
The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities

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Abstract This article explores the theoretical implications of the logic of practicality in world politics. In social and political life, many practices do not primarily derive from instrumental rationality (logic of consequences), norm-following (logic of appropriateness), or communicative action (logic of arguing). These three logics of social action suffer from a representational bias in that they focus on what agents think about instead of what they think from. According to the logic of practicality, practices are the result of inarticulate know-how that makes what is to be done self-evident or commonsensical. Insights from philosophy, psychology, and sociology provide empirical and theoretical support for this view. Though complementary with other logics of social action, the logic of practicality is ontologically prior because it is located at the intersection of structure and agency. Building on Bourdieu, this article develops a theory of practice of security communities arguing that peace exists in and through practice when security officials' practical sense makes diplomacy the self-evident way to solving interstate disputes. The article concludes on the methodological quandaries raised by the logic of practicality in world politics.

*We can know more than we can tell.*¹

Most theories of social action focus on what agents think about at the expense of what they think from. In International Relations (IR), rational choice theorists primarily emphasize representations and reflexive knowledge in explaining political action. In the rationalist equation (desire + belief = action), ideas factor in an individual calculation informed by intentionality. Agents deliberately reflect on what are the most efficient means to achieve their ends. For their part, several constructivists theorize that norms and collective identities reflexively inform action. Intersubjective representations of reality, morality, or individuality determine socially embedded cognition and action. In a related fashion, Habermasian constructivists concentrate on collective deliberation and truth-seeking as a form

For helpful comments on earlier versions of this article, many thanks to Emanuel Adler, Janice Bially Mattern, Raymond Duvall, Stefano Guzzini, Jef Huysmans, Markus Kornprobst, Jennifer Mitzen, Iver Neumann, Daniel Nexon, David Welch, Alexander Wendt, and Michael Williams, as well as the journal's reviewers.

1. Polanyi 1983, 4.

Schwarz



Supplement

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of communicative action. Overall, the three logics of social action that have the most currency in contemporary IR theory—the logics of consequences, of appropriateness, and of arguing²—all suffer from a similar bias toward representational knowledge. Conscious representations are emphasized to the detriment of background knowledge—the inarticulate know-how from which reflexive and intentional deliberation becomes possible.

In and of itself, this focus on representational knowledge is not necessarily a problem: the logics of consequences, appropriateness, and arguing cover a wide array of social action, as a special issue of *IO* about socialization in Europe recently demonstrated.³ The problem rests with the many practices that neither rational choice nor rule-based and communicative action theories can explain properly. Take the case of diplomacy, arguably the most fundamental practice in international politics. For most IR theorists, diplomacy is primarily about strategic action, instrumental rationality, and cost-benefit calculations. Yet this scholarly understanding is at odds with that of practitioners, who rather emphasize the very practical and inarticulate nature of diplomacy. A former diplomat turned professor argues that diplomacy is “not a matter of mathematical calculation; it is not an exact science; it remains a matter of human skills and judgments.”⁴ In fact, seasoned diplomats are at pains to explain their craft in abstract, social scientific terms: Nicolson contends that “commonsense” is the essence of diplomacy, while Satow defines it as “the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states.”⁵ Clearly, commonsense, intelligence, and tact cannot be learned in books through formal schemes; nor are they strictly the result of conscious deliberation or reflection. The diplomatic skills identified by practitioners and which constitute the social fabric of international politics are background dispositions acquired in and through practice.⁶

This article starts from the premise that most of what people do, in world politics as in any other social field, does not derive from conscious deliberation or thoughtful reflection—instrumental, rule-based, communicative, or otherwise. Instead, practices are the result of inarticulate, practical knowledge that makes what is to be done appear “self-evident” or commonsensical. This is the logic of practicality, a fundamental feature of social life that is often overlooked by social scientists. In so arguing, this article joins a larger trend advocating a “practical turn” in social theory.⁷ To simplify a bit, practice theorists seek “to do justice to the practical nature of action by rooting human activity in a nonrepresentational

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Against the representational bias that pervades most theories of social action, practice theory brings background knowledge to the foreground of analysis. In IR, a few pioneering scholars are already part of this theoretical fray. ⁸ Mann entices students of world politics to move away from the “armchair analysis of discourse to study social action as enacted in and on the world.” ⁹ Hopf suggests that social identities (and foreign policies) thrive on a “logic of habit” generates unreflexive action. ¹⁰ Adler uses the concept of “community of practice” to theorize the background knowledge that cements constellations of agency across borders. ¹¹ Williams takes inspiration from Bourdieu to reconceptualize security practices as cultural strategies in the international field. ¹² Mitzen emphasizes routine and unthinking action in the international drive for ontological security. Building on these works, I pursue two main objectives in this article. First, I seek to bolster the practice turn in IR theory by offering an in-depth discussion of the logic of practicality.¹⁴ Second, I demonstrate the analytical pregnant of the logic of practicality with a crucial case in world politics: international politics. The argumentation unfolds as follows. The first part levels a theoretical critique at the dominant strands of social and IR theory. I argue that both rationalist constructivism suffer from a representational bias whose epistemological run deep into Modernity. The second section takes inspiration from other human and social sciences that have already taken the practice turn. Insights from philosophy, psychology, and sociology not only reinforce the call for a practice turn in IR theory but also provide important clues as to how to conceptualize the logic of practicality in world politics. In the third part of the article, I apply practical knowledge and distinguish it from representational knowledge. I follow Bourdieu’s conceptual apparatus, I assert the ontological priority of the logic of practicality in relation to the mutually constitutive dynamics between agency and structure. Overall, the relationship between practicality, consequences, appropriateness, and arguing is one of complementarity. The fourth section seeks to elaborate this point with the case of security communities. I argue that peace exists and through practice when security officials’ practical sense makes diplomatic the self-evident way to solving interstate disputes. Finally, the conclusion adds the peculiar methodological challenges raised by the logic of practicality in politics.

8. Scharzki 2005, 177.
9. Neumann 2002a.
10. Hopf 2002.
11. Adler 2005. See also Wenger 1998.
12. Williams 2007.
13. Mitzen 2006.
14. Though inspired by Bourdieu’s “logic of practice,” the notion of practicality is meant to emphasize a more specific dimension of social action, namely, nonrepresentational practices. To Bourdieu the “logic of practice” covers both representational and nonrepresentational action. See Fassin 1990.

2. See March and Olsen 1998; and Risse 2000.
3. Checkel 2005.
4. Watson 1991, 52. See also Kissinger 1994.
5. See Nicolson 1963, 43; and Satow 1979, 3.
6. See Neumann 2002a, 2005, and 2007.
7. Scharzki, Knorr Cetina, and von Savigny 2001.

The Representational Bias

In this first section, I critique contemporary theories of social action for their inability to account for nonrepresentational practices. The logics of consequences, appropriateness, and arguing tend to focus on what agents think about (reflexive and conscious knowledge) at the expense of what they think from (the background know-how that informs practice in an inarticulate fashion). This representational bias, which pervades both modern and postmodern social theory, finds its epistemological roots in the evolution of Western thinking since the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution. In an illuminating book, Toulmin laments that the epistemic revolution of Modernity gave birth to an imbalance between universal Rationality and contextual Reasonableness. Local knowledge that makes sense in particular contexts is dismissed in favor of generalizable and abstract precepts; so much so that nowadays "the human values of Reasonableness are expected to justify themselves in the Court of Rationality."¹⁵ Against this powerful tide, Toulmin advocates everyday experience as the necessary complement to "desituated" and "disembedded" logic.

The epistemic shift that led Western thinkers away from practical knowledge over the past few centuries is well illustrated with the practice of mapmaking.¹⁶ During the Middle Ages, "maps" consisted of reclinear routes from an origin to a destination, comprising the different steps to go through (places to eat, to shelter, to pray, and so on) and walking distances in days between them. In other words, medieval maps were performative itineraries that reproduced the knowledge learned in and through practice. Starting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, maps began to evolve into the geographical representations from above that still exist today. This epistemic transformation, of course, took place over centuries. For a while, maps conveyed both practical and representational knowledge: in pre-modern maps, for instance, "ships drawn on the sea convey the maritime expedition that made representations of the coast possible."¹⁷ But progressively the godlike posture of modern science, which looks at the world from above, triumphed over practical knowledge. As "totalizing representations," contemporary maps do not convey the practical operations that made them possible. The entire modern scientific enterprise can be interpreted as a similar movement away from practical knowledge and toward formal and abstract representations of the world.

The representational bias in modern thinking is reinforced by the logic of scientific practice and its institutional environment. In trying to see the world from a detached perspective, social scientists put themselves "in a state of social weightlessness."¹⁸ Looking at the world from above and usually backwards in time implies that one is not directly involved in social action and does not feel the same prox-

imity and urgency as agents do. Contrary to practitioners, who act in and on the world, social scientists spend careers and lives thinking about ideas, delib-
 erating about theories, and representing knowledge. As a result, they are enticed "to
 strue the world as a *spectacle*, as a set of significations to be interpreted r-
 than as concrete problems to be solved practically."¹⁹ The epistemological co-
 quences of such a contemplative eye are tremendous: what scientists see from
 ivory tower is often miles away from the practical logics enacted on the g-
 For instance, what may appear to be the result of rational calculus in (acad-
 hindsight may just as well have derived from practical hunches under time
 sure. This "ethnocentrism of the scientist"²⁰ leads to substituting the practical
 tion to the world for the observer's (theoretical) relation to practice—or, to
 Bourdieu's formula, "to take the model of reality for the reality of the model

To return to diplomacy, Kissinger, whose career spanned the divide between
 the academic and the policy worlds, concurs that "there is a vast difference between
 the perspective of an analyst and that of a statesman.... The analyst can elu-
 which problem he wishes to study, whereas the statesman's problems are im-
 on him. The analyst can allot whatever time is necessary to come to a clear
 clusion; the overwhelming challenge to the statesman is the pressure of time.
 The analyst has available to him all the facts.... The statesman must act on an
 agents that cannot be proved at the time that he is making them."²² As a r-
 diplomacy is an art not a science?²³ It is a practice enacted in and on the v-
 in real time, and with actual consequences for the practitioner. As such, the
 ticity of diplomacy cannot be fully captured by detached, representational
 observation.

From this perspective, the epitome of the representational bias is rational c-
 theory and its tendency to deduce from the enacted practice (*opus operatum*)
 mode of operating (*modus operandi*). The problem is deeper than the well-k-
 tautology of revealed preferences. By mistaking the outcome of practice f-
 process, rational choice "project[s] into the minds of agents a (scholastic) p-
 of their practice that, paradoxically, it could only uncover because it method-
 set aside the experience agents have of it."²⁴ While social scientists have
 necessary time to rationalize action post hoc, agents are confronted with p-
 problems that they must urgently solve. One cannot reduce practice to the e-
 tion of a theoretical model. For one thing, social action is not necessaril-
 ceded by a premediated design. A practice can be oriented toward a goal w-
 being consciously informed by it. For another, in the heat of practice, h-
 take precedence over rational calculations. In picturing practitioners in the

19. Wacquant 1992, 39.

20. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 69.

21. Bourdieu, 1987, 62. See also Poullet 2008, for an epistemological discussion.

22. Kissinger 1994, 27.

23. Kissinger 1973, 2, 326.

24. Wacquant 1992, 8.

15. Toulmin 2001, 2.

16. De Certeau 1990, 177-79.

17. *Ibid.*, 178.

18. Bourdieu 2003, 28. This and additional translations from French are the author's.

of the theorist, rational choice theory produces "a sort of monster with the head of the thinker thinking his practice in reflexive and logical fashion mounted on the body of a man of action engaged in action."²⁵ In IR, the literature on the rational design of international institutions best exemplifies this representational bias.²⁶ It is correct that states seek to mold international institutions to further their goals; but it does not follow that this design is instrumentally rational. The outcome of political struggles over institutions and the process of struggling over institutions follow two different logics—observational versus practical. One cannot impute to practitioners a theoretical perspective that is made possible by looking at social action backward and from above.

In IR, the representational bias is not the preserve of rational choice theory; however, most constructivist interpretations of rule-based behavior also fall victim to it. In March and Olsen's seminal formulation, the logic of appropriateness deals with norm- and rule-based action conceived "as a matching of a situation to the demands of a position."²⁷ This definition, however, encompasses two distinct modes of social action.²⁸ On the one hand, the logic of appropriateness deals with rules that are so profoundly internalized that they become taken for granted. On the other hand, the logic of appropriateness is a reflexive process whereby agents need to figure out what behavior is appropriate to a situation.²⁹ Sending calls these two possible interpretations "motivationally externalist" versus "motivationally internalist,"³⁰ a distinction that hinges on whether agents reflect before putting a norm into practice. Problematically from a practice theory perspective, a vast majority of constructivist works fall in the former camp, according to which norm-based actions stem from a process of reflexive cognition based either on instrumental calculations, reasoned persuasion, or the psychology of compliance. Here the representational bias shows very clearly. But even those few constructivists who theorize appropriate action as nonreflexive assimilate it to the output of a structural logic of social action or a habit resulting from a process of reflexive internalization. Nowhere in these interpretations is there room for properly theorizing practical knowledge.

Three main strands of constructivist research construe appropriateness as a motivationally externalist logic of social action. A first possibility is to introduce "thin" instrumental rationality in the context of a community, that is, a norm-rich environment. Keck and Sikkink's "boomerang model" is one of the best-known frameworks of this genre: state elites' compliance with transnational norms first

comes through strategic calculations under normative pressure; only at a stage do preferences change.³¹ Schimmelfennig's notion of rhetorical action "the strategic use of norm-based arguments"³²—follows a similar logic of rited strategic action constrained by constitutive communitarian norms and A second possibility is to conceive of appropriateness as a logic that relies on reasoned persuasion. Building on Habermas's theory of communicative action several constructivists theorize that the "logic of arguing" leads actors to reflexively deliberate "whether norms of appropriate behavior can be justified that norms apply under given circumstances."³³ Other constructivists build on the notion of "social learning" to explain the workings of argumentative persuasion in social context.³⁴ Finally, a third externalist interpretation of appropriateness emphasizes cognitive processes that take place at the level of the individual mind. Relying on psychological notions such as the acceptability heuristic, vision bias, and images, Shannon argues that "[a]ctors must feel justified to violate a norm to satisfy themselves and the need for a positive self-image, by internalizing the norm and the situation in a way that makes them feel exempt."³⁵ On most constructivists construe appropriateness as a reflexive logic of action on thin rationality, reasoned persuasion, or the psychology of compliance.

TABLE 1. Constructivist interpretations of the logic of appropriateness

Logic of appropriateness	1. Externalism
	a. Thin rationality within normative environment
	b. Communicative action/persuasion
	c. Psychological mechanisms of compliance
	a. Structural logic of action
	b. Habituation through reflexive internalization
	2. Internalism

Meanwhile, a few constructivists take the externalist route and prefer to emphasize the nondeliberative nature of the logic of appropriateness. Yet, even this understanding seems better in tune with the practice turn advocated in this article, it fails to capture the practicality of social life because internalist constructivists construe appropriateness either as a structural logic devoid of agency or a form of habituation that is reflexive in its earlier stages. To begin with, some constructivists claim that the internalist logic of appropriateness is plagued with a "structuralist bias" that renders it "untenable as a theory

25. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 123.

26. Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001.

27. March and Olsen 1989, 23.

28. Risse 2000, 6.

29. March and Olsen lean toward this second interpretation when they write that in order to enact appropriate behavior, actors pose questions such as "Who am I?" or "What kind of situation is this?" See March and Olsen 1989, 23.

30. Sending 2002.

31. Keck and Sikkink 1998.

32. Schimmelfennig 2001, 62.

33. Risse 2000, 7.

34. Checkel 2001.

35. Shannon 2000, 300. See also Johnston 2001, on social identity theory.

vital action."³⁶ In this account, the essence of agency rests with choice and the capacity to deliberate among options before acting: "If the [logic of appropriate-ness] is to be individualistic in structure, the individual actor must be left with a reasonable degree of choice (or agency)."³⁷ But this restrictive notion of agency seems unwarranted within the structuralist ontology that characterizes constructivism. Agency is not simply about "defying" structures by making choices independently of them. It is a matter of instantiating structures, old or new, in and through practice. Without practice, intersubjective realities would falter; thus agency (or the enactment of practice) is what makes social reality possible in the first place. In introducing contingency, agency need not be reflexive; and thoughtless-ness does not logically imply structural determination.

Taking a different tack, a number of constructivists equate the logic of appropriateness with the internalization of taken-for-granted norms. For instance, Checkel seeks to understand how norm compliance moves from "conscious instrumental calculation" to "taken-for-grantedness." In what he calls "type II socialization," agents switch "from following a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness."³⁸ A similar view can be found in Wendt's discussion of internalization, from "First Degree" to "Third." This process essentially consists of certain practices getting "pushed into the shared cognitive background, becoming taken for granted rather than objects of calculation."³⁹ Norms begin as explicit "ought to" prescriptions but progressively fade from consciousness and become taken-for-granted. Significantly, thus, this internalist interpretation remains embroiled in the representational bias that plagues externalism: the taken-for-granted knowledge that informs appropriateness necessarily begins as representational and conscious.

In distinguishing the "logic of habit" from that of appropriateness, Hopf comes closest to accounting for practical knowledge in IR. As he perceptively argues: "Significant features distinguish habitual action from normative compliance. Generally, norms have the form 'in circumstance X, you should do Y,' whereas habits have a general form more like 'in circumstance X, action Y follows.'"⁴⁰ This all-important distinction, upon which this article builds, represents a significant step toward a practice turn in IR theory. That said, this article seeks to fix three main limitations in Hopf's framework. First, it remains partly embroiled in an internalization scheme not so distant from Checkel's or Wendt's. In using the language of norm selection versus norm compliance, Hopf implies that the internalist logic of habit follows from the externalist logic of appropriateness. By contrast, this arti-

cle theorizes practical knowledge as unreflexive and inarticulate through-through. Second, while both logics of habit and practicality build on past experiences, the latter does so contingently while the former is strictly iterative.⁴¹ Hopf insists his is only a methodological distinction between the logic of evidence and the logic of appropriateness, which entices researchers to look for evidence and norm compliance in the unsaid instead of explicit invocations.⁴² Though an important piece of methodological advice, this point falls short of granting practice the full ontological status it deserves in social theory.

Before concluding this critique of IR literature, it is necessary to address "stronger program" in IR constructivism located closer to postmodernism. very epistemological standpoint, postmodernism epitomizes the representational bias: detached from, and in fact indifferent to, the social urgency of practice, many postmodernists intellectualize discourse to the point of distorting its social logic and meaning. In addition, postmodernist works often embody the "chair analysis" that Neumann urges to overcome in taking a practice turn.⁴³ A this tendency, a number of IR constructivists move closer to Foucault's actualization of discourse as practice.⁴⁴ But several analyses still fall short of acting for the practicality of discourse—that is, discourse as a practice enacted and on the world. Fierke's works on "language games," for instance, emphasize background knowledge but do not take the materiality of practice seriously.⁴⁵ In a similar fashion, the Copenhagen school asserts that security is practice,⁴⁶ but in restricting its focus to traditional discourse analysis, it evacuates practical logics that make the securitizing discourse possible. Taking a practice turn promises to help overcome the representational bias in IR theory, v rationalist, constructivist, or postmodernist.

Practice Turns

Still a recent development in IR, the practice turn has also been promoted number of other human and social sciences. This section briefly reviews literatures in philosophy, psychology, and sociology. This survey not only suggests that practice theory is starting to attract increasing attention, it also provides useful insights for theorizing practical knowledge in world politics.

The philosophical interest in practical knowledge dates back at least tootle. In his discussion of practical reasoning (that is, reasoning oriented toward action), Aristotle highlighted the importance of "topoi" or the "seat of

36. Sending 2002, 445.

37. Ibid., 451. Sending also writes that "[i]t is thus a central feature of structuration theory, which is a key building block of constructivist theory, that the actor is always in a position to evaluate, reflect upon and choose regarding what rules to follow and how to act"; ibid., 458. On a closer look, however, there is nothing in Giddens's definition that restricts agency to choice: "Agency concerns events of which the individual is the perpetrator"; Giddens 1984, 9.

38. Checkel 2005, 804.

39. Wendt 1999, 310–11.

40. Hopf 2002, 12.

41. See below for an illustration with the diplomatic practice.

42. Hopf 2002, 11, fn. 44.

43. Neumann 2002a.

44. See, for example, Ashley 1987.

45. Fierke 1998.

46. Hansen 2006.

ment."⁴⁷ These commonplaces are tacit in nature: one discusses or acts with them but not about them. However, this Aristotelian insight was later subdued by Plato's and others' fascination with representational knowledge. With Descartes, centuries later, the representational bias entrenched itself within Western philosophical thought, a situation that lasts to the day.⁴⁸ In an illuminating critique of this philosophical evolution, Toulmin equates this disciplinary tendency to favor the universal to the detriment of the contextual with "the behavior of an intellectual ostrich."⁴⁹ Toulmin's critique is inspired by the later Wittgenstein, probably the most prominent figure in opposing the representational bias in philosophy.⁵⁰ Most famously, Wittgenstein denounced his colleagues for studying language as a theoretical system of signs and representations whereas it is primarily a practice whose meanings are determined not in abstracto but in and through its context and use.⁵¹ In his Wittgensteinian interpretation of rule-following, Taylor best summarizes the case for practice theory in philosophy and more largely in social science:

To situate our understanding in practices is to see it as implicit in our activity, and hence as going well beyond what we manage to frame representations of. We do frame representations: we explicitly formulate what our world is like, what we aim at, what we are doing. But much of our intelligent action in the world, sensitive as it usually is to our situation and goals, is carried on unformulated. It flows from an understanding which is largely inarticulate. . . . Rather than representations being the primary locus of understanding, they are similarly islands in the sea of our unformulated practical grasp on the world.⁵²

Three other disciples of Wittgenstein—Ryle, Polanyi, and Searle—have also been instrumental in advocating a practice turn in philosophy. The former convincingly derides the doctrine of the "ghost in the machine" that pervades Western philosophy, according to which a chef has to recite his recipes to himself before cooking.⁵³ On the contrary, argues Ryle, "[e]fficient practice precedes the theory of it."⁵⁴ His distinction between "knowing-that" and "knowing-how" remains fundamental to the practice turn. For instance, Polanyi argues that one may know-how to use a machine without knowing that doing so requires the operation of such and such mechanisms.⁵⁵ This know-how Polanyi calls "tacit knowing," which consists of attending from something (for example, the machine's

internal mechanisms) to something else (for example, using the machine).⁵⁶ Tacit knowing primarily rests on bodily experience and practice: it is knowledge without the practice instead of behind the practice. This is obviously not to say that the brain plays no role in tacit knowing. A professor of chemistry, Polanyi recalls that "mathematical theory can be learned only by practicing its application; true knowledge lies in our ability to use it."⁵⁷ One may know the theorem heart but their application must be learned in and through practice as a form of tacit knowing. It is a similar insight that informs Searle's (Wittgensteinian) notion of Background. As he explains, "the general thesis of the Background . . . is all of our intentional states, all of our particular beliefs, hopes, fears, and so on; only function in the way they do—that is, they only determine their condition of satisfaction—against a Background of know-how that enables me to cope with the world."⁵⁸ This pre-intentional knowledge is nonrepresentational and preverbal: it is only activated in and through practice.

The philosophical metaphysics of the practice turn find solid empirical support in the latest strands of psychological research.⁵⁹ In his Nobel Prize lecture in 2002, Kahneman argues that there are "two generic modes of cognitive function: an intuitive mode in which judgments and decisions are made automatically and rapidly, and a controlled mode, which is deliberate and slower."⁶⁰ These two modes of cognition coexist and complement each other. But intuitive judgments are mere perceptions although both are equally fast: contrary to the latter, the former "deal with concepts" and "can be evoked by language."⁶¹ Psychologists use "System 1" and "System 2."⁶² The former refers to these two ways of knowing as "System 1" and "System 2." The latter refers to the exception of the former. The philosophical revolution here regards automatic cognition: with the exception of the former, psychology has traditionally spent most of its attention on conscious cognition. More recently, thanks to several experiments, psychologists have found "evidence from everyday life of the existence of an automatic, intuitive mode of information processing that operates by different rules from that of a rational mode."⁶³ From that perspective, cognition falls into two ideal-typical categories as Table 2 shows.

Though interactive, System 1 and System 2 present different characteristic forms of cognitive unconscious, System 1 is "a fundamentally adaptive system that automatically, effortlessly, and intuitively organizes experience and directs behavior."⁶⁴ Empirical data suggests that this is the natural mode of operation and

47. In IR, see Kratochwil 1989.

48. Ryle 1984.

49. Toulmin 2001, 168.

50. Wittgenstein 1958. Other philosophers who also argued in a similar direction include the American pragmatists (for example, Dewey and Peirce) as well as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.

51. This is also close to Foucault's argument, whose thought can be linked to the practice turn.

52. Taylor 1993, 50.

53. Ryle 1984, 15–16, 29.

54. *Ibid.*, 30.

55. Polanyi 1983, 19.

56. *Ibid.*, 10.

57. *Ibid.*, 17.

58. Searle 1998, 108.

59. The parallels that are drawn here with the notion of a practice turn are not explicitly in the psychology literature.

60. Kahneman 2003, 449.

61. *Ibid.*, 451.

62. Stanovich and West 2000.

63. Epstein 1994, 710.

64. *Ibid.*

it is a lot more efficient than reflexive cognition. A pioneer in this strand of psychological theory, Reber builds on decades of empirical studies to establish the pervasiveness of "implicit learning" in cognitive processes. As he argues: "Implicit learning is the acquisition of knowledge that takes place largely independently of conscious attempts to learn and largely in the absence of explicit knowledge about what was acquired."⁶⁵ Importantly, Reber insists, acting on the basis of such tacit knowledge does not make individuals irrational. Their practices, which are informed by past experiences and exposure to environmental demands, should rather be conceived as "arational,"⁶⁶ that is, based on nonrepresentational knowledge and thought processes.

TABLE 2. *Two ways of knowing in psychological theory*

<i>Experiential way of knowing (System 1)</i>	<i>Rational way of knowing (System 2)</i>
1. Holistic	1. Analytic
2. What feels good	2. What is sensible
3. Associative	3. Logical
4. Behavior mediated by "vibes" from past experiences; automatic	4. Behavior mediated by conscious appraisal of events; controlled
5. Encodes reality in concrete images, metaphors, and narratives	5. Encodes reality in abstract symbols, words, and numbers
6. More rapid processing; oriented toward immediate action	6. Slower processing; oriented toward delayed action
7. Slower to change; changes with repetitive or intense experience	7. Changes more rapidly; changes with speed of thought
8. Context-specific processing	8. Cross-context processing
9. Experienced passively and preconsciously; tacit thought processes	9. Experienced actively and consciously; explicit thought processes
10. Self-evidently valid	10. Requires justification via logic and evidence

Sources: Adapted from Epstein 1994, 711; and Stanovich and West 2000, 659.

Philosophical and psychological arguments in favor of a practice turn have spilled over to social sciences. For instance, D'Andrade's "cognitive anthropology" intends, among other things, to counter the representational bias in social theory. As he argues, "social scientists sometimes ascribe *rules* to the actor when it is only the actor's *behavior* that is being described. In many cases in which behavior is described as following rules, there may be in fact no *rules* inside the actor."⁶⁷ In sociology, Zerubavel emphasizes the social aspects of cognition as well as the

tacit dimension of socialization, for instance, in the process of learning a language.⁶⁸ In becoming part of collectives, human beings learn how to think social skills that rests on inarticulate knowledge first and foremost. It is a similar process that gave birth to Garfinkel's ethnomethodology or to Giddens's structural theory.⁶⁹

More recently, a number of social theorists have advocated taking a "practice turn" in social theory.⁷⁰ Among the theoretical innovations advanced is an attempt to overcome the representational bias in sociological theorizing. The key element put forward is that social action stems from practical logics that are fundamentally nonrepresentational. Practical logics cannot readily be verbalized or explicated by the agents themselves because "practice does not account for own production and reproduction."⁷¹ In sociology, this theoretical strand has best developed by Bourdieu, whose works comport the rare advantage of being systematically applied to various empirical investigations. In general, the rich concepts developed in Bourdieu's dozens of books and hundreds of articles serve other purpose than their application—an approach in line with the notion of a practice turn. In IR, a handful of scholars have already demonstrated how Bourdieu's sociology could enrich one's understanding of security,⁷² power,⁷³ integrative or political economy.⁷⁴ This article adds to this burgeoning literature by focusing on Bourdieu's attempt to reach at the inarticulate in social life—the huge body of background knowledge that every social being carries and uses constantly; if unconsciously, in daily practices. Many practices appear self-evident without having to reflect about them; how can that be? Bourdieu's conceptual triad of habitus, and practical sense offers a most useful apparatus to theorize the logic of practice.

The Logic of Practicality

Practice theory seeks to save practical know-how from the "nocturnal abyss" of social activities in order to put it at the center of social scientific inquiries.⁷⁵ Objective, ultimately, is to bring the Background to the foreground. By confronting the representational bias, practice theory opens a whole new domain of inquiry traditionally excluded from modern theories of social action: the logic of Practicality. This section defines what practical knowledge consists of and then

68. Zerubavel 1997, 15.

69. Garfinkel 1967; and Giddens 1984. See De Certeau 1990.

70. Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, and von Savigny 2001.

71. Barnes 2001, 19.

72. Bigo 1996; Huyssmans 2002; Gheciu 2005; and Williams 2007.

73. Guzzini 2000.

74. Kauppi 2003.

75. Leander 2001; and Dezalay and Garth 2002.

76. De Certeau 1990, xxxv.

65. Reber 1993, 5.

66. *Ibid.*, 13.

67. D'Andrade 1995, 144.

lishes the ontological priority of the logic of practicality over the logics of consequences, appropriateness, and arguing. Throughout this theoretical discussion, Bourdieu's theory of practice is used as the linchpin of a practice turn in IR and political science more generally.

An interesting starting point to understand the logic of practicality is Scott's *Seeing Like a State*, a rare study in political science that takes practical knowledge seriously.⁷⁷ To explain the failure of certain states' grand schemes for social engineering, Scott argues that state projects of societal legitimacy and simplification usually fail because they ignore what the Greeks used to call *mētis*, "a rudimentary kind of knowledge that can be acquired only by practice and that all but defies being communicated in written or oral form apart from actual practice."⁷⁸

This practical knowledge is absolutely necessary for the implementation of any policy because it is on it, and not on bureaucratic models, that constituents' everyday lives thrive. Contrary to the abstract schemes produced by technocrats and social scientists, *mētis* presents three main characteristics. First, it is local and situated. *Mētis* is knowledge-in-context and derives from concrete applications. Second, *mētis* is plastic and decentralized: there is no core doctrine since it is continually changing with the practices it informs. Third, *mētis* knowledge is extremely difficult to convey apart from putting it in practice. In Scott's words, "[m]ētis knowledge is often so implicit and automatic that its bearer is at a loss to explain it."⁷⁹ It resists being translated into the deductive and abstract models required by states' social engineering initiatives.

Whether called *mētis*, tacit knowing, Background, experiential way of knowing, or else, this stock of unspoken know-how learned in and through practice and from which consensus-deliberation and action become possible can conveniently be called practical knowledge. Table 3 captures, in a heuristic (if oversimplified) way, the main differences between practical and representational knowledge. While representational knowledge is conscious, verbalizable, and intentional, practical knowledge is tacit, inarticulate, and automatic. The former type of knowledge is acquired through formal schemes whereas the latter is learnt experientially, in and through practice, and remains bound up in it. Representational knowledge is rational and abstract; practical knowledge is reasonable and contextual. Thus the inferences drawn from each type are respectively explicit and justified versus implicit and self-evident. Representational knowledge factors in reflexive cognition (in situation X, you should do Y—whether for instrumental or normative reasons), whereas practical knowledge remains unsaid (in situation X, Y follows).⁸⁰ In fact, it is precisely because it is thoughtless and inarticulate that the Background is

forgotten as knowledge. It is located within practices instead of behind them. Practical knowledge is unconscious because it appears self-evident to its bearer: "it is simply what I do," as Wittgenstein quipped.⁸¹ Thus a defining feature of practices informed by the Background is that their rules are not thought but implicitly enacted. Inarticulate, concrete, and local, practical knowledge is learned experience and can hardly be expressed apart from practice. It is "thoughtless" what popular parlance calls commonsense, experience, intuition, knack, skill, practical mastery.

TABLE 3. Two ideal types of knowledge

	Representational knowledge (knowing-that)	Practical knowledge (knowing-how)
<i>Cognitive status</i>	Conscious, verbalizable, and intentional	Tacit, inarticulate, and automatic
<i>Mode of learning</i>	Acquired through formal schemes; reflexive	Learned experientially, in and through practice; unsaid
<i>Relation to practice</i>	"Behind" the practice; knowledge precedes practice	Bound up in the practice; knowledge is in the execution
<i>Nature of inferences</i>	Explicit and prone to justification	Implicit and self-evident
<i>Direction of fit</i>	Mind-to-world (observing)	World-to-mind (doing)
<i>Type of reasoning</i>	"In situation X, one should do Y" (instrumental or normative reasons)	"In situation X, Y follows" (thoughtlessness)
<i>Popular categories</i>	Scheme, theory, model, calculation, reasoning	Commonsense, experience, intuition, knack, skill

Another useful way to grasp the distinction between representational and practical knowledge is what Searle (after Austin and Anscombe) calls the "direct fit" between the mind and the world.⁸² As Searle explains, when a man goes to the grocery store and buys items on his shopping list, the direction of fit is from the mind: the man alters the world to fit his mind (here materialized in the list). But imagine now that a detective investigates what groceries this man bought. notes them on a list as they are being placed in the cart. Now the direction is reversed, from the mind (the detective's list) to the world. The list is trying to match the world as it is being acted upon. A similar difference arises between practical knowledge, which is oriented toward action (world-to-mind direction), and representational knowledge, which seeks to capture in words or other representations practices enacted in and on the world (mind-to-world direction). Doing and observing, in sum, are two distinct ways of relating to the world.

77. Scott 1998. Another interesting exception is Wagenaar 2004.
 78. Scott 1998, 315.
 79. Ibid., 329.
 80. Hopf 2002, 12. Contrary to Hopf's "logic of habit," however, practical knowledge does not merely lead to the repetition of past action: the logic of practicality stems from the contingent encounter of dispositions (*habitus*) and positions (*field*). More on this below.

81. Wittgenstein 1958, § 217.
 82. Searle 1998, 100–102.

It is important to note that although all practical knowledge is taken-for-granted or unreflexive, not all taken-for-granted knowledge is practical. In Hopf's logic of habit, for instance, taken-for-granted knowledge was once reflected upon before becoming internalized; whereas practical knowledge is learned tacitly. But just how could a minimally complex practice be learned without ever being explicitly taught? Building on decades of experiments, psychologist Reber asserts the "primacy of the implicit": "other things being equal, implicit learning is the default mode for the acquisition of complex information about the environment."⁸³ Babies learning the complex syntactic rules of their mother tongue is the obvious example of such nonrepresentational competence-building. In Ryle's example, even the game of chess need not be explicitly taught for a boy to be able to play by the rules: "By watching the moves made by others and by noticing which of his own moves were conceded and which were rejected, he could pick up the art of playing correctly while still quite unable to propound the regulations in terms of which 'correct' and 'incorrect' are defined... We learn how by practice, schooled indeed by criticism and example, but often quite unaided by any lessons in the theory."⁸⁴ Though often imperceptible, implicit learning is the rule not the exception.

In world politics, for instance, state elites come to master the international rules of sovereignty and nonintervention in part through implicit learning. In effect, most of them never got trained in the formal schemes of international law. Statespersons simply replicate, in and through practice, the done things in the international society (or else they may face social or political sanctions). In fact, most of the complex workings of the diplomatic practice rest on a stock of practical knowledge that is tacitly learnt. Reviewing dozens of classics on diplomacy, Berridge observes that there is "an overwhelmingly strong sentiment that practical knowledge could be acquired only at the elbow of a master, that is to say, by apprenticeship."⁸⁵ This inarticulate mode of learning differs significantly from the dominant model of norm internalization advocated by several IR constructivists.

As a "knowledge that does not know itself,"⁸⁶ practical knowledge does not lend itself easily to scientific inquiry. In this endeavor, Bourdieu's theory of practice appears especially helpful because his conceptual triad of habitus, field, and practical sense has been empirically operationalized time and again—it works in practice. To begin with, habitus is a "system of durable, transposable dispositions, which integrates past experiences and functions at every moment as a matrix of perception, appreciation, and action, making possible the accomplishment of infinitely differentiated tasks."⁸⁷ For instance, one could argue that there exists a "diplomatic habitus" in world politics—a set of regular traits which dispose its

83. Reber 1993, 25.
84. Ryle 1984, 41.
85. Berridge 2004, 6.
86. De Certeau 1990, 110.
87. Bourdieu 2001, 261.

bearers to act in a certain way"⁸⁸—which makes international diplomatic inaction possible. Four main dimensions of the concept need to be emphasized. First, habitus is historical. The dispositions that comprise it are the sedimented individual and collective trajectories. It turns history (and its intersubjectivity) into a second nature; as a result the past is actualized into the present.⁸⁹ In Bourdieu's theory of practice, people do what they do because "this is how things are" according to the collective and individual experiences embodied in their habitus. These dispositions are acquired through socialization, exposure, imitation and symbolic power relationships. Though "ever-changing" as history unfolds, the habitus instills path dependency in social action for revisions take place on the basis of prior dispositions.⁹⁰

Second, habitus is made up of inarticulate, practical knowledge. It is learned by doing, from direct experience in and on the world: "The core *modus operandi* that defines practice is transmitted through practice, in practice, without access to the discursive level."⁹¹ This is not to say that individuals form no reflections; but they do so on the basis of the habitus's unreflexive dispositions. With reflection or deliberation, habitus tends to generate "reasonable," committed 'behaviours'⁹² which agents may be at pains explaining. In that sense, a form of "learned ignorance" [*docte ignorance*].⁹³ Borrowing from Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu contends that the inarticulate nature of habitus is due to the fact that it is comprised of "corporeal knowledge" [*connaissance par corps*]—a practical mastery of the world that profoundly differs from representational knowledge. Whether one rides a bicycle or plays flute, these practices are an unspoken, bodily knowledge that is learned and deployed corporeally: body is not just the executant of the goals we frame or just the locus of causal factors which shape our representations. Our understanding itself is embodied.⁹⁵ Being a female or a male, to take a general example, is a bodily form of knowledge that informs most of our practices without conscious reflection: it. People behave in gendered manners often without any explicit teaching; masculine or feminine behavior is not something they can readily express in words. In world politics, meetings among statespersons similarly involve the knowledge of habitus as a "sense of one's place" and of the others' place. Bourdieu explains: "What is 'learned by body' is not something that one can like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is."⁹⁷ In this

88. Neumann 2002b, 23.
89. Bourdieu 1990, 56.
90. Bourdieu 2003, 231.
91. Bourdieu 2001, 285.
92. Bourdieu 1990, 55.
93. Bourdieu 2001, 308.
94. Bourdieu 2003, 185–234.
95. Taylor 1993, 50.
96. Williams 2007, 28–31.
97. Bourdieu 1990, 73.

