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# Global Citizenship in Australia: Theory and Practice

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... our life should not be based on cities or peoples, each with its own view of right or wrong, but we should regard all men as our fellow countrymen.

(Zeno cited in Baldry 1965: 159)

There exists in Australia a significant group of intellectuals whose distinguishing feature is their global outlook on politics and law. These are writers and activists who call upon universalist values to criticise and reform institutions and practices in Australia, and in other countries. By universalism is meant a doctrine, such as world peace, international human rights, or ecological sustainability, whose principles – moral and political – apply to all people whatever their gender, religion, culture, or political location. The Australians who hold such values are not the traditional kind of detached scholars or academics; they are engaged intellectuals who interpret, adapt and promote political ideas emphasising the global community to which all Australians belong. As ‘global citizens’, they attempt to enlarge Australian notions of political identity beyond the national. Contrary to certain nationalist and populist views, these intellectuals are not ‘rootless cosmopolitans’, unmindful of local concerns and affiliations, but strongly grounded in Australian society. Their ideas, life and work offer a new dimension to our understanding of globalisation, citizenship, and the scope for political action. This book draws out that important transnational tradition of political thought and action.

As engaged activists or publicists, such intellectuals interpret, adapt, promote, and creatively apply political ideas that are usually formulated by others. By articulating and transmitting social and political ideas to a broader public, they may be said to produce a form of Australian political thought.<sup>2</sup> These people rarely exert direct, formal political power, though they may

mix and meet with those who do. Thus, we may discern a category of public intellectuals who seek to extend our political perspectives beyond the local, and expand the traditional boundaries of national community and civic identity. Generally, their objective is to challenge, by words and deeds, the dominant public values, and establish new ones. Although they may adopt traditional political strategies, such as writing and lobbying for their cause, some have taken the more radical approach of protest and direct action. In a few cases, their tactics, such as the green bans, have been highly innovative.

This group of intellectuals comprises a distinct political tradition that seeks to transcend parochial, nationalist and populist politics in Australia. One of their guiding assumptions is that pursuing universalist political principles will benefit not only the people of Australia, whether or not they are citizens, but also those outside it. Just as important, they also work out of particular local and national historical contexts. Accordingly, in this book we consider those intellectuals situated in Australian institutions and organisations, and who grapple with and try to implement universal ideas. These public figures provide an alternative perspective upon, and contribution to, debates on citizenship in a world where social and economic problems increasingly transcend national boundaries, and where these boundaries are becoming more permeable.

## Transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and internationalism<sup>3</sup>

There is no single tradition of thinking about and acting upon universalist principles and intuitions. Universalist ideas can be found in many religious, moral and political forms. A first task, therefore, is to distinguish between the different kinds of universalist political ideas and action, so that we may better categorise, understand and evaluate the contributions of this group of intellectuals. In this regard, the term transnationalism may usefully be deployed to describe those normative traditions of political theory and practice on issues, events and conditions that are not limited to the nation-state. Familiar examples from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries include communist, socialist, liberal, and feminist internationalism. Nonetheless, there are significant differences of origin, principle and strategy among these transnationalist ideologies. We distinguish here between two types of transnationalism, namely cosmopolitanism and internationalism, both of which share a number of common features, including the advocacy of universal principles, but which diverge over how these principles may be put into practice.

Perhaps the original form of transnationalism is *cosmopolitanism*, which is a philosophy of life and morality based upon universal values (Heater 2001: 179). Its origins lie among the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome, though similar ideas about the essential unity of all people are discernible in non-western cultures, most notably Hinduism in India and Confucianism in China (Heater 1996: x). The Cynics of the fourth century BC saw cosmopolitanism as a moral way of life in which one lived according to the universal natural law and rejected values set by human decisions and convention (Kleingeld and Brown 2002: 2). The primary moral emphasis was upon individuals and their obligations to others, not on states or polities. The principal task for a Cynic was to set an example of the virtuous life.<sup>4</sup>

The later Stoics of the third century BC, however, while recognising the universal law of the divine cosmos, did not entirely reject political engagement.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, cosmopolitan morality has been extended into political theories of cosmopolitan, or global, or world citizenship involving notions of civic identity, values, rights and responsibilities that transcend national boundaries, as well as institutions appropriate to them. The term ‘cosmopolitan citizenship’ conveys the notion of a moral *and* political community whose members share, or ought to share, a number of basic human values such as the equal moral worth of each person, mutual respect and tolerance of differences, and even the promotion of justice and non-violence. The cosmopolitan citizen maintains a global perspective upon obligations owed to others, whatever their race, religion, ethnicity, social status, or their connection to a nation-state.

David Held (2003) has distilled these observations into four fundamental principles of cosmopolitanism. The first two are essentially moral while the second two are political. He first sketches an individualist moral ontology, namely, that ‘the ultimate units of moral concern are individual people, not states or other particular forms of human association’ (Held 2003: 470). Held’s (2003: 470) second principle of ‘reciprocal recognition’ is the ethical requirement that every person should accord equal respect to every other person. Held then articulates two cosmopolitan political principles, which he calls ‘consent’ and ‘inclusiveness and subsidiarity’. The principle of consent ‘recognises that a commitment to equal worth and equal moral value requires a non-coercive political process through which people can negotiate and pursue their interconnections, interdependence and differences’ (Held 2003: 470). Finally, the principle of inclusiveness and subsidiarity recognises that ‘[t]hose affected by public decisions ought to have a say in their making’ (Held 2003: 471). Thus, at a minimum, the cosmopolitan or global citizen is bound to be a participatory democrat. That is, global citizens do not just delegate responsibility for political decision making to their parliamentary

representatives, but seek to participate in making decisions that affect them.

Cosmopolitans may differ over the means considered best able to promote universal values and principles. Within cosmopolitanism, therefore, we may discern differences of emphasis and implementation in which various dimensions may combine. As we have seen above, one type focuses more upon the moral role of the *individual* and the person's relations with other human beings. Here, cosmopolitanism emphasises a broad *moral* stance that gives priority to the autonomy and dignity of individual humans, and the principle of mutual respect (Vertovec and Cohen 2002: 10). This stance may extend into a *legal* cosmopolitanism that specifies and codifies universal rights and obligations. There is also a third form of *political* cosmopolitanism dedicated to creating institutions, national and transnational, to protect universal rights and fulfil global responsibilities.<sup>6</sup> A common concern is the promotion of peaceful relations between people and states. In the creation and maintenance of international legal institutions such as the International Criminal Court, the legal and the political types of cosmopolitanism tend to merge.

In practice, moral individualist cosmopolitanism seeks to protect and promote the values of individual autonomy and human dignity. Particularly since the formation of the United Nations (UN), the rationale for such values derives from ideas and codes of universal human rights. This form of cosmopolitanism is expressed both through individual action and collectively, through groups in global civil society, such as international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). Moral cosmopolitanism, as I have outlined it, may have a purely private dimension, but it becomes public and political when it takes either a critical or constructive form in seeking to change policies or modify institutions of domestic government or transnational governance. We may legitimately call this latter activity a form of citizenship and specifically categorise its civic ideology as one of *cosmopolitan citizenship*, *world citizenship* or *global citizenship*.

Modern global citizenship requires the individual to be actively concerned about issues that impact on global society. Those who see themselves as global citizens engage in political activism to compel governments and corporations to abide by commonly acknowledged international values such as those embodied in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Global citizenship values are also evident in many INGOs and transnational social movements that are less constrained by the formal rules of the inter-state system than governments, and may criticise and try to shape that system (Falk 1994; Ghils 1992; Korten 1990, Tarrow 2005).

There is a strong tradition of INGOs, such as the Red Cross and Amnesty

International, that are often able to influence national governments when their citizens are powerless to do so. Other global citizens aim to establish political institutions of global governance, global democracy or world federations to give substance to citizens' rights and duties (e.g. Kerr 2001; Suter 1981). Coming from below, as it were, these institutions are not based upon the current system of nation-states. Cosmopolitan ideas are not just relevant to global problems; they provide a perspective in which critics can scrutinise particular problems such as abuses of human rights within their own society.

By contrast, the second form of transnationalism, *internationalism*, is based upon what Hedley Bull (1977: 25–7) has called an 'international society' of nation-states. Internationalism is the principle that 'in the interests of greater prosperity and security, nation states must collaborate in international organizations' (Northedge 1966: 53).<sup>7</sup> Internationalism offers a vision of a global order based upon nation-states that are bound by their respect for state sovereignty, and an obligation to participate in international institutions (Bull 1977: 42; Carter 2001: 2; Pogge 1992: 48–9). The guiding principle is that of inter-state order, supplemented where feasible by international justice. Internationalists reject the traditional 'realist' interpretation of international politics as one of a state of anarchy in which conflict is inevitable, and in which order and security can only be maintained by stronger states exercising their superior power. Internationalists specify a strong role for the nation-state, but within a framework of cooperation for mutual benefit based upon limited and voluntarily agreed-upon restrictions on sovereignty. Examples include the League of Nations, the United Nations and their associated agencies, such as the International Court of Justice. Nonetheless, these liberal international institutions may or may not have a global reach. Wherever liberal institutionalism is at work, we may categorise its civic ideology as one of *international citizenship*.<sup>8</sup>

This form of transnational citizenship often arises out of serious problems – war, global poverty, natural disaster relief, environmental degradation or financial collapse – that threaten the security of sovereign nation-states. Ideally, as international citizens, nation-states agree to cooperate under a system of international rules and institutional regimes bound by common principles of conduct (such as those set out in international law and multilateralism). Here, international citizenship is largely the province of national governments working within the many international and regional institutions formed under the auspices of international organisations such as the UN. Except under the most extreme circumstances, international citizenship is usually limited by the mutual respect for sovereignty of other states. Within international society, the civic actors or 'citizens'

are states and their officials or representatives. Furthermore, these institutions can create their own problems. For example, the role of powerful international organisations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as the regional polity of the European Union, has raised issues about their infringement upon national sovereignty and the erosion of national citizenship. Nonetheless, on such problems, Kofi Annan (1999), when he was the Secretary-General of the UN, suggested that the notion of state sovereignty was being redefined to take account of infringements upon 'individual sovereignty', such as where there are mass violations of human rights. He noted, for example, a 'developing international norm in favour of intervention to protect civilians from wholesale slaughter'. Annan (1999) saw this norm as sanctioned by the UN Charter: 'When we read the charter today, we are more than ever conscious that its aim is to protect individual human beings, not to protect those who abuse them'.

Both cosmopolitanism and internationalism share a number of common features, including the advocacy of global cooperation. Yet 'global' and 'international' forms of citizenship part company over the different kinds of political actors involved, the different priorities given to the nation-state and national sovereignty, and in assumptions about what is politically possible within a particular context. Whereas internationalism is concerned primarily with promoting peaceful relations and security between states, cosmopolitans approach such problems with a greater focus upon the role of the individual and their rights and obligations to others. Internationalism is associated with the theory and practice of international citizenship, and cosmopolitanism is generally expressed through global or world citizenship.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, cosmopolitanism and internationalism may be understood as two poles of a political continuum, and particular individuals may operate at different times as either global citizens or, when working for nation-states, as international citizens.

## Political identity and obligation

Our discussion above raises important theoretical and practical questions about political identity and obligation. On the first issue, a common question is whether any citizen can maintain more than one primary civic identity and loyalty. In response, Martha Nussbaum (1996: 9) sketches the Stoic view on the matter:

The Stoics stress that to be a citizen of the world one does not need to give up local identifications, which can be a source of great richness in life. They

suggest that we think of ourselves not as devoid of local affiliations, but as surrounded by a series of concentric circles.

These concentric circles begin with the family and progressively include extended family, neighbours, local groups, fellow city dwellers, and fellow countrymen, to name but a few possibilities. She continues: 'Outside all these circles is the largest one, humanity as a whole'. Nonetheless, this understanding does not require us to abandon our other affiliations.

We need not give up our special affections and identifications, whether ethnic or gender based or religious. . . . But we should also work to make all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern, base our political deliberations on that interlocking commonality, and give the circle that defines our humanity special attention and respect.

Historically, dual identities, loyalties and obligations are evident among the Roman Stoics, such as Cicero and Seneca, who maintained that a citizen had obligations to both the cosmos and the *patria*, or homeland (Kleingeld and Brown 2002: 3). For them, political engagement ought not to be confined to one's own polis.<sup>10</sup>

In an age of globalisation, such concerns have become more vital, for it is widely considered that the political identity of many citizens has become more fluid, hybrid, and multi-layered. As we have seen, such features did not just arise in the late twentieth century. Wherever there have existed multinational empires, citizens have maintained more than one political identity. Even in more recent centuries, where the primary allegiance of citizens to the nation-state has been an important source of civic identity, this has not excluded other usually complementary identities. We may therefore conclude with Alonso (1995: 585) that:

The idea that citizenship in a nation-state should be a person's primary identity is a recent one on an historic scale. In many cases it is only a hopeful fiction, although sometimes a useful one. For most people, this form of identity competes with, or complements, several other forms of identity such as race, tribe, language, ancestry, religion or ideology.

The Earth Charter formulated in March 2000 (cited in Dower 2003: 166) recognises just such multiple identities: 'We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked'. Multiple affiliations and obligations have become the condition of, and possibility for, modern political life.

Yet one may still ask whether it is possible to undertake the possibly conflicting ethical obligations associated with different civic identities. Can



citizens combine both a universalist commitment to cosmopolitan values *and* respect for national allegiances? Here too, the possibility of maintaining multiple ethical commitments, with certain provisos, has been demonstrated. Charles Jones (1999: 169) affirms, for example, that ‘no nation-based ethical commitments can ever constitute the entire sphere of a person’s legitimate obligations’.<sup>11</sup> Such possibilities have been referred to in the American literature as ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’ (e.g. Ackerman 1994; Cohen 1992).<sup>12</sup> Here, the qualifying adjective needs to be understood as meaning ‘grounded in particular political context’, rather than the less respectable meaning commonly given it by Australians. The term ‘cosmopolitan patriots’ (Appiah 1996) also conveys the aspiration to combine local affiliations with universal values.<sup>13</sup>

Recognising these conditions of political life, however, does not dispense with debate over the limits and requirements of a cosmopolitan political identity.<sup>14</sup> One vexed question is which identity and obligation has primacy for the individual and the state. National governments, predictably, tend to assert the primacy of a national political identity over more cosmopolitan and internationalist ones. Tan (2005: 165), among others, however, requires that the commitment to cosmopolitanism must have primacy, for it is arguable that this ethic gives meaning to all subsidiary ones. Nonetheless, there remain many other practical issues to be determined, including the rights and duties that citizens should accord to strangers, or to those outside the nation, or to future generations.<sup>15</sup> Intense political dispute and conflict has occurred over such issues. It is not just their symbolic value that is significant, but also, as in the case of immigration, whether individuals and groups can gain access to material resources and physical space.

The process of constructing any political identity is an inherently selective one, in which certain memories of the past are brought to prominence, and others are forgotten. For nation-states like Australia it is the nationalist heritage that usually receives most attention, and this often obscures the disparate and often fragmented history of ‘transnationalist’ achievements. This book aims to recover that transnationalist tradition of Australian political thought and action. The intention is to provide a way of interpreting, and confirming the legitimacy of, a distinctive set of political ideas and experience. But in this project too, choices must be made.

## Scope, limits and qualifications

As this is primarily an interpretive task, we do not seek to evaluate in any systematic way the political success or failure of its subjects. Furthermore,



this study of cosmopolitanism in Australian political thought focuses on its legal and political dimension. It does not include the meaning of cosmopolitanism as an attitude or disposition that enables one to travel widely, and be familiar with different cultures (Vertovec and Cohen 2002: 13). Nor does it include aesthetic cosmopolitanism that represents the cosmopolitan as one who holds an appreciation of beauty that reaches beyond criteria commonly accepted within a particular society. Similarly, we have little interest in consumerist cosmopolitanism exemplified in the expansion of global fashions and styles or the global spread of consumer goods. Most importantly, the book does not encompass the pejorative use of ‘cosmopolitan’ in Soviet and post-Soviet bloc countries to signify lack of patriotism and allegiance to international capital, or as a racist political code word for ‘Jew’.

Though neoliberalism is eminently worthy of examination in its own right, we also put to one side this ‘economic’ form of cosmopolitanism. This is because neoliberalism’s emphasis upon universal economic principles that promote freer markets and global free trade is an unduly narrow or reductionist form of cosmopolitanism. By recommending significant limits on government intervention in economy and society, neoliberalism rules out too much that would be of political interest to those in the larger tradition of cosmopolitanism. Specifically, neoliberalism tends to give primacy to a limited range of economic freedoms over other kinds of human rights. For this reason, it may be claimed that although neoliberalism meets the first moral criterion of cosmopolitanism, it does not sufficiently adhere to the second principle of equal mutual respect. Furthermore, its advocates tend not to follow the two political principles outlined by Held above. Because of neoliberalism’s minimalist approach to democracy and citizenship, which gives preference to a strong centralised state governed by representative and elitist forms of democracy, it falls short of the participatory ethos required by political cosmopolitanism.<sup>16</sup> Further, it is arguable that most transnational corporations are not subject to sufficient democratic controls, either externally by the state or internally through participatory and inclusive forms of management.<sup>17</sup> It is for these reasons that contemporary global citizenship may be considered a direct critic and opponent of neoliberalism. It may be argued further that the globalising power of neoliberalism gives global citizenship one of its most powerful rationales.

Given the discussion above, we are also not concerned with those who may be called ‘internationalists’ and whose careers have largely occurred within the official circles of government and the public service. There is a long and distinguished list of Australian prime ministers, foreign ministers and public servants who have espoused and acted upon internationalist

principles. A notable example was H. V. Evatt, whose work in and support for multilateral institutions led an American dean of law to bestow upon him the title of ‘citizen of the world’ (Tennant 1972: 220). One former Labor foreign minister, Gareth Evans (1989), even attempted to give conceptual and policy substance to the idea of Australia as an ‘international citizen’ in world affairs.<sup>18</sup> Our focus, however, is largely upon those who have pursued a cosmopolitan agenda outside the system of states, or who have been on the fringes of government, or who have worked both inside and outside government. Because of their idealism and critical bent, such cosmopolitans have often been in disagreement with the official Australian internationalists.

The book is not intended to be comprehensive. It aims simply to provide a representative range of examples of cosmopolitan thought and action in Australia. This has meant that we had to leave out a few subject areas and people that may rightly be considered cosmopolitan. For example, although we discuss one person of South Sea Islander descent, there are no Aboriginal or Torres Straits Islanders. Certainly, Indigenous activists have engaged in transnational activism for their cause, such as by their participation in the World Council of Indigenous Peoples and forums of the United Nations.<sup>19</sup> Nor is the Indigenous quest for self-determination incompatible with cosmopolitanism, since most arguments for Indigenous self-determination tend to invoke universal values. Nonetheless, Indigenous appeals to international law and justice serve two main functions. Like the cosmopolitans, Indigenous activists and writers have used such principles to show up the structure of discrimination and oppression suffered by Indigenous people, and provide grounds for the reform of policies and institutions. Where the principles support programs of democratic inclusion, there can be an accommodation with cosmopolitanism.

Yet, reference to international law has also buttressed calls for Indigenous self-determination that go beyond inclusion. In this discourse, the primary goal is to promote self-government and the freedom of Indigenous people to make their own choices over issues that concern them. Although Indigenous people may choose to build their political campaigns for self-determination upon international principles, this is not the primary aim, which is to enable authentic forms of political autonomy. By its very nature, this quest for self-determination puts Indigenous values to the fore, and these may conflict with the principles contained in such documents as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A Kombummerri elder and Queensland Aboriginal activist, Mary Graham (cited in Ivanitz 2002: 129), points out the source of the problem: