

# RESPONSE TO MY CRITICS

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I have been fortunate in having the critics that I had at the Pasadena Session on my *Globalization and Justice*. All three of them understood me very well, reported me accurately and criticized me fairly and perceptively. An author could not ask for more. In some places I will, as a result of their criticisms, have to modify or clarify what I say, but in other places, and indeed very central places, I remain intransigent and hold my ground, I hope not out of pigheadedness, a hardening of the intellectual arteries or out of a blinkered partisanship.

Many important issues are raised in their papers and I cannot, for reasons of space, respond to them all here. So I must be sharply selective. I shall in response to Jon Mandle and David Reidy focus on places where they put to test what I take to be the democratic deficits of capitalist globalization and where I argue for socialist alternatives. These issues are of central importance in my *Globalization and Justice* and, what is vastly more important, for our world order. Kok-Chor Tan focuses on a distinct issue which has arisen in the context of cosmopolitan articulations of global justice, namely the issue of compatriot partiality. I shall close by responding to him about that.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. RESPONSE TO JOHN MANDLE

John Mandle rightly sees that I do not object to globalization as such but to *capitalist* globalization. He asks me what I mean by “capitalist globalization.” Let me first clear some decks. I do not treat capitalist globalization as a synonym for the Washington consensus or neoliberal

<sup>1</sup> I have responded to their critiques at greater length and with attention to salient criticisms of me I have passed over here. Copies can be had by writing me at Kai Nielsen, Department of Philosophy, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W., Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3G 1M8.

capitalism on a global scale. There are, as Mandle rightly says, *capitalisms* and *capitalisms*. Not all are neoliberal capitalisms. But where we are talking about the capitalism – any capitalism – resident in a nation-state, we mean that in the society of that state there is at least an extensive preponderance of private ownership and control of the means of production. By contrast, in a socialist society with its state there is a public ownership of at least the major means of production usually involving some workers' ownership and control of the means of production.

Where we have globalization capitalism goes transterritorial. For capitalist globalization to obtain we need to have a world in which at least many of the key enterprises of the world are transterritorial, whether multinational firms (transterritorial firms which in terms of ownership and control are particular nation-state or several particular nation-states based as now transterritorial firms typically are) or transterritorial firms which are genuinely transnational where ownership and control is based in no nation-state or a cluster of states (Scholte 1997a: 15–30).<sup>2</sup> A firm, of course, may start out as a multinational firm and become genuinely transnational.

We should also say that we have capitalist globalization when the world is becoming one in the way globalists characterize it and when at least most of its transterritorial firms (whether multinational or transnational) are privately owned and controlled and where at least most of the firms of the various nation-states which are not transterritorial are also privately owned and controlled. Furthermore, capitalism to be capitalism must have a labor market where labor is bought and sold as a commodity.

It is all forms of capitalist globalization that I have been concerned to critique and reject as desirable ways of social organization. Some, of course, are worse than others. But, or so I shall maintain, the only form of globalization that we should welcome, except perhaps reluctantly temporarily as a second best, is some form of *socialist* globalization that is thoroughly *democratic*.

What is this socialist globalization that I recommend and commend to the anti-globalization movement? It must become (given the very conception of what socialism is) *worldwide*. Socialism is and always has been an internationalist movement. Socialism may, of course, start in one country or at nearly the same time in a cluster of countries, but it can never be stable or be what it aspires to be until it is worldwide.

Globalization of any form, including a socialist form, sees *the globe as one place*. Globalization refers to processes whereby many social relations increasingly acquire relatively distantless and borderless qualities so that human lives are more and more played out in the world as a single place. The countless and complex ways that people interact with and influence each other are more and more being constructed and organized on the basis

<sup>2</sup> 80% of the multinational firms are based in the United States – another sign of empire.

of a planetary unit (Nielsen 2003: 317; Scholte 1997b: 15–30; Scholte 2000). When this obtains we have to some degree globalization whether capitalist or socialist. Our world may not yet be globalized, but it is globalizing. It is, that is, on the road, barring some vast disaster such as a nuclear war or worldwide and long enduring economic collapse, to being a globalized world.

What, in addition, distinguishes *socialist* globalization is this: all nation-states in such a globalizing world have all, or at least a major part, of their socio-economic system, as one in which there is the public ownership and control of at least the major means of production either through some state-ownership or other public and cooperative-ownership. It may take the form of workers' control through workers' councils or actual discrete groups of workers' ownership and control of productive property. For transnationals they will be owned and controlled by the socialist world federation itself which will come into being with worldwide socialism. That, however, will not be without democratic impact – the federation is democratically ordered – though the worry about an unavoidable elitism here remains very strong. But there will be multinationals and perhaps transnationals, but they will be, in one way or another, publicly owned and controlled with a strong input from the workers who work in these transterritorials. When a strong input from people who work in the firms obtains, it will be fair to say we will have a globalization from *below* by workers in a world where everyone either is a worker, has been a worker, or will be a worker. This, if it ever comes to pass, will be a genuinely and deeply democratic globalization. The populations, in one way or another, will actually be in control of the means of production.

This would require some form of world governance. Most people shy away from the very idea of a world-state. The fear is that if such a thing ever becomes a reality it could hardly avoid being tyrannical or at least authoritarian. I am less confident of that or fearful of that than most others, but I do fear that it would be clogingly inefficient, unavoidably *heavily* bureaucratic and even, however benevolently intended, unavoidably a rule by elites. How could there be room for what Will Kymlicka calls 'politics in the vernacular' (Kymlicka 2001)?

However, we could perhaps, somewhat in the way that Kant envisioned, have a world federation of nations or peoples. Couldn't we, building on the present UN and altering it extensively, develop something like that? The General Assembly could be such that it would be given the final say on matters relevant to the world at large. Neither the Secretary General nor the Security Council would be able to permanently veto the General Assembly's decisions. Arrangements like these would make the General Assembly far more effective, representative and answerable to the people than it is now. We, with such changes, would have a UN less hostage to the great powers – particularly to US power.

What I gave insufficient attention to in my *Globalization and Justice* was the facts and effects of imperialism and how it relates to globalization. Sometimes, inaccurately and simplistically, globalization is said to be Americanization. But this is a way – a misleading way – of calling attention to the American Empire, to US hegemony.

Sometimes our attention to globalization has deflected our attention from this, if you will, neo-imperialism: an imperialism without official colonies, but with, in varying degrees of clienthood, client nation-states galore spread throughout the world, giving the New Empire extensive control of the world enabling its multinationals to have extensive scope and to savagely (and profitably) exploit various peoples of the world without fear of significant competition or (more importantly) of significant restriction. Globalization is an efficient facilitator under contemporary conditions of this largely monopoly capitalism with its imperial state, assisted by its satellites, working to facilitate the smooth and expeditious working of its multinationals: the making of the world safe for and open to its multinationals.

Mandle is justified in contending that capitalist globalization's "track record is much more complicated than Nielsen's uniformly negative portrayal suggests" (Mandle 2004). *The United Nations Human Development Report 2003*, he points out, shows, for example, that in "East Asia the number of people surviving on less than \$1 a day was almost halved in just the 1990s" (Mandle 2004). Still, he adds, "some 54 countries are poorer now than in 1990. In 21 a larger proportion of people is going hungry . . . In 12, primary school enrolments are shrinking. In 34, life expectancy has fallen" (Mandle 2004). Capitalist globalization in some regions has nonetheless done some good things. But the overall record, as Mandle acknowledges, has been devastating; 18 million people die prematurely each year from poverty-related causes. This is one-third of all human deaths: 50,000 every day, including 34,000 children under the age of five.

It is evident enough what is so bad about capitalist globalization. It undermines welfare systems that have worked for years, systems which did something to meet human needs that are not being met now. It destroys reasonably stable and productive peasant economies while replacing them with extensive immiseration. Such globalization increases poverty, malnutrition, starvation, sometimes abets the drug trade, in some places increases illiteracy and increases either joblessness or marginal employment. It gives rise to very – and increasingly – inegalitarian structures throughout most of the world. The gap between the rich and the poor both *within* nations and *between* nations – most dramatically between the North and the South – is growing. Indeed between the North and the South it is growing to such proportions that it is not a *parti-pris* exaggeration, or an exaggeration at all, to call it obscene.

Capitalist globalization with its driving rationale to maximize profits exacerbates this while a socialist globalization, while in a controlled way it will use markets for allocation, is an organizing of things where the underlying rationale for production is first the meeting of human needs and then secondly, where productivity makes this possible, the satisfaction of non-manipulatively stimulated wants throughout the world. It's about that and not centrally about the maximizing of profits. Moreover, when the productive forces in the world have developed to the extent they now have, world economies with their wealthy nation-states can afford such a shift in the rationale of production. Efficiency, of course, remains important, but it is not the bottom line (the servant of capital accumulation and of profit maximization); it is no longer so imperative.

Socialism on a world-wide scale – a socialism going with socialist globalization – would eliminate private ownership of productive property in all but some very small enterprises. We are left, Mandel avers, with two major options: (1) some kind of collective control of the means of production or (2) some kind of worker control of the means of production. He, like Jürgen Habermas, regards the former as a non-starter, a matter of irrationalism if anything is. Well *presently* it is utopian. But it is not so clear that it always would be: that it could not be an essential part of a *realistic* utopia. Suppose we got something like Kant's federation of states: a remodeled UN something like I described. The individual nation-states – the modules in the federation – would, as I modeled them, have collective ownership of the means of production. But, being democratic states, their citizens – individuals acting collectively – would have the ownership and the control of the means of production. If they didn't like the way the economy was being managed, they by their vote could change things. We would have, *in addition* to the democratic form we are familiar with, an economic democracy. That is how in general (in broad terms) this collective ownership would operate. It would in its most *general features* be determined by the democratically elected parliament of the federation of states with many powers typically (but not necessarily) devolving to individual nation-states or sometimes even to municipalities or to worker-owned and controlled firms. But while these entities would have considerable autonomy they would finally be answerable to a world parliament and in that way to the people, i.e. the populations of the world electing their representatives to the refurbished General Assembly. Moreover, since each society (each nation-state) is a socialist society, we will have a workers' federation where everyone is, will be, or has been a worker; we will still in that way have, with such a collective control, worker control of the means of production all the way along the line. And in all but the smallest enterprises nothing that is privately owned and controlled while keeping of markets as instruments for allocation.

This is a mere sketch of a socio-economic policy and of institutional design: something that if brought into existence would no doubt have to be modified and nuanced in all sorts of ways. But it isn't clear to me why something like that in a world with an extensive democratic, egalitarian and socialist ethos and deeply ingrained democratic practices could not be made to work and not be authoritarian, overly bureaucratic or be too distant from actual people. Moreover, it would not have to be as 'top down' as my remarks in the previous paragraph may have seemed to suggest. There are different areas of control for different social entities and the general economic policies proposed by the General Assembly would not come as 'fiats from on high'. There could be (and should be) feedback and challenges from the lower levels of authority. It would function in the way analogous to the way *wide* reflective equilibrium functions. However, even if this is too utopian and considerable elite control would remain, we should remember that we have that anyway in the extant nation-state system and it would hopefully be at least ameliorated in an exemplification of the model I have proposed.

## 2. REPLY TO DAVID REIDY

I am more worried about Reidy's empirical challenge to my understanding of the effects of globalization than about his challenge to my cosmopolitan egalitarianism. It is with the empirical challenge that things cut to the bone. Reidy, like Mandle, argues that globalized capitalism or capitalist globalization is not as bad as I make it out to be. It is, indeed, taking forms – I think he means social democratic non-neoliberal forms – that show signs that a better world is possible *within* capitalism and that that is indeed even coming into being now. And that this world is better than anything we can expect from socialism – something which, he has it, cannot be achieved anyway. He points out, correctly I believe, that "the percentage of the world's population in deep poverty is declining, even if absolute numbers continue to rise with world population growth. Moreover, globally many indicators are improving – health, longevity, education, infant mortality and the like. To be sure, much of sub-Saharan Africa is an exception here."<sup>3</sup> But he claims:

it is unlikely that markets and the private ownership of the means of production, whether domestically or globally, is primarily to blame for this. Also the evidence relevant to mutual advantage is less than decisive. The Asian tiger economies were able to integrate themselves into the global economic order and secure mutual advantage and the same would appear to be likely as time unfolds for India and China. The economies of China, India, Bangladesh, Chile, Pakistan, Botswana, Ireland and Egypt and many

<sup>3</sup> All quotations from David Reidy are from his manuscript examining me. See Reidy (2004).

others have grown more in the last twenty years than the economy of the United States . . . [O]verall it is not obvious that in those cases integration into a global economy organized around commodity, capital and labor markets with private ownership of the means of production has been something other than mutually advantageous for all.

These are important factual matters or factual-interpretive matters that I did not face.

First, take what perhaps is the most salient of them, namely that the percentage of people in deep poverty is declining in most of the places of the world – that health, longevity, education, and infant mortality is improving. Suppose this is true, as I assume it is, still the poverty and the things that go with it are horrific by any reasonable standards and Reidy acknowledges this. Could it be made better with an alternative mode of production, with an alternative rationale for production? It could, I claim, under the market socialism where the *underlying* rationale for production would be the meeting of needs and not the drive for profits through capital accumulation. Our world has now enough productive power and capacity to enable us to relax the drive for capital accumulation and as much profit as possible and to produce instead to meet human needs though not without continued attention to efficiency and to something like capital accumulation.

It is also crucial that socialism piggybacks on capitalism. That is to say, socialism is only possible where there has been the wealth – productive capacity – created by capitalism. As Rosa Luxemburg realized long ago, if socialism did not quickly spread from Russia to Western Europe the Soviet Union was doomed. Socialism must grow out of an advanced capitalist society. Second World countries – say, South Africa – cannot achieve it alone where the Great Powers are capitalist.

But by now we have an incredibly wealthy capitalist order and with it (typically) parliamentary democracies (though often deeply faulted) in the rich capitalist world. And with this socialism is economically possible and sustainable. But it was never possible in any sustainable manner in Russia or China not to mention the Third World countries. Moreover, most of the rich capitalist democracies have something resembling the proper democratic forms. If they all (or at least most of them) turned socialist, they could (and no doubt would) carry along that basic democratic form along with their socialism. There is no inherent conflict between democracy and socialism. Indeed they fit together like hand and glove. We must not confuse socialism with the dreadful authoritarian and statist structure that the Soviet Union became (a) arising in conditions where for them there was little in the way of a democratic tradition and (b) where they were harassed on all sides by implacably hostile capitalist powers. Without this the Soviet Union might not have taken such a harsh turn. If the rich

capitalist democracies collectively turned socialist there is no reason why they should take that turn.

Socialism, under such politically democratic and economically developed conditions, could meet needs in a way that no capitalism could. After all, a capitalism (any capitalism you like) will have a capitalist class which will own and control (directly or indirectly) the means of production primarily to answer to their own interests. But a socialism would not be answering to such class interests. A genuinely socialist democracy could not have a group of bosses playing in good measure the role of such a class, e.g. as in the old Soviet Union or China today. Production would have as its *underlying* rationale the meeting, and equitably, of the needs of everyone.

I do not build into the very meaning of “capitalist,” as Reidy thinks I do, that it involves “the systematic subordination of *all* political judgments and initiatives to the logic of capitalist economic necessity.” I do defend a version of the *capitalist domination thesis*, but in a weaker form than the form that Reidy expounds and critiques. He articulates and critiques a form of vulgar Marxism devastatingly critiqued long ago by Max Weber where all (as it was called) superstructural phenomena (politics, culture, religion, etc.) were said to be completely determined by the economic base. But this is vulgar Marxism and not anything that Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Lukács, Gramsci, or the analytical Marxists ever propounded or defended. In the various modes of production and in the social life of class societies superstructure and base constantly interact. Normally the economic base determines the superstructure. Where it doesn’t determine it, it almost always strongly influences it. But sometimes political considerations determine or deeply influence economic ones.

The capitalist domination thesis as I read it says there is a pervasive tendency for the economic system of capitalism to determine or at least strongly influence the politics of such societies and, though often less decisively, the rest of the social life of capitalist societies. It is an empirical thesis at least putatively descriptive and explanatory of the way capitalist societies work. Taken in this weak form it is almost trivially true. But it cannot be said to be inevitably or necessarily so, as Reidy takes the capitalist domination thesis to be claiming. There is no historical inevitability in Marxism *pace* Popper, Berlin, or Acton. In the sense they speak of ‘historical inevitability’ it is indeed, as they claimed, nonsense. But there is plainly some empirical inevitability, e.g. when the flush toilet comes on stream, the outhouse is doomed and indeed (more generally) it is empirically inevitable that productive forces *tend* to develop over time. Looking at the whole world and over time, there is a *tendency* for the productive forces to develop. It is not that profits *must* come before people, but almost always, and nearly, empirically speaking, inevitably, it is profits before people. “Capitalism exploits the poor,” like “Swedes are Lutherans,”



doesn't take a universal quantifier. But as a few Catholics, Jews, or Muslims in Sweden do not falsify "Swedes are Lutherans," so a few capitalists who behave decently (though from their own point of view irrationally) and do not exploit the poor or anyone else does not disconfirm or even infirm "Capitalism exploits the poor."

Perhaps, as Reidy says, such a law-like claim hasn't been proved. Indeed it has not been proved as a *law* for it does not even purport to sustain counterfactual conditionals. But this says nothing about its being a reliable generalization. It is unlikely any such strong law-like claims can be established in the social sciences or in any significant sense concerning society. But some things can be more plausibly believed and plausibly generalized about. The capitalist domination thesis in the weak form I have stated it is one of those things. The way capitalist globalization is going now with 50,000 starving unnecessarily daily, with in almost all places inequality astronomically growing both within nations and between nations (both rich and poor), with increasing numbers of homeless and beggars in the rich North American capitalist democracies, with problems of racism and with it neo-fascist attitudes arising in Europe over foreign workers being both needed and unwanted by rich European capitalist democracies, with the stark increase in child labor and in some places with the return of actual slavery, these things do not give us a favorable view of capitalisms' trajectory.

To say that some of these things yield mutual advantage, given the weaknesses of some bargaining positions, does not show that in those circumstances where we have mutual advantage we have anything like justice: that where mutual advantage is met then justice is met or even the standards of decency that both Reidy and I accept are met. That some impoverished peasant "sells" one of his children into child labor to some multinational (directly or indirectly) like Nike so that the family (including the child "sold") can survive (however mutually advantageous under these circumstances to both sides) does not show that it is just or even morally tolerable if something can be done about it, without undermining the very capacity of the family to survive and even then "justice" is not the right word for what is happening. As well that a factory that has moved from the United States to Mexico in search of cheap labor after a time abandons its workforce there and moves to Bangladesh where it can get still cheaper labor and exploit even more deeply may in the circumstances be in the mutual advantage of the Bangladeshis hired and the firm doing the hiring, but it doesn't show that it is just or even morally tolerable. We just see here the horrible phenomena of a Brechtian-depicted capitalist world. Mutual advantage is not the test or the mark of justice or even of decent social arrangements. It is only morally acceptable when the mutual advantage of the parties is gained when they are in a fair bargaining position which in turn must be otherwise defined perhaps by

nearly equal power relationships or by fair reciprocity. It may, horrible as it is, still be better for the people so pushed against the wall in bargaining to accept such a dreadful deal. It might *as things stand* be advantageous to them since anything like justice or even decency is not possible there for them. This is a matter of survival for them not of justice or moral acceptability.

### 3. REPLY TO KOK-CHOR TAN

Liberal nationalism was not at the center of my attention, as Kok-Chor Tan realizes, in *Globalization and Justice*, but I did discuss the priority of compatriots thesis in Chapter 8. If Tan's friendly amendments to what I say about it are on the mark, my argument would, on the face of it at least, be considerably strengthened by Tan's amendments. It would enhance my case for a liberal nationalism that is also compatible with, though not derivable from or reducible to, a cosmopolitan perspective.

He rightly points out that my analysis in *Globalization and Justice* "only shows that priority for compatriots is not acceptable under conditions of global injustice. It does *not* show that priority for compatriots *as such* is objectionable" (Tan 2004b). That is right, but it is perhaps not terribly significant for globally speaking our world is grossly unjust and even with Thomas Pogge-like practical recommendations for improvement accepted and in place, it is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. But according to Tan the priority for the compatriots principle does not come into play where global injustice obtains. This shows, I think, that, given Tan's construal, the compatriots priority principle belongs exclusively in ideal theory and not in non-ideal theory. So placed, Tan articulates a rationale for it. What we see where we are doing ideal theory is the thesis that individuals may favor in certain circumstances their compatriots and that this is not in itself objectionable. *As far as ideal theory goes*, and assuming we should play that language game, *the real challenge for a cosmopolitan nationalist is to show how the cosmopolitan commitment to global egalitarianism can be reconciled with the nationalist principle that compatriots do take priority.* (Of course, priority *ceteris paribus*.)

I have tried to meet this challenge, but Tan argues that my defense of liberal nationalism and the compatriot priority thesis are inadequate because I argue that particular attachments and using the compatriots priority principle have instrumental value *only*, but that, particularly for a nationalist, is not sufficient. "For serious nationalists, national membership and attachments are not only instrumentally valuable . . . they are also to be valued for themselves" (Tan 2004b). Indeed, for most ordinary people, their shared nationality has non-instrumental value because it is constitutive of their well-being or conception of a good human life. Part of what gives meaning and worth to a shared national membership is the special concern

members have for each other's needs. "To regard nationality as having *only* instrumental value is to empty it of much of its meaning and force" (Tan 2004b).

However, it is important to remember that things can have, and usually do have, both instrumental value and non-instrumental value. Some value walking as an end in itself *and* as a means for keeping healthy. Group membership, including a shared national membership, could be valued as an end and as well be valued instrumentally. I hope that I, not even at my worst, ever said that national membership and attachments and compatriot partiality were *only* instrumentally valuable. If I did I was surely mistaken. They can reasonably be valued both instrumentally and non-instrumentally for the very reasons that Tan gives. But, without denying that, I was in the paper he refers to concerned to show that compatriot priority has instrumental value (Nielsen 2003b). Someone resisting attaching value to group membership (as some do) might be a tough-minded intellectual who thought that "the fact that a person is my compatriot is *reason enough* for showing her special concern" was little more than communitarian blather without genuine cognitive force. I wanted to try to show *even to such persons* that all that notwithstanding compatriot partiality has instrumental value and that that is sufficient for many at least nationalist *political* arguments. We instrumentally need local attachments for a society to flourish even if we refuse to acknowledge that anything like that can have a *value in itself* or even that such notions make sense. We can leave the debate over whether group attachments *have value in themselves* for the philosopher's closet. For practical argumentation a sound argument which shows the instrumental value of compatriot priority and the instrumental value of local attachments and a sense of cultural belonging is sufficient. And this could be as true for a serious nationalist concerned with the achievement of the national self-determination of the nation of which he is a member as for anyone else (Couture and Nielsen 2005).

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