

of practice, where a field is a bounded domain such as agriculture, politics, recreation, or education. Practices in a field pursue the specific matters at stake in it, drawing on material, symbolic, and cultural capitals accumulated there and arising from subconscious generating mechanisms (*habitus*) that, in mirroring objective properties of that field, ensure that practices perpetuate those properties. Giddens, meanwhile, analyzed a slew of prominent social phenomena, including institutions, change, systems, power, and ideology, by reference to practices, which he understood as structured by sets of rules and resources.

Philosophers, too, have advocated the constitutive and causal centrality of social practices. Examples are Charles Taylor's doctrine that social reality *is* practices and Theodore Schatzki's claim that social phenomena are slices or aspects of nexuses of practices and material arrangements.

Human Activity

Theorists of social practices also usually sport a particular philosophical conception of human activity. Since the 17th century, philosophical discussions of human activity have been structured by the dichotomy between subject and object. On the background of the ideas of the celebrated 20th-century philosophers Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein, philosophers of a practice persuasion, such as Taylor and Hubert Dreyfus, have made two important claims. The first is that action rests on something nonpropositional, something that cannot be put into words, for example, skills or practical understanding. This nonpropositional know-how is embodied, as opposed to contained, in a subject or its mind. The second claim is that activity so understood both is conceptually prior to and underlies the traditional division between mind and the world. This claim fosters the philosophically important conception of practices as constellations of doings and the nonpropositional understandings underlying them, which form the background on which—the place where—states of mind, human activities, rules, and interpersonal relations receive determinate content—that is, are the states, activities, rules, and relations they are.

This picture of action also characterizes social-theoretical practice theories, paradigmatically, those of Bourdieu and Giddens. In Bourdieu, the

nonpropositional phenomenon that underlies action is *habitus*: arrays of subconscious bodily structures that generate activity, thought, and perception. Meanwhile, according to Giddens, “practical consciousness”—what a person knows but cannot say—is the central agency responsible for human activity.

Theories highlighting practices share the conviction that prominent features of human or social life not previously so conceived are best understood as constituted or rooted in bundles of actions resting on embodied know-how. As the above discussion shows, the concept of social practices also joins philosophy and social theory. Practically all theories that make the concept central are resolutely multidisciplinary.

Theodore R. Schatzki

See also Embodied Cognition; *Habitus*; Holism, in the Social Sciences; Individualism, Methodological; Knowing-How Versus Knowing-That; Pragmatism and the Social Sciences

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SOCIAL RULES

Social rules are the rules of social groups. Different groups may have different rules. A possible social rule is the rule that one is not to talk on a cell phone while dining with friends. Although such rules are commonplace, theorists disagree on what precisely they amount to. There is pointed disagreement over the attitudes individual members of a social group must have if there is to be a social rule. One account

argues that there is a social rule when members *personally* accept a certain pattern of action as a standard for the group. Another account argues that *joint* acceptance by the members is required. The joint account claims to explain better how people respond to rule breakers.

This entry briefly reviews three prominent accounts of social rules and highlights their differences.

H. L. A. Hart on Social Rules

According to the British legal philosopher H. L. A. Hart, there is a social rule within a group if and only if, roughly, all or most group members (a) regularly conform to a particular pattern of behavior; (b) consider this pattern a standard to which group members *ought* to conform, all else being equal; (c) pressure one another to conform to the rule; and (d) think that such pressure is justified. Though influential, Hart's account is open to criticism. The necessity of each of his conditions has been questioned. Furthermore, it seems that there are situations that meet all of his conditions but do not instantiate the concept of a social rule.

Thus, consider the following case: All members of a particular group are regularly truthful, they consider *not lying* to be a standard to which group members ought to conform, they pressure one another not to lie, and they believe that such pressure is justified. As described, not lying seems to meet all of Hart's conditions for a social rule of this group. But though each group member *individually* considers not lying to be a standard to which group members ought to conform, it is not clear that it is a rule *of the group*.

It has also been argued against Hart's account that the kind of pressure put upon rule breakers, including demands for conformity and rebukes for nonconformity, requires a special standing or authority. Hart's conditions could be satisfied without group members having that authority.

David Lewis on Social Convention

Some see *social conventions* as a species of social rule. According to David Lewis, conventions are patterns of behavior conformed to by members of a given group within a recurring *coordination problem*. Here is a sample coordination problem: Sue and Tom agree to meet at "the Greek restaurant

downtown." Later, both realize that there are two Greek restaurants downtown. They have no way to contact one another. Tom and Sue have a coordination problem. Each wants to go to the same restaurant as the other, and neither cares which restaurant that is, but where should each one go?

According to Lewis, a group has a convention if and only if, roughly, there is a pattern of behavior in the context of a particular coordination problem such that all or most members of the group conform to that pattern, expect one another to conform to it, and prefer to conform to it on condition that the others do, and all of this is known to all.

A clear case of a Lewisian convention is driving on the right side of the road. When all relevant persons prefer to drive on the side everyone else drives on, everyone expects everyone else to drive on the right, everyone does so drive, and all this is known to all.

Driving on the right may have become the convention by chance. Perhaps some people started driving on the right for no particular reason and others took it from there. Lewis emphasizes that there need be no explicit agreement in order to start a convention, nor need the parties be moved by a sense of their obligations to others. Group members conform to conventions given their personal preferences and their personal expectations that others will conform.

Does Lewis's account of convention capture our everyday understanding of social rules? One problem with the account is that not all social rules seem to be grounded in coordination problems. The cell phone rule imagined earlier seems to be an example. It may simply make sense to some people to have such a rule. If that is right, Lewis's account is in at least one respect too narrow to account for social rules generally.

Another problem is that Lewis's account seems unable to explain important aspects of social rules. People think of the rules of their group as something that members should conform to regardless of personal preference. Furthermore, Lewis's account seems not to entail that group members have the standing to rebuke one another for failing to conform to an established convention.

Margaret Gilbert on Social Rules

Margaret Gilbert's account of social rules differs from those of both Hart and Lewis in significant ways. It does not appeal to what individuals personally

accept, expect, or prefer from others. It invokes the *joint* acceptance of a rule and explains this in terms of something akin to an agreement.

If two individuals make an agreement, then if one violates the agreement without release from the other, that other has grounds for rebuking the violator. In other terms, agreements create obligations of the parties, one to another. When there is a social rule in Gilbert's sense, the parties are in this way obligated to conform to certain standards of behavior.

Gilbert's account of social rules is not in terms of agreements as such but rather in terms of something she takes to be the result of agreement making. It can also occur independently of the making of an agreement strictly speaking. This is what she refers to as *joint commitment*.

According to Gilbert's account, in her technical terminology, a given pattern of behavior is the rule of a particular group if and only if members *jointly commit themselves to accept as a body* that they are to conform to it. Those who make such a joint commitment are said *jointly to accept* that they are to conform to the said pattern. As a result of this process, each member of the group is committed to conform to the rule in question, and no one is in a position unilaterally to rid oneself of this commitment; the permission of the other group members is required. Furthermore, Gilbert argues, each member is in a position to rebuke other members for nonconformity to the group's rule and to demand conformity when it is threatened. Thus, she sees her account as an improvement over that of both Hart and Lewis in this respect.

Margaret Gilbert and Maura Priest

See also Collective Agents; Commitment; Conventions, Logic of; Plural Subjects; Promises and Agreements; Rule Following; Social Conventions; Social Facts; Social Norms

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SOCIAL STUDIES OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Social studies of science and technology is a field of scholarship that has developed in its current form only in the past 40 years or so; it is often referred to as STS, for science and technology studies. In its broadest sense, STS is concerned with the conceptual and empirical analysis of science and technology in their social context.

Orthodox philosophy of science and STS are clear contenders with regard to the study of science, and to a large extent, STS has challenged received assumptions about science and technology. Equally, STS can be seen as important for the development of the philosophy of the social sciences, as certain social-scientific disciplines, notably sociology, have been expanding their erstwhile domain by looking at science, the role of scientific theories, and scientific production, while at the same time posing interesting philosophical questions about science and the way it should be studied. In this vein, the reader may also look at a parallel development, the study of the economics of scientific knowledge (see entry in this encyclopedia), as an offshoot of modern developments in the philosophy of science and of social science.

Though there are many reasons for being interested in the social context of science and technology, there are three analytical issues that are most prominent and of conceptual importance for philosophy and the social sciences.

(1) The first of these revolves around the question of the extent to which science and technology—but especially science—are bound up with or independent of their societal context. As will be explained below, this issue was the central point of contention in early scholarly debates around STS in the 1970s and into the 1980s. (2) The second analytical issue relates to the growing importance of science and technology for the social and human sciences, given the extent to which contemporary political and