Philosophies of the Resolution  
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The contentious 2016 presidential election cycle mounted a (shall we say, “big league”) assault on the English language—neutral words assumed potent connotations as their users hurled them at one another.[[1]](#footnote-1) Consequently, depending upon one’s position on the political spectrum, the words “nationalism” and “globalism” carry substantial baggage as both political parties and the media have construed them to straddle political fault lines. This article endeavors to penetrate beyond the mere political sentiments engendered by the concepts in NCFCA’s 2017-2018 Lincoln-Douglas resolution and investigate their philosophical underpinnings, tracing their lineage back to their original thinkers.

Philosophies of Nationalism

Civic Nationalism (Locke and Mill)

“Civic nationhood is meant to describe a political identity built around shared citizenship in a liberal-democratic state. A “civic nation,” in this sense, need not be unified by commonalities of language or culture (where “culture” refers to the traditions and customs of a particular national group). It simply requires a disposition on the part of citizens to uphold their political institutions, and to accept the liberal principles on which they are based. Membership is open to anyone who shares these values. In a civic nation, the protection or promotion of one national culture over others is not a goal of the state.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* notes that nationalism coalesces not just around ethnicity or shared heritage but around ideology.

“American nationalism was a typical product of the 18th century. British settlers in North America were influenced partly by the traditions of the Puritan revolution and the ideas of Locke and partly by the new rational interpretation given to English liberty by contemporary French philosophers. American settlers became a nation engaged in a fight for liberty and individual rights. They based that fight on current political thought, especially as expressed by Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine. It was a liberal and humanitarian nationalism that regarded America as in the vanguard of mankind on its march to greater liberty, equality, and happiness for all. The ideas of the 18th century found their first political realization in the Declaration of Independence and in the birth of the American nation. Their deep influence was felt in the French Revolution.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

John Stuart Mill corroborated that notion that classical liberal nationalism is underpinned by universal rights in his argument “that liberal governments were, indeed, dependent on a prior national principle, free institutions being almost impossible in a state containing mixed nationalities that precluded ‘fellow-feeling’ and a sense of common identity.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Despite the heterogeneity of certain nations, disparate groups of citizens can unite behind a banner of ideology.

G.W.F. Hegel

In what is famously known as his “master/slave dialectic,” Hegel posits that “a consciousness exist[s] for itself… in mediate relation with itself through another consciousness,” meaning that one does not only derive one’s personal identity from self-conscious experience but also through relationships with other beings.[[5]](#footnote-5) According to Hegel, one cannot truly know oneself independent of one’s relations with other entities. One continually engages in the pursuit of self-understanding, an objective achievable only through discerning what one is *not*, via differentiating oneself from objects and entities in the outside world.

In conjunction with the resolution, Hegel would promote nationalism as essential to identity, with a country’s collective consciousness and self-understanding shaped by its differentiation from other nations. Inculcating a sense of national pride and distinctiveness reinforces the populace’s communal identity. A globalized world would impair the formulation of the notion of who we are.

Philosophies of Globalism

A Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Aaron Renn helpfully distills several of the key tenets of globalism:

1. *Borderless World*: This notion does not necessarily entail open borders, but refers to the expedited worldwide transfer of capital and resources.
2. *Global Culture and Regime*: Renn emphasizes that a one-world government is unfeasible, and this construct exemplifies “a shared set of social, lifestyle, and political norms,” which “supersede all national norms and institutions.”
3. *Flat Earth Morality*: Renn uses this moniker to denote the principle that all humans are equal, and, consequently, that political decisions ought to consider the ramifications on every human throughout the world rather than just the implications for national or local communities. In contrast, “Traditional human cultures are hierarchical in their conception of moral obligation. That is, our first obligation is to our family, then tribe, then nation, and finally to the world at large.”
4. *Neoliberal View of Personhood:* This perspective considers “humans concerns as primarily economic, and assumes utility maximization, rational behavior, etc. are hard wired into people.” Individuals “are simply a factor of production, no different from iron ore or bonds. The flat moral schema also relies on seeing human beings as effectively a pile of widgets in a warehouse. They all have equal value under “mark to market” accounting. They also have no intrinsic relationship to one another. Hence there’s no reason to value one over the other. No do you need to know much about about any particular widget, just whether or not its economic value is rising or falling.”

At the conclusion of his article, Renn observes that these four objectives are more often implicit than explicit in the globalist worldview, and that many globalists would ascribe to these positions while not necessarily having articulated them as such. Moreover, many elements of globalism involve a bipartisan concurrence, meaning that the media’s sharply delineated political strata aren’t entirely accurate.

Finally, Renn notes that a crucial problem for globalism inheres in the fact that “human beings aren’t widgets, aren’t *homo economicus*, and don’t like being treated as such. And while the elite might aspire to flat earth morality, in the real world political communities are local and national – and still tribal in many places.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Karl Marx

Any discussion of globalism would be remiss without mentioning the notorious progenitor of communism, Karl Marx. In their *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote that “the working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got” and furthermore that “national differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world-market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

Marx’s commentary indicates that while globalization via the abolition of national boundaries is a communist objective, it also results from burgeoning capitalist economic development—a testament to globalism’s transcendence of the political spectrum.

Martin Heidegger

German phenomenologist Martin Heidegger “anticipated contemporary debates about globalization” with pessimism and consternation. According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Heidegger presaged the “‘abolition of distance’ as a constitutive feature of our contemporary condition,” writing that “‘All distances in time and space are shrinking. Man now reaches overnight, by places, places which formerly took weeks and months of travel.’” Heidegger described an era where “distant sites of the most ancient cultures are shown on film as if they stood this very moment amidst today's street traffic…The peak of this abolition of every possibility of remoteness is reached by television, which will soon pervade and dominate the whole machinery of communication.’”

*The Stanford* *Encyclopedia* concludes that Heidegger’s sentiments toward globalism “ultimately proved no less apprehensive than the views of many of his predecessors.” It continues:

“In his analysis, the compression of space increasingly meant that from the perspective of human experience ‘everything is equally far and equally near.’ Instead of opening up new possibilities for rich and multi-faceted interaction with events once distant from the purview of most individuals, the abolition of distance tended to generate a ‘uniform distanceless’ in which fundamentally distinct objects became part of a bland homogeneous experiential mass (Heidegger 1950, 166). The loss of any meaningful distinction between ‘nearness’ and ‘distance’ contributed to a leveling down of human experience, which in turn spawned an indifference that rendered human experience monotonous and one-dimensional.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

# Conclusion

Despite their polarizing connotations in today’s political environment, nationalism and globalism are the products of a multifarious philosophical lineage that predates contemporary political parties and refuses to compress the depth of either concept into a mere political label. As civic nationalism demonstrates, nationalism is not simply an ethnocentric mentality that entails the purging of minorities, but often depends on ideological principles of universal human rights. Similarly, thinkers such as Marx demonstrate the applicability of globalism to both the Left and the Right, and Heidegger shows that objections to globalism can arise from a philosophical, not political, standpoint.

Don’t passively employ mere labels. Grasp the philosophy first.

1. Liam Stack, “Yes, Trump is Really Saying ‘Big League,’ Not ‘Bigly,’ Linguists Say.” *The New York Times*, Oct. 24, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/25/us/politics/trump-bigly-big-league-linguists.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Anna Stilz, “Civic Nationalism and Language Policy,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 37, No. 3. 2009. <https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/Stilz_PAPA_0.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hans Kohn, “Nationalism.” *Encyclopedia Britannica,* July 17, 2016. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nationalism> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Kane, John, “Loving the Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Foundations of Civic Nationalism” (2010). APSA 2010 Annual Meeting Paper. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1642131> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. J.L.H. Thomas, from M.J. Inwood, ed. *Hegel: Selections* in Paul Edwards, gen. ed.*, The Great Philosophers* (New York: Macmillian, 1989), reprinted in Forrest E. Baird, ed. *Philosophical Classics, Vol. IV: Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003), 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Aaron Renn, “What Is Globalism?” <http://www.urbanophile.com/2017/05/05/what-is-globalism/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*. Edited by Jeffrey C. Isaac, New Haven; London, Yale University Press, 2012. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vm1x2](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vm1x2). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Scheuerman, William, "Globalization", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy(Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/globalization/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)