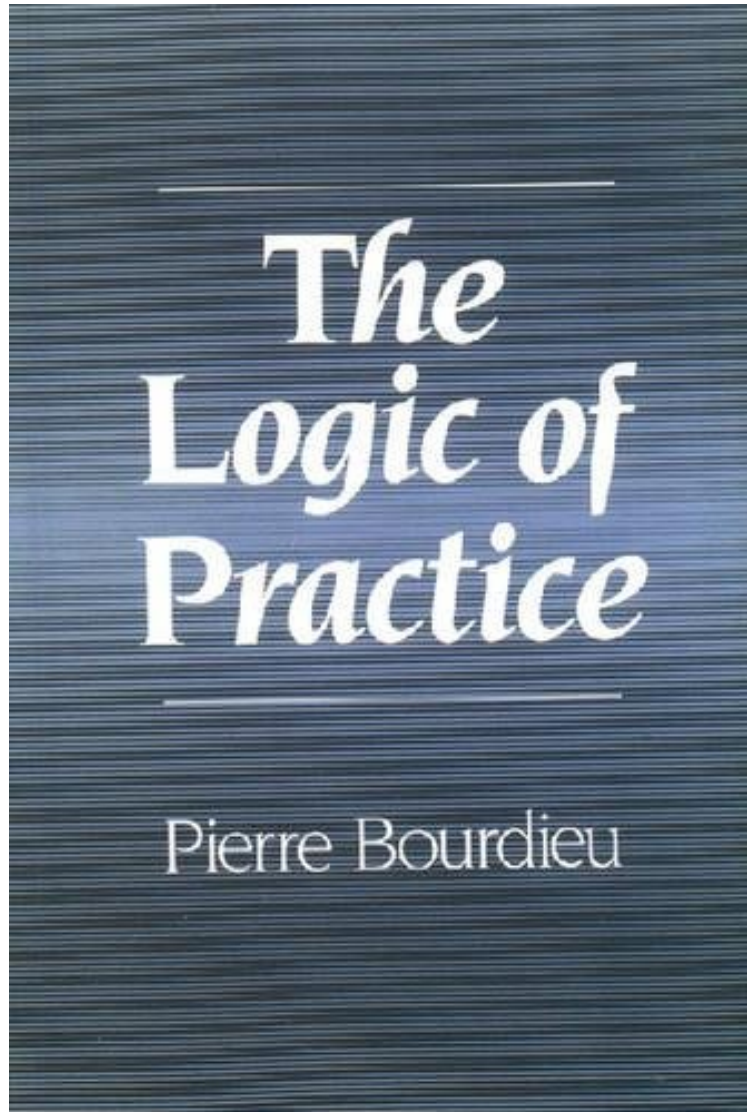


## The Logic of Practice

*Pierre Bourdieu*

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#661073 in Books Pierre Bourdieu 1992-08-01 1992-08-01Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .85 x 5.881, 1.02 #File Name: 0804720118333 pagesThe Logic of Practice | File size: 17.Mb

**Pierre Bourdieu : The Logic of Practice** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Logic of Practice:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Useful and ComplexBy J.P.Bourdieu is brilliant and very difficult to read and understand, however many of his theories are really quite useful, if you can get your head around his complicated language.106 of 111 people found the following review helpful. Two books in oneBy A CustomerBourdieu followed a strange organization for this book. The first part is an exposition of his theoretical / philosophical suppositions. The second part is an application of his ideas as applied to anthropology. Anthropologists

may find passages in the second part to be brilliant (I have heard some praise Bourdieu's analysis of home-building in small villages in northern Africa). Since I am one of those many "cross-over" readers who read Bourdieu and try to assimilate his ideas into other academic disciplines, I found the second part dull, especially since it dealt with the anthropological analysis of an obscure community of "non-western" people living in northern Africa. To get a flavor of Bourdieu qua working sociologist, a book like *Distinction*, or *Homo Academicus* is much more readable and relevant. On the other hand, the first part of the book contains what I consider the "meat". In part one, Bourdieu attempts to present, in its fullest and most abstract expression, a philosophical system which gives impetus to his work as a sociologist, as an analyst of "practice". In part One we find the "objective-subjective" arguments, habitus, doxa, and all sorts of reference to strange concepts like "structured structuring structures" of the mind. (I wonder what that is?) One noteworthy part of Part One is Bourdieu's discussion of the body, the body's relation to the habitus etc and how people use their bodies as a function of the habitus. Missing, however, are in depth discussions of language, symbolic power, fields, or the idea of cultural capital which make some of Bourdieu's other writings so interesting to non-anthropologists. One last note: if you are familiar with "Outline of a Theory of Practice" you will find that this book bears a strong resemblance to the aforementioned. This book, in fact, appears to be Bourdieu's effort, 20 years after the publication of "Outline" to revisit the same material, address some of the original objections and challenges made to "Outline" and otherwise refine the expression of his ideas. If you are looking for a document that captures in one place the current state of affairs of Bourdieu's philosophical/anthropological program, look to this document rather than the "outline" since much Bourdieu's ideas are more completely and currently expressed here. Also, if Bourdieu is a new writer to you, this is a very poor first Bourdieu book to read, however. Everything that is wrong with Bourdieu's writing style is exponentially exaggerated in this text. Once you are used to Bourdieu's style and ideas, however, this book can become an invaluable resource.

21 of 50 people found the following review helpful. Beyond Structure and Practice, Redux By Herbert Gintis Who was Pierre Bourdieu? Quoting from an appreciation by sociologist Loïc Wacquant, "the grandson and son of sharecroppers from a marginal province [of France], he rose to the apex of the French cultural pyramid and became the world's most cited living social scientist. Reared to join the high caste of philosophers, the supreme intellectual species in postwar France, he embraced instead the lowly and then-moribund discipline of sociology, which he helped revitalize and renew." This appreciation is quite accurate, except that (a) not sociology, but rather core sociological theory, was lowly and moribund, and (b) Bourdieu did nothing to help revive sociological theory. Rather, he exemplifies its ills. Modern sociology is populated with politically correct social pleaders of all sorts, and Bourdieu was one himself, especially in the last two decades of his life. But, modern sociology also has produced penetrating, insightful, and socially relevant analysis of social problems through the skillful collection and analysis of data and the use of basic, low-level but robust social theory. Bourdieu began his career with such down-to-earth social analyses, mid-way between sociology and anthropology, starting with *The Sociology of Algeria* (1962). Indeed, throughout his life, Bourdieu made sure not to wander too far from concrete data collection, analysis, and interpretation. However, Bourdieu was educated in the Continental philosophical tradition, was conversant in the languages of Marx, Hegel, Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the rest of the gang, and had pretensions of theoretical grandeur. He learned the Continental manner of saying little with many erudite words, choosing his political commitments to maximize his popularity with the intellectual elites. It is an indication of the sad state of sociological theory that Bourdieu's contributions could be called "theory" at all. In fact, Bourdieu invents a few neologisms, such as habitus, *illusio*, and symbolic capital, but these terms have not become, and likely never will become, part of a general sociological theoretical discourse. Bourdieu the theorist is an idiosyncratic social philosopher, a thinker more like an artist than a scientist, like a poet who is appreciated and analyzed, but not copied. Indeed, there is a considerable amount of pleasing poetry in this book, *The Logic of Practice*. For instance, Bourdieu tells us "Practice has a logic which is not that of the logician." (p. 86) Of course, this is a knock-off of Blaise Pascal's famous "Le coeur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connaît point. (The heart has its reasons that reason knows not at all)," but cute just the same. The intellectual message of *The Logic of Practice* is very simple. There are two main strands of sociological theory, subjectivism (phenomenology, ethnomethodology, etc.) and objectivism (structuralism, functionalism, systems theory). Both are wrong because each is one-sided in recognizing part of social reality and attempting to subsume the remainder as an epiphenomenon. Now, to my mind there is a perfectly reasonable consolidation of subjectivism and objectivism in structure/action theory, according to which social institutions create the space of possibilities within which strategic action takes place, as well as supplying the incentives for role-performance. Thus structure structures practices and practices maintain and transform structures. We can model this system using game theory, the rational actor model, the sociological theory of norms, and the like. Bourdieu, of course, will have none of such a solution (he has mounted vigorous, if to my mind uniformed, critiques of each of the building blocks of what seems to me to be the correct approach). Rather, he opts for creating the new term habitus, which is a sort of philosophical solution to the problem. "The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing conscious aiming at ends or an

express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them." (p.53) Habitus is thus neither objective (it is not a structure because it resides in individuals) nor subjective (it is not thought, it has no conscious aims, it is not reasoned, it is not choice). Unfortunately, Bourdieu's eloquence and erudition are not likely to turn habitus into a major theoretical concept. It is of course true that individuals do not re-solve problems anew each time the pertinent situation arises. One brushes one's teeth without heavy calculation, and one drives to work each day traversing the same route as the previous day. Living one's life is an exercise in routinization, and it takes a considerable alteration in structural conditions or personal situation to induce one to revise one's habitual choices. However, the concept of habitus does not solve any problems, but rather describes the situation of the individual whose problems have already been solved, or at least accommodated. An integration of structure and subjectivity must say how the content of habitus is determined and changes over time. Of this, the logic of practice gives us no hint.

Our usual representations of the opposition between the "civilized" and the "primitive" derive from willfully ignoring the relationship of distance our social science sets up between the observer and the observed. In fact, the author argues, the relationship between the anthropologist and his object of study is a particular instance of the relationship between knowing and doing, interpreting and using, symbolic mastery and practical mastery or between logical logic, armed with all the accumulated instruments of objectification, and the universally pre-logical logic of practice. In this, his fullest statement of a theory of practice, Bourdieu both sets out what might be involved in incorporating one's own standpoint into an investigation and develops his understanding of the powers inherent in the second member of many oppositional pairs that is, he explicates how the practical concerns of daily life condition the transmission and functioning of social or cultural forms. The first part of the book, "Critique of Theoretical Reason," covers more general questions, such as the objectivization of the generic relationship between social scientific observers and their objects of study, the need to overcome the gulf between subjectivism and objectivism, the interplay between structure and practice (a phenomenon Bourdieu describes via his concept of the habitus), the place of the body, the manipulation of time, varieties of symbolic capital, and modes of domination. The second part of the book, "Practical Logics," develops detailed case studies based on Bourdieu's ethnographic fieldwork in Algeria. These examples touch on kinship patterns, the social construction of domestic space, social categories of perception and classification, and ritualized actions and exchanges. This book develops in full detail the theoretical positions sketched in Bourdieu's Outline of a Theory of Practice. It will be especially useful to readers seeking to grasp the subtle concepts central to Bourdieu's theory, to theorists interested in his points of departure from structuralism (especially from Lvi-Strauss), and to critics eager to understand what role his theory gives to human agency. It also reveals Bourdieu to be an anthropological theorist of considerable originality and power.