Since the Enlightenment, cosmopolitanism has represented itself as a form of moral and legal universalism that is culture transcendent. In its most recent iteration, having acknowledged the fact of cultural pluralism, cosmopolitanism now presents itself far more modestly, as a difference-sensitive and pluralism-responsive reworking of moral universalism. Rather than presuming already to possess the transhistorical and transcultural standards by which all human practices and institutions are to be judged, the "new cosmopolitanism" offers to engage in genuine dialogue with others and the Other, while remaining critically vigilant of any form of attachment or belonging. According to its adherents, this more "rooted" cosmopolitanism is the best way to make sense of, and to meet the complex demands of living with, cultural pluralism.

In this paper I show how the "new cosmopolitanism" is as ambivalent about culture and cultural pluralism as it is parasitical upon them. I will argue that it has not released itself from a suspicious view of culture and pluralism that arises from a skewed and inadequate conception of them. Finally, I will suggest a very different way to conceive of culture (as both identical and non-identical with itself) and different way of understanding the challenges and opportunities of pluralism.

Nikolas Kompridis is a Professorial Fellow in the Centre for Citizenship and Public Policy at UWS. He is the author of a number of books, including the edited volume, The Political Economy of Australian Cultural Policy. The author will give a thumbnail sketch of the various researchers and media discsourses about Australian cultural policy continued to be dominated by discussions of funding for performing arts institutions, while and media discourses about Australian cultural policy continued to be dominated by discussions of funding for performing arts institutions, while

The political economy of Australian cultural policy

Drawing on the work of Vincent Mosco and other members of the political economy of communication school, this seminar examines some of the current issues in Australian cultural policy from the perspective of political economy. The author will give a thumbnail sketch of the various researchers and research programs that study Australian cultural policy. Why have public and media discourses about Australian cultural policy continued to be dominated by discussions of funding for performing arts institutions, while largely ignoring broader questions about media concentration, innovation policy, copyright law and the National Broadband Network? It will be argued that a political economy approach allows a number of disparate policy concerns to be examined synthetically and coherently from a position outside of the typical neoclassical position adopted by Australian public policymakers. Finally, in the spirit of political economy, the author’s own social and cultural activism will be briefly detailed, in particular his call to abolish the Australia Council for the Arts.

Ben Eltham is a researcher, writer, journalist and creative producer. His most recent publication was a chapter for the Centre for Policy Development’s book More Than Luck: Ideas Australia needs now. This chapter, “Cultural policy in Australia”, co-written with Marcus Westbury, argues that Australia’s fragmented cultural policy needs to move beyond its ‘funding paradigm’. Ben trained to postgraduate level in neuroscience and philosophy at the University of Queensland before spending the next decade devoted to his love for culture and the arts. Ben has worked as a producer at a number of arts festivals including This is Not Art, Straight Out of Brisbane (where he was the founding director), Melbourne Fringe, Brisbane Festival and Adelaide Fringe. From 2001-2006 he was the Courier-Mail’s arts and theatre critic, and he continues to write regularly about Australian politics, arts and culture for publications including the ABC’s The Drum/Unleashed, Meanjin Quarterly, Overland, Inside Story, Art Monthly Australia, Artlink and Australian Book Review. Ben is currently NewMediaU’s National Affairs Correspondent and Crikey.com.au’s arts columnist. Ben is currently completing his PhD at the University of Western Sydney’s Centre for Cultural Research.

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