

AFTERWORD: BEYOND COSMOPOLITANISM: HUMANITY'S EVOLUTIONARY IMPERATIVE!

Marcus Bussey

There is certainly a cosmopolitan horizon for our planet—but this horizon, like all horizons, moves as we move, dancing with us as we journey towards our goal, always slipping out of reach yet calling us to strive. Each struggle to move towards a cosmopolitan life way is instructive in that it indicates the power of the cosmopolitan calling, but also the multiplicity of ways in which cosmopolitanism can be expressed. This book is a testament to that multiplicity covering as it does such a diverse and rich territory. It comes as an invitation to pursue the cosmopolitical stance in our intellectual and political struggles whilst grounding that task in the embodied processes of identity work, the forging of a somatic cosmopolitan being.

This book says to me: we all have our traditions of thought, our cultural and intellectual compasses, we are all journeying towards a seemingly shared cosmopolitical horizon yet the pathways lead to no one, unitary (dare I say utopian) terminus. Instead it is the journey that counts, and the *Beyond*, couched so skilfully in the title as a challenge, promises us a release from the rhetoric of the cosmopolitan discourses so heavily embedded in

M. Bussey
Creative Humanity's Centre, University of the Sunshine Coast,
Sippy Downs, QLD, 4556, Australia

Western aesthetic and ethical tradition. But the intention is not to sweep these indigenous (to the West) traditions aside but to expand them into dialogues across traditions and histories.

We find in these pages a series of cosmopolitan categories in which being, meaning and purpose are constructed through each writer's epistemological and ontological traditions. Put together, they call forth a soft synthetic epistemology and ontology of engagement. Here we have the beginnings of a new conversation in which love and relational being come to the fore in various ways. The *polis* is stretched and indeed broken apart, for what does it mean to be a citizen of the world? And how can we meet in the agora and speak on the part of the voiceless? How do we cross, what Habermas (2003: 103) has called, the 'rift of speechlessness' that silences us in the face of the mounting tensions between and within communities today? In all this, the *anthropos* implied by traditional cosmopolitical thought is itself a limit to the *cosmopolis* that seems increasingly fragile. Our little global village is struggling to fulfil the possibilities and responsibilities inherent to that image of the 'Blue Marble' supplied in the iconic 1972 photograph of the Earth from space. Later images have told ever more wonderful stories of *our planet* in a cosmos of dancing forms. What are we to make of this 'our planet' narrative? Is it not also the planet itself and all sentient members of the global family that we need to factor in to a new sense of cosmopolitan belonging?

So, the writers in this volume challenge us to think beyond our categories and consider new forms of the human contract. The current contract is bankrupt. It calls for a war on the other. It is born of our fears and our historical partnership with violence that is the foundation stone of civilisation. A planetary civilisation has no need for violence. The new contract is premised on a new humanity that is relational in nature. As Thomas Berry noted: 'We cannot discover ourselves without first discovering the universe, the earth, and the imperatives of our own being' (1990: 195). The cosmopolitical engagement being explored in this book is a provocation to go beyond. In these pages, we find a group of thinkers wrestling with the issue Berry points to: Who are we? What are we to become? This is a work of the heart that calls for a holistic sense of self in community.

If our planet is to be a site for a *global engagement with Being* premised on relationship and its co-creative possibilities, then the call of cosmopolitanism and beyond and beyond cosmopolitanism—the title of the book—cannot be ignored. I for one see this call writ large as **Humanity's Evolutionary Imperative!** Rethinking cosmopolitanism is a prerequisite

for any decent planetary future. It is perfectly understandable that we as individuals, communities and even a species are confused and stressed. A lot is happening. Yet many are doing the work needed for this new contract and covenant. We are opening our hearts, taking the risks in thinking and relating, and investing in expanded visions of humanity as a member of larger stories. This all involves broader, deeper conversations, a reflective stance that listens and is open to alternatives (plural not singular and closed) beyond business as usual. It also requires us to look to our planetary context, the earth, as a sacred site from which real cosmopolitical engagement can emerge. *This of course is a new kind of work.* It is as exciting as it is necessary. Thomas Berry (ibid.) was pointing to this new horizon of the possible when he noted:

[...] we need to go to the earth, as the source whence we came, and ask for its guidance, for the earth carries the psychic structure as well as the physical form of every living being upon the planet. Our confusion is not only within ourselves; it concerns our role in the planetary community. Even beyond the earth, we need to go to the universe and inquire concerning the basic issues of reality and value, for, even more than the earth, the universe carries the deep mysteries of our existence within it.

Giri and his colleagues are all in their unique ways engaged in this task; they are all fellow travellers doing the work of bridge building that will enable humanity to cross the rift of speechlessness that threatens to quell human cultural creativity and stifle the yearning for relationship that is an innate human capacity. I see this new book *Beyond Cosmopolitanism* as an offering in the service of the emergent planetary consciousness that will underwrite a new human contract and covenant that draws its strength not on any unitary cosmopolitan vision but on a commitment to the beauty and generosity of diversity and a sense that we can affect the changes necessary to fulfil this promise.

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