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**T**he Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia was established in 1971. Previously, some of the functions were carried out through the Social Science Research Council of Australia, established in 1942. Elected to the Academy for distinguished contributions to the social sciences, the 410 Fellows of the Academy offer expertise in the fields of *accounting, anthropology, demography, economics, economic history, education, geography, history, law, linguistics, philosophy, political science, psychology, social medicine, sociology and statistics*.

The Academy's objectives are:

- to promote excellence in and encourage the advancement of the social sciences in Australia;
- to act as a coordinating group for the promotion of research and teaching in the social sciences;
- to foster excellence in research and to subsidise the publication of studies in the social sciences;
- to encourage and assist in the formation of other national associations or institutions for the promotion of the social sciences or any branch of them;
- to promote international scholarly cooperation and to act as an Australian national member of international organisations concerned with the social sciences;
- to act as consultant and adviser in regard to the social sciences; and,
- to comment where appropriate on national needs and priorities in the area of the social sciences.

These objectives are fulfilled through a program of activities, research projects, independent advice to government and the community, publication and cooperation with fellow institutions both within Australia and internationally.

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## President's column

2005 has started full of activity for the Academy.

Our program of Policy Papers – a new series initiated by the Policy and Advocacy Committee – has, in a short time, become a vehicle for the intelligent discussion of major policy questions. Meredith Edwards provided a systematic look at the mechanisms by which the social sciences and the arena of public policy could relate more fruitfully, in her *Social Science Research and Public Policy: Narrowing the Divide*.

Most recently, we have published the most ambitious paper yet – a three part contribution to *Uncertainty and Climate Change: The Challenge for Policy*. In this paper, the Academy was especially fortunate to have the first of the trilogy written by John Zillman. John is President of the Academy of the Technological Sciences and Engineering and Director of the Australian Bureau of Meteorology from 1978-2003. He is thus extremely well placed to reflect on the level and character of uncertainty in the science of climate change, and the challenge to scientists of providing useful information while conveying an accurate sense of the degree of uncertainty. Warwick McKibbin then reflects on how economics can provide guidance on how to deal with the uncertainty that John Zillman identifies. He is critical of the Kyoto Protocol in this regard, and puts forward a well developed alternative approach. Aynsley Kellow focuses on the politics of managing such an important public policy issue when policy must be made with very imperfect information, but the price of getting it wrong will be high. These policy papers are part of the Academy's program of showing the social sciences at work, and displaying the major contribution that they can make to intelligent debate on important issues.



In the pursuit of the same agenda, the Conveners of workshops in the Academy's Workshop program are being encouraged, where appropriate, to provide time in their program for participants to come to a view on the policy ideas that flow from the insights of their scholarship. The outcomes of these reflections can be found on the Academy website (a most interesting place to browse, if you have not been there for some time). In addition, again where appropriate, Workshop conveners are being encouraged to invite one or two suitable public servants to join in their discussions.

In early March, the Policy and Advocacy Committee, of which Mike Keating is Chair, arranged to meet with the Secretaries of the Commonwealth departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet (Peter Shergold), Family and Community Services (Jeff Harmer) and Education, Science and Training (Lisa Paul). This meeting heard what the major agendas are for each department, and discussed ways in which the Academy and the social sciences more generally might contribute intelligent ideas to the policy process. As a result of this meeting, it is likely that the Academy will offer to identify distinguished social scientists who could speak at the regular monthly breakfast meeting of senior public servants. We hope also to establish a regular (perhaps annual) meeting with appropriate people from the main policy departments, with an eye to keeping informed about major policy issues and providing advice about scholars in the Academy, or more broadly, who can provide original thinking on these

issues. We also intend to encourage senior public servants to attend our Annual Symposium, where it has a policy flavour, and will offer free places to a number of junior staff from departments that do attend.

In all, I believe the meeting with Secretaries was most fruitful, and an excellent initiative of the Policy and Advocacy Committee. The Secretaries themselves expressed similar sentiments.

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The theme of connecting the social sciences with the policy makers was continued in an initiative from the Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (of which this Academy is an active supporter). CHASS invited a number of members of the Federal Parliament, their advisors and some senior public servants, to attend a dinner, kindly hosted by the Vice Chancellor of the Australian National University, Professor Ian Chubb. At this dinner, Hal Kendig and I (on the basis of our roles in the NHMRC/ARC Ageing Well Network), conducted a dialogue on some of the important aspects surrounding the ageing of the Australian population. This was intended to show the social sciences at work, and to have the members of parliament leave with some ideas that were new to them. By all accounts it was a successful evening, and several of the parliamentarians were interested in the possibility of providing such events in Parliament House.

The Academy has been actively involved in the consultations initiated by Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) to review the way in which research activity is measured. With the financial support of DEST, the Academy convened a meeting in February of 10 Fellows plus our Executive Director, selected to represent a broad range of the social science disciplines. The Fellows were: Sue Richardson, Diane Gibson, Doug McEachern, Alison Booth, Frank Jackson, Beryl Hesketh, Stuart Macintyre, Alan Woodland and Marian Sawyer.

This meeting discussed at length the following topics:

*Attributes of an Research Quality Framework (RQF)*

- What attributes should an RQF as a whole have?
- How should quality and impact be defined?
- How should an RQF ensure that 'new starters' to the system are not locked out?
- How can future/potential/emerging excellence as well as past excellence be recognised?
- Does the quality of research training need to be considered as part of or separate to research quality?
- How could the National Research Priorities be applied within an RQF?

*Implementation and Metrics*

- How should quality and impact be measured?
- How is the quality of research training best measured?
- How frequently should the assessment process be run to ensure that there is a greater focus on improved research quality and impact?
- What sort of transition arrangements would be appropriate?

The group generally accepted that a revised method of evaluating research is likely to be beneficial, for several reasons. These were a) a more credible system would help

to boost the level of funding for research; b) it would lead to a better allocation of research funds and c) it would probably improve the quality of research.

The discipline or department was seen to be the most appropriate unit of assessment, with each department making a case for its research quality based on explicit guidelines. The process would need a capacity to evaluate multi-discipline units. It would also need to have criteria that encouraged a long-term perspective on research quality and quantity. There was considerable discussion of the risks of gender bias in the usual measures of output and esteem, and an emphasis that such bias must be avoided. It was argued that introduction of a revised quality system that was used to allocate resources would be resisted if it did not increase resources at the same time. A copy of the full record of discussion from this workshop has been provided to DEST and is, or soon will be, available on their website at [www.dest.gov.au/resqual/workshops](http://www.dest.gov.au/resqual/workshops).

A similar round table consultation was organised by the National Academies Forum, with an emphasis on how to deal with multi-discipline research. Our Academy was represented at this discussion by Brian Head and Frank Jackson.

The consultation process on this vital topic has been extensive and taken considerable Academy time. I am very grateful to the Fellows who contributed their expertise and time to enable the Academy to play its proper role in these consultations. Let us hope that the final outcome will be substantially improved as a result.

The Academy also made an important contribution to the NHMRC review of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*. This is an extremely important review, since the new National Statement intends to apply to all forms of research involving humans, rather than just medical and bio-medical research. It was crucial to contribute an informed social science voice to this review, in order to assist the review team to avoid the manifest problems for social science research in the current National Statement. The Academy submission was prepared by Robert Cribb, Robert Gregson, Don Byrne, Conal Condren, Duncan Ironmonger and Nic Peterson. Before it was submitted, it was endorsed by the Academy Executive. The working group did a fine job and again, all social scientists are indebted to them for the quality and careful reasoning with which they represented the research interests of our disciplines. A copy of the submission will be placed on our website in late April.

I am pleased to be able to report that our annual Indigenous Summer School was held in February, at the University of Melbourne. This is one of our most important forms of outreach, and has been convened since its inception by Leon Mann and Marcia Langton. It was again an outstanding success, judged so by the important criterion of participant satisfaction.

This is just a brief review of the major representative functions of the Academy so far this year. Much else is happening besides, in our regular workshop, research and international programs. I should note in particular that in February, the Academy signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Council of Social Science Research. We are optimistic that this will lead to a number of joint projects and academic exchanges between our two academies.

**Sue Richardson**

## **Australian Intellectuals Today**

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**Not by Words Alone**

**Geoff Sharp**

Any attempt to discuss Australian intellectuals now is faced with the difficulties associated with their main roots being set within a far wider world. It is merely a century since the term itself, 'the intellectuals', was coined in recognition of their relatively independent and self active role in public life<sup>1</sup>. In the intervening years they have gone on to divide and multiply so that, in changing their relation to every institution, they have changed themselves and become integral with a different reality. To even begin to pin down 'the intellectuals' now calls for some attention to their place within a social world which is being reframed by intellectualisation.

Such a process can scarcely begin unless the way in which the intellectuals are actually constituted in a unique social register is recognised. This is not to point to the distinctive content of intellectual ideas or even to note the way in which that content reaches towards generality. Rather it is to emphasise that the abstraction, which is as one with that generality, is not confined to ideas but is integral with distinctive forms of social interchange. These forms and their changing mode of engagement within the overall process of social life must first be sketched if we are to work towards an understanding of the intellectuals in their contemporary expression.

The notion of differentiating social types in terms of their modes of social engagement has a relatively short history. Almost a century ago Max Weber, in a classical essay entitled 'Bureaucracy',<sup>2</sup> outlined the conditions of formation of the bureaucrat. He specified formality, the suppression of any particular or personal relation to others, as one key feature that set the bureaucrat apart. In the intervening years the professions, along with an extended range of institutional settings, have slowly been drawn within the scope of theoretical accounts of the way in which social types emerge. But the intellectuals, in a literal sense, have remained as a given category; they were gifted or talented, or for Weber himself they were called from an ideal realm. For him, while intellectuals had become more explicitly responsive to historical circumstances, they still had a continuity with that ancient prophetic lineage which represented them as vessels of divine meanings. Yet, as if in some anticipation of the present, Weber made a distinction. Some intellectuals lived for their vocations, others lived off them.

No doubt the familiar emphasis upon the abstract ideas of intellectuals, and the recognition that as individuals they were different, may have pointed, in some quite diffuse sense, to their distinctive mode of engagement with reality as such. That awareness alone was sufficient to place them outside the terms of everyday life as lived by the great majority of the population. Nevertheless this was an ambiguous relation. While it recognised that the leading ideas of at least some intellectuals make an indispensable contribution to the normative and moral framework, the onesidedness of that recognition carried with it a significant bias. Its preoccupation with ideas and prominent individuals obscures the mode of interchange within which they arise, thus limiting insight into its potential to spread out to encompass social life as a whole.

The argument I am suggesting here asserts that, however elementary they may be, it is techniques or in their elaborated expression, technologies, which set the intellectuals apart. The basic point is the way these techniques mediate, extend, and reconstruct the relation to world as experienced through the given powers of the body within contexts where people meet one another in the flesh.

Here I concentrate upon the way writing (in the case of the humanities) and writing, complemented by technical apparatus as well (in the case of the sciences), provide a means of standing one step back. By entering into a different mode of social interchange intellectuals constitute a different engagement in and experience of reality.

In a purely empirical attitude to intellectuals writing is a quite mundane activity, no more than the carrier of a content of ideas. Part of my purpose here is to lift it out of that taken for granted obscurity and to emphasise its role as a condition for, and a complement to, the role of the ideas of intellectuals within civilisations. That will entail a restricted focus upon those intellectuals who work quite directly with concepts with a view to articulating a coherent narrative or who, in going beyond that, seek to develop an explicit and rationally sustainable explanation of events or phenomena. Nevertheless it is clear that to set the boundaries in terms of words or writing alone is to leave aside the musicians, the artists or even the performers who, while their direct source of inspiration is more likely to be by way of the sensibilities than by more fully explicit ideas, should nevertheless be recognised as close kin to the intellectuals. Their transformation of sensory experience, through its varied modalities, feeds into the imagery of language. Sharing the criterion of abstraction they enter into a distinctive mode of interchange, which influences and is influenced by the intellectual focus upon ideas. Patrick White illustrates that relationship when he acknowledges his debt to the painter, Roy de Maistre: 'he taught me to write by teaching me to look at paintings and get beneath the surface...'.<sup>3</sup> While comparable examples of the interpenetration of the various regions of the intellectual field are commonplace in the history of the relations of the sciences and the arts it is far beyond my brief to attempt to explore them here. It is sufficient to note that no single term can readily come to mind which evokes the common ground onto which abstraction draws these groupings. To discuss either of them in isolation can readily convey the sense of a lack of feeling or alternatively, one of excessive subjectivity or indulgence.

Within the scope of this essay my contention is that a focus upon writing and the social forms which the technologies of extended interchange make possible, is the best way of understanding the changing relationships of the intellectual institutions. Early in the twentieth century when Max Weber spoke of the charismatic individual who breaks new ground in the framing of social life he did so within the spirit of the Enlightenment. In a mood framed both by nostalgia and a passionate sense of the integrity required to face the present, Weber remarked that 'The fate of our times is characterised by rationalisation and intellectualisation and, above all, by the disenchantment of the world'.<sup>4</sup> As one who was determined to explore the interplay of intellectual traditions he was a committed empiricist. Set within the tensions that imposed, his sense of mission demanded that 'he set to work and meet the demands of the day'. An intellectual answered to his vocation by finding and obeying 'the demon who holds the fibres of his very life'.<sup>5</sup>

Torn between commitments to incompatible traditions and committed both to the labour of research and an impulse to make a difference in public life, Manning Clark

readily comes to mind as an Australian figure from a similar mould. Like Weber, he embodies that type of Enlightenment empiricism which still retains ties to the religious, or even magical, traditions which for so long were the main setting of intellectual life. As that influence fell away and the secular university became the key intellectual institution, the residues of the idealist conceptions of the exceptional individual and with that of vocations, persisted. In a move away from that approach, the most sustained attempt to account for the intellectual in unambiguously empirical terms appeared in Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, while in keeping with a general turn towards the formative influence of social circumstance as distinct from ingrained nature, it stopped short at the way the special education of intellectuals formed them.

### **Abstraction as a socio-material process**

To point to the technologically mediated and abstracted form of life of the intellectuals is to break with any empirical account which stops short at the phenomena of difference as between intellectual and other social types. It is to break with approaches which seek to account for their difference in terms of a simple description of the content, educational or otherwise, of that experience. Likewise it is a break with that empiricism that seeks to account for what intellectuals say or do by confining attention to the content of the various themes which, in their interplay, contribute to some particular framework of cultural reality. Neither Weber nor Mannheim directly asks how the intellectual work which addresses those themes is itself grounded in a particular form of social interchange. The empirical phenomenon as such, of the intellectual being set apart, whether by vocation or education, would seem to have deflected them from that line of inquiry.

That was not the case with one of their younger contemporaries. Alfred Sohn-Rethel, for a time the student of Max Weber's brother, Alfred, directly questioned the work of the mind as the sole defining feature of intellectual life. He persisted in asking: 'Can there be abstraction other than by thought?'<sup>7</sup>

Sohn-Rethel's question was prompted by the Marxist approach to distinguishing between the use value and exchange value of commodities. It noted the way money as a homogenising medium, abstracted from the particularity of use values. As a socio-material medium it both found expression in the social relations of the market as well as having an immediate presence as an idea. Sohn-Rethel's obsession gained no credence with Alfred Weber who reluctantly concluded, 'Sohn-Rethel is crazy!' Here I will suggest that his query had a more general significance than its author's own special preoccupations with the relation of philosophy to money. By taking mediation and especially writing, rather than money, as the medium of social interchange which places its own stamp upon the social type of the intellectual, my intention is to lift it out of the obscurity which a radically taken for granted status as carrier of ideational content imposes.

It is that preoccupation with content, as the primary phenomenon addressed within conventional empiricism which retards insight into the real significance of the way intellectual content takes on a far more active 'life of its own' when writing becomes established within civilisations. It allows those who become literate to reach across the boundaries of orally grounded cultures. By way of mediated interchange it contributes to an overall social framework which calls upon the intellectuals to

crystallise and to codify the concepts and the values which are integral with a more abstracted and extended mode of being.

This is not the place to elaborate this crucial distinction. It is sufficient to point out that castes, classes and status groups can all be conceived as 'lifted out' or abstracted from an order of social life wherein more specific (particularistic) social ties, set within kinship and with a potentiality for mutual presence, predominate.

In civilisations where this more abstracted level of social reality has emerged it scarcely needs emphasis that it is inseparable from the way the whole society is held together. It constitutes, both in practice and in ideas, a cosmological and moral engagement with the natural and social worlds. Such engagements are both indispensable to and guaranteed by the powers. Yet, as I will seek to show in due course, because of the distinctive character of the mode of interchange, which contributes to the formation of the types of intellectual we are discussing, they always have the potential to break out. That is a source for the frequently recognised 'unreliability of the intellectuals'. They are prone to breaking with the existing powers, or to joining movements for social change and to codifying the attitudes and aspirations of discontented groupings. As Marx and Engels famously observed in 1848, at a certain stage within the rise of a socialist movement a portion of the ideologists of the middle class, 'who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole', break away and join the working class.<sup>8</sup>

That empirical observation says nothing about the way in which any distinctive mode of their engagement with one another may have contributed to the capacity of the intellectuals to abstract themselves and to overview 'the historical movement as a whole'. Leaving aside their far more pointed class reductionism, the standpoint of Marx and Engels is as close to Mannheim's view that the intellectuals are set apart by the distinctive content of their educational experience as it is far from Max Weber's inclination towards vocational inspiration.

### **Writing and the abstracted formation of intellectuals**

It can readily appear that to go back to writing as an approach to the intellectuals is to enter an endless detour. Against that I will suggest that once the reality of intellectual abstraction being linked to the distinctive form of social interchange is acknowledged, a way is opened to reaffirming that interpretation is the central feature of intellectual work. Traditionally it sought an understanding of the cosmos and the relations of human beings within it by combining inspired knowledge with the actuality of experience within a given reality. Within that perspective interpretive ideas stood higher than the materiality they addressed. Moreover within the Christian roots of Western traditions the ideal world of the sacred was both universal and unchanging.

If the Enlightenment turn towards nature sought to explore an alternative, which took transformation for granted, that process is still far from completion. Alongside its vast explorations in physical and biological reality the social order remains a relative blind spot. Within that sphere especially, traditionalist residues persist and actively affect interpretation. And while the intellectuals have moved towards an account of the social formation of other social types, as I have already noted, their own self-accounting remains half mute. It fixes upon the way the social conditions of others contribute to the reality which they seek to explain or portray while their own internal mode of interchange receives no proper recognition. That scholars learn from one another is common knowledge, but this emphasis upon empirically given content

obscures the way in which it derives a special character from the other side of that interdependence. By deflecting attention from the social form of interchange it allows the persistence of traditional accounts of why intellectuals have the capacity to stand apart, to overview and to lend a universalising quality to their work.

Max Weber's approach to the intellectual is a clear example of the consequences of ignoring the intellectual form of interchange. 'One foot in heaven and one on earth' he exemplifies the ambiguity of the early Enlightenment. In their more radical turn towards circumstance figures such as Marx and Mannheim, along with so many others, also stop short. They have nothing to say about their own form of life.

In practice this means that even while familiar with the way intellectuals have contributed to the moral and normative frameworks of social life those who adopt this standpoint are not well placed to comment when the form of life which is the condition of possibility of that contribution is diminished. I contend that can occur in two major ways. First, through an internal shift in priorities wherein the new-found power, and even more the material hope, evoked by the physical and biological sciences overshadows the critical interest of the humanities in the way people have sought to comprehend and regulate their life in common. Secondly, it is further diminished through the way that internal process has a direct tie to an external relation: the conjunction of the technosciences with the economy.

It scarcely needs to be emphasised that this is an unprecedented shift. In Australia where, as in other countries, it had been long in the making it, was publicly foreshadowed in 1988 by John Dawkins the then Minister for Education, Employment and Training in the Labor government of the day. He observed that,

More clearly than at any time in our history Australia is now an integral part of the international community. The barriers to contact, communication and trade generated in the past by our remoteness have been removed over the last quarter of the century as cultural, technological and economic revolutions have swept the globe.<sup>9</sup>

The implication of my argument here is that both the opponents and the exponents of the shift in policy which John Dawkins finally made so explicit were at least alike in one respect. Both took the category of 'the intellectual' as given. While one saw it as having a cultural significance by way of its potential to reflect upon the whole way of life, the other viewed it in more narrowly instrumental terms; albeit within an implicit frame of individualistic material values which were no longer taken to be highly contentious. Neither grouping was drawn towards grounding the cultural framing role of intellectuals within a unique form of life.

As long as intellectuals were simply taken for granted as having different capacities there was little sense of the need to seek any social roots of the intellectual as a social type. Indeed the very way in which intellectual discourses build up incrementally and by way of the interplay of the countless voices, the manifold contents of which constitute a tradition, serves to conceal its constitutively abstracted form. Moreover when a major synthesis emerges it frequently takes hold within public awareness in the name of the particular individual; the prominence of a Luther or a Darwin then reinforces the sense of the exceptional and creative individual as the source of abstracted ideas.

I propose to argue here that the shift towards the priority of the technosciences and with that their merger with, or direct ties to the economy, further consolidates an

individualism which, in the longer term, is likely to confirm its incompatibility with the common good. That merger was not regarded as an option within a modern ethos of intellectual work which is now being bypassed. The common stance of the sciences and humanities having primarily cultural as distinct from economic concerns precluded that. I argue that as an ethos that stance had a grounding in the intellectual form of interchange. The exploration of that connection can help to finally challenge individually grounded conceptions of abstraction as well as to question its residual ties to otherworldly origins.

In the immediate context it can help to reframe discussion of what after all is the key question: the longer term viability of the unprecedented merger of the technosciences with the economy. It is that historic shift that demands a return to basics: first to the way in which writing sustains that particular version of abstraction which, at least within civilisations, intellectual work expresses; secondly to the way in which that work plays an indispensable part in articulating the abstracted moral orders which are both a condition of their viability and at the centre of any realistic assessment of the role of intellectuals.

#### **The intellectual form of life**

While acknowledging Sohn-Rethel's socially constitutive approach to abstraction I propose to take a more explicit and comprehensively social approach to its particular foundations within civilisations. That is by no means to deny the presence of abstract concepts within predominantly oral cultures in the tribal mode. Nor is it to imply the superiority of cultures which have differentiated a distinct stratum or grouping whose members contribute to overall interpretations of reality. Within a more abstracted mode of interchange they offer a more universalised account, they feed back into everyday life and help bind together its particularities. Social integration, social solidarity, social cohesion, national consciousness are just a few of the terms that crop up in that context. They assume the extended reach of the practical relations between people which, in my usage here, distinguishes an isolated community from a dispersed larger population coordinated by a central authority. That extended reach requires writing. It is an indispensable component of a form of social interchange which can lift a population out of constraints of mutual presence. By this account, it is a mediator. By way of a technological mediation of mutual presence it constitutes a lived abstraction and in that movement creates the possibility for the complementary concepts which hold a now extended mode of social life in place.

Writing itself is a complex reality. It is more than simply inscribing words upon a surface; it is conjoined in our tradition to the analytic dismemberment of speech. As distinct from hieroglyphics, phonics in its alphabetic expression becomes the condition for writing to convey meanings via inscription.

It can immediately be said that this is obvious, that no one could entertain the notion that the grouping we refer to as intellectuals could operate without writing. But that would be to miss the point of the approach that I am outlining. It would be to return to the emphasis upon the content of ideas as the mark of the intellectual, whereas I am stressing that a socially materialised redefinition of abstraction 'other than by words' is the condition of possibility of those forms of abstraction we associate with intellectuals.

Again it may be said from an inductive standpoint every noun is already abstract in an elementary sense preceding the grammatical recognition of abstract nouns, but that too is beside the point in terms of the argument here. It has no immediate need

to venture into that territory; its scope, *qua* intellectuals, is restricted to that particular level of abstraction which is a condition of possibility of extended societies held together in ways which require the abstracted forms of interchange inseparable from writing and its derivatives. Likewise the argument has no immediate need to discuss the particular mechanism of abstraction in preliterate or oral societies. Clearly they universalise their particular modes of life and enact that universality in collective ritual or myths. In doing so they raise the order of abstraction characteristic of their more particular activities. Nevertheless the requirement of mutual presence reduces the scope of their universalising practices. It ties them to place and holds such wider exchanges as do take place in a quite subordinate role.

While technological mediation by way of writing serves as the main formative medium for all of the intellectuals, it is conjoined to that second mediation whereby the observation or manipulation of the natural world, by way of apparatus, marks out a distinction between the humanities and the sciences. In the case of the sciences the role of technologies is unquestioned, but it is of some interest to note that drawing attention to their place within the foundations of the humanities can be to strike an unwelcome note.

Nevertheless within that role mediation has two main features. The first is the communication of a content between people who are not present to each other, the second is that the inscription of that content of ideas allows it to be stored. Prior to their face-to-face interchange with others in institutional settings the intellectuals proper work with those extending resources. By way of the library traditionally and as amplified now by the Internet and other media they reach across spaces and times to draw upon the contributions of others who may be either living or dead.

In the course of that activity they are 'lifted out' of modes of interchange characteristic of the everyday life in which, in other settings of their lives, they are also engaged. In a practical sense and within a distinctive form of life they are abstracted.

To develop their work within that form, the typical interpretive intellectual working within the field of the humanities is engaged in a process of inquiry which has universal implications within a given cultural horizon. One need not be a philosopher for that criterion to apply. Within the sometimes shifting borders of disciplines every intellectual seeks to stand back one step from everyday life as well as from the work of others. In interchange with those having like concerns the object is to constitute a second reality which reflects upon and sometimes critically evaluates both everyday reality and its own domain as well.

To begin to spell out the mode of engagement in that mediated reality it is useful to start off with the notion of a mediated network of sources through which, with a given end or interest in view, the particular intellectual reaches out. It is a set of ties to the stored results of the inquiries conducted by other intellectuals. By that process those stored writings become known to the inquiring individual even if their authors are quite unknown to one another. The task is to synthesise them, to work out their overall relevance to the end in view: an act of synthesis which, while it may vary according to the way a particular discipline recognises results, normally entails some attempt to produce rational conviction.

An individual network of the type just noted cannot exist except in interconnection with others of a similar type. No one of its participants has point unless their individual syntheses of the stored sources are, as it were, turned around: that it is written out, or

printed, and so turned into a source for others. The vast manifold of the overlapping networks of readers and writers which I have just set out may be seen as a step towards defining the social form of an intellectual culture.

Further to that one may note that while writing is the primary mediator for the humanities the modern sciences are inconceivable without the range of mediating technologies which may be generally designated as apparatus. Autoclaves, thermometers, microscopes, chronometers, accelerators and so on operate as amplifiers or extensions of the sensory or motor powers of the body. The different relation to the natural world which that permits calls for a different, a more abstracted, order of concepts (H<sub>2</sub>O by contrast with water) and related explanations (the earth rotates on its axis and describes an orbit around the sun). Whether by observation or experiment the scientific undertaking both draws upon and feeds back into that double manifold of networks of reading and writing which can be conceived as the general social form of an intellectual culture.

While I am stressing the significance of this form of life as a frame and an underpinning for intellectual life generally, that by no means contradicts the role of the institutions, disciplines, schools and personal coteries set within it. While all of these have their own particular arrangements, the individuals they embrace are concerned with content; they are concerned with the elaboration of meanings. These build up, in the main incrementally, within the resources of observation or experiment and, of course, language as well. The latter, especially within the intellectual level of abstraction as emphasised again in recent decades, carries its own resources for the formation of concepts and interpretations. The gradual build-up within particular articulations of intellectual activity with other institutions and especially with the ruling powers from time to time precipitates a wholesale restructuring. The Dawkins' initiatives of 1988 are one example just as, in a more minor key, is the consequential shift towards 'user pays' recently extended by the current federal Minister for Education. All this however is by way of context to the central point of the present discussion. The form of life of the intellectuals proper is complemented by universalising values and practices which, while often implicit or taken for granted, can nevertheless be seen as integral with the form as such. Among them, a responsibility to be self active in the synthetic mode is central. Beyond that, the build-up of a framework of interpretation can only develop if those engaged in the overall manifold work up their conclusions honestly and in a universalist attitude which stands outside more parochial commitments. More specifically that calls for a certain detachment. Likewise, a readiness to share knowledge with others is an obvious prerequisite.

While I am suggesting that these values are immanent in the form of interchange, it is clear that their recognition along with their power to produce effects is related to changing external pressures. Typically any tendency for the values implicit in the mode of interchange to control any consequences of inquiry is overridden, in greater or lesser degree, by external interests. In effect the powers act back to constrain, but this is far less likely to be by way of overt decision than by culturally embedded assumptions. Frequently these work with special force when they find a match with particular intellectual traditions. A ruling ideology, through its confluence with particular modes of understanding, may then renew its legitimacy both for the culture as a whole and even as a framework for intellectual life. The fusion of areas of technoscience and of particular branches of economic theory with the social relations

of corporate capital may be cited as examples in the present period; just as the theory of evolution lent impetus to, and found support from, liberal individualism in the past.

Such points of fusion, which have the potential to compromise intellectual values, are inescapable; but that effect is more likely when intellectuals fail to acknowledge their own distinctive mode of interchange as a source of their ethic. Given that recognition they have the chance to see that since particular points of fusion with the interests of the powers are transitory they are also of secondary importance. The key issue is the independence of their mode of interchange. Recognition of that displaces excessive preoccupation with their own individual qualities or their traditions. The universals embracing a whole culture, to which intellectuals contribute, may be consistent or inconsistent with the equalitarian impulse of their own form of life, but the capacity to critically stand outside any set of these universals depends upon the independence of their distinctive mode of interchange.

Because intellectual values cannot be guaranteed simply by reason of the individual's interest in writing for publication, the extended networks which provide the basic framework of intellectual work have typically been complemented and monitored by the institutions. These draw intellectuals into close association and control the chances of individuals, whether by affirming that they do meet the normative criteria or even by exclusion.

### **Conclusion**

In drawing this essay towards its ending I should first return to one of its central propositions. That is to my claim that the contemporary shift in the relation of the intellectuals to the wider society has been decisively affected by the conjunction of key areas of the technosciences with the economy. By way of that direct engagement more abstracted technologies have promoted a surge of productivity. Integral with that surge a range of mediated social forms have reached out to reconstruct the institutions of everyday life. The distinguished historian Eric Hobsbawm, in summarising the overall effect, notes that 'We are the first generation to have lived through the historic moment when the rules and conventions which had hitherto bound human beings together in families, communities and societies ceased to operate'.<sup>10</sup>

Paradoxically an immediate effect of this cultural transformation, in which one branch of the intellectuals has played such a key role, has been to undermine the capacity of all of the intellectuals to stand apart. Lacking a developed institutional awareness of their own universalising mode of interchange they cannot convey any full sense of the importance of its integrity to society at large. That integrity, I am suggesting here, is one mooring point of the cultural frame within which a moral order is constituted. That is an order which, by standing over against the rule of individual interests alone, helps to elaborate 'the rules and conventions' which bind individuals together.

In a period of transformation, when the market assumes unprecedented prominence as the point of origin of general norms of individual conduct, basic questions arise. How is any critical sense of overview to be renewed? Would such a society risk implosion if pervasive individualism reduced its moral order to the residues carried in language?

In the earlier years of the twentieth century, a sense of vocation and a commitment to the common good was prominent in intellectual circles. Albert Einstein, for instance, was by no means atypical when he confirmed his endorsement of an ethic wherein the intellectuals

stood apart from the economy and its norms of self interest. No doubt aware of the build-up of commercial pressures he actually patented some of his insights to ensure that his work was available for public use.<sup>11</sup> His attitude can readily be contrasted both with the contemporary economic framing of intellectual activity as a source of human capital and the now familiar assumption of company directorships by research workers promoting their own 'products'.

My argument here is that while the ethical stand familiar to Einstein's contemporaries recognises the incompatibility of the ethics of the intellectuals proper with the individualistic norms of buying and selling, there is no reason to suppose that they saw that ethical tradition as prompted within a unique form of social interchange.

Any recognition that the ethos of intellectuals, along with their distinctiveness as a social type, was integral with their unique mode of social engagement, was yet to enter social awareness. As long as they endorsed concepts which accounted for them as individuals endowed with vocations, gifts or even special talents, it is difficult to see how any distinctive mode of social engagement could provide a grounding for thinking otherwise.

In the longer wake of the Enlightenment, that mode of understanding had begun to develop more rapidly by the middle of the nineteenth century. The secular university was disengaging from its erstwhile religious setting as, with somewhat ambiguous motives, Cardinal Newman had elaborated the notion of the 'community of scholars'.<sup>11</sup> By the middle of the twentieth century that way of representing intellectual life was well entrenched within both the humanities and the sciences. At least within the social disciplines the study of the ethos of science especially had moved on to isolate a clear set of ethical precepts regulating the relations of scholars to one another. Robert Merton's work<sup>12</sup> was a signal example of that interest. In 1942 he had specified the four norms of science as universalism, 'communism', detachment, and organised scepticism. These, however, he derived entirely from a sociologically informed study of the history of science rather than from any explicit focus upon a mode of interchange as such. Nevertheless the convergence of this set of ethical norms with those I have taken to be implicit within the intellectual manifold of networks is unmistakable and therein lies a problem.

For as long as the ethical norms carried within the intellectual mode of interchange remain implicit, that 'half life' of their own, carried through language and tradition, can mask the way the roots of their vitality are being severed. Any understanding of their loss of vitality cannot focus upon the social form with which it is integral. It can be especially difficult to verify that it is occurring at all when a merger with the new economy requires some continued endorsement of the technical norms of detachment and scepticism. They guarantee the quality of products even as commitment to precepts such as shared or open access to overall interpretations of reality are pushed from the foreground by economic norms.

Nevertheless a direct merger of the technosciences with an economy entails a basic ambiguity and with that a potential for instability. Extending the reach of the economy so that it encompasses all other institutions also extends its mastery of nature and that process inevitably affects deeply taken for granted roots of the formation of human nature. In common sense, apart from religious presuppositions, the roots of human nature are typically assumed to lie in the given powers of body and mind in their relation to the natural world. The contrary assumption prompting this essay accents the formative power of institutions; that is, settings such as the family, the

immediate community, or at times religious practices which, since they have retained some stability across cultures, are frequently seen as expressing natural predispositions rather than cultural formation.

Whatever the exact relation between nature and culture the technosciences now offer the potential to reconstruct both terms. Hence to speak of a merger with the economy may be far too superficial a description of a shift which, even within those terms, is unprecedented. In conventional terms of development, of economic growth and the satisfaction of material needs, it may appear as a process in which the economy is simply absorbing the technosciences. Yet in a shift of this scope the opposite might also be argued. One might then ask whether the typically individualist norms of the current economy could persist if it were to be more fully encompassed by a technoscientific process. The 'mastery of nature' might then display an inherent contradiction. If it were to reveal its potential for transforming 'human nature' the issue of an institutional and ethical framework for the common good could return to the centre of attention.

Every intellectually grounded engagement with the future also locks into a practice and sense of being human to which intellectuals contribute but by no means determine. To rapidly deconstruct that sense and practice whether by genetic means, the radical reconstruction of the natural level of the environment, or by way of the far more active incursion of technologically mediated forms of social life into once relatively stable arrangements of private life, can readily promote widespread questioning along with a sense of foreboding about future consequences.

It opens up one vista of technologically grounded hope: one of escape from, or at least deferral of, the traditionally taken for granted limitations of the human condition. Alongside it a more cautious agenda emerges, one which for the present, stops short at 'sustainability' and often celebrates what it takes to be natural or technologically unmediated modes of engagement with nature and with other people.

Neither of these perspectives relate exclusively to the economy. Insofar as they celebrate, react against, or at least urge caution in the face of its extended reach, their primary response need not depend upon any seemingly incontrovertible 'logic' of the economy at all. However diffusely, it can be a reaction to the transformation of, or the sense of pressure upon, what had once been an unquestioned sense of the permanence of human nature.

Any such reaction to the unfamiliar which stirs sensibilities within the ground of being is likely to be 'beyond imagination' in any articulate sense. In consequence most contemporary efforts to draw it into an explicit theoretical register tend to fix upon the most obvious evidence; that is, upon external events, such as a changing environment, rather than upon human nature as such.

Stephen Boyden's pioneering work on *The Biology of Civilisation*<sup>13</sup> which is subtitled 'Understanding Human Culture as a Force in Nature', is a current example of efforts to reconceive the place of humankind within, rather than as master of, a natural world. Nevertheless it too is directed to readily identifiable natural objects, whether as human bodies or in the form of the whole environment. While it focuses upon how 'we', as the formative medium of a culture, are also its agents as we act upon the natural world, it is not specifically concerned with the way a universalising and ethical potential tends to be 'dumbed down' by the changed relationship of its mode of interchange with the economy.

Boyden's confidence in the ethical potential of the intellectual tradition can draw some support from the way public intellectuals respond to the changing sensibilities associated with a culture change which affects the population as a whole, including the technoscientists themselves. Their ambiguous engagement with the economy does not exclude their simultaneous need to breathe the same air and dwell in the same bodies as their fellow beings. Indeed its very ambiguity leaves open a way of return to the ethical potential of the intellectual mode of interchange.

The intellectuals proper and public intellectuals are by no means identical. Although the categories clearly overlap, the medium within which intellectuals proper are set lends them a potential to stand outside the terms of their own culture. Typically the public intellectuals work within those terms, limited by the movements and conflicts within public life and awareness. In periods of basic cultural transformation however, such as the present, the two categories tend to converge. A basic stirring of popular sensibilities finds more active expression in the public realm and the intellectuals proper may be expected to lend their capacity to articulating that process in its universal aspect while the public intellectuals act as bridges into that wider movement.

In changed circumstances, any longer-term prospect for an intellectual capacity to act depends upon the relative autonomy of their mode of interchange and thereby of its implicit social ethic. That relative autonomy I have suggested here is one precondition within civilisations of the ethical framing of the social bond.

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With his main attention directed towards the consolidation of modernity, Zygmunt Bauman classified the intellectuals as either legislators or interpreters.<sup>14</sup> His legislators were mainly professionals, they include those I have referred to elsewhere as the 'intellectually trained',<sup>15</sup> or those who, in Max Weber's terms, are the main agents of the 'intellectualisation' of the modern world. Bauman's legislators set the standards whereby the way of life of a now literate population is regulated in almost every setting of their daily lives. They stand over against his category of interpreters who most nearly approximate to what are now spoken of as the public intellectuals.

Given the descriptive virtues of his classification he nevertheless stops short, as do his predecessors, of a constitutive account of the intellectuals. That is an account which recognises that the technologies which feed into their conditions of possibility are typically overlooked by figures, modern and postmodern, who insist that 'in the beginning was the word'.



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This essay shares a similar perspective to articles by John Hinkson, Simon Cooper, Paul James and Douglas McQueen-Thomson, which have been drawn together in: Cooper S, Hinkson J and Sharp G (eds) (2002). *Scholars and Entrepreneurs*, Arena Publications: Box 18, N Carlton 3054.

- <sup>1</sup> Bauman, Z (1987). *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Postmodernity and Intellectuals*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca: 21.
- <sup>2</sup> Weber, M (1947). 'Bureaucracy'. In, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Kegan Paul: London: Ch 8.
- <sup>3</sup> Hewitt, HV (2002). *Patrick White, Painter Manqué: Painters, Painting and their Influence on his Writing*, The Miegunyah Press: Carlton: 5.
- <sup>4</sup> Weber (1947) *op cit*: 155
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid*: 156
- <sup>6</sup> Mannheim, K (1936). *Ideology and Utopia*, Kegan Paul: London: 138.
- <sup>7</sup> Sohn-Rethel, A (1978). *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology*, Macmillan: London: 17-19.
- <sup>8</sup> Marx, K and Engels, F (1948). *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow: 55.
- <sup>9</sup> Dawkins, J (1987). *Higher Education: A Policy Discussion Paper*, Australian Government Printing Service: Canberra: iii.
- <sup>10</sup> Hobsbawm, E (2002). *Interesting Times: A Twentieth Century Life*, Abacus: London: 414.
- <sup>11</sup> Merton, R (1968). *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Free Press: Glencoe: 612.
- <sup>12</sup> Merton (1968) *op cit*: Ch 7.
- <sup>13</sup> Boyden, S (2004). *The Biology of Civilisation: Understanding Human Culture as a Force in Nature*, UNSW Press: Sydney.
- <sup>14</sup> Bauman (1987) *op cit*: Introduction, Ch 8, Ch 9.
- <sup>15</sup> Sharp, G (1983). 'Intellectuals in Transition'. *Arena* 65 first series: 84-95.



**Not The Pyramids:  
Intellectual work and its politics in a neoliberal era  
RW Connell**

**Introduction**

On election night in October 2004 I was invited to a dinner-and-television party in an inner suburb of Sydney. Most people there were professionals and cultural producers of various kinds - an author, a musician, an academic, a human services administrator, etc. As the results came in and the success of the Liberals' fear campaign became clear, the party became rather quiet. Eventually one of the guests remarked that she found the results surprising, because she did not know personally *anyone* who supported the Howard government and had been going to vote Liberal. Others around the room nodded, and said that was true for them too.

This seemed a neat measure of the distance that now exists between the regime in power in Australia, and a considerable part of the intelligentsia in Australia. The hostility is obviously reciprocated. Where previous national governments had shown respect and support for cultural and intellectual producers - witness Menzies' university policy, Whitlam's arts policy - the current government has tried to commercialise the universities, intimidate the ABC, and expand corporate control of communication and culture. In a range of policy areas - from school education to the intervention in Iraq - expert knowledge has been brushed aside the moment it conflicted with corporate interests, the market agenda or the party line.

The Howard government is both a participant in, and a beneficiary of, a larger cultural and political shift. The rise of neoliberalism to a dominant position in politics, traced by Michael Pusey a decade ago,<sup>1</sup> is a global event. The consequences are visible far outside the realm of electoral politics.

Here, for instance, are the reflections of a computer systems designer, Kieran, interviewed a few years ago in a research project on intellectual labour:

The twin things of globalisation plus a shift to an accounting-oriented world, something that really worries me. I feel that we're losing perception of civilisation.

Kieran is a technical expert in a high-technology business, who might well feel that the world is his oyster. But he also takes a broad view of culture and history. In the interview he gave examples of great engineering projects - building the Pyramids, sending a man to the moon - which had, in their time, great flow-on effects in stimulating intellectual activity. Would they be done now?

The people who run the world now would say 'Where's the profit in that, how do we make money out of that?' and consequently it wouldn't happen. So I think we're focusing on the efficiency business, the McDonald's process, getting the process perfect. But I don't think anyone is really looking at civilisation, really saying, 'What can we do that no-one's ever done before?'... I just feel frustrated that nobody thinks those thoughts at all.

Kieran's frustration is echoed by many academics, worried about the impact that the commercialisation of Australian universities is having on intellectual life. The same concerns can be found in other professions. This is a good moment to think about the cultural and political role of intellectuals, and the changing character of the intelligentsia itself.

### **The tale of the intellectuals**

According to some theories, intellectuals should be ruling the world, or at least setting the agenda. No less a figure than Auguste Comte, in the 1850s, had seen 'savants' as bearers of social regeneration (in alliance with women and workers!). Lenin's model of a 'vanguard' of militant intellectuals is very familiar, and there have been fierce debates around such ideas. In the 1920s Lucien Benda's *Treason of the Intellectuals* argued urgently for keeping a distance from the corrupting world of political emotion, while Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* saw the independence of intellectuals as the condition, not only for resolving the problem of relativism, but also for a scientific politics.<sup>2</sup>

In the following generation, these themes matured into analyses of intellectuals as a 'new class'. In the case of the Soviet bloc they were seen as the core of a new power structure. In the capitalist world, the very growth of new technologies, the presence of large-scale corporations with their complex demands for finance and planning, the growth of nuclear weapons systems, and the expansion of government involvement in the economy, all seemed to give a strategic social position to the bearers of knowledge.

In a very influential argument the US sociologist Alvin Gouldner, in *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*,<sup>3</sup> pictured the growth of higher education and professional employment as the milieu for a 'culture of critical discourse'. Intellectuals as a social force were necessarily opposed to the power of corporate capitalism. A less-known but more sophisticated analysis was produced by the Australian journal *Arena* in the 1970s and 1980s. The *Arena* group looked at the intellectually trained as a workforce, and suggested that the social relations involved in intellectual work pushed this workforce towards egalitarian and socially critical views, making it a likely site of opposition under corporate capitalism.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of an oppositional new class has been adopted by many neo-conservative commentators. They simply give it a different political slant, in polemics against 'political correctness' and the chardonnay-sipping 'liberal elites' who don't care for the battlers. We have heard a lot of this in the aftermath of the Australian and US elections.

But some sociological argument has questioned the idea of 'the intelligentsia' as a distinctive social group and any idea of intellectuals as oppositional. For instance Zygmunt Bauman's *Legislators and Interpreters* waxes sardonic about enlightenment by connecting the modern 'role' of intellectual with the rise of the modern state, attacks on popular culture, and the growth of systems of surveillance and control. Bauman suggests that with the transition to postmodernity this role is falling apart; intellectuals cannot be cultural 'legislators' any more.<sup>5</sup> Other researchers have suggested a convergence between academic and corporate culture.<sup>6</sup>

There are some large problems with this evolving tale, not least its eurocentrism. But at least it poses significant questions about who intellectuals are and what role they play in social change.

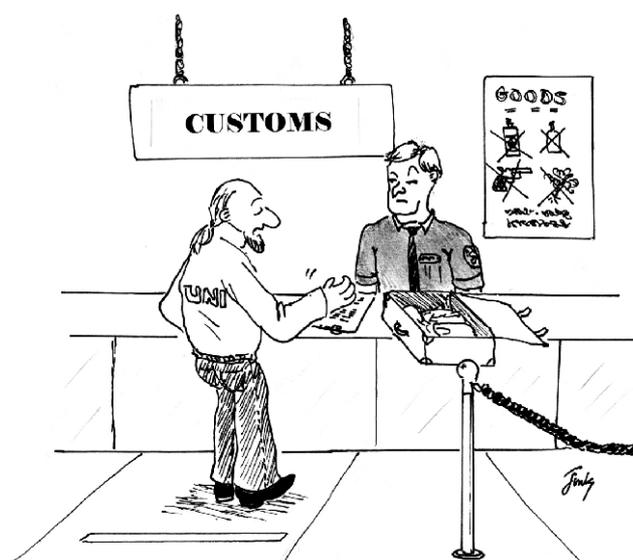
### **What is an intellectual?**

In the discussion that follows, I draw on the findings of two research projects. One was a close-focus study in which 58 people from four broadly-defined fields of intellectual labour were interviewed during 1997-98 about their lives and careers. The second was a cross-sectional telephone survey of 500 intellectual workers, drawn from 40 occupational categories and all states of Australia, conducted in April-June 2000.<sup>7</sup>

In the life-history study we interviewed research scientists, applied scientists, policy-makers, journalists, management consultants, software designers, authors, philosophers and clergy, among others. Very few were comfortable with the term 'intellectual'. When we explained the nature of our study, the commonest response was, 'why me?' 'Intellectual' is not a popular identity to claim.

But all of these people were doing intellectual work, and for most of them, cultural production or the gathering and application of knowledge was the main part of their business. I think the *Arena* group had it right: it is intellectual labour that is the core of the matter. To be an intellectual - at least at this stage of history - is to be one of a group performing a particular kind of task, and requiring certain kinds of resources.

Our image of the intellectual tends to focus on great minds and great breakthroughs - Einstein, Darwin, Ibsen. Some of the people in our life-history study did tell about great moments, about being on the cutting edge when a new research field opened up, a deep shift in ideas occurred, or a book-writing task began to 'flow'. Nevertheless, most intellectual work is routine, whether assembling information or interpreting it, generating cultural materials, performing or disseminating them. One of our respondents, looking back at her experience in a university research laboratory, remarked bitterly:



"I have nothing to declare but my intellectual property..."

Look, a well-trained monkey can do this work.

That was a biochemist with a PhD. In our cross-sectional survey, respondents were asked which of these statements best characterised their work:

*My work mainly involves solving problems by applying existing ideas, knowledge or methods.*

*My work mainly involves trying to produce new ideas, knowledge or methods.*

Across the whole sample, 54 per cent said the former, 43 per cent the latter. Of course this varies from field to field, with the former response more common in obviously 'applied' fields.

We need to think of what intellectuals do as a *labour process* and consider, as we would for any other group of workers, the conditions of this labour and the organisation of the workforce.

### Intellectual labour

Details of the work, obviously, vary from one field to another, but there are common elements. For instance, among those whose work involves knowledge about social relations, there seem to be two basic intellectual processes in their daily routines. The first might be called 'making a warranted statement'. This is essentially the process identified in Latour and Woolgar's *Laboratory Life* in their analysis of peptide chemistry.<sup>8</sup> The second might be called 'making a warranted decision'. Here for instance is Patrick, a psychiatrist, describing how he makes a patient assessment:

Well, first is to find out what problems need to be dealt with, and essentially you ask them, or somebody tells you that they need to be assessed because of particular behaviour. First of all, as in any psychiatric admission unit, your history-taking is based around the presenting behaviour, and related material. Then, having dealt with that, it gives you further clues as to what other areas that you need to delve into - background, family relationships, family history, past psychiatric history, all of that. Having got those related areas, then you sort of fill out the picture, getting social information, early development history, that sort of thing. Then you make your diagnosis, and then you make your management plan.

These elements are familiar. Patrick assembles specific information about the case, gathers new information that he judges to be required, and then follows the professionally-defined decision-making procedure. At all stages he is applying his technical knowledge, for instance his background knowledge of what constitute 'clues' and what information is needed in a case history.

These processes are, of course, subject to historical change. And a strong sense of change comes through in both the life-history study and the survey. In response to the statement *In my field of work, knowledge and methods are changing rapidly*, no less than 83 per cent of survey respondents agreed, and only 15 per cent disagreed.

The most striking change that has occurred recently is the advent of computer technology. Though there are many individual differences, our respondents are collectively heavy users of information and communication technology (ICT). In the cross-sectional survey, 94 per cent described themselves as 'regularly' using a personal computer, 89 per cent as 'regularly' using email, 73 per cent as 'regularly' using the Internet. These are impressive levels of penetration, and they are spread fairly evenly across fields and sectors. Some respondents are extremely sophisticated users of ICT, and they gave us detailed narratives of the transformation of specific fields of knowledge work by new technologies.

Does computer technology change the nature of intellectual work? No computer is yet able to do what Patrick does, and there are other intellectual processes that are little affected. But in some forms of intellectual work there seems to be a basic change.

The capacities of databases and retrieval systems are changing the nature of expertise. In an earlier generation, being a scholar meant having read (and being able to remember and sort) an immense amount of detail about one's subject. That is exactly the job computers do best. Ideally, then, every scholar's intellectual power would now be amplified, the time spent on simple reading and retrieving would be reduced, leisure and reflection would rise.

But that is not happening. For one thing, time isn't saved. Hours of work continue to be long - respondents in the cross-sectional survey reported an average working week of about 50 hours. There is more sense of growing pressure than of intellectual spaciousness. For instance Elaine, a senior academic in the humanities, feels acutely the loss of the leisure required for reading. She struggles to keep up with the journals in her field, loses ground, and so from time to time sends her research assistant to conduct electronic 'raids' on the literature. Elaine considers that the change has penetrated the core process of producing knowledge in her field, the writing of technical papers:

It's got less and less to do with communication, and more and more to do with establishing credentials...That's the big change that I've seen. It's not about communication. Once it used to be - the business of writing... reading one another's draft, and then reading the journal. It's part of a different exercise. We're producing parcels of information, that I don't think a lot of us are reading.

Here, Elaine appeals to an older intellectual technology - the world of seminars, face-to-face discussions, cycles of debate and reflection. Some of our respondents recalled with great affection their days of excited discussion in smoke-filled pubs, or cutting-edge laboratories where the latest theories and techniques were hotly debated. But they located these experiences well in the past, and often on the other side of the world.

ICT has also penetrated these processes of peer exchange and the formation of communities of knowledge. Email communication is now standard practice, even among academics. In the business world, labour processes involving knowledge are now extensively integrated with computer systems. Rachel, a senior manager at a financial services firm, starts the day early:

I'm linked every which way you possibly can: fax, Internet, email, so I'll do a lot at home...Technology plays a very big part of my job...I'm an absolute news hound, and I love getting up, I mean I get up at 5 o'clock every day, because I'm an early morning person, and I hit the Internet and I read the *Financial Times* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* and CNN and get the World News, I love it, it's at my fingertips.

Similarly, contemporary market research and management consultancy practice would be inconceivable without computer technology.

Across a range of fields, ICT has made possible a new level of collectivisation in the intellectual labour process. To understand contemporary intellectual life, then, we must look carefully at its institutional setting.

### **Workplace and sector**

Though there is still a significant number who work independently - some 19 per cent of the respondents in our survey work in a personal practice or a small partnership - the great majority of contemporary intellectual workers are employees in organisations. These include universities, government agencies, corporations, large partnerships, and voluntary sector organisations.

The *Arena* thesis suggests we might find in this organisational life some structural bases for a democratic outlook. At first sight, our data seem to refute this. Asked if there is a specific person who supervises their work, 61 per cent of respondents in the survey say there is. Asked if they supervise other employees, 78 per cent say that

they do. A majority, then, appear to be in a hierarchical workplace, much like other workers.

However our respondents do not have a strong perception of being in a hierarchical setting. On the contrary, when asked to respond to the statement *Most people in my workplace treat each other as equals*, some 81 per cent agreed and only 14 per cent disagreed. Here the *Arena* thesis seems better supported. There is a sense of equality within the intellectual workplace, and there is a good deal of networking in it and beyond it. The survey data on high usage of email are relevant here, a technology well adapted for peer-group communication. Our life histories also have many examples of intellectual peer groups and 'invisible colleges'.

However this does not readily turn into an oppositional consciousness. There is, for instance, only a modest rate of unionisation. Among respondents to our survey, just 28 per cent are members of a union - compared with 64 per cent who are members of a professional association. The stronger tendency among our respondents seems to be a sense of individual empowerment, of personal autonomy. To the statement *I have a high level of autonomy or independence in the work that I do*, no less than 95 per cent agreed - 49 per cent 'strongly'.

Though an emphasis on the personal autonomy of intellectual workers is the dominant note in the collective consciousness, the institutional setting does matter. Indeed, institutional setting is clearly associated with this sense of autonomy itself. We developed a seven-item scale to measure the 'autonomy' factor, and institutional sector was clearly associated with this variable. Workers in the university and government sectors had the *lowest* 'autonomy' scores. (Evidently, whatever we have left of academic freedom does not produce unusual independence for university workers.) When we looked at opinions on issues of cultural politics, including support for the neoliberal market agenda itself, sector of employment and level of unionisation were important predictors of attitudes.

In a number of ways, our data show the importance of organisational context in the lives of intellectual workers. This has two conceptual implications. On the one hand, it argues against the thesis that culture has somehow become autonomous, floating free of material determinations. On the other hand, it argues against the 'convergence' thesis, that corporate and academic cultures have merged. They *may* be converging, but they are far from identical at this point.

### **Quasi-globalisation**

An important reason for doubting the older 'tale of the intellectuals' is its geopolitical naivety. We no longer have - if we ever did - intelligentsias that are simply local. Our respondents in both studies have impressive levels of international connection. For a considerable number, the crucial event in their careers was travel to another country and study or work outside Australia. For a good many, continuing relationships with colleagues in other countries are crucial to the work they do.

There are of course differences in the level of international involvement. We were able to construct scales to measure this, and an important and unexpected result emerged. Contrary to the widespread idea that we are being globalised under the impact of market forces, it is not corporate sector intellectual workers who show the highest levels of international engagement. It is university workers.

But the connections are not fully global. Consider this discussion of inter-departmental contacts by Terry, a chemist. In his field, he says,

Well, there's quite a close knit - there's no formal structure, but quite a close knit association between, particularly [departments] in the UK and United States and Canada and New Zealand for that matter. But also to a lesser extent but still nevertheless quite useful, with quite a few of the European countries like France and Germany in particular, and Holland. There's a like a network, exchange of information about all aspects of [field] education. And of course a lot of these people linked each other international conferences which is clearly an important part of it.

The countries Terry mentions are the rich countries of the First World, principally north America and western Europe. That is absolutely typical. Most of our respondents hardly register this stark cultural and economic bias. 'International science' or 'international connections' generally mean connections with the global metropole, not with global society generally. When developing countries figure at all in Australian intellectual workers' stories, it is generally as recipients of aid, or targets of intervention - not as sources of knowledge, wisdom or innovation.

In Australia, then, we are quasi-globalised. Peripheral, but not oriented to the periphery. Many of the strategic issues in Australian intellectual workers' careers concern the problem of participation from, not in, the periphery. One still gets kudos in Australian intellectual life mainly by getting recognised in the metropole. And one cannot normally get this by email. The basic moves are still the old techniques of personal contact - travel to the centre, doing higher degrees at Oxbridge or the Ivy League, doing a training course in the parent company, doing a tour of duty in head office and making a splash there, giving papers at international conferences, visiting laboratories in Germany. Electronic peer contacts build on those personal links, they do not yet substitute for them.

So globalisation, as experienced by Australian intellectual workers, is not an opening-up of the world to a boundary-free cross-fertilisation of cultures and knowledges. It is still a process dominated by the institutions and knowledge systems of the global metropole. Though there are individual exceptions, collectively the Australian intelligentsia participates in the world through its relationship with metropolitan culture.

This is highly relevant to Australia's share in the invasion of Iraq and the current national panic about 'Islamic terrorism'. In the course of our life-history interviewing, across a range of fields and institutions, we met no-one who had done any of their training in a Muslim country, or for whom Islam was a significant cultural force. Our government's dependence on the US government's interpretation of world affairs is not accidental. Australians collectively see the Islamic world through American eyes. This reflects the underlying pattern of quasi-globalisation in Australian intellectual culture.

### **Conclusion: intellectual workers' place in the world**

Among our respondents from the corporate world, no tension between the power of knowledge and the power of command is visible. The capacity to deploy intellectual techniques is itself a major resource in managerial careers, in Australia and doubtless elsewhere. In such careers an intellectual identity is difficult to sustain. Some respondents locate their intellectual excitement at an earlier stage of their career,

some shift their intellectual interests into private life (the pile of books by the bedside). The nearest thing to a managerial/intellectual identity is the 'strategic advisor' role, played by two people we interviewed, both women. Both were outside the line-management hierarchy, and both have an unusually broad, reflective view of the world of corporations and state power. But it is not a critical view.

In the academic world, a critical view is more easily taken, and neoliberal attitudes are less common. In our cross-sectional survey, on a measure of market ideology, university-based respondents were the most oppositional of all sectors, corporate employees the most market-oriented - a robust statistical finding. But this did not mean that academics boasted a confident intellectual identity. On a measure of cultural optimism (vs cultural pessimism), university-based respondents scored relatively low and corporate respondents relatively high.

Some reasons for cultural pessimism emerge in the life-history interviews. As one respondent - a part-time lecturer, part-time journalist - remarks, 'there's no secure place. Universities are not secure, newspapers certainly aren't secure'. Bertrand, a full-time academic, focuses on the changes inside universities that have accompanied commercialisation and corporate-style management:

My sense as a lecturer back in the 'seventies and 'eighties was that we were the university. When you thought of it, it was this big body of people, and then a group of others who were supportive, like Vice-Chancellors and so on... Whereas my sense now is that that has all changed, turned around. And you are very conscious of someone else running the university, and they don't appear particularly friendly. Although they readily say things that are intended to keep people feeling possibly relaxed and comfortable, but have anything but that effect.

Among some respondents - though certainly not all - there is a sense of full-blown cultural crisis around the role of an academic; a sense that a valuable way of life has been destroyed and nothing very admirable has taken its place.

Kieran, whom I quoted at the start of this paper, isn't quite right that 'nobody thinks those thoughts at all'. There are still many who do think large thoughts about civilisation and the long-term future.

But the circumstances of the thinking have certainly changed. There is a widespread sense among our respondents, in both studies, that the ground has shifted, that older modes of intellectual work are passing, or have already passed. Among some respondents there is marked insecurity. Among many there is a sense of being under pressure, which often takes the form of serious time shortages. This has (I think) become a key issue for the intellectual workforce - some are saying that the result is not higher performance, but falling quality. (Yet most, in the survey, agree that Australian standards remain high.)

The pressure for change does not, on the face of it, come from 'globalisation'. Indeed, the pattern of international connection I have called 'quasi-globalisation' - dependence on the metropole - seems one of the more stable features of Australian intellectual life. It would be good to have more really *global* orientation! But the language of 'globalisation' also has the implication of dominance by global markets, and the growing influence of market relationships at all levels of social organisation certainly is one of the pressures producing change.

Australian intellectual workers, examined empirically, do not look very much like the 'new class' of either progressive theory or new-right journalism. But neither do they look like the bearers of free-floating postmodern culture. They are mostly working in organisations and performing an increasingly collectivised form of labour. They remain a group in which oppositional ideas exist, but they are institutionally divided, unlikely to act as a coherent cultural force.

Are there alternatives? We were able to identify statistically a group who are relatively marginalised from the organisational mainstream, and who show high levels of autonomy in their work. We might speculate that the strategy of casualising the intellectual workforce will produce alienation and opposition in the future. But most are still in the organisational world. Here a key issue is the growing tension between market-oriented managerialism and the culturally-embedded concerns of intellectual workers for the quality of their own work, for collegiality in the workplace, and for the right to pursue truth wherever the search leads. I doubt those will ever be the banners of a revolution, but they are 'values' that will increasingly matter to other social groups as well. Intellectual workers might then become, not a 'vanguard' in the old sense, but pioneers for moves beyond the dark valley of neoliberalism.

Those are long-term possibilities. For the moment, intellectual workers in Australia are not a powerful force for change. Those who are closest to the levers of power are those who are least likely to dissent from the reigning ethos of neoliberalism and its emphasis on short-term advantage. For the time being, Kieran is probably right about the pyramids.



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- <sup>1</sup> Pusey, Michael (1991). *Economic Rationalism in Canberra*, Sydney, Cambridge University Press.
  - <sup>2</sup> Benda, Julien (1928). *The Great Betrayal [La trahison des clercs]*, London: Routledge; Karl Mannheim (1985[1929]). *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
  - <sup>3</sup> Gouldner, Alvin (1979). *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*, New York, Continuum.
  - <sup>4</sup> Sharp, Geoff (1983). 'Intellectuals in transition', *Arena*, 65: 84-95.
  - <sup>5</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt (1987). *Legislators and Interpreters: On modernity, post-modernity and intellectuals*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

- <sup>6</sup> For instance, Kleinman, Daniel Lee and Steven P Vallas (2001). 'Science, capitalism and the rise of the "knowledge worker": the changing structure of knowledge production in the United States', *Theory and Society*, 30, 4: 451-492.
- <sup>7</sup> For further details of these studies see RW Connell and Julian Wood (2002) 'Globalization and scientific labour: a life-history study of intellectual workers in the periphery', *Journal of Sociology*, 38, 2: 167-190; RW Connell, June Crawford and Julian Wood (in press) 'The global connections of intellectual workers: an Australian study', *International Sociology*; RW Connell and June Crawford (in press). 'Are we postmodern yet? The cultural politics of Australian intellectual workers', *Australian Journal of Political Science*. Other papers are under submission.
- <sup>8</sup> Latour, Bruno and Steve Woolgar (1979). *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts*, Beverley Hills, Sage.



## Winning the Hearts and Minds of Academics in the Service of Neoliberalism *Bronwyn Davies*

### What is neoliberalism?

Fifty years ago, according to Susan George,<sup>1</sup> there was a widely accepted belief that the management of human lives and of the environment should not be abandoned to the vagaries of the market. In marked contrast, the newly ascendant neoliberal philosophy asserts that 'the market should be allowed to make major social and political decisions; ... the State should voluntarily reduce its role in the economy, ... corporations should be given total freedom, trade unions should be curbed and citizens given much less rather than more protection'.<sup>2</sup> George sees the current ascendancy of these beliefs as the result of a concerted campaign on the part of 'neoliberals and their funders' to transform relations between human beings and the market:

Starting from a tiny embryo at the University of Chicago with the philosopher-economist Friedrich von Hayek and his students like Milton Friedman at its nucleus, the neo-liberals and their funders have created a huge international network of foundations, institutes, research centers, publications, scholars, writers and public relations hacks to develop, package and push their ideas and doctrine relentlessly.

They have built this highly efficient ideological cadre because they understand what the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci was talking about when he developed the idea of cultural hegemony. If you can occupy people's heads, their hearts and hands will follow... They have spent hundreds of millions of

dollars ... [and] have made neoliberalism seem as if it were the natural and normal condition of humankind.<sup>3</sup>

Just how concerted this campaign has been is, of course, a matter of dispute, with sociologists generally unwilling to explain any changes as the result of a conspiracy. That there has been a transformation, however, is not disputed. That the market has greater weight than people's lives is not disputed. That there has been a massive redistribution of wealth in favour of rich countries, and of corporate leaders is not disputed. And neoliberal systems of government are now the new and favoured forms of government on both the left and right sides of politics. Neoliberalism, one way or another has achieved cultural hegemony.

My interest in this paper is to contemplate Gramsci's observation that 'if you can occupy people's heads, their hearts and hands will follow' in the context of the takeover in universities of neoliberal funding mechanisms and management practices. In what ways has neoliberalism taken over the heads of academics? And how does this takeover translate to hearts and hands?

The new contract between the state and people under neoliberalism is that the state takes over the maintenance of 'the infrastructure of law and order' while the people 'promote individual and national well-being by their responsibility and enterprise'.<sup>4</sup> Neoliberal philosophy espouses 'survival of the fittest' and unleashes competition among individuals, among institutions and among nations, freeing them from what are construed as the burdensome chains of social justice and social responsibility. Populations are administered and managed through the production of a belief in each individual in his or her own freedom, autonomy and sense of responsibility. Governing through freedom, however, as Rose points out, requires a great deal of complex manipulation of those 'free' and 'autonomous' individuals:

Constructing a 'free market' seems to entail a variety of interventions by accountants, management consultants, lawyers and industrial relations specialists and marketing experts in order to establish the conditions under which the 'laws of supply and demand' can make themselves real, to implant the ways of calculating and managing that will make economic actors think, reckon and behave as competitive, profit-seeking agents, to turn workers into motivated employees who will freely strive to give of their best in the workplace, and to transform people into consumers who can choose between products'.<sup>5</sup>

Within this competitive, consumer-oriented system, individuals in pursuit of their own freedom must also be persuaded to freely accept responsibility, both for themselves as individuals and for the success of their workplace. To this end an extensive audit system is needed, since, in a neoliberal philosophy, trust and commitment to the collective well-being have been made redundant. The audit systems in turn add to the culture of distrust: 'Whilst audits have become key fidelity techniques in new strategies of government, they generate an expanding spiral of distrust of professional competence, and one that feeds the demand for more radical measures that will hold experts to account.'<sup>6</sup> Litigation has flourished in the dual context of individual responsibility and distrust.

By the 1970s, Rose points out:

Neoliberalism took as its target not just the economy but society itself. All kinds of practices – health, security, welfare and more – were to be restructured

according to a particular image of the economic – the market. Markets were seen as the ideal mechanisms for the automatic co-ordination of the decisions of a multitude of individual actors in the best interest of all. Hence these styles of governing sought to create simulacra of markets governed by economic or para-economic criteria of judgements in arenas previously governed by bureaucratic and social logics: the new techniques were those of budgets, contracts, performance related pay, competition, quasi-markets and end-user empowerment.<sup>7</sup>

Tertiary education institutions were both seduced and manipulated through concepts such as the knowledge economy, a concept that suggested they had a central role in the new order. They would be responsible for the reduction in trust of professional judgment and the shaping of the new enterprise individual, the individual who would be committed to the principle of his or her own freedom and autonomy, who would accept, beyond doubt, the authority of the market. These individuals would be required to be responsible both for themselves and for surviving the vagaries of the market, while at the same time being freely committed to hard work and a life of consumption. How were academics persuaded to accept this package, to make it their own? Fifty years ago, as George points out, it would have been impossible.

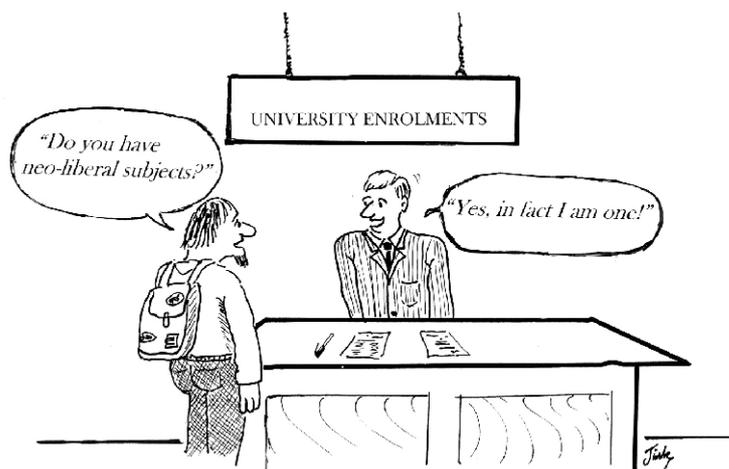
One mechanism was via students, who as 'end-users' were given substantial surveillance powers through, for example, teaching evaluations – to shape the academics who were in turn to shape them as appropriate neoliberal subjects. In this context of transformation, universities simultaneously took on the expansion of the student population (persuaded by the logics of social justice and 'big is better') along with successive restructurings that were sold to them by managers and consultants who offered to make them more appropriate – more competitive – in the new quasi-market. These changes to the student population and to the structures and practices of universities left academics, predictably, individually and collectively uncertain about how their own institutions worked. This uncertainty went hand in hand with a new vulnerability to competition discourses that suggested their institution did not have a viable economic life without embracing the new structures and discourses - structures and discourses that were actively being taken up by their newly management-oriented Vice Chancellors and by government assessment bodies.

Another major strategy of neoliberalism has been to emphasise the global nature of the changes, representing neoliberalism itself as both natural and inevitable - not as stemming from the whims of specific governments, but as a feature of globalisation itself. Individual governments can then be seen not to impose neoliberal strategies and values, but to assist the country in managing the inevitable changes. The enemy, in this twist of logic, is hard for any 'newly individualised' worker to detect, particularly as there is no time left to *talk* about what is going on. With the simultaneous weakening of unions and loss of tenure, collective action becomes a thing of the past. Union energy is absorbed in attempts to keep wages up with inflation, in return for undertakings that workers will work ever harder - 'no increase in wages without an increase in productivity' having achieved the status of a truism within neoliberal thought.

In characterising the change as the inevitable effect of globalisation, neoliberalism takes up an anti-historical stance, representing itself as unable to be questioned (it is inevitable) and as unquestionably better than the past (which is either irrelevant or

bad). In this new social/economic order workers are individualised and cut loose from old dependences on the social, and within the spirit of survival of the fittest, to freely engage in a reworking of themselves within 'the ethos and structure of the enterprise form'.<sup>8</sup> Integral to this process is that '[A]ll aspects of social behaviour are ... reconceptualised along economic lines'.<sup>9</sup> This elevation of economic discourse to hegemonic status entails a serious undermining of social critique. In place of technologies designed to protect the weak or vulnerable or abused, the technologies designed to shift individuals' performances toward higher levels of flexibility, productivity, and cooperation with national *economic* objectives, are what are to be desired. The strategies through which education is reconstituted as 'a market in which private clients purchase private goods for private benefit'<sup>10</sup> is, from within neoliberalism's espoused logic, simply a desirable elaboration of the inevitable reshaping that is necessitated by participation in the global economy.

From within the institutions in which these changes are taking place, these neoliberal discourses and strategies have been quite difficult to pin down as a coherent analysable object of study. They are not visibly a coherent imposition from outside, but discursively constituted as being freely taken up. They are both ubiquitous and yet strangely intangible. They can appear as an apparently innocent set of strategies and



improvements here and as a new set of strategies and goals there. They are always directly or indirectly tied to funding, and are being pursued energetically by apparently responsible university managers intent on the competitive survival of their institutions. But they are also being freely taken up by competitive individuals. Neoliberal discourses and strategies thus cleverly forestall resistance to themselves. They further disguise themselves through taking on semantic virtue (borrowing words like 'quality' and 'accountability'), through semantic obscurity ('stake-holders' and 'end-users'<sup>11</sup> and also through the generation of new/old myths. These include the inevitability of globalisation, the limited and limiting nature of finance ('you can't do it if you don't have the money'), the guilty irresponsibility and dependence of individuals in the past, and, above all, the virtue of competition. Thatcher once said in a speech 'It is our job to glory in inequality and see that the talents and abilities are given vent and expression for the benefit of us all'.<sup>12</sup>

### Neoliberalism at work in academe

Before I took up my current position at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) nearly two years ago, I came very close to quitting academe altogether, despite the

fact that I love it so much, or perhaps because of that love. I remember the particular Saturday morning vividly. I was sitting in the coffee shop reading the paper in a desultory fashion, brooding over the way our work was being transformed by narrow mechanisms of control and surveillance that not only did not guarantee good intellectual work, but that seemed, rather, to make it irrelevant. I did not at that time have a language with which to make sense of what was going on. I just knew that whatever it was, it made me unhappy and that the changes seemed to run against everything I thought universities were about.

I thought, in a mood of despair, of the staff meeting the day before in which we were discussing the proposed list of 'generic skills' for our School. The committee that had generated the list appeared to have no thoughts about where the requirement for generic skills had come from and with what purpose. At best their purpose could be guessed at in terms of working on 'our competitive edge' in the market. At worst it was what everyone was doing, or what we had been told to do by university management. There was no thought about how the production of this list related to our teaching practice. I asked whether it was a set of ideals defining what we thought we might aim at, or did the compilation of the list amount to a claim that we already taught those skills? If so, how did we know that we did? No-one on the committee, as far as I could remember, had asked me what skills my students acquired in the subjects I taught. If we accepted this list, were we obliged to redesign our teaching so we did teach them? Were they add-ons to the skills and understandings we had, until then, thought we were teaching? Or were they replacements?

My colleagues found my questions annoying. 'Surely you want the students to have a commitment to life-long learning' (one of the 'generic skills' on the list that I had found most absurd) one of my colleagues had asked, frowning in disbelief at my impossible positioning of myself. (I was, apparently, where no one could imagine being, resisting the idea that our job was to shape the students within the new discourses). I was undermining the hard work the committee had undertaken over the previous year in generating this list. The way it must go, they explained was that we would freely assent to the list, having agreed on some minor modifications to make them democratic, and to make them our own, and then we would put them in our course notes. This way we would differentiate ourselves from the university and its list of generic skills, and from other schools of education. We would have a recognisable identity and could proceed with our teaching accordingly. In effect, we would be competitive, we would be able to attract students, those consumers who were out there, learning to discriminate between one advertised consumer product and another, learning to employ their freedom by choosing among the different offers, so shaping themselves up as marketable subjects in the market economy. Not that we had that language available to us then, in that meeting: the discussion was much more inchoate and fractured.

I sat there in the coffee shop brooding on the ways in which my teaching could be made, at worst, redundant, and, at best, simply wrong. I did not want to accede to the demand that we produce this new, generic, homogenised student with generalisable skills. I wanted to produce astute critics of all forms of hegemony. Continuing resistance in the face of so much willing submission, seemed, in that moment, too difficult. The idea flashed across my mind that I did not have to either resist or submit. I could simply walk away from it all, extract myself from the relentless hegemony of these neoliberal practices of manipulation and control. I was so startled

by the obviousness and the apparent beauty of this solution that my mood lifted from one of despair to euphoria. I went straight home, and in a state of relief and happiness, wrote my letter of resignation.

I began to ponder, then, what I wanted to do with the 'rest of my life'. Where might I find a pocket of the world free from this cancerous growth? Living on consultancies, as many of my ex-colleagues now did, would be to become a servant of the new system, an instrument in bringing about the transformations. Maybe I could write a novel about it... How had it all happened? And why? What I most wanted was to understand how neoliberalism works on us, how it reshapes intellectual life with so little apparent resistance. It dawned on me that I had an obligation to make sense of the monster *before* I quit. My moment of euphoric separation was over, and the project of understanding how neoliberalism works on the minds of intellectual workers had begun.<sup>13</sup>

It was impossible to get funding to support something apparently so radical as examining the impact on intellectual life of the neoliberal regime. But I proceeded anyway, using invitations to lecture or to examine theses, in various parts of the world, to fund my travel. I interviewed twenty-six academics from Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and the US. The interviewees were from universities varying in status and size, in both major metropolitan universities and regional universities. They were selected for this diversity in their workplaces, but only from among those who were known by their peers as successful and dedicated academics. Their status ranged from Senior Lecturer to Professor and many currently or previously had major administrative responsibilities. I also began paying more careful attention to documenting my own and my colleagues' daily experience in the workplace.<sup>14</sup>

I found the interviews and the collaborative work with colleagues on how neoliberalism works on us, and through us, both moving and deeply intriguing. I stopped feeling so lonely, so cut off from my colleagues and from interesting conversations. Some of the distress they expressed was almost unbearable, but the passion for work that they expressed – both research and teaching – was profound and inspiring. The longing expressed in some of the interviews was for the place that has been lost - a place in which critical intellectual work could flourish. It was a place where we were paid to do the work of thinking and teaching others to think. It was also a place where political work was done to bring about change both within the institutions themselves and outside them.<sup>15</sup> Both the intellectual and the political work were sites of dispute and both led to a vitalising of the culture. There was, in this remembered place, an exchange of views, and the emergence of new ideas. It was a vivid image that sustained many of the interviewees.

Some of my colleagues, who are relatively new to university work, have no memory and little idea of this place. They ask, is this pre-neoliberal university a memory, or is it a fantasy? Was there ever that place of learning that some of us long for, or have we made it up, as some would have it, as part of some inability to move forward? Within neoliberal-speak past *wrongs* count as good evidence that the past was bad and that it necessitated the inevitable present. But the longed-for past, with all its faults, was one that afforded the very possibility that we could openly critique what we found and collectively take action to create something different. Movement and change was intrinsic to it. We were collectively vitalised by the disputes, whichever side we were on, and by the movement of the social in new directions. To the extent that this only seems to be a memory for those of us who have been around for a

while, then it exists only as a fantasy for others, and as a fantasy that, if it surfaces, is vigorously put down with a string of binary clichés: 'you are romanticising the past; the past had many problems that you have forgotten about, it was never that good; it was necessary to move beyond it because of x, y, or z abuses that took place within it.' Any one of the beads on this string can be quite effective in silencing the one who yearns, or the one who remembers, or the one who fantasises. No-one wants to be recognised as an out-of-date, old-fashioned romantic, or as naïve, or as someone who condones old abuses.

What is left unexamined, once the silence is accomplished, is that the neoliberal present is anything but problem-free or abuse-free. It is also anything but rational or responsible and, dare I say, probably not even economically viable, despite (or perhaps because of) all that auditing and reporting. In the meantime we need to understand how we got to this peculiar place in which we are so easy to silence and so easily changed into neoliberal subjects.

The compulsory forgetting of what was good is one crucial strategy of neoliberal governance. With such collective forgetting we can assent to the inevitability and the apparent normality of the ahistorical present, with its absence of critique and its salvation story of saving us from economic ruin and from our inadequate and corrupt past. The production of generic graduates, equally serviceable (and equally disposable) in any context can be read as one sign, once one has let go of the past, of our newly responsible approach to our work in which we entice students as consumers to desire our product (so the university survives in the competitive market) and then produce out of the students another product that the market says it wants (thus responsibly ensuring our graduates have jobs).

### **Heads, hearts and hands**

In this last section of the paper, I will draw on one interview, in particular, to show how neoliberalism plays itself out from heads to hearts and hands. The interview is with an Australian professor who runs a research centre in an elite university. He struggles with his ambivalent take-up of neoliberalism. He reveals in his analysis of his current situation many of the conceptual traps neoliberalism provides. While he visibly accomplishes himself as an appropriate neoliberal subject, at the same time he talks about the incredible cost to his body and his work.

He explains that the advent of neoliberalism in universities is the fault, at least in part, of the bad and lazy academics of the past. These bad and lazy *others* are apparently a crucial ingredient of the inevitability myth. The interviewee says, in response to my question about the erosion of academic autonomy:

I think we have to be careful about the concepts of academic autonomy, it is extremely valuable that we have it and we can't live without it, but there has been a long period of time in which some of us took advantage of it and did bloody nothing and damaged the university system because it allowed managers to come in and lay down their standards of productivity and to cut into our working conditions and to control, you know, how we communicate up to a point. But to an extent we brought that upon ourselves because we inherited this Oxbridge type tradition in which laziness was a really big feature, and we weren't energetic enough and vigilant enough about our own standards, so we opened the door a bit. Certainly in my experience at this university what

people got away with in teaching and in research was appalling and it made it very hard on young people, and as I was a young person starting academic life I could see what amounted to a corrupt system. That doesn't justify the amount of surveillance we have now, which is just excessive. There's a lot of it doesn't do anything, it is oppressive in the sense of time-consuming and the cost of being counted and having to account and report, that's an overkill. But it has got to be compared with the days when there was this lackadaisical approach on the part of some and a not insignificant number of academic staff who abused their position and exploited a larger group of junior staff, who today probably no longer exist. But certainly they created the conditions for future insecurity. So look, I think there is a history there and it is not simply at the level of government.

He begins with a deep ambivalence. We need autonomy and cannot live without it, but it is dangerous - and the proof of that is the bad behaviour of those *others* in the past. There are three different threads of reasoning woven together here: a systemic reasoning - we can blame the Oxbridge system for making us into inadequate lazy academics (thus we needed systemic change); a reasoning about the nature of individual human subjects who are naturally irresponsible, being corrupt and exploitative if left to their own (de)vices (thus we needed systems to control them); and a new systemic argument - the neoliberal system is necessary but it may have gone too far. This is a powerful trio of arguments. It constructs a new ascendant morality. The Oxbridge model is painted in starkly negative terms (we exploited the young, we were lazy, and we had a lackadaisical attitude) in contrast to a present in which we are no longer vulnerable to that kind of elitism, that kind of injustice, that kind of old world inadequacy. We are, in the *new world (the new university)*, vital and responsible and energetic. That the stuffing is being knocked out of us by the new system is less troubling when put in this anti-colonial framework, in which we have responsibly shed our outdated dependence on the coloniser's corruption and exploitation. As well, the ambivalence between having lost academic autonomy and yet needing it to survive as intellectual workers is glossed over in the drama of marching forward, of bringing those *others* under control, and in shedding the unacceptably elite, corrupt past. The marching forward narrative is painfully interleaved with pain and loss, albeit a loss we had to have. I asked the interviewee what impact the new system had on him:

Well there are a range of ways in which you could say that it affects me a lot, and I am not happy about it. I don't want to, I don't spend anywhere near enough time in the library, reading the works of other people, I go to conferences but I go to conferences as a speaker, so I am not there at the conferences where I could learn from other people, I am not reading their works enough, I am not doing any independent research, so my ability to inform students about the world around me has diminished as a result, as well as the quality of my own research. So it is not a satisfactory outcome to be placed in a position effectively where you are an entrepreneur generating income. It is not compatible in the long term with sustained high quality academic research. It is compatible with occasional significant contributions, but sustained, long term, no. It undermines you, it saps you of energy.

This is a common position described by many of the interviewees. They are unable to find the time to do that hard, pleasurable, invisible work of extending their capacity for thought. Despite this devastating effect on himself, the interviewee justifies his

position as a supporter of the new system and as one who has reworked himself to become the successful entrepreneur by relying on the first of his arguments about the old system being corrupt, for example, with poor teaching practices. Yet he admits that under neoliberalism both his teaching and his research have suffered: 'my ability to inform students about the world around me has diminished... as well as the quality of my own research'. In response to his claim that the new system sapped him of energy and that it did not allow sustained significant work, I broached the topic that other interviewees had raised with me of the present corrupt practice of applying for research funds that are not needed. His denial that he engages in this practice is intriguing, and relies on the binary of good (if difficult) present against bad past, a past that vaunted itself as good, and as pure. In invoking the pure/garbage binary he displays a painful ambivalence. He is sure his research is not garbage *and* he worries that it is garbage. He holds this doubled ambivalent knowledge together without resolving the contradiction, like a tension between the new and the old held in his own body:

[The pressure doesn't] come from the university for me to pull money in, the pressure comes from how do you support your team so that the research activity can go on. The research activity that is important, in itself, can go on and it has to be funded and it can only be funded by cross-subsidisation, apart from ARC things which are too unreliable really to worry about. So it is not that I am interested in selling some message to the university administration. (The pressure comes) when I put in for the renewal of my staff's employment that I have to point to contracts to pay their wages and that is why I am interested. I have got to show that there is money in the bank for their salaries. Now a spin-off of that is that if you earn a lot of money then you get respect. But it is not for the respect that I am doing the work, it is to, at least I don't think I do, I think I am honest with myself...

[So, I could interpret what you said as a vicious cycle in which you've got staff who need to be paid, and the money that is easy to get or that you *can* get, is the sort of stuff that isn't really deeply intellectual research, but is client-based and it is not leading to intellectual thought, that just goes around in a funding circle?]

No you couldn't do that, you could do that before (when) the projects we got were garbage projects, and there were short term and larger reward value, yeah you'd, you know, I'd be able to say that. But that is not the way it works, we don't do garbage projects, although I sometimes think we do. We only do projects that we think are, have good aspects about them - that are worth doing. There are some projects that we have done that I wish we hadn't done. But on the whole all the work we do is of *potential* intellectual significance, and I won't do projects that I think are garbage, you know, where there are foregone conclusions involved (and you're just giving the funding body what they want). But if you look at the range of projects that we, in this group, do, all of them, I would say, with very few exceptions, are intrinsically worthy projects, I am very confident about that. I can imagine a situation in which a vicious circle (gets put in place) in which you earn money in order to earn money. But that is not what happens here. We do a lot of good work and the challenge for us is to make sure that the client work that we do is of a good quality and of intrinsic interest not just client interest, and that it produces (enough to) fund the academic work we do. You do also have to consider the fact that not all academic work is of intrinsic interest. Some of it is garbage, and has got no (real value) and

academics should not kid themselves that everything they have done, simply because it wasn't paid for by a commercial client, is by that fact qualitatively good, that (it's good just because it) got accepted into a journal. I mean people can learn how you get stuff into journals, and there is a routine and there are methods for doing it. Just because they get published in a journal doesn't mean that the stuff they've done is intrinsically better than a research report (for a client). So we have to deal with those facts, it is not so straightforward that anything that is touched by commercial money is dirty. Where is the purity in academic research? I don't think it is utterly pure.

The binaries pure/dirty, good/bad, academic/commercial and lazy/responsible do important work here in sustaining the legitimacy of the painful present. He is unhappy at the imagined claim from the Oxbridge dons that their work was 'pure' and 'academic' in contrast with his work that uses commercial money. He is angry with the elite *others* who did not visibly produce work and who spent (too much) time just thinking. Now he does not have time to read and reflect, to engage in what might be construed as such laziness. He admits the current situation is: 'not compatible in the long term with sustained high quality academic research' yet this does not lessen his rage against those others who had time to think and who occasionally produced high quality academic research. The best he can offer, in the current situation, is *potential* intellectual significance.

What this interviewee's reasoning suggests is that a major energy supporting neoliberalism is resentment against the imagined elite *others* who claimed to be pure, but who were not (well, not always). As universities have become more open to those from non-elite backgrounds, as they have expanded the student base and become accessible to 'everyone', such reasoning casts the 'old ways', not as having made possible the very debates and conflicts through which such openings were generated, but as the very ways to be overturned in securing the (more acceptable) present. In such a framing of the situation, those of us who yearn for the lost space in which we can do intellectual work become the anachronistic *other*, the other whom no-one could imaginably want to be.

But there is a great deal of ambivalence in this interview around the pure/dirty and good/bad binaries. The interviewee has not dismissed the old entirely. He frets about not going for the ARC money. He worries about wanting to be, and perhaps being, respected just for the sheer volume of commercial money he brings in. He does not dismiss purity as bad. It's just that what we (and our Oxbridge forebears) have done is not utterly pure in the way we might, in some fantasy space, have said it was. The government has organised the university funding so that each university cannot sustain itself without bringing in the kind of external funding that this interviewee brings in. The university depends on him and he knows it. Yet he goes on in the interview to describe his stress and the extent of his hard work (the hard work that separates him off once and for all from the lazy side of the binary) as having led to a weakening of his heart and to subsequent life threatening health problems. He is supported by the new regime and successful within its terms, yet he is afraid of wanting the affirmation it gives him.

It is important to examine the *implicit* subject who gives rise to the need for neoliberal strategies of surveillance and control. In the narrative as it is spelled out here, that subject is slothful and corrupt and in need of a system that counteracts that naturalised tendency to laziness and greed. This guilty subject found in such narratives of the past is taken up as real even by those deeply opposed to the ascendance of neoliberalism.<sup>16</sup> Systems of surveillance and reporting can easily be justified once it is taken as true that this is the nature of the human subject (though always the *other* human subject). In an interview with

another interviewee I asked whether being accountable and reporting on what you do is a good way to make you responsible:

Yes.

[Really?]

Yes, because there are colleagues I consider irresponsible who are not accountable, I think accountability is a good thing.

[But would you be responsible without it?]

Oh yeah, but I think in a system, I thought that was a, this is a, me?

[Yeah]

Oh, OK, no I'll be responsible without it. I was thinking of the generic 'you'.

Laziness is easy to attribute to someone whose work does not have measurable or economic products. Neoliberal systems of evaluation are understood, in the face of this implicit subject, as keeping them honest and hard working. Neoliberal discourse itself, with the justification of all action in terms of economic benefit, and the accompanying assumptions about the natural human subject, is inevitably producing us as another kind of subject - not necessarily an ethical subject, and not necessarily one who yearns for passionate commitments, since one must remain open, always, to what someone else believes to be desirable whether that be auditors, funding bodies or government.<sup>17</sup>

In the narratives of neoliberalism we are required, as academics, to manage a doubled positioning in which we assent to being treated as the always/already corrupt, lazy subject in need of the technologies of management and surveillance. At the same time, we must freely work to create the intellectual space in which it is possible, despite our exhaustion and humiliation and the thousand eyes of surveillance, to think creatively, to produce new thoughts, thoughts that may take time, thoughts that may produce no immediate product with economic value, thoughts that may increase well-being rather than dollars.

In the ambivalent take-up of neoliberal discourses and practices some of the academics I interviewed work incredibly hard to forge a pathway that is successful in neoliberal terms. Some find in the encouragement to entrepreneurial activity some opportunities coming up that they would not have had otherwise. All work harder than they have ever worked before, but none claimed to be producing better work than they had done before. Many said, like the interviewee above, that sustaining quality work was not possible in the new system. Some were angry and grieved at their inability to do sustained intellectual work as they finished off the reports for one research grant and then dived into the production of the next. Many describe serious health problems that require a disciplined regimen of working on their bodies to keep them fit enough and healthy enough to survive. Even with an ambivalent and partial take-up of neoliberal discourses and practices, hearts and hands follow the head in the production of endless doing that saps the body of energy, deadens the spirit and troubles the heart.



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  - <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*: 1.
  - <sup>3</sup> *Ibid*: 3.
  - <sup>4</sup> Rose, Nikolas (1999). *The Powers of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 139.
  - <sup>5</sup> *Ibid*: 65.
  - <sup>6</sup> *Ibid*: 155.
  - <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*: 146.
  - <sup>8</sup> *Ibid*: 138.
  - <sup>9</sup> *Ibid*: 144.
  - <sup>10</sup> Marginson, Simon (2002). 'Postgraduate training in the social sciences: knowledge, engagement, vocation,' *Journal of Australian Studies*, 74: 7-46at 19.
  - <sup>11</sup> Watson, Don (2003). *Death Sentence. The decay of public language*. Milson's Point: Knopf.
  - <sup>12</sup> Cited in George (1999) *op cit*: 4.
  - <sup>13</sup> See Davies, Bronwyn (2003). 'Dissemination, or critique and transformation?' in Becky Francis and Christina Hughes (eds) *Disseminating Qualitative Research*. Maidenhead: Open University Press: 110-122; (2005). 'The impossibility of intellectual work in neoliberal regimes,' *Discourse*, 26, 1: 3-16. See also Bronwyn Davies and Eva Petersen (2005). 'Intellectual workers (un)doing neoliberal discourse,' *International Journal of Critical Psychology*, 13: 32-54; and (forthcoming) Bronwyn Davies and Eva Petersen, 'Neoliberal discourse in the academy: the forestalling of (collective) resistance,' *Learning and Teaching in the Social Sciences*.
  - <sup>14</sup> Davies, Bronwyn, Jenny Browne, Susanne Gannon, Eileen Honan, and Margaret Somerville (2005 forthcoming). 'Embodied women at work in neoliberal times and places', *Gender, Work and Organization*, 12, 4.
  - <sup>15</sup> Davies (2003) *op cit*.
  - <sup>16</sup> See Biggs, John and Richard Davis (eds) (2002). *The Subversion of Australian Universities*. Wollongong: Fund for Intellectual Dissent.
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## Stifling Freedom of Thought in the Information Age?

*Chilla Bulbeck*

### Introduction

It all started in 1996 when Prime Minister John Howard attacked 'political correctness'. Since then, from election to election, both the Coalition and some in the ALP have used a form of anti-elitism described as 'market populism' by Jim Walter.<sup>1</sup> Market populism blames 'elites' for growing income inequality, thus shifting attention away from the effects of globalisation, economic rationalism and a retreating welfare state in creating inequalities of wealth and power. While this brand of anti-elitism is bizarre in misunderstanding the cause of economic inequality, there are reasons for its purchase in the popular imagination. As discussed by contributors to *Us and Them*,<sup>2</sup> an exploration of the spread of anti-elitism in Australia over the last decade, elites are described in a range of unflattering terms. They are most particularly defined as university-educated intellectuals who consider themselves morally superior to 'ordinary' Australians; they are employed in government jobs and so live off the very taxpayers they are said to despise; and they 'lecture' ordinary Australians on issues such as environmentalism, feminism and multiculturalism. As Barry Hindess suggests, until recently humanities intellectuals educated in universities *did* see their social role as the promotion of 'civilised habits of self-regulation'.<sup>3</sup> Since none of us likes to be in receipt of 'improving discourses', little wonder that anti-elitism condemns elites for their contempt for 'ordinary' Australians and claims of moral superiority. Anti-elitism also found fertile soil in the dark underbelly of Australian 'mateship' and 'egalitarianism' which is partially comprised of anti-intellectualism.

Contemporary anti-intellectualism expresses a shift in economic relations and the complementary justifying ideological discourses. The 'Keynesian consensus' or Australian settlement was built on 'equalising projects'; distribution from the owners of capital to the workers (eg, arbitration), from consumers to manufacturers (eg, tariffs), regional equalisation through federal grants and near-universalisation of educational access and standards.<sup>4</sup> This consensus was masterminded by those with 'expert knowledge' and thus excluded those who were not the 'experts'. Others were also excluded, or incorporated in specific ways. The 'new class' advocating feminism, multiculturalism and so on, expresses the voices of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s which challenged the 'Australian settlement'. These groups were not recognised in Australia's assimilationist and gendered project, which required all men to be in paid work as productive members of the capitalist economy and all women to be mothers and housekeepers. The new social movements had some success in changing our understanding of Australian identity and including different voices in the national conversation – *Mabo* and reconciliation, femocracy and feminism, and so on.

Anti-elitism is particularly acute for the white working class male who has lost both recognition and redistribution, in Nancy Fraser's<sup>5</sup> terms, marginalised from the national story by the 'new class' and from economic security by neoliberalism. Prime Minister Howard hailed this 'white worrier'<sup>6</sup> in a discourse opposing 'ordinary Australians' to the 'elites' of left-wing intellectuals, Asians, migrants, homosexuals, feminists, and beneficiaries of various 'industries', like the Aboriginal or ethnic industries.<sup>7</sup>

Hindess argues that when the Australian settlement was replaced with the ideology of neoliberalism, intellectuals were no longer needed. Adam Smith's notion that people driven by self-interest will learn 'prudence, diligence, punctuality and self-control' has reasserted itself. There is no longer a need to educate people in improving habits; the unregulated market will achieve this outcome automatically.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the Australian government no longer needs intellectuals, or not those of the left, as it is no longer engaged in nation-building projects that require the forging of a national consensus.

On the other hand, ideas still circulate, newspapers and books are still written and representations proliferate. We are constantly told we live in an 'information' age, rather than a manufacturing or even a finance capital age: 'The growth of an information economy is further marginalising the less educated, while global communications and media industries threaten national cultures'.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, it is not all intellectuals who are on the government's nose: those of the 'left' have been displaced by those who support anti-elitism through propounding economic rationalist theories (the rise of this discourse was traced by Michael Pusey back in the 1980s<sup>10</sup>) and via 'insider populism'.<sup>11</sup> Anti-elitism is expressed by talkback commercial radio shock jocks on multi-million dollar salaries, newspaper columnists with a platform in the Packer or Murdoch media, prime ministers and other politicians with considerable political power.

Focusing on the demise of 'femocrats', the institutionalised voice for gender equality located within government, I will trace some of the ways in which the voices of the 'new class' elites have been stifled. Then, I will grasp at the straws in the wind which suggest that anti-elitism is unstable. In essence, there are two major contradictions. First is the gulf between the material reality of what actually causes inequality and the anti-elitist blaming of those who are often the most economically marginalised. Second is the complaint from the now marginalised voices of the new class that we lack a voice in Australian discourse, by contrast with the promise of the information age proclaiming that no voice can be suppressed, particularly the voices of the educated.

### **Paying the piper and calling the tune: muzzling dissident voices**

Anne Summers bemoans *The End of Equality*, not so much because women are still far from achieving equality, but because gender equality is no longer a national goal: 'we have stopped even having the national conversation about women's entitlements and women's rights'.<sup>12</sup> Marian Sawer<sup>13</sup> traces the astonishing anti-elitist translation of 'equality seekers' into 'rent-seekers'. Those in largely feminised and underpaid professions, such as teaching and social work, are labeled elitist, accused of disguising their self-interest beneath claims to be serving their clients. Feminists, it is claimed, for example, are really only interested in retaining their jobs, and advocate for single mothers or prevention of violence against women as a hypocritical means of doing so.

The Coalition government sought to end the gender equality debate by deploying its economic and legislative powers to stifle critical and alternative voices, and indeed, any information that might support criticism. Government instrumentalities responsible for defending the rights of women and other disadvantaged groups have been de-funded or legislatively hobbled. The Office of the Status of Women (OSW) suffered a budget cut of 40 per cent in 1996, 'quite disproportionate in terms of the rest of the Prime Minister's portfolio'. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities

Commission also suffered a 40 per cent budget cut, halving the staff in the Sex Discrimination Unit and leaving the position of Sex Discrimination Commissioner vacant for a year. The ensuing demoralisation in both these organisations allowed the government to replace the femocrats with econocrats, in Pusey's terms.<sup>14</sup>

The Office for the Status of Women no longer promotes the interests of women through vigorous representations across all departments and in the wider community, but is a propaganda tool for the government, protecting it from criticism concerning its gender policies.<sup>15</sup> The legal powers of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission have been reduced, partly as a result of removing complaints handling powers from the individual commissioners to a federal court where they were more expensive and formal. Following a reduction in the Legal Aid budget in 1996, complaints under the Sex Discrimination Act dropped from more than 2000 a year to just over 300.<sup>16</sup> An attempt in 2003 to abolish the post of Race Discrimination Commissioner and to replace legal enforcement with 'education' in tolerance was only halted by a Senate enquiry.

State Labor governments have also de-funded their Offices of Women; for example Peter Beattie in 2004 demoted the Office of Women from the Premier's Department to Local Government, and NSW abolished its Department of Women, along with a 75 per cent budget cut, retaining only one position to advise the premier. The role of the Affirmative Action Agency has been redefined to support business rather than equity for women in employment.<sup>17</sup>

The revised Public Service Act prevents public servants from speaking out against government policy. Moreover, as the 'Children Overboard' case demonstrates, public servants are expected to protect ministers from embarrassing information, so that they can claim not to know. (It should be noted, however, that the politicisation of the top echelons of the public service began when the Whitlam government was elected in 1972 and found itself confronted with a public service steeped in Liberal Party traditions, thus suggesting that the professional public service claim to provide disinterested advice cannot necessarily be sustained).

The Coalition government's death by a thousand dollar cuts has also scythed down Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) advocating for women, refugees, social security recipients and others, deprived of some or all of their funding if they criticise government policies. Sawyer<sup>18</sup> suggests that the new social movements that formed in the 1970s were given 'recognition' in government decision-making processes through 'consultation' via 'bodies that could perform the role of community representative at the table'. The Whitlam, Keating and even Fraser governments listened to, and sometimes formed, consultative bodies to represent those previously excluded from government decision-making. Emerging under the aegis of redistributive governments, these groups are critical of the Howard government, which has responded by cutting out their tongues, de-funding them. For example, the Women's Electoral Lobby was 'de-funded in the late 1990s following its critiques of the differential impact of the goods and services tax and industrial relations "reform" on women'.<sup>19</sup> Social service agencies which have felt the blade include the Victorian Council of Social Service, the Collective of Self Help Groups, the Victorian Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, the Council of Single Mothers and their Children, the Disability Resource Centre and the Welfare Rights Unit (under the Kennett government in Victoria); the WA Council of Social Services and other peak

community welfare bodies (under the Richard Court government in WA); Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition, National Shelter, Australian Pensioners' and Superannuants Federation, the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, the Australian Community Health Association, the Association of Civilian Widows, Family Planning Australia and three peak ethnic welfare lobbies, along with substantial cuts to ACOSS' funding.<sup>20</sup> The South Australian Women's Studies Resource Centre, an International Women's Year initiative, and housing the largest collection of feminist books, magazines and journals in the southern hemisphere, was de-funded by the South Australian Liberal government from July 2000. Some of its funding was restored when the Rann Labor government was elected.

A recent survey of 290 NGOs found that many, particularly the women' groups, feel the government is not listening to them. Forty three per cent of the women's groups felt that their message was not being heard by the Howard government and only one said that they had been very successful in getting their message across. Social justice and welfare groups were divided: 28 per cent believed they were unsuccessful and 13 per cent felt successful, possibly based on whether or not they aligned themselves with the coalition. Around 70 per cent of those who receive government funding believe that this restricts their ability to comment on government policy, 14 per cent saying this happens often or always. The message that funding is conditional upon holding their tongues was conveyed through censorship, bullying, and undermining the credibility of organisational spokespersons. Ninety per cent believed dissent created the risk of funding cuts. Indeed, Immigration Minister, Phillip Ruddock, candidly admitted the government's attitude when he criticised a government-funded organisation speaking on behalf of refugees: 'We pay them to know better', he said, and threatened to withdraw their funding.<sup>21</sup>

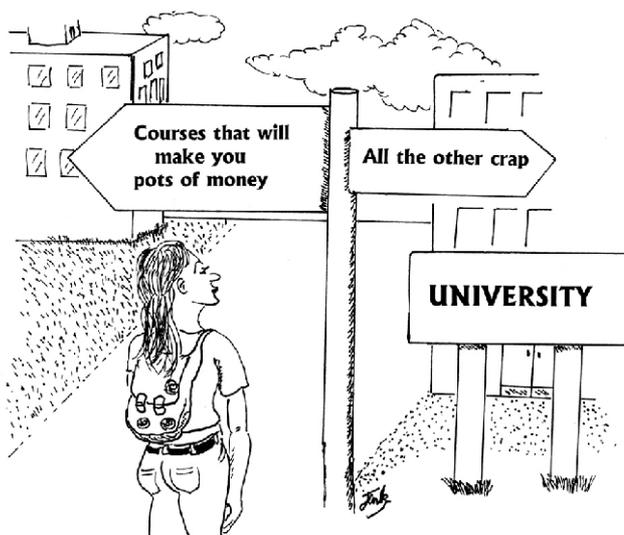
For a nation which developed the internationally applied women's budget statement and was commended by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, today 'there is no national benchmarking on the progress made on gender equality in Australia. It is not officially systematised in policy or the programs of government agencies, nor is there any systematic reporting back against achievements'.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the specialist units responsible for preparing and disseminating statistics which measure progress towards or away from gender equality have been disbanded, including the abolition of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Women's Statistics Unit and The Women's Bureau, established in 1963, which monitored labour force trends. Both closed down in 1997.<sup>23</sup>

Even 'Everyone's ABC' excised its feminist voice when it abolished the Radio National program 'Women Out Loud' some five years ago. But worse has come since. The Friends of the ABC regularly deplore the slashed government budget and interference with the 'integrity' of ABC journalists and commentators, who are among the few independent voices in a media dominated by the Packer and Murdoch corporate empires. Like other public servants, ABC employees are now unable to make any public comment that is not 'part of normal work or specifically approved by the executive director'. There is an ongoing battle to institute an independent ABC Board, rather than one stacked by the political party of the day.<sup>24</sup> Both the ABC and commercial talkback radio like to claim inclusiveness, although the former broadcasts mainly to the urban managerial and professional elite and the latter to para-professional, clerical and trades people. 'Talkback is activist, in a period when politicians of traditional parties are no longer thought to be activist', the million-dollar

earning hosts cultivating anti-elitism in the 'grammar of popular discontent', orchestrating the callers either by gag or encouragement as supporting roles in their staged production.<sup>25</sup>

Academics seem to be experiencing the brunt of anti-elitism. Some Labor politicians, for instance, complain that working-class taxpayers are funding the free university

education and subsidised childcare of an elite, in particular feminists, who despise working class values. The 'aspirational voters', by contrast, are represented as solid working class Australians seeking advancement through the sweat of their own brows, attending university, not to acquire a 'cultured intellect', but rather for the vocational qualifications that will allow them to succeed in the harsh world of economic competition: the 'specialised skills of the



economist', according to Hindess.<sup>26</sup> In fact, economics is also suffering from declining student interest, along with the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, swept aside by enthusiasm for business studies. Between 1995 and 1999, the growth in domestic student graduations in business studies was 32 per cent as compared with 2 per cent in all other disciplines; for international students the comparative growth rates were 140 per cent and 73 per cent.<sup>27</sup> Simon Marginson criticises the 'philosophical naivety of business studies courses, their utter lack of reflexivity at the level of the social system and human need (the market and money are treated as beyond scrutiny)'. He claims that employers, international students and local students happily participate in this dumbing down. Employers want graduates who are unquestioningly devoted to furthering the interests of the firm; students are happy to oblige, themselves seeking fortunes in the corporate world, here or overseas.<sup>28</sup> In their new utilitarian mode, universities claim to be committed to 'the pursuit of excellence',<sup>29</sup> but this actually means training in courses that have market demand. Now that universities are required to find more of their income from private sources, academics worry about interference from the market: pressure to lower academic standards, pressure by senior management to stop university lecturers from speaking out of corporate turn. Many university senior managers despair of academics who, like butterflies, 'refuse to fly in formation' or, like cats, cannot be 'shepherded' or 'whipped' into line.<sup>30</sup>

However, as Stuart Macintyre and Simon Marginson point out, 'academic freedom' is a relatively recent concept in Australian universities. The democratisation of universities in the 1960s and 1970s replaced extensive government control of academics in Australia. At the turn of the century, universities were national, or rather

state, institutions, and their inhabitants were expected to support national development (by not mentioning things like soil erosion), to stay aloof from the political fray (for example by not speaking out against the Boer War or World War I) and to eschew 'immorality'. By providing press and radio commentary on Aboriginal rights, immigration policy, the rise of fascism, academics gradually claimed the right to 'intellectual freedom', a process hastened by the student radical protests of the 1960s which insisted universities be relevant and engaged with social issues.<sup>31</sup>

In brief, until the 1960s and 1970s academics were incorporated into the Australian nation-building project as long as their commitment was to economic development. From the 1960s, academics and students alike were caught up in the politics of recognition demanded by new social groups. Different faces and different voices appeared in academia: female, Indigenous, gay, and so on, teaching courses that challenged the old verities, in variations of gender studies, cultural studies, 'postmodernism', 'postcolonialism'.<sup>32</sup> According to Readings, these new voices seized the citadel of the university only as the university came to have no continuing relevance to the state. Given globalisation, the nation state is no longer the primary site of the reproduction of global capital, and universities are no longer called on to produce public knowledge, to train 'citizen subjects', to uphold 'national prestige'. Now that universities no longer matter, cultural studies and the other post-discourses have invaded an abandoned fortress.<sup>33</sup>

### **Straws in the cross winds**

In countering the hegemony of the 'insider elite' discourse, the four straws I will clutch at concern the internal contradictions of the 'insider elite' position, the mismatch between ideology and material 'reality', and indications that others, apart from left-wing elites, perceive this mismatch.

As Carole Johnson<sup>34</sup> suggests, it is 'a very strange Australia' when Pauline Hanson can claim that 'the most downtrodden person in the country is the white Anglo-Saxon male', the Prime Minister can depict himself as 'the victim of elite opinion' and 'the republic debate could see Princess Diana applauded as one of 'us' and elected politicians as an elitist 'them'. Johnson goes on to note that this is only strange if one has a 'class-based analysis of inequality, influenced by welfare liberalism, social democracy, socialism, trade unionism and the social movements'. But this understanding of the world has been evacuated from public discourse by the *Tunnel Vision* of neoliberalism, making it 'extraordinarily difficult for alternative arguments to gain a hearing'.<sup>35</sup> Even so, there are signs that the anti-elite consensus is unstable, partly because of a contradiction between insider and outsider anti-elitism.

Pauline Hanson's *One Nation* anti-elitism, which is often seen as the kick-start to the spread of populism, was actually an 'outsider populism' rather than an 'insider' discourse. True, she attacked Asians, the Aboriginal industry, lesbians and the United Nations, but she also attacked multinational corporations and the banks. According to Jim Walter, the empirical research by Michael Pusey, Peter Saunders and Clive Hamilton reveals that 'ordinary' Australians still understand that markets create inequality and governments should intervene to redress the balance.<sup>36</sup> I am not so sanguine, at least not in relation to Pusey's findings. Across his sample of 'middle Australia' focus groups, 73 per cent agreed that big business has too much power and 72 per cent that there should be stronger government controls over multinational corporations; but only 57 per cent felt that big business benefits owners at the expense of the workers. Furthermore, where the dissatisfied 'improvers' (akin to the

'new class') understood this as an issue of economic inequality, the dissatisfied 'battler Hansonites' (about 10-20 per cent of a sample) were captured by 'insider populism'. Even though economic rationalism has forced them into part-time subcontracting jobs as courier operators, handy repairers or car cleaners, they tend to blame the 'do-gooders and people with dreadlocks at protests', 'boat people' 'Aboriginals' and 'pollies'. While Pusey suggests that economic reform is slowly running out of credibility, because his focus groups cleave to some enduring notions about 'fair distribution', this is not really supported by his findings. Indeed, another study has found that, while National-Liberal politicians are less redistributive than the public at large and ALP politicians slightly more so than their own voters, redistribution through tax cuts is about as popular as through higher social spending. Only the 'new class' of the university educated and professionally employed prefer higher social spending.<sup>37</sup>

As both Pusey and I have found in studies of 'we-they' attitudes, self-reported class has almost no explanatory value: it is education that makes the difference.<sup>38</sup> Higher education is on its way to becoming the experience of the majority of young Australians. At present some 45 per cent of 'a cohort of Australians' enrolls in higher education within seven years of leaving school or somewhat later in their lifetimes, 38 per cent for males and 51 per cent for females.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps this gives us hope that the doughnut hole will spread out from the inner cities where it first manifested itself to political commentators in the 2004 federal election. The doughnut hole represents Labor held inner city seats created by the disparagingly named 'doctors' wives' who voted with their conscience against the Iraq War and refugee detention. The sea change in Australian attitudes to refugees and immigration is remarkable, revealed in the contrast between an election won on this issue in 2001 and a government now quietly reviewing the cases of those in detention in Nauru (only 50 on an island that once held 1000 refugees), and claiming that only 2 children are in detention (although 86 are). Polls in February 2003 revealed that 61 per cent agreed 'with Howard's hardline stance' on immigration. That number has now dropped to 35 per cent. In National-held rural seats there has been a revolt against the Temporary Protection Visa as farmers and locals admire and seek to keep the hard-working fruit pickers and meat packers in their communities.<sup>40</sup>

The above examples suggest internal contradictions in the anti-elitism position, both in terms of the discourse of outsiders to elitism in contrast with their actual economic marginalisation, for example the battler Hansonites, and in the evidence that some erstwhile Liberal voters appear to be taking on the values of the 'new class', for example in relation to the treatment of refugees. Furthermore, anti-elitism is also unstable when propounded by those with 'insider' status, shock jocks on corporate kick-backs, politicians fomenting an alienation from politics which rebounds on their own credibility, newspaper columnists with national platforms from which to broadcast their opinions. Thus an analysis of all the articles in three newspapers between 1996 and 2002 which used the term 'elite' or 'elitism' when discussing Australian politics found that the 'elite' most often condemned was in fact the 'political elite' (eg, 'Canberra bureaucrats'), followed by the media, with the educational elite only in third place.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

I will conclude by noting two issues that bedevil the capacity of the 'new class' to regain a voice in contemporary Australia - apart from all the impediments outlined above! One concerns the difficulty of speaking 'truth' in a world made relativist by the 'post-' discourses. The other concerns finding a new voice in a world now shot through with commodity fetishism and saturated with images and information.

*Speaking truth to power ...*

Raimond Gaita is not surprised that academics have lost their public:

The institutions which are called universities are compromised by mendacity, by a pervasive untruthfulness in their descriptions of how they have changed to accommodate the political pressures of recent years. Academics tend to deny the extent of the untruthfulness, but everybody knows that it is now widespread.

Gaita claims that we will only earn the ears of the community by standing again 'for an ideal of truthfulness that could inspire a public intellectual space outside them'.<sup>42</sup> However, as Readings suggests, the post- discourses mean that universities can no longer claim to be places where some are teachers and others are taught. We can no longer claim truths and falsehoods. Instead, the university should become a 'community at loose ends', a community in which communication is not seen as transparent and not grounded in a common cultural identity.<sup>43</sup>

However, the problem with such recommendations, at least for some of us reared in the Enlightenment discourse and committed to projects of human emancipation, is that such hopes and recommendations often seem like semantics. A more basic and much-needed solution is a good dose of economic redistribution. As with the painful generation debate within feminism, perhaps the 'New Left' has become too old to express and shift the instabilities of the future. This task might belong to those at home within commodity fetishism and a world of multiplying representations.

*... but in the voice of commodity fetishism?*

Today the 'money' economy is at least one hundred times larger than the 'real' or commodity and services economy, operating as 'casino capitalism'.<sup>44</sup> Naomi Klein argues that many anti-globalisation movements are based on our identities and identifications as consumers, for example the 'Fair Wear' campaigns in Australia.<sup>45</sup>

Surveillance in Australia has increased through tracking bracelets for offenders in home-based detention, video cameras in shopping malls, cell phones by which parents keep tabs on their teenagers, attempts to move kids into regulated drop-in centers, skate parks and so on. Anita Harris suggests that young activist women sometimes pitch their political actions against the increasing surveillance of their lives and appropriation of their counter-discourses for mainstream profit-making. In this scenario, participation in 'adult' political forms, such as lobby groups or street marches, can seem like part of the machinery of surveillance. Evading surveillance, many young women retreat from public media spaces into underground magazines, alternative music spheres, 'gURL' web pages or electronic zines. Underground zines problematise and mock the image of the 'can-do' girl with titles such as *Losergrrrl*, *My Life as a Mega-Rich Bombshell*. *Cavity* zine displays a collage of newspaper clippings about AIDS, teenage pregnancy, police numbers and voting, introduced with: 'I am sure you are delighted to be here, entering into what is likely to be one of the most exciting and interesting times of your life'.<sup>46</sup>

Along with the doctors' wives, the Old Left should welcome grrl power as another outcrop of hope, rising above the tide of neoliberalism. We also take heart in rural communities mounting campaigns to extend the TPVs of their local refugee workers, in ex Liberal Prime Ministers and present departmental heads speaking out against the excesses of the current government. Given the limitations of the intellectual world in which Australians now live, I am amazed that anyone still has access to alternative understandings of what might be good for Australia; alternatives to those that Howard and Ruddock, on the part of the Government, or Packer and Murdoch in the media, offer us. However, there are a kaleidoscope of voices and websites on the internet. IndyMedia has Independent Media Centres in Nigeria, Madrid, Montreal, Boston, Chiapas, Uruguay and Sydney as well as the USA.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the net is becoming evermore akin to a vast forum or conversation, as new software, such as the Wiki, allows anyone to edit anyone's posting (and keeps track of the changes), and promotes online collaboration.<sup>48</sup>

A generation who lives in a world saturated with images and commodities will practise politics in ways I, and those of my generation, can barely grasp. Not all of these young people are after their first million, but want to engage with morality, meaning and the future – witness the lure of New Age spiritualism, environmentalism, working in a school in Africa or a village in India. Some, like Bill Gates, want to combine making millions with eradicating AIDS in India, even though left intellectuals of my generation find such desires perplexing. As two Third Wave feminists in the USA say, there is no sin in attracting or giving money. Indeed it is essential. 'Feminist ... philanthropy ... is itself a form of activism', the 'women's funding movement' linking those with money to those with ideas and needs.<sup>49</sup>

Contributing to these new ways to do politics is the challenge for the 'new class' as it grows old. We need to find appealing ways to exchange the insights of the Marxist and/or feminist tradition with young activists: grrls writing their ezines, anti-globalisation protesters demanding fair working conditions for workers in other nations, and environmentalists opposing the logging of old growth forests.



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- <sup>1</sup> Walter, James (2004). 'Elites, politics and publics' in Marian Sawer and Barry Hindess (eds) *Us and Them: Anti-Elitism in Australia*. API Network, Curtin University of Technology, Perth: 203-224 at 220.
- <sup>2</sup> See for example, Hindess and Sawer (2004) 'Introduction', in Sawer and Hindess (eds) *ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> Hindess, Barry (2004). 'Anti-elitism and the academy' in Sawer and Hindess (eds) *op cit*: 225-240 at 234.
- <sup>4</sup> See Walter (2004.) *op cit*: 203-224 at 207.
- <sup>5</sup> Fraser, Nancy (1995). 'From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a "Post-Socialist" Age' *New Left Review* 212, July/August: 68-93.
- <sup>6</sup> Hage, Ghassan (2003). *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society*, Pluto Press, Sydney: 7, 3, 2.
- <sup>7</sup> Johnson, Carole (2004). 'Anti-elitist discourse in Australia: International influences and comparisons' in Sawer and Hindess (eds) *op cit*: 117-135 at 64-5.
- <sup>8</sup> Hindess *op cit*: 235.
- <sup>9</sup> Johnson (2004) *op cit*: 117-135 at 123.
- <sup>10</sup> Pusey, Michael (1991). *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation Building State Changes its Mind* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- <sup>11</sup> Hindess and Sawer (2004). 'Introduction' *op cit*: 6.
- <sup>12</sup> Summers, Anne (2003). *The End of Equality: Work, Babies and Women's Choices in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Australia*. Random House Australia, Sydney: 6-7.
- <sup>13</sup> Sawer, Marian (2004) 'Populism and public choice in Australia and Canada: Turning equality-seekers in to "special interests"' in Sawer and Hindess (eds) *op cit*: 34-55 at 34-39.
- <sup>14</sup> Sawer, Marian (1999) 'The watchers within: Women and the Australian state' in Linda Hancock (ed) *Women, Public Policy and the State* South Yarra: Macmillan: 36-53 at 43, 48.
- <sup>15</sup> I am grateful to Tahnya Donaghy for this insight.
- <sup>16</sup> Summers (2003) *op cit*: 132-4.
- <sup>17</sup> *ibid*: 130-1; Whip, Rosemary (2003). 'The 1996 Australian Federal election and its aftermath: a case for equal gender representation' *Australian Feminist Studies* 18, 40: 73-97 at 85.
- <sup>18</sup> Sawer (2004) *op cit*: 52-53.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid*: 53.
- <sup>20</sup> Mendes, Philip (2001). 'Public choice theory and the de-funding of community welfare groups' *Social Alternatives* 20, 2: 50-55 at 52.
- <sup>21</sup> Hage (2003) *op cit*: 78.
- <sup>22</sup> Babicon Hurriyet (2004). 'Women hold up half the sky: Gender mainstreaming and women's inequality in Australia' *Development Bulletin* 64, March: 49-52 at 50.
- <sup>23</sup> Sawer (1999) *op cit*: 45.
- <sup>24</sup> See articles in 'Background Briefing' (December 2004), 6, 4, published by the Friends of the ABC, discussions which can be found in almost any issue of this newsletter over the last couple of years.
- <sup>25</sup> Mickler Steve (2004). 'Talkback radio, anti-elitism and moral decline: A fatal paradox?' in Sawer and Hindess (eds) *op cit*: 97-116 at 101-2,109.
- <sup>26</sup> Hindess (2004) *op cit*: 225-240 at 240.
- <sup>27</sup> Department of Education, Science and Training (2002) *Higher Education at the Crossroads: An Overview Paper*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra: 51.
- <sup>28</sup> Marginson, Simon (2002). 'Towards a politics of the enterprise university' in Simon Cooper, John Hinkson and Geoff Sharp (eds) *Scholars and Entrepreneurs: The Universities in Crisis*. Arena, North Carlton: 109-136 at 126.
- <sup>29</sup> Readings, Bill (1996). *The University in Ruins* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts: 10-11.

- <sup>30</sup> Marginson, Simon and Considine, Mark (2000). *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 11-12, 133, 194.
- <sup>31</sup> Macintyre, Stuart and Marginson, Simon (2000). 'The university and its public' in T Coady (ed) *op cit*: 56-59, 65.
- <sup>32</sup> See discussion by Readings (1996) *op cit*; Walter (2004) *op cit*; Hindess (2004) *op cit*.
- <sup>33</sup> Readings (1996) *op cit*: 14, 91.
- <sup>34</sup> Johnson (2004) *op cit*: 117.
- <sup>35</sup> Walter, James (1996) *Tunnel Vision: The Failure of Political Imagination*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, discussed by Walter (2004) *op cit*: 220.
- <sup>36</sup> Walter (2004) *ibid*: 222-3.
- <sup>37</sup> Wilson, Shaun and Breusch, Trevor (2004). 'Where the divides lie: Politicians, public opinion and anti-elite politics' in Sawyer and Hindess (eds) *op cit*: 161-181 at 155, 175-6.
- <sup>38</sup> Pusey, Michael (2004) *op cit*: 200, see also Bulbeck, Chilla (2004). 'The "white worrier" in South Australia: Attitudes to multiculturalism, immigration and reconciliation', *Journal of Sociology* 40, 4: 341-361.
- <sup>39</sup> Karmel, Peter (2000). 'Funding universities' in T Coady (ed). *Why Universities Matter: A Conversation About Values, Means and Directions*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards: 159-163 at 159-160.
- <sup>40</sup> Fickling, David (2004). 'Australia loses taste for xenophobic politics,' *Guardian Weekly* 10-16 September: 5; Abraham, Mathew (2004). 'Ideal Support' *City Messenger* 21 October: 14.
- <sup>41</sup> Scalmer, Sean and Goot, Murray (2004). 'Elites constructing elites: News Limited's newspapers 1996-2002' in Sawyer and Hindess (2004) *op cit*: 147-9.
- <sup>42</sup> Gaita, Raimond (1999). *A Common Humanity: Thinking About Love & Truth & Justice*. Text Publishing, Melbourne: 203.
- <sup>43</sup> Readings (1996) *op cit*: 20, 185.
- <sup>44</sup> Barlow, Maude and Clarke, Tony (2001). *Global Showdown: How the New Activists are Fighting Global Corporate Rule*. Stoddart, Toronto: 64.
- <sup>45</sup> Klein, Naomi (2000). *No Logo*. Flamingo, London
- <sup>46</sup> Harris, Anita (2004). *Future Girl: Young women in the twenty-first century*. Routledge, New York and London: 119-120, 128, 131, 149, 160-8.
- <sup>47</sup> Breitbart, Joshua and Nogueira, Ana (2004). 'An independent media center of one's own', in Vivien Labaton and Dawn Lundy Martin (eds). *The Fire this Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism* Anchor Books/Random House, New York: 31.
- <sup>48</sup> Gillmor, Dan. (2004). *We the media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*. O'Reilly Media, Sebastopol, California: 148-150, 182-3.
- <sup>49</sup> Labaton, Vivien and Martin, Dawn Lundy (2004). 'Afterword: Looking ahead and building a feminist future', in Labaton and Martin (eds) *op cit*: 279-290 at 287-8.

## Labour Intellectuals Today<sup>1</sup>

Sean Scalmer

The 'labour intellectual' is an unstable combination. 'Intellectual' suggests the mind, 'labour' the body. The intellectual life is comfortable; 'labour' is often burdensome and tiring. The intellectual is ethically detached and free-floating, and yet the status of 'labour intellectual' implies a sense of membership and connection.

If this identity is beset by persistent tensions, it is also stretched by contrary historical forces. The collapse of the labour movement in western countries is now widely accepted. Trade union membership has fallen precipitously: 'labour' parties have been modernised beyond recognition; socialist parties have disbanded; workers' education and publishing are marginal or crankish enterprises. 'Class', in short, has lost its place in contemporary politics. 'Consumption', it is argued, now rules over 'production'.<sup>2</sup> Work society is a thing of the past.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically, as 'labour' apparently falls, so 'intellectuals' are thought to rise. Industrial sociologists commonly affirm the replacement of blue-collar workers with a knowledgeable, 'creative class' of employees.<sup>4</sup> The move from 'industrial' to 'post-industrial' society is usually thought to involve an equivalent transition from 'industrial' to 'knowledge-based' work.<sup>5</sup> The 'postmodern' condition, in short, is a knowledge society,<sup>6</sup> where the intellectual bestrides the stage. Now, the 'new social movements', have taken the place of the militant worker.<sup>7</sup> 'Middle-class radicalism' rules.

How have these changes shaped the role of labour experts, leaders, thinkers, and writers? Most contemporary accounts emphasise that 'the intellectual' has colonised the institutions of the labour movement. Within labour politics, the militant, self-schooled labourite is commonly understood to be on the way out. The smooth, university-educated careerist has taken their place. Indeed, an increasingly popular view suggests that the 'rise of the intellectuals' is the direct cause of labour's political decline.

In some versions, this argument suggests that labour's representatives have become associated with 'intellectual elites', and have lost touch with working-class experience.<sup>8</sup> In more sophisticated versions, a new class of leaders and bureaucrats has modernised the 'labour tradition', and in the process emptied it of cultural and political meaning.<sup>9</sup> Labour leaders have become remote technocrats, and sometimes opponents of industrial struggle.<sup>10</sup> The collapse of 'labour' and the rise of the 'labour expert' are closely connected.

How much evidence supports this view? If 'labour intellectuals' are depicted as an historically novel presence, then not very much.

### The 'labour intellectual' in the past

In fact, 'intellectuals' have always played an important part in the labour movement. The political mobilisation of labour was nourished by a love of learning. Working-class autodidacts devoured the classics, collected quotations, and tried to understand.<sup>11</sup> Australian activists described books as 'mental food', as 'meaty', and as 'stuffed with meat'.<sup>12</sup> Knowledge was thought a powerful resource, capable of 'immensely' increasing the 'efficiency' of political struggle.<sup>13</sup>

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the working-class challenge was underpinned by the formation of a range of new institutions. They included trade unions, labour councils, socialist parties, radical book stores, labour parties, newspapers, and educational

bodies. Collectively, these organisations could be thought of as a specific arena of intellectual exchange – a 'labour public'.<sup>14</sup>

The labour public was a space of withdrawal from wider society, and organisation to change it. It was where members of the movement met to discuss what they shared in common, how to comprehend their collective situation, and how it might be changed. It was also a space where activists planned agitational activities that addressed outsiders, waverers, and opponents.<sup>15</sup>

Organisations need workers; publics require intellectuals. Not surprisingly, the rise of the labour public therefore involved the emergence of a special kind of intellectual – the '*labour intellectual*'. Labour intellectuals were distinguishable from other participants in the labour movement because they produced knowledge and manipulated symbols. They edited the journals; spoke at the stumps; formed the arguments; framed the legislation; planned the strategies; composed the novels; painted the pictures; organised the parties; and coined the theories. All members of the labour movement had the capacity to be intellectuals, but only some members fulfilled this particular function.

Within the labour movement's ranks, the professional status of intellectual activities was quickly recognised. As early as 1893, Australian socialist William Lane was already arguing that Labor's communicative efforts should be the domain of paid experts. Lane argued that this craft required technical knowledge and 'versatility of the pen'. As a result, he enthused 'it is always a pleasing thing to see genuine pressmen going into Labour papers', for 'it is only by meeting skill by skill that the influence of the capitalistic press can be overcome'.<sup>16</sup>

The same arguments were also extended to directly political tasks. In a lecture in 1896, William Morris Hughes vigorously defended the skills of parliamentary work, noting that they were an integral part of the movement's purpose, and an important way to achieve reforms for the working class.<sup>17</sup> Nor was this emphasis on professionalisation limited to the grasping, career politician. In *What Is To Be Done?* [1902] Vladimir Ilyich Lenin famously argued for a political party comprised 'first and foremost of people whose profession is that of revolutionists'.<sup>18</sup> His enthusiasm for 'expert writers' was also well-known and widely shared by revolutionary comrades.<sup>19</sup>

In this sense, arguments that pit 'intellectuals' against 'contemporary labour' lack much persuasive power. Neither a leading role for intellectuals, nor their 'professionalised' status are historically novel. If labour has transformed, then the existence of 'labour intellectuals' is not part of this transformation. It is the *precise form* of labour intellectuals, rather than their simple presence, which is at issue.

Has the form of the labour intellectual changed? It appears so. Earlier generations of labour intellectuals ranged widely. In a long-term project, Terry Irving and I identified three 'modes' of intellectual work within the labour public.<sup>20</sup> We called these the 'movement', 'representational' and 'revolutionary' modes. 'Movement' intellectuals usually worked in the press and labour education. They claimed oneness with the movement, and hoped to act as ciphers for 'labour's' true being. Their self-appointed task was to awaken labour's army to its unacknowledged calling. They enjoined the movement to fulfil its historic task: to challenge a corrupt society, and to lead its social reconstruction. According to this view, the specific institutional affiliation of workers was not the primary issue. Once labour's army was roused, victory would be assured.

'Representational' intellectuals were employed in the trade unions and their peak bodies, in the Labor Party, and in state and quasi-state organisations (parliaments, local government councils, judicial and regulatory bodies). Their constituency was not so much 'the movement' (to which they nonetheless appealed for legitimacy from time to time) but the members of the party or union branch, or the Labor voters, whom they sought to represent. Standing somewhat apart from the common member of the movement, representational intellectuals tried to strike a balance between the demands of the liberal state and the hopes of the rank-and-file. They deployed skills such as bargaining and negotiation, and they provided the movement with expert knowledge about politics.

The *revolutionary mode* took the separation of the intellectual from the movement a step further. Revolutionary intellectuals thought themselves bearers of a special knowledge about human nature, politics, language and history. This knowledge was thought essential if the working class was to realise its potential to remake society. Although revolutionary intellectuals were found in the trade unions and the Labor Party, their claim to special knowledge led them to locate themselves in special, revolutionary, organisations, dedicated to that specific cause. Their constituency was the working class. However, that class was understood to be deficient in a number of quite fundamental ways. It was in spiritual bondage to bourgeois culture.<sup>21</sup> It lacked 'intellectual penetration'.<sup>22</sup> It therefore needed to be *led through the organisation* of an outside, revolutionary force. The Communist Party of Australia thought of itself as the general staff of the working class; it provided the 'organisational guarantee' that correct policy would be pursued.<sup>23</sup> In the course of revolutionary organisation, working-class experience would be reinterpreted. Only through this process could revolutionary change become possible.

What is left of these varied traditions? Today, the collapse of 'labour's public' means that the scope of intellectual work is now much reduced. The decline of workers' education and publishing has ensured that the 'movement intellectual' is rarely present. The discrediting of communism means that the 'revolutionary' tradition has also been reduced to a small rump. Only the 'representational mode' of intellectual work has maintained its earlier strength. Labor's intellectuals are deal-makers and lobbyists; experts and advisers. What does this mean in practice?

#### **The dominance of the 'representational mode', the remaking of the labour expert**

The representational mode of intellectual work has not merely survived; it has greatly expanded. Government ministers and even humble parliamentary representatives now possess large personal staffs. They require employees to answer correspondence; liaise with the bureaucracy; write speeches; generate positive media; provide policy advice; and extinguish flickering crises. These are 'staffers' or 'minders'. They have joined the party-workers and technocrats of the labour movement as the dominant actors in contemporary working-class politics.

What do we know about the labour movement's contemporary experts? Unfortunately, their role is greatly under-researched.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, it is clear that the new breed differs from the old in four major ways: education; mobility; activity and relationships.

The labour intellectual of the past typically lacked formal education. Though learning was highly prized, opportunities were scant. Labour's thinkers were often self-taught. Leading campaigners learnt on-the-job. The university was mostly a foreign domain.

In contrast, the new breed arrive bearing university degrees.<sup>25</sup> The expansion of the universities has opened higher education to generations of ambitious, working-class children. Political and communicative skills are increasingly purveyed in undergraduate and masters programs.<sup>26</sup> The path from the campus to the Labor Party's machine is now well-trodden.

However, the contemporary intellectual often lacks a life-long commitment to the labour movement's cause. Certainly, a minority of junior staffers aspire to attain parliamentary office. Their pre-eminence has been the object of frequent political discussion.<sup>27</sup> A greater number pass through the movement swiftly and unregretfully. Time within the Labor machine (as MP, staffer or higher official) can lead to work in the upper reaches of the bureaucracy and business. In recent years, it has been a stepping-stone to lobbying and political commentary (in the case of Stephen Loosely and Graham Richardson), business (eg, Gary Gray), consulting (eg, Cameron Millner), and much more besides. Staffers typically move on to higher-paid jobs.<sup>28</sup> The position has become a rite of passage for many members of the future elite.<sup>29</sup>

Not only has the career of labour's intellectuals changed, the work of labour thinkers today is also much altered. While the old tasks of writing and speaking remain, they are now accompanied by a slew of additional activities. These include opinion-polling, advertising, marketing, public relations, and fund-raising.<sup>30</sup> Unlike speaking and writing, these are arcane, secretive arts. Their practitioners claim not only a specific skill, but also an exclusive experience. As a result, the gulf between the expert employee and the enthused Party supporter is now much greater. Today, 'representational' intellectuals inhabit a different world.

This suggests a final transformation – an altered relationship between 'intellectual' and everyday labourites. Labour intellectuals of the past had an *active* relationship with their constituents. 'Movement' intellectuals hoped to awaken 'labour' to its true mission; 'revolutionary' intellectuals aimed to remake the 'working class'; even 'representational' intellectuals were always striking deals and addressing crowds, cajoling and persuading. The ties linking intellectual and worker were vital and constantly renewed.

In contrast, contemporary politics has been annexed by the techniques of marketing. Now, the customer takes first place in a cycle of production and consumption.<sup>31</sup> The apparent desires of the electorate drive the development of policy. Intellectuals are reactive and accommodating. They worry about protecting the 'brand name of the Labor Party',<sup>32</sup> and the reviews of their performance in the commercial media. Direct intervention or active leadership is comparatively rare. Cultivating a relationship with the members of the labour movement has become far less important. The technology of the poll and the advertisement now stands in for the direct communication of previous times.

The transformation of the labour intellectual therefore seems complete. The era of the self-tutored worker or the poetry-quoting orator seems forever passed. But is the dominance of the technocrat inevitable? Or are competing forms of intellectual work still possible? While it would be rash to speculate unduly, there are some signs within the trade unions that a more engaged and democratic understanding of intellectual work is beginning to emerge.

Organising trade unions and the possibilities of 'movement' intellectuals today

Those fighting to rebuild the labour movement have begun to rediscover the importance of lost modes of intellectual work. Over the last decade, some trade union leaders have begun to react to the movement's clear decline. The most thrilling

response has been the 'organising model' of unionism. This rejects the earlier emphasis on servicing a passive membership, and instead emphasises that the act of 'organising never stops'.<sup>33</sup> The focus is partly on organising the unorganised.<sup>34</sup> It is also on fostering the activity and independent judgement of all those who join the union's family.

In this context, a different kind of intellectual work becomes possible. Union members are trained as delegates and activists. Not only do they take responsibility for their own workplace meetings, discussions, and collective bargaining,<sup>35</sup> they also assist in the organisation of other workplaces.<sup>36</sup> Paid officials act as supporters and guides. However, the strategy will be successful only if a new generation of independent labour activists is created.

In many ways, this approach is not particularly new. The initial mobilisation of trade unions was built upon self-activity and organisation. As long ago as 1948, C Wright Mills identified the importance of 'union-made intellectuals' to the growth of a democratic and vigorous union movement.<sup>37</sup> If organising has only just been formalised as an official 'model', it has long been treasured as an ideal.

Still, it does represent a new challenge to the dominance of the technocratic, 'representational' mode of intellectual work. It suggests that even today alternative versions of the 'labour intellectual' might still be possible.

So far, the success of this strategy is not at all obvious. Nonetheless, its clear emphasis on popular learning and activity signifies that, for many trade unionists at least, the future of 'labour intellectuals' remains somewhat open. If the trade unions are successfully rebuilt, then this is likely to be the effort of more intellectuals, not fewer. Such success would rest substantially upon the work of 'union-made' intellectuals. It would also change the context for other members of the labour family. A re-energised, growing movement would put more pressure on its paid political experts. In this case, the 'movement' mode of intellectual work might find renewed political relevance. The era of the technocrat and careerist might find new, more powerful opposition.

If, on the other hand, unions fail to engage a new generation of workers, then the labour movement's pull will be greatly diminished. In that case, neither 'labour intellectuals', 'labour' as an identity, nor 'labour' as a movement will have much meaning. A grand tradition will have passed, and a new era begun.

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**All cartoons are by Julian Wood**, who is a sociologist working out of the Education Faculty of the University of Sydney. He worked with Professor Bob Connell on two studies of Australia's intellectual workforce. Julian is also a film critic and cartoonist. His graphic work appears under his pen name. 'Jink'.

## **Academy News**

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### **Annual Symposium and Colloquium 2005**

The Academy Symposium Committee has agreed that the theme of the 2005 Annual Symposium will be the social sciences and Australian public policy, based on papers prepared as part of a research project funded by the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements. A forthcoming book on the project is to be published by the University of NSW Press at the end of 2005.

The Colloquium – ‘Should Australia have a Bill of Rights?’ - will be introduced by Hilary Charlesworth.

Following consultation with the Fellowship, the dates for the Symposium and Annual General Meeting have been set down for 7-8 November.

### **ASSA Indigenous Postgraduate Summer School 2005**

The third ASSA Summer School for Indigenous postgraduate research students was held at Trinity College, University of Melbourne, 14-18 February 2005.

The Summer School has achieved a reputation as a week-long learning community in which faculty, students and supervisors meet for a concentrated program of knowledge sharing, skills learning, and refinement and development of thesis project ideas and research methodologies. One of the rewarding features of the Summer School is the very apparent growth in the students’ understanding of the research process and what is entailed in thesis work. Another rewarding feature is the pledge that many students make at the end of the School to maintain contact and complete their degrees.

Faculty leading the Summer School included Academy Fellows Professors Marcia Langton and Leon Mann, who have co-directed the Summer School from its inception in 2002. ASSA Fellows Nancy Williams and Bob Tonkinson, together with Professor Martin Nakata, Professor Lynette Russell, Dr Zane Ma Rhea, and Ms Raymattja Marika, also participated as faculty, leading sessions on research questions and hypothesis testing, research methodologies, research ethics, writing, publication and career development.

ASSA Fellow Professor Peter McPhee, Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic at the University of Melbourne, welcomed Summer School participants at a reception hosted by Ms Tjanara Goreng Goreng, Director of the Centre for indigenous Education, at the University of Melbourne.

The Summer School is supported by a grant to ASSA from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program. Students attending the Summer School are supported by scholarships awarded in the name of major donors at the Raheen Dinner in 2003. Scholarships in the name of the Pratt Foundation were awarded to Tamara MacKean (Flinders University), Terry Dunbar (Charles Darwin University), and Carol Vale (Southern Cross University); The Hecht Foundation to Norma Benger (Charles Darwin University) and Judy Kaye Knox (Southern Cross University); RioTinto Aboriginal Foundation to Petah Atkinson (University of Melbourne), Joanne Buckskin (University of Wollongong), and

Mark McMillan (University of Technology Sydney); CSIRO to Greg Blyton (University of Newcastle) and Faye McMillan (Wollongong); Newmont Australia to Julie Smith (RMIT) and Annie Vanderwyk (Newcastle); and University of Melbourne to Julie Butler (Newcastle) and Crystal McKinnon (Melbourne).

Thesis topics studied by the students include sustainability of health delivery programs; attracting Indigenous students into science careers; effective parenting models in Indigenous communities; the law and Indigenous governance; just processes for dispute management and resolution; aboriginal activism from the 1960s, expressive therapy as a means to greater community participation, and the appeal of hip hop culture and music to youth in Indigenous communities in Australia, Canada and the USA.

Under the terms of the DEST grant the longterm outcomes of ASSA's Summer School and mentoring program will be evaluated in 2007-08. Meanwhile, the Summer School goes from strength to strength.



*Summer School student Crystal McKinnon (centre) with Professors Marcia Langton and Leon Mann. (Photo courtesy of Paul Richiardi, University of Melbourne News.)*

## **Research Program**

### **ARC Linkage-Learned Academies Special Projects 2005**

Each year the Australian Research Council provides funding to the Academy of the Social Sciences as part of its Linkage-Learned Academies Special Projects budget.

ASSA has successfully bid for research funds over a number of years. Individual projects have on average attracted funding of \$100,000. The Academy now welcomes applications from Fellows for research projects eligible for funding in **2006**. Projects

should be multi-disciplinary. An email outlining the key criteria for funded projects has been sent to all Fellows.

The Academy particularly welcomes applications from Fellows who have applied for funding support for Centres of Excellence and ARC networks, whether successful or unsuccessful.

Expressions of Interest for consideration by the Academy's Research Committee must be submitted to Dr John Robertson, Research Director: john.robertson@anu.edu.au by 17 May 2005.

Forthcoming publications, arising from Academy Research Projects include:

*Rethinking Wellbeing: Essays on Health, Disability and Disadvantage* edited by Lenore Manderson will be published in July 2005 by the API Network.

*No Time to Lose: The Wellbeing of Children* edited by Margot Prior and Sue Richardson will be published by Melbourne University Press at the end of 2005.

*Management Ethics: Contemporary Contexts* edited by Stewart Clegg and Carl Rhodes is to be published by Routledge UK as part of its Ethics and Governance list early in 2006.

## **Workshop Program**

The following workshops have recently been approved by the Workshop Committee for 2005-2006:

\* 'Water Justice: unlearning indifference in freshwater ecologies', convened by Professor Alison Mackinnon, Professor Rhonda Sharp, Dr Phil Cormack (University of South Australia) and Dr Deborah Bird Rose (Australian National University).

Rivers and wetlands are powerful imaginative and physical presences for Australians, and they demand our urgent attention if we are to prevent their ecological collapse, with serious attendant social, cultural and economic consequences. A major challenge facing Australia is managing the many different ways of understanding and using water that exist in the community. The complex relationship between environmental sustainability and social justice is one which must be explored through an interdisciplinary lens, as traditional discipline boundaries are proving obstacles to progressive research in this area.

The workshop, co-sponsored by ASSA and the Australian Academy of the Humanities, will draw together researchers from the social sciences and humanities with a range of water management experts in order to address the issues faced in the management of inland waterways in Australia, particularly the Murray-Darling Basin, and formulate new ways to approach and resolve issues of 'Water Justice'.

\* 'How organisations connect: Investing in communication', convened by Professor Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne), Professor Simon Vile (Wollongong) and Professor Gordon Boyce (Queensland University of Technology).

Communication between organisations has always been an important and beneficial form of collaboration. The inter-organisational domain provides the setting for a mutual exchange of complementary competences with the prospect of building synergies if the collaboration is sufficiently wide-ranging and sustained. Unfortunately, many, perhaps most, inter-organisational collaborations fail to satisfy the expectations of their

initiators. Convenors argue that this is because most organisations under-invest in the complex and multifaceted task of external communication relative to the potential benefits it can yield, instead concentrating their resources upon the productivity and efficiency of internal operations.

The aim of the workshop will be to increase our understanding of why inter-organisational collaboration has a high failure rate, by focusing on the development of institutional norms governing patterns of negotiation and through the examination of historical case studies of collaboration. The workshop will also provide the opportunity to highlight the importance of work being undertaken in economic history and its broader contribution to the social sciences in Australia.

\* 'HIV/AIDS, fragile states and human security', convened by Professor Dennis Altman and Dr Michael O'Keefe (LaTrobe University).

HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest contemporary threats to global human security, and its rapid growth in parts of the Asia/Pacific region makes it a major concern for Australia.

The problem of how to effectively respond to failing and fragile states is quickly becoming a central security concern on the international agenda. State failure in Africa has seen the collapse of centralised authority over, and resource allocation to, institutions essential to the maintenance of societal wellbeing. The basic conditions required to guarantee human security, such as law and order and health services, break down, leading to a dramatic increase in suffering and ultimately, death. The absence of stability that characterises failed and fragile states undermines the chances of providing the most basic aspects of human security. In Africa the presence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in states already weakened by civil war, famine and poverty exacerbates state failure and state failure exacerbates the spread of the epidemic.

The workshop, for which ASSA received supporting funds from the UNESCO National Commission Grant Program, will encourage interdisciplinary perspectives to HIV/AIDS as a threat to human security. It will enhance the knowledge base for social science informed policy- and decision-making for both development strategies and for addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

\* 'Globalising the antipodes: policy and politics in Australia and New Zealand', convened by Professor Frank Castles (University of Edinburgh), Dr Jennifer Curtin (Monash University) and Professor Jack Vowles (University of Auckland).

The objective of the workshop is to bring together a number of scholars to examine the way in which the processes of globalisation have had an impact on, and been mediated by, various political institutions and public policies in Australia and New Zealand. These two countries are seldom compared, but given Australia/New Zealand parallels have become more extensive in recent decades, such a comparison is increasingly compelling. By comparing and contrasting political and policy development in Australia and New Zealand since the mid 1980s, and by taking into account the many similarities that exist between the two societies, it will be possible to focus on key differences between them, 'thus employing social explanation in one of its most potentially powerful comparative applications'.

**Details of forthcoming workshop are available:** [www.assa.edu.au/workshop](http://www.assa.edu.au/workshop).

## International Program

### 2005 Applications for International Programs

**Closing dates for applications for funded projects in 2005-06:** Australia-France Joint Program, 30 June 2005; Netherlands Exchange, 15 August, 2005; Australia-China Exchange Program, 29 July, 2005; Australia-Britain Special Joint Project Funding, 30 September, 2005.

### Australia-Britain Special Joint Project Funding

ASSA, together with the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the British Academy, have recently announced the results of applications for funding support in 2004-05 under its grants for Australian-British Joint Projects. Two projects have been funded:

*Professor Alexander Bird*, University of Bristol and *Dr Toby Handfield*, Monash University for their research project 'Powers that Be: Dispositions in a World of Physical Causes'.

*Professor Bencie Woll*, City University and *Associate Professor Trevor Johnston*, University of Newcastle for their research project 'Exploring Tagging Agreement for Comparative Analyses in Australian (Auslan) and British (BSL) Sign Language Corpora'.

### Australia-India Memorandum of Understanding

ASSA and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) have now formalised an exchange agreement to support the development of joint research projects and academic exchanges. Applications will be called for in September 2005 following further discussions with ICSSR.

### UNESCO Social Science Network

The Australian National Commission for UNESCO provides annual grant fund assistance for a range of projects which will further UNESCO priorities and objectives. Up to \$75,000 is available annually to be divided amongst competing Australian projects. The National Commission decides which projects are to be funded and the level of funds approved for each project.

ASSA, through its membership of the UNESCO Social Sciences Network, has been successful in past years, in applying on behalf of Fellows for funding for research projects/workshops. Applications are called by the end of July 2005 and are submitted under the auspices of the Academy. Please refer to details of guidelines and successful projects funded in the last round at: <http://www.dfat.gov.au/intorgs/unesco/>

Fellows interested in submitting an application in 2005 should contact John Robertson at the Academy on: [john.robertson@anu.edu.au](mailto:john.robertson@anu.edu.au)

### Australia-France Exchange Program

In November 2004 the eleven applications received by ASSA and the French Embassy seeking funding support in 2005 were short-listed. Funding was awarded for the following projects:

'The impact of E-administration on rural citizens and government in France and Australia'; 'Investing and developing educational, training and research needs to enhance sustainable mining practices in the mining industry of New Caledonia'; 'Modelling complex labour interactions in a knowledge-based economy'; 'Standardised methods for archiving and describing ethnographic recordings'; 'Security and privacy issues for communications and information technologies'; 'Ethnicity and historical

ecology in the South-East Asian Massif (China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Burma)'; and 'Indigenous strategies of communication: cultural festivals and new technologies'.

#### **Australia-Netherlands Exchange Program**

*Dr Sonia Mycak*, Australian Research Fellow of the Australian Research Council and Editor of *Australian Canadian Studies*, Department of English at the University of Sydney, has reported on her useful visit to the Netherlands. She visited the Netherlands Institute for Ship Archaeology (NISA) in Lelystad, which she found to be a world class facility. She writes: 'It is extremely impressive as visitors can view all collection items if they choose. It is organised as an open facility allowing visitors to observe "behind-the-scenes" activities (conservation work), as well as view displays and the entire archaeological collection that NISA accommodates. The store is organised as a walk-through exhibition'.

She also delivered two lectures - one to colleagues at the Rijksinstituut voor Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek (ROB) head office in Amersfoort and another to an undergraduate archaeology class at Leiden University. She was invited to do so by Dr Thijs Maarleveld, Head of Maritime Heritage at the ROB as well as a maritime archaeology lecturer at Rijksuniversiteit Leiden (RUL). She made use of her visit to have discussions with Dr Maarleveld - as well as with one of his colleagues, Dr Diederik Meijer - regarding the possibility of offering internships to RUL archaeology students who may want to spend some time in Australia (eg, at the Museum of Tropical Queensland), assisting with the processing and interpretation of the Pandora collection.

The remainder of Dr Mycak's time was spent in The Hague at the Royal Library (perusing newspaper collections from 1792) and at the National Archives. In the latter she researched primary source material relating to the transit through Dutch East India Co (VOC) settlements and on VOC vessels of HMS Pandora wreck survivors. As a result of her visit to The Netherlands, she feels fairly confident that very little substantive information remains to be found in the Royal Archives relating to the Pandora wreck event. She found that Dutch newspapers from 1792 do not appear to have specifically reported the arrival in Holland and transit through Dutch ports of Pandora seamen, although she did find a report of the September 1792 court martial (and subsequent execution) of the Bounty mutineers who were brought back to face British justice by the Pandora survivors. She expressed her appreciation to the Academy and her Dutch hosts for the opportunity to spend time in The Netherlands. (sonia.mycak@arts.usyd.edu.au)

**Professor Douglas Vickers**, the University of Adelaide, died suddenly late in 2004. His obituary will appear in the *Annual Report*.

## Reports from Workshops

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### Publicising Performance Data on Individual Surgeons: The Ethical Issues Steve Clarke and Justin Oakley

An important development in health care over the last fifteen years is the publication and disclosure to patients of performance information on individual surgeons. Performance information on cardiac surgeons has been publicly available in New York State and Pennsylvania for over a decade, and has recently been made available in the UK, following the national inquiry into paediatric cardiac surgery deaths at the Bristol Royal Infirmary. There is now increased public awareness of medical errors and adverse events, and many developed countries are investigating new measures to improve the safety and quality of their health care systems. A major focus of debate has been the public release of individual surgeon performance information, or surgeon 'report cards', which has been debated by surgeons, professional associations, health administrators, patient support groups, and policymakers. There has, however, been very little analysis and discussion of these developments from an ethical point of view.

The workshop on 'Publicising performance data on individual surgeons: the ethical issues', organised by Steve Clarke (Research Fellow, Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, Charles Sturt University and Australian National University, Canberra) and Justin Oakley (Director, Monash University Centre for Human Bioethics), addressed these debates. The workshop was held at the University of Melbourne in November 2004, and was sponsored by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. The workshop arose from a three-year NHMRC-funded project led by Clarke and Oakley, *An ethical analysis of the disclosure of surgeons' performance data to patients within the informed consent process*. The workshop was divided into seven sections, covering the most important ethical issues raised by surgeon report cards. There were sections focusing on surgeons' perspectives, defensive medicine, implementation issues, informed consent, report cards in market-based health care systems, patients' perspectives, and a concluding section on policy issues.

#### Surgeons' views of publicising performance data on individuals

The first section discussed surgeon's viewpoints on publicising performance data. Joe Ibrahim (Professor, Health Services, Peninsula Health Services, Victoria) and Silvana Marasco (Cardiothoracic surgeon, the Alfred Hospital, Melbourne) examined whether the reporting of individual surgeon performance is harming or helping with patient care. Ibrahim and Marasco discussed the ways in which surgeons' report cards can be utilised to enhance patient involvement in their own health care. They also considered ways in which surgeons can be encouraged to become involved in the process of creating and using report cards.

Tony Evers (Colo-rectal surgeon, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney) considered the difficulties of undertaking surgical innovation and providing adequate training to surgeons in a system in which surgeons' performance data is widely publicised. He addressed the problem of providing fair assessments of trainee surgeons and he

considered the difficulty of adapting the culture of medicine to ensure that established surgeons will continue to assist the development of trainees in a culture that is focused on providing publicly verifiable results.

#### **Defensive surgery and the avoidance of high-risk patients**

The second section discussed concerns about surgeons avoiding high-risk patients, as a response to the introduction of report cards on individual practitioners. Yujin Nagasawa (Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, Australian National University and Department of Philosophy, University of Alberta) considered the plausibility of well-known 'defensive surgery' objections to the publicising of individual surgeons' performance data. He argued that the strongest form of the defensive surgery objection is that surgeons will be motivated to avoid anxiety resulting from a fear of litigation as a result of high risk surgery going wrong. However, Nagasawa argued that this form of the objection can be met by utilising adequate risk adjustment techniques when preparing surgeons' performance information for public presentation.

Justin Oakley (Director, Centre for Human Bioethics, Monash University) evaluated the plausibility of the claim that publicising individual surgeons' performance data will lead surgeons to avoid operating on high-risk patients. He argued that this claim is not substantiated by available empirical evidence. Oakley further argued that even if this claim were substantiated, it should not be taken as a knock-down objection to the public reporting of individual surgeons' performance data, as there are compelling ethical arguments in favour of public reporting of such data.

#### **Implementing 'report cards' on individual surgeons**

The third section concentrated on implementation issues for practitioners and patients. Steven Bolsin (Associate Professor, Divisional Director of Perioperative Medicine, Anaesthesia and Pain Management, Geelong Hospital, Victoria) is well-known as the 'whistleblower' in the paediatric cardiac surgery deaths at Bristol Royal Infirmary in the 1990s. Bolsin explained to participants a practical means of collecting accurate surgeon specific performance information. He argued that personal digital assistants can be effectively utilised to record accurate performance information. Bolsin also considered how such devices might best be introduced into the contemporary culture of medicine.

Steve Clarke (Research Fellow, Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, Charles Sturt University and Australian National University, Canberra) identified a number of heuristics and biases that affect the lay interpretation of statistical information. He argued that 'report cards' presenting surgeons' performance information to patients should be developed with the reality of such interpretive biases in mind, and he provided examples of how this might be done.

#### **Informed consent and patients' rights to information**

Section four considered informed consent, autonomy, and patients' rights. David Neil (Philosophy, University of Wollongong) and Merle Spriggs (Ethics Unit, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, University of Melbourne) each served as discussants in this section. Neil raised the question of whether patients' rights to medical information entail a right to be provided with risk information that does not yet exist (as would be the case where surgeon report card data has not been collected). Spriggs spoke, *inter alia*, about different conceptions of patient autonomy, and how these bear on autonomy-based arguments for providing patients with individual surgeon performance information.

#### **Surgeon report cards in market-based health care systems**

The public release of practitioner performance data is sometimes advocated as a way of making health care systems more closely resemble markets, so the fifth section of the workshop examined these ideas. Adrian Walsh (School of Philosophy, University of New England, Armidale) argued that an adequate assessment of the ethical ramifications of surgeons' report cards requires an understanding of the market or quasi-market condition in which report cards are to be introduced. Walsh argued that consumer-sovereignty justifications of markets, where what matters is that people can choose among a range of products or services, lend themselves to individual surgeon report cards. He examined a range of market and quasi-market arrangements that institutions may implement. In considering markets as distributive mechanisms, Walsh posed the question of whether surgeon report cards might lead better-performed surgeons to charge higher fees. Walsh also discussed how perverse incentives can best be avoided and how altruistic motivations can be encouraged under such market and quasi-market arrangements.

Neil Levy (Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, University of Melbourne) contended that autonomy-based arguments for surgeon-specific report cards are too narrow, and that a full ethical evaluation of report cards would also consider the relevance of equality in this context. Levy argued that undesirable social consequences will follow as a result of the publicising of individual surgeons' performance information. In particular, Levy argued that report cards will lead to the best surgeons becoming concentrated at the bigger hospitals, in more affluent areas, and that the poor can be expected to bear a disproportionate share of the cost of medicine in a more market-driven system. However, he argued that report cards on institutions can perform useful social functions, and should be implemented instead of report cards on individual surgeons. Levy also suggested that patients will be able to make more informed decisions with report cards on institutions rather than on individuals, as surgical outcomes are in fact produced by teams rather than individuals.

#### **Patient perspectives, trust, and surgeon-patient relationships**

Section six focused on patients, and on report cards' effects on surgeon-patient relationships. The first paper, by Marilyn Walton (Associate Professor of Ethical Practice, Office of Teaching and Learning, University of Sydney) was on how transparency rather than secrecy puts patients in the picture. Just prior to the workshop Professor Walton found that she would not be able to attend, but she agreed to her paper being presented and discussed at the workshop. Drawing on her recent experience as Health Care Complaints Commissioner for NSW, Walton's paper considered how patients can be best prepared to use report cards on individual surgeons. Her paper argued that patients will incorporate information from surgeon report cards into their decision-making procedures only when they feel comfortable discussing the information contained on report cards with their surgeons.

The paper by David Macintosh (Cairns Base Hospital, Queensland) built well upon these ideas. Macintosh focused on the importance of building trust in the doctor-patient relationship. Some opponents of surgeon report cards claim that such measures exemplify a misguided recent trend to seek ways of replacing the need for trust in this context with what some regard as more secure. In response, Macintosh argued that this view sets up something of a false dichotomy. Macintosh acknowledged the value of trust in doctor-patient relationships, and argued that report cards can actually promote well-founded trust of surgeons. Drawing on his experience as an orthopaedic surgeon, Macintosh argued that patients place great significance on

knowing they are in safe hands, and so report cards can also enhance autonomous decision-making by patients. Macintosh concluded that report cards on individual surgeons should be presented and used in such a way as to foster trust and that there is a danger of developing a culture of suspicion if report cards are not introduced into medicine in a careful manner.

### **Surgeon report cards and public policy**

The final section focused on some ethical issues for public policy on practitioner report cards. Michael Parker (Professor, The Ethox Centre, Department of Public Health, Oxford University) discussed how much choice individuals might be prepared to sacrifice for social purposes, and whether some of the public goods of report cards might be jeopardised by a 'league table' approach. Parker argued that reporting can help to correct injustices in the distribution of surgical care, and he examined who in a democracy ought to be able to decide the criteria against which professional performance is to be measured.

Ian Freckelton (Medical Practitioner's Board of Victoria, Victorian Bar, and Adjunct Professor at the Law Schools of Monash and La Trobe Universities) argued that the introduction of practitioner report cards reflects increasing mistrust of health professionals, and he addressed some possible legal implications of report cards. He argued that few patients who make complaints about being inadequately informed say they would have altered their decision about a medical procedure if the relevant information had been provided, and so most such complaints are not actionable under medical negligence statutes. He then considered whether surgeon report cards are likely to result in an increase in litigation against surgeons.

### **Publication plans**

Papers from the workshop form the core material for a proposed edited volume on this topic. A book proposal is being sent to major international publishers, and, given the quality of the papers, the timeliness of this topic, and the absence of other material on the ethics of surgeon report cards, we are very confident of obtaining a contract for this edited collection. The workshop papers are being revised for submission to the edited volume, and may be supplemented by papers from Rosemary Robins (University of Melbourne) and Mark Sheehan (Keele University), who attended the workshop but did not make presentations. These papers may also be complemented by a number of specially-commissioned papers from leading figures in current debates about this topic.

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### **Policy implications**

In the United Kingdom, performance information about individual cardiac surgeons was made public for the first time in 2004 (D Neil, S Clarke and J Oakley (2004). 'Public Reporting of Individual Surgeon Performance Information: United Kingdom Developments and Australian Issues', *The Medical Journal of Australia* 181: 266-268.).

There are two very different forms of argument in support of the publicising of surgeons' performance information. First, it is argued that patients have a *prima facie* entitlement to such information. This entitlement can be understood as part of the entitlement of patients to a substantial disclosure of relevant information for the purposes of obtaining their informed consent to surgery (S Clarke and J Oakley (2004). 'Informed Consent and Surgeons' Performance', *the Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 29: 11-35). North American initiatives in publicising surgeons' performance information seem to be based

mostly on appeal to the entitlement of individuals to such information. Second, there is substantial evidence that a system in which performance data is publicly reported will, all things being equal, provide greater levels of safety and quality in health care than a system which does not involve public reporting of performance data. ('Learning from Bristol: the Report of the public inquiry into children's heart surgery at the Bristol Royal Infirmary 1984-1995: [www.bristol-inquiry.org.uk/final\\_report/index.htm](http://www.bristol-inquiry.org.uk/final_report/index.htm)). British initiatives in publicising surgeons' performance information seem to be developed with the goals of enhancing the safety and quality of services provided in mind.

The information that is currently provided to the British public is considerably less fine-grained than the information that is provided to the public in those American states where such information is made public. Whereas an appeal to patients' entitlement motivates the publicising of very fine-grained information, an appeal to the publicising of performance information as a means to enhancing safety and quality only motivates the provision of detailed information in so far as the provision of such details improves overall safety and quality. One recommendation that we see as emerging from the workshop is that proponents of publicising surgeons' performance information in Australia should be very clear which argument(s) they are appealing to when seeking to promote the publicising of surgeons' performance information. A system of publicising surgeons' performance information that is primarily designed to enhance safety and quality will likely look quite different to a system that is designed to enhance individual awareness. A system that is designed to enhance safety and quality, and also to enhance individual awareness may look different again.

The overall sentiment at the workshop, towards systems of publicising surgeon's performance information, was positive, but it was recognised that there are a number of issues that need to be more satisfactorily addressed. It is recommended that the Australian Government give serious consideration to introducing a system in which surgeons' performance data is made public, but do so in a way that is informed by a close examination of the American and British experiences, and is based on careful consideration of the following issues:

- Systems publicising surgeons' performance ability should be developed in such a way as to ensure that surgeons are not prompted to avoid taking on high risk patients. This will involve ensuring that 'report cards' on individual surgeons are adequately risk adjusted.
- Systems publicising surgeons' performance ability should be developed in such a way as to ensure that trainee surgeons are fairly assessed and that potential trainees are not discouraged from undertaking surgical training.
- We should be mindful of the fact that surgeons' report cards can be introduced in a variety of different market and quasi-market conditions and that the details of these particular conditions will have a very significant effect on the outcomes that are promoted.
- We should also be mindful of the fact that under the wrong market or quasi-market conditions the introduction of surgeons' report cards can result in the best surgical services being provided to the wealthy, and the poor bearing a disproportionate share of the cost of funding medical services.
- We should also be mindful of the fact that the introduction of surgeons' report cards will potentially have a profound effect on the doctor-patient relationship. We should only introduce a system of surgeons' report cards in such a way as to ensure that patients

feel comfortable talking to their doctors about the information contained on surgeons' report cards and in a way that does not encourage the development of a culture of suspicion, diminishing the trust between a doctor and a patient.

- We should be mindful of the fact that surgeons' report cards can be expected to contain detailed statistical information and that this information is subject to a number of interpretive biases. We should aim to develop surgeons' report cards so that the information they contain is presented in such a way as to minimise the effects of these interpretive biases.

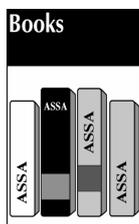
The workshop also identified two very general issues that need to be addressed as part of the process of considering how a system of publicising surgeons' performance ability might be developed. First, we should be aware that considerations of individual entitlement are often in tension with considerations of justice. A system which responds to an argument for individual entitlements to information, such as a 'league table' approach to publicising surgeons' performance information may have detrimental social consequences. In considering the implementation of such a system, we should try to be clear about how much information individuals would or should be prepared to sacrifice for social purposes. Second, we should be mindful of the fact that we live in a time in which there is increasing mistrust of professionals and the introduction of practitioner report cards will be seen as reflecting this increasing mistrust of health professionals. In such an intellectual climate there is an increased potential for litigation and we should carefully consider whether the introduction of report cards on individual surgeons is likely to result in an increase or a decrease in litigation against surgeons.

**Steve Clarke**, Research Fellow, Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, Charles Sturt University and **Justin Oakley**, Director, Centre for Human Bioethics, Monash University

Sponsorship for the workshop was provided by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and was supplemented by funding from the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, Charles Sturt University and the Australian National University.

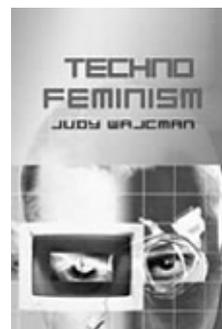


## Books



**TechnoFeminism.** By Judy Wajcman. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.

This book by one of Australia's leading feminist scholars covers concisely a very large territory – the gendered character of technology, feminist ideas about science, feminist strategies and feminism's relationship with technological theories of society. Wajcman is herself one of the most influential contributors to this field. Here she reflects on her earlier work and appraises the arguments and ideas since her *Feminism Confronts Technology* appeared in 1991.



She calls *TechnoFeminism* 'an essay' and it is mostly in the genre of commentary. It is implicitly addressed to feminist women – explicitly in the closing pages – but should be read by many others with pleasure and profit. It is written with Wajcman's characteristic clarity and verve (a real bonus in a field divided between over-excited prophecy and technical obscurantism). The volume gives off a lovely aroma of competence, care and engagement.

The opening chapters review feminist critiques of science, technology and technological determinism. Nobody knows this story better than Judy Wajcman, and this is a crisp and balanced introduction to the research that revealed the gendered character of science as well as the gender inequalities built into characteristic technologies of modernity. A highlight is the brilliant précis of the 'actor-network' approach in science studies and a dissection of its gender-ignorance. There are also very nice accounts of the gender processes involved in the development of specific technologies, from the typewriter to the Pap smear. Wajcman lays emphasis on the point that a technology doesn't stop evolving when the first gizmo rolls off the assembly line. Technologies also evolve in use, and the social processes in which equipment is used (especially work, both domestic and industrial) are gender-structured.

In the next two chapters Wajcman reviews the more optimistic, even enthusiastic, feminist writings on technology that have followed the digital revolution and especially the growth of the Internet. Wajcman goes quietly through the claims – that the Net is inherently liberatory for women, that gender becomes fluid on the Net, that a new kind of society is emerging - and pours the cold water of fact and common sense upon them. Her three-page demolition of the archaic gender-essentialism of Sadie Plant, one of the leading cyber-feminists, is memorable.

Wajcman takes much more seriously (as we all should) the work of Donna Haraway, whose brilliant work in the history of science will be known to many *Dialogue* readers. Around the figure of the 'cyborg' Haraway has developed a complex argument about human/machine connections and social change, beginning in materialist feminism and developing into a unique hand-knitted postmodernism. Wajcman offers a thoughtful summary and a cautious appraisal of Haraway. Wajcman appreciates her willingness to find pleasure and possibility in technological change but worries about Haraway's obscurity and the difficulty of drawing political conclusions from her work.

In the final chapter Wajcman outlines a synthesis between cyborg feminism and a constructivist theory of technology, which she calls 'technofeminism'. She takes a

broadly materialist approach – emphasising the fact of gender inequalities, the importance of practices of production and use, and the material character of technology itself – while also recognising changing subjectivities. Her theme, if I can put it into a pre-industrial nutshell, is that technology is internal to human society and its effects are socially, not extra-socially, produced. Therefore its gender effects are the consequences of gender politics (often implicit) not of technological magic. The future is open – to social struggle.

I have two dissents from this stimulating and impressive work. First, for a book so much concerned with the materialisation of ‘male power’ (itself a problematic term), it makes little use of the now substantial research on men and masculinities. Wajcman knows of this literature, and at a couple of points says it contributes nothing on the connections between masculinity and technology. Here she is mistaken. Very interesting research now exists, mainly for the US and Europe, on the construction of masculinities in relation to military technology (eg, Barrett) and technological occupations such as engineering and heavy industrial labour (eg, Cockburn, Frehill, Mellström, Donaldson). Seidler has explored the cultural relationship between Western masculinity and conceptions of rationality. Döge has analysed the interplay between masculinity, the state and science and technology policy. There is an emerging discussion of masculinity in medical technology, for instance in relation to contraception and IVF (eg, Oudshoorn). No-one however, has yet synthesised this research from the point of view of feminist technology studies.

The second issue is about geography. Practically every one of the authors Wajcman cites comes from Europe or North America, and the debates in which she intervenes are internal to the society of the global North. Near the end she acknowledges this fact, with a few pages about the ‘Third World’ (another problematic term), but the issue does not become formative in her argument. She makes nothing of being an *Australian* writer, positioned in a specific way in global processes – though she has worked out an interesting solution to Australian marginality in her own academic career.

This is the usual way social theory has been done in Australia, since the days of WE Hearn. Should we any longer settle for theorising that unreflexively adopts the standpoint of the global metropole? Wajcman is rightly sceptical of current theories of globalisation as technologically induced homogenisation. But if we recognise global difference, shouldn’t we recognise our own specificity? The issue seems relevant to Wajcman’s central themes of power, knowledge and democratisation.

**RW Connell**

***Who Rules? – How government retains control of a privatised economy.*** By Michael Keating. Federation Press, 2004.

All is *nearly* for the best in modern Australia, so far as government has anything to do with it. Government’s capacity to manage has neither been diminished by the greater exposure of the economy to external forces nor become subservient to neo-liberal doctrine. Techniques of macro-economic management have changed, but they remain potent. Government has deployed its taxing and spending powers to avert any growth of income inequality. The ‘share’ of government in the economy, measured by taxing and spending, will inevitably grow - by as much as ten per cent of the GDP by mid-century. ‘Marketisation’, displacing the older techniques of command, control and uniformity of provision, is a means to an end: improving service delivery and

accommodating greater citizen choice. That the government exercises its power in a different way does not make it less important. There is scope for further reform along these lines. In so far as the market is not the chosen instrument of delivery, the standard of government service will be raised by greater decentralisation of decision-making. Those, I think, are the bare bones of Michael Keating's book.

It is full of insights and opinions that can be related to Keating's experience as the nation's top mandarin. Party politics play little part in his story. Perhaps this represents an enduring adherence to the tradition of a neutral public service. Alternatively, Keating may see the forces that shape the role of government in our society as so compelling that any government would bow to them. That, however, runs somewhat counter to one of his central theses – that government has always been, and remains, in control. Yet again, it may be that politicians are merely a shopfront: that real 'government' lies with the Sir Humphreys. Until Keating explains himself further, we shall not know which of these conjectures is closest to the mark. Consistent with his seeming disregard for elections and their outcomes, Keating makes no mention of the powers wielded by media and pressure groups.

He identifies and refutes two *alleged* causes of a decreased government role. One is a narrowing of options due to market – especially external - pressures. 'One point on which the political Left and the Right are agreed', he says, 'is that marketisation results in a substantial loss of state power. Indeed, this loss of power is precisely why the Left opposes marketisation and why the Right wants to advance it further.' Keating denies the loss of state power. The instruments may have changed, but they are still effective. The flexible exchange rate, for example, has liberated monetary policy for the pursuit of macroeconomic balance. If fiscal policy is less used as an instrument of stabilisation, this is due more to a realisation of its limitations than to newly-emerged market pressures. Like Keating, I find the argument that government power has been reduced by the opening of the economy unconvincing. Certainly, the context in which power is exercised has changed. But that is always happening.

The other claimed cause of diminished government is the ascendancy of neo-liberal doctrine. Keating's position, if I understand him, is that policy has *not* embraced a doctrinal antipathy to intervention, but reflects, rather, a conviction that there are better means of achieving given ends. Thus the service provided, at government expense, by the job network is more flexible and responsive to individual needs, as well as cheaper, than was the previous public employment service. State-owned businesses have been privatised because of a judgment that, in private hands, they will produce equivalent or better services at lower cost to consumers and taxpayers. The share of the GDP deployed by government has not fallen, nor is it low by world standards; but government has attempted, with much success, to get better value for money.

Government, as Keating reminds us, has always bought goods and services from the private sector. Decisions that shift the boundary between public and private production may well be based on practical considerations, such as cost containment. But there are also issues of values and priorities. An example is education: the fluid boundary between public schools and state-assisted private schools raises larger questions than that of efficiency. Related issues arise in health provision. In the case of privately operated prisons (not discussed by Keating), some would hold that the state should



not devolve the responsibilities that go with incarceration, just as many would be repelled by the notion of a privatised judiciary. Keating does not deny that there are issues other than efficiency. But once that is conceded, the nature of the other criteria becomes important; and they surely include ideology.

'Deregulation', says Keating, is a misnomer. The more accurate term is 're-regulation'. In general, it entails a shift from 'command and control' to supervised and enforced competition. We need not dwell on the semantics. However described, the change has entailed a freeing-up of businesses to pursue their own ends, but with some regulation of monopoly and the exercise of oligopoly power. The financial sector has probably been the most affected. Keating clearly thinks that the change has been for the better - the result of a critical assessment of the unintended effects of regulation. In many respects, the judgment is difficult to resist. But there are areas of controversy.

One of them is the labour market. The principal institutional changes over the past two decades have been a remarkable decline in trade union membership and power and an equally remarkable neutering of the arbitration tribunals. The two are related in complex and debatable ways, but it is inappropriate to explore those here. Reducing the authority of the arbitration tribunals began, under the Hawke and Keating Governments, with the shift to 'enterprise bargaining'. It has continued, under the Howard Government, with the encouragement of individual agreements. Legislation now foreshadowed would further marginalise the tribunals. Keating is broadly in sympathy with labour market 'deregulation' (though the book does not encompass the latest proposals). He sees it as a primary cause of the productivity 'surge' of the 'nineties. I have elsewhere questioned the reality of the 'surge'. Even if it were real, there would be several possible causes, and arbitrary selection of one from among them is an elementary fallacy. Keating's principal concern, however, is with the relation between labour market institutions and the degree of inequality within the society.

In broad terms, the facts recounted by Keating are reasonably well known and uncontroversial. First, the inequality of labour *incomes* has tended, over a long period, to increase. Secondly, wage *rates* for given tasks, as prescribed in arbitral awards and formal agreements, have *not* become less equal. Thirdly, the seeming discrepancy between the previous two statements is explained by changes in the composition of employment: middle-paid (typically blue-collar) jobs have diminished relative to high-paid and low-paid jobs. Here, there is some disagreement about causes. On one view, the opening of the economy *has* been a major contributor, because it explains the relative decline of manufacturing, the largest provider of blue-collar work. Another view, favoured by Keating, is that the disappearance of 'middle' jobs is technology-driven. My guess is that both causes have been important. Finally, the greater inequality of employment incomes has been fully countered by the tax-and-transfer system, so that the dispersion of household disposable incomes has been roughly constant. In Keating's view, it is transfers rather than taxes that have stabilised income shares. Arithmetically, this may be right; but in a broader sense, the system is indivisible, for without taxes there can be no transfers.

An inference commonly drawn from these facts is that income equalisation is best left to the tax-and-transfer system. This is Keating's position. I think that it is wrong.

Of course, equalisation *is* a widely recognised objective of fiscal policy. But there are political, economic and administrative restraints on the share of the national income deployed by government. The facts outlined in the previous paragraph mean that taxable capacity has been used up to stabilise the distribution of disposable income.

Suppose that, superimposed on the distributional effects of changes in workforce composition, there had been a movement toward less equal wage rates. Then the 'task' of the tax and transfer system would have been so much greater. Indeed, it may well have exceeded what was realistically achievable. The scenario is not fanciful, because various commentators, including Keating, have called for reductions in the real value of minimum wages, offset by an even greater reliance on taxes and transfers. Such a policy, it is said, would reduce unemployment and thereby counter a major source of household inequality. The prescription has at least three weaknesses. One is that the effect of wage reductions on the demand for labour is unknown and could be quite small. A second is that the inequality of private income to be countered by taxes and transfers would be greater. The third is that parts of the existing transfer system would have to be dismantled or reduced to make low-wage jobs a more attractive option than social welfare.

The suggested choice between management of private incomes – especially wages and salaries – and taxes and transfers as methods to avert greater inequality is a false one. The two are complementary, dealing as they do with different aspects of the problems of poverty and inequality.

Notwithstanding my reservations, this is an important book, giving clear expression to a coherent political philosophy. The level of academic and public debate will be improved if it commands a wide audience. We know that day-to-day government is pushed in one direction or another by a vast range of pressures and problems. But the philosophy that Keating articulates is one that underpinned many of the policies of the Hawke and Keating Governments (and has much in common with the notions of 'New Labour' in the United Kingdom). A tantalising question now is whether a future Labor government would continue along the kind of path that Michael Keating has laid out. If so, the alternation of Labor and conservative governments may indeed be seen to make little difference.

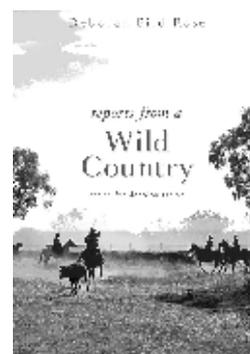
**Keith Hancock**

***Reports From a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation.*** By Deborah Bird Rose. University of New South Wales Press, 2004.

Since 1980, Deborah Bird Rose has been talking to people from the Victoria and Daly Rivers region of the Northern Territory, in particular to the people living at or near Yarralin, Lingara, Pigeon Hole and Daguragu. Their country was colonised in the last two decades of the nineteenth century by Europeans with cattle herds. Rose has published several acclaimed books on the Indigenous locals' history and survival, and her attention has turned increasingly towards their account of their relationship with a changing biota. The pertinence of her proposed 'ethics of decolonisation' is not only to our settler colonial relationship with the Indigenous people, but also to our human relationship with all other species in a damaged land.

Eleven essays make up the book, falling into three sections.

In 'Here and Now', Rose presents a psycho-historical portrait of Australians. She argues that as settler-colonists we conceive ourselves as the initiators of history in a land that lacks a history. With that understanding, we absolve ourselves of responsibility for the past, and we become deaf and blind to those whom



we classify as 'of the past', such as Indigenous Australians. Any anxieties are quelled by the 'mantra' 'She'll be right mate'. In this blithe future-orientation, Rose sees something both particular to Australians and characteristic of Modernity. The exemplary site of modernity, she suggests, is the frontier – 'a time and place where modern culture simultaneously reveals its capacity for destruction and reinvents its own myth of creation. The hand of destruction and the hand of civilisation mutually shape a chronotope focused on Year Zero' (p 62). Because 'Year Zero is a moment of uncertainty, a site of incomplete conquest' (p 85) the colonists need to reassure themselves that they will survive. One ritual that enacts this uncertainty, in order to deal symbolically with it, is the rodeo. 'Here and Now' closes with Rose's reading of rodeos and camp drafts (events of 'numerous meanings', she concedes, p 90). Two meanings – in tension with each other – have emerged for her: the cooperation between human and beast, and the risk of relationships eluding control. In rodeo, civilisation performs the possibility of failure.

In Part Two 'Battlefields', Rose enriches our idea of conquest by calling attention to some of the symbolic and discursive continuities within frontier masculinity. Thus, after reminding us of the competition between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men over Aboriginal women, she shows how we can consider 'the cock' (in the sense of penis) as a displaced gun. The removal of half-caste children climaxed the cock's destructive impact. Taking a highly successful 'out back tour' (operating from Timber Creek) as the subject of another essay, Rose is perceptive about the racial and sexual solidarities implied in the tour leader's jokes. Christianity competed with these more profane and erotic frontier masculinities, and its legacy is complex. In Rose's account, its decorous self-confidence may be even more insidious than the licentious camaraderie of the cock, for it solicits Aboriginal converts to conceive themselves 'at the periphery in time and space, and in the rearguard of the march towards redemption or progress' (p 155), and to think nothing of the physical transformations of their homelands. At the same time, she allows that in some post-colonial cults elements of western spirituality have been reconfigured so that they 'speak of an imagination sharpened and expanded by the experience of the most barbarous of frontiers' (p 148).

Part Three 'Tracks' continues a project for which her work is widely valued: formulating Aboriginal conceptions of life, death and the relatedness of the world's living and non-living things. To the extent that ours are an 'ethics of decolonisation' we will attend closely to this cosmology, Rose insists. Reconciliation she understands as openness to review critically, under Aborigines' stimulus, ways of thinking that are deeply constitutive of Modernity. Her exposition of what she takes to be the modern episteme and of its Aboriginal antitheses makes this the most abstract part of the book, and I will not try to summarise the argument here. In the final essay I was glad to see an example of such 'reconciliation'. In its National Parks policy, the New South Wales government has listened to what Aboriginal (Yuin) and non-Aboriginal people have told them about the importance of not misusing (logging, rifle range) Mt. Dromedary (Gulaga). Drawing on an interview by Peter Read, Rose presents one white Australian's exemplary sensitivity to place.

I know that I risk complacency in drawing too much comfort from this example, but if public policies sympathetic to declaring national parks are exemplary of the ethics of decolonisation, then Australia would seem to be doing much to decolonise (as long as a Park is not another way to ignore Indigenous belonging to land). How could this be so? Are the impulses towards 'decolonisation' stronger in Australia (and in Modernity?)

than Rose cares to admit? Here I find something paradoxical in Rose – a lack of awareness of the historical roots of her own ethics. In her Introduction she remarks: ‘Our generations alive today may be the first wave of settlers to try to grasp the enormity of conquest’ (p 6). This not true: there is long tradition of at least some Australian colonists declaring that they were appalled by the impact of colonisation, and seeking – with mixed success – amelioration. Indeed, Rose’s remark is an instance of the settler-colonial chronotope that she spends much of her book criticising. ‘The logic is to declare the present disjunctive with the past, and then to declare that the present is about to be transcended and that we will soon live in a period that is disjunctive with our “now”’ (p 19). Is the unacknowledged attraction of this chronotope an essential feature of her argument or a contingent gesture of ethical gravitas? The latter, I think, but it points to a weakness in the book: a tendency to shrink the history of the West/Modernity/Australia to the frontier scene that she has studied so attentively.

A long-staying American who never quite gives up the epistemological privilege of the visitor, Rose is at her best, in my view, as an analyst of Australian humour. Her sense of its ideological richness is not dulled by her (sometimes uneasy) laughter. In her succinct elucidation of Paul Keating’s remark that Australia is the arse-end of the world (p 46), in her discussions of drovers’ water tank graffiti (pp 77-82), and in her analysis of Max the tour guide’s joke about the impregnating potential of the didgeridoo (pp 123-26), Rose is at her most acute and compassionate.

**Tim Rowse**



## Opinion

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### Australian Multiculturalism and the Politics of a New Pluralism\*

Laksiri Jayasuriya

#### Introduction

The advent of multiculturalism ranks as a notable experiment of social engineering. Nevertheless, this social ideal has been under critical public scrutiny for sometime. The problematic nature of multiculturalism as a contested notion of public policy arises from two alternative ways of conceptualising multiculturalism:

- First, as a philosophy of migrant settlement catering to the needs of new comers through public policies designed to help their integration into the socio cultural structures of Australian society.
- Secondly, as a constitutive principle of the Australian nation, one which is central to how we regard ourselves as being Australian in a multicultural nation, ie, as Australian citizens in a diverse and plural society.

In other words, how do we as citizens in a liberal democracy deal with *difference*? How can the ideology of multiculturalism respond to the 'new pluralism' of Australian society?

#### The multicultural philosophy: from Whitlam to Howard

##### *Cultural pluralism - an ideology of migrant settlement*

From the outset, Australian multiculturalism has been characterised by two distinctive features: one was that of a *migration for settlement linked to the idea of a common citizenship*,<sup>1</sup> the second was the fact that it was oriented to catering to the symbolic and expressive needs of the culturally different.<sup>2</sup> Firstly, as an inclusionary citizenship, these policies granted full protection of the law and most of the citizenship rights to all Permanent Residents or 'denizens'.<sup>3</sup> This was what guaranteed a 'fair go' for the newcomers by recognising that all legal immigrants were no longer treated as 'aliens', but as citizens.<sup>4</sup>

However, the enjoyment of the rights and entitlements of citizenship by immigrant settlers was conditional on the newcomers accepting the common structures of society – its legal and political institutions, system of administration and rule of law, and English as the official language. While this was a limitation imposed on the manifestation of 'difference', this was the key to their incorporation into the commonalities of Australian society. This conditional multiculturalism,<sup>5</sup> along with the conferment of the social rights of citizenship, accounts for the successful social integration of new settlers.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, from the outset, the doctrine of cultural pluralism also sought to embody the values and ideals of a liberal political culture and humane society. These included an 'equality of respect', the human dignity of all persons – expressed as a mutual respect for, and understanding of, one another and equal regard for every member of society as a human being.<sup>7</sup> Underlying this was the belief that a sense of social/ethnic identity may, at least for first generation settlers, co-exist with a sense of national identity of being an *Australian*. Importantly, multiculturalism has evolved primarily as a doctrine of cultural pluralism. This refers to the 'preservation of the communal life and significant patterns of the culture'<sup>8</sup> of immigrant groups subject to the proviso that this

is within the context of accepting the rules and practices inherent in Australian citizenship.

Cultural pluralism was built around notions of *culture* and *ethnicity* and generating an *identity politics* which has governed the practice of policies of ethnic affairs and migrant welfare especially from the Fraser era onwards. This identity politics, based on an essentialist view of ethnicity and cultural groups/ communities<sup>9</sup> and also drawing on various forms of cultural relativism, privileged cultural maintenance and cultural celebration. The fallout from this has been a 'them' versus 'us' attitude and this trend has been reinforced by *diaspora nationalism* (ie, linkage back to cultures of home countries) among some migrant groups.

This model of culturalist multiculturalism, despite modifications introduced in the Hawke-Keating era and also by the Howard government, has enjoyed bipartisan endorsement. While the Hawke-Keating policies still remained aligned to the identity politics and the ethos of culturalist multiculturalism inherited from the Fraser era, the underlying tenor of its policies was clearly one of a '*managerial multiculturalism*'.<sup>10</sup> This was 'a policy for managing the consequences of diversity in the interests of the individual and society'<sup>11</sup> which Keating refers to as a 'productive dividend'.<sup>12</sup> This rationale was associated with the prevailing culture of economic rationalism, and advocated the virtues of productive diversity (and later 'economic efficiency'), to assist trade and business activity. By channelling multicultural policies towards enhancing Australia's competitive advantage, Keating was clearly attempting to reorient the ideology of multiculturalism in the national interest by adding to its foundations in an inclusionary citizenship.

#### *Towards a normative multiculturalism*

What this does is to provide the first signs of making multiculturalism something more than catering to migrant welfare needs, and dominated by identity politics. Accordingly, Keating's understanding of the philosophy of Australian multiculturalism was essentially the same as the key principles governing Australian social and political institutions. The latter he identified as 'the constitution and the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language, equality of sexes and tolerance'.<sup>13</sup> This endorsement of the ideology of multiculturalism with a focus on membership in the political community was importantly couched – to use the language of Baubock<sup>14</sup> – as a 'republican citizenship' rather than the later Howard conceptualisation in terms of a 'national citizenship'.

When we come to the Howard era, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>15</sup> we find that *New Agenda*<sup>16</sup> policy prescription only serves to fine tune and reform the edges of the *National Agenda* of the Hawke-Keating era. This is, indeed, a classic instance of the aphorism, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!*

But there are two critically significant points of difference. Unlike the Hawke-Keating document, Howard's *New Agenda* is stated not in terms of rights based citizenship but is more oriented towards 'civic duties' – the mutual obligations and responsibilities of citizens.<sup>17</sup>

The overarching theme of Howard's *New Agenda* is 'reconciling unity and diversity' by the simplistic solution of denying the migrant experience, the vibrant pluralism of society and re-affirming the cultural values of the dominant anglo celtic heritage as signifying the homogeneity of the 'cultural nation'. This, in many respects, is reminiscent of Henry Parkes' celebrated slogan – 'One People, One Destiny' – at the

time of Federation. The only difference being that British identity is now replaced by a sense of Australian identity and citizenship arising from membership of a political community. This is constructed in terms of core cultural values, the inviolable cultural heritage of the Australian nation and citizenship.

### **Multiculturalism in crisis**

#### *Multiculturalism as public policy*

Until quite recently, this orthodoxy of Australian multiculturalism proved to be effective as a successful policy of migrant settlement for a variety of reasons, First and foremost, from its inception this policy ethos had a corporatist flavour; it was a state directed policy, a carefully monitored and regulated aspect of public policy which had the endorsement of capital and labour – employer organisations and the unions, Equally significant was that these policies were developed and consolidated in conditions of relative economic affluence. These policies were also carried out with the active participation of the new ethnic middle class, co-opted by governments to promote an agenda of identity politics.

For two main reasons, the dominant groups in the mainstream of Australian society were also inclined to give this form of cultural multiculturalism lukewarm support as a way of managing diversity. One was because what was promoted was a highly depoliticised multiculturalism which afforded little occasion for social conflict and disruption. Indeed, the oft repeated theme of this period was the need for 'social cohesion', along with the slogan 'multiculturalism for all'.<sup>18</sup> The main objective of the latter was to highlight the limits of difference within a framework of universal citizenship. The overriding concern was to prevent any form of 'structural pluralism' or social pluralism.<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, and more importantly, there was the expectation that in the long run, differences would disappear and there would be a 'melting pot'. The growing incidence of intermarriage, particularly among some ethnic groups<sup>20</sup> is repeatedly used by critics of multiculturalism<sup>21</sup> as evidence of 'a melting pot', meaning ethnic assimilation or 'anglo-conformity' This thinking, however, fails to recognise that what we may have with inter-ethnic marriages are mixed identities or 'half breeds' as revealed by some studies overseas.<sup>22</sup> As Penny and Khoo<sup>23</sup> rightly observe, there are a variety of adaptations resulting from inter-marriage between ethnic groups.

What has given this hidden assimilationism, evident in much of the public understanding of the multicultural discourse, an additional impetus was the resurgent new nationalism.<sup>24</sup> This held out the prospect of restoring the ruptured ideal of cultural homogeneity by constructing a sense of Australianness,<sup>25</sup> as one commentator put it, based on the 'cricket test'! This was also clearly the thrust of the Hanson critique of multiculturalism, but equally of the Howard Agenda for Australian multiculturalism, evident in the failed exercise of the Constitutional Preamble, and the conditions under which John Howard embraced the 'm' word.<sup>26</sup>

From the point of view of migrant settlers, the inclusionary citizenship built into the doctrine of cultural pluralism was also attractive to new settlers because of the tangible benefits of political and social citizenship available to citizens and 'denizens' alike. The inherent fairness of the political and legal institutions, the generosity of the state in guaranteeing new settlers the social benefits of citizenship which accrued from the wage earners' welfare state, ie, a minimum level of economic security and a social wage, proved to be the most effective social glue, binding newcomers to Australian society and providing a sense of belonging. This clearly suggests that social solidarity

and being a stakeholder resides in the political culture and not in some set of arbitrary cultural values derived from a historic past.<sup>27</sup>

*The paradox of pluralism and the backlash*

Yet, despite the success of this conventional model of multiculturalism, it has been subject to critical scrutiny from across the political spectrum and also by the general public. The public perception of the practice of Australian multiculturalism remains confused and shrouded in uncertainty.<sup>28</sup> Neither is it seen as serving effectively the needs and aspirations of the ethnic minorities. There is no doubt that Australian multiculturalism is in a state of crisis. As suggested earlier, this is mainly due to two features. The first arises from the fact that the ideology of multiculturalism derived from the 1980s confronts a new social reality, especially a new pluralism; second, perhaps more importantly, that the contradictions and tensions inherent in the doctrine of cultural pluralism relate to *the paradox of pluralism*.

In short, multiculturalism, as a 'public policy regime' which evolved in the 1970s and 1980s had three essential components: a) it reflected the economic climate and regime that went along with a 'Fordist' manufacturing sector that served to produce for the internal market; b) it was enmeshed with 'welfare state' politics; and, c) it catered largely to the interests of first generation migrants of mostly European origin. However, right through the 1980s and 1990s the deep structural changes in the Australian economy shifted to a more competitive outward oriented economy, one where full employment and generous expansive welfare provisions could not be taken for granted.<sup>29</sup>

Along with these structural changes there was a 'new pluralism' characteristic of Australian society. This was marked by new waves of migrants, mostly non-Caucasian groups from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, the emergence of second and third generations of migrants, and a distinct religious pluralism<sup>30</sup> rarely acknowledged in the conventional multicultural discourse. Contrary to the view that 'Australia remains relatively homogeneous with ethnic groups being progressively integrated into mainstream culture',<sup>31</sup> there is clearly an increased pluralisation of Australian society.<sup>32</sup> This has led to a blurring of boundaries in social functioning, creating a 'mixed' cultural landscape, a hybridity and mixed identities. This policy regime of multiculturalism was clearly unresponsive to the needs and interests of this new social reality.

On the other hand, the *paradox of pluralism* linked to cultural pluralism, as *identity politics*, revolves around the issues of *equality* and *difference*. The first concerns the constructions of identity which draw on contested views about the meaning of *culture*, and *ethnicity*. It is beyond the brief of this essay to engage in an extended analysis of these issues which are more fully explored elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> In brief, the main point is that identity politics, by regarding the concept of culture in essentialist terms (ie, as an immutable fixed entity), offers a reified, static, unreal view of culture which fails to capture the lived reality of culture as a form of cultural practice. This view of culture has placed the emphasis on the *expressive/affective* dimensions of culture and ethnicity – the need to belong and maintain one's cultural identity (lifestyles).

In contrast, ethnic identity is best viewed as a 'politico-economic resource' that can be mobilised in the pursuit of group interests. What we experience therefore, are mixed identities arising from the intersection of class, gender, ethnicity/race, which creates an entirely different understanding of identity politics. Therefore, once you recognise the contingent nature of identity, it is clear that identities are determined in the political

realm, ie, the public domain, rather than the private domain. But this is exactly what the inherent privatisation of the cultural model ignores.

What lies at the heart of the *paradox of pluralism* is the coexistence of identity politics with notions of equality and universalism, arising from a common citizenship; hence the dilemma surrounding the conjunction of cultural pluralism and the 'politics of universalism' inherent in the practice of multiculturalism. But the dilemma of cultural pluralism is that the universalism inherent in identity politics seeks to avoid or minimise the very differences that it promotes. The assumption of a sanitised homogeneity arising from the universalism inherent in identity politics confronts the very difference that it seeks to avoid or minimise.

In other words, the celebration of difference, of culture and ethnic identity, sits uneasily alongside the universalism promoted by a common citizenship. Hence, the paradox: identity politics creates the very divisions and ethnic structures—be they in sport, religion, or the arts – it seeks to avoid. The latter are integral to the social and political reality of a diverse and pluralist society. This incidentally underlies the perceptive and insightful observation of Jean Martin many years ago, that there can be no cultural pluralism without some sort of social pluralism.<sup>34</sup>

It is this policy orientation which has been mainly responsible for the backlash against multiculturalism in the wider community accusing it of tribalism and breeding cultural ghettos and of a *diaspora nationalism*,<sup>35</sup> all of which have been seen as endangering social cohesion and social solidarity.<sup>36</sup> In a nutshell, the problem is that multiculturalism, as a form of identity politics, seeks to emphasise a privatised cultural difference while existing within a 'public realm' where these differences are not recognised.

### **Reframing citizenship for a new pluralism**

#### *From identity politics to the politics of identity*

The starting point of any restructuring of multiculturalism or developing a new rationale rests on a) an acceptance of the stark reality of pluralism, and b) a preparedness to build on the positive achievements of cultural pluralism such as equality of respect, mutual understanding, tolerance, and an inclusionary citizenship. What we have today is a pluralistic community which is both 'racial', 'ethnic', and religious in composition, and this must surely include the Aboriginal people who have been left out in the multicultural consciousness as constituting a defining component element of a pluralistic society.

However defined, the reality we confront is that minority groups — be they racial, religious, cultural or ethnic — are status devalued groups operating in the public domain, but marginalised from the power structures and treated pejoratively. Therefore, in refashioning our understanding of diversity and pluralism we need to move away from the *identity politics* of the past towards a *politics of identity* which views difference in terms of the minority status of ethnic groups as groups who have to contend with inequalities and disadvantage, reminiscent of the late 1960s.

This shift entails a move away from a narrowly conceived apolitical 'cultural pluralism' to a more *democratic pluralism* which confronts the problematic nature of what has been described as 'the tensional nexus of democracy (democratic citizenship) and multiculturalism'.<sup>37</sup> This form of democratic pluralism is contingent upon re-negotiating the concept of citizenship, and requires us to go beyond an understanding of citizenship merely as *legal status* embodying rights: civil, political, and social rights.

Rather, *citizenship* has to be understood normatively as conferring a distinctive sense of identity, of belonging and enjoying full and equal membership status in a pluralistic community. The principles and ideals of a *democratic pluralism* based on a redefined and revitalised sense of Australian citizenship must perforce extend the meaning and understanding of a 'common citizenship' to recognise the full participation of the 'different'.

The logic rationale of the WA Charter of Multiculturalism<sup>38</sup> incorporates this new thinking about citizenship and carves out a new domain. In espousing the principles and ideals of a democratic pluralism it embodies four key principles - *Civic Ideals or Virtues, Fairness, Equality, and Participation* - and is built around three pillars or key notions. These are *participation, recognition, and representation*. Participation alongside the politics of recognition, among other things, leads importantly to questions of representation, ie, of *who* represents *what* and leads to questions of reordering the political foundations of Australian society associated with a radical citizenship.

#### *A radical citizenship*

Put simply, by reframing citizenship in this manner, we acknowledge that when a society is socially differentiated, citizenship must equally be so. The notion a democratic pluralism posits a political and enabling multiculturalism within a framework of citizenship that 'treats all members as equal and also recognizes their separate identities.'<sup>39</sup> Premised on the existence of a 'shared political culture', this allows for a '*differentiated citizenship*' (or a multicultural citizenship) which is socially integrative and acknowledges the reality of a society differentiated by gender, class, and ethnicity. Hence differences between individual citizens or a group of citizens need to be recognised and taken account of in catering to citizens' needs. All citizens, by virtue of their shared common citizenship, enjoy a sense of shared belonging by their membership of the political community based on public virtues such as democratic spirit of tolerance, the rule of law, respect for liberty, etc.

In short, it is this *civic culture* arising from a liberal political order that binds the nation and integrates varied segments of society. To quote Habermas,

... the political culture must serve as the common denominator for a constitutional patriotism which simultaneously sharpens awareness of the multiplicity and integrity of the different forms of life which exist in the multicultural society.<sup>40</sup>

A radical view of citizenship, incorporating a differentiated citizenship flows from the *political* rather than the *cultural* nation. What is, therefore, crucial for social solidarity in a pluralistic society committed to a liberal political culture is the homogeneity of the *political* nation conceived of as a 'self governing' *political* and *moral* community, and not a *cultural* nation derived from core cultural values of a single unifying ethnic core of the dominant groups in society.

This difference in how we constitute the Australian nation may be summarised by contrasting the vision of Australian identity in the Howard era - as deriving from the anglo celtic heritage - and the Hawke Keating era in terms of our being a uniquely Australian nation; one which is geographically located out of the western orbit but still retaining a distinctive political culture which has its origins in western liberal political ideals. The contrast, therefore, is between an 'ethnic nationalism', one based on core anglo-celtic values and a 'civic nationalism'<sup>41</sup> embodying a civic culture linked to

democratic political values and social institutions. In this context, as Macgregor *et al*<sup>42</sup> rightly point out 'a strong sense of Australian nationalism requires symbols that can speak meaningfully to the nation'. As these authors argue, the Eureka legend may well provide us with a powerful national symbol for constructing a national story, which is salient and sensitive to the new pluralism.

In other words, for those who do not share the Howard vision, the real basis of unity, social cohesion and social solidarity rests on an identity which derives from an acceptance and identification of a common set of social and political institutions, not shared values – a mythical set of core cultural values. Clearly, the unity and cohesion of society rests in the political consensus and the common possession of rights and entitlements associated with full and equal membership of the political community. What matters is the *political nation*, and not the *cultural nation*.<sup>43</sup>

It is in this context that a constitutional document, embodying the aspiration of 'we the people' as a pluralistic society, acquires crucial significance in forging social solidarity and constructing our identity as a nation, as a truly multicultural society.<sup>44</sup> The constitutional document is what is most likely to give legitimacy and credibility to a sense of Australian identity, as a distinct nation in a pluralistic society; and at the same time it is a document that binds citizens in a common belonging through the principles and values enshrined in the constitution.

We need, as a matter of priority, to have an 'Australian conversation' to reorder the political foundations of Australia as a pluralistic society, governed by a rights-based democracy and committed to liberal political values. As the Premier of WA, Dr Geoff Gallop (2003) observed in his recent Walter Murdoch Address, entitled *Living with Difference*:

Australia has the opportunity to show the rest of the region that it is possible to have a robust democratic and civic culture that at the same time respects and values religious and cultural pluralism.

This must serve to articulate a new philosophy for Australian multiculturalism as a 'plural society ... held together and legitimated by a common understanding of a citizenship'.<sup>45</sup> There is, indeed, a compelling case for devising constitutional ways and means for incorporating the rights element in the Australian political culture as a means of safeguarding and protecting the rights and freedoms of minorities.<sup>46</sup> This needs to be strengthened by giving political legitimacy to a pluralistic citizenship and inscribing it in statutory form via a *Bill of Rights* or an Australian Charter of Rights.<sup>47</sup> Such an Act will help to include both indigenous and non-indigenous groups in the multicultural discourse, and facilitate the separate but linked development of an Aboriginal and a multiculturalism consciousness.

Australian multiculturalism, as an integral and defining aspect of the Australian nation needs to be embodied in a legislative statute, and this is best accomplished via a Bill of Rights inscribing a radical new ideal of a pluralistic citizenship.<sup>48</sup> As the late Jean Martin concluded from her pathfinding research many decades ago, if Australian 'pluralism is to be more than a cardboard façade [it is] to be acknowledged as a potential political force [and it needs to assume] some kind of political responsibility and make their experience forcefully relevant at the level of political decision making'.<sup>49</sup>

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- \* This is an edited version of two papers available at:  
www.socialwork.arts.uwa.edu.au/data/page/33070/diversity.pdf;  
and www.arts.uwa.edu.au/socWkwww/
- 1 This is contrary to John Howard's apparent discovery and recent endorsement of 'Australian Multiculturalism' as an integral feature of Australian citizenship. By any reckoning, all versions of multiculturalism have been framed within the framework of Australian citizenship. This was explicitly acknowledged in the Committee on Community Relations (1975) - Lippman Report - as far back as the early 1970s. See also Zubryzcki, J (1982). *Multiculturalism for All Australians*. Canberra: AGPS; Castles, S (1996). 'Democracy and Multicultural Citizenship: Australian Debates and their Relevance for Western Europe'. In Baubock, R (ed) *From Aliens to Citizens: Redefining the Status of Immigration in Europe*. Aldershot: Avebury.
  - 2 Recently there has been a significant departure from these policies with the increasing number of short term contract labour or transient migration. See Khoo, S-E (2002). 'Immigration Issues in Australia', *Journal of Population Research*, 19, 2.
  - 3 'Denizen' is a term introduced by Hammar, T (1990). *Democracy and the National State: Aliens, Denizens and Citizens in a World of International Migration*, London: Avebury, to identify permanently resident foreigners who still enjoy some rights of citizenship. In Australia, those with Permanent Residence status who are denied some rights, eg, right to vote and access to some public service appointments, are denizens.
  - 4 Jordens, Ann-Marie (1997). *Alien to Citizen*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin; Castles (1998) *op cit*.
  - 5 Kymlicka, W (1998). *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
  - 6 See Jayasuriya (1993) for the Australian approach through 'industrial citizenship' to confer 'social rights' to immigrant settlers in a 'residualist welfare state'.
  - 7 Krygier, M (1996). 'The Sources of Civil Society', *Quadrant*, October.
  - 8 Gordon, M (1981). 'Models of Pluralism'. *The Annals. American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 454.
  - 9 Jayasuriya, L (1992). 'The Problematic of Culture and Identity in Social Functioning'. *Journal of Multicultural Social Work*. 2, 4; Jayasuriya, L (2000). 'Australian Multiculturalism and Citizenship: Towards a New Paradigm'. In Ethnic Affairs Commission, NSW, *Building the Reconciliation Bridge*. Sydney: EAC/NSW.
  - 10 This characterisation is borrowed from Davidson, A (1997). 'Multiculturalism and Citizenship: Silencing the Migrant Voice'. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 18, 2.
  - 11 OMA (1989). *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*. Canberra: AGPS.
  - 12 For the main proponents see B Cope and M Kalantzis (1996). *Productive Diversity: A New Australian Approach to Work and Management*. Sydney: Pluto Press.
  - 13 Keating, P (2000). *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia Pacific*. Macmillan.
  - 14 Baubock (1996). *op cit*.
  - 15 Jayasuriya, L (1998). 'NMAC and Multiculturalism: Plus ça Change, Plus C'est La Même Chose!' *Australian Language Matters* 6, 1; Jayasuriya (2000) *op cit*.
  - 16 NMAC (National Multicultural Advisory Council) (1997). *Multiculturalism: The Way Forward*. AGPS; NMAC (1999). *Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness*. AGPS.
  - 17 Jayasuriya (1998) *op cit*.
  - 18 Zubryzcki (1982) *op cit*.

- <sup>19</sup> Martin, J (1971). 'Migration and Social Pluralism'. In K Wilkes (ed), *How Many Australians?* Canberra: AGPS; Committee on Community Relations (1975) *Final Report* (The Lippman Report), AGPS.
- <sup>20</sup> Penny, J and S Khoo (1996). *Intermarriage: A Study of Migration and Intermarriage*. BIMPR. Canberra: AGPS; Giorgas, D and FL Jones (2002). 'Intermarriage Patterns and Social Cohesion among First, Second and Later Generation Australians'. *Journal of Population Research* 19, 1.
- <sup>21</sup> See B Galligan and W Roberts (2004). *Australian Citizenship*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- <sup>22</sup> Lambert, WE and DH Taylor (1990). *Coping with Cultural and Racial Diversity in Urban America*. New York: Praeger.
- <sup>23</sup> Penny & Khoo (1996) *op cit*.
- <sup>24</sup> Davidson (1997) *op cit*.
- <sup>25</sup> This was advocated by the UK Home Secretary, Norman Tebbit, who argued that you cannot be accepted as being English unless you support England in Test matches!
- <sup>26</sup> Kelly, P (1997). 'The Curse of the M-Word'. *The Australian* 30-31 August.
- <sup>27</sup> Jayasuriya (2000) *op cit*.
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- <sup>29</sup> Beilharz, P (1989). 'Social Democracy and Social Justice'. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 18 (1); Graycar, A and A Jamrozik (1993). *How Australians Live: Sociology in Theory and Practice*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) Melbourne: Macmillan.
- <sup>30</sup> Carey, H (2003). 'Australian Religions Culture from Federation to New Pluralism', in Jayasuriya, L, D Walker and J Gothard (eds) (2003.) *Legacies of White Australia: Race Culture and Nation*. Perth: University of WA Press.
- <sup>31</sup> Galligan, B *et al* (2001). *Australians and Globalisation: The Experience of Centuries*. Cambridge University Press: 185.
- <sup>32</sup> Markus, A (1988). 'The Second Round of the Asian Immigration Debate'. In C D'Mello, Francis Kok Wahn Loh, A Markus, R Rasmussen and K Tang (eds), *Asian Immigration: Assessing the Issues*, Melbourne: Centre for Migrant and Intercultural Studies, Monash University.
- <sup>33</sup> In Jayasuriya (1992); (2000) *op cit*.
- <sup>34</sup> Martin (1971) *op cit*.
- <sup>35</sup> See R Skeldon (1998). 'From Multiculturalism to Diaspora: Changing Identities in the Context of Asian Migration'. In E Laquain *et al* (eds). *The Silent Debate: Asian Immigration and Racism in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, for a similar situation that has arisen in the context of Canadian multiculturalism.
- <sup>36</sup> Blainey, G (1984). *All for Australia?* Melbourne: Methuen Hayes.
- <sup>37</sup> Jayasuriya (2000) *op cit*.
- <sup>38</sup> See WA Government Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) website, [www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi) Charter for details.
- <sup>39</sup> Taylor, C *et al* (1992). *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- <sup>40</sup> Habermas (1994) *op cit*. 198-99.
- <sup>41</sup> Ignatieff, M (1993). *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*. New London: ABC Books.
- <sup>42</sup> Macgregor, D *et al* (2004). *Imagining Australia: Ideas for the Future*. Sydney; Allen & Unwin.
- <sup>43</sup> Jayasuriya, L (1991). 'State, Nation and Diversity in Australia'. *Current Affairs Bulletin* 66, 6.
- <sup>44</sup> Jayasuriya, L (2003). 'Fin de Siècle'. In L Jayasuriya, D Walker & J Gothard (eds) (2003). *Legacies of White Australia: Race Culture and Nation*. Perth: University of WA Press.
- <sup>45</sup> Miller, D (1995). 'Citizenship and Pluralism'. *Political Studies* 23.
- <sup>46</sup> Charlesworth, H (2002). *Writing in Rights: Australia and the Protection of Human Rights*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

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- <sup>47</sup> Jayasuriya, L (2002). 'Taking Rights Seriously in Australia'. *Dialogue 21, 3*.  
<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>49</sup> Martin (1971) *op cit.*



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