



On Global Learning

Global security, climate and health challenges have all created a deep-seated unease about international society's capacity to cope with change. International Relations (IR) should help practitioners develop appropriate responses, but Jason Ralph argues that IR would be better positioned to do so if it drew more explicitly on the insights of classical Pragmatism. By bringing this tradition in from the margins, Ralph comprehensively engages norm, practice, realist and global IR theory to extend the 'new constructivist' research agenda in a normative direction. He develops a 'Pragmatic Constructivist' approach to assess how well communities of practice facilitate the learning that mitigates emergent social problems and improves lived experiences. This normative assessment focuses on the extent to which communities of practice are characterized by inclusive reflexivity and deliberative practical judgement. These two tests are then applied to critique existing communities of practice, including the UN Security Council, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

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On Global Learning

Pragmatic Constructivism, International
Practice and the Challenge of Global
Governance

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To class 6CM of Calverley Church of England Primary School, and your friends across the world, whose schooling was cut short by the global pandemic; your learning did not stop and make sure it never does, for the world always needs the intelligence and creativity of the next generation.

A possibility of continuing progress is opened up by the fact that in learning one act, methods are developed good for use in other situations. Still more important is the fact that the human being acquires a habit of learning. [S]he learns to learn.

John Dewey,
Democracy and Education, 1916

We are told almost daily and from many sources that it is impossible for human beings to direct their common life intelligently. We are told, on the one hand, that the complexity of human relations, domestic and international, and on the other hand, the fact that human beings are so largely creatures of emotion and habit, make impossible large-scale social planning and direction by intelligence.... There is nothing in the inherent nature of habit that prevents intelligent method from becoming itself habitual; and there is nothing in the nature of emotion to prevent the development of intense emotional allegiance to the method.... The most important attitude that can be formed is that of a desire to go on learning.

John Dewey,
Experience and Education, 1938

[Intelligence involves c]oncrete suggestions arising from past experiences, developed and matured in the light of needs and deficiencies of the present, employed as aims and methods of specific reconstruction, and tested by success or failure in accomplishing this task of readjustment.... Intelligence is not something possessed once and for all. It is in constant process of forming ... an open-minded will to learn and courage in readjustment.

John Dewey,
Reconstruction in Philosophy, 1948

Being alive as human beings means that we are constantly engaged in the pursuit of enterprises of all kinds, from ensuring our physical survival to seeking the most lofty pleasure. As we define these enterprises and engage in their pursuit together, we interact with each other and with the world and we tune our relations with each other and the world accordingly. In other words, we learn.

Etienne Wenger,
*Communities of Practice. Learning,
Meaning and Identity*, 2005

Our best practical judgements are won in involvements with uncommon others, meeting the challenges of plurality and experimenting with what works among those affected.

Molly Cochran,
‘The “Newer Ideals” of Jane Addams’s
Progressivism’, 2017

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