Synopsis

University of Warwick ‘Beyond Development’ Conference

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In this conversation, I raise many issues—some in quest of even a more nuanced interlocution and all still awaiting an approach to answer.

First, is ‘globalization’ to be narrated as a stage—perhaps last and final stage—of ‘capitalist modernity’ with many an adjustment? If so, what shall we make of any theory of contradictions, whether material, institutional, normative, cultural, antagonistic or non-antagonistic?

Second, how far does one describe this Age of Cruelty both as an ‘oppressive’ and ‘liberational’ globalization? The latter provides the historical herein of resistance, contemporary human rights standards and norms (discursivity), and even ‘emancipation’. Are these necessary products of Evil and do we have a theory of evil in contrast to abundant theoretical approaches to the virtue of ‘good’?

Third, are there alternatives to a globalizing modernity, especially when the Second and Third Worlds are said to have suffered a historic demise, and Third Worldism—as an ideology and a state of social consciousness—is said to be in retreat both among the theorists and those who are theorized? How is one, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos declares, to ‘de-Westernize emancipation’? Can the latter be attempted without also de-westernizing the paradigms of regulation and the law? Or, is the best way to explore some new social movements that’ (as Arturo Escobar puts it) directly and simultaneously engage with imperial globality and global coloniality’. Do/should we regard demosprudential adjudicatory leadership as one such movement?

Fourth, does all this entail conceptions and practices of ‘postneoliberalism’? Much here depends on the possibility of (as Max Frisch says) of ‘taking away’ from crisis ‘the aftertaste of catastrophe’. How is this at all possible/probable unless we redefine power in semiotic terms as practices of reorganizing individual, institutional, and social memory? And if so, how do the repressed
develop and practice a counter-memory? Are these conceptions and practices related to what is now being called ‘postdevelopment’?

Fifth, how do socially responsible (and to add a ‘dangerous supplement’ from Jacques Derrida: response-ability) conversations begin which are not devoid of: (a) our responsibilities as planetary citizens in the Anthropocene Age; (b) global democracy and human rights; (c) rethinking social movements (as Tara Mulqueen • Anastasia Tataryn accentuate) ‘not outside the law, but... in the movement and processes of community’.

Thinking beyond ‘development’ is to rethink the concrete and general suffering and the oppressed Other beyond ‘semiotic enchantment’ (as Walter Mignolo demonstrated) and even ‘semiotic enslavement’ (as Felix Guttari terms it). The all-important question is: What is the most socially effective mode of practising epistemic insubordination within the borders and boundaries of the disciplines of thought?