OCEAN TO

COSMOPOLITANISM IN
CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIA

OUTBACK

Edited by Keith Jacobs and Jeff Malpas

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Introduction

Keith Jacobs and Jeff Malpas

Cosmopolitanism has, in recent times, become both a commonplace and a contested term. Historically, it refers to the idea of the 'world citizen' – the *kosmopolites* – whose group loyalties lie not with any single polity or state, but with the world as a whole (the cosmos, or '*kosmos*' to use the Greek term). It is thus that the term is employed by the Cynics and the Stoics, as well as by later thinkers whose most notable representative is, perhaps, the Enlightenment philosopher, Immanuel Kant. Today, the term appears with a variety of meanings: as a contrast concept to be set against the parochial, local, or national; as referring to the idea of a certain international outlook or mode of life that may be variously realised; as designating (as it does in Kant) a particular moral and political position that emphasises the need to give equal weight to the interests and needs of those who belong to polities and communities distinct from our own.

What comes to the fore in some of the more contested discussions of cosmopolitanism is not the dry semantics so much as the question of what it actually implies, along with

the philosophical, perhaps even ideological, presuppositions that accompany it. If cosmopolitanism is set against the parochial, the local, or even the national, does that also mean that it entails a neglect of, or a disdain for, the concerns and interests of particular groups and communities? Might cosmopolitanism actually function to camouflage what is essentially the continuation of a colonialist or Eurocentric mode of discourse? Might it be simply the extension of a certain European parochialism to the world as a whole?

Tensions around the idea of cosmopolitanism, even when not explicitly expressed in its conceptual vocabulary, have had a significant impact on Australian political culture in recent years. A number of writers have pointed out that the Howard government adopted a more parochial, and, in this sense, more anti-cosmopolitan attitude on a number of fronts during its eleven years in office. This manifested not only as an antagonism towards certain international initiatives (including the idea of a permanent international war crimes tribunal), but also in an apparent willingness to endorse, and to make political use of, what might be seen as insular and xenophobic attitudes on matters such as immigration, the treatment of refugees, and even multiculturalism. Under the Labor government meanwhile, it might be argued that while a more cosmopolitan rhetoric is the norm, some forms of anti-cosmopolitanism have resurfaced, particularly on matters of immigration. At the same time both conservative and labour administrations in Australia, as elsewhere in the world, have maintained a strong commitment to what might be thought of as a form of financial and economic 'cosmopolitanism' aimed at encouraging economic globalisation. Indeed, the character of globalisation as corrosive of local and national identities and structures, as well as its insensitivity to the interests and needs that are operative at more 'parochial' levels, may be thought to exemplify the darker side of the cosmopolitan compact. Here, contemporary cosmopolitanism turns out to be allied

in the final instance, not with the forces of 'democracy' and 'morality', so much as with globalised capital and corporatised self-interest.

Yet in spite of the tensions that surround the concept of cosmopolitanism – or perhaps, in part, because of them – it seems to us that cosmopolitanism remains an important concept in any attempt to address a range of debates concerning contemporary politics and society. For example: how do we make sense of the significant communal challenges that have surfaced in recent years in relation to race, identity and belonging? How can the tensions that emerge from an increasingly global world economy be successfully managed within the nation state? What possibilities are there for forging social cohesion in contemporary Australian cities? These debates require us to attend to exactly the sort of connections that are at stake, even if sometimes equivocally, in cosmopolitanism's own thematisation of our relation to, and place in, the wider world. What is at issue in cosmopolitanism then, and in the various anti-cosmopolitan responses to which it gives rise, is the nature and significance of plurality and difference in a world that, precisely in virtue of its being a *world*, is also a cosmos within which we are variously brought together, and in which we are always drawn into connection and into a certain sort of commonality.

This suggests that rather than abandon the notion of the cosmopolitan altogether, we should redouble our efforts to make it a more focussed object of inquiry and perhaps to rethink, reanalyse and reconfigure it in substantial ways. This is even more urgent because the wide-ranging employment of the conceptual vocabulary of cosmopolitanism in both empirical research and social theory is sometimes marred by conceptual confusion and excessive abstraction. It is also often used in ways that seem to have only a tenuous connection to material practices and lived experience.

The approach to cosmopolitanism adopted in this collection, while not uncritical of the concept or unaware of its definitional

plurality, also aims to retain and even revitalise its positive, optimistic implications. For the most part, this collection seeks to engage in a recuperative response to some of the contemporary challenges with which cosmopolitanism is associated – retrieving a sense of the cosmopolitan as referring to the way our own individual and often parochial circumstances relate to the cosmos in which we are situated. We take the contemporary situation in Australia to be one in which our own lives as 'Australians' are inextricably tied to the way we understand ourselves in relation to a complex international and multi-ethnic environment. The tensions that Australians see overseas are also tensions that we can see played out in our own communities. Indeed, the very idea of the Australian community as such, is itself in contention. In our view, the issues at play here need to be worked out in concrete ways, paying attention to the lived details of particular places and circumstances. As Falzon has pointed out, 'all cosmopolitanisms are to some extent actually-existing in that they are located within some historical and geographical framework'[1], and this has been a key idea in the framework of this collection. The essays that appear here are thus, for the most part, explicitly anchored to specific locations, and it is out of and in relation to those locations that their arguments are developed.

Before looking more closely at the essays that make up this volume, it is worth briefly surveying the way in which the idea of cosmopolitanism appears in the existing literature. While overlapping with the broad forms of cosmopolitanism sketched above, four different uses of the term, sometimes operating in combination, can be identified within contemporary theory: normative; descriptive; methodological; and ideological.

It is the normative sense of cosmopolitanism that is perhaps most familiar within a theoretical context, and it is also a use that corresponds to the first form of cosmopolitanism that we distinguished initially – the form that, originating among

the Stoics but continuing in Kant and others, is associated with the idea of the 'world citizen'. In this normative usage, cosmopolitanism names an ethical project in which individuals commit themselves to advancing a shared sense of humanity that transcends nationhood, kinship and religion.[2] The leading exponent of this normative tradition is Martha Nussbaum who draws on the Stoic tradition to argue that an adherence to cosmopolitanism does not necessitate a disavowal of local identity, but rather a commitment to humanity as a whole.[3] For Nussbaum it is through education that we are able to develop a cosmopolitan outlook.[4] Other important contemporary theorists who have conceptualised cosmopolitanism in accordance with this interpretation include Jürgen Habermas and David Held.[5] Both Habermas and Held draw explicitly upon a Kantian vision of cosmopolitan order to argue for new modes of postnational and transnational governance.

The normative employment of cosmopolitanism is more particularly associated with the use of the term within philosophy and political theory. Within more sociologically oriented discussions, the term is often used to refer to certain aspects of the contemporary world that are seen as deserving of further analysis.[6] In this respect, sociologists often deploy the term 'cosmopolitanism' to refer to everyday happenings, or what Robbins has termed 'actually existing cosmopolitanism', in terms of the ways that individuals and communities make sense of cultural difference. Cosmopolitanism is thereby used as a descriptive term to frame contemporary practices and attitudes towards, for instance, migrants and refugees.[7]

In a usage that reflects the third of the three broad forms we distinguished initially (cosmopolitanism as an 'international' outlook or mode of life), cosmopolitanism appears within some sociological contexts as referring to forms of behaviour in which individuals actively seek out spaces in which cultural exchanges can take place; for example migrant neighbourhoods and multicultural festivals. Here one might characterise

cosmopolitanism as a term used to denote a willingness to embrace the 'Other' or the stranger.

A further development within this descriptive use of cosmopolitanism arises explicitly in relation to contemporary processes of globalisation. Ulrich Beck, for example, has defined cosmopolitanism as meaning '(a) the erosion of clear borders separating markets, states, civilizations, cultures, and the life worlds of common people, which (b) implies the involuntary confrontation with the alien other all over the globe'.[8] This descriptive usage gives rise to a methodological imperative with which cosmopolitanism is also associated. For Beck and other sociologists, cosmopolitanism does not function merely to describe certain contemporary processes, but also implies an epistemological shift that encourages us to cast aside rigid demarcations of the local, global, national and international and instead consider new social formations and interconnectivities which are a feature of the modern age.[9] A similar view of cosmopolitanism is evident in recent scholarship within the field of international relations and politics. Here cosmopolitanism is used to critically engage with a range of strategies and tactics of contemporary governance that have cosmopolitan implications or influences such as the use of multiculturalist policy settings to manage intra-communal tensions within urban spaces.[10]

Another important cosmopolitan perspective is provided by writers conversant with postcolonial theory.[11] It is tempting to treat these writers as part of a generic and unified grouping on the grounds of their shared normative and methodological concerns. Such a move would not do justice, however, to the specificity and diversity of their work. Yet the differences between them are not always fundamental or decisive and those who address the cosmopolitan from a postcolonial perspective share a number of analytic and intellectual preoccupations. Most significantly they often develop normative descriptions and situate their understandings of cosmopolitanism outside the confines of a Western nationalist tradition by embracing notions

of hybridity and the 'Other'. In terms of methodology, a number of postcolonial contributions place an emphasis on translation as an analytical frame to consider the ways that cultures have become intertwined in the context of globalisation (see Nikos Papastergiadis's chapter in this collection). For writers such as Homi Bhabha, it is through the methods associated with translation that we are able to shed light on the deficiencies of our society and forms of exploitation that take place within it.[12]

In its normative employment, cosmopolitanism appears as a positive ethical notion directed at ameliorative ends. In its descriptive and methodological uses, cosmopolitanism also appears in a largely positive light. There are, however, a number of contemporary theorists who are highly critical of cosmopolitanism, particularly in its normative form, but also in many of its other guises.[13] One of the best known is David Harvey, who has criticised cosmopolitanism as a proxy for the ideologies of global capitalism and market democracy, and for being too abstract and global (hence unable to make a contribution to struggles within the spaces of cities) to provide the basis for any form of progressive politics.[14] He castigates those writers who have sought to link cosmopolitanism to discussions of universal ethics. For Harvey it is only through political intervention at the level of material practices that the challenges of the contemporary era can be addressed.

Although, the various approaches to cosmopolitanism that can be distinguished in contemporary theory all appear in different ways in the pages that follow, the volume is not predicated on the emphasis, elevation or endorsement of any single one of these approaches. The viewpoints and perspectives that figure in the discussions collected here are quite diverse. What they share, *pace* Harvey, is a conviction that the idea of the cosmopolitan continues to offer something that is of critical significance. Thus, while the volume is not uncritical of the cosmopolitan project(s) or of more general cosmopolitan tendencies, it does attempt a rethinking of the cosmopolitan,

and so also a renewed deployment of the concept, in the light of our contemporary situation.

The chapters that make up this volume have been arranged thematically. Within the overall framework of the discussion there are three discernible strands that we would foreground and that correspond to the three divisions into which the volume is organised: Varieties, Tensions, and Encounters.

The chapters encompassed within the first strand are less directly concerned with the investigation of cosmopolitanism in 'place', but rather offer a discussion of the cosmopolitan political sensibility and its capacity to throw light on some of the most pressing contemporary global challenges. Val Colic-Peisker's chapter 'Cosmopolitanism as a civilising project' reviews the political ideal of cosmopolitanism by drawing upon the writings of Norbert Elias.[15] The author poses a number of questions about the efficacy of cosmopolitanism to counter bigotry and promote a shared sense of collectivity. For Colic-Peisker, supra-national global challenges necessitate some form of cosmopolitan response. Yet the challenges of pursuing a cosmopolitan agenda are immense because, as a unifying principal, it has less appeal than the nation state and it is difficult to see how a sense of 'global humanity' can be enhanced. In the second part of her chapter, Colic-Peisker explores the cosmopolitan 'predisposition' through interviews with transnational knowledge workers. She notes that for these workers, understandings of what cosmopolitanism entails requires a capacity to transcend national frames of reference, to reach out to others. She concludes her chapter by arguing that the cosmopolitan project has little chance of succeeding unless we are able to cast aside our obsessive preoccupation with economic status and material wealth and instead embrace an altogether more generous set of social dispositions.

The opportunities afforded by physical distance can provide a valuable vantage point to reflect on contemporary Australia. Keith Jacobs draws on his own transnational experiences to reflect

upon the 7 July 2005 London transport bombings to mount a critique of narrow forms of identity politics. Jacobs considers the potential use of cosmopolitanism as a platform from which to reflect upon reactions to terrorism post 9/11. He takes issue with explanations of terrorism that are framed entirely in Western forms and instead seeks to consider the assumptive worlds of those who engage in such acts. Drawing upon the conceptual language of psychoanalysis, he argues that we risk 'infantilising' those who perpetrate acts of violence unless we acknowledge more fully their moral culpability. Cosmopolitanism for Jacobs provides us with a contextual space to work through some of the complex challenges we encounter when attempting to respond to acts of terrorism and state violence.

Nikos Papastergiadis's chapter 'Cultural translations and cosmopolitanism' considers the capacity of art to forge new spaces for cosmopolitan forms of engagement. Papastergiadis discusses contributions on cultural identity by authors such as Ihab Hassan and Paul Carter, drawing upon the example of Aboriginal artists working in Western Australia in the early 1970s that came to be known as the Papunya Tula movement. For Papastergiadis, art and philosophical meditation have the potential to transform our understanding of our relationship to others. Debates in relation to cosmopolitanism need to proceed, not so much in respect of methodology but by 'taking a closer account of the link between the kenotic ideal of self-dispossession and the cross-cultural process of inter-subjective immersion, interaction, feedback and transformation'. For Papastergiadis, the meaning of a work of art is always the outcome of the process of translation in which to some extent the individual undergoes a form of subjective transformation. The vision of Indigenous cosmopolitanism provides us with a starting-point to re-think who we are from the perspective of the social interactions that surround art and creative endeavour.

While Colic-Peisker, Jacobs and Papastergiadis make use of the conceptual space that comes from looking at Australia

through the prism of a transnational or an Indigenous optic, other chapters in the collection are more grounded in the actual geographical spaces within the Australian nation-state. In particular, the essays that make up the second part of the collection, 'Cosmopolitan tensions', centre on turbulent events that took place in the southern beach suburbs of Sydney, particularly Cronulla, in December 2005. Asquith and Poynting, and Miller and Malpas, as well as Noble, all draw upon the so-called 'Cronulla riots' to discuss the significance of place and the imaginary of the 'Other'.

For Nicole Asquith and Scott Poynting, the form of the Other is a constructed Arab/Muslim identity. The racist attacks at Cronulla beach provide an example of 'anti-cosmopolitanism' in which the Arab/Muslim Other was understood in this process as inherently violent, irrational and misogynist. Asquith and Poynting provide a detailed account of the riot using the frame of 'hate crime' as a basis for interpretation, noting that both instigators and perpetrators often justify their crimes by claiming that their victims deserve banishment. Their account provides some truly disturbing quotations which make clear the deep and extensive antipathy towards the Arab/Muslim Other. The events that took place in Cronulla are at the extreme end of a continuum of hostility that has remained close to the surface. In their conclusion, Asquith and Poynting ask if there is a way forward for cosmopolitanism. They are not optimistic; pointing out that there is no evidence for believing any significant social movement will emerge to embrace cosmopolitanism.

Linn Miller and Jeff Malpas engage in a critical reading of cosmopolitanism in their chapter, 'On the beach: between the cosmopolitan and the parochial'. For Miller and Malpas, the riots that took place on Cronulla beach are used as a setting to reveal the dislocation that is experienced in relation to place when specific forms of identity politics are enacted; in this sense, the symbolism of the 'shore'. They explore evidence of cosmopolitan and anti-cosmopolitan feeling and argue that

the riots can themselves be understood within the context of a larger framework of social, and so also spatial, dislocation. They make the case for a form of alternative cosmopolitanism that, while foregrounding a 'sense of place', does not view such locatedness as a barrier to wider forms of engagement. In many respects contemporary cosmopolitanism actually shares with contemporary nationalisms a tendency towards an abstracted and displaced form of understanding in which a sense of connection with those around us is lost. The people we meet on the beach cease to be individuals we know, and with whom we can engage, and instead become representatives of an identity that we reject.

The consequences of John Howard's time as prime minister continue to reverberate in many of the discourses that surround cosmopolitanism, so it is important that some assessment is made of his legacy. One of the objectives of the chapter authored by Greg Noble is to reflect on Howard's influence in shaping constructions of 'identity' and 'belonging' in contemporary Australia. He considers what form an 'Australian' cosmopolitanism might take in a post-Howard era and how it can be differentiated from existing nationalist sentiment. In his chapter 'Belonging in Bennelong', Noble provides two examples of cosmopolitanism in practice: a musical presentation at a primary school in Epping; and the Granny Smith festival celebrated by large numbers of local people. For Noble, cosmopolitanism is best understood as a process. He is critical of those accounts, therefore, which conceptualise it as a virtue or locate cosmopolitanism simply in terms of an opposite to racism and bigotry. Our understanding of what cosmopolitanism entails can only really be achieved by exploring shared practices. In a wide-ranging discussion, Noble contrasts the politics of the Howard era and his narrow vision of multiculturalism with the sense of joy and conviviality that is possible in shared moments of belonging. The key point Noble makes is similar to the one advanced by Miller and Malpas; namely that the cosmopolitan project does not necessitate an abandonment of our attachment to place (be it locality or

nation). Rather, cosmopolitanism is really nothing more than an affective investment in what Marion Young has called 'living in togetherness'.

The final three essays, written by Ashley Carruthers, Jesse Shipway and Mary Zournazi, that make up the section 'Cosmopolitan encounters', also take their points of departure from particular places, and explore the scope for cosmopolitan encounters. But their explorations involve sites other than Cronulla, as well as a differently focused set of issues and concerns. Much of the empirical focus of cosmopolitan informed research is situated within the narrow confines of migrant/host relationships. This configuration of how we understand cosmopolitanism is challenged by Ashley Carruthers in his chapter 'Alternative multicultural subjectivities? Indochinese cosmopolitanisms in Western Sydney'. He makes a strong argument to include minoritarian and intra-cultural exchanges that are not referenced in the usual binary of migrant/host relationships in cosmopolitanism discourse. His detailed ethnographic study of Fairfield, Sydney as a 'contact zone' provides us with a vantage point to understand the 'minor cosmopolitanisms' negotiations and manoeuvres that are a feature of similar urban locations across Australia. Carruthers provides us with lucid descriptions of his fieldwork encounters and successfully engages in the problematic aspects of these 'multicultural' spaces that some researchers are reluctant to engage with for fear of being misinterpreted. Amongst the conclusions to his chapter, is his argument that reluctance amongst migrants to engage with host cultures should not be interpreted as evidence that other intercultural exchanges are not taking place. For Carruthers, we need to cast aside narrow constructions of cosmopolitanism and take more notice of the diversity of experiences taking place within contemporary urban spaces.

Jesse Shipway's chapter poses the question as to why positive accounts of cosmopolitanism are so difficult to articulate. We have a clearer idea of what it is not than what it is. In other

words, our understanding relies on making binary distinctions. He draws upon his experiences living in both Melbourne and Hobart to argue that cosmopolitanism requires us to find ways to make connection with the plight and tribulations of others while at the same time attend to our immediate relationships in the context of place. For Shipway, our feelings in relation to cosmopolitanism rest on whether we experience it as either a basis for renewal or view it as some form of destabilising ethic that undermines our desire for individual autonomy and cultural expression. In this sense, the cosmopolitan ethic can only succeed in a context in which individuals feel rooted in place.

Mary Zournazi's chapter 'Love on the streets' provides an altogether more optimistic interpretation of cosmopolitanism. Her chapter examines the connections between patriotism and nationalism in the context of suburban Sydney. She draws upon her experiences of watching Portuguese and Greek soccer fans celebrating their respective national team's participation in the 2004 European championships as a setting to develop her arguments about the possibilities for cosmopolitan modes of political engagement. Zournazi makes use of the writings of Hannah Arendt (whose work also makes an appearance in Miller and Malpas's discussion) and argues that it is our sense of living in the world with others that provides us with the ability to forge new possibilities. As she writes of her own feelings about this sense of living, 'My identity dissolved and the boundaries of who and what I was seemed to evaporate and become part of the communal experience'. For Zournazi, it is the act of being together that creates a different social bond. Whether or not we are persuaded by Zournazi's argument on this point, it undoubtedly reflects an important feature of what might be understood as the phenomenology of a certain cosmopolitan experience.

The fact that cosmopolitanism is indeed such a widespread, as well as contentious, concept is one of the reasons for taking it as the focus for a volume such as this. Moreover, as the essays contained here demonstrate, cosmopolitanism also seems to present itself as a concept that stands at the centre of many of the issues and challenges that confront contemporary Australia. However, as one might expect in a world in which the cosmopolitan is already such a salient notion, the issues and challenges that confront us in this country are not peculiar to Australia alone. The variations, tensions, and encounters that we find instantiated within a cosmopolitan frame are repeated in many different localities and circumstances. Cosmopolitanism and anti-cosmopolitanism thus name tendencies and dispositions that are characteristic of the world in which we currently find ourselves, even though they are tendencies and dispositions that are best understood as always working in and through the concrete circumstances of specific places, particular social and political formations, particular experiences, and modes of life. While contemporary Australian experience is indeed framed 'between outback and sea', the very specificity of that placing is also what makes cosmopolitanism an issue and a challenge, since it is only within the horizon opened up by the specificity of place that what lies beyond that horizon is made accessible. This is perhaps the real significance of the cosmopolitan: the world itself is only ever brought to appearance in relation to the concrete singularity of what is here and now, of what is local and immediate, and yet it is only against the wider background of the world that the local and the immediate has any meaning and significance of its own. It is thus that the essays in this collection eschew any meta-theoretical standpoint removed from connection with lived experience, and look instead to a series of explorations of the cosmopolitan through its own concrete situatedness.

Select bibliography

Beck, U., *The Cosmopolitan Outlook*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2006.

——, 'Foreward', in M. Nowicka & M. Rovisco (eds), *Cosmopolitanism in Practice*, Ashgate Press, Aldershot, 2009, pp. xi–xiii.

Bhabha, H., *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994.

Breckenridge, C., H. Bhabha, S. Pollack, and D. Chakrabarty, (eds), *Cosmopolitanism*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 2002.

Brennan, T., *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1997.

Delanty, G., *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.

Elias, N., *The Civilizing Process,* vol.1, *The History of Manners*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1969.

Falk, R., *On Humane Governance: Towards a New Global Politics*, Pennsylvania University Press, University Park, 1995.

Falzon, M., 'Ethnic groups unbound: a case study of the social organisation of cosmopolitanism', in M. Nowicka & M. Rovisco (eds), *Cosmopolitanism in Practice*, Ashgate Press, Aldershot, 2009, pp. 37–50.

Habermas, J., *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1998.

——, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001.

Harvey, D., 'Cosmopolitanism and the banality of geographical evils', *Public Culture*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2000, pp. 529–64.

Held, D., *Democracy and the Global Order*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995.

Huntingdon, S., *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2004.

Kendall, G., I. Woodwood, & Z. Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009.

Nussbaum, M., 'Patriotism and cosmopolitanism', in J. Cohen (ed), *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996, pp. 6–17.

——, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

Robbins, B., 'Actually existing cosmopolitanism', in P. Cheah & B. Robbins (eds), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, University of Minneapolis Press, Minneapolis, 1998, pp. 1–19.

Smith, A., *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era,* Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995.

Touraine, A., 'Sociology without societies', *Current Sociology*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2003, pp. 123–31.

Urry, J., 'Introduction, thinking society anew', in U. Beck & J. Willms (eds), *Conversations with Ulrich Beck*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 1–10.

Young, I. M., *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993.

Zolo, D., *Cosmopolis: Prospects for World Government*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997.

Notes

1   M. Falzon, 'Ethnic groups unbound: a case study of the social organisation of cosmopolitanism', in M. Nowicka & M. Rovisco (eds), *Cosmopolitanism in Practice*, Ashgate Press, Aldershot, 2009, p. 37.

2   R. Falk, *On Humane Governance: Towards a New Global Politics*, Pennsylvania University Press, University Park, 1995. T. Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1997.

3   M. Nussbaum, 'Patriotism and cosmopolitanism', in J. Cohen, (ed), *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996, pp. 6–17. ——, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

4   See G. Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.

5   J. Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1998. ——, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001. D. Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995.

6   See, for example, A. Touraine, 'Sociology without societies', *Current Sociology*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2003, pp.123–31. J. Urry, 'Introduction: thinking society anew', in U. Beck & J. Willms (eds), *Conversations with Ulrich Beck*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 1–10. U. Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Outlook*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2006.

7   See G. Kendall, I. Woodwood, & Z. Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009.

8   U. Beck, ' Foreward', in M. Nowicka and M. Rovisco (eds), *Cosmopolitanism in Practice*, Ashgate Press, Aldershot, 2009, pp. xi–xiii.

9   U. Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Outlook*.

10 A. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995. S. Huntingdon, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2004.

11 See, for example, C. Breckenridge, H. Bhabha, S. Pollack, & D. Chakrabarty (eds), *Cosmopolitanism*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2002.

12 H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994.

13 See A. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*. D. Zolo, *Cosmopolis: Prospects for World Government*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997. S. Huntingdon, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*.

14 D. Harvey, 'Cosmopolitanism and the banality of geographical evils', *Public Culture*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2000, pp. 529–64.

15 N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process,* vol. 1, *The History of Manners*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1969.

Varieties of
Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism as a civilising project

Val Colic-Peisker

Introduction

This chapter conceptualises cosmopolitanism as part of an ongoing civilising project. Cosmopolitanism is seen as an ethical position and practice developing with certain inevitability from cognitive cosmopolitanism, that is, most people's increasing knowledge of the Other[1]. Cosmopolitanism is defined as a willingness and ability to identify as a citizen of the world in preference to a citizen of any particular country. Applying ideas of Elias[2] and Bax[3], the process of civilisation is defined as people's expanding range of identification beyond various, latently or manifestly conflictual group particularisms and towards a universalistic identification with humanity. It should be noted at the outset that the concept of civilisation in this chapter bears no connection and holds no connotation to the European and broadly Western 'civilising' of the non–Western Other through colonial expansion, articulated as the 'white man's burden' by R. Kipling[4] at the peak of the British imperial

era and carried through to the current American wars for global control. It will soon become clear that the project of civilisation is defined as exactly the opposite of the meaning it had in colonialism: as gradual diminishing of the barriers between people erected during the modern history through the ideas of developmental, power and cultural differentials between nations and ethnic groups. Opposed to this modernist discourse is the process of cosmopolitanisation as identifying with those who belong to polities and communities culturally distinct from our own. This attitude can be described as a humanistic content of globalisation: a force of global democracy and morality opposed to the brutality of global capital and corporate self-interest.

The latest wave of globalisation – usually defined as the past three decades of communication and long-distance mobility revolutions – has provided unprecedented possibilities for cross-cultural awareness and mixing, and opened a multitude of opportunities to learn about the Other. Globalisation is therefore a necessary although not a sufficient condition of the development of cosmopolitan attitudes on a significant scale: while learning about different cultures (conventionally attached to nation-states) and communicating with people who inhabit them, we are likely to broaden our horizons and learn to appreciate narratives and practices that differ from those dominant in our own socio-cultural context. This may lead to expanding our range of identification beyond primordial, territorial and otherwise familiar groups and communities. In the process of learning about the Other and their 'cultures', Turner[5] argues, we are likely to develop a critical distance and 'irony' towards our own 'taken for granted' culture. Therefore, the processes of global communication and mobility implicit in the idea of globalisation facilitate development of cosmopolitanism as a civilising process. As elaborated below, the association of the processes of globalisation with the dominance of global, and predominantly Western, capitalism, cannot be disregarded; this

connection represents an obstacle to the civilising project of cosmopolitanism at least implicitly. As illustrated by narrative data gleaned from interviews with 'transnational knowledge workers', such an openness towards the Other and accompanying universalist identification is more likely to develop among mobile and educated people who actively enjoy globalisation and the opportunities for professional and personal development it affords them, rather than suffering its unwanted consequences, as is the case with the less privileged 'locals'. The transnationals may, because of this, have the responsibility of taking on a 'cosmopolitanism burden' as a *mission civilisatrice* – that is, act as the avant-garde in advancing the civilising process towards a universalism appropriate to the age of global interdependency. The globalisation of dependencies and risks is perfectly illustrated by, although not limited to, the pervasive global warming discourse.[6] Therefore, the concepts of civilisation, globalisation and cosmopolitanism all imply an increasingly complex and differentiated, and consequently increasingly interconnected and interdependent web of global society.

In this chapter I take an optimistic, though not uncritical view of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism means various things to various people, social theorists included. Just like globalisation, it has been theorised through its 'good' and 'bad' aspects. In this chapter, I theorise the advance of cosmopolitanism – the real as well as desired – as a civilising process; indeed, as a much-needed late-modern 'second enlightenment'. This second enlightenment should change and emancipate the globally dominant Western rationality, currently reduced to economic rationality and chained to the idea of self-interest, manifested in the global arena as national interest. Before elaborating on this thesis I have to address queries that readers may have at this point: what is the evidence that cosmopolitanism is actually advancing, and, an even more acute and controversial question: are we really becoming more 'civilised', regardless of whether we count cosmopolitanism as an ingredient of this process?

Clearly, the awareness of the world – the planet Earth – as one entity has never been as strong as it is today and there has never existed a more urgent need to develop it further. Regardless of the fact that a majority of non-Westerners still live in 'traditional'[7] rural communities, perhaps having little opportunity to see beyond the horizon of their quotidian pursuits, and deprived – or free from? – mass media and the knowledge of distant uprisings, tsunamis and financial upheavals, the number of people who live a 'global' existence that includes everyday awareness of, and communication with, faraway places, has risen exponentially since the postwar decades. Since that time the mass media – first radio, then television, and finally the internet – gradually destroyed the innocence of local life, and made more and more people aware not only of what is going on thousands of miles away, but also of the consequential interconnectedness: of the fact that faraway events bear on their existence. The twentieth century with its two world wars and global initiatives that followed after them saw a development of a global consciousness that has reached zenith in a decade-old political upheaval around global terrorism and the 'war on terror', and the current incessant media attention on global warming, as well as the multitude of other global issues. In fact, everything is gradually turning global or at the very least 'glocal'.[8]

Following the war atrocities committed in the name of nation, initiatives such as the League of Nations after World War I and the United Nations after World War II were expressions of an acute political need to acknowledge human rights and human solidarity beyond national borders. The universal solidarity and the institutional recognition of the community of humans beyond national boundaries found expression in the 1948 UN Charter of Human Rights and the 1951 Refugee Convention. The declaration of universal human rights implies that a community of human beings should have primacy over any existing political community. Of course, the ideology of humanitarianism remains inefficient in the

world where *Realpolitik* driven by national interests still reigns supreme; this in spite of mounting evidence that advancing the 'national interest' in competition with other nations may not be a rational stance any longer. Climate change is currently the most prominent, but not the only case in point. The institutions of global governance, however inefficient in achieving the goals of global peace and cooperation, have fostered the development of a widespread awareness of the globe as a unified cosmopolis through a universalist discourse and their global action mandate. Within these institutions new universalist concepts such as human rights have been developed, emphasising the sameness of human beings and their equivalent entitlements across national, racial, ethnic and gender differences. Human rights discourse, and to a lesser degree the associated international legal practice, is an application of moral universalism, which in turn is an aspect of 'ethical cosmopolitanism', as elaborated below. In the early twenty-first century, mass media and instant satellite-based communication are available to people in almost every corner of the Earth and provide daily nourishment to the feeling of the closeness of faraway things, people and events. Therefore I claim cosmopolitanism is advancing.

Expanding the range of identification as a civilising process

In what way is this purportedly apparent development of cosmopolitanism associated with the civilising process? This question has to be followed by another underlying conceptual query: how is the civilising process to be defined? If we turn to Norbert Elias who devoted his life to defining the 'civilising process'[9] – which he saw as an ongoing developmental process inherent in human society – we find a point that is of great importance to my current argument about cosmopolitanism: that the process of civilisation means an increasing awareness

of other people. According to Elias, becoming more civilised means a growing sensitivity to the presence of people around us: becoming more observant of them and having a more acute understanding of them. The increasing awareness of the Other – from the close Other who eats and sleeps with us to a distant Other whose everyday practices may be very different from ours – inherently means expanding the range of identification with other human beings. Being observant of others and caring to understand them signifies encountering them as creatures of equal worth and, at least at a moral if not emotional level, identifying with them. E. B. Bax argued that the 'barbaric [non-civilised] stage of human society is throughout based upon the kinship community, the clan or the tribe, and [that] its feeling towards humanity outside the narrower social organisation is entirely subordinated to the interests of the latter'[10]. With the advancement of civilisation, the category of 'us' expands.

Elias gives examples of increasingly more elaborate table manners and increasingly discreet sexual behaviour, that is, 'civilised' humans becoming more socially regulated.[11] Such civilising process implies a profound discontent as nature's unrestrained and instinctive id, in search of pleasure here and now, is increasingly controlled by the delayed-gratification superego[12] which dictates the awareness of other people and care for them. Such 'unnatural' behaviour that stems the purported basic 'selfish' instincts becomes a necessity of a complex human society, as the 'chains of social action and interdependence' lengthen.[13] The everyday sensitivity to the physical and moral presence of Others logically expands towards the awareness of distant Others, once information about them becomes increasingly present in our everyday lives through expanding communications. If we take the Australian perspective, in this process of stretching our attention to more and more distant Other it is likely that we regularly reach those on the other side of the globe. As social 'chains of interdependence'[14] reach farther and farther it is not just benevolent and disinterested curiosity

that makes us pay attention to people far away – we are also heeding our own interests.

There is a considerable step, logical but not inevitable, from such 'cognitive cosmopolitanism' towards its 'ethical' variety: when we acknowledge that close as well as distant Others have the same essentially human characteristics and goals, we imply that they should therefore be given the same opportunities, guaranteed through human rights, to pursue those goals. It is a job of governments (Elias used 'nobles' in the meaning of 'elites') to regulate and institutionalise such inclusive, universalist, cosmopolitan ideas. Many political and moral thinkers, from Plato to John Stuart Mill who deliberated on what constitutes the 'good society' and what may be the purpose of human society, came to a conclusion that the (good) government should develop in its citizens a sense of mutual duty and solidarity: in other words, civilise them.[15] Mutual solidarity is at the centre of the Christian doctrine (as *benevolentia*) and features in the main slogan of the French revolution as *fraternité*. In the twentieth century it became progressively easier to argue that developing a universalistic recognition and identification advances the common good of humanity because humanity has become interdependent. At the political end of this ideology is a much-repeated claim that a world government is needed: a claim that so far remains in the realm of utopia.

Clearly, the process of civilisation as development of universalist values and institutions is not smooth and suffers constant setbacks and episodes of 'decivilisation'. Wars are the most prominent example of such regression. M. Bax, writing about the Bosnian war, described ethnic mobilisation as a process of 'decivilisation': a 'reduction of the range of identification to the ethnic base'[16] or, to use a concept of social psychology, shrinking of the in-group to the ethnic base. This is usually achieved by political manipulation and mobilisation that portrays the out-group as inferior but threatening. Those at the bottom of the social hierarchy are more likely to succumb to

this manipulation and, even if they see through it, they may not be able to insulate themselves socially, or simply leave. Ethno-nationalist mobilisation may achieve short-term political ends but it is politically and socially dysfunctional and 'decivilising' in the longer term.

The process of decivilisation is not rare or geographically limited: to use a shares market metaphor, the shares of civilisation often drop in value, sometimes dramatically – take European fascism and World War II with its dramatic shrinking of the range of identification for many people – but the long-term trend is upwards. This does not mean accepting the still widespread eighteenth-century Enlightenment assumption that all human progress is in a straight line and we are inevitably becoming more civilised. However, the universalist cosmopolitan identification, as it inevitably diminishes conflictual particularistic (national, ethnic, religious) tendencies, is inherently part of the civilising process.

The relationship between localism/patriotism/nationalism and cosmopolitanism has been extensively debated from various theoretical and ideological positions. Some authors, if not most, see these two value perspectives as opposed. [17] Kant theorised that cosmopolitanism in association with the 'perpetual peace'[18] was hardly possible in the world structured as the system of competing nation-states. Martha Nussbaum placed patriotism on the list of particularistic passions. Some authors did not formulate the relationship between patriotism and cosmopolitanism as one of logical opposition. For example, J. S. Mill saw patriotism primarily as care for fellow countrymen rather than as competitive opposition towards other nations; in this sense, such patriotism can easily be extended to humanity and made part of cosmopolitanism.[19] Those who look at the issue of cosmopolitanism from a 'subaltern' perspective (either a non-Western-middle-class perspective or a working-class perspective) do not necessarily see the contradiction between nationalism and patriotism either.[20] K. Appiah's notions of

'cosmopolitan patriotism' and 'rooted cosmopolitanism' in the context of Ghanaian anti-colonial struggle are well known.[21] Cheah criticises the alleged opposition of nationalism and cosmopolitanism as an oversimplification while Delanty argues for a 'limited cosmopolitanism' and 'cosmopolitan citizenship' practised in real, lived civic communities.[22]

Cosmopolitanism has also been critiqued as a 'cool' rational stance with little mobilising power, in contrast to the hot and highly mobilising passions of nationalism and patriotism. Further, cosmopolitanism has been criticised for allowing people to distance themselves from their community ties and commitments. Due to this very 'stepping back' from our immediate milieu and its claims, the 'cosmopolitan virtue' (just like other virtues and virtuous acts) involves rational self-reflexion and may appear cooler and less engaged than the passions that drive pursuing immediate interests. But even if cosmopolitanism could remain cool and 'theoretical' in the past, it may now become a politically mobilising force through a global necessity, as environmental devastation subsumed under the formula of 'global warming' compels humanity to act in unison. This and other global threats make cosmopolitanism not only an ethically preferable position, but also the only rational one. This is the meaning of the call for the 'second enlightenment'.

Nation, however, remains a strong point of identification for most people – this in spite of the alleged weakening of its sovereign prerogatives through the process of globalisation. Neoliberal globalisation, primarily economic and profit-driven, may present another challenge to the nation-state: it may undermine its legitimacy as a moral community. Market ideology, having reached its fundamentalist extremes over the recent decades[23] is often seen as legitimising social Darwinism. Further, neoliberalism erodes the sense of nation as a community by diminishing mutual solidarity for the sake of competition, and by shrinking protection offered to citizens by the welfare state. This, coupled with daily political and other developments

that keep building our sense of the world as one, may gradually shift the claim to a moral community towards global humanity. At the present moment, however, this may sound as mere wishful thinking, because the struggle for economic, political and military predominance (e.g. between the West and the rising Asian superpowers) and overt conflicts (primarily in the context of the 'clash' of the Western and the Islamic worlds) stand in the way of the substitution of a national identification with a cosmopolitan one.

Today's ability to travel and communicate at an unprecedented speed also means a heightened immediacy of threat in the situation of conflict: of nuclear or terrorist attack for example. The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s did not lead to a more harmonious world: in fact the twenty-first century world resembles more than ever a hostile anti-utopia of Orwell's *1984*, where alliances change but hostilities are constant. What results is a situation of permanent national mobilisation, caused by real or perceived threats, and manipulated by national government as nation-building opportunities. In this situation, the individual freedom of identification is significantly reduced. If one is not ready to unequivocally align oneself with the mobilised group, and define oneself primarily, if not exclusively, as a member of that group, one is automatically the subject of suspicion and in danger of being excluded. This exclusion can have grave consequences for the individual. In Nazi Germany, one's failure to strongly identify with the nation was, if not fatal, then at least very dangerous. One can safely guess that it was unpopular to declare oneself a 'cosmopolitan' in the US in the aftermath of 9/11. Even identification with a subgroup of the mobilised nation – e.g. women – can be seen as divisive and reprehensible. During the war in my native Croatia in the early 1990s, the publication of my scholarly feminist article was described by a senior colleague, in a public situation, as 'frivolous': while the nation was at war fighting for its independence, there was no room for emphasising 'divisive' gender differences.