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**Review of *Social Welfare for a Global Era: International Perspectives on Policy and Practice*. James Midgley. Reviewed by Fei Sun.**

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fundamentalists might be surprised to see this same analysis applied to leading edge advocates of transhumanist rationalism.

In summary, Schneider has produced a commendable work of passion, insight, advocacy and public vision on perhaps the most important social topic of our time. Furthermore, it comes in a very readable package of short, digestible chapters, ideally suited for discussion in classrooms, book groups, and other platforms of learning. Like the work of our best public intellectuals, it is a scholarly treatise in which the scholarship supports the message without interfering with or obscuring the topic at hand.

Daniel Liechty  
Illinois State University

James Midgley, *Social Welfare for a Global Era: International Perspectives on Policy and Practice*. Sage Publication (2017), 243 pages, \$81.00 (paperback).

In this book, James Midgley attempts to shed light on three major questions. The first one is what comprises international social welfare. The discussion of social welfare is contextualized within a global era, in which social welfare is defined to cover three dimensions: meeting needs, managing problems, and maximizing opportunities. Global social welfare has its root in ancient thoughts about a one world perspective, dating back to the Greek philosopher Diogenes, who claimed himself a "citizen of the world." Followers of Diogenes believed in the existence of natural law governing people of different cultures and languages.

The question remains debatable regarding which entity should have the authority to safeguard the rights that natural law entails. In history, competing schools of scholars have supported either a single political authority or a powerful theocratic figure. However, the most influential ideas come from the literal and social democratic views of cosmopolitanism that emphasize governing in the interests of citizens based on values of cooperation, equality and development. Such thoughts influence

governmental welfare policies around the world as well as the projects and programs of international organizations.

The second inquiry is into the roles of different welfare agents in a global era. It is easily overlooked that families, neighbors, and communities were primary welfare agents before governments took on an essential role in modern welfare societies. Even in today's global era, informal welfare agents, including non-formal welfare and faith-based organizations, remain critical sources of help in meeting basic needs in times of difficulties for citizens in different parts of the world. Midgley does an impressive job giving voice to these traditional welfare agents, acknowledging their struggles during the process of their evolving toward managerial professionalism.

The role of welfare agents, consisting of nonprofits, corporations and governments, are well discussed in this book. Social work, a profession with deeply embedded values in line with a global perspective of welfare, is singled out for focused discussion. Midgley outlines how social work as a profession contributed to social welfare in different countries. Social work values were derived from Christianity and a set of Western values of individual dignity and freedom, social equality and justice. Thus we must expect issues to arise when social work is translated in a developing country or countries that uphold differential ideologies (e.g., communism). Governments of these countries tend to embrace the function of social work as a means of mitigating social problems and of maintaining social stability more than its role of advocacy in the social change process. In countries such as China, facing widening social inequality due to rapid economic growth, social work from Western societies represents a promising governing technique that is worth exploring. Midgley also acknowledges the challenges faced by social work professionalism in these countries, such as lack of accredited social work schools, standardized licensure systems and the scarcity of professional associations.

The last question centers on current approaches to promoting global social welfare. Social development as an approach emerged in the 1950s and is now widespread in the field of international welfare. Midgley highlights the strengths and limitations of this approach. On one hand, it raises awareness of social disparities associated with economic growth and points out

the possibility of eradicating poverty and inequality through social policies and programs. But on the other hand, social development may appear to have an eclectic underpinning, which fails to generate a synthesized knowledge base to explain variations of social development programs around the world. Due to theoretical underdevelopment, replication or translation of social development programs in other societies can be challenging and problematic. Moreover, as some critics argue, a social development approach might not be effective in addressing certain problems, such as crime, oppression and more.

This book is informative, inspiring and easily resonating with scholars and practitioners who have experience of studying or working in the field of global social welfare. It offers students and those who have limited background knowledge in this field an opportunity to gain a clear picture of what global social welfare looks like. It may be, however, a little disappointing for those who are eager to retrieve and then apply successful international experiences of promoting social welfare in their own field. This audience would be more intrigued if exemplary cases in international welfare work were provided and discussed. Yet, the overarching information found here about social development theories and practice strategies can serve as a starting point. Another critical area in international welfare is the similar driving force of globalism, namely, technological advancement. As the world becomes more closely-knit and “flatter” (to borrow Tom Friedman’s characterization), readers might have welcomed a critical discussion of the role of information technology in promoting or challenging global social welfare.

In a world full of news stories portraying division, terrorism and hatred, we are brought closer together than ever before to work on these issues. This book reminds us that we are global citizens, regardless of how diverse we are in terms of languages, cultures, religions and sociopolitical and economic systems. World peace and equality may be a rhetorical dream for some, but it remains a noble calling for those dedicated to pursuing the well-being of all. These readers will find inspiration and reassurance in this book.

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