

Cosmopolitan Sentiments After 9-11? Trauma and the Politics of Vulnerability

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The paper provides a critical analysis of the possibility of a cosmopolitan response to traumatic events like 9-11. While cosmopolitan sentiments are celebrated for highlighting the question of vulnerability, it is argued that such questions are always-already rendered according to practices of governance that are ethically and politically problematic. In this sense, the paper explores what it calls the 'politics of vulnerability' via a critical engagement with David Held's version of cosmopolitan democracy, followed by a problematisation of psychological structures of knowledge about trauma. Beyond the tranquilising effects of universal norms and/or the scientific certainty of trauma counselling, the paper makes the case for developing an acute empirical politics of the subjects of trauma. Ultimately, this argument does not then turn into a rejection of cosmopolitan democracy, so much as a call for its further politicisation and continuous engagement.

Introduction¹

In the aftermath of 9-11 there ensued a battle for meaning over what had happened, its political significance, and how to respond (Devetak, 2005; Zehfuss, 2003). Protagonists and critics of the War on Terror were united in their assessment that 9-11 marked a traumatic event: many people, 'innocents', died in a horrific and largely uncontrollable fashion (Edkins, 2002). While some sought to honour the feelings and memory of those people with an aggressive display of (hyper) security, bent on lashing out, punishing, and asserting power in the face of vulnerability, others had a different take. Many, adopting a broadly cosmopolitan sentiment, sought to 'use' 9-11 to reflect upon the meaning of vulnerability, and how it reaches into many more lives than were taken that day. On this view, a key question was how to respond to and build sympathy in order to deal with wide-spread vulnerability to suffering (Brassett, 2008).

This cosmopolitan sentiment was common across a range of positions including, for example Andrew Linklater (2002) who argued that 9-11 provides an

opportunity to think through how we are all, in a sense, vulnerable to ‘unnecessary’ human suffering. Likewise, Judith Butler (2004) suggested that 9-11 could be seen as an opportunity to engage a ‘politics of mourning’ where life and grief, and specifically the question of whose lives are grieve-able could be seen a way of finding a point of identification with suffering itself. Further, the importance of the ethico-political question of vulnerability, was evidenced in the reactions of diverse theorists in including Daniele Archibugi, Jacques Derrida, David Held, Maja Zehfuss; journalist/authors such as Martin Amis, and artist/film makers such as Oliver Stone. Even Chris Brown (2002), so often measured to the point of critique in his assessment of cosmopolitanism, saw fit to endorse global justice as ‘still’ the right thing to do after 9-11.

In making this point I do not intend to assert some artificial unity of purpose or common standard of ethics among these authors. The differences between such approaches are clearly politically and ethically salient and for a number of reasons. Moreover, as will be argued, the initial recognition was merely an opportunity (only partly taken) to engage with what I call the ‘politics of vulnerability’. In this sense, it is suggested, initial sentiments to understand and engage with vulnerability may well be a common and important ethico-political question. However, in straightforward terms, such sentiments only become politically manifest in and through governmental responses. That is to say, ethics is not some removed scholastic or spiritual realm of thought or consideration, but, rather, an embodied social practice that should be understood and engaged via the political question of how we govern. While sympathetic to initial cosmopolitan sentiments, then, this paper seeks to engage with a critical questioning of how they play out – *and how they might play out differently* - in political processes of global governance.

This question is addressed in three sections. Section 1 provides a critique of David Held’s version of cosmopolitan democracy as a response to 9-11.² The cosmopolitan agenda to provide some combination of global justice, democracy and inclusion, while important, arguably reduces questions of vulnerability to an instrumental and de-politicised logic – (i.e. justice and inclusion will tranquilise grievance and opposition to global violence) - that fails to reflect upon the tensions and disagreements within the much heralded ‘global communities of fate’. Thus, it is argued, we need to question the politics of cosmopolitan democracy, specifically, to understand what different people within Held’s ‘communities of fate’ actually think and argue for. It is suggested that too much in Held’s schema is afforded to the elision of an unquestioned global scale with a universal normative foundation of individual liberty. This elision brackets out - and ultimately defers - the political tensions and contests within global communities of fate that might better be seen as

the 'real stuff' of global democracy.³

Section 2 develops this point by suggesting that traumatic events like 9-11 present a special set of challenges for grounding an ethical response – cosmopolitan or otherwise. Taking forward Held's problematic constituency I ask whether vulnerability to trauma can be seen as a basis for a 'community of fate'. Does the experience of traumatic events foster solidarity in the face of vulnerability? While some arguments posit increased levels of altruism in trauma affected communities (Solnit, 2009), others suggest division and hostility. Indeed, one must remember that while there was much international solidarity with those affected by 9-11, there was equally celebration in some quarters. Moreover, as Jenny Edkins (2003) suggests, the traumatic memories of communities are ripe for exploitation and subjection through the workings of sovereign power. On this view, much of the solidarity towards the affected of 9-11 was equally and at the same time concerned with affirming a state-centric ontology of global politics; standing 'shoulder to shoulder' with the US was clearly a precursor to the successful construction of a 'coalition of the willing'.

In the absence of a clear foundation in the affected communities of trauma, it is questioned whether we might pay more attention to the governance of trauma via psychological knowledge about individuals? In this sense, while I share Held's concern with the network-centrism of global governance I am also concerned with the *types of knowledge* that function within such networks; knowledge that is constitutive of certain political possibilities and limits. In short, while a traumatic event like 9-11 may open up new spaces for thinking and doing the politics of global ethics, a critical approach must remain sensitive to the ways in which new possibilities are always-already limited in certain respects. Trauma is limited in its mediation by psychological knowledge. While laudable in many ways, particularly for turning attention to the actual subjects of trauma, i.e. the individuals affected, it is argued that existing psychological knowledge operating via networks of humanitarian development has produced a problematic consensus on trauma. In common with existing critical approaches to such 'therapeutic governance' (Pupavac, 2001) I question the reduction of trauma and vulnerability to a technology of sympathy that 1) de-politicises the subject/event via the treatment of all concerned as 'mere victims' 2) re-ifies particular norms of correct emotional behaviour via the generalisation of rationalities such as 'Cognitive Behavioural Therapy' (CBT) and 3) subsequently labels trauma survivors as either 'helpless' or (ironically) 'potential threats' to the security of themselves or others (Aradau, 2008). Such technology is (potentially) a deferral of the politics of vulnerability.

Thus finally, Section 3 questions whether and how we might better understand and engage trauma and vulnerability from a cosmopolitan perspective? When trauma and global governance is problematised in the manner suggested, I argue, the key question that emerges is how we move from a technology of sympathy to a

politics of empathy that emplaces trauma – and the subjects of trauma - as the key ethico-political question? Trauma is problematic and contingent. While mechanisms of global governance are emerging to address terrorist attacks, the effects of war, natural disasters, and so on, from a critical perspective the operation of these mechanisms is itself constitutive of understandings of trauma. This constitution can be problematic, unstable and/or progressive and it can involve an array of political subjects including counsellors, survivors, lawyers, and the media. Therefore, we must adapt to the suggestion of cosmopolitanism that the extant politics of vulnerability is happening in particular sites of ‘global governance’: understood to include institutions, networks, and media, but also knowledge about trauma counselling, the trauma profession and the survivor groups that contest the meaning of their own trauma often years after the ‘event’. Such a complex schema may swing against the ‘will to management’ in contemporary discourses of global governance. In ethico-political terms, however, it is essential for understanding how we come to ‘know’ what trauma is, and how we might politicise such knowledge in order to realise new ethical possibilities perhaps, but not necessarily, in line with cosmopolitanism.

In short, while cosmopolitan sentiments may ask good questions, the development of ‘answers’ should rely on better understandings of the interaction between modalities of becoming (knowledge about trauma) and the individual sites/subjects of production (counsellors, survivors, media, etc.) that make up the ‘politics of vulnerability’. This is a task for research, but it is also an invitation to engage with and reform policies of trauma governance that are more clearly the concern of practitioners and survivors. Ultimately, this argument does not then turn into a rejection of cosmopolitan democracy, so much as a call for its further politicisation and continuous engagement (Brassett, 2010).

1. Cosmopolitan democracy as a response to 9-11

What resources exist within the cosmopolitan paradigm for responding to 9-11? The question is important because cosmopolitan authors positioned themselves as progenitors of a critical and progressive alternative to discourses of a War on Terror (Archibugi, 2001; Held and McGrew, 2007). This section will first identify the relationship between cosmopolitanism and trauma before questioning the normative framework of cosmopolitan democracy – especially its location within systems of global governance – to suggest how it may silence far more than it raises in relation to trauma and vulnerability. In short, laudable cosmopolitan sentiments may be subsumed within a project of cosmopolitanism that closes down consideration of ‘vulnerability’.

Trauma, in the modern therapeutic sense, is used to refer to the experience of an event where our life, or the life of someone close to us, is threatened, where we have no control over what is happening, and where basic feelings of security are put in fundamental question. Many trauma sufferers have trouble dealing with the event and will either repress the memory or strongly dissociate from the feelings of vulnerability associated with it, using guilt, anger, or radical hope as a way of 'using' the event in the life continued. As Jenny Edkins argues, "Trauma is very much to do with the fact of survival in the face of death. The repetition that takes place in the dreams of trauma sufferers is not so much an attempt to make sense of the trauma itself, but an attempt to come to terms with the fact of survival." And on a societal level she says

In our everyday lives, we prefer to forget our vulnerability. We pretend that it is possible to be completely secure and safe. Death is an accident or a failure, something that could be avoided with better protection or better systems of healthcare. If there appears to be some threat to this security, people immediately look for ways to make themselves feel secure again. (2002, p. 247)

On this view, 9-11 can be seen as a significant event for cosmopolitan ethics because it brings the issue of vulnerability to the centre of America and Europe. Television images of planes crashing into buildings, people jumping from buildings, the shocked faces of passers-by and the strange looking cloud of smoke that engulfed the city do not, to say the least, tally with our generalised expectations of normal life. The question that arises is: how does cosmopolitanism address the trauma of 9-11? And, perhaps more critically, how does the ethical subject of cosmopolitanism – the reflexive and tolerant individual – articulate such reflexivity and tolerance if they are, to some extent at least, traumatised?⁴

On one level, it can be argued that cosmopolitan responses to 9-11 *are* sensitive to trauma, there has been a clear focus on the loss of life; the indiscriminate use of violence highlighted must in some sense focus our minds upon vulnerability. Indeed, recent attempts to incorporate the 'human security' paradigm into global governance are some recognition of the all pervasiveness of vulnerability. Likewise, as considered elsewhere cosmopolitan principles of global justice and the much vaunted agency of global civil society in movements such as the Make Poverty History Campaign clearly follow through on Linklater's invitation to think through how we might understand and address vulnerability to human suffering (Brassett, 2008).

On another level, however, there is a danger that cosmopolitanism might efface the politics of the trauma of 9-11 via a simple narrative of global hope: hope that we can learn, hope that we can improve, hope that we can make the world a

better place. Of course, such narratives are important at any time, but as a response to trauma they perhaps overshadow the experience and politics of trauma in a manner commensurate with repression. The point being that when faced with existential questions about 'our own' vulnerability we respond with models of global utopias to export to 'others'. On the argument of Judith Butler we perhaps do 'the others' and ourselves a disservice by failing to focus on the ethics and politics of mourning.

Cosmopolitan democratic responses to 9-11 re-affirm the moral attractiveness of the reflexive individual who – at their best – is not only tolerant and sensitive to suffering, but is also, able “to reason from the point of view of others”, indeed such people are “better equipped to resolve, and resolve fairly, the challenging transboundary issues that create overlapping communities of fate” (Held and McGrew, 2007, p. 41). Such reflexivity, such doubt and sensitivity to the potential suffering of others is, no doubt, an attractive ethical quality. This is especially so in light of the common charge against cosmopolitans that they impose a violent subjectivity upon the non-Eurocentric 'other'. But, in light of the fact of 9-11 as a traumatic event, is it possible that the violence might also be inner directed? The model of the rational, internally balanced individual – as both capable of understanding their own contingencies and thinking from the point of view of others – is, to say the least, a tall order for *everyone* to achieve. In short, how can we reason from the point of view of others when we may have the far larger problem of reasoning from the point of view of ourselves?

While this may seem a relatively straightforward point to respond to, perhaps requiring a few caveats and provisos, I would suggest that such assumptions serve as a foundation for the unquestionably grander edifice of cosmopolitan global governance. Addressing the 'global' in cosmopolitan democracy is itself a matter of unpicking how the 'model' is fundamentally tied to a normative conception of ethics and ethical agency. Held writes

The anticipation of autonomy for each and all constitutes a regulative idea – an idea which has guided conflicts over the institutionalization of democracy. It is an idea, moreover which has provided a normative standard which could be turned against existing institutions, as it has been by the working class, feminist, anti-racist and anti-colonial activists, to reveal the extent to which the principles and aspirations of equal liberty and equal political participation remain unfulfilled. (1995, p. 71).

And for cosmopolitans, the prime target of such a regulative idea is global governance; a state-centric political system is gradually replaced by a form of

"heterarchy – a divided authority system – in which states seek to share the task of governance with a complex array of institutions, public and private, local, regional, transnational and global representing the emergence of 'overlapping communities of fate'" (Held and McGrew, 1998, p. 221).

Cosmopolitan democracy is therefore 'global' because it undermines appeals to fixed, territorial political communities associated with nation states. Instead it identifies numerous and overlapping communities of fate that now exist in a supra-territorial context. And cosmopolitans seek to re-imagine the political basis of democracy by subjecting this complex global context to the normative principle of autonomy. This leads to various avenues including global institutional reforms to promote accountability and inclusion, increased recognition of the potential contribution of global civil society, and a cosmopolitan legal order.

Three inter-related critical points can be made. First, cosmopolitan democracy ultimately hinges on a comprehensive conception of values - liberty & equality – which are extended to all people, everywhere. An apparently complex and contingent global scale is thus rendered to a pre-determined normative logic. Second, and drawing from critical IPE, globalisation should itself be understood as a constitutive discourse which engenders certain attitudes and logics. As such, when those attitudes or logics are either unquestionably accepted or, rendered according to a particular normative position of advocacy then it immediately pushes the question: *how do these new positions relate to, and converse with, all those people who don't accept or agree with the discourse as it is constructed in the first place?* And finally, quite simply, where is the 'politics' in democratic global governance? Global governance appears as an institutional embodiment of a set of shifts in the spatial organisation of modern life. 'Politics' in the sense of the open and acknowledged contest and contestability of that 'life' appear somewhat peripheral. The crucial challenge is the 'issues' of newly emergent global communities. While this clearly contests the 'old' frame of IR and political theory, such a contest arguably works to consolidate, rather than question, the founding assumptions of cosmopolitanism. Moreover, seeking to 'represent' diverse 'communities of fate' within global governance does not address the instabilities, tensions, and political dissonances *between* and *within* those communities.

Within the complex array of groups and actors within global civil society we are essentially dealing with the issue of diversity and disagreement. Thus, for some, politics in the context of global governance might mean supporting a project of de-globalisation, or, in the case of terrorism, it could actually (and counter intuitively for some) involve supporting the overthrow of America or Western society. Despite the claims to openness and inclusion, there is a sense of irreconcilability about how to be both global and democratic when 'anti-global' or 'localising' sentiments might best describe the attitudes of many of those included.

The relevance of this democratic critique of cosmopolitan democracy can be seen when we try to engage with what might be called the 'global traumatic stress community'. If a response to trauma is important for cosmopolitan authors, then surely the voices of the traumatised is an important site of potential commonality? Indeed this is an argument that has received more or less optimistic endorsements in the work of Andrew Linklater and Judith Butler. More located arguments have focused on the regenerative capacity of communities in the wake of disasters. Solnit (2009) even argues that the 'normal' response of communities in the wake of major disasters is altruism. However, I want to argue that such identifications are problematic at best and – in line with the work of Jenny Edkins – either naïve about or *actively contributory towards* a totalising logic of sovereign power.

On the one hand, attitudes towards trauma are simply not 'always' uniting and can actually lead to divisive and alienating responses. This common sense of the literature on trauma can no doubt be over done, but it does at least suggest rather less agreement on our global togetherness than might be gleaned from Held's schema. On the other hand, feelings of trauma, when experienced on a mass level are apt for manipulation, can be structured by power and can feed larger antagonisms. In short, vulnerability to trauma fits only ambivalently with the notion of cosmopolitan 'communities of fate'. While we may feel sympathy for the suffering of the vulnerable, others, including those who celebrated and danced after the September 11th attacks, may not. Likewise, while survivors and their associates may identify with each other, such identification may skew along exclusively state or parochial lines, even before discussions of affirming sovereign authority in the face of insecurity begin. I therefore suggest that there is no 'natural kind' at work in trauma (Young, 1995), it neither naturally divides nor unites, but is a subject of governance and, therefore, politics.

2. Governing trauma (or the trauma of governance)

As Jenny Edkins (2002) argues the memorialisation of 9-11 marked an important limit on the politics of vulnerability. The inner directed morbidity of terrorist fallout was conjoined to the myth of the nation-protector, mourning in such a way as to produce resolve. For some the resolve was to revenge, for others it was to survive in peace. But both projects accepted the initial construction that security could be provided on a national basis, that vulnerability could be overcome, as it were. Clearly, this move was not complete. The climate of fear in the US and Western states in subsequent years was a clear embodiment of the stressful reactions to vulnerability that were being felt. But they were all subject to a national rendition, a narrative of collective security for existence. What is perhaps less addressed in this

schema of sovereign power is the way that individual experiences of trauma are actually governed, and how that form of governance at once de-politicises and globalises. Trauma itself becomes 'known', global.

Returning to the question of a cosmopolitan response to traumatic events like 9-11, my proposition is that it is not enough to simply assert the existence of transnational networks that can be rendered to certain global 'communities of fate'. This is, no doubt an elliptical and promising line of thought that immediately both questions to veracity of the nation state as the repository of community and politics and provides some 'stuff' for the often nebulous third person of global civil society in cosmopolitan discourse. However, from a critical perspective we also need to take time to think through, examine and question the types of knowledge that operate within – and act to constitute - such 'networks'. My suggestion is that we need to combine a cosmopolitan awareness of the global context of traumatic events – and especially the suggestion that we all share a susceptibility to vulnerability – with a critical questioning of knowledge about trauma. The global governance of trauma is not simply a case of providing effective responses, neither is it a cosmopolitan variant of all happily coming together in mutual understanding of our collective vulnerability, but rather of emplacing vulnerability itself as the key ethico-political question. In order to do this, an appreciation of the way in which trauma is known/produced is crucial.

Trauma, in the modern therapeutic sense, has been subsumed within a technical structure of psychological knowledge concerned with the pathological effects on individuals. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was accepted in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) within DSM-IV in 1994. DSM IV criteria involve some combination of the following symptoms: 'Re-experiencing Phenomena' including intrusive memories, dreams, and physiological/psychological distress to cues, acting/feeling as if events are recurring; 'Avoidance and Numbing' including avoidance of thoughts, feelings, reminders, amnesia, reduced affect; and 'Increased Arousal' sleep difficulty, irritability or outbursts of anger, hyper vigilance, exaggerated startle response and difficulty concentrating (Bisson, 2007, p. 399). Since this relatively recent legitimisation in the psychological knowledge, PTSD has become widely acknowledged as a key psychological risk factor for people who experience major disasters, terrorist attacks, car accidents, sexual abuse, and so on. Estimates suggest that 60% of the population will experience something in the range of potentially traumatic events during their life. Although it is widely acknowledged that only a very small proportion of people who experience traumatic events will go on to develop PTSD.

Despite the relatively recent arrival on the scene of trauma and PTSD as therapeutic norms, the growth of trauma counselling as a profession has been

astronomical. While techniques are always evolving, various combinations of CBT, Eye Movement Desensitization therapy and prescribed drugs have become common and acceptable responses (NICE, 2005). Survivors of 9-11 were attended to by teams of psychologists on the day. In common with many recent disasters, people received post-trauma interventions like Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) or Psychological De-Briefing (PD). The aim of such interventions is to monitor and 'prevent' the onset of post-traumatic stress reactions. Medical evidence for the effectiveness of such interventions is, at best mixed, and at worst, negative, owing to the potential for producing 're-traumatisation', via the perception that survivors are being asked to re-live the event against their wishes. Indeed, PD has been a major source of critical debate within the trauma counselling profession in recent years (See Rose et al. 2005).

As this last point suggests, knowledge about trauma and how to respond is constantly evolving within the psychological community. But this ambiguity has not prevented the growth and spread of knowledge about PTSD or the expansion of systems for addressing major disasters in terms of psychological, rather than say, medical or social welfare criteria. Indeed, a number of critical scholars have pointed out the problematic aspects of the rapid and questionable globalisation of such knowledge/practices. Pupavac (2001) questions the widespread turn to consider development and peacekeeping in terms of the 'emotionology of therapeutic governance'. Aradau (2009) notes how refugees, in particular, trafficked women, are subjected to diagnoses of PTSD and asked to submit to counselling as a condition for receiving social support. Likewise, Mark Fowle (2009) recounts how peacekeeping organisations in Vukovar sometimes make submission to counselling a condition of joining.

The suggestion is that the global governance of trauma is dominated by a technology of sympathy that draws impetus from disastrous moments and then simply 'turns on' the therapeutic governance machine. Given the timeline, it might be tempting to suggest a straightforward narrative of PTSD in the US being rendered down to provide a technological account of the 'emotionally competent individual' of CBT that is then exported across the world. Indeed, this is a position that many have adopted in light of the evangelical zeal of some PTSD 'campaigners'. Likewise, as Pupavac suggests, the knowledge fits very easily into meta-narratives of our time that involve dislocation, problem-solving and medicalisation as central parts of a general malaise.

While sympathetic to such critical arguments, I would like to suggest a slightly different approach that draws upon the ongoing interactions between/within knowledge about trauma and the subjects concerned, including counsellors and survivors, as well as the institutions that support them. Straight

arguments that trauma knowledge is de-politicising or productive of 'victims', while certainly engaging, may miss the potential for and practice of politics in these new modalities. Indeed, as Didier Fassin (2008, p. 534) argues, "humanitarian psychiatry is itself another instance of power that,...., prescribes a certain discourse: its compassion for trauma produces a particular form of subjectification that is imposed on individuals, but through which they can also exist politically." On this view, while the knowledge and practice of trauma governance is clearly problematic, we cannot ignore the ways in which the subjects it produces – the counsellors and the survivors – are always-already capable of further production. For Fassin this involves the potential for humanitarian psychology to serve as a critique of violence, that by narrating experiences in terms of trauma we can (albeit problematically) open a window upon the inequalities and injustices of conflict. Likewise, I suggest that trauma can be instructive for thinking about the ethics of global governance.

My suggestion is that the experience of vulnerability associated with trauma might actually cut directly 'against' attempts to technologise global governance according to therapeutic knowledge. Against practices of therapeutic governance that 'level down', in a sense, rendering trauma as a common event with a common solution, I suggest the opposite. Trauma has power over individuals precisely because it is unknowable, it cannot be put into words. Each experience of trauma is a singularity. Each attempt (by counsellors or others) to let individuals come to terms with trauma is equally so. In this sense, vulnerability is not something that can be 'known', 'responded to', or 'governed'. Sympathy may be an appropriate emotion for generating resources and driving processes, but empathy might say more? Empathy at least suggests our own vulnerability is part of the story, that attempts to 'respond' through global governance are equally attempts to create a distance from our own vulnerability. Reversing an earlier construction, the global is writ individual, a sop to our own existential fragility.

3. Engaging the Politics of Vulnerability

To unpack the progress of this argument, cosmopolitan sentiments in the wake of 9-11 sought to turn our attention to vulnerability. Drawing from the work of David Held, it was suggested that the move to mediate global vulnerability via community based responses was promising but limited (and further that it exposed certain contradictions between the universal and the democratic in Held). The first limit is that trauma can provoke a range of responses, some uniting, some divisive that play out on a mass level in a politically mediated and contested manner. The second limit is that building this global community of vulnerability in relation to traumatic events is currently heavily and performatively influenced by psychological knowledge about trauma. To wit, cosmopolitan networks are only one part of the puzzle and a critical

appraisal of the constitutive powers of knowledge operating within such networks is crucial. However, identifying the limits of cosmopolitan sentiments in this way is not a move to reject, but rather to politicise and engage. That traumatic communities are problematic does not imply that they are unimportant. And recognising the constitutive power of knowledge does not imply that the subjects produced are unable to produce themselves in different ways. The point is that a cosmopolitan democratic response has to caution itself against 'imposing' an ethics – reflexive or otherwise – since (traumatic) subjects are in a process of becoming that can produce its own ethics. This bottom up production of cosmopolitanism is a complex and ambiguous subject that requires a pragmatic turn to context and engagement (Brassett, 2010).

This final section will now draw these points together in a discussion of what it terms the politics of vulnerability. Having problematised the idea that there is either a 'natural kind' response to trauma (e.g. altruistic, divisive, etc.), or, that the subject of trauma can be tranquilised (beyond politics) via the deployment of psychological knowledge/practice, the task is instead to 'hear' the subjects of trauma and vulnerability. In short, both cosmopolitan democracy and psychological knowledge about trauma assume that the governance of vulnerability will be a one way process: top down problem solving. My argument is that trauma and traumatic events are intensely political *and politicising* in a way that might problematise and go beyond existing constructions of cosmopolitan ethics.⁵

Perhaps oversimplifying there is something about the dry constructions of cosmopolitanism, global governance, and indeed trauma counselling that portrays global ethics in a universal manner that overlooks the continued and changing significance of us/them dichotomies. On the one hand, critically speaking, I have suggested that 'we', in fact, *need* the (discussion of the) global governance of traumatic events in order to provide ourselves with some distance from our own vulnerability. It is simply heartening for those unaffected to hear that there are mechanisms of response in place: it re-assures us of our preparedness, resilience and civilisation. On the other hand, more constructively, it may be that by engaging such critical questions we might be better able to hear the voices of those who experience trauma? Once we move from a technology of sympathy to open up empathy as an important (though problematic) question, we press the idea that we currently lack an ability to hear and understand the voices of the vulnerable. Currently the voices of survivors are rendered to the logics of legal compensation, truth commissions, baring witness and memorialisation. My suggestion is that beyond these important, but predictable, responses there are ongoing discussions of what it means to live with vulnerability, what it means to live with others and ourselves.

Vulnerability is at the heart of ethical impulses to protect and to care for

suffering yet there are remarkably few examples of a positive definition of what vulnerability might mean. Trauma, especially in the modern therapeutic sense, carries a number of positive definitional qualities relating the nature and emotional experience of events where lives – our own or others – are threatened. While these positive definitions are clearly contested and contestable, not least because of their re-ification of particular understandings of the ‘normal’, emotionally competent, individual-as-subject, such knowledge nevertheless requires engagement and where necessary contest. It is not enough to simply write off such rationalities as discourses of power, or meta-narratives of our time. Rather we need to see how such rationalities are perpetuated, with what effects, and how might they be changed (or in a process of changing). As the previous section argued, drawing on Fassin, the commonplace (indeed normalised) use of trauma counselling in everyday situations of trauma and traumatic events has rendered countless subjects in particular ways. By focusing on these subjects, how they contest the meaning of their experiences, we might ‘learn from’, rather than simply ‘respond to’ vulnerability.

Connecting these points together, there are remarkably few attempts to engage the vulnerable in the discussion of what trauma might mean. Global ethics, as an academic discourse, has been more comfortable to either assume a basic common standard of suffering, i.e. levelling pain, loss, death, starvation, homelessness, rape, violence, etc. – or to proceed in less affirmative terms, engaging narratives of suffering as a means to open up our consciences to such concerns (Rorty, 1998). I suggest that the contemporary politics of trauma represents fertile ground to productively engage with the ethico-political question of vulnerability. Firstly, vulnerability is something we are all susceptible to. While Richard Rorty (1998) talks about sympathy, for instance, the existential nature of vulnerability ‘might’ allow for the identification and nurturing of empathy as a more appropriate/powerful ethical sentiment. And secondly, beneath the technocratic veil of ‘traumatology’ and, indeed, terms like trauma victim/survivor there are individuals and groups with lived experiences, biographies, moral webs and so forth. In my view, the politics of vulnerability works as both ethical concern for the development of empathy but also (or through) an acute empirical politics involving trauma counsellors, survivors and, furthermore, all those involved in the production of knowledge about trauma.

One example of this more located concern is that survivors actively contest the contours of their own experiences in the process of organisation, through counselling, and in the kinds of work they go on to do in their ‘post-traumatic lives’. For instance, one survivor from the Marchioness Boat disaster was moved to develop a career photographing survivors of the Rwandan genocide as part of his exploration of the politics of memorialisation. Developing from this and other empirical examples, the subjects of trauma, and the individual who experiences the event, may hold within them important resources for thinking about global ethics?

The value of this argument is that it simultaneously circumvents the twin flaws of 'ignorance' or 'victimisation' in relation to subjects of trauma. Each of these flaws in the global governance of trauma is clearly problematic and indeed potentially counterproductive to the ethical cause of understanding or feeling empathy for vulnerability. But each flaw is born of the same issue, which is a failure to include the voices of the subjects concerned in the (political) negotiation of meaning associated with the global governance of trauma. By including the subjects of trauma more centrally I follow the cosmopolitans in calling for a more democratic approach. This is not the democracy of voting and elections. Rather it is the democracy of engagement, where people are included in the negotiation of meanings that affect their lives. This might be in the way that particular experts in the trauma counselling community contest expert knowledge about what trauma is or who should respond to it. For instance, the clinical psychologist Jon Bisson has actively contested the (previously accepted) practice of Critical Incident De-Briefing (CID) and has led the way in promoting the importance of a more diversely inclusive 'global traumatic stress community'. Likewise, I suggest that those who experience traumatic events 'may' themselves contribute to our understandings of the politics of vulnerability. Controversially, perhaps, this draws on the lived experiences of trauma survivors who (with or without counselling) have gone on to make important contributions to politics and the world around them. We are quite used to the suggestion that the experience of trauma can have a major influence on art or creativity. We are less attuned to the possibility that it might impact in other realms as well, including politics. This is a task for research, but is always already a constitutive force in cosmopolitan global governance.

Conclusion

In summary, the paper has explored the question of a cosmopolitan response to 9-11. It suggested that the key distinguishing factor was a focus upon the issue of trauma and vulnerability. When cemented to a model of global governance, however, it was argued that cosmopolitanism succumbs to a top-down response that generates 'sympathy' for the affected communities, but only allows for their political inclusion via an instrumental logic of representation regulated according to universal norms of liberty and equality. Thus the argument turned to an engagement with the politics of Held's 'communities of fate' – in particular the question of whether there might be a 'global traumatic stress community'. Against the interesting idea that trauma affected communities might be 'naturally' altruistic (Solnit, 2009) or divisive, it was suggested that no such certainties could be attributed. The ambiguity of trauma at the individual, let alone a community, level combined with the critical

issue of how traumatic memory is manipulated and rendered according to sovereign power (Edkins, 2003) means that a different track is required. Therefore, the paper interrogated how the production of knowledge about trauma has become a crucial element in the constitution of the global governance of trauma. Rather than rejecting such constitutions as simply the negative consequences of power, it was suggested that we might interrogate such subjects as both produced by and productive of ethical possibility.

In conclusion, this argument suggests that cosmopolitan sentiments are rarely if ever translated into an unproblematic politics. In fairness, I doubt whether any cosmopolitan author would find this point the least bit surprising. However, the suggestion that engagement with the ambiguities and ambivalences of such 'cosmopolitics' can render up important lessons and (potentially) new ethical horizons might shift concerns slightly. The cosmopolitan impulse to open up to and engage vulnerability is a laudable ethical question. But the prosecution of this impulse has revolved around a set of straightforward closures: affirming universal global norms, practices of therapeutic governance and a subsequent 'eventalisation' of global governance. Perhaps cosmopolitanism is destined to re-produce openness and closure by dint of its desire to retain strategic relevance (Brassett, 2008; Parker 2009). What is less clear is whether and how engagement with the subjects produced by such processes is itself an opportunity to learn about new possibilities – for others and ourselves - beyond the cosmopolitan paradigm (Brassett and Bulley, 2007).

Engaging the politics of vulnerability associated with trauma involves both grappling with the production of sympathy for suffering and the recognition that, in doing so, we also necessarily express empathy. The distinctiveness of empathy in the context of trauma is that it can only ever be based on the recognition of our inability to 'know' 'vulnerability'. In this sense, I suggest, it may be helpful to think about the politics of vulnerability in terms of an ethico-political conversation where many of the words either do not exist or, rather, the speakers (and listeners) are engaged in the process of inventing them.

Notes

¹ This paper is an expanded version of a plenary address made at the 2009, Political Studies Association Conference. For comments and support in the development of this paper the author thanks Claudia Aradau, Chris Brown, Chris Browning, Dan Bulley, David Held, Kim Hutchings, Matt McDonald, Owen Parker, Columba Peoples, and Len Seabrooke.

² While the paper focuses on David Held this is not to suggest that he is the only

voice on cosmopolitanism. Held is of particular interest because of his prominence as a global scholar and the location of his arguments at the cusp of academic and policy discussion. The strategic relevance of cosmopolitanism is often overlooked or seen as philosophically problematic, whereas I regard it a crucial aspect of the performativity of global ethics (See Brassett, 2008).

³ While criticised in this paper, the ‘communities of fate’ element of Held’s position is an extremely promising development in the current outpouring of (more grounded versions of) the cosmopolitan paradigm and carries synergies with other more sociological approaches to cosmopolitanism and globalization such as the work of Ulrich Beck (2005, 2006, 2007) and Jan Aart Scholte (2005).

⁴ In making this connection between the event of 9-11 and the traumatisation of individuals it is important to remain sensitive to the difficulties involved with speaking about trauma. Experiencing trauma and becoming ‘traumatised’ (especially in the long run) are different things. Likewise, the suggestion of a traumatised society presents further difficulties of anthropomorphising the community according to particular knowledge about how individuals experience trauma that is itself contestable. However, I think it is fair to suggest, for the sake of argument, that those who experience trauma and those who live with PTSD have just as much right of inclusion in cosmopolitan democratic systems as anybody else and we should have some idea of the relative burden of rational reflexivity in such circumstances.

⁵ To underline, a critical analysis of existing cosmopolitan ‘models’ does not carry a rejection of cosmopolitan ethics. In line with the work of the British sociologist Robert Fine (2005) the suggestion is rather that we can retain a cosmopolitan imagination/attitude without re-ifying any of the universal signifiers (be they ethical or institutional) that existing cosmopolitans identify. In short, we can take the ‘-ism’ out of cosmopolitanism.

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