

Publication

At the Papini Hotel - On Pragmatism in the Study of International Relations

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Pragmatism is ever more popular amongst those who study international relations. Its emphasis on practice is generally acknowledged as a defining characteristic. There is, however, a general tension within pragmatist thought concerning practice, for pragmatism may emphasize the theorizing of practice. It is, then, distinguished from other theories in International Relations (IR) such as neo-realism or constructivism as a contender in their midst. We delineate a pragmatist theory of IR in the first part of this article, but insist on going beyond merely establishing the next paradigm, for pragmatism may also emphasize the practice of theorizing. Theories are, then, considered different tools useful for dealing with the social world. This will be corroborated in the second part by a close reading of William James. Finally, we submit that instead of a paradigm war, a metaphor such as that of the Papini hotel is needed in IR — a metaphor that accounts for theory competition without neglecting the limitations set by the practice of theorizing itself.

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