

Praxis

On Acting and Knowing

Praxis investigates both the existing practices of international politics and relations during and after the Cold War, and the issue of whether problems of praxis (individual and collective choices) can be subjected to a “theoretical treatment.” The book comes in two parts: the first deals with the constitution of international relations and the role of theoretical norms in guiding decisions, in areas such as sanctions, the punishment of international crimes, governance, and “constitutional” concern. The second part is devoted to “theory building.” While a “theorization” of praxis has often been attempted, Kratochwil argues that such endeavors do not attend to certain important elements characteristic of practical choices. *Praxis* presents a shift from the accepted International Relations standard of theorizing, by arguing for the analysis of policy decisions made in non-ideal conditions within a broader framework of practical choices, emphasizing both historicity and contingency.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47125-1 — Praxis
Friedrich Kratochwil
Frontmatter
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European University Institute, Florence



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108471251

DOI: 10.1017/9781108557979

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First published 2018

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-47125-1 Hardback

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Civi ignoto

[T]he word “good” is used in as many senses as the word “is” . . . Using technical language we may predicate “good” in the categories of a) substance, b) quality, c) quantity, d) relation, e) time, f) space. Clearly then “good” is something that can be said in one and the same sense of everything called “good” . . .

Next, what do they mean by the “thing as it really is”? For in their own terminology “man as he really is” is just another way of saying “man” . . . If we are allowed to argue on these lines we shall find no difference either between the really good and the good, in so far as both are good. Nor will the really good be any more good by being eternal. You might as well say that a white thing, which lasts a long time, is whiter than one which lasts only one day . . .

The thought that a knowledge of the absolute good might be desirable as a means of attaining those goods which a man may acquire and realize in practice . . . The argument has a certain plausibility but it manifestly does not accord with the procedure followed by the sciences. For all these aim at some *particular* good and seek to fill up the gaps in their knowledge of how to attain it. They do not think it any business of theirs to learn the nature of the *absolute* good . . . Or how shall a doctor or a general who has had a vision of the Very Form [of the good] become thereby a better doctor or general?

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*,
 Bk. I, iv (1096a 19–1097a 15)

In all incidents of life we ought still to preserve our skepticism . . . Nay if we are philosophers, it ought only to be upon skeptical principles and from inclination we feel employing ourselves in that manner . . .

While warm imagination is allowed to enter into philosophy, and the hypotheses embraced merely for being specious and agreeable, but were these hypotheses once removed, we might hope to establish a system or set of opinions, which if not true (for that perhaps it is too much to be hoped for) might at least be satisfactory to the human mind, and might stand the test of the most critical examination . . .

Generally speaking, the errors in religion are dangerous, those in philosophy only ridiculous.

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*,
 Bk. I, part 4, sec. 7

A rule stands there like a sign post. Does the sign post leave no doubt about the way I have to go?

If I have exhausted all justifications I have reached bedrock and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: This is simply what I do.

Ludwig Wittgenstein,
Philosophical Investigations, paras. 85 and 217

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978-1-108-47125-1 — Praxis
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Acknowledgments

I wish to mention with gratitude the persons and institutions that have contributed to this book. Above all, my wife patiently put up with my mental absence and more than usual grumpiness while taking care of running a hospitable home and attending her project on language acquisition and integration of migrants.

The Institute CEDIN at Belo Horizonte and the Papal University of Minas Gerais offered me a congenial working environment as a guest professor, which allowed me to write several chapters during my stay in 2015.

Oliver Kessler and Hannes Peltonen pestered me again and again to make a manuscript out of the sketches they had seen, and thereby provided important impulses – the latter even at peril to his own work, as he consistently provided the needed IT assistance and had taken on the yeoman’s job of compiling the humongous first draft, and valuable detailed criticism. I also owe a special thanks to Guilherme Vasconcelos who provided important feedback, with detailed comments on the first draft of several chapters and also on the book as a whole.

I also profited from a brief stay at the Forschungskolleg Humanwissenschaften and the Werner Reimers Stiftung at the University of Frankfurt and from discussion with the colleagues there, as well as from the comments of Gunther Hellmann and Jens Steffek of the Excellenz-Cluster “Normative Ordnungen” on the last few chapters.

Nicholas Rengger and Jan Klabbers at St Andrews University and the University of Helsinki, respectively, both provided generous support by organizing workshops which gave me an opportunity to try out my ideas and provided much-needed feedback.

John Haslam of Cambridge University was, as always, very supportive of the project despite its unusual length. In choosing two anonymous referees he was also instrumental for the much streamlined second version, as both reviewers had made excellent and detailed suggestions on how to strengthen the argument.

I also owe a special debt of gratitude to Abigail Neale, who managed the production process, and Ken Moxham, the copy-editor, who both did an excellent job in seeing this project through. It was a real pleasure working with them.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the reprint permission of several publishers and journals, which are listed separately, as they made it possible to use parts – often in quite altered form – of earlier arguments that had been published over the years.

Parts of Chapter 1 appeared in my chapter, “Constructivism as an Approach to Interdisciplinary Study,” in Karen Fierke and Knud-Erik Joergensen (eds.), *Constructivism and International Relations: The Next Generation* (Armonk, NY, London: M.E. Sharpe, 2001): 13–35.

The discussion of “Two Transformative Moments” in Chapter 3 drew on an earlier article, “Politics, Norms and Peaceful Change,” *Review of International Studies*, vol. 24 (1998): 193–218.

Chapter 5 (Guiding) incorporated some of the arguments made in my chapter, “How Do Norms Matter?” in Michael Byers (ed.), *The Role of Law in International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 35–68.

Parts of Chapter 8 (Remembering and Forgetting) appeared as “History, Action and Identity,” *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 12, No. 1 (2006): 3–29.

Chapter 9 (Knowing and Doubting) made use of my earlier discussion of Hume: “Re-thinking Inter-disciplinarity by Re-reading Hume” in Nikolas Rajkovic, Tanja Aalberts, and Thomas Gammeltoft (eds.), *The Power of Legality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 29–74.

Some of the analysis presented in Chapter 11 (Judging and Communicating) relies on an article that Joerg Friedrichs and I co-authored: “On Acting and Knowing,” *International Organization*, vol. 63, No. 4 (2009): 701–731.

All of the publishers have graciously granted reprint permission.

I also gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Alte Pinakothek in Munich Germany who allowed me to use the painting by Albrecht Altdorfer, “Die Alexanderschlacht,” and Andres Gonzales’s help in preparing the initial cover.

To all a heartfelt “thank you”! Errors of fact and judgment are, of course, exclusively mine.

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978-1-108-47125-1 — Praxis
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