
Globalisation is a hot and often contentious topic in today’s economic, social, cultural and political discussions. As we navigate the debate, we may consider questions such as: “What are the important positions in the debate of globalisation?” “What are the compelling reasons for these various positions?” “Is there another position we should search for?” These are the essential questions that Tony Smith’s book, *Globalisation: A Systematic Marxian Account*, thoroughly examines. Smith proposes that he has found the answer to the last of these questions in the Marxian model of socialist globalisation.

A social philosopher, Smith methodically explores four capitalist models of globalisation: social-state, neo-liberal, catalytic-state and democratic-cosmopolitan. This examination continues on to a Marxian model of capitalist globalisation and finally rests on a Marxian model of socialist globalisation.

The book is structured as a careful and exhaustive exploration and assessment of each of these models, exposing their shortcomings and the contradictions that exist between how they function and the claims their proponents make for them. The methodological framework of systemic dialectics is the means through which the reader journeys through the text. Though readers may find the vocabulary or ideas difficult at times they will know exactly where they are located in the analysis at all times. Like a good tour guide, Smith continuously reminds us where we have been in the assessment of his chosen models, where we are going and how they are related.

To briefly summarise Smith’s account, he begins with the “social-state model”, taken from John Rawls’s template for globalisation laid out in *A Theory of Justice*. Smith argues that several contradictions exist within Rawls’s framework, especially that “the dominant tendency… for the social programmes that endure [are] far less ambitious than what justice requires…” (p. 42).

Moving to the next model of globalisation, Smith argues that the “neo-liberal model”, which is essentially Adam Smith’s “invisible hand thesis”, does not in fact provide for the success of others when private self-interest is pursued in the market. This seems to fit the arguments against economic
globalisation by the likes of more popular writers like Naomi Klein and Joseph Stiglitz.

The third capitalist model that is reconstructed is the “catalytic-state model”. The idea of the catalytic-state model refers primarily to John Gray’s *False Dawn: The Delusions of Social Capital*. This model uses communitarian values—the flourishing of the community can lead to the flourishing of individuals. Smith argues that within this model, competing objectives exist, leading to the economic insecurity of a large number of the population.

The last of the capitalist models explored is the “democratic cosmopolitan” model. This is position defended by such thinkers as Jurgen Habermas, Martha Nussbaum and in David Held’s *Democracy and the Global Order*. This model works from the principal of autonomy. Simply put, an individual should be free in deciding his or her own life’s conditions as long as those decisions do not impinge on another’s freedoms. However, because of the capitalist tendency toward the over-accumulation of resources and the uneven development of the world markets, this model too contains inherent and problematic contradictions.

After reconstructing the four capitalist models of globalisation, Smith provides a Marxian framework to further show the inherent contradictions of a capitalist model of globalisation. Smith focuses on that which constitutes the heart of the relationships connecting national economies and the world market: money.

In the final chapter, Smith offers a model “that would institutionalise a qualitatively higher level of efficiency and normative attractiveness than any possible form of global capitalism” (p. 295). This model is the Marxian model of socialist globalisation. Although Smith states that this is by no means a “full vision of a future society”, he sees it as the beginning of a search for an alternative to global capitalism. As the social forms of global capitalism currently define “the inclinations and tendencies of our contemporary social world”, an alternative model of globalisation is one that allows us to move beyond “the private ownership of the means of production” (p. 344).

The “systematic” portion of the title refers to the systematic dialectical framework Smith uses to think through these models. Here Smith is certainly guided by Hegel and Marx. The framework is the “rational reconstruction of positions in debates” (p. 294) while taking the theoretical