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Must a Marxist Be a Globalist?*

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Introduction

In many, if not most, strands of Marxist thought, there has been an undeniable component of antagonism toward the political status quo of separate and sovereign nation-states. The antagonism, it is conventionally assumed, has its roots deep in Marxist normative theory, and the necessarily repressive and exploitive character it assigns to states in both their domestic and international functions. If this hostility is an essential part of Marxism, it follows that no Marxist can consistently embrace an ideal of a world order (even if it is peaceful and stable) made up of such nation-states. For this kind of Marxist, the ultimate aim is not to conduct and normatively evaluate international relations, but rather to do away with global diversity and the entire state system.

Historically, those committed to this general line of thought are well represented. Lenin saw the ultimate goal of Marxism, at least on this question, as the “complete equality, the closest rapprochement and the subsequent *amalgamation of all nations*” (Lenin, 171). One Marxist manual, published in the former Soviet Union (and authored,

appropriately, by a collective of officials and academics), marks out communism's final aim as "turning the human race which for thousands of years was torn asunder by discord, quarrels, conflicts and wars, into one world-wide commonwealth" (Dutt, 873). Gilison claims that communism aims eventually to bind together "all peoples of the world" under the direction of "some sort of world government" (161). He cites several Soviet writers who envision an eradication of all national and cultural differences, including even differences in language (162-63). The political theorist R. N. Berki argued that accepting a world of separate and sovereign states is incompatible with the foundational assumptions of Marxist thought, and maintained that "the very existence of international relations poses a serious, and perhaps intractable, *problem* for Marxism" (Berki, 80).

Let us call this general attitude a Marxist version of "globalism" (realizing that this term has many different meanings depending on the context—my use of it in this essay should be clear enough). So must a Marxist be committed to this globalist line of thought? Is it an essential part of Marxism, or is it entailed by other themes that Marxists do consider essential? In this essay, I will argue that an antagonism toward a system of separate nations or states and a commitment to a single global structure or culture are *not* essential elements of Marxism. Specifically, I hope to show that there is *no good Marxist reason to be committed to globalism of this sort and opposed to the state system or national and cultural diversity as such*.

In what follows I will thoroughly explore several ways a Marxist might justify this globalist line of thinking, ways I think are the best available within the Marxist framework. I will argue that all the surveyed ways of trying to justify a Marxist

commitment to globalism are mistaken. Given these mistakes, I think we are left without a compelling Marxist case in support of the globalist position (which is not to say there might not be other, non-Marxist arguments for it). The globalist's antagonism toward separate nations, states, cultures, even languages, etc., which has been taken in some circles to be a bit of Marxist orthodoxy, is not in fact adequately supported in, and does not follow from, the central themes of Marxist theory.

Importance of the Problem

We should not underestimate the importance of this problem. Of course, a Marxist surveying our world will see a great deal that needs *immediate* political attention. Exploitation, suffering and alienation can be found almost everywhere. Hence, while the long range goals of the Marxist are an interesting issue, it might be natural to focus on more pressing concerns. For example, one might be concerned over "how rapidly, and by what means, discrepancies in living standards of workers in different countries should be equalized *in the transition period*" (I quote here an anonymous referee who thinks this is the "real question" we should address). Nevertheless, immediate political action without a clear view of one's long term goals would be ill-advised. To *what*, the Marxist must ask, do we wish eventually to transition? Whether or not a Marxist is a globalist in the long term might inform how he should proceed even in the short term. And how should the Marxist greet contemporary globalist tendencies being expressed in non-Marxist corners? Has the Marxist found a practical ally or no? So this globalist question, while it is a long term issue, is still very important.

We should also at the outset distinguish this theme from a similar one in the literature on Marx. There have been many debates about whether or not Marx was, or a Marxist should be, an “internationalist.” The issue in *those* debates is whether or not the communist revolution should be conducted within or across national borders. The worry in this essay is over whether a Marxist, after the revolution, can finally endorse a world that has national borders and cultural diversity at all. And this worry has *not* heretofore received very much careful attention.

Moreover, the collapse of the former Soviet Union does not render this globalist question moot. Communism is still a powerful political force in Russian, China, and in many other places. Nor is Marxism dead, and throughout the third world, it is the ideological lens through which many understand their unhappy positions. A Marxist commitment to globalism has much fertile soil in which to grow. So while the globalism question as I have framed it is admittedly a narrow one, it is no less crucial politically (or fascinating in its own right) for its tight focus. What I take to be the wrong answer to this question has, in the past, been widely accepted as correct, and is still taken as a platitude in some Marxist political and philosophical circles. If I am wrong, and this is not a particularly popular position among Marxists these days, then let this essay be a nail in its coffin.

Some Preliminaries

Before undertaking my central arguments, I think it is prudent to engage some preliminary matters. My understanding of these preliminaries sets the stage for the main arguments. Broaching these matters first will help frame the main ideas that are to follow and identify some possibly contestable assumptions.

A Focus on Marx

Obviously, the writings of Marx have given rise to a tremendous variety of political ideologies and theoretical systems. However, these variations on the original Marxist themes, some no longer even recognizably Marxist, will not be the focus of my attention. I aim instead to address what is by my lights Marx's original ideas, and not one or more of the long line of ad hoc ideological adjustments that have emerged through the years. My hermeneutic exercise will be restricted to the writings of Marx himself (or Engels when it uncontroversially elaborates Marx's own thinking), and what it is we can discover that follows from these texts.

Conventional Marxism

Recall Kenneth Waltz's classic work on the causes of war. Waltz grouped theories about the causes of war in three ways: what he called first image theories explain conflict in terms of human nature, second image theories explain conflict in terms of the internal structure of states, and third image theories in terms of the structure of international relations. Inside this schema, Waltz thought the Marxist explanation of conflict "represents the fullest development of the second image" (125). On this view, the causes of war, and other activities that obtain between states, are found in the internal structure of the states themselves, specifically their economic structure. We might label this understanding of interstate relations, and the deeper theory that informs it, conventional Marxism.

The real cause of political activity and change in conventional Marxism is the conflict between developing forces of production and relations of production that have become outmoded. This conflict is manifested as a struggle between social groups or classes, which are identified by their relationship to the means of production. Classes, and not nations or states, are the important and fundamental units. Now it is worth noting here that Marx does not seem to make a sharp distinction in his writing, as modern political scientists are wont to do, between nations, that is, more or less social entities, and states, understood as strictly political entities. Yet however he means us to understand these terms, compared to class conflict, relations between nations/states are “at a second remove from relations and conflicts that are really significant” (Berki, 82). Conventional Marxism thinks of *international* or *interstate* relations as having an only derivative status.

There are other related Marxist themes that support or dovetail with this way of thinking. There is the well known idea in Marx’s theory of historical materialism (roughly, the view that all important historical development is moved along by the “base” of economic activity, and that all other human activity is part of a less efficacious “superstructure”) that modern states are merely a part of the superstructure. They have the internal function of maintaining the system of exploitation for the capitalist class. They are, as Marx said, “the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests” (*The German Ideology*, in Tucker, 187). Indeed, the “executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Tucker, 475).

Externally, modern states also serve to facilitate economic expansion, seeking after ever larger and larger markets. In the *German Ideology*, Marx claimed that “relations of different nations among themselves depend upon the extent to which each has developed its productive forces, the division of labor and internal intercourse” (Tucker, 150). So nations/states and the relations between them are nothing else but expressions of a certain economic organization, and will change as that organization changes. In themselves, these entities are not causally efficacious or important, but are instead historically conditioned and ephemeral units.

In fact, on the conventional Marxist story, the nation/state as an entity is doomed historically. What begins as a plurality will end in a unity. Again in the *German Ideology*, we learn that industry will destroy “the natural exclusiveness of separate nations” and the “peculiar individuality of the various nationalities” (Tucker, 185). In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx forecasted that there would someday be only one world literature. Marx thought that in his own day, the first truly international group had already formed: the proletariat. And what effect will national ties have on this unifying tendency? Marx replied, “The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got” (Tucker, 488).

So goes, in rough outline, the conventional view on Marxism and international relations. To summarize, nations and states bear, in a loose sense, a merely epiphenomenal relationship to the genuine causal structures in world politics. And in the fullness of Marxist time, as these causal forces play themselves out, the separate nations and their identifying cultural marks, along with the state system, will disappear. This

constellation of ideas is undoubtedly what animates the globalist attitude we have already noticed.

Prediction versus Commitment

Yet there is a crucial distinction to be made before taking up an analysis of this ostensibly Marxist position on globalism. Do conventional Marxists merely *predict* a more globalist world, as an inevitable result of economic and political forces, or are they for some reason normatively *committed* to such an outcome? Of course, these two possibilities are not mutually exclusive. But imagine that they merely predict. If the prediction turns out to be wrong, we can expect that scientifically inclined Marxists will busy themselves with trying to figure out why the prediction failed to come true, but not much else. If, however, these Marxists are also for some reason *committed* to broadly globalist attitudes, should a more globalist state of affairs fail to materialize, they likely will take action. They will try to *make* the prediction come true. For committed globalists, the demise of states and the rise of national and cultural uniformity are necessary for, and an essential part of, the advent of the Communist Millennium.

Of course, some Marxists may be completely sure about predictions of a more globalist world. For them, the question of whether or not to embrace global political diversity is moot, since they believe more uniformity is inevitable. But after all, Marxists might be wrong about this or that empirical matter, or this or that principle of economics or politics, etc., causing *predictions* about the demise of states and other sorts of diversity to fail. Besides, those who originally predicted *fewer* nations and states, and less cultural diversity in the world, has now got an awful lot of explaining to do in the 21st Century.

Still, I am not going to explore this avenue. Marxist economics, though a fascinating topic, is beyond my competence to evaluate.

So I am going to refrain from taking a stance on Marxist economic and political *predictions*. Either these Marxists are correct, and globalist uniformity is inevitable because of certain economic forces, or they are wrong. But if they are wrong, then they will need to decide just how disappointed they will be with the mistake. Will they be just as happy with or without the predicted global uniformity? Or will they find it an unsatisfactory state of affairs, one we should seek to change? The Marxist must decide if the globalist world is one to which we should also be *committed*. This question of commitment, I would like to suggest, is not a pointless one even if globalist predictions do come about; again, I am assuming it is good to understand what one is ultimately after, as well as what one expects will happen. In any event, the subject of my investigation is into Marxist *commitments* to this globalist attitude, and reasons they might produce for having them. It is an essentially practical and moral issue that I aim to explore.

A Less Robust Globalist?

In contrast to the robust globalism I have outlined, a Marxist might have instead a more modest commitment. This sort of Marxist would not think of cultural pluralism, national diversity, or the state as such as undesirable, but rather only the *capitalist* state. This sort of Marxist might think that when Marx recommended (rather than predicted) the disappearance of the state, he was concerned *only* with the disappearance of its function as an agency for maintaining oppression and exploitation. Most certainly, a

commitment to the undoing of capitalism and its attendant moral problems is a completely settled part of what it is to be a Marxist. But on this more modest view, *after* the removal of capitalism, what remains is not so important, be it a nation, a purified state, a civil society, a community, the “administration of things,” or some combination of these. So long as we do not coerce and exploit, this sort of Marxist will be satisfied. Politically organizing and promoting the interests of a group in a particular geographical area, national diversity, cultural pluralism, etc., are not in and of themselves objectionable. This more modest (unconventional?) Marxist vision is one not of complete unity of the human race, but one wherein there is still group, or even national and political, diversity.

Now Philip Kain (there are probably many others) has claimed that, for a Marxist, oppression is an essential part of the *concepts* of the state and sovereign power (480). Where there is no power that is lorded *over* the people, where there is no exploitation or oppression, there is no state, and no sovereignty. Of course, for those who think along these lines, it may appear the answer to my question is, in part, painfully straightforward: at the very least, a Marxist cannot endorse a pluralism of states, for he endorses no state at all. But the overarching question for the less ambitious Marxist is different than this. *Whatever* we choose to call the non-oppressive organizational structures that the Marxist wants to supplant nations/states, we should wonder whether the Marxist can abide a pluralism of them, as opposed to a single global structure. The single global culture and structure is, after all, what many Marxists have seemed to advocate—and this more robust view is what I am calling globalism.

Causes of Conflict

Waltz ends up pointing to this same question of globalist commitment from another direction. In the course of his analysis of Marx and the causes of interstate war, he asks: “Is it capitalism or states [as such] that must be destroyed in order to get peace, or must both be abolished?” (Waltz, 127) If there were a world of *socialist* states, would they fight? Of course, one way of reading Marx (one that pays close attention to the preceding passages that inform the conventionalist view, with their forecasts of the demise of nations and states) has it that the state as such will disappear. And if there are no states, there will naturally be no fighting between states. But this does not settle the question as to whether the Marxist thinks the disappearance of states as such is a *necessary* condition for peace.

We might once again try a little thought experiment, wherein we suspend judgment about the inevitable collapse of nations and states. Would the bare existence of a system of states, whatever their character, make fighting inevitable? Perhaps fighting would cease if and when states were internally more perfect, more socialist. Perhaps it is not national diversity and the state as such that are the culprits, but again the *capitalist* state. Indeed, Waltz’s second image approach to conflict analysis strongly suggests this possibility for the “less ambitious” Marxist. *If* it is the internal structure of states that causes conflict, then the proper changes to the internal structure can result in peace. Sweeping away a diversity of internal structures altogether would not be necessary. So a Marxist view of conflict *might* accommodate theoretically a stable, peaceful, yet diverse world order of nations and states, so long as they were of the right kind.

Waltz's interesting line of questioning leads us immediately to other, closely related questions. What ought a Marxist make of these ideas? A conventional Marxist, looking only for a way to a peaceful world, should be happy to consider Waltz's suggestion—*unless of course there are other reasons, besides wanting to prevent war, for a Marxist to be globalist.* Are there such reasons? That question, again, is the primary focus of the rest of this essay.

Summary of Preliminaries

So there are some uncertainties here. It is not clear whether (1) the Marxist merely *predicts* the demise of states and a more culturally homogenous world, (2) the present system of states and national/cultural diversity are to be eschewed because they result in conflict or oppression, (3) the demise of states national/cultural uniformity are an essential element of what the Marxists *seek*, since they think there should be a single global structure or for some deeper practical and moral reason. And of course, the alternatives are not mutually exclusive. The Marxist might endorse one, more than one, or all of them. A revised, less ambitious Marxist analysis would see a peaceful diversity of non-oppressive socialist states as perfectly compatible with the deeper meaning and intentions of Marx's thought, and endorses (1) and (2) only. For those wedded to the third, 'pure' globalist alternative, the revision that accepts a post-capitalist diversity is *not a line of thought even open to a Marxist.*

The committed globalist camp thinks it makes no sense for a Marxist to consider endorsing a non-antagonistic diversity of socialist states, a world of liberated, but separate, nations and cultural groupings living peacefully side by side. This camp must

argue that the existence of separate cultures, nations or states would negate the very essence of Marx's original ideas, and that Marxism cannot accommodate this possibility "without thereby losing its coherence as a philosophy of man and society" (Berki, 86). For these thinkers, exploitation, oppression and the causes of conflict notwithstanding, there are other Marxist reasons for shunning an ideal of a post-capitalist world made up of diverse cultures and separate states.

Let us now leave these preliminary and stage-setting considerations, and turn to examining what sorts of reasons might be available for the 'pure' and more ambitious globalist position. Arguments for the idea can take one of several forms. First, we might think Marx's normative vision of human nature requires us to be globalists. Second, I will consider a variety of specific passages throughout Marx's writings that may provide inspiration to the globalist thinker. Last, there may be a way of construing the concept of private property that drives the Marxist to be a globalist.

Species-Being and Diversity

Underlying all Marx's thought, giving it its critical bite, is his concept of the human being. These commitments as to our nature are explicit only in Marx's early work, but they remain a vital component in Marxist thought throughout the body of his writings. And it is one understanding of these deep commitments that provides the first possible reason for being a globalist: the Marxist concept (explored below) of human beings as "species-beings" might provide the reason the globalist is looking for.

Let us begin our exploration of this understanding by considering the antagonism Marx cites between the owners of capital and workers. The means of production are owned by one group of people, to the exclusion of another group. The excluded group belongs to the community only negatively, producing wealth by their labor-power, but not sharing in its enjoyment. So there is, on the Marxist analysis, a sharp antagonism between the two groups. But what, in Marx's deep theory, makes this sort of situation antagonistic? "A society of this kind is antagonistic, because in it the laboring human being is *alienated*" (Berki, 93).

Alienation, it seems then, is one of the fundamental elements of what is objectionable in capitalism. Moreover, capitalistic antagonisms in society manifest alienation in two ways: alienation of person from person and humanity from nature. In the first manifestation (I will return to the second one later) we find solitary, calculating, self-regarding individuals of capitalist society: they are estranged, alienated, and "not at home." If this is so, then what for Marx would constitute an unestranged, unalienated condition? What, or where, is humanity's true "home"? What is the normative ideal for humanity that Marx had in mind?

One possible reading of Marx would have it that humanity's home is in the "species," and that humans will be unalienated only when they are all united with the whole of the species. Only this kind of unity can do away with the alienation we see between person and person. And such a unity is, according to this account, an essential part of Marx's normative picture of our nature. Communism's goal is, in Marx's words, "the complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e., human) being . . . the true resolution of the strife between . . . the individual and the species" (*Economic and*

Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, in Tucker, 84). Again, communism will be “the positive transcendence of all estrangement—that is to say, the return of man from religion, family, state, etc., to his *human*, i.e., social mode of existence” (Tucker, 85).

So there is, on this reading, dialectic between the individual and the universal, the single human being and the species. But “man is a species being . . . because he treats himself as the actual living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being” (Tucker, 75). And we shall not perfectly realize our species-being by entering into union with just *some* of our fellows. If this understanding of species-being is correct, then we should take Marx to mean that *all* human beings should live in communistic union if they are to fulfill their natures. And this, concludes the argument, leaves no room for a world with a pluralism of cultures, nations, or sovereign states.

A More Careful Reading

So we now have on the table an attempt to ground a Marxist endorsement of, as an ideal, the absolute unity of our species (and *a fortiori*, a world without separate nations/states). The grounding we have proposed relies on the normative notion that our true nature is that of a species-being. And we have taken this to mean that for Marx humanity’s only true home is in communion with the entire species.

But given that “species-being” is for Marx what we might call a technical term, are we sure we have the meaning right? There is, of course, unambiguous condemnation by Marx of class divisions within societies. And many have taken it for granted that this condemnation of divisions, flowing from the normative concept of species-being, is universal in its scope. But ought we to be certain that Marx’s concept of species-being

was emphatically hostile to non-exploitive groupings based on region, nation, culture, race and so forth? Are we sure the concept of species-being makes out all separations as alienating? Indeed, I think this way of looking at species-being is mistaken and I would like to suggest an alternative reading of the relevant texts.

Recall some of the earlier textual evidence we produced: “man is a species being . . . because he treats himself as the actual living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore free being.” We took this to mean that our essential being requires that we treat ourselves as belonging to a collective that captures the whole species. But I believe interpreting the passages in this way misses the mark. In the original context of Marx's writing, universal does not refer us to the whole species. It refers to our universal and unfixed *capabilities*, and our freedom. These bits, from the same passage, make this clear.

[The] animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally. It produces only under the dominion of immediate physical need, whilst man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom. An animal produces only itself, whilst man reproduces the whole of nature. An animal's product belongs immediately to its physical body, whilst man freely confronts his product. An animal forms objects only in accordance with the standard and the need of the

species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. (*Manuscripts*, Tucker, 76)

And again, in a nearby passage, we see the clear reference to humanity's universal, that is, unrestricted, *ability* to freely transform nature:

and the more universal man (or the animal) is, the more universal is the sphere of inorganic nature on which he lives. . . . The universality of man appears in practice precisely in the universality which makes all nature his *inorganic* body—both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object, and the instrument of his life activity. (75)

Our freedom and flexibility is what is essential about us. Paradoxically, the type of being we are is one that is not of a fixed type. We are not shackled by a certain, particular mode of life, nor are we constrained to produce in a particular way. I hope it is clear that this theme is *not*, as some might have been inclined to think, a call somehow to unify the entire species either socially or politically.

Perhaps the following lends some support to the reading I am opposing: a human is “. . . a being that treats the species as its own essential being.” But once again, I do not

believe Marx meant here that we should treat the species (the collective entity) as the essence of what each of us is. The original context is helpful.

In creating an *objective world* by his practical activity, in *working-up* inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species-being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as its own essential being, or that treats itself as a species-being. (76)

This passage is focusing on our conscious productive activity, and is immediately followed by the above quoted passages which explain our radical freedom and universal capabilities. Marx was pointing up the consciousness we have of our own freedom, and the fact that in creating, and in work, we at once make our own species, our own type. When considered in context, it seems more plausible to place the emphasis of this passage on our self-creation, rather than on identification of the individual with the entire species as a collective.

We might try to press yet another bit of text into service of the “universal” theme: “estranged labor estranges the *species* from man. It changes for him the *life of the species* into a means of individual life” (75). But this does *not* mean that a person is separated from the group. The separation of person from person was discussed later in the text and as a separate issue; this separate discussion was even numbered by Marx (as number four, on 77). Instead, Marx was saying that in estranged labor, the *kind of being we are* is transformed, and deformed, into a being that grubs merely for its own

existence. Unfortunately, when Marx called the result “individual life” it invites the misreading I am setting my face against. But there are other expressions and restatements of this same thought in the text that make the correct meaning clear. Immediately following this remark, Marx elaborated. In estranged labor, humanity’s

. . . labour, *life activity*, *productive life* itself appears to man in the first place as a *means* of satisfying a need—the need to maintain the physical existence. Yet [when we are not estranged] the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life. The whole character of a species—its species-character—is contained in the character of its life activity; and free, conscious activity is man’s species-character. . . . [But in estranged labor, life] itself appears only as a *means to life*. (41)

Again, “Estranged labor . . . makes his life activity, his *essential being*, a mere means to his *existence*” (76). And also, we read that

. . . in degrading spontaneous, free activity to a means, estranged labour makes man’s species-life a means to his *physical existence* [my emphasis]. . . . The consciousness that man has of his own species is thus *transformed* [my

emphasis] in such a way that species[-life] becomes for him
a means. (77)

So Marx was lamenting the fall of humanity from its own nature, as the kind of creature that does more than struggle for his individual, physical existence. He was *not* speaking against the separation of the individual from the species as a whole group.

There is another reference to “species” to which we might attend. Marx said that when Communism finally comes to pass, there will be “. . . the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species.” But this is not a resolution of the individual with all mankind. Given what we have already discovered about species-being, and the other items on the list of things to be resolved, it is plain that this is a resolution of individuals with the kind of beings that they truly ought to be. Communism will be a mode of living, not a membership in a group.

Granted, we will witness “the complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e., human) being.” And this notion of humans as social beings is very plausibly an element in the Marxist conception of the species-being. Or perhaps it is a closely related even if separate concept. We will return from the estrangement we experience in identifying our essence with “religion, family, state, etc.” But we will not do so by withdrawing our membership from one group and joining another larger one. It is a matter of living in a different mode, finding our essence in a different place. We will begin a “*human*, i.e., *social* mode of existence” (85).

So I conclude that nothing in the concept of species-being, or humans as social beings, points to a Marxist ideal of a global, species-wide community. Naturally, the concepts point to *some* kind of collectivity as the appropriate home for humanity. But the appropriate *extent* of the collective is still very much up for grabs, and only a misunderstanding of species-being would require that the collective be global. The ambitious, ‘pure’ globalist position still needs a Marxist argument against diversity as such.

Other Possible Support

So the concepts of species-being and humans as social beings do not force on the Marxist a commitment to absolute unity, and do not compel us to rule out non-antagonistic diversity as such. Maybe there are other specific passages of text bearing more directly on this issue, which would give Marxists some other reasons to be globalists. Marx at one point says that in a communist society, “nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes . . . to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic” (*The German Ideology*, Tucker, 160). A supporter of the globalist line might take this to mean there is something wrong with diversity. But this is not a tirade against diversity as such either, but against being *coerced* into roles. The rub is in the fact that we are “forced,” “cannot escape,” and “must remain” in these narrowly defined, restrictive, and freedom squelching identities. Even if we were willing, for the sake of

argument, to extend these thoughts to the international context, it would only establish an aversion to coerced arrangements of separateness.

Also in *The German Ideology*, we learn Marx is emphatic in his distaste for “inflated and extravagant national pride” and “insistence on nationality” (Pascal, 99). Indeed, “national narrow-mindedness is everywhere repellent.” But surely this segment only supports a Marxist stance contra *narrow-mindedness*, an excessive preoccupation with one’s own national interest, and not a condemnation of the existence of nations as such.

A passage from *The Holy Family* may be relevant:

The egotism of the nation is the natural egotism of the general state system, as opposed to the egotism of the feudal estates. The supreme being is the higher confirmation of the general state system, that is, again the nation. Nevertheless, the supreme being is supposed to curb the egotism of the nation, that is, of the general state system! (McClellan, 147-48)

From this, we might be tempted to think Marx was alluding to a vision for the globe that would make him something like Waltz’s third image theorist (i.e., one who thinks conflict is a result of the structure of international relations). After all, the egotism of the state is a “natural” result of a “general state system.” Removing the egotism hence would require doing away with the system, perhaps revealing Marx’s aversion to

diversity as such in the global political context. I think we would be wrong to infer this result. First, even if egotism was the natural result of any state system at all, it is the egotism Marx appears to have found objectionable, not the diversity. More, I see no evidence here that helps to resolve the ambiguity we noticed early on: should we interpret Marx to have meant a system of *capitalist* states, instead of any states at all?

Indeed, deciding that Marx thought the egotism was endemic to any and all interstate relations *would* be to make Marx into what Waltz would call a third image writer. And this might lead to the anti-state, globalist position. But I have found no independent confirming textual evidence that Marx was so inclined; and much I have found seems to contradict this thesis and support Waltz's assessment that Marx was second image. In the *Communist Manifesto* we find strong second image proclamations:

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.

(Tucker, 488-89)

Also, in the *German Ideology*, Marx was clear that the

relations of different nations among themselves depend upon the extent to which each has developed its productive

forces, the division of labor and internal intercourse.

(Tucker, 150)

These are unambiguously second image sentiments.

So there is very little that should convince us that Marx had a third image view of, or vision for, international relations. Conflict could be removed without doing away with the state system, so we must have some other reason for wanting to do away with that diversity. The passages we have examined in this section so far demonstrate a dislike for national narrow-mindedness and national egotism. But extending the conclusion beyond these to a dislike for national diversity as such would not follow.

On another front, we might find support for the globalist position in the distinction Marx drew, in *On the Jewish Question*, between merely political and complete human emancipation. Marx said mere political emancipation “is the final form of . . . emancipation *within* the framework of the prevailing social order” (Tucker, 35). So unless the order changes, full human emancipation will be impossible. Now at least one writer (Berki) believed that the “prevailing social order” is a reference not merely to capitalism but also to the system of separate state/national units (96). So if a system of separate states remains, human emancipation cannot come to pass.

It seems to me that a non-antagonistic system of socialist states clearly would *not* be the same “prevailing social order.” The only relevant element that would remain from the old arrangement of antagonistic, capitalist states is the existence of states as such, and the separation their existence implies. For this argument against states to work, it must be the case that this separation is sufficient to prevent emancipation. And if that is true,

capitalist political structures, and relations of private property, did not play an essential (ineliminable) role in preventing emancipation in the old order. Can this be a reasonable interpretation of Marx? Could Marx have meant that capitalism was not the real culprit in alienation? I do not think so. Indeed, such a conclusion is, for a Marxist anyway, outlandish, and the whole argument looks more like a *reductio ad absurdum* than support.

So the wholeness, the healing, the cure for alienation that Marx sought was not a political or even nonpolitical unification of every human being into a collective. It is instead a reclaiming of the kind of beings we are, a fulfillment of the kinds of lives that we as a member of the human species ought to live. Granted, part of this will ultimately be found by immersing ourselves in some group or collective or other, but nothing I can find in Marx's thought would require the collective to be a global or species-wide one (at least on a correct understanding of the concept of species-being). Nothing would require it, that is, unless there is something else, something besides the bare fact of diversity, in a state system that a Marxist finds offensive. Perhaps there is a feature, one that attaches to any national diversity at all, that necessarily *results* in alienation. It is to just such a possibility that we will next turn.

Alienation and Organized Productive Groups

Let us put aside the issues of (1) whether Marx's theory of humanity as a species-being requires that separation as such is impermissible at the deep, moral level, and (2) whether there are various other in-principle objections to cultural, national or state

pluralism. It may be that there is something else in the organization of any state system at all which makes interrelations necessarily antagonistic at a higher level of the theory. A multi-state system might be undesirable for the same reasons that the single capitalist state is unacceptable: the alienation that is manifested in private property. To be sure, this would not be a stand against all diversity, but only contra the state. But if it works, it will at least support *some* element of the general globalist attitude.

Private property can be property owned by an individual, a partnership, a joint stock company, a huge corporation, or any group really, as long as the controlling group is smaller than the total society that makes the property's production possible. By benefiting from this exclusion, the excluding party is engaged in exploitation. A person may be a good person in some or other sense, or the group can be internally constituted in any laudable way whatever. But in excluding a part from the whole, they exploit. They alienate those excluded from the products of their labor. They are part of a system of private property that is morally objectionable.

We can project this analysis on to a hypothetical, non-antagonistic system of communistic states. Only two shifts are needed. First, the whole under consideration will not be a particular nation or society, but instead the whole world of societies. Second, we must remember that the internal organization of the lesser groups (states, societies) can be of any stripe one likes, even an ideal, communistic one. Nonetheless, if some portion of the whole excludes another part, they exploit, they alienate, and are the holders of private property.

If we reflect on this projection, it becomes obvious that a system of sovereign states as we now conceive it *does* create holders of private property. What is state

sovereignty if it is not exclusive control over property within the state? National groups hold back for their own exclusive control some of the proceeds of global production, and this is morally objectionable for the Marxist. Where there is the smoke of private property, there must also be the fire of antagonism and alienation. Hence, concludes the argument, a system of sovereign states is not compatible with the core principles of Marxist theory. Globalism must be our goal.

The force of this line of argument depends in part on the necessary and inevitable connection between a system of states and the resultant exclusion, antagonism and private property (in the context of national sovereignty). What is it that makes this state of affairs inevitable? I believe the critical notion is that of *sovereignty*. The globalist probably thinks a state would not *be* a state if it was not sovereign, and the sovereignty of each member state is an essential characteristic of the international system. But sovereignty means, at the very least, the power to exclude those outside a state from its material wealth. So on this view, sovereignty and the kind of exclusion it entails are what bring about the alienation.

When we make the gestalt shift that reveals private property in the notion of national sovereignty, a (from the Marxist perspective) grim picture indeed emerges. We see an image that even communist nations have of themselves and their relations to one another that looks alarmingly *capitalistic* in character. Many of the concepts they use to describe themselves reveal just how capitalistic the relations between them really are. Sovereignty is nothing less than the supremacy of a nation over its domain, and its right to dispose of its material wealth as it sees fit. It is a vision of states as *owners* in the context of a larger community of nations. Any international division of labor would turn

out to be another culprit: the equality of nations that is sometimes asserted in communist circles is undermined by any division of labor, which typically results in international *inequality*. And of course, actual inequality is certainly compatible with international relations being capitalistic, since capitalism is characterized by relations of inequality arising out of the division of labor. Yes, the relations between these communistic states look surprisingly capitalistic in their structure.

Nor does the existence of fraternal assistance and mutual aid, which has so often been invoked in communist international discourse, make a difference here. After all, even capitalism can sometimes exhibit a regard for those that are alienated. These and other efforts by communist countries can mollify the bad effects of, but they cannot eradicate, the antagonisms and alienation created by the state system. Only by abolishing the root cause, the sovereignty and existence of separate nations, can the capitalist character of global relations be wiped away. So, on this view, the consistent Marxist must see a world community of separate states as necessarily having a capitalistic and antagonistic character. Exercising sovereignty is tantamount to owning private property, and private property is an unambiguous culprit. And so the only way to realize the Communist Millennium is to eradicate the system of separate states.

What should we make of this line of reasoning? As was the case with the other globalist arguments, I think it is mistaken. First, it depends on rather narrow notions of alienation and exploitation, notions that may not be exactly or fully what Marx had in mind. Another sense of alienation might be concerned with goods, the products of our labor, dominating people, and being valued over people. If this is the sense we prefer to make of alienation, then the argument does not make a persuasive case against

sovereignty (though I will not take up that worry here). Worse, there is a concept of sovereignty at work in the argument that I think properly should be criticized as too simplistic. Yet these are not the most serious problem for the approach. Even if we bracket the potential problems with these interpretations of alienation and sovereignty, and play them as they lie in the argument, I still think the argument is faulty. But to make my case for this assessment, I must review what it is that this kind of Marxist finds objectionable about private property in the first place.

Let us return to the second manifestation of alienation in society, the severance of humanity from nature (as opposed to the separation of person from person). The relevant feature of this sort of alienation is that workers are excluded from enjoying the fruits of their human, productive activity on nature; and more, that this transformed bit of nature is now owned by others. Private property is not simply the capitalist's basis for dominating the worker (the theme which receives the lion's share of the attention in the Marxian corpus). At the most fundamental level in Marxist theory, private property is also objectionable because through it our human laboring on nature is alienated from us, and given over to another. This is the interpretation of alienation on which our present argument seems to rely.

Of course, we should keep in mind that Marx's condemnation of private property and this kind of alienation is not grounded in a categorical claim to nature and whatever we fashion from it. Marxist man is a member of a community, and the exclusion and alienation he finds objectionable is measured against the community's aggregate production, the *community's* transformation of nature, its production for human needs. We are organized for production, and the non-alienated, ideal relation would be one of

human equality towards whatever it is we, as a collective, wrest from nature. In this social setting, all who labor and are indispensable in production ought to enjoy the fruits of that production. The institution of private property makes for morally objectionable deviations from this ideal.

So there exists a whole, an entire community organized for production. But only a part of that community, merely a part of the whole, effectively possesses and controls the proceeds of the production. It is not as if those who work in say, a shoe factory, are only alienated from the shoes they make. The workers are part of a complex system of production, and the total proceeds of that labor-sharing system is what the workers ought not be excluded from. When we keep this in mind, class antagonisms, so often pointed up in Marxism, are best seen not as conflicts between two different groups, but as conflicts between a whole group, a society organized for production, and a smaller portion of that same group, the owners of the means of production.

How does our objection against a less-than-global political system hold up in light of this analysis? If we start with a whole which is a *group organized for collective production*, then if some in the group contributing labor to the production are denied or excluded from the product, it is objectionable. Now it seems that post-capitalist states might exercise exclusive control over property (sovereignty) in two contexts. In one, the communist states might organize internationally to produce, and one greedily withholds from the other, alienating the other group from its labor, and manifesting what is objectionable in private property. But in the other context, groups that have nothing to do with each other economically might insist on exclusive control over the goods they produce. It is only in the first context that we find alienation. Why? *Because*

contributing to the production of a thing (even if only indirectly) is a necessary condition for an exclusion from it to be objectionable, alienating, or a manifestation of what is wrong with private property.

If I exclude a greedy usurper who has done nothing to help in production, I have done nothing wrong at all. For if someone has not labored, I cannot, *a fortiori*, alienate this person from the products of the labor. Or if I labor at one thing (or as part of one system), and you labor at another thing (or as a part of another system), my excluding you from the products of my labor does not alienate you from the products of yours. Perhaps we should understand Marx to mean something more radical: anyone who labors anywhere is entitled to a communistic sharing of everything that is produced. But if this is what he meant, we are left with a curious gap in the theoretical story. How is it that we can alienate people via exclusion from the products of their labor if they did not labor to produce it? The only possible way I can think to make this work is to depend on some variation of what we have already found to be a mistaken understanding of species-being. Perhaps we are supposed to consider ourselves all as one, so the labor of any of us is the labor of all of us. But even if we allowed *that* kind of argument into court, it would not win the case. For then it seems to me that the possessions of any of us would be the possessions of all of us, and alienation would be impossible.

No, the only way for this kind of analysis to have any critical bite is to stay within those contexts wherein groups are organized for production. These situations are the locus for this kind of alienation. So it is only under these conditions of organized production that a system of sovereign states could manifest the alienation and antagonism that Marx finds objectionable. Organization for production is a necessary condition for

this private property critique to be effective. Therefore, if some societies are *not* involved in production with other societies, then this kind of alienation between them and other societies cannot take place. Since it is at least possible that states/nations not organize together for production in this way, then it clearly is not *necessary* for there to be antagonism between them.

Of course, in the modern world, we live in a globally integrated economic community. There is a great deal of this kind production that spans more than one state. Now what comes of this interdependence in the modern world? Where this productive interdependence obtains, perhaps then the Marxist critique of sovereignty works. But we can still distinguish between two different classes of productive assets: those chiefly produced internally by a nation, and those produced in undertakings with other nations. Granted, there may be some overlap between these two in many cases. But what would be the Marxist harm in exercising sovereignty (i.e., state ownership and control) over the internally produced assets? If no one outside our state collective participated in the production of an asset, then on our analysis, they cannot be alienated by our excluding them from it. Since this state of affairs is possible, then sovereignty is not *necessarily* antagonistic.

Naturally, when states do organize to produce, then the product of their joint efforts must be shared communistically, lest one or more of the parties be alienated from their labors. And this has a nice Marxist ring to it. But how far does this concession take us in the attack on the system of sovereign states? For this to count as part of a critique it must be the case that states *cannot* or *would not* share in this way. For the attack to be completely successful, the concept of sovereignty in itself must rule out this kind of

interstate organization for production. And this does not ring true. We can admit for the sake of argument that, as part of sovereignty, states do have ownership over their internally produced goods. But it does not follow that, upon entering into an organized productive group with another state, the very meaning of sovereignty requires full control of the entire proceeds, or an unfair portion of them. Communistic joint control is possible at this higher level of organization, just as it is for individuals within states. So yet again, there is no *necessary* antagonism between states/nations in virtue of the very existence of separate units. We still have found no argument that compels a Marxist to be a globalist.

What Is Acceptable and What Is Not

So what, finally, ought we to make of the often-invoked Marxist commitment to globalism? There seems to be no reason to eschew a diversity of languages and cultures. Likewise, different national groups can easily exist without running afoul of any core Marxist commitments. As for other matters in administrative and governmental arenas, some activities are, and will in the future, be administered globally, and some will be administered more locally (another observation that I owe to an anonymous referee). There is nothing about this that ought to concern a Marxist. Such choices will be made for a variety of reasons, and might go either way.

Can the Marxist abide a pluralism of *states* (understood as political structures), or any states *at all*? This question is a bit more interesting. Answering it requires that we say something about what Marx takes a state to *be* in its essence. However little Marx

wrote on this topic, we must have at least some idea of what it is we will be allowing or rejecting. I will mention once again the sometimes voiced conception of the state as *essentially* an instrument of exploitation and oppression. Having mentioned it, I will also once again set that conception aside. It strikes me as a strange use of language. This, that, or even most contemporary states might have the characteristic of being exploitive or oppressive, but I do not see why we need to judge the phrase “non-exploitive state” an oxymoron. Should a certain kind of Marxist insist, then I will stipulate that I am concerned only with the political structures that would remain if and after states stopped doing bad things. Call those structures what you will.

I suspect (cautiously) Marx himself would be on my side in any such semantic dispute. He was not always careful to distinguish between his uses of “the modern state” and “the state” as such, but it is often easy enough to tell which he means in the context. On the issue of the state as such, he said that it is, “from the *political* standpoint . . . the organization of society” (*Critical Notes on “The King of Prussia and Social Reform”* in Easton and Guddat, 348). It is nothing else but the “active, self-conscious, and official expression” of society as it is actually organized (350). This does not appear to place prior conceptual constraints on how a society might, for better or worse, be organized; and hence I see no prior constraints (at least in terms of exploitation and oppression) on the kind of political structure we might properly call a state. Perhaps the following lends some support to my position.

The question then arises: What transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social

functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically . . . (*Critique of the Gotha Program*, in Tucker, 538)

In any event, this all skirts the central issue. Of course, no Marxist will countenance exploitive or oppressive political structures. What, if anything, a Marxist *would* be willing to accept from the state as we know it? Interestingly, Engels elaborated at least three features he thought characterized the state (155-56). First, there is the grouping of its members on a territorial basis. That feature seems innocent enough from a Marxist standpoint.

Second, there will be the institution of a special force, consisting of armed organizations such as the police (and perhaps the military), prisons, and other coercive institutions. In capitalist states this public force is, among other things, used to keep class antagonisms in check. This and other oppressive uses of force create a state that stands over and above society. But would not there be legitimate uses for such forces, properly constrained, in a communist world? As I understand it, the advent of communism will not usher in the end of *all* crime, only the problems caused by class antagonisms and exploitation. Coercive protective functions guarding against other potential sources of violence should not be troubling to a Marxist. After all, there is at the very least the possibility of a resurgence of capitalist-style immorality (attempts to control means of production, exploitation, etc.).

The third feature of the state noted by Engels was the practice of taxation. In one sense, taxation as we know it in the capitalist state will become meaningless if the Marxist gets his way. Yet in another sense, the public cooperation that taxation at its best facilitates would be an essential part of well run communist economics and politics. So it appears a Marxist should be able to accept a diversity of post-capitalist political structures, structures that have at least a strong family resemblance to what we now call the state. Nothing in Marxist theory commits us to setting our faces against territorial organization, a police force of the right kind, or the sort of public cooperation inherent in taxation. Only the morally and economically objectionable features of the *capitalist* state must go.

Conclusion

Some have thought that endorsing a culturally diverse world of non-antagonistic nations and sovereign states is not a consistent alternative for a Marxist: a Marxist at heart must also be a globalist. I explored several possible justifications for thinking this. First, one might think there is a case against diversity in general, and hence cultural and national diversity in particular, in Marx's deep normative theory of human nature. I hope I have shown that the texts do not support this way of thinking. Second, I explored a variety of specific passages in Marx that might be interpreted as being averse to diversity as such in the global context. Careful examination of these passages reveals no such aversion. Last, one might believe the concepts of alienation and private property should be extended to the international setting, which would result in a critique of any state

system, since any state system results in exclusive control over property by the states. But close attention to what makes private property objectionable reveals that applying these concepts internationally does *not* make the idea of an international society of societies impossible or inconsistent. I hope these arguments I tried to mount in *favor* of a Marxist commitment to globalism did not amount to so much straw. If they are just straw, they are still the best straw I could weave together. In the absence of a better case, I feel entitled to being skeptical about the alleged Marxist commitment to globalism.

Of course, we must concede that a clear understanding of what Marx was after recommends radical changes to the state system as we now find it. Indeed, from the Marxist perspective, internal reform is necessary almost everywhere. And international relations must not, contrary to common present practice, be characterized by narrow-mindedness, egotism, and the quest for unfair advantage. Insofar as these things are true of the present system, the Marxist cannot endorse the status quo, with all its faults. The Marxist clearly must be committed to *change*. But these targeted faults are not an essential part of what it is to be a state, or what it is to be part of a system that contains political, cultural, or linguistic diversity. So an opposition to a diverse world of separate cultures, nations and states (*regardless* of their character) is not an essential component of Marxist theory, however often this ideal has been invoked in the past. A peaceful diversity of languages, cultures, nations, and even socialist states, is perfectly compatible with the final ends of Marxist thought. A Marxist need *not* be committed to globalism.

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