

## **The logic of Bourdieu, by C\*rrie Ichik\*w\* J\*nkins**

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*Abstract.* This paper contains a brief pastiche of analytic philosopher Carrie Ichikawa Jenkins, responding to the sociological theories of Pierre Bourdieu.

*I was reading the book Bourdieu: A Critical Reader and thought it would be nice if a response by Carrie Ichikawa Jenkins was included. To my knowledge, she does not write on Bourdieu and perhaps she is not interested in entering this secondary literature, so I wrote how I imagine her responding.*

Pierre Bourdieu is well-known as the source of a distinction between different senses of the term “rule following.” A typical case of “rule following” in the first sense involves a subject who is aware of some rule R, abides by rule R because they intend to do so, and has a disposition to make a statement to the effect “I was following rule R,” if asked in suitable circumstances why they performed certain actions. In another sense, a researcher constructs a model of what is going on in a social situation and this model features agents who behave in certain regular ways, with behaving in such a way described as following a rule. But the typical participant in this situation may lack awareness of these regularities and, consequently, the intention to behave in these regular ways, and the disposition to explain their behaviour in terms of following rules requiring such regularity.

Bourdieu is opposed to explaining success and failure within a field, such as philosophy, entirely in terms of following or not following rules. I agree with his point

in broad outline. A subject can follow a plausible set of rules of philosophy – author citation rules, rules to clarify specialist terminology, rules of inference, etc. – and yet not succeed professionally in philosophy, in contrast to others whose track record of rule-following is poor in comparison.

I find it easier to make sense of Bourdieu through secondary literature. His own texts leave me with questions of whether the writing makes sense. In “The Social Conditions of the International Circulation of Ideas,” he throws into relief a number of issues to do with the reception of ideas across social contexts, such as what sorts of ideas gain an international reception and whether attracting foreign readers is evidence of long-term value. I was trained in the analytic tradition and this is a quotation from the text to illustrate the obstacles an analytic philosopher is likely to face when reading Bourdieu directly:

Doubtless, many people here wonder how it was that the French became so interested in Heidegger. There are many reasons of course, perhaps too many, but one particular reason leaps out to the eye: the fact that Sartre held the intellectual field in a stranglehold throughout the 1950s (as Anna Boschetti has demonstrated quite convincingly in her book *Sartre et les Temps Modernes*). One of Heidegger’s major functions for the French was to diminish Sartre’s impact, with teachers saying for example that all of Sartre’s major ideas were already there in Heidegger, where they were better elaborated. (1999: 223)

So here are four propositions:

- (1) The question is why the French became so interested in Heidegger.
- (2) Jean-Paul Sartre is French.

- (3) Bourdieu presents an answer which does not explain why Sartre himself became interested in Heidegger
- (4) His answer is satisfactory in this context.

Analytic philosophers will wonder, how can we reconcile (1)-(4)? Why do the French read Nazi philosopher H? If the answer given is to stop French writer S from reading Nazi philosopher H, this just seems to push back the question. We now want to know, why did S start reading H? (Was it somehow an unFrench act?)

The reform of philosophy so that contributors who follow certain rules are rewarded and those who break these rules are not would probably be good for improving access to the field,<sup>1</sup> but that would actually give a reason for excluding Bourdieu.

## Reference

Bourdieu, P. 1999. The Social Conditions of the International Circulation of Ideas. In Shusterman, R. (ed.), *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.

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<sup>1</sup> Switching out of pastiche mode, there is an assumption that it is easier to follow a set of explicit rules, which I am tempted to make as well, but for some people that may not be true.