

## Development, conflict and globalization

There is no universally accepted definition of development, but a neutral statement such as *process of innovative structural change in the economic, political and cultural fields*, gives many advantages. It allows historical interpretation of past processes and understanding of current ones, constantly calling attention on the true motor of development: *internal innovation* (something that no external aid can replace). Globalization tends to be reified by many authors: one hears that “globalization does this or does that”. It is not so. Globalization, like any other development process (such as the agricultural “revolution” of the Neolithic or the Industrial Revolution), by itself does nothing. Rather, globalization is moved by the innovative activities of dynamic actors. It is not in itself a prime mover, although it may act as multiplier of these activities. Last but not least, a neutral definition leaves space for the negative sides of development, as no one can guarantee that innovations will not have adverse outcomes.

The main points to be borne in mind in a general theory of development are: the nature (static or dynamic) of the society, the interaction of human activity with the physical environment, the Centre-Periphery relationships (essential for historical interpretation), the stages of development (it is rather surprising that some geographers still make reference to the stages of old Rostow), and the unavoidable and ubiquitous conflict. Globalization is a process (or *the* process) of the highest importance, not only economic but also political and cultural. It is still an ongoing process. In rough approximation, we can say that, out of six billion human beings, only one billion people

(belonging to the most advanced countries) are truly active globalizers. Three more billion (in particular India, China, Brazil and some others) can be regarded as passive globalizers, in that they are getting increasingly dynamic and being gradually included into the global world (although some of their regions might be more dynamic than the some comparatively static regions of developed countries). Only two billion people are still in a marginal position and unglobalized. Underdevelopment means precisely having too little dynamism and innovative capability to be included (yet) in the globalized world.

What about the enemies of the global world? In the poorer countries people seem to be aware of the advantages of globalization rather more than those of developed countries, a fact which no enemy of globalization has ever explained or even tried to explain. The enemies are mainly two: the nonglobal movement and Islamic fundamentalism. Their conflictual relationship to the globalizing centres of the world is the leading theme of this volume, which tries to attract attention to *facts*, not to vague “discourse”. A dominant, and most unfortunate, trend of today’s “human” geography is precisely “discourse”, “relativism”, “weak thinking”, with the result that “geographers have developed a disturbing – even dysfunctional – habit of missing out on important intellectual and politically significant debates” (Dicken 2004). What is globalization? Beyond a vague perception of something having to do with “imperialism”, and therefore “bad”, a great many geographers and non-geographers are unable to go.

It is doubtful that such “weak philosophizing”

approach may provide much insight into real processes, first of all because if we accept relativism, why on earth should the very proposition “all is relative” be “true”? Why should we trust the “relativist”, whose “truths” are, by definition, “relative”? Ah, but says the “relativist”, what I say is true because I say it. Very good, then stay cosy in your cocoon and trouble us no more. But the broader question, “why so much discourse?” is still to be answered. What is the philosophical basis for this line of “thinking”? Its import is far broader than the mere field of geography, and concerns human society and human life as a whole. Let us try, briefly, to understand, or at least to guess. Hereby follow a few hints to help readers to understand (or guess) by themselves.

First hint: the moral law of Christianity is irksome to people who prefer doing what they like without moral hindrance (actually these are a great many people, whereby arise all the countless heresies, persecutions and black legends on “Inquisition”, “Conquistadores”, and the like). Second hint: since the 18<sup>th</sup> century culture and science have been overwhelmingly in the hands of declared atheists and agnostics (mostly black legend mongers; they call it “secularization”). Third hint: during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries these people hoped to destroy Christianity by their new-fangled toy made up of “Aufklärung”, “rationality”, “positive thinking”, “facts, facts, facts”. Fourth hint: subsequently the toy began to break down.

The “herald” of modernity, Giordano Bruno, had become the darling of atheists because he had proclaimed the Universe to be eternal and therefore independent of God and Creation; unfortunately for him and his deluded followers, astrophysics began to discover that the Universe had a definite beginning and will have an end; moreover the materialistic theory of biological evolutionism, another milestone of atheism, has entered a deadly crisis, and for anyone who does not like self-imposed blindness it should be clear that science disproves the possibility of doing away with Christianity rather than helping to destroy it. This does not mean that Christianity ever needed “scientific” proof, or will ever need in future, but merely that atheists sought for proofs against it, fostered the illusion of having found them, and the “proofs” rot and became dust in their very hands.

Fifth hint: as the toy was breaking down, “Aufklärung”, “rationalism”, “positivism”, “facts, facts, facts” were abandoned and “weak thinking” (behaving as if God did not exist, since “we cannot know”), “discourse” (behaving as if reality could not be known, and the only possible intellectual

activity were to talk of what other people had previously said, in practice “talk, talk, talk” instead of “facts, facts, facts”) became the new catchwords. These five hints taken together might bring to the unpleasant (for some) conclusion that their activity and “scientific” production is not the outcome of study and research but of an attempt to live without God, satisfying their vices, revolving endlessly around their poor selves, and therefore of corrupting soul, mind and body.

But there is more than that, and of the highest importance just for the problems being investigated in this special issue. After the multifarious contradictions of pagan philosophy (“everything is in flux”; “no, everything is unchanging”; “the world is made exclusively of matter”, “no, it is a reflection of a world of pure ideas”, and so forth), Christianity had taught mankind a vital lesson: the *principle of reality*. According to this principle, there is a real world over which we do not have any control. This comes as a consequence of the acceptance of the main essential reality: the existence of God. God is the Being by definition, His Name is “I am”, as revealed to Moses in the Burning Thicket. Whether we believe in Him or not, this reality does not change. God does not stop existing because some people think (hope) that he does not, so that there may be no moral law and no final reckoning.

The very concept of God helped to realize the existence of other realities too, over which we likewise have no control. That is the great intellectual lesson of Christianity, and the very foundation of the ability to think. The progression of secularized thinking gradually undermined this ability. This was not done all at once: at first the principle of reality was upheld by Enlightenment and Positivist “thinkers”, when they thought that rationalism, materialism and atheism would be able to defeat Christianity. When, as we have seen, materialistic ideas began to totter, the old philosophy of scepticism (dating back to the hellenistic Age, with Pyrrhon of Elydes) was resurrected with a new label: “weak thinking”.

To top all this, came superspecialization, whereby only “specialists” are entitled to judge within a given field, even if thinking in that field affects very deeply the life of all. Thus, for example, only specialized philosophers should be entitled to speak of philosophy. All the others are expected to be passive receivers, lest they be accused of overstepping the bounds of their own fields of research. However, philosophy, i.e. thinking, is too important to leave it in the hands of philosophers alone. The hasty demise of the principle of reality



and the prevailing scepticism, or agnosticism, or “weak thinking”, whatever you call it, have catastrophic effects precisely in studies on conflict and globalization.

Due to the declining ability to think, terrorists and noglobals are able to spread their senseless slogans. Just due to the same loss of reasoning ability, the balance of terror is always to the detriment of the State actor, deemed to have failed to protect the victims, while no blame is attached to the terrorist criminals. Exactly this loss of brainpower prevents many people from understanding the radical changes of war, whereby it is no longer possible to distinguish clearly between military and civilians, and fighters may be utterly alien from any military establishment: the terrorist and his logistics supporters and propagandists, the pacifist who strives to prevent one side from defending itself, the judge who send terrorists free, the academic, the politician and the journalist who propagates “understanding” for terrorism and the “need” of yielding to their requests, the hacker trying to upset police and military files, the protester who smashes shops and banks and hurls stones and Molotov cocktails at the police, are all fighters. And precisely because of enfeebled reasoning power (and fear) most people prefer to deny the inevitability of conflict and of the clash of civilizations: it would be magnificent indeed if our wishes came true, but this is seldom (or rather never) the case, and wishful thinking is the most disastrous way of approaching any problem, particularly life and death predicaments such as those facing the Western world today.

All other civilizations have kept their own roots and cherish them, none more so than the Islamic one. The West is throwing away its heritage, destroying its own roots, apostatizing Christianity. Any attempt to defend what little remains of those roots is frowned upon as “narrow-minded”, “racialistic”, “sexist”, “a stumbling block to international understanding”. Anything the others do is not to be criticized, because “it is their culture”. What culture is left to us? The levelling off of any trace of Christian and Western identity, with the prospect of starting again from a cultural Ground

Zero, at the mercy of alien cultures and codes of behaviour. All this means one thing only: death.

This volume seeks to tackle the difficult task of probing into the interlocking processes of conflict and globalization rejecting “discourse” and self-imposed blindness, *looking at facts with true faith in human reason*, trying, with the aid of a group of valiant scholars in the fields of Geography, History, Economics and Linguistics, to understand ongoing processes and to suggest how this world of ours might be improved by defeating terrorism and bringing about positive and fruitful development.

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