

Cosmopolitanism, Wisdom, and International Migration: A Geographical Viewpoint

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Abstract

Personal geographical change from the permanent (international migration) to the temporary (international traveling) spontaneously brings about geographical comparisons, and through these comparisons we learn to appreciate not only the relativity of values, but also the importance of learning to live with uncertainty. Both of these aspects, I argue, help international migrants develop a sense that they are wiser than their earlier selves. This paper fleshes out these geographical ideas about wisdom in dialogue with (a) recent empirical research on the experiences of Romanian immigrants in Ontario, Canada and (b) with the recent literature on cosmopolitanism, global citizenship, and multicultural cities. The paper highlights the importance of geography and criticizes the psychological narratives of wisdom and their development around positivistic ideas of quantification. It makes the case for a phenomenological approach that cultivates a deep investigation into the subjective experience of international migrants and into the ongoing editing and re-editing of their own life scripts.

Keywords: distance; learning; multiculturalism; phenomenology; subjectivity