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Global Cosmopolitanism and Nomad Citizenship

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Forget about all the political bullshit [‘Oublions les tracas politicians’] … forget about founding the ‘Federated States of the Caribbean’ … forget about working out our statutory relations with France … if we speak to France at all from Martinique, it won’t be to fight her, much less to be her servants or employees, but simply to tell her we’re going to try something else — [‘nous allons entreprendre autre chose’] … And just what are we going to do? Let’s seek out markets around the world for goods that we agree to make here, that we design and put into production ourselves, instead of following orders from foreign politicians and world bankers only to end up making commodities that don’t sell. Sure, we’ll have to face plant reconversions, reorganize work, redistribute resources, invent new products … Sure, the going will be tough — but is our current situation all that good? It really isn’t even livable! So if we don’t devote ourselves to this utopia, then we’ll have to imagine some other one …

- from the ‘Martinique’ chapter of Edouard Glissant’s *Traité du tout-monde*

Although it may seem easy to agree on a general definition of cosmopolitanism – the idea that human beings all belong to one global community, not just to particular local ones – there are in fact several distinct kinds of cosmopolitanism. Moral cosmopolitanism is probably the most widespread – although the moral character of many cosmopolitanisms often goes unacknowledged. Legal or political cosmopolitanism distinguishes itself from moral cosmopolitanism in its insistence on the necessity of some political entity – usually a supranational one – to formulate laws and enforce the kinds of behaviors and responsibilities moral cosmopolitanism leaves to mere precept, consensus, or exhortation. There are also cultural and economic cosmopolitanisms, each dealing as it were with the medium in which a common community is to be found or fostered. Then there are what we might call “meta-” cosmopolitanisms, like those of Kwame Appiah and Tzvetan Todorov, which seek human
community not in a set of already-agreed-upon precepts and/or their means of enforcement, but through some process by which such agreement could be reached – such as conversation or discussion, in the case of both Appiah and Todorov. My aim in what follows is to propose a version of economic cosmopolitanism – or rather, an economic meta-cosmopolitanism – which is based not on conversation and eventual explicit agreement but on the distributed sovereignty or collective decision-making made possible by means of markets.

This is not an easy argument to make. For how could markets possibly foster a world-wide cosmopolitan community, when they are in fact responsible for massive and ever-growing global inequality? I take the objection seriously: how indeed? That is the challenge I aim to address: how – and under what conditions – could markets foster an equitable and sustainable global community, instead of the one we have now? The first step is to clarify a fundamental ambiguity about cosmopolitanism itself. It is often assumed that cosmopolitanism is a good thing, because, or in light of which, its opposites are bad: parochialism, nationalism, particularisms of many kinds. But the claim that “all human beings belong to one community, not just particular local ones” says nothing about the quality or desirability of that community – just as the mere existence of human rights, as Deleuze and Guattari have argued, “says nothing about the immanent modes of existence of [the] people provided with [those] rights” – whence the ambiguity lying at the heart of the very idea of cosmopolitanism.\(^1\) Marx & Engels were quick to diagnose this ambiguity early on:

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. . . . [I]t has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national
industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes.  

But at the same time, this process of what we now call “globalization” also means – as the passage goes on to say in the very next sentence – that

in place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature. The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all nations, even the most barbarian, into civilization.

At the cost of diagnostic rigor such as this, we shall in what follows simply eliminate the ambiguity: as a component of or reaction to globalization, cosmopolitanism will be considered a desideratum. Not as an absolute: but as balanced against the undeniable value of the local and the particular, it is to be made good. Globalization itself is complex and ambiguous, to say the least; here, cosmopolitanism is one way of designating a variety of schemes and attempts to make the globalized community a better place.
In such a context – the one diagnosed by Marx: globalizing capitalism as we know and live it – arguing in favor of a specifically economic version of cosmopolitanism is a steep uphill battle. And what little philosophical ink has been spilled defending economic cosmopolitanism – compared to the untold volumes written on various moral and political versions – comes mostly from the right. Nevertheless, it seems to me that this is where the battle must be joined, since the capitalist economy is what has made human community truly global in the first place. Historically, there have been other vectors or vehicles for what we might call “partial-world” cosmopolitanism: for classical cosmopolitanism, the proximity and isomorphism of the Greek city-States, the Mediterranean trading basin, the territorial conquests of Alexander the Great and the Roman Empire played such a role; for the cosmopolitanism of ecumenical Christianity, the Church played a similar role – and so on. But today and for the foreseeable future, what human (or inhuman) community there is on a global scale exists as an effect of the world market, and hence any effective cosmopolitanism, whatever else it may come to include, must first and foremost be economic. *Hic Rhodus, hic saltus.*

Often enough, political entities such as the State are invoked and expected to serve as a counter-weight or a check on global capitalism. This raises a host of questions, full treatment of which lies well beyond the scope of this essay – but to which the answer is mostly “no”. The recent acceleration and intensification of capitalist globalization, for one thing, makes it unlikely that nation-states any longer have the power to reign in global capital flows. But then again, has the nation-state ever been at its core anything other than a instrument for the rule of one group or class over others? Or at the very least – and again, at its core – anything other than a vehicle for
one group to assert itself through violence – whether aggressive or defensive – against other
groups? To be sure, attempts have been made (some successfully) to turn the State apparatus
back against its real beneficiaries, by asserting citizens’ rights even against the State itself. But
these are Pyrrhic victories: to the extent that states can command – and obtain – obedience from
their citizens, the principal State functions of domination, control, and war prevail. The same
would be true, mutatis mutandis, of any super-national political entity that commanded
obedience to its laws – even if those laws were designed to protect fully human rights, i.e.
universal-cosmopolitan rather than State-citizens’ rights. For any and every addition to the
domain of human rights would end up increasing the power of such a world government, and
extend its control over greater and greater areas of social life across the entire globe. I will want
to argue that righteous participation in social movements and institutions, rather than obedience
to political entities such as states or super-states, is a preferable way to knit together a truly
cosmopolitan human community (in the narrower, solely positive sense of cosmopolitan I have
stipulated).

Before doing so, however, it is worth comparing economic to moral cosmopolitanism – with
which I think we have to acknowledge far more common ground than we did with respect to
political cosmopolitanism. Here, too, though, certain ambiguities need to be cleared up from the
start – especially given the role that Kant has played and may continue to play in debates about
modern and contemporary (i.e., Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment) cosmopolitanism. To
do so, it should suffice to invoke the well-known distinction between morality and ethics. There
is in my view no chance – or at least no desirable means or likelihood – of developing for the
entire world and all of its peoples a universal, deontological morality of the kind proposed by
Kant, i.e. one that is based on formulating and then obeying universal laws. (Neither is there, given the diversity of cultural self-conceptions across the globe, much of a chance of developing a universal virtue-based morality.) Instead, we should rely on a pragmatic or consequentialist ethics that would help regulate our participation in various social movements and institutions according to the demonstrable impact they have had or can reasonably be expected to have on ourselves and others. One advantage of such an ethics, compared to deontological and virtue-based moralities, is that even though many of the same precepts are invoked – just vs. unjust, free vs. unfree, equal vs. unequal, and so on – consequentialism entails the empirical evaluation of effects in the real world, while also providing concrete means of realizing desirable outcomes, in the very activities of the movements and institutions whose effects are being evaluated. And one of the social institutions I have in mind for evaluation from such a consequentialist viewpoint is the world market, which has put the possibility of and need for a positive cosmopolitanism on the human agenda with such steadily-increasing urgency over the past few centuries.

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So what I am proposing is a positive, economic meta-cosmopolitanism based on consequentialist-ethical participation in social movements and institutions rather than obedience to State or super-State law, with the world market serving as one of the primary social institutions responsible for knitting the human community together on a global scale. This is the form of cosmopolitanism I would like to refer to as “nomad citizenship”. “Citizenship” because it conveys the sense of belonging and commitment to human community that cosmopolitanism requires; and “nomad” citizenship partly because I want to detach that sense of belonging from the bounded territory of the nation-State and all the exclusions and proclivity to violence that
State-citizenship entails. Other reasons for choosing the term “nomad” will become clear in a moment. For now, what matters is the desired effect of detaching social belonging and ethical commitment from the near-monopoly exercised over them by the State: citizenship can then be invested in a broad range of institutions of very different scales. As Arjun Appadurai has put it in an essay on the future of patriotism, “the steady erosion of the capabilities of the nation-state to monopolize loyalty… encourages the spread of forms [of belonging] that are largely divorced from territorial states” [421], with the result that citizenship “become[s] plural, serial, contextual and mobile” [428]. The concept of nomad citizenship is designed to capture and foster this growing ubiquity and plurality of citizens’ social affiliations.

This concept takes much of its inspiration – though not its name – from the work of Mary Parker Follett, a turn-of-the-20th-century North American political activist and theorist who started out in the Neighborhood Association movement but ended up after World War I as an innovative management theorist with views diametrically opposed to those of her better-known contemporary, Frederick Talyor. Where taylorization entailed the top-down command of workers and the work process by management executives, Follett insisted that work-groups – like the neighborhood groups she had counseled before – should self-organize, forming what Gilles Deleuze would, much later, call an “assemblage”. Key to the concept of assemblage, according to Deleuze, is that group membership is characterized not by a shared identity or obedience to a common law or a single authority, but by the simple operators “and” or “with”. Unlike “the people,” whose mode of being-together is a matter of homogenizing representation for and by the State, and unlike “the masses,” whose being-together is a matter of indifference, the self-organization of an assemblage is determined by difference and relation – by what Follett
called the power of “related difference”.⁶ The huge advantage of this mode of self-organization, in her view, is that differences within an assemblage are neither cancelled out through unification nor ignored through massification, but are instead brought into a complex of mutually reinforcing relations whereby the effect of assembling those differences is greater than that of a whole obtained through mere addition.

These are precisely the features of what Deleuze & Guattari would later call “nomad” social relations – a term they derive less from nomadic peoples than from Greek philosophy.⁷ For them, nomadism does indeed designate a way of occupying space (smooth vs. striated), but more important: it translates as “custom” as opposed to “law”. A custom is kind of a rule that one follows mostly out of habit and social respect or engagement, in contrast to laws, which are followed out of obedience and ultimately under threat. This is one reason (among many) why Deleuze prefers civil institutions to State governments. So nomad citizenship, in brief, entails voluntarily belonging to self-organizing groups of various kinds and at different scales. The point of the concept is to break the State’s monopoly on citizenship, and re-distribute social belonging among other groups and other forms of group organization. Through such a redistribution, the actual multiplicity of minor group allegiances in modern societies is recognized and fostered, while the lethal master-allegiance claimed by the State is denied.

In referencing group-formation in this way, we may seem to have left cosmopolitanism – and especially its global reach – far afield, yet nomad citizenship does achieve one of the aims of cosmopolitanism: the mitigation of nationalism, as well as a tempering of parochialism and particularism, provided that nomadic engagements are always multiple rather than singular. But
there also exist today any number of self-organizing groups that span the globe – whether by means of the internet (the Open-Source Software movement, for example) or in the form of NGO’s (such as Médecins-sans-frontières). The question remains, however, what role the global market might play in all of this – particularly if, as I have claimed, it is mostly responsible for putting cosmopolitanism on our agenda in the first place, as a desperately-needed corrective to globalizing capitalism.

Before turning to the world market, however, it is worth assessing the advantages of this institutional focus for developing cosmopolitanism. Such an institutional cosmopolitanism, as Thomas Pogge has called it, would dilute the political authority now monopolized by the State, and redistribute social authority instead over a wide variety of self-organizing civil institutions. Participation in such institutions would be strictly voluntary, and based primarily on two factors: anticipation of the benefits accruing from participating in institutional practices, and an ethical commitment to ensuring that the effects of those institutional practices are just for everyone affected by them – with the concrete specification of what “just effects of the institution’s practices” amounts to being left to the group itself to decide, rather than being legislated for it from above or read off some supposedly universal moral code. The other principal advantage of the institutional-cosmopolitan view is the simultaneous elasticity and tenacity of the obligations to others entailed by it. On one hand, it does not hold us responsible for the well-being of every other person on the planet; such an obligation would be far too onerous. On the other hand, it does not relieve us of responsibility simply because we have not personally harmed another person or persons directly, with the blood on our own hands, so to speak. If institutional practices we benefit from can be shown – through the empirical evaluation of effects required by
consequentialist ethics – to harm others in identifiable ways, we are obliged to make every reasonable effort to reform the institution so as to eliminate those harmful effects, or we are obliged to leave the group and forego the benefits derived from our participation in it. Let me note here for emphasis the importance of freedom as a precondition for truly voluntary participation in these civil institutions.

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For as we turn to the consideration of markets as one form of such civil institution, the criterion of voluntary participation will prove especially important. I said earlier that relatively little philosophical ink has been spilled defining or defending economic cosmopolitanism – but “little” does not mean “none”. Adam Smith and other so-called “anti-mercantilists” foresaw and promoted a gradual decrease in the role of political entities and regulations in the development of a world-wide economy governed by the “invisible hand” of the market rather than by governments or a world government. And for all their ambivalence regarding the economic cosmopolitanism of the rising capitalist class, as we have seen, Marx & Engels conclude The Communist Manifesto with a resounding call for the “workers of the world [to] unite” – thereby endorsing a kind of economic cosmopolitanism of the left arrayed squarely against that of Smith et alia on the right. A quick look at two more recent versions of these positions – those of Hardt & Negri on one hand and von Hayek on the other – will help clarify by comparison the form of economic cosmopolitanism I am proposing here.

Hardt & Negri barely mention the term cosmopolitanism in their four volumes of collaborative work, yet practically everything they say is testimony to its ever-increasing relevance. “The possibility of democracy on a global scale,” reads the first sentence of Multitude, “is emerging
today for the very first time.”9 “One primary effect of globalization,” they profess in a passage from the Preface to Commonwealth that echoes the ambivalence of Marx & Engels, “is the creation of a common world, a world that, for better or worse, we all share.”10 Moreover, it is very clear throughout their works that they consider the chances of knitting together a worldwide human community for the better to be far greater through economics than through politics. Here is one formulation (taken from Empire), where the argument hinges on the construction of subjectivity in the two modes:

each subjectivity must become a subject that is ruled in the general networks of control (in the early modern sense of the one who is subject to a sovereign power), and at the same time each must also be an independent agent of production and consumption within [the] networks [of modern, disciplinary power]… Is it possible for the system to sustain simultaneously political subjection and the subjectivity of the producer/consumer? It does not really seem so …The new mixed constitution [of Empire] leads to … a new social dynamic that liberates the producing and consuming subject from… the mechanisms of political subjection…11

There is much to agree with in Hardt & Negri’s work; we part company, however, over the issue of history: how it is to be conceived, and how it is to be practiced. For there are practical and ethical implications of conceiving of history one way rather than another. One of the phrases quoted above is an index of the problem: “a new social dynamic… liberates the producing and consuming subject from the mechanisms of political subjection.” The problem here is that the allegedly revolutionary subject is in fact a (a grammatical predicate) object – an object liberated by a so-called “social dynamic” that remains totally abstract. The same problem vitiates “the multitude” construed as an agent of progressive historical transformation: it may well be
important to distinguish the multitude from “the people” (as I suggested a moment ago), but how exactly does the multitude constitute itself as an active subject of history? Where is its agency? To be fair, it must be said that this is a problem that Hardt & Negri acknowledge early on:

One might object at this point, with good reason, that all this is still not enough to establish the multitude as a properly political subject, nor even less as a subject with the potential to control its own destiny.

But the answer they give is revealing – and to my mind, represents a serious misconception of history:

But this objection does not present an insuperable obstacle because the revolutionary past and the contemporary cooperative productive capacities ... of the multitude ... cannot help revealing a telos, a material affirmation of liberation.12

History, this is to say, has a telos; it is linear, and moves in a single determinate and determinable direction: a new social dynamic will liberate us, whether or not we ever manage to actually take control of our own destinies. This may explain Hardt & Negri’s disregard for any concrete plans or means by which we could actively hasten what they call the decline and fall of Empire. I would contend, following the likes of Immanuel Wallerstein as well as Deleuze & Guattari, that history is better conceived of as non-linear and crucially indeterminate, and better practiced with some indication of the kinds of active intervention to be pursued and the loci where they might be most effective.13 An illustration of such a conception and practice of history appears in the conclusion, below. For now, I will distinguish the economic cosmopolitanism I am proposing from that of Hardt & Negri simply by suggesting that what I have called “positive” cosmopolitanism should really not be used in declarative empirical statements at all, but only in the imperative or hortatory mode: “let there be cosmopolitanism” or “make it so”.
Cosmopolitanism, in other words, is not an established fact, nor a historical tendency or telos – it is an act of social engagement and an ethical commitment, or it is nothing… but a possibility.

Whereas Hardt & Negri’s version of economic cosmopolitanism may finally be too lofty and impractical, von Hayek’s version displays the opposite virtues and vices: it is admirably practical, but never escapes the strictures of the capitalist ideology it renews and defends. Taking up a position made popular centuries earlier by Adam Smith with his image of the providential but “invisible hand” of the market, von Hayek both updates Smith’s notion for the information age, and uses it to attack the centralized planning models typical of State socialism. Given the historical context of emerging capitalist hegemony, Smith’s model had been aimed against traditional collective or corporatist values such as noblesse oblige: instead of respecting traditional obligations to act for the common good of the whole society, Smith’s market agents were expected to act strictly out of self-interest. By von Hayek’s time, that battle had been won (both culturally and legally). In his view, the main problem for the market in an age of information was therefore not coordinating the activities of self-interested actors, but coordinating the activities of relatively ignorant ones in an increasingly complex (and, we might add, increasingly globalized) economy, whatever their motives. Von Hayek argued strenuously against the implicit claims that socialist State planners were or could be in command of sufficient information to run an economy by fiat, and that such top-down rule was preferable to letting the economy arrive at its own decisions via the mechanisms of the market. For him, the distributed decision-making mechanisms of the market were far superior (and the historical record of socialist State planning has largely born out this claim, as far as it goes). But we need to look more closely at the details and limits of von Hayek’s argument, in order to determine what the
distributed intelligence of market decision-making might contribute to a positive economic cosmopolitanism.

Along lines similar to the conventional distinction made between the technical and the social division of labor, von Hayek distinguishes between decision-making as it occurs within a single business enterprise and the kind of decision-making that occurs in an entire economy considered as a whole. Whereas a single firm makes resource-allocation decisions on its own account, a whole economy is comprised of a relatively large number of entities operating independently of one another, and collective decision-making is left to the aggregation mechanisms of the market. Firms have a fairly clear-cut, vertical authority structure: decision-making occurs by command from on high. The whole economy, by contrast, has something approaching a horizontal authority structure: decision-making occurs by coordination rather than command. Individual firms, partly due to their relatively limited size, operate with more or less complete information, which is concentrated at the point of command; the economy as a whole operates via very limited knowledge, which is distributed among a relatively large number of agents. Hayek’s main claim is that there is simply no way, in any complex modern society, to concentrate at the point of command (e.g., the socialist State planner) all the information that is dispersed among the multitude of independent agents. The mistake made by socialist State planning – a kind of category mistake, in von Hayek’s view – is to transfer the structure and dynamics of command hierarchy from the individual firm to the economy as a whole, where only distributed decision-making via horizontal coordination can succeed. Like soccer players operating without need of a quarterback, or jazz musicians without a conductor or composer, free-market agents don’t need commands from on high to make reasonable decisions based on limited knowledge available to
them *in situ*, on the ground, in their particular time and place. High-speed computer simulations have revealed this to be precisely how birds flock and how fish school: each agent reacts only to its immediate surroundings, adjusting its speed and direction in light of very limited information about the speed and direction of near-by agents. The result is well-nigh perfectly coordinated collective action, with absolutely no need for transcendent command.

Von Hayek takes this model one step farther in the contrast between command and coordination systems: what matters is not just the amount of information, but also and even more the kind of information relevant for each type. The choice between centralized and decentralized planning, he suggests,

> will... largely turn on the relative importance of [two] different kinds of knowledge: [one which is] more likely to be at the disposal of particular individuals and [the other] which we should with greater confidence expect to find in the possession of an authority made up of suitably chosen experts.15

Von Hayek then goes on to contrast centralized or universal scientific knowledge with an “unorganized,” local knowledge conducive to solving particular problems rather than pronouncing general laws – precisely the kind of knowledge, surprisingly enough, that Deleuze calls “nomad science” or minor knowledge in contrast to the royal science of general laws:16

> Today it is almost heresy to suggest that scientific knowledge is not the sum of all knowledge, but a little reflection will show that there is beyond question a body of very important but unorganized knowledge which cannot possibly be called scientific in the sense of knowledge of general rules: [this is] the knowledge of the particular circumstances of time and place.17
The market economy works the way it does, von Hayek argues, when particular agents are free to mobilize minor knowledge to reach independent decisions, and then free-market mechanisms aggregate those decisions into a collective result. Much like a flock of birds, the distributed intelligence of a whole economy arrives at decisions, von Hayek concludes,

not because any of its members survey the whole field, but because their limited individual fields of vision sufficiently overlap so that through many intermediaries the relevant information is communicated to all.18

Significantly, the minor knowledge characteristic of individual agents in a market economies is incompatible with the royal science of statistics: the “sort of knowledge with which I have been concerned,” von Hayek insists,

is knowledge of the kind which by its nature cannot enter into statistics and therefore cannot be conveyed to any central authority in statistical form. The statistics which such a central authority would have to use would have to be arrived at precisely by abstracting from minor differences between the things, by lumping together, as resources of one kind, items which differ as regards location, quality, and other particulars…19

So for von Hayek, a market economy forms a self-organizing assemblage that operates through the horizontal coordination of multiple agents, each of whom uses minor knowledge to act independently yet in close relation to “neighboring” agents, and all of whom together constitute a form of distributed intelligence whose collective actions comprise a functioning whole.

Von Hayek thus offers considerable insight into the dynamics of the market economy operating according to a form of distributed sovereignty. But it turns out that the limitations of his perspective are equally instructive; they typify much conventional economic thinking about
market dynamics. First of all, there is the question of principle: even if a centralized planner were able to compile all the relevant information, would she come to the right decisions? And even if so, would we want society to be programmed from the top down in this way? Far more important, however, is a question concerning information itself: even though von Hayek stresses the importance of using local or minor knowledge in market decision-making by multiple agents, as we have seen, he ultimately reduces the information involved in such decision-making to price alone. The only relevant issue for him is how to overcome local or punctual scarcity by finding the least-costly substitute good. So even without subscribing to the self-interest axiom of Smith’s “invisible hand” theory, von Hayek nonetheless reduces market decision-making to questions of efficiency and product-substitution, for which price information may indeed be sufficient. But the market in fact makes information other than price available to agents, and could do even more. At the same time, market agents act on far more than price information alone, and in fact, research indicates that consumers would like access to even more information than they currently have.

What if market agents were expected to act not just out of narrow self-interest and strict cost-consciousness, as per Smith and von Hayek, but also with regard to the well-being of others? What if, in other words, market agents routinely took into account not just personal desires and price information, but information regarding products’ circumstances of production, conditions of distribution, environmental impact, and so on? The result of the aggregation mechanism of the market would then be more than mere efficiency: it would be an aggregated approximation of the Common Good. A market economy self-consciously oriented to the Common Good in this way would harness what James Surowiecki has called “the wisdom of crowds” – that is, the
ability of people operating independently but in sufficiently large numbers to arrive at good
decisions. The determination of the Common Good resulting from such market mechanisms
would of course always be approximate, never absolute. But perhaps an approximation is all we
can and should expect: for where would a definition of the Absolute Common Good come from,
absent convenient fictions such as Plato’s Philosopher-King? If we rule out that kind of
omniscient, top-down authoritative source as extremely implausible as well as ultimately
undesirable, then methods for determining the Common Good more horizontally, in ways that
respect the wide diversity of perspectives entailed in a global-scale community, begin to look
pretty good by comparison. In this light, the distributed sovereignty embodied in a “Common
Good-oriented market” would represent an additional vehicle for democratic decision-making,
alongside the town meeting, the ballot box, and so on – and one that could operate on a truly
global scale, as we shall see.

It would at the same time represent a vehicle for the kind of consequentialist institutional-
cosmopolitanism discussed earlier. Investment and purchasing decisions would be made not on
the basis of price alone, but also on an assessment of the ethical qualities and effects of the
organization with which one was dealing. The late-20th century South Africa divestment
movement is one successful example of this, albeit a negative or privative one (i.e., operating via
disinvestment rather than investment). A positive example would be what the French call
“entreprises citoyennes” – which translates into English (quite abominably) as “triple-bottom-
line enterprises”: enterprises that take not just profitability into account, but also workplace
conditions, impact on the environment, and so on. A Common Good market-orientation would
encourage people to buy from this kind of enterprise instead of others, or to invest in one – and
perhaps even to work for one. But here we run into a problem – and it’s just the tip of the iceberg: ethical decision-making of this kind presupposes a considerable degree of choice. And not everyone, obviously, has the choice of e.g. investing in South African businesses or not; just as not everyone has the discretionary income to make ethical choices about the goods they buy; and not everyone, finally and most importantly, has the option of choosing the employer for whom they work. You will recall that consequentialist institutional-cosmopolitanism requires that participation in institutions be voluntary; in the same vein, and for the same reasons, an economic cosmopolitanism grounded in a Common-Good oriented market requires that market agents have free choice. And so this is the iceberg: the Common-Good market orientation I have been describing is impossible within capitalist markets, precisely because that orientation requires free choice. And capitalist markets, as we know – and especially its labor market – are anything but free.

That capitalist markets by and large preclude a Common-Good orientation is testimony not just to the historical reach and cultural force of Smith’s injunction to act selfishly, nor merely to the distorting and inflationary influence of advertising on people’s desires, but to the impact of capital on the very premises of these markets. It is for capital’s sake – for the sake of ever-increasing private accumulation – that exchange-value takes priority over use-value, that the production of surplus-value takes precedence over production itself, that quantity becomes more important than qualities, and so on. For all his talk about the importance of a particular or minor knowledge not susceptible to quantitative, statistical treatment, von Hayek adopts a quintessentially major standard for measuring market outcomes: maximum efficiency and optimum resource allocation, quantitatively measured.23 This, then, is the second major
limitation of von Hayek’s position, although it is clearly related to the first; for if the information relevant to a market economy is reduced to price, then maximizing exchange-value will be the standard measurement of success – and the market henceforth answers first and foremost, and as though by definition, to the imperatives of capital accumulation.

The final limitation of von Hayek’s position is one he shares with practically the entire tradition, stretching all the way back to Smith. It is the failure to recognize that, from its very inception, capitalism would inevitably vitiate the freedoms and virtues ascribed to the market itself. Capitalist markets, in a word, are not and simply cannot be truly free markets. Symptomatic of this failure in von Hayek is his forbearance and half-grudging admiration for business monopolies contrasted with his virulent repudiation of trade unions (which can themselves be considered, in a special sense, merely another kind of monopoly, designed to prevent job-market competition from depressing wages). What he refuses to acknowledge is that capital inevitably concentrates and centralizes. It therefore exercises a kind of vertical command over markets that may differ in scale or proportion from that of socialist State planning, but does not differ in kind. Centralized, top-down planning is centralized, top-down planning, the antithesis of free-market, distributed decision-making – and the fact that there is a small number of business-monopoly centers and just one socialist State center is not decisive. Moreover, any attempt to prevent capital from centralizing or preclude its exercising power over markets would require precisely the kind of massive State bureaucracy against which so-called free-market advocates inveigh so vociferously. So-called “free” markets, then, are truly free when and only when they are completely free from capitalist command and control. These – to return to the question with
which we began – are the conditions under which markets could foster a more equitable and sustainable, cosmopolitan global community than the one we have now.

It should come as no surprise that positive cosmopolitanism requires the elimination of capitalism, since its kind of market is responsible for massive global as well as regional inequalities, ubiquitous social and environmental degradation, widespread impoverishment, continual curtailment of job- and life-prospects, and so on. But it is equally important to remember, as the Australian/American feminists Gibson-Graham insist, that capitalist markets are not the only ones, and moreover that capitalist firms are not the only kind of viable business enterprise – as the remarkable, long-term success of the Mondragon cooperatives in Spain and the more recent growth of *entreprises citoyennes* throughout Europe clearly indicate.24 As we know, capital is not a stockpile of things or even of wealth, but a social relation between private ownership and wage-labor – which means that it can end either through the social expropriation of accumulated capital or the elimination of wage-labor. Of these two, nomad citizenship entails eliminating wage-labor, by replacing it with self-organizing production cooperatives: for whatever other ethically-oriented institutions may be involved, economic cosmopolitanism on a global scale requires truly-free free markets – which is to say: capital-free markets.

Here’s an example of what I’m talking about:

**Bolivia, 1988**: The El Ceibo federation of cocoa-growing cooperatives in the Alto Beni region surpasses the $100,000 mark in exports. Founded in 1977, it drew on centuries-old traditions of Andean indigenous participatory democracy to organize production cooperatives, expanding from 5 to over 30 village cooperatives in its first decade. The historical conjuncture had not been
favorable for such a remarkable experiment to succeed. Peasants had been displaced to begin with by an unholy alliance between the Bolivian state and international capital, which replaced traditional farming with cattle and sheep grazing starting in the 1960s, with disastrous consequences for the environment, the economy, and indigenous people alike. Unlike the Enclosure and Game Acts in England centuries before, however, the Bolivian State’s measures did not result in peasants’ total dependence on capital: the production cooperatives became an important alternative source of self-provisioning. But this was not through subsistence farming: the cocoa-growers had to find markets for their chocolate. The first products were sold locally, but runaway inflation (reaching as high as 24,000 percent in the mid-1980s) and State policy that kept food prices low for urban industrial workers at the expense of rural farm workers compelled the federation to look elsewhere for markets.25

**The Netherlands, 1988:** A consortium of European import cooperatives establish the Max Havelaar fair trade label (named after the hero of a 19th-century novel critical of the Dutch treatment of coffee-growers in Indonesia). It represented the culmination of a decades-old movement started in the Netherlands in 1959 to remedy Third World underdevelopment through “trade not aid,” as the slogan put it. The “alternative trade organization” movement started by developing so-called “World Shops” in Europe to sell handicrafts made in the developing world. But as the focus shifted in the 1970s from handicrafts to agricultural goods, starting with coffee, tea, and chocolate, import cooperatives were established in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland to arrange purchase-agreements with growers throughout the Third World. The other key innovation of the Max Havelaar Foundation was to market goods in regular retail outlets via the Fair Trade label, rather than exclusively in World Shops, which broadened the market exponentially. The Swiss import cooperative OS3 (later renamed and now doing business as
Claro Fair Trade) entered into fair trade agreements with growers throughout Central and South America--including the El Ceibo federation of chocolate-growers in Bolivia, starting in 1977.\textsuperscript{26} Was 1988 a historical turning-point in the passage, as Hardt & Negri might say, beyond capitalist globalization into a positive cosmopolitanism? We may be inclined at the moment to say no. But the truth is, we don’t know – and, as always, it is easier to find an answer to the wrong question than to ask the right question to begin with. The question should be: will 1988 have become a historical bifurcation-point on the way to a positive cosmopolitanism? – to which the answer can only be: it all depends. And one thing it depends on, in some sufficiently broad construal of this first-person pronoun, is us – on what we do, and what we will have done. From a properly non-linear perspective on history, it’s up to us, in other words, to make cosmopolitanism positive.
NOTES


3 Ibid., pp.83-84.


6 Ibid., p. 33.


12 Ibid., p. 395.


16 Deleuze and Guattari, op. cit., 361-74.

17 Von Hayek, op. cit., p. 521.

18 Ibid., p. 526.

19 Ibid., p. 524.

20 This is the problem posed dramatically at the end of Isaac Asimov’s *I, Robot*.


Gibson-Graham, J.-K. *The End of Capitalism (as We Knew It)*. Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996


