

CLAUS OFFE

CITATION FOR AN HONORARY DEGREE

Mr Chancellor, it is my privilege to present for a degree of the University, Professor Claus Offe.

Claus Offe is perhaps the most distinguished social theorist of his generation and is renowned internationally for his profound contributions to our understanding of capitalism, of democracy, and of the complex relationships between them.

Claus Offe was born in Berlin in 1940. In the propitious year of 1968, he took his doctorate from the University of Frankfurt, where he was Assistant to the famous philosopher Jürgen Habermas. Claus Offe has been Professor of Theories of the State at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin since 2006, having previously held Chairs in political science and sociology at three distinguished German Universities, Bielefeld, Bremen and Humboldt. At the Australian National University, we are proud and fortunate to have had Claus Offe visit for several weeks in alternate years since 1992, latterly in the capacity of Adjunct Professor of Social & Political Theory.

Claus Offe is famous for his work on the crisis of the welfare state and the changing nature of employment; on democratization, civil society and new social movements; on issues of justice in societies in transition, and how to build public trust and civil society. Among his many books and articles on topics as diverse as welfare state studies and post-communist transitions to democracies, are some absolute classics that will be read for generations to come.

In his critique of late capitalism, Claus Offe draws his inspiration from Marx and Weber in equal measure. His concern is with the dynamics of social structures: with the 'determination of limits' and what happens when those limits are transgressed. Contradictions lead to crisis, crisis to transition. Claus Offe's recurring motif is to critique the irrationalities of rationality, the undesirable effects of rational action.

An engaged intellectual, Claus Offe is active in the German Greens and in the worldwide movement for a 'basic income' for all citizens. He bemoans what he calls 'the current underutilization of the moral capacities of citizens'. His style, however, is to advise and inform rather than to hector and preach. As he once said, 'No one is closer to God than anyone else. That is a hard lesson to learn, particularly for people from the traditional Left. But I would say that the lesson should be learned'.

Claus Offe's contribution to political sociology has been recognised by honours too numerous to list in full. He has held fellowships at virtually all the major research centres in his subject: the Institutes for Advanced Study in Princeton, Wasenar and Vienna; the Centre for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford; the Max Planck Institute at Starnberg; the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin; and the Collegium in Budapest. In 1994 he was elected a foreign honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Mr Chancellor, it is with much pleasure that I present Claus Offe, that you may confer on him the Degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*, on the ground of his outstanding achievement as a scholar in the field of political sociology.

Professor Ian Chubb AC
Vice-Chancellor
The Australian National University
20 December 2007