

Theorizing Change in the Practice Turn in IR Theory
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This article builds on the practice turn's welcome move to redirect our attention to the unconscious habitual practices that constitute most of daily social life, including in world politics. But IR practice theorists continue to resort to arguments that include deliberate reflection. I try to clarify the relationship between going on in the world automatically and proceeding with conscious reflection. Beyond providing scope conditions for reflection during ongoing practice, which increase the probability of a change in practices, I also elaborate mechanisms by which ongoing practices may yield an endogenous source of change. I illustrate some of these conditions for change from recent IR scholarship on practices in world politics.

The Dominance of Habitual Practices in Everyday Life

The most important contribution of the practice turn in IR theory (PTIR) has perhaps been to shift our focus from reflective deliberation and conscious instrumental and normative decision making to the daily practices of habitual sayings and doings. The dominance of habit in everyday life has been recognized for many centuries by many thinkers. It is a central assumption of theorists of the practice turn. And, most importantly, it has robust empirical support in neurocognitive science.

Habit has been at the center of scholarly attention for centuries. Montaigne wrote in 1580 that habit is "a violent and treacherous schoolmistress."¹ David Hume argued that "the far greatest part of our reasonings, with all our actions and passions, can be derived from nothing but custom and habit."² It is "the great guide of human life."³ Thomas Reid observed in 1788 that "we are carried by habit as by a stream in swimming."⁴ John Dewey identified habits as "an immensely more intimate and fundamental part of ourselves than are vague, general, conscious choices....[T]hey constitute the self."⁵ Deleuze has written that "We are habits, nothing but habits."⁶ Indeed, without habits, life itself is impossible.

As William Sewall has observed about the twentieth century, "theorists as diverse as Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Clifford Geertz, and Raymond Williams, to name only a few, have shifted emphasis from highly self-conscious, purposive individuals attempting to elaborate or enact 'blueprints' for change, to the relatively

¹ Montaigne, *Of Custom*, 1580, p. 89.

² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), p. 81.

³ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1902), p. 44

⁴ Thomas Reid, *On Active Powers of Man* 1788, p.119.

⁵ *On Human Nature* p. 21

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity* 1989, p. x.

anonymous and impersonal operation of 'ideological state apparatuses,' 'epistemes,' 'cultural systems,' or 'structures of feeling.'" There is no need to look into "the conscious wills of individual actors."⁷

Bourdieu understood broad norm adherence as a product of unconscious doxa. We are not, as the "logic of appropriateness" and norm-centric constructivism would have it, constantly referring to our identities to find out what we should do in a particular situation. Instead "it is this immediate and tacit agreement, in every respect opposed to an explicit contract, that founds the relation of doxic submission, which attaches us to the established order with all the ties of the unconscious. The recognition of legitimacy is not, as Weber believed, a free act of clear conscience. It is rooted in the immediate, prereflexive agreement between objective structures and embodied structures, now turned unconscious...."⁸ Nietzsche wrote that "the terrible par excellence would be for me a life entirely devoid of habits, a life that would demand perpetual improvisation. That would be my exile and my Siberia."⁹

A central reason for the necessity of habit is that it frees up the reflective mind to consciously deliberate about the world. It is at this point, however, where some scholars of the practice turn in IR begins to deviate from the practice turn in social theory. Instead of acknowledging that habits allow reflection, they deny that habits play this kind of role and, instead treat habits themselves as creative.¹⁰

While habits are necessary for reflection, habits in themselves should not be understood as fostering creation; they are permissive, not productive.¹¹ Indeed, just as habit has been theorized for 100s of years, philosophers and scholars also had a hunch through those centuries, borne out by experimental psychology in the last 20 years, that habits are "at once a blessing and a curse."¹² Claire Carlisle, surveying theological and philosophical views on habit from Thomas Aquinas to Hegel, concludes that "because so much of our activity is taken care of by habit...our energies and attention are free for other things, including creative thought. Without this effect of habit, it is difficult to imagine the development of a culture beyond the basic

⁷ Sewell 1985, p. 60. We could add here as well Gramsci's common sense, Wittgenstein's forms of life, Benjamin's social imaginary, Heidegger's common world, Berger and Luckmann's symbolic universe, Searle's Background, and Bourdieu's doxa.

⁸ Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, pp. 55-6.

⁹ *Gay Science* p. 167

¹⁰ Kratochwil, Friedrich. "Of Words and Deeds: A Reply to My Critics." *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 44.2 (2016): 278-291.

¹¹ This kind of confusion is evident in Elizabeth Grosz's analysis of the work of Ravaisson, where in she concludes that habits are a "creative capacity," but then goes on to observe that habit enables radical change, but through reflection, as it gives us time. Elizabeth Grosz, "Habit Today: Ravaisson, Bergson, Deleuze and Us," *Body and Society* 19:2-3 (2013), 217-39, quoted in Wendy Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), p. 89.

¹² Clare Carlisle, *On Habit* (London: Routledge, 2014), p 5. I thank an anonymous reviewer for directing me to Carlisle's work, especially her scholarship on Felix Ravaisson.

elements of survival."¹³ William James argued that habit is "the great thing" that allows the brain to be free for "higher flights."¹⁴ Hubert Dreyfus, summarizing Martin Heidegger's views on this point, writes that "nondeliberate action" or "unthinking comportment" provide "the nonsalient background that makes it possible deliberately to focus on what is unusual or important or difficult."¹⁵

Another role for reflection in the practice turn is for learning habits in the first place. To be sure, while mimesis, or simple repetition of what is done around us, and not doing what is not around us, plays a primary role in the acquisition of habitual practices for practice turn theorists, they acknowledge as well the role of learning rules or being deliberately instructed how to do one thing, rather than another.

Theodore Schatzki, one of the practice theorists most cited by IR scholars of practice, makes the case for mimesis, citing Bourdieu: "The inculcation of habitus transpires for the most part simply through children encountering and interacting with people going about their business." But Bourdieu goes on to write that this "process is hastened, and its misfirings corrected, by the citation of rules."¹⁶ In other words, practices are acquired both through imitation and explicit instruction. Felix Ravaisson, writing some 140 years before Bourdieu, explains that "virtue is first of all an effort and wearisome; it become something attractive and a pleasure only through practice...Such is the very secret of education...."¹⁷ Hubert Dreyfus has made the point that "while infants acquire skills by imitation and trial and error, in our formal instruction we start with rules." As we become expert at a practice, "these give way to more flexible responses" that are unconscious.¹⁸

Scholarship in psychology confirms each of the three hunches of the practice theory: habits dominate everyday life; habits free up humans to reflect; and habits are acquired through a combination of imitation and instruction. From the perspective of cognitive psychology, humans are naturally habitual, as otherwise, they could not go on in the world. Humans operate on the principle of "least effort," not "maximum thought."¹⁹ William James wrote in his 1890 psychology textbook that "when we look at living creatures...one of the first things that strikes us is that they are bundles of habits."²⁰

¹³ Clare Carlisle, "The Question of Habit in Theology and Philosophy: From Hexis to Plasticity," *Body and Society* 19: 2-3 (2013), 30-57, quote from p.48. See also Hume 1902, p. 44.

¹⁴ William James, *Manuscript Lectures*, "Lowell Lectures on the Brain and the Mind," (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 19

¹⁵ Dreyfus 1991, p. 93

¹⁶ Bourdieu, *OTP?*, p17, quoted in Schatzki 1987, p. 118.

¹⁷ Felix Ravaisson, *Of Habit*, translation, introduction, and commentary by Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair, (London: Continuum, 2008/1838), p. 69.

¹⁸ Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Overcoming the Myth of the Mental," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 79:2 (November 2005), p. 52.

¹⁹ Axel van den Berg, "Out of Habit," *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 25:3 (October 1998), p. 446.

²⁰ *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1, (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), p. 104.

With acute prescience, William James understood the role that habits play in allowing for reflection on other matters. He wrote that habits, because they occur with a minimum of consciousness and decision making, liberate the individual to "attend to unexpected matters that warrant an intelligent response."²¹ Foreshadowing what has now become a common understanding of the relationship between the automatic and deliberative parts of the brain, James wrote that "a strictly voluntary act has to be guided by idea, perception, and volition, throughout its whole course. In an habitual action, mere sensation is a sufficient guide, and the upper regions of the brain and mind are comparatively free."²² This is precisely the position of contemporary neuroscience, which differentiates between a reflexive amygdala and a reflective pre-frontal cortex.²³

There is also agreement among neurocognitive psychologists that acquiring a habit has two paths: mimesis and reflection. As Vila-Henniger describes it, "when learning a habit, declarative and non-declarative memory systems compete to control habit acquisition. At first, declarative memory tends to be more active as actors attempt to memorize a task. However, as performance improves, procedural memory is favored." Indeed, not only are both implicit and explicit memory working together, "the latter is often indispensable in early stages of habituation."²⁴ The confusion is created within practice theory which often tends to concentrate on the "mindlessness" of virtuoso performances by chess grandmasters, concert violinists, and professional tennis players, paying no attention to how they learned their skills in the first place, let alone the fact that the rest of us are virtuosos in nothing. In his interpretation of Heidegger, Dreyfus, for example, reminds us that the play of chess masters is "based on previous attention to thousands of actual and book games" and so "incorporates a tradition that determines the appropriate response to each situation...."²⁵

Reflection in Practice

Despite the commitment of the practice turn to keep reflection out of it, its theorists frequently cannot do without it, as the following examples illustrate. In an excellent analytical review of the practice turn in IR, Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger differentiate among five different approaches to practice theory. Most seem to be unable to stay out of their minds. Bueger and Gadinger's first, and most prominent, approach to the practice turn is Bourdieu. And yet there is clearly conscious reflection in Bourdieu. He writes of both habitus and doxa as "cognitive

²¹ James, "Lowell Lectures," pp. 18-19.

²² James, *Principles*, p. 116.

²³ For a summary of the dual-process theory, see Roy F. Baumeister and John A. Bargh, "Conscious and Unconscious: Toward an Integrative Understanding of Human Mental Life and Action," in eds., Jeffrey W. Sherman, Bertram Gawronski, and Yaacov Trope, *Dual-Process Theories of the Social Mind* (New York: Guilford, 2014), 35-49. It is worth noting that Baumeister and Bargh started out on different sides of the reflective/reflexive barricades and have reached a consensus that gives both their due.

²⁴ Vila-Henniger, pp. 245-6. See also Alfred R. Mele, *Springs of Action: Understanding Intentional Behavior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²⁵ Dreyfus 1991, p. 93.

schemes” that agents implement in order to go on in the world.²⁶ The very stakes of political struggle are a “cognitive struggle for the power to impose the legitimate vision of the social world,...its present meaning and the direction in which it is going and should go.”²⁷

The second stream is the "community of practice" approach of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. This research program focuses on "how learning processes unfold," how "knowing and doing become related," argues that "within these communities, meanings is negotiated [and] knowledge is created, and community members "deliberate what their joint enterprise is constituted by."²⁸ Learning, knowing, negotiation, and deliberation all seem very reflective. These deliberations are about "what matters and what not,...what to do and what not, what to pay attention to and what not...,what to justify and what to take for granted,...when actions are good enough....and when they need improvement or refinement."²⁹ At a minimum, we could conclude that conscious reflection is a necessary part of practice at least when community members are learning what it means to be a member of any particular community. Or is it perhaps the case that reflection is a continual part of practice?

The third, narrative, approach is based on the work of de Certeau. Bueger and Gadinger describe this approach as entailing actors using narratives "in their deliberative practices to make sense of a problem." Through subjective storytelling different worlds are created.³⁰ It is hard to imagine telling a story, or deliberating, without consciousness. The authors identify Luc Boltanski's pragmatic sociology as another approach to practice. They describe actors who "consciously decide when it is either appropriate to engage in justification" or not and credit Boltanski with the foundational premise of "frankly critical and reflexive actors."³¹ Only Bruno Latour's actor-network theory escapes crediting conscious reflection in its account of practice. I will make use of this exception below.

In later work, Bueger and Gadinger add pragmatism as an approach to practice and suggest that from the pragmatist point of view, practices can "only be grasped if one takes their (participants') perspective as fundamental." Indeed, situations are "always in need of interpretation by involved agents."³² Perspectives and interpretations imply reflection. Andreas Reckwitz, another scholar of practice theory, defines practice as including "forms of mental activities, background knowledge, and

²⁶ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, p152 and Bourdieu and Wacqant, p. 168.

²⁷ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, p185.

²⁸ Bueger and Gadinger 2014, pp. 29-31.

²⁹ Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.81, cited in Bueger and Gadinger, *International Practice Theory*, p.31.

³⁰ Bueger and Gadinger 2014, pp. 36-41.

³¹ Bueger and Gadinger 2014, pp. 53 and 73. I could put a *sic* after reflexive here. As reflexive means a product of reflex, but not reflection. But in IR, at least, the meanings have been reversed from that which is common in psychology. I will stick to the IR nomenclature here.

³² Bueger and Gadinger, 2015, p. 455.

motivational knowledge."³³ One might think the latter, at least, entails conscious reflection.

In one of the foundational texts for practice theory, Theodore Schatzki writes that "it is the role of socially constituted mind plays in structuring practices that certifies practices as the place of social order." Practices, in part at least, are "organized by a pool of understandings [and] a set of rules."³⁴ Despite the practice turn putting great stress on the difference between "knowing how" versus "knowing that or what," in practice, practice theorists themselves seem unable to remain consistent. For example, Schatzki writes that "knowing *what* another person is doing helps determine how to respond to him." He distinguishes this from "practical intelligibility" that is not primarily determined by understanding, "but by rules, teleology, and affectivity." The latter two aside, by rules he means "the explicit formulations that enjoin or school in particular actions." These include, "statute law, rules of thumb, and explicit normative enjoinings." None of this appears very unconscious, but rather demands reflection for practices to proceed in any organized fashion. Indeed he continues: "What people often do often reflects formulations of which they are aware." What makes sense to them to do often "reflects their understanding of specific rules."³⁵

One of the practice turn's foundational texts, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's edited volume, *Situated Learning*, is devoted to demonstrating, in part at least, the primacy of knowing how over knowing that or what. The contributors and editors argue that learning occurs through doing, not through reading a text or a manual. In other words, we learn "how," we don't learn "that."³⁶ But in the twelve case-studies in the book, not a single one of them is able to do without dozens of pages on learning "that" this is how we can be a midwife, that these are the ways to give up alcohol in the twelve-step alcoholics anonymous program, that these are the things a navy quartermaster, does, and does not do, in order to do the job appropriately, etc. So, even a classic practice turn text can't get away from reflective agency even while it is declaring that we can theorize the social world without it.

Barry Barnes warns that reacting against the excesses of those who privilege reflection on representational knowledge "by giving attention exclusively to the role of practice is merely to indulge in another form of excess. It amounts to an ungrounded prejudice in favor of know-how at the expense of know-that, in favor of skill and competence at the expense of information and representation."³⁷

³³ Andreas Reckwitz, "Toward a Theory of Social Practices," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5:2 (2002), p. 249.

³⁴ Schatzki 2001, "Practice Mind-ed Orders," pp. 50 and 58.

³⁵ Schatzki 2001, pp. 58-62. It should be pointed out that within philosophy the substantive distinction between knowing how and knowing that/what is contested. Jason Stanley and Tim Williamson, "Knowing How," *Journal of Philosophy* 98:8 (2001), 411-44.

³⁶ Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, eds., *Situated Learning*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

³⁷ Barry Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action," in Schatzki, et.al., 2001, p. 29. Clare Carlisle credits both Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur with similar views, valuing both implicit and explicit knowledge. Carlisle 2014, p. 42. I think an anonymous reviewer for encouraging me to explore the views of Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur on habit.

In his introductory chapter to *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, co-edited with Karin Knorr Cetina and Erike von Savigny, Schatzki insists that "claims about practical understanding deny neither the existence nor the efficacy of explicit formulations in ongoing activity. Skills and explicit propositions work in tandem. What is more, different mixes reign in different practice arenas."³⁸ In this view, there is obviously room for reflection in practice.

Change in Practice

Emanuel Adler, in writing his entry for the Sage *Handbook of International Relations Theory*, begins by quoting Hopf's "Promise of Constructivist IR Theory," in which it is argued that "constructivism is agnostic about change." On the contrary Adler counters, "constructivism is nothing if not about change." More recently, in their introduction to *International Practices*, Adler and Vincent Pouliot write that "change is the natural condition of social life."³⁹ In what follows, I try to make sense of these differences.

First I will address what change is. Second, I will offer a reflective account for change, which is mostly rejected by IR theorists of practice. Third, I will offer a non-reflective account for change, elaborating ways in which unconscious performances of practices can result in a change in practices independent of anyone's intention to effect such change. I think it is the latter to which Adler and Pouliot refer. But a fuller account of changes occurring in practices requires attention to reflective conscious choices as well.

What is Change?

It can certainly be acknowledged that practices are never the same, from one moment to the next performed by the same person, or across the same practice performed by different people. As Barnes reminds us, relying on Wittgenstein, "rules can never be sufficiently informative...to keep instances of rule-following behavior relevantly identical in all the diverse situations wherein rules are followed."⁴⁰ But, as Theodore Schatzki reminds us: "an event is not the same as change. To be sure, every activity is unique and thereby effects a change in, that is, an expansion of, the total stock of events. (But) not every activity constitutes change beyond this...." We must realize that "many events perpetuate existing practices...and effect only negligible changes, if any." This runs counter to the "prominent contemporary intuition that

³⁸ Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory," in Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, and von Savigny 2001, p. 17.

³⁹ Emanuel Adler. "Constructivism in international relations: sources, contributions, and debates." *Handbook of international relations* 2 (2013): 112-144; Adler and Vincent Pouliot, "International Practices: Introduction and Framework." *International Practices*, edited by Adler and Pouliot (2011): 3-35. See also Doty 1997, p. ? More recently, Pouliot and Jeremie Cornut have observed that practices tend to reproduce themselves, and while "they may transform over time,...only at the margins and evolutionarily..." Pouliot and Cornut 2015, p. 306.

⁴⁰ Barnes in Schatzki 2001, p. 34.

becoming--or process--...are understood as continuous change."⁴¹ Jorg Kustermans criticizes the practice turn in IR for not acknowledging that "change and process are not the same thing" and for assuming "change to be ubiquitous," when in fact "this remains a metaphysical wager."⁴²

Change in Practices

This paper treats change as a change in practices, that is, what we are saying and doing. This does not mean there is any observable or significant change in social structures. It only means that how one goes on in the world is different at t+1 than at t. I explore two routes to such change. The first is the unconscious unarticulable one, or changes in practice through practice. The second is the conscious reflective route, or changes in practice through reflection. One could call the first practical agency, and the second, reflective agency. I end with a discussion of the conditions under which we should expect reflection.

Change in Practice through Practice

A central insight of the practice turn is that change may occur without conscious reflection, through the operation of practices themselves. This is a very important claim, as it implies that all of us are change agents all the time, even if unconsciously. It also implies that practical changes occur without any necessary or predictable directions, hence making any efforts at predicting change futile. All we can best do is historically reconstruct the collection of practices that produced the changes in practices we ultimately observe.

It should be said that change through practice, rather than change in practices via reflection is a modern, if not, contemporary conceptualization. Until the twentieth century at least, habitual practices were largely understood as constraints on change, not sources of it. As Bueger and Gadinger illustrate, there are many approaches to the practice turn. But none of them they identify come before the publication of Pierre Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* in English translation in 1977. I will start with Bourdieu, but go a little farther back in the twentieth century to enrich my elaboration of what practical change might entail.

Bourdieu's concept of "practical sense," which he distinguishes from conscious thought, as well as Giddens's "practical knowledge," which he distinguishes from discursive knowledge, are speaking of the unarticulated everyday practices of agents operating within constraining social structures. Through these unconscious engagements with the world, a world that itself is always just at least a little different than it was just a moment ago, adjustments in practices occur that we might call change.

One of the more important contributions of Bourdieu to the concept of

⁴¹ Theodore Schatzki, "Where the Action Is," *Sustainable Practices Research Group Working Paper 1* (2011), p. 4.

⁴² Jorg Kustermans, "Parsing the Practice Turn," *Millennium* (2015), pp. 7-8.

practical agency is the idea of “regulated improvisation.”⁴³ This was one way Bourdieu understood how change could occur despite the fact that individuals are constrained by their habitus within a social field to automatically respond to the cues of their environments in a predictable fashion. How could there be anything but stasis if people only responded reflexively to structured predispositions? His answer was improvisation, but within limits, hence, “regulated improvisation.” What goes unexplored is how much regulation, and how much improvisation? Bourdieu repeatedly reminds us of the limits of such improvisation, while simultaneously insisting it demonstrates the capacity for agency within the habitus, if only an anchored kind of agency.⁴⁴

Wittgenstein's discussion of following rules perhaps provides an understanding of why Bourdieu's actors have to improvise. We do not apply rules by referring to the rule's literal language, for no human-generated rule could possibly refer to the infinite varieties of reality we in fact face on a daily basis. A rule does not apply itself; it has to be applied. So, we must necessarily “improvise” when applying any rule, and in so doing, we change what the rule means in practice. This is the kind of unintentional change that the concept of practical agency captures. While we very well may be reflecting upon our circumstances, and what they require, our actual practices, or application of a rule in that particular situation, unintentionally entail a slight or not so slight, (mis)application of the rule such that our actions are a practice somewhat different than any we have previously executed.

Wittgenstein wrote that “there is a gulf between an order and its execution. It has to be filled up by the act of understanding.”⁴⁵ There is no precise correspondence between the rules that govern everyday social life and the unique features of social life encountered every day.⁴⁶ Necessarily, all of us must act in situations under-specified by the necessarily non-existent rulebook. How we respond to these situations is almost always “appropriate,” in that we go on in the world without a hitch. But even minor improvisations in how we follow the rule can bring about minor adjustments by others. Before we know it, how a rule is generally understood can be undermined, and transformed. And all this is done quite unintentionally, and quite unpredictably. Wittgenstein recognizes this unintentional potential for slippage: “We remain unconscious of the prodigious diversity of all the everyday language-games

⁴³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge 1977), p. 11.

⁴⁴ Emirbayer and Mische, p. 979, make similar claims. As does Sherry B. Ortner, “Specifying Agency: The Comaroffs and their Critics,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 3:1 (2011), 80. That practices may “alter the structure through the innovativeness of reflective actors” is one of the core commitments of practice theory, according to Bueger and Gadinger 2015, p. 453.

⁴⁵ Wittgenstein 1953, *PI*, p. 128e, #431. There is a clear relationship between Wittgenstein's notions and Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*. The underlying system of rules that nobody can possibly know is Saussure's *langue*, and the actual instances of following a rule are Saussure's use of *parole*. Change originates in language in use, in linguistic performance, in *parole*, not in *langue*. Saussure, *Course in Linguistics*, p. 85

⁴⁶ Once again we are back to the Heraclitian river. Or to Derrida's conclusion that it is impossible to ever repeat the same action identically because the environment in which we seek to enact it, whether verbally or behaviorally, is always and unavoidably different. See Jack Reynolds, “Habituality and Undecidability: A Comparison of Merleau-Ponty and Derrida on Decision,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 10:4 (2002), 449-66.

because the clothing of our language makes everything alike."⁴⁷ But this passage also reflects the intrinsic barriers to change: a very high probability of not recognizing differences in performances and uses even when we see them.

Practices are never precisely the same as well because no two phenomena are ever identical, immortalized in Heraclitus's observation that one can never step in the same river twice. The social world, and the audience for one's words, gestures, practices, and actions, is constantly changing, like that Heraclitian river. Moreover, each of us is irreducibly unique. Each of us has had life experiences that make it impossible for us to be identical to each other in understanding the social world and our places in it. Which means in executing a practice it is unlikely we will be performing that practice in a way identical to others performing the "same" practice. It is these potentially meaningful differences in understanding the "same" word, idea, or practice that makes practical agency possible in terms of unintentionally effecting change while believing one is doing nothing, or nothing of the kind, or doing precisely the opposite.

This line of reasoning extends to feminist treatments of mirror neurons. Instead of mirror neurons being objective reflections of identical feelings, as the very term mirror implies, mirror neurons themselves are socially constructed, so that "my embodied perception and your embodied perception of another person are not equivalent even though they might be similar; they share the same stimulus, but are different because they are situated in distinct micro-architectures that are located in bodies with singular material histories."⁴⁸ Vittorio Gallese, who is often credited with the discovery of mirror neurons in the 1990s in Parma, acknowledges that "the mirror metaphor is perhaps misleading. The more we study mirroring mechanisms, the more we learn about their plasticity and dependence upon personal history and the situated nature of the mirroring subject."⁴⁹

Unconscious practices may also foster change because none of us can possibly know all the consequences of what one says or does. As Bourdieu put it: "Each agent is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning. Because his actions and works are the product of a *modus operandi* of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery, they contain an objective intention which outruns his conscious intentions... *It is because subjects do not know what they are doing that what they are doing has more meaning than they know.*"⁵⁰ We are all practical agents because the social world is so complex we cannot possibly foresee the consequences of what we do in that world, and some of these consequences change the world.

One reason we cannot know the consequences of all our practices is because the social world itself is a probabilistic one of contingency, not a deterministic one of

⁴⁷ Wittgenstein 1953, p224e.

⁴⁸ Victoria Pitts-Taylor, "I Feel Your Pain: Embodied Knowledges and Situated Neurons," *Hypatia* 28:4 (Fall 2013), p. 862.

⁴⁹ Vittorio Gallese, "Mirror Neurons, Embodied Simulation, and the Neural Basis of Social Identification," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives*, 19:5, (2009), p. 531. This discussion raises interesting questions about whether "thick" intersubjectivity is even possible.

⁵⁰ Bourdieu, *Outline*, p79. My emphasis.

causal law. This matters because outcomes unintended by deliberating agents are inevitable, and so alterations in the meanings of practices, doings, and sayings are also inevitable, whether an agent means them, or not.⁵¹

Operating at a more meso level is Bourdieu's concept of *hysteresis*, or the conflict created when an agent who is inhabiting a habitus suited to one social field finds herself in another field where the social, cultural, and material capital valued in the first field turns out to be mismatched to the new social field she has entered.⁵² Such mismatches result in either an agent realizing her devaluation and hence need to adjust to the new field and/or the field adjusting to her new, and challenging, sources of capital. One can imagine, for example, taking one's working class habitus off to Oxbridge or the Ivy League and finding one's tales of summer jobs and poor public education an awkward fit with the prevailing elitist habitus of summer camps and preparatory schools.

Finally, practices intentionally aimed at resisting prevailing social structures can unintentionally pave the way for the large changes in those structures that we more readily observe. James Scott's "weapons of the weak" are acts of resistance that are intended, but not intended to bring about the transformative effects they ultimately bring about. What is unintended is the overthrow of the existing order; what is intended is the expression of discontent with that order, or at least one's small local part of that daily life. Scott calls all these acts of "foot-dragging, poaching, pilfering, dissimulation, sabotage, desertion, absenteeism, squatting, and flight" constitutive of "infrapolitics." Infrapolitics because "it is practiced outside the visible spectrum of what usually passes for political activity."⁵³ He employs the metaphor of a growing coral reef, where just like anthozoan polyps, "thousands upon thousands of acts of insubordination" create an "economic and political barrier reef of their own" that can effectively counter the existing order.⁵⁴

Change in Practice Through Reflection

Despite its primary focus on unintentional practices, practice turn theory reserves a large space for conscious reflection and consequent change in practices. While it would be incorrect to say that practice theorists believe reflection is necessary for change, since most argue unconscious practices themselves produce

⁵¹ See Charles Peirce, "Design and Chance," 548-9, cited by Menand 2001, p. 277.

⁵² It has to be said, however, that the two most recent empirical investigations of hysteresis in IR by two proponents of the practice turn, have demonstrated that a state whose practices are "out of place," in this case Russia over the last 700 years, has not resulted in change, but rather in the ostracism or isolation of the state whose practices have violated the existing predominant order. Iver Neumann and Vincent Pouliot, "Untimely Russia: Hysteresis in Russian-Western Relations over the Past Millennium," *Security Studies* 20:1 (2011), 105-37 and Vincent Pouliot, *International Security in Practice* (Cambridge 2010). See also Brenda Farnell, "Getting out of the Habitus," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6:2000, p427.

⁵³ Scott 2012, 12.

⁵⁴ Scott, 2012, xvii-xx, 7. And of course one must as well include *Weapons of the Week* and *Hidden Transcripts* in this discussion. See also Alison M.S. Watson, "Agency and the Everyday Activist," in Olivier Richmond and Audra Mitchell, *Hybrid Forms of Peace* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 39-57.

change as we have seen above, they do argue that reflection is very often an occasion for change.

John Dewey believed deliberate reflection was necessary for change.⁵⁵ Ruminating about the 1897 Pullman strike with his wife in Chicago, he concluded that "I think the few thousand freight cars burned up a pretty cheap price to pay—it was *the stimulus necessary to direct attention*, and it might easily have taken more to get the social organism thinking....I am a good deal of an anarchist."⁵⁶ Dewey distinguished between those of us who unthinkingly accept the world as it is and those who see it as an opportunity for reflection. There is a "remarkable difference between the attitude which accepts the objects of perception...as final, as culminations of natural processes and that which takes them as starting points for reflection and investigation....."⁵⁷ Dewey calls this "the scientific attitude," an attitude that has an "interest in change instead of an interest in...fixities." It is an attitude that is "necessarily alert for problems," and efforts to solve problems are nothing if not opportunities "for effecting more directed change." But, unfortunately, Dewey acknowledges, while we are all potential geniuses and scientists, most of us most of the time instead "still live in dread of change and of problems," and so perpetuate the status quo.⁵⁸ Dewey observed that "it is a commonplace that the more suavely efficient a habit the more unconsciously it operates. Only a hitch in its workings occasions emotion and provokes thought."⁵⁹ We could say "we only think when our habits give out."⁶⁰

Hubert Dreyfus interprets Heidegger as arguing that "if something goes wrong, people are startled...If the going gets difficult, we must pay attention and so switch to deliberate subject/object intentionality. [Only] then does one have the sense of effort described by [William] James and [John] Searle."⁶¹ According to Dreyfus, Heidegger's basic point is that "mental content arises whenever the situation requires deliberate attention....The switch to deliberation is evoked by any situation in which

⁵⁵ See Reijo Mietinen, "Epistemology of Transformative Material Activity," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 36:4 2006, p. 403.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2001), p. 297. My emphasis.

⁵⁷ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (Lexington, KY: Foliopharian, 2011/1921), p. 100. Again, Berger and Luckmann also plead with us to remember that we have created the world, no matter how "objectified" it has become. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor, 1966) See also Knorr-Cetina's discussion below of the need for "incomplete objects" to provoke reflection.

⁵⁸ Dewey 1921, pp. 101 and 228.

⁵⁹ Dewey 1921, p. 178. Along these pragmatist lines, see also Charles Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, eds. Nathan Houser and Christian J.W. Kloesel, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 122.

⁶⁰ Bill Pollard, "Explaining Actions with Habits," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 43: 2006, p. 67.

⁶¹ Dreyfus 1991, pp. 68-9. Dreyfus finds Merleau-Ponty's work to be similar in this respect: "I only deliberate when coping is blocked." Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Intelligence without Representation--Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Mental Representation," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 1: 2002, p. 381. I thank an anonymous reviewer for requesting I consider Dreyfus's take on Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology, and habit in this article.

absorbed coping is no longer possible--any situation that, as Heidegger puts it, requires 'a more precise kind of circumspection, such as inspecting, checking up on what has been attained, etc'."⁶² Disturbances produce intentional states and only on reflection "can we ask if our beliefs are true."⁶³ Heidegger categorizes these moments of disruption "temporary breakdowns" or "obstinacy." At these junctures, the previously transparent becomes explicitly manifest. We "act deliberately, paying attention to what we are doing."⁶⁴

Knorr-Cetina's contribution to the Schatzki, et.al., edited volume calls out the practice turn for its overemphasis on "the habitual and rule-governed features of practice." In fact, one might expect practitioners "to have to keep learning...and to continually reinvent their own practices of acquiring knowledge.... There are "moments of interruption and reflection" in the performance of research. What we often encounter is "creative and constructive practice--the kind of practice that obtains when we confront nonroutine problems." This kind of practice goes beyond our "current conceptions of practice as [only] skill or habitual task performance."⁶⁵

The practice turn's position on interrupted habits necessitating reflection is supported by the findings of experimental cognitive and neurocognitive psychology. Eric Kandel, the 2000 Nobel Prize winner in medicine for his work on the neurobiology of memory, has found that "voluntary attention arises from the need to" attend to stimuli that have not been processed automatically.⁶⁶ Drawing on the dual-process model from psychology, Stephen Vaisey observes that while actors are driven primarily by deeply internalized processes, when the "demands of social interaction" require it, we are capable of deliberation and justification.⁶⁷

Scope Conditions for Reflective Agency and Change in Practices

There are no scope conditions for practical agency, as we are constantly executing practices, and in so doing, changing them. But, as the discussion above implies, there are situations and contexts that more likely to result in reflection, and those that are more likely to result in us just going on in the world without a thought. But they have not yet been specified precisely.

As Paul DiMaggio has observed, although the idea that structures both enable and constrain "has become virtually catechismic among sociologists of culture, we know little about the conditions under which one or the other is the case."⁶⁸

⁶² Dreyfus 1991, p.70, quoting Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 409/358.

⁶³ Dreyfus 1991, p. 249.

⁶⁴ Dreyfus 1991, p. 72. See also pp.74-6. On Heidegger's arguments on how entities which are "ready-to-hand," and so invisible and employed automatically, become entities "present-at-hand," so visible and employed with reflection, see Stephen Mulhall, *On Being in the World* (Routledge 2014), p. 119.

⁶⁵ Knorr-Cetina, "Objectual Practice," 2001, p. 184.

⁶⁶ Eric Kandel, *In Search of Memory*, (New York: Norton, 2006), p. 88.

⁶⁷ Stephen Vaisey, "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action," *American Journal of Sociology* 114:6 (2009), p. 1687.

⁶⁸ DiMaggio 1997, p. 268.

Emirbayer and Mische, as well, call on scholars to “locate which sorts of social-structural, cultural and social psychological contexts are more conducive to developing the different modalities of agency....”⁶⁹ We still need scope conditions for reflective agency.

Bueger and Gadinger also single out the unresolved “tension between understanding practice as a social regularity and as a fluid entity.” We are faced with the “continuously changing character of practice on the one side, and the identification of stable, regulated patterns, routines, and reproduction on the other.” They suggest that “understanding when and how practices transform under which conditions...will be one of the main challenges for future studies in international practice theory.”⁷⁰

I take up this challenge below, offering some dozen conditions that affect the probability of reflecting on one's practices, if not of course guaranteeing that they are changed.

Meaningful Difference

Accepting that the social world is made up of necessarily unique practices and phenomena should not lead us to the mistaken conclusion that these differences are such that we actually pay attention to them in daily life. In fact, going on would be impossible if we were to adopt a default of difference, rather than one of meaningful similarity.⁷¹ This is an intrinsic bias in favor of the status quo and against any change borne of recognition of difference.

Like Garfinkel's subjects in the breaching experiments, when faced even with completely unexpected deviations from the norm, we work hard to “close the breach” and make things normal.⁷² Wittgenstein observed that “we remain unconscious of the prodigious diversity of all the everyday language-games because the clothing of our language makes everything alike.”⁷³ In other words, despite ontological uniqueness, we experience meaningful similarity or practical identity.⁷⁴ Or, to put it another way, the social world is ontologically objectively unique, but the social world we experience is ontologically (inter)subjectively identical.

How can difference overcome our capacity to make it too similar to be noticed? It is a truism, and so not interesting, to argue that difference is recognized

⁶⁹ Emirbayer and Mische, p1005.

⁷⁰ Bueger and Gadinger 2014, pp. 60-5. See also Bueger and Gadinger 2015, p. 456 and Kustermans 2015, p. 19.

⁷¹ Michel Foucault, for example, commented that Gilles Deleuze's "Theatrum Philosophicum," an ideal ontology of pure difference, would require the elimination of all ontological categories. But to achieve this would require large doses of LSD or opium. Gary Gutting refers to this as a "drug-induced acategorical Deleuzian world," a world of complete openness to difference and novelty, unassimilated to any internalized givens, and hence of course unliveable in a normal state. Gutting, *Thinking the Impossible* (Oxford University Press 2011), pp. 96-8.

⁷² Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 35-7.

⁷³ Wittgenstein 1953 p. 224e

⁷⁴ For a psychological explanation for treating objective uniqueness as subjective similarity, see: Wendy Wood, Jeffrey Quinn, and Deborah A. Kashy, “Habits in Everyday Life: Thought, Emotion, and Action,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83:6 2002, 1282.

when available ways of understanding are inadequate to the task of apprehending some new phenomenon.⁷⁵ It is slightly more illuminating to realize that a “regular stream of disturbances” is more likely to provoke a recognition of novelty, and reflection upon it, than a singular event. Axel Van den Berg argues that the relationship is curvilinear. If novelty is too extreme, uncertainty is so intense, it is rational to avoid reflective calculations about our too strange surroundings. And if there is not much novelty, it is rational to avoid what there is. So, the sweet spot is a steady stream of (manageable) novelty. This view accords with the work on the logic of ontological security, as well as the curvilinear relationship between fear and rationality: too much fear provokes irrational panic; too little fear irrational complacency.⁷⁶ Karina Knorr-Cetina suggests that objects of attention must be “incomplete;” they “have to be seen as transient [and] internally complex,” showing signs “of their lacks and needs.”⁷⁷

Socialization and Institutions

Berger and Luckmann identified several groups in society most likely to notice difference: children, senior citizens, and those with mental illnesses. What each of these groups has in common is that they are less socialized than “normal” people. The young have yet to be fully socialized, so they still express wonderment at everything new, ask about it, and are unable, or unwilling, to immediately categorize what is novel into already existing bins in their head. John Dewey exhorted his readers to remain as child-like as possible, for as long as possible, for this very reason. He lamented the fact that “we may not be able to retain in adult habits this [toddler’s] zest of intelligence and this freshness of satisfaction in newly discovered powers. The delightful originality of the child is tamed... It is a combat between the habits of adults and the impulses of the young.... We envy children their love of new experiences, their intentness in extracting every last drop of significance from each situation, their vital seriousness in things that to us are outworn.”⁷⁸ As Picasso observed, “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.”⁷⁹ We could say that children are far more likely to live an ontology of uniqueness than their adult counterparts who have been socialized into an ontology of meaningful similarity.

The aged, in Berger and Luckmann’s estimation, are less socialized because they don’t care so much about social conventions and norms. They are more likely to say and do things out of the ordinary, not fearing social stigmatization or sanction. Finally, those of us with mental illnesses do not respond “normally” to the taken for granted world, because we don’t take for granted what others do, and do take for granted what others don’t. Such notions have a long intellectual pedigree. Thomas

⁷⁵ DiMaggio 1997, p271; Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 998; Wood, Quinn and Kashy, 2002, p1283.

⁷⁶ Axel van den Berg, "Out of Habit," *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 25:3 (October 1998), p. 451. On the need for environmental changes and new contexts to disrupt habit, see Bas Verplanken and Wendy Wood, "Interventions to Break and Create Consumer Habits," *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing* 25:1 (2006), p. 91.

⁷⁷ Knorr-Cetina in Schatzki 2001, p. 192.

⁷⁸ Dewey 1921, pp. 70 and pp. 98-9.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Jonah Lehrer, *How Creativity Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), p. 109.

Reid, a representative of the Scottish Enlightenment, wrote in his 1764 *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, that “common sense principles are integral to the belief systems of everyone—with the exception of the infantile, mentally defective, and deranged—all over the world and at all moments.”⁸⁰ Contemporaneous psychological studies show that depression is an engine of creativity. Bipolar disorders are twenty times more prevalent among creative professionals than among the general population.⁸¹

The more deeply socialized the individual and the more institutionalized her environment, the less likely reflective agency. There will be far less opportunity to be exposed to anything that could be construed as difference, let alone have a system of incentives and social support that would reward recognition of the novel. Not only does socialization, and then, institutionalization, strictly limit the world to which we are exposed on a daily basis, but the strength of cognitive priors, and hence resistance to recognition and responsiveness to novelty, is maximized. Institutions are sites for legitimization, naturalization, and habitualization.⁸² Dewey wrote that mindlessly repetitive habits are “the product of conditions that are uniform because they have been made so mechanically—as in much school and factory work.”⁸³ Bourdieu and others agree that the more institutionalized the environment, the more powerful the effects of doxa, the more unproblematically one operates in one’s habitus, and the less likely there will be any “regulated improvisation.”⁸⁴

The latter works better the more uninstitutionalized the environment.⁸⁵ Bourdieu expects that maladapted, incoherent, and unintegrated habitus are all sites productive of change.⁸⁶ One can see why this would be the case. If you bring the wrong habitus to the party, literally, your practical sense will be inappropriate, your words will be ill-chosen, your practices unexpected and unrequited. One example is an upper class gentleman practicing his class habitus at a working class bar during a football game. Awkward. A habitus is incoherent to the extent that the person inhabiting it was never properly, or fully, socialized to its demands. So, a working class student at an Ivy League school might find his infrequent, but marked, deviations from the upper class habitus, sufficient to provoke reflection. Finally, a habitus is unintegrated to the extent that the social setting in which the person is situated is insufficiently institutionalized;

⁸⁰ Quoted in Sophia Rosenfeld, *Common Sense* (Harvard 2011), p. 73.

⁸¹ In Lehrer 2012, p. 79. Most academics would not be surprised by this. It should be said that being happy is also associated with creativity. But anger and frustration are not. Lehrer, p32.

⁸² Dequech 2013, p. 99; Gomez and Jones 2000, 703; and Swidler in Schatzki 2001, p. 95.

⁸³ John Dewey, “Logic: The Theory of Inquiry,” in *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), p. 39.

⁸⁴ See also Emirbayer and Mische, p. 983; Dequech 2013, p88; Arthur T. Denzau and Douglass C. North, “Shared Mental Models: Ideologies and Institutions,” *Kyklos* 47:1 (February 1994), 3-31; DiMaggio and Powell 1991, p. 22; and James C. Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism* (Princeton 2012), 60-80.

⁸⁵ This is not to say that competing institutions are not productive of reflective agency and perhaps change. The argument here is only about processes within a single institution. I thank an anonymous reviewer for asking for clarification of this point.

⁸⁶ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, p160

it does not secure a constant and consistent demand for sayings and doings that routinely reproduce the prevailing social order. This kind of incomplete institutionalization allows for competing conventions, multiple identities, and contextual variety, each of which increases the probability of “regulated improvisation,” or reflective agency, and perhaps, change.⁸⁷

Berger and Luckmann distinguish between primary and secondary socialization. The first, and more fundamental, occurs during childhood and is “the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual” into her social world. A child “internalizes *the* world, not a world among many choices.” Primary socialization is mostly a family affair whose collection of taken for granted truths, or stock of knowledge and symbolic universe, is an intersubjective structure with which any secondary socialization must contend.⁸⁸ Institutions are the social structures that emerge from processes of collective socialization within a community. They control, but also provide predictability, or what we would call ontological security. Institutions are so effective because they are understood as objective facts, a process Berger and Luckmann call “objectivation.”⁸⁹ By forgetting, or never realizing or knowing, that institutions are not objective, but socially constructed, “reification” occurs, whereby we “forget our own authorship of the human world,” and that which we create “is lost to consciousness.” We are “capable of producing a reality that denies us.”⁹⁰ The question Berger and Luckmann leave us with is whether there are any de-institutionalized spaces in society? Is there a private, personal sphere within which socialization can be suspended, and reflection given free reign?

Some of the corporate world has recognized for some time that developing institutional environments to allow exposure to difference is an important, if not necessary, condition for coming up with new ideas. Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M) invented the “15% Rule,” allowing every researcher to spend 15% of each day pursuing her own speculative ideas. It also rotates its engineers through different divisions, to expose them to projects, ideas, and processes that may stimulate them to think anew about their own problems, let alone come up with new projects altogether. Looking at data from a number of workplaces, the most creative

⁸⁷ For competing conventions, see Gomez and Jones 2000, pp. 701-5; for multiple identities, Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 988; and contextual variety, David T. Neal, Wendy Wood, and Jeffrey M. Quinn, “Habits: A Repeat Performance,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 15:4 (August 2006), p. 200 and Wendy Wood, Jeffrey Quinn, and Deobrah A. Kashy, “Habits in Everyday Life: Thought, Emotion, and Action,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83:6 (2002), p. 1282.

⁸⁸ Berger and Luckmann, 129-37. (Their emphasis) The longer a set of practices and habits goes on, the more deeply institutionalized they become. Van den berg 1998, p. 449. Some of us who have relied on Berger and Luckmann have been suspicious of their views on primary and secondary socialization, given that they are rooted in 1950s and 1960s scholarship. But their positions seem to have held up. See Strauss and Quinn 1997, 105-119. For example, Berger and Luckmann argued that primary socialization more fundamental because of the affective ties children have with their significant others. Strauss and Quinn report neurocognitive research that shows that cultural schemas are more durable the affective arousal occurs during their acquisition, with strengthened neural connections resulting from the experience. P. 93.

⁸⁹ Berger and Luckmann, pp. 52-9.

⁹⁰ Berger and Luckmann, pp. 82-3.

workers are those who interact with the greatest number of colleagues; the least creative the least.⁹¹

What this shows is the potential promise of institutionalizing diversity, exposure to difference, the cultivation of liminal spaces, and the provision of spaces for childlike imagination. But this is NOT how the normal everyday world operates. To theorize the scope conditions of change, it behooves us to pay attention to the contexts that are most conducive to the presence of difference and its serious appreciation. In the world of IR, these are not very likely in foreign and defense ministries, presidential and prime ministerial cabinets, or security and intelligence bureaucracies. But these are the primary sites for the making of interstate relations.⁹²

Bourdieu recognized that institutions have a dominant habitus within which particular kinds of cultural and social capital are favored, and hence selected for, militating against innovation and problem recognition. Bourdieu did, however, identify one type of actor in an institution who could potentially buck the system: the person who has high social and cultural capital in another habitus to compensate for the sure loss of capital in her present institution if she is to question how things are done.⁹³

A very few professions incentivize recognizing, or even creating, difference. Dewey singled out artists for this privileged position in an otherwise depressingly institutionalized social world. Dewey begins by excoriating the rest of us: “The scientific systematizer treats each act as merely another sample of some old principle, or as a mechanical combination of elements drawn from a ready-made inventory.” What is required is “art to introduce variety, flexibility, and sensitiveness into [one’s] disposition.” As if writing Google and Microsoft office manuals, Dewey argues that “art, fun, and sport release impulses...and prevent a stereotyping of attention...enriches and frees meanings in life....” Most importantly art “reduces the domination of the prosaic.”⁹⁴

Art may be most productive at provoking reflection when it defies comprehension. We can imagine a continuum, as Hitler and Stalin, and conservatives in general apparently do, between representational art, which is safe for mass consumption, for it is what it is, requiring no interpretation, and abstract art, which is always dangerous because “who knows what it means?!”⁹⁵ Hitler and Stalin’s repression of modern, “degenerate” art, and frequent right-wing forays in the US against the Vietnam War memorial and other works that might inspire uncontrolled thought, manifest the productive power of art to generate difference that gets noticed,

⁹¹ Lehrer 2012, pp. 29, 41, and 153. See also the work of Scott Page who has found, experimentally, formally, and in case-studies, that diverse (defined along class, ethnic, racial, gender, religious, and ideological lines) teams develop more optimal (defined in terms of producing more and better widgets) outcomes than less diverse teams or teams of one genius. Scott Page, *The Difference* (Princeton 2007). See also Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p1007, for the importance of “multiple contexts.”

⁹² I illustrate these constraints in a subsequent section.

⁹³ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 158.

⁹⁴ Dewey, 155-63.

⁹⁵ Although, as Wittgenstein observed, “However like I make the picture to what it is supposed to represent, it can always be the picture of something else as well.” *PI*, p. 119e #389

and thought about.⁹⁶ Perhaps the most extreme version of such provocation is Dadaism. While Malevich's abstract Black Cube can be understood in an infinite variety of ways, everyone who looks at it at least has cognitive resources to make her own sense of it. But how to make sense of nonsense? The power of Dadaist work is the power to thwart our cognitive capabilities. Listening to artists reading randomly selected words produces difference we are cognitively unequipped to assimilate to prior templates. Instead, it provokes us to think of why the artists are doing it in the first place: a true challenge to taken for grantedness.

As Sophia Rosenfeld argues in her history of commonsense, Dadaists thought that subverting sense and undermining comprehension were the starting points for undoing all structures of authority, including that of predominant common sense. They wanted to "liberate the bourgeoisie from their conceptual world." Dadaists, reminiscent of Berger and Luckmann's observations, "played the role of madman, idiot, savage, or clown."⁹⁷

Liminars and Margins

Liminars are often identified as sufficiently novel to spur reflection. Liminars are entities that are simultaneously partly us and partly them, partly self and partly other.⁹⁸ While usually depicted as individuals with particular social identities, they may be just as well ideas or events. What makes them so effective as goads to conscious consideration is the fact that, although they are undesirable, they are also an inextricable part of ourselves. For example, a straight homophobic male's liminar might be a gay male friend. His friend is biologically identical as a male, but his sexual orientation is the opposite. He cannot deny the similarity or the difference; he must confront it. Other liminars for a US white male might be a homeless white man begging for money on the street; a European democracy that attacks another state; a democratic country where speech is money, etc. etc. Liminars, however, do not produce any pre-ordained reaction. Reflection has no direction. As Wendelin Kupers has observed, "liminal conditions are both exhilarating and frustrating," as we are "torn between the promise of freedom... and the promise of stability." Liminal uncertainties can be "exciting and enable creative learning, but can also be unsettling and anxiety-provoking," resulting in fear and ontological insecurity.⁹⁹

One should rightly conclude that Berger and Luckmann and Dewey's reliance on children, senior citizens, and the mentally ill for oases of novelty recognition

⁹⁶ On Soviet fears of abstraction, see Hopf, *Reconstructing the Cold War* (Oxford 2012), 29-71 and 143-97. On cultural conservatives in the US and the Vietnam War Memorial, see James Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchy* (Princeton 2012), 61-5 and Kirk Savage, "The Politics of Memory," in John R. Gillis, ed. *Commemorations* (Princeton 1996) 127-49.

⁹⁷ Rosenfeld, 240-3

⁹⁸ See Ann Norton, *Reflections on Political Identity* (Johns Hopkins 1988)

⁹⁹ Wendelin Kupers, "Dancing on the limen---Embodied and Creative Inter-Places as Thresholds of Be(com)ing," *Tamara: Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry* 9:3-4 September-December 2011, 45-59, quotes fr p. 51. On the need for ontological security, see Berger and Luckmann, 100; Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Stanford 1991), pp. 35-69; and for its application in IR, see Jennifer Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 12:3 (2006), 341-70.

reflects their deep pessimism about the vast bulk of the rest of society to recognize difference and novelty when faced with it.¹⁰⁰ Beyond retaining our childlike curiosity, looking forward to old age, and embracing our neuroses and psychoses, Berger and Luckmann and others recommend exposing ourselves, and paying attention to, these margins, if not becoming them. Critical theorists, for example, repeatedly point out that minorities, sexual, ethnic, racial, religious, and otherwise, are superior sources of knowledge about mainstream majority society for one simple reason. The average African-American in the United States has to know how white America works in great detail in order to survive, if not thrive, in its normalcy.¹⁰¹ Minorities know majorities better than the latter know themselves, because they enjoy the “invisible privileges” of being that dominant majority, and so need not pay attention to their own daily practices to get along in the world. Meanwhile, of course, she knows her own minority society much better than the white majority does.

The Discursive Fitness of Novelty, or Effective Difference

Even if the institutionalized absence of meaningful difference can be overcome, and the cognitive barriers to recognizing difference when it is there can be surmounted, not just any difference will do. It has to be the kind of difference that resonates with what is already there. There must be some kind of discursive fit with already-existing understandings of the world. Mass common sense must be receptive to the difference that is available. The difference, first, must be intelligible, and second, if it is to provoke reflection and change, must offer a plausible and viable alternative to the current reality, which is now unacceptable, or at least suboptimal, upon reflection. Perhaps one of the most comprehensive critical approaches to the issue of discursive fit was Antonio Gramsci’s theory of ideological hegemony.

Gramsci asked “[c]an modern [revolutionary] theory be in opposition to the “spontaneous” feelings of the masses, what has been formed through everyday experience illuminated by ‘common sense,’ that is, by the traditional popular conception of the world. . . . ?” He answered unequivocally: “It cannot be in opposition to them.”¹⁰² It cannot be in opposition, that is, if it ever expects to be, first, understood by them, and second, taken up as a legitimate way to think about the world. For change to occur, there must be a discursive fit between a set of ideas being

¹⁰⁰ On the need for the “crude activities of the young,” see Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, 1921, p. 96.

¹⁰¹ could add Shannon Sullivan, Allison Weir, Ann Norton here, too Deirdre N. McCloskey tells a similar story in making the transition from man to woman in her autobiography, *Crossing*, (University of Chicago Press 1999). She tells of how intently she had to study women to find out what daily practices constituted that gender, practices that those born and socialized as women “knew” only as doxa.

¹⁰² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (International Publishers, 1971), pp 198-9. To put it in Bourdieusian terms, it is necessary to at least understand the doxa of those with whom one wishes to communicate. “Without shared doxa, there is no...unfolding of an argument meant to persuade an audience....It is indispensable because it is part of any cognitive or communicational process.” Amossy 2002, pp. 372 and 383.

propounded by a revolutionary party and the set of ideas, mostly taken-for-granted, that inform the daily life-world of average people.¹⁰³

In a sense, there is a “sweet spot” for effective difference. Too little difference will go unnoticed as it easily assimilable to prevailing beliefs and taken for granted common sense. But too much difference, understood as either unintelligible or excessively counter-normative, will also be ineffective. Gramsci, for example, thought about the ineffectiveness of the socialist movement in southern Italy among the impoverished peasantry. Of all people, they would benefit from a socialist revolution that would expropriate exploitative landlords and distribute the land to those who worked on it. But socialist cadres, instead of focusing their efforts on the issue of land reform, included atheism in their ideological agenda, driving devout Catholic peasants away from the very party that advanced their earthly interests.¹⁰⁴

There is broad consensus among a variety of social theorists that framing innovative, potentially emancipatory, ideas in ways that resonate with pre-existing ideas, whether explicit or implicit, is necessary to effect reflection, and possibly action and change.¹⁰⁵ Not unlike Gramsci’s recommendation for a “war of position” against ideological hegemony, Berger and Luckmann argued that the biggest challenge to a predominant social system arose from confronting the society with an alternative “history and symbolic universe,” providing a complete and plausible replacement.¹⁰⁶

Exogenous Shocks and Productive Crises

Wendy Chun concluded from her survey of the literatures on habit that "almost all the literature, from the psychological to the philosophical, assumes that consciousness drives habit change." And further that it is conflicts and crises that drive this consciousness.¹⁰⁷ She reduces this to the formula "Habit + Crisis =

¹⁰³ Constructivist IR scholars have long been preoccupied with the issue of discursive fit or resonance. For example, Andrew P. Cortell, and James W. Davis Jr. "How do international institutions matter? The domestic impact of international rules and norms." *International Studies Quarterly* (1996): 451-478; Andrew P. Cortell, and James W. Davis Jr. "Understanding the domestic impact of international norms: A research agenda." *International Studies Review* 2.1 (2000): 65-87; Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Norms, institutions, and national identity in contemporary Europe." *International Studies Quarterly* 43.1 (1999): 84-114; Thomas Risse-Kappen and Stephen C. Ropp, "International Human Right Norms and Domestic Change: Conclusions, in Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds. *The power of human rights: international norms and domestic change*. (Cambridge University Press, 1999), PP?? and Thomas Risse, *A community of Europeans?: transnational identities and public spheres*. (Cornell 2010).

¹⁰⁴ Although Gramsci’s explanation for the success of the Russian Revolution was the absence of bourgeois ideological hegemony that allowed the Bolsheviks to win a “war of movement,” and so capture the state, one could also point out that Lenin’s slogan of “Bread, Peace, and Land” certainly resonated with Russian mass common sense more than Trotsky’s purist slogan of “Permanent Revolution.”

¹⁰⁵ For example, DiMaggio 1997, p. 280.

¹⁰⁶ Berger and Luckmann, p. 107. On the need for plausibility, understood as a real promise of effective change, see Van den Berg 1998, p. 449. See also Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelations and Revolution*, Volume 1, (Chicago 1991), 29. On Dewey, see Richard J. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 227.

¹⁰⁷ Chun 2016, p. 85.

Update."¹⁰⁸ Many social theorists, as well, believe that crises are the most productive context for reflective action, and change. Bourdieu, for example, argues that “the operation of the habitus may be superseded in certain conditions—certainly in situations of crisis—by rational and conscious computation...,” thereby directly linking crisis with reflective agency.¹⁰⁹ It is easy to see why since the scope conditions outlined in this section all would seem to operate best in conditions of crisis. A war, revolution, or economic depression are each certain to produce new or unexpected phenomena, enduring differences with the usual daily life, novelty, and so, motivation to reflect on what one can do to survive or endure the new challenges. Institutions are also likely to be under severe stress, as we question the relevance of their routines and habits for dealing with new circumstances.

While we are all probably pretty good at knowing a crisis when we see one, it is a methodological challenge to avoid knowing what one is only by knowing it had the effects of spurring change. That is tautological, but, alas, also the most common way one encounters discussions of crisis in the scholarly literature. This is why we need to offer some scope conditions for productive crises. Are there features of wars, revolutions, and economic depressions that make some, rather than others, provoke reflective agency? Three such conditions appear in the scholarship here: changed production relations; unmasking of underlying power relations; and offering a plausible alternative.

Many neo-Marxist approaches to society would focus on relations of production as the foundation of any social order.¹¹⁰ Hence, changing these necessarily yields changes in such superstructural elements as collective ideas about how the world works, and should work.¹¹¹ This condition has the virtue of severely restricting what we mean by crisis to cases of social revolutions.¹¹² On the other hand, of course, most social theorists believe that crises, albeit ill-defined, are far more frequent. Familiar to all critical theorists is the second condition for a productive crisis: unmasking the power relations underlying the current unacceptable social, political, and economic order. As Bourdieu conceptualizes matters, crises provide the opportunity to highlight the mass “misrecognition” of prevailing social relations. As Berger and Luckmann observed, people forget that they have created, and are reproducing, their own social order, even ones they wish, upon reflection, to change or replace. Bourdieu argues crises are moments for “a critical unveiling of the founding violence that is masked by” the normally functioning habitus.¹¹³

But unmasking will produce no real effects, as Gramsci argued, if there is no plausible alternative on offer, and/or if that alternative social order is not presented in

¹⁰⁸ Chun 2016, p. 69.

¹⁰⁹ Bourdieu, *Outline*, p97.

¹¹⁰ On the opportunity offered in transforming such relations, see Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, p. 180.

¹¹¹ Cox’s explanation for change in international politics adopts this “historical materialist” perspective.

¹¹² Indeed, as is well known, Theda Skocpol defined social revolutions in precisely these terms, yielding only the French, Russian, and Chinese in the universe of cases.

¹¹³ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, p. 188.

such a way as to resonate with the already taken for granted common sense of society. True, crises do unsettle that common sense more than in “normal” times, but it is still more probably that crises will be productive if there is an alternative that resonates with what is already there, rather than contradicts or ignores it.

The Inability to Go On, or Problems that Matter

Social theorists have widely identified problems with going on as before as a critical occasion for reflection to interrupt habitual practices. William James wrote that we have “sensations to which we are usually inattentive, but which immediately call our attention if they go wrong.”¹¹⁴ Dewey implored us all to adopt “the scientific attitude, as an attitude of interest in change instead of interest in isolated and complete fixities,” one that is “necessarily alert for problems; every new question is an opportunity for further experimental inquiries—for effecting more directed change.” Note that Dewey identifies an “attitude,” not a profession. He recommends we all adopt this scientific attitude, because normally we all “live in dread of change and of problems.”¹¹⁵ But “a disciplined mind takes delight in the problematic.” Instead of desiring “certitude,” we must develop a “scientific attitude” that “enjoys the doubtful” and makes “a productive use of doubt by converting it into operations of definite inquiry...”¹¹⁶

Hubert Dreyfus, Charles Spinosa, and Karina Knorr-Cetina have interpreted Heidegger's work in terms consistent with James and Dewey. When “equipment malfunctions,” or there is a problem in going on, as we would put it, we discover its unusability; it becomes “conspicuous and unavailable.” For Heidegger, a problem must be an extreme problem to generate considered reflection. Otherwise, we will quickly reflect, adjust our practices as minimally as possible against the already operating background, and continue on. But, if “our work is permanently interrupted, we can...take a new detached theoretical stance toward things...Only when absorbed ongoing activity is interrupted is there room for such theoretical reflection.”¹¹⁷

Berger and Luckmann write that unless the “symbolic universe has become a problem,” it is “self-maintaining, i.e., self-legitimizing by the sheer facticity of its objective existence in the society in question.”¹¹⁸ It is easy enough to say that change occurs when people encounter problems going on in the world.¹¹⁹ But what is a problem? Recognizing that it is “dissatisfaction with the status quo”¹²⁰ seems to mistakenly avoid the central issue of specifying just when such dissatisfaction is felt,

¹¹⁴ James, *Principles*, p. 118.

¹¹⁵ Dewey 1921, p. 101. See Knorr-Cetina 2001 as well on the need to see objects as “incomplete.”

¹¹⁶ Dewey 1921, p. 228. Certainty is an enemy of reflective agency. Unfortunately, in the social world, certainty is the default. See Hopf, “Logic of Habit,” pp. And Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*

¹¹⁷ Dreyfus 1991, pp. 71-2, 79-80. See also Knorr-Cetina 2001, p. 189 and Charles Spinosa, “Derridian Dispersion and Heideggerian Articulation,” in Schatz 2001, pp. 219-20.

¹¹⁸ Berger and Luckmann, p. 105.

¹¹⁹ Many mistakenly treat problem recognition as unproblematic. For example, Emirbayer and Mische, p. 973.

¹²⁰ Van den Berg 1998, p. 447.

recognized, and acted upon. And just how dissatisfied? Presumably most of us in the world are not satisfied every day with the level of violence, inequality, misery, hunger, and oppression we know about around us. "A discrepancy between a current and a desired state" raises problems.¹²¹ But how do these necessary "desired states" arise? And how big a gap must there be between what we desire and what we experience for us to reflect, let alone act?

From the sections above it is clear that problems are not so easily recognized as problems for prevailing social orders; they are easily assimilated as aberrations, or necessary costs, or someone else's problems. Moreover, if no solution is being offered to the problem that resonates with one's common sense and offers a plausible way forward, the problem might be recognized, but action and change will not ensue. As Bourdieu aptly outlined the situation, "the problem is that, for the most part, the established order is not a problem."¹²²

Finally, neurocognitive science backs up all the above social theoretical hunches. Chun summarizes her review of the literature: "habits become problems that need to be updated when they become faulty predictors, when they lead to incorrect anticipations due to changes in the environment, or when the actions they invoke conflict with current goals."¹²³

Change in Practice in International Relations

Empirical studies of practice in international relations remain rare, if for no other reason than ethnographic studies of the daily practices of foreign policy and security elites are very difficult to achieve. What follows are illustrations from some studies of some of the propositions about change in practice that are enumerated above.

Frederic Merand, for example, demonstrates the power of doxa in international relations in his case study of European defense and security cooperation, finding that European diplomats automatically regard Britain as the the only European country that can bring the US onboard European plans and automatically regard France as the country to be trusted to ensure that European foreign policy will not be sacrificed to trans-Atlanticism.¹²⁴

Severine Autesserre, in a uniquely rich ethnographic study of international interventions, reveals the collection of habits of intervenors that prevent them from reflecting upon the many pernicious consequences of their practices. Such shared habits included not prioritizing understanding local histories, cultures, or languages;

¹²¹ AP Dijksterhuis, "Automaticity and the Unconscious," in Susan T. Fiske, Daniel T. Gilbert, and Gardner Lindzey, eds., *Handbook of Social Psychology* (New York: John T. Wiley and Sons, 2010), p. 234. See also DiMaggio 1997, p. 271.

¹²² Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, p. 178. Also p. 56.

¹²³ Chun 2016, p. 82.

¹²⁴ Mérand, Frédéric. "Pierre Bourdieu and the birth of European defense." *Security Studies* 19.2 (2010): 367.

not basing recruitment or promotion, even partially, on knowledge of local contexts; and not developing personal or social relationships with the host populations.¹²⁵

Shared practices shaped interveners' views on what counted as a problem. In Congo, for example, dominant narratives constructed illegal exploitation of natural resources and sexual violence as problems that international actors should address, while framing community conflict and nonsexual torture as domestic issues unworthy of international attention.¹²⁶

Autesserre describes the process of inducting and socializing new arrivals into the already existing practices of older interveners. Newcomers "learn to mimic prevailing habits."¹²⁷ The institutional processes are so strong in this "transnational community of practice" that despite all the differences across Autesserre's cases: war and postwar environments, different international agencies and NGOs, and different personal and professional biographies, the practical habits are shared.

Similarly institutionalized as the international interveners analyzed by Autesserre were the foreign diplomatic corps in Egypt during the Tahrir Square rebellion, as analyzed by Jeremie Cornut. These diplomats were completely unprepared for the revolution or its analysis as it unfolded because they preferred to talk to other officials, not "real" people; they preferred those in suits who spoke English, so even those locals with whom they spoke were already far removed from the street that mattered. One of the common practices of a new diplomat arriving in country is to meet with other diplomats, hence reproducing the same circulating narrative among the isolated embassies. Moreover, the institution of the embassy reproduces itself by providing briefing notes to the incoming envoys, thus perpetuating the same isolated analysis of events that have endured in the embassy's institutional memory.¹²⁸

Autesserre and Cornut also report similar sources of reflection in these institutionalized environments: the margins. Cornut writes that during his fieldwork he met several "expeditionary diplomats" who "break free from the isolation of working behind embassy walls and contacting just a narrow array of host-country officials." These oddities speak and read Arabic, hang out with common people, meet with NGOs, activists and opposition party members, and went to Tahrir Square and monitored social media.¹²⁹ Cornut does not report, however, that these margins had any effect on the institutionalized bulk of the diplomatic corps. Autesserre reports similarly that the only person in Timor-Leste among international interveners who predicted the 2006 riots was the one who did not hang out with the international

¹²⁵ Severine Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 32-3.

¹²⁶ Autesserre 2014, p. 38.

¹²⁷ Autesserre 2014, p. 39.

¹²⁸ Jeremie Cornut, "To be a Diplomat Abroad: Diplomatic Practice at Embassies," *Cooperation and Conflict* 50:3 (2015), pp. 391-3

¹²⁹ Cornut, "To be a Diplomat Abroad," p. 398.

community of intervention practitioners.¹³⁰ As with Cornut, Autesserre does not report that the anomaly had any success inducing the rest to reflect.

But at least in Autesserre's cases, she can conclude that the margins can "lead the process of contestation in Peaceland." The first of these are those excluded from power in the country, including ordinary citizens in conflict zones. Contesting, resisting, distorting, or rejecting a given international program forces international interveners to reflect.¹³¹ The other group are "expatriates at the margins of the interveners' club." These include "those not yet socialized into Peaceland, such as newcomers, interveners from the same region as the host country..." (so have local knowledge), and those with particularly strong ties to the host countries because of personal or family histories. These "foreign peacebuilders at the margins of the interveners' club are most likely to promote competing practices, habits, and narratives, and they routinely do so."¹³²

Iver Neumann's work on how the Norwegian foreign ministry constructed a new region in the northern borderlands between Norway and Russia shows the importance of an exogenous shock in producing reflection, and change in diplomatic practices, as well as the institutional resistance that had to be overcome to get Norwegian diplomatic professionals to change their daily practices. The creation of a new northern regional council in the Barents region with local representatives conducting foreign relations with their Russian counterparts could not have occurred without the exogenous shock of the Gorbachev revolution in foreign affairs and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. The foreign minister himself had to not only initiate the new policy against the resistance of the professional foreign ministry bureaucracy but continually intervene against institutional resistance to this new diplomatic practice.¹³³

Autesserre, in part, explains some of the pathologies of peacemaking as the product of an exogenous shock. The increased number of attacks on interveners in the late 1990s and early 2000s, in particular the 2003 bombing of the UN and Red Cross headquarters in Baghdad, prompted a change in everyday security practices, encouraging "bunkerization," rather than relying on acceptance to ensure safety.¹³⁴ This spurred the growth in institutionalized isolation of the intervener community from the communities it serves.

Pouliot and Cornut have written that "diplomacy and practice more generally tend to reproduce themselves." While they may transform over time, it is only at the margins. One exogenous shock they identify that was associated with reflection and

¹³⁰ Autesserre 2014, pp. 6-78

¹³¹ Scott's "weapons of the weak" are evident here.

¹³² Autesserre 2014, p. 41.

¹³³ Iver B. Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy," *Millennium* 31:3 (2002), pp. 627-51.

¹³⁴ Autesserre 2014, p. 43.

"problematization of established ways of doing things" was the failure to prevent the first World War and subsequent calls for open diplomacy.¹³⁵ The authors also observe that when change does occur, "new and innovative practices need to be synchronous with the past in order to resonate in the present."¹³⁶ In other words they need to fit.

Schindler and Wille's analysis of the breakdown in Russian-NATO relations in the 1990s is a good example of the power of difference and "incomplete objects," to use Knorr-Cetina's conceptualization, to spur reflection. Schindler argues that it was uncertainty about the meaning of the past, in this case what the end of the Cold War meant, that destabilized practices between NATO and Russia, and thus made the sudden and drastic change in relations between NATO and Russia possible.¹³⁷ The history of the end of the Cold War was contested, or as Knorr-Cetina put it, instead of history being a closed box, it was "more like open drawers filled with folders extending indefinitely into the depth of a dark closet."¹³⁸ This disagreement between actors spurred reflection, and Russian resistance to NATO's interpretation of the end of the Cold War as Russian capitulation to a NATO-led security order in Europe.

One can see liminars at work in world politics, especially in its study. For many years, Germany and Japan were singled out, by policymakers in the US, and especially by Realist scholars of IR in the US, as abnormal great powers. They had all the material indicators of great powerhood, but they refused to act like great powers. Instead of making war on others, intervening around the world militarily, and otherwise converting their economic wealth into military instruments, they chose to concentrate on economic growth and development at home, and foreign aid abroad.

When Japan seemed to defy realism, it began to be ascribed several *other* identities than the 'normal' one prompted by realism — to name just a few, those of a "trading state, an "economic" and a "civilian" power; a "reactive" and "defensive" state, and an "economic giant, but military pygmy."¹³⁹ As Berger and Luckmann would predict, mainstream IR scholars have treated Japan and Germany as "freaks" and outliers, the exception that proves the rule. They are both "traumatized" by their World War II experiences, have "odd" pacifist publics, and enjoy US security guarantees. Nevertheless, to the extent that Germany and Japan remain rich and undermilitarized, they provoke reflection in the US.

There are also examples of Bourdieu's claim that those with external capital might have greater agency within an institutionalized environment. Henry Kissinger, for instance, as national security adviser, and then secretary of state, to both

¹³⁵ Vincent Pouliot and Jeremie Cornut, "Practice Theory and the Study of Diplomacy: A Research Agenda," *Cooperation and Conflict* 50:3 (2015), 297-315

¹³⁶ Pouliot and Cornut 2015, p. 307.

¹³⁷ Sebastian Schindler and Tobias Wille, "Change in and Through Practice: Pierre Bourdieu, Vincent Pouliot and the End of the Cold War," *International Theory* 7:2 (July 2015), 330-59.

¹³⁸ Knorr-Cetina 2001, p. 190.

¹³⁹ Linus Hagstrom, "The 'Abnormal' State: Identity, Norm/Exception, and Japan," *European Journal of International Relations* 21:1 (2015), p. 127.

Presidents Nixon and Ford, violated institutional norms regularly, relying on his academic capital from Harvard. Or Robert McNamara, as secretary of defense under Johnson, who had literally capitalist capital from his chairmanship of Ford Motor Company. A more recent instance might be Michael McFaul, former US Ambassador to Russia under Obama, whose academic capital from Stanford, and political capital from friendship with Obama, might have empowered him to adopt unorthodox practices as a diplomat in Moscow.

Conclusion: A Practical Model of Change in Practices

Habits of practice are acquired through mimesis and reflective learning. As these practices are mastered they become automatic and habitual; they are no longer reflected upon. Instead, actors perceive the world and react and go on without thought. These practices in general reproduce the social structure in which their performance is situated, but, critically, they also unintentionally introduce small changes into the practice with every iteration. This may amount to large visible structural change some indeterminate time down the road. Or it might not. Indeed, such adjustments could actually make the prevailing structure more durable, as actors become more skilled at adopting practices that are appropriate to a structure which itself is in always in process. Finally, a host of conditions may provoke reflection on one's practices. And this reflection might elicit a change in one's practices. Reflective change is what is most visible and often ascribed responsibility for structural changes we do see. This is misleading, as the practical improvisations performed before reflection might account for the need or the possibility to reflect in the first place.