

The second globalization

Rogelio Saunders

When Christopher Columbus embarked on the mistaken journey that would end up being known as the “discovery” of America, he could barely imagine its extraordinary consequences. Not even Columbus knew what his destiny would be since the world had yet to reveal itself in all its integrity. That’s why we can call this adventure of Columbus (this erroneous and at the same time promising drifting) the *first* globalization. Not a “meeting of cultures”, as some deceptively tried to proclaim, but a violent and dramatic development in which space-hungry dreams took wing in a orgy of greed and blood in which entire cultures disappeared.

And still, a first *globalization*. A first recognition (mistaken, but fruitful) of the human *extension*. It was such an enormous change that until very recently we had lived in its inertia. The world was the world that Columbus’ adventure revealed (even if Columbus himself was unable to see it). Human populations that had grown almost infinitely apart came close again, forced to recognize each other in the mirror of their own estrangement. It was the birth of new worlds inside the world: of new ways to see and love, to dance and cook: new ways to think and write, to dream and sing, to do battle and die. And also—alas—the birth of a new political excess and of terrible injustices. But above all was the revelation of the world to itself; the wonder of encountering ourselves after centuries of separation; after the basal and diasporic movement that scattered the human population across the globe—and the long journey in the opposite direction began. A journey that now has received a new and formidable drive in what can be called the *second* globalization.

But this second globalization (this great opportunity and challenge) doesn’t bring, like the first, new worlds inside the world. Above all it brings the *immediacy*, the *instantaneity* of human coexistence. It means that the world has become instantaneous, unique, *one*. There is an intense outbreak of simultaneity, and at the same time, a questioning of the old structures. The distribution of work has become truly international (although not equal), and the power is moving towards a political multipolarity that will be more evident in the next years. But along with big opportunities, there are also big threats. Since everything is now intertwined, the butterfly effect happens at every level of the human life. The economy, a weather report of the state of the world, is the first to register it. The perspective of a world war comes to

the front again, along with it the temptation to step back to the era before the creation of the UN. Everything has entered an age of change and effervescence. Of redefinition and actualization.

But we have yet to understand the virtues of this process in which we are the protagonists. Technology, which promises a limitless freedom, actually strips our individuality away and we become part of the mass. We cannot see clearly the deep meaning of this change. There are big absences and strange silences, as if we didn't want or dare to recognize that the world is really *one*, and that the fate of every human is linked more than ever to the rest. That the face of a child who dies from hunger in Africa—the face of a beggar or a homeless person who dies in the street—is not anymore—especially today, especially now— someone else's face, strange and unknown, but our own face. Because there are no others (there never were). We are the others.

And that's precisely the peril that accompanies the second globalization, this wonderful opportunity that comes before us. That we are incapable of recognizing it; that we get lost in a thousand and one traps of the codification, in a thousand and one traps of the old thought (the thought predominant to this second globalization). (This globalization—let's say it once and for all—is nothing more than the process of recognizing humanity as *one*). That we cannot correctly read this new context and what it says about ourselves, wasting a great opportunity with the same old and awkward and useless alienations. That we don't realize that we have actually discovered a whole continent, rich and unique, made exactly to our measurement.