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Globalisation and Cosmopolitanism: Beyond Populist Nationalism and Neoliberalism

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Since the early 1970s, social and political commentators have deployed the term globalisation to identify what they see as far-reaching and complex changes occurring across the world. There is much debate, however, over how to define globalisation. For our purposes, the term globalisation signifies the growing interdependence and interconnectedness of states, peoples, economies, and cultures, as well as a public consciousness of that process.² Referring to the latter dimension, Pierre Bourdieu (1998: 34) calls globalisation a myth, 'a powerful discourse, an *idée force*, an idea that has social force, which obtains belief'. In its different forms, the discourse of globalisation offers an account of both the problems and possibilities confronting human beings in their diverse communities and polities. For some people, the globalisation discourse has become a way of understanding and explaining not only the historical evolution of the world, but also its future direction.

Yet simply describing the process does not tell us what we should do about it, or how we should act when confronted with globalising tendencies.³ Should we just accept the process and ride the waves of globalisation to wherever they may take us? That is, ought we submit to the inevitable? Alternatively, should we try to resist the process and reaffirm our perceived national political sovereignty and culture? Or, rather than either submit or resist, should we try to shape or transform the process, and bend it towards what we consider to be our needs and interests?⁴ Such questions raise issues for individuals, citizens and governments about the rationale for deciding to take one path rather than another. Centrally, the question is one of whether there are any defensible principles that are applicable to political action in a globalising world. This chapter discusses the main

types of Australian responses to globalisation, which we categorise here as neoliberalism, populist nationalism, and cosmopolitanism.⁵ A case is made for cosmopolitanism providing a significant intellectual and political alternative for guiding individual responsibilities under the conditions of globalisation. Further, it is argued that the practices of global citizenship emanating from cosmopolitanism offer the basis for a new transformative politics.

Neoliberalism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism

Currently, the most dominant form of political ideology in Australia is that of neoliberalism, which gives primacy to the promotion of capitalism by creating free markets, and reducing direct government intervention in the economy. For neoliberalism, contemporary economic history complements a preferred ethical standpoint. Global trends towards open economies and freer markets are often portrayed as inevitable, and they are also endorsed as necessary because they are considered to increase individual choice and overall wealth.⁶ In this neoliberal philosophy, the ownership of private property is both a primary good and a means to greater individual autonomy and wellbeing – for everyone. For many critics, globalisation and neoliberalism are identical. Limiting the understanding of globalisation in this way, however, also constrains the imagination of responses.

Australian governments have been among the most enthusiastic advocates of neoliberal globalisation. From the early 1980s, they have ‘opened up’ the country to the forces of economic globalisation. Labor and Liberal–National Party governments have lowered tariffs, privatised public sector corporations, corporatised public services, and deregulated the financial system and other national markets, such as the labour market. Although some neoliberal critics (e.g. Norton 2007) do not consider that governments have gone far enough along this path, and think that the size of the public sector is still too large, it is clear that a major change in the culture of public policy has occurred. Market principles, such as consumer choice, profitability, competitiveness, and so on, which are all internal to neoliberalism, have become the sole criteria for evaluating whether any policy is defensible or not. Furthermore, these criteria are staunchly defended in the mass media, and other forums.⁷

This shift in ideology and practice has provoked a second response to globalisation, emanating from nationalistic and populist forms of opposition to neoliberalism. Where the neoliberal advocates brook no criticism of the globalising tendencies in the Australian economy, the populist

nationalists would like to restore the previous political arrangements in economic and social policy.⁸ For supporters of the One Nation movement, for example, government decisions to open the Australian economy to greater international trade have brought damaging consequences to many industries, employers, and employees. Such populist nationalists also tend to see Australia's relatively open immigration policy as problematic because it does not discriminate on the basis of race and culture. Where newcomers from Asia are perceived to be flourishing, and the Anglo-Celtic and European Australians are seen to be undergoing hardship, there are increasing expressions of ethnocentrism and racism. For the populist nationalists, the Australian state has not only abandoned its previous protective role, it has also been undermining Australian culture and identity. Such dichotomous views necessarily oversimplify and distort the complexity of economic and social life in Australia.⁹ Furthermore, and paradoxically, even these nationalistic responses lend support to neoliberal ideas. This is because such reaction appears to offer a crude choice: either one favours an economically open and increasingly unequal Australia, or one must support a narrow and isolationist view.

Yet, these are not the only political options. Neoliberalism is not the only ideology that seeks to transform Australia by exposing it to changes in the wider world. Nor is a reactionary nationalism that wants Australians to return to an era of social and cultural, if not economic, isolation really a viable alternative to neoliberalism. This kind of nationalism has had little success in challenging the hegemony of neoliberalism because it has largely focused on internal factors, and maintained a simple opposition to outside trends and influences. That is, it has offered no vision of how Australians might respond creatively to the rapidly changing conditions of a globalising world.

There is, however, another perspective that *does* take account of global challenges, but which emphasises the crucial principles of universal human rights and social justice. That perspective is one of cosmopolitanism, and it is represented by the diverse group of Australian global citizens whose thought and action we have examined in this book.

Australian activists as cosmopolitans

This book is therefore first an exercise in recognition and recovery. It has sought to give larger meaning to the work of an array of thinkers, activists, and social movements. By refining and applying the terms cosmopolitanism

and global citizenship, we have given an organising principle to a disparate history of ideas, and of political and judicial action in Australia. Our conclusion is that there is an important tradition of Australian political thought and action oriented to, or informed by, cosmopolitan values. This tradition is not just an abstract one, articulated by intellectuals, but one that is expressed and practised by a range of politically active Australians. The utility of the term 'cosmopolitan' was also endorsed by most of those interviewed, who, when presented with its chief characteristics, agreed that their views could be categorised under the terms cosmopolitanism and global citizenship.

It is important to note that the universalism espoused by global citizens does not imply any diminished commitment to Australia and its peoples. Instead, it involves a redefinition of Australian patriotism that reaches beyond the limits of what the state or the dominant political elites, or their populist protagonists, may deem appropriate. Although the global citizens discussed in this book are not nationalists, and are very sceptical of nationalism, they retain a strong allegiance to Australia and its people. Indeed, it is often the strength of their concern for Australians that helps explain why they have sought, in innovative ways (which differ substantially from those of the neoliberals), to 'open up' Australia to global influences. These global citizens, by applying universalist ideals in an effort to reshape Australian institutions and policies, have demonstrated the practical possibilities of global citizenship in action. Faith Bandler, for example, used the court of world opinion to help change Australia's 1901 Constitution by popular vote, thus transforming a racist clause (51xxvi) into one that created the possibility for the Commonwealth Parliament to pass special laws for the benefit of Aborigines, and offered the further potential to recognise Indigenous rights. Bob Brown helped establish the Greens as a third force in Tasmania, and then brought them into national politics. By helping create a new political party, Brown has provided an effective political forum for those wanting serious environmental reforms in Australia, and in so doing he also linked them to a broader global movement for a sustainable planet.

None of the nine figures discussed in this book have followed the same path, but they all form part of a distinct group. Because this group is not based in a single organisation or institution, it is not accurate to define it as a movement, although all of those considered here have been active in a range of social and political movements. These Australians subscribe to a way of thinking about Australia and its place in a wider world that is both global in outlook and more inclusive in its approach to politics and citizenship. What unites these Australians as global citizens is a normative

vision of how Australia ought to respond to local and global challenges. This vision comprises no less than a new moral community that redefines the boundaries of belonging for Australians, and their resultant individual and social obligations. By distinguishing between cosmopolitanism and internationalism, we have also marked out the different fields of *global* citizenship and *international* citizenship. Given the diverse and often conflicting ways in which the terms are used, such conceptual clarification is crucial if misunderstandings are to be avoided, and political critique to be enhanced. For example, Singer and Gregg's (2004) assessment of Australia's record as a 'global citizen' is really about Australia's official policies as an 'international citizen' in the world of foreign affairs, overseas trade and aid. Singer and Gregg's own critique, however, could be categorised as the product of global citizens applying cosmopolitan principles to the state's external practices.

For a different purpose, and with reference to the internal politics of Australia, Judith Brett contrasts 'cosmopolitans' with 'locals' or 'national patriots'. Brett (2004: 5) explains:

Cosmopolitans have the social skills and attitudes that enable them to move amongst people of different cultures with confidence and purpose, whereas locals, even when they travel, are more attuned to the familiar than the different. For Australian cosmopolitans, it is their interest in and skills with cultural differences that most distinguishes them from their parochial compatriots.

Although Brett's distinction provides an insight into the character of contemporary Australian political debate, its sociological dichotomy between cosmopolitans and locals suggests that this is the only normative or political option. In reproducing the older image of the rootless cosmopolitans, primarily intellectual elites, whose defining feature is their familiarity with different cultures, the distinction is also too narrow. In our view, the concept of cosmopolitanism indicates a commitment to universal values, *and* to taking civic action to protect them at local, national, and global levels.

This conceptualisation also enables a better understanding of the emergence of an alternative notion of Australian citizenship that complements but also transcends the official, legal meanings. Not only do the cosmopolitans discussed in this book maintain a more inclusive notion of Australian citizenship, they also recognise both a citizen's universal human rights and a citizen's responsibilities beyond the nation-state. Such a global awareness is not just confined to the older age groups. As Thao Nguyen avows, global citizenship has become a practice, often unconscious or unreflective, among many young people. Their practice of global activism often grows out of

experiences of discrimination, and is founded upon an appreciation of the power of political cooperation. This is not simply the lifestyle commitment of a certain younger generation, but one that has continuity over a number of generations. Nor is it confined to those people featured in this book. There is a longer tradition of cosmopolitan thought and action in Australia that extends back to the colonial period, and includes liberals, socialists, and feminists.

Making global citizenship practical

One query that is often raised about the ideal of global citizenship is how it can be realised in a world where there is no support for a world government.¹⁰ Our response again is that citizenship is more than a legal or administrative category used by state officials to determine membership in a political community. Citizenship is crucially about the quality of participation in public life, the boundaries of which are not confined to or defined by the nation-state. Obviously there are great challenges facing anyone who claims the title of global citizen, and seeks to take part in global politics independently of their governments. But such challenges are not insuperable. In recent decades, the phenomenon of global civic action has expanded in size and reach. With the growth of information technology and proliferation of diverse means of mass communication, a global public sphere is now emerging, albeit unevenly accessible under authoritarian regimes. Under such conditions, global citizens can profoundly influence and shape national, international, and global agendas.

These remarks lead directly to further questions about the political significance of cosmopolitanism and global citizenship. Through raising new global issues for consideration, or presenting old problems in a new light, global citizens can help to shift the way in which people perceive their country's relations with the wider world. In the Australian context, cosmopolitanism contributes to that 'enlarging' tendency in Australian society and culture, which was commended by the historian Manning Clark. As John Rickard (1994: 53) presents it, this unashamedly progressive tendency looks outward to 'integrate Australia into the world'. Historians like Clark set out such visions 'not simply for the celebration of some localised sense of national identity, but so that we could recognise our humanity' (Rickard 1994: 54). The political project of enlargement is common to all the Australians considered in this book. It necessarily opposes the other rather cramped project, often referred to as the 'small picture', which argues that Australia should *not* be judged by universal norms. During the years of the

Howard government¹¹ from 1996 until 2007, such arguments were used to reject United Nations monitoring of human rights abuses in Australia, and provided the grounds for labelling Australia not just as 'isolationist', but as 'exceptionalist' (Otto 2001).

As global citizens, each individual discussed in this book is concerned to move popular and official attitudes about the key political issues for Australia away from narrow nationalist and populist viewpoints. Michael Kirby (2000: xxv), for example, urges us (quoting Shakespeare) to 'see the challenges of our time through the world's eye', and demonstrates the relevance of international human rights law for Australia. Global citizenship, however, is not just oriented to changing perceptions, important as these are. Questions of policy, along with the necessary political decisions and action to implement it, are also central. Herb Feith sought to redefine the sources of Australian insecurity in the region and to strengthen non-military responses. Similarly, Nancy Shelley (1987) spoke of the need for a paradigm shift in conceptualising the nation's security, and for recognising that a peaceful world requires an active practice of non-violence. Jack Munday has worked assiduously to shift the role and purpose of trade unions beyond their usual preoccupation with wages and conditions. Margaret Reynolds has campaigned to promote respect for refugees, and helped to put in place legislation to ensure that Australian tourists are held accountable for criminal actions abroad, especially the sexual exploitation of children. Keith Suter's mission has been to alert Australians to key international and global problems such as disarmament and poverty, and reframe their responses to them.

These examples indicate the general political significance of a cosmopolitan outlook. Cosmopolitanism provides Australian citizens with an ideological and moral resource that can stimulate political criticism of institutions and policies, as well as orient political action inside or outside the nation-state. For this reason, cosmopolitanism is well suited to fill the political spaces left by the decline in attachment to traditional ideologies, such as those of democratic socialism and social liberalism. Cosmopolitanism offers counterpoint values or 'sentiments' (Appiah 2006: 23) of a universalist kind that can be used to hold governments, communities, and individuals to account for their actions. The political location of much cosmopolitanism is also important. It is often expressed through the voluntary non-governmental organisations of civil society, such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International, as well as political parties like the Greens. Activists in such groups 'gain voice across borders', and create new public spheres for the pursuit of global justice and transnational democracy (Bohman 2007: 189). The practices of global citizenship therefore demonstrate an alternative organisational tradition to both that of the state *and* its methods of cooperation with other

nation-states. Accordingly, global citizens are not bound by the usual constraints of the international citizenship of states.

The politics and impact of global citizenship

Given the widespread disillusionment with traditional party politics in Australia, as in other liberal democracies, cosmopolitanism offers the possibility of a new politics of commitment. Whenever governments become paralysed by the fear of losing elections, and resort to short-term survival tactics, or parties are disabled by factionalism, the cosmopolitan alternative becomes more appealing. Cosmopolitanism encourages citizens to focus on long-term problems, such as global warming, global pandemics, particularly HIV-AIDS, and systematic infringements upon human and civil rights, and to formulate strategies for solving them. Such strategies involve intellectual elites, but also require participation by ordinary people, both citizens and non-citizens.

Not only can such a new politics entice citizens away from the confines of their individual private lives, it can also inculcate a new cosmopolitan identity through which people understand both the necessity to claim rights *and* to undertake global responsibilities. There is evidence that, while many younger Australians are increasingly distrustful of major political parties and the mainstream media, they are intent on raising global issues and are committed to new forms of debate and 'participatory deliberation' (Walter and Strangio 2007: 83–4). In this regard, cosmopolitan organisations and activities foster processes of political socialisation that build and reinforce the new civic identities of global citizenship.

What, then, has been the impact of the global citizenship tradition in Australia? The examples of the activists for change analysed in this book enable us to make a preliminary assessment. Global citizens have helped to shape the nature of political discourse in Australia over the past fifty years. They have done this by broadening the language of political accountability to include, for example, human rights and ecological sustainability, as well as keeping alive the values of peace and non-violence. Through volunteering to assist in development projects overseas, many Australians have followed in the steps of Herb Feith, and aspired to foster peace through inter-cultural dialogue.

Most of the subjects studied in this book have contributed to the broad project of making governments and corporations more accountable, particularly for breaches of the principle of non-discrimination.¹² In this regard, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other UN covenants have

been critical. The language of international human rights has become an important political resource for protecting and advancing the interests of those on the margins of mainstream society. Aborigines and Torres Straits Islanders, for example, are now able to call upon the standards of international human rights, albeit with uneven success (see e.g. Davis 2007).

The discourses of environmentalism and political ecology now provide principles for guiding environmental accountability. Precursors to such ideas were articulated and disseminated by activists like Jack Munday and Bob Brown and many others who succeeded in protecting both urban and remote environmental heritage areas. This discourse and activism helped set the broader political climate for federal government decisions to nominate particular wilderness places for World Heritage protection, and for Australia's eventual decision in late 2007 to sign the Kyoto Protocol on reducing greenhouse emissions.

As Carmen Lawrence notes in her Foreword, the global citizens discussed in this book have experienced vulnerability not as a threat, but as an opportunity to create a different society in Australia, where violence, injustice, and discrimination are diminished. As a consequence, the values of global citizenship are evident in changing Australian attitudes towards racial discrimination, global warming, violence, and the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. Nonetheless, the discourses of global citizenship are strongly contested, and holding governments and corporations to account through such values remains a constant political struggle.

Taking a risk

Crucially, the commitment to universalism in the cosmopolitan identity entails a commitment to comprehending and taking risks. This is the opposite of the attitude to risk management that preoccupies much contemporary organisational and administrative practice. Discussing the demands upon intellectuals, Edward Said (1994: xii) explains: 'Universality means taking a risk in order to go beyond the easy certainties provided us by our background, language, nationality, which so often shield us from the reality of others'. Martha Nussbaum (1996: 15) puts the problem another way, saying that becoming a citizen of the world is a 'lonely business', in which one cannot rely on the comforts, warmth, and security of patriotism. But in saying that cosmopolitanism offers only 'reason and the love of humanity', she overly intellectualises the problem. Certainly, individual judgment and decision making are very important, but for the contemporary global citizen, their arena of political thought and action is necessarily cooperative

and collective. As all the subjects in this book show, the active global citizen is not self-absorbed, but socially engaged. The global citizen does not just conduct an internal conversation.

Global citizens are encouraged to 'manage' their risk and insecurity with inclusive democratic deliberation and personal judgment.¹³ In this way, their practices can be differentiated from the narrow rule following, and prohibition upon, deliberative judgment required by the advocates of 'risk management'. While global citizenship must be instrumentalist in pursuing explicit political goals, this is not its defining feature. In showing their commitment to certain values, especially when the prospects of realising them are slim, global citizens are frequently expressivists. Where the conditions for deliberation and negotiation are absent, global citizenship encourages symbolic protest, and direct action. In this way, issues can be brought into the public sphere, and a political groundswell created for deliberation and negotiation (Carter 2005: 190).

When risk is conceived as inherent to politics, and the subject of judgment based upon deliberation, more imaginative forms of political leadership can become possible. Indeed, it is precisely this sort of politics, political identity, and leadership that forms the basis of movements to shift globalisation away from its neoliberal economic tendencies. Popular globalisation, as Suter (2000: 9) calls it, comprises just this collection of cosmopolitan impulses. By building networks of global civic action beyond direct government control, global citizens are creating a movement of 'globalisation from below' (see Falk 1995). In this way, they have opposed the economic and political forces of 'globalisation from above' that tend to disregard the broader panoply of human rights and ecological constraints. With the recovery of political critique, *and* the evolution of cosmopolitan identities and practices, Australians need not be bound by the dogmas of neoliberalism and populist nationalism. Although such a transition in thinking confronts huge obstacles, the studies in this book suggest that cosmopolitanism and global citizenship can provide a basis for the renewal of Australian politics.

Notes

- 1 We would like to thank Lucinda Horrocks for her comments on this chapter.
- 2 For good overviews of the concept of globalisation, and debates over its meaning, see Steger (2003) and Scholte (2005).
- 3 On this topic, see the essays in Booth, Dunne and Cox (2001).
- 4 These questions are adapted from the three major patterns of argument in debates over globalisation identified by Held et al. (1999: 2–10).

- 5 There are, of course, other responses, such as those of a religious nature that propose the adoption of universalist theological principles and global programs, but these are expressed by a tiny minority and have had little impact on public policy.
- 6 See Steger (2003: 93–112).
- 7 See Stokes (2006b).
- 8 These national policies, and institutions are now often referred to as the 'Australian Settlement'. See Kelly (1992) and the critique in Stokes (2004a).
- 9 See the essays in Leach, Stokes and Ward (2000).
- 10 See also the discussion in Stokes (2004b).
- 11 The Howard government was defeated in the federal election of November 2007. Whereas the key election issue was industrial relations, a factor contributing to the government's defeat was the unsatisfactory way that global issues like climate change were handled (Walter and Strangio 2007: 14).
- 12 The principle of non-discrimination is indicated clearly and comprehensively, for example, in Article 26 of *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*: 'All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.'
- 13 See the discussions of deliberative democracy in Dryzek (2000; 2006) and deliberative citizenship in Stokes (2006a).

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