1996). *Logik und allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie. Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1917/18. Mit ergänzenden Texten aus der ersten Fassung von 1910/11*, Vol. XXX of *Husserliana*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Mulligan, Kevin. (2004). Essence and Modality: The quintessence of Husserl's theory. In M. Siebel and M. Textor (Eds.). *Semantik und Ontologie. Beiträge zur philosophischen Forschung*. (pp. 387-418). Frankfurt am Main: Ontos Verlag.
- Ostrow, James M. (1990). *Social Sensitivity: A study of habit and experience*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Plato. (1997). *Meno*. G.M.A. Grube, tr. In J.M. Cooper, (Ed.). *Plato Complete Works*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Scalambrino, Frank. (2013a). A Brief History of the Problem of Agent Causation in the Human and Behavioral Science with a Recommendation for Future Research. Unpublished paper presented at 45th Annual Meeting of *Cheiron: The International Society for the History of Behavioral and Social Sciences*, University of Dallas, Texas, USA.
- Scalambrino, Frank. (2013b). Filming the impossible: Orpheus and the sense of community in *Amour*. Unpublished paper presented at *Film-Philosophy Conference: Beyond Film*, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
- Scalambrino, Frank. (2014). Metaphysics. In *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Forthcoming.
- Scalambrino, Frank. (2012a). Mnemo-psychography: The Origin of Mind and the Problem of

Biological Memory Storage. In L. Swan, (Ed.). *Origins of Mind*. M. Barbieri & J. Hoffmeyer (Series Eds.). *Biosemiotics*, (Vol. VIII). (pp. 327-339). New York: Springer.

Scalambrino, Frank. (2012b). Tales of the Mighty Tautologists? *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2 (1): 83-97.

Schutz, Alfred. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. G. Walsh and F. Lehnert, Tr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich. (1953). *Christian Ethics*. Philadelphia: David McKay Publishing.

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich. (1969). *Fundamental Moral Attitudes*. Alice M. Jourdain, Tr. New York: Books for Libraries Press.

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich. (2009). *The Nature of Love*. J.F. Crosby & J.H. Crosby, Tr. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press.

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich. (1973). *What is Philosophy?* Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company.