

Dusan Cotoras, Joaquín Zerené
& Diego Gómez-Venegas

TOWARDS THE *OPERATIVE*
OBJECTS OF POST-CAPITALISM:
A CRITICAL CULTURAL- AND
MEDIA-THEORETICAL *REFUSAL*
ON THE CHILEAN CASE (1973-2023)

Abstract

This essay aims to unfold a refusal on what we understand have been the historical hegemonic modes of social and cultural research under *capitalist realism*; that is, the politico-economic system ruling the West and beyond since the 1970s onwards. To do so, we present an updated approach to analyze Chilean social and cultural history during this period, insofar as it is, we argue, a paradigmatic case to critically understand *capitalist realism* in general. Thus, the essay is formed by three main parts: a) a historical presentation and contextualization of the case in that period, deployed in three fragments; b) the development of a critical cultural- and media-theoretical set of concepts that are instrumental to analyze the case; and c) a proposal that allows us to project the analysis' insights towards the present and beyond. Particularly from this latter part, but more clearly in a final short conclusion, the proposal and its potential stems from a *theory-fiction* approach.

APRJA Volume 10, Issue 1, 2021
ISSN 2245-7755

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Three historical encounters and clashes between objects and subjects

1. On the night of October 18th, 2019, the streets of Santiago de Chile saw the burning peak of a not unannounced social uprising: several heated and apparently non-hierarchically organized hordes took over key spots of the country's capital. Public transportation infrastructure was set on fire, including many subway stations of which some were completely destroyed, and clashes between protesters and the police left sad traces of increasing anger in the form of ashes, and the endless odor of tear gas (Garces 483-84; Bartlett "Chile protests"). Almost two weeks before, a 3.75% fare rise that was put in place by the city subway — 30 Chilean pesos that amount to 3.5 Euro cents[1] — had triggered vast protests led by secondary school students. The students, who were not directly affected by the fare rise since they have a special pass, operated as electronically coordinated mobs in order to get into subway stations, and evaded the turnstiles so agilely and in such large numbers, that no security guards or police personnel were able to control them. Using the media — especially TV — politicians from both the right-wing government, as well as from the Social-Democrat and Christian-Democrat coalition that had previously governed the country, deployed a negative feedback strategy in order to regulate this disturbance in the system: they portrayed the students as thugs and criminals, and some even made jokes about what they understood as the discrepancy between a seemingly insignificant source of malaise — the fare rise — and the true legal and economic scope of the evasions. However, it was as if that feedback strategy had had the exact opposite effect.

Soon thereafter, many adults joined the students, and those who did not join them actively often embraced the motto of the rising protests: "It is not thirty pesos, it is thirty years" (Freire Castello 156).

That catch-phrase, that eventually became a chant, signaled the period that from 1990 onwards marked Chile's *return* or rather *transition to democracy*. One year earlier, in 1989, the presidential campaign of the eventually triumphant christian-democrat candidate, Patricio Aylwin, emerged — also through TV — as the echo, if not the byproduct, of a previous campaign and its catchy chant: "Chile, the joy is already coming" [Chile, la alegría ya viene] — a way to emphasize that the sadness and terror of Pinochet's dictatorship would be left behind (Dzero 124). Thirty years later, however, most Chileans saw this period as a fraud: the neoliberal political economy introduced by force during the dictatorship was profoundly deepened by the subsequent democratic governments, and the rapid economic growth of the 1990s and early 2000s was only possible at the expense of a highly stratified and unequal society. This critical diagnosis became evident — despite some politicians had recently dared to state that nobody saw the social uprising coming — through the equally massive student protests in 2005 and 2011 (Roberts 127). The social uprising of October 18th, 2019, was thus the pinnacle of an already ongoing process; one that continued during November and December that year. Downtown areas in Santiago and other cities of the country became the epicenters of hard reverberations that seemed to emerge from below: the aesthetics of neoliberalism — that Mark Fisher called "aesthetic poverty" (*K-Punk* 503-504) — was ferociously attacked. Hundreds of windows and backlit logos were destroyed, and façade after façade were graffitied with silent screams of anger. Corporations reacted by

building wooden and even metallic scaffoldings in front of their buildings in a desperate attempt to find protection, or perhaps remain hidden, behind the strange resurrection of improvised *iron curtains*. Some of these protections, as the irony would have it, were soon covered by highly elaborate collages, poems, and drawings asking, hoping, for the arrival of a new time.

2. In July 2012, Pablo Larraín's *No* premiered in Chile; a film telling the story of the development of the 1988's political advertising campaign that, through a national referendum, would put an end to Pinochet's dictatorship (*No*). After fifteen years, due to domestic and international pressure, the tyrant had agreed to carry out a plebiscite where Chileans would be able to decide if they wanted him to remain in power (the option *yes*), or if they wanted him to leave (the option *no*). Thus, a broad and eclectic group of opposition political forces — which gathered members from the Communist party to the Christian-Democrats, and that had remained either clandestine or proscribed during much of the dictatorship — agreed to deploy a colorful and encouraging advertising campaign — again broadcast through television — aiming to convince the people that overcoming their fears and openly rejecting the dictator would be not only safe, but promising — it was actually then that the “Chile, la alegría ya viene” jingle was born (Howe 422). But as Larraín's film depicts, the decision to use one of the central methods of neoliberalism to bring about a new political era would in effect operate as a sort of aesthetic metaphor for what will follow: the dictatorship may end, but not the economic system it brought about — “there is no alternative” (Thatcher qtd. in Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* 8).

Larraín is part of a successful generation of Chilean film-makers that have been able to deploy a melancholic aesthetics of introspection. This generation may well have benefited

itself of having true access — perhaps due to the very politico-economic system from which their work emerged — to equipment and technology, and thus to learning and mastering the cinematographic techniques, as well as of participating of a vast network of international film festivals, in a way their predecessors were simply not able to know. *No* was thus the first Chilean film ever nominated to the Academy Awards, and Larraín himself was behind the production, through his company *Fábula*, of Sebastian Lelio's *A Fantastic Woman*, winner of the Oscar for Best Foreign Film in 2018 — let alone that he has become a familiar name in Hollywood by directing quite popular films (*Howe 421; A Fantastic Woman; Jackie; Spencer*). But more importantly, these film-makers are also part of a generation of Chileans that, growing up during the country's *transition to democracy* — from the 1980s to the 1990s — decided to remain *cynical* to the conditions of a period that appeared to them clearly as a farce, but which they accepted as their only fate:

[N]ot in the simple sense of not believing its own words, but at a much more basic level: it is cynical precisely insofar as it does believe its own words, since its message is a resigned conviction that the world we live in, even if not the best of all possible worlds, is the least bad, such that any radical change will only make things worse (Žižek, First as Tragedy 28)

Indeed, the aesthetics that followed the rise of neoliberalism in Chile consisted of a mixture of resignation and suppressed anger which sedimented the space of subjectivation for a functional depression (Sloterdijk 5). An anaesthetic aesthetics of cynicism that may have somehow operated as a silent *capacitor* from which a younger generation — one that grew up while this aesthetics and

its subjects were in full deployment, from the early and mid-2000s onwards — decided to act against, or rather from.

3. In November 1970, Salvador Allende took office as the first Socialist-Marxist president democratically elected in Chile — perhaps anywhere, ever. A few months later, in July 1971, three engineers at the National Agency of Development would write a letter — one that only one of them would sign — to the British cybernetician of management, Stafford Beer (Medina 43-45; Espejo). Central to Allende's program was the nationalization of several companies in key industrial branches, and thus, finding efficient methods to tackle the exponentially increasing complexity of their management was a task the government entrusted to the aforementioned agency (Medina 46-47). The team of engineers — already acquainted, although still superficially, with Beer's work — was certain that the challenges that the Chilean economy was experiencing — not only its nationalization, but also its socialist modernization and its subsequent antagonistic noise — required “cybernetic thinking” and “scientific views on management and organization” (*Letter to Stafford Beer*). Therefore, it should not be surprising that Beer's reply had been enthusiastic and that he formally requested to play an active role in such a process (*Letter to Fernando Flores*).

In November 1971, Stafford Beer arrived in Santiago de Chile for the first time. After a few months of arrangements, he had become the scientific director of a project that would transform the national economy into a socialist-cybernetic one; namely, Project Cybersyn (Medina 46-69). This endeavor was based on Beer's *Viable System Model* (VSM); a framework he had just developed to grant organizations a cybernetic mode of operations (Beer, *Brain of the Firm* 155-199). Thus, Cybersyn consisted of a system that would connect the nationalized factories to

a network of transmission, which, on a daily basis, would provide production data that in turn would be statistically processed in a computational node to forecast patterns of economic behavior. That information would be then assessed in an environment for decision where experts and government officials would generate instructions that, again as data, would be introduced back to the network of transmission, flowing all the way down to the factories (Medina 88; Gómez-Venegas 5-6). However, this design faced several challenges: the lack of computational equipment (Beer's VSM originally considered one processing unit in each factory (*Brain of the Firm* 175)); the expert methods used to model the factories' operations (which did not necessarily include workers participation, despite what has been claimed (Kohn; Medina 75)); and the external oppositional forces that introduced increasing *noise* to the system (for example in the form of international embargos or local strikes (Medina 4-5; 141-151)). Perhaps for these reasons, Beer envisioned — once the development of Project Cybersyn was advanced enough as to show its weaknesses and actual scope — a complementary cybernetic system that could grant the people a network to effectively influence the decision-makers. The *People Project* would be connected to the local TV broadcasting infrastructure, establishing a signal-input device in every house, allowing its residents to give real-time feedback to every government decision and proposal at the same time as they were announced on TV (*Brain of the Firm* 278-310). Despite the fact that this project was never implemented — although an early prototype was tested locally in meetings the team held in Santiago (Espejo) — we argue that, insofar as it was a spin-off or rather an amendment to Project Cybersyn as a whole, it might have paved the road to give the people a technological platform to act *so agilely and so massively*, that

no *police* would be able to actually control them.

Uncertain Objects, Technological Objects, Technological Subjects

The three fragments presented above — linked by the silent murmurs of a time that is more-than-historical — describe a broad, although neglected, field where we attempt to find that we call *uncertain objects*; that is, entities defined by multiplicity, whose borders are so transparent, and whose lengths and movements are so unpredictable, that hegemonic research — as an enterprise consolidated with the rise of *capitalist realism* (Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* 2-18; Wallerstein 34-58) — tends to avoid, or rather to fight them. On the contrary, we argue that tracing and identifying these objects constitutes in effect, perhaps today more than ever, an urgent act of *refusal*. The cyclical reverberations revealed by the threefold character of the Chilean case suggest that underneath any cloth weaved to placate uncertainty, its sources not only continue to operate, but their signals always find ways to resurface. Therefore, our approach implies embracing radical uncertainty; that is, by refusing the procedures by which objects of interest have been traditionally characterized — serving the analysis and deployment of the historical course of capitalism — allowing instead the operations beneath the aforementioned cloth to become apparent. This approach invites, accordingly, to bracket off the capacities historically granted to subjects; that is, the power to grant meaning to the material conditions of production. To do so, we first unfold a diagnosis that — following Mark Fisher and his reading of Žižek — allows us to describe a

negative space that, governed by a cynicism about the reality configured by neoliberalism, constitutes at the same time the central point of our case (Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* 1-30; Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* 52-56). In a second movement, however, we employ *theory-fiction* — coming back to Fisher (*Flatline Constructs* 138-156) — to problematize such a central point as a reservoir of energy that, perhaps silently, maybe unexpectedly, would have made possible the emancipatory flows in both ends of our case to be connected again. In other words, the three fragments forming the Chilean case are here diagrammatically thought of as a single cyclical signal of energy flow — as an m-shaped cosine wave (Fig. 1). This assessment, and moreover the surveying of its further emancipatory potential, is only possible, we argue, by tracing networks and entities that are certainly more than human, and whose ongoing connections will enact a transformative turn both in subjects and the societies they inhabit — a road we follow with Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker (149-157), and thus with Gilbert Simondon (*On the Mode of Existence* 147-159; *Individuation in Light* 327-355).

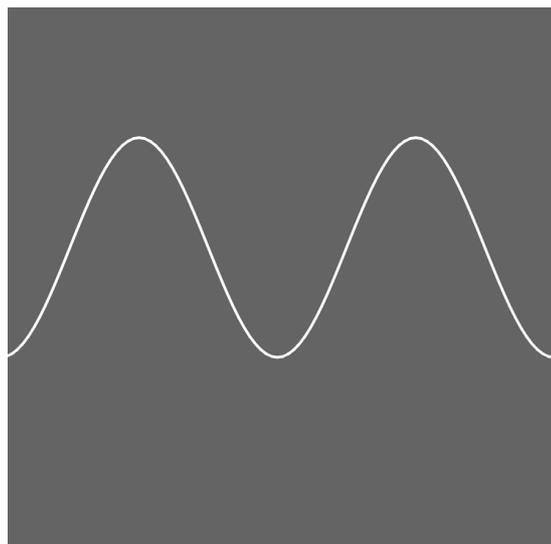


Figure 1: M-shaped cyclical energy flow – a diagram.

Henceforth, our tracing endeavor can proceed now as a loop, from the past to our present, and perhaps beyond:

Salvador Allende's political program — one that materialized through Project Cybersyn could be seen as an attempt to build a cybernetic sort of socialism — offers a concrete example of what *uncertain objects* are, and what their potential may be. By modulating collective processes of both aesthetic and political *becoming* — where humans and non-humans participate of an ongoing entanglement — this sort of socialism could have given way, either purposefully or not, to the emergence of a complex order of objects whose borders, always moving, would be then ungraspable, and whose members, through the multiple and ongoing connections they become part of, are always changing. These *uncertain objects* could bring about, therefore, networks of *becoming*, or, following Gilbert Simondon, of *individuation* (*Individuation in Light* 1-17). Even more fundamentally, these objects could be critical to understanding the constitution of trans-individual relations in networked societies — as those Cybersyn, and perhaps the *People Project* more intensively, paradoxically enough could have rendered *avant la lettre*. In other words, we suggest two things here: a) that seen through the lens of Chile's attempt at deploying a cybernetic socialism, *uncertain objects* are inevitably *technological objects* too, in the sense that given the entanglements they make possible, they also configure, through and *with* technological infrastructures, psychic and collective processes of individuation; and b) that as they hold the potential to *modulate* psychic and collective individuation — transcending historical socialisms, and moreover with the potential to overcome *capitalist realism* — *technological objects* should not be understood only as useful instruments but as durable, if not pervasive, structures of social

and political action (Combes 66-70).

As a counter-example, Pinochet's dictatorship — the tyranny that overthrew Allende's democratic government in 1973 — relied on a different sub-class of objects to regulate the social milieu it aimed to reconfigure. This regime certainly deployed technologies of surveillance and punishment, but, more importantly for our case, it also developed a more abstract, or rather black-boxed, order of *technological objects*[2]; namely, economic-normative apparatuses for the regulation of power and control, like the still-operative country's Constitution promulgated in 1980 (Heiss 470-472). This was, and is, a *technological object* aimed at absorbing and thus terminating all inner uncertainty. In itself uncertain — because its limits and scopes were not only never fixed, but they seem able to organically grow in order to block any deviation in the system — it installed a neoliberal model which, in turn, set a new framework of legal, political, economic, social, cultural and technological certainties in Chile — *literally* the black-boxed *principles*, the *arché*, for the implementation of the Thatcherian “there is no alternative,” and thus for the global inauguration of *capitalist realism* (Fisher, *K-Punk* 424). Put differently, this set of principles became the machine that configured, always in advance, the horizon of possibilities that would determine for decades what the Chilean people could think and hope, and in the process reaffirming capitalism as the sole source of reality, and giving way, accordingly, to the emergence of *cynical subjects*.

Being always technological, there are, therefore, *uncertain objects* to absorb uncertainty, while there are others that make it proliferate.

Thus, even though some dared to introduce amendments to the 1980 Constitution,[3] the reality it regulated seemed to keep offering no alternative, but to dream within and through the sort of constrained *realism* it put

in place. It is precisely then, in this oneiric landscape that one encounters a new example of *uncertain objects*. From the bottom of the generation that grew up during the 1980s and became creatively active in the late 1990s — as the product of a *transition to democracy* always ruled by *capitalist realism* — a new type of Chilean cinema emerged; one that, fully productive from the early to the late 2000s, developed an aesthetics of introspection and cynicism that is no other thing than an *uncertain object*; a dreamlike machine that reveals, through always expandable cinematographic languages and infrastructural platforms of materialization, the modes of being of *cynical subjects*. This *machine*[4] portrays both the secret cries and the silent effects that the *transition to democracy* period bequeathed to Chilean society, most of the time depicted as a personal, isolated, and melancholic experience. In doing so, it operates on at least three levels: first, as the anaesthetic effect on the possibility of transforming reality (Sloterdijk 4); second, and consequently, as a dispositive that by declaring this reality as an inevitable farce, becomes an (a)political apparatus for cynic subjectivation (Žižek, *First as Tragedy* 16); and third, as it was described earlier, as a *capacitor* that due to its aesthetic and political modes of operations — those that kept all melancholy and anger enclosed within itself — connects with its future, both antagonistically and sympathetically, as a source of energy release. It is in this sense that this *uncertain object* is also a *technological* one.

Accordingly, in the 2019 Chilean social outbreak *technological objects* played a key role in the activation and *synchronization* of the subjects that occupied both the streets and social media. They constituted mediatized bodies that circulated through the technological networks of the city, of the mediascape, as “a machine capable of being affected and producing affects” (Fisher, *K-Punk* 281),

hence activating bodies in their proximity. As it was pointed out earlier, the protests were not coordinated by a central command, but rather followed a propagation pattern based on viral, decentralized communication, and distributed action all over the country. In some cases, similar to what happened with the performance by the feminist collective *Las Tesis* (“The rapist is you!”), the contagion networks even managed to activate bodies in far corners of the world, triggering an unexpected *consciousness-raising*, and subsequent new processes of subjectivation. It is at this point that it becomes evident how the recognition of what we call *technological objects* — with the uncertainty they carry, with all the networked entropy they make possible — leads to the identification of *technological subjects* as well. Here, *technological objects* are tantamount to networks that make possible the operations that connect a multiplicity of ongoing individuation processes — human and non-human, organic and technologic.

The point here is not that networks are inherently revolutionary but that networks are constituted by this tension between unitary aggregation and anonymous distribution, between the intentionality and agency of individuals and groups on the one hand, and the uncanny, unhuman intentionality of the network as an ‘abstract’ whole (Galloway and Thacker 155)

Therefore, *technological objects* bring about aesthetic atmospheres that shape our sensible and cognitive experiences, which in turn transform us into *technological subjects*. As Bernard Stiegler points out, human subjects maintain a co-constitutive relation with *technological objects*, which play a major role in the configuration of human perceptions, imaginations, memories, and desires (Stiegler 8-11). Thus, human beings are constituted

through and with the *technological*, and can develop both positive and caring, or negative and poisonous relations with it. The question that follows is not only how we humans can learn to foster a nourishing order of relations with these processes, but moreover, how we can recognize ourselves as a constitutive part of them, and hence, how we can consciously learn to *operate* with and through them. Thus, the understanding that hyper-industrial capitalism threatens with generalized deindividuation, but that it also holds the potential to produce and multiply collective processes of psychic and collective individuation (Stiegler 45-50), may constitute the ultimate strategy for techno-political action in the near future. That is why, we suggest, critical theories of culture and society need techno-political and techno-aesthetic thinking to embrace the emancipatory potential of capitalist *technological objects* and networks.[5]

In *The Exploit*, Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker, following Simondon, develop a techno-political reflection on how to think of subjectivation as a networking operation: “Networks, generally speaking, show us the inhuman in the human, that the individuated human subject is not the basic unit of constitution but a myriad of information, affects, and matters” (Galloway and Thacker 155). Similarly, Simondon’s *transductive* approach on individuation — that is, “a physical, biological, mental, or social operation through which an activity propagates incrementally within a domain operated from one region to another” (*Individuation in Light* 13) — makes it possible to think of the individual as meta-stable systems whose dynamics integrate both stability and instability, certainty and uncertainty, allowing the continuous emergence of successive processes of individuation (Combes 6-9; *Individuation in Light* 13-16). Thus, we argue that nowadays *technological objects* and the networks they bring about can be thought of as a pre-individual condition for

every subject: subjects that will become truly technological only when they recognize that pre-individual space as such, and moreover, once they are able to consciously *operate* through that transductive phase that will make them massively multiple, uncertain, and hardly able to be defeated.

Towards Operative Objects — From Theory-Fiction to a Techno-Politics of Reality

Consequently, we are now in the position to present some final considerations to establish our proposal:

First, following Mark Fisher, we argue that *consciousness-raising* is not about the mere accumulation of knowledge, but about changing the way we relate to the world in order to transform it (*K-Punk* 421). It is, therefore, a multi-nodal productive operation that creates “a new subject — a we that is both the agent of struggle and what is struggled for.” This affects not only *subjects* but also *objects*, which are then perceived and conceived as “something that can be transformed,” and not as if they were “some static opacity, the nature of which is already decided” (*K-Punk* 421). Nonetheless, to achieve this sort of transformation, knowledge is also needed; a kind of knowledge, however, that enables communication between subjects and objects *through operations* rather than through representations; an order of knowledge that may lead to open up the *black boxes* containing the *technological objects* we are interested in; a sort of knowledge that will take us to operate on, and through, these *technological objects*, allowing us then to participate in the rewriting of their programs — once such an opening-up takes place, *technological subjects* can *operate* with

technological objects, transforming them, and themselves in the process. To summarize, *consciousness-raising* is not about a critical representation of the world, but about a transformative *operation* of it, in which new *subjects* and *objects* are created.

Second, following Galloway and Thacker, we state that networks are crucial to deploy a broad and contemporary understanding of the processes of becoming a subject: to operate within *networks* certainly means to connect with them, but, more importantly, such connections imply becoming part of them too. But given that “their dynamics operate at levels ‘above’ and ‘below’ that of the human subject” (Galloway and Thacker 157) — precisely due to the “ceaseless connections and disconnections” they put in place (156) — *networks* are hard to visualize. In a way, it could be said that *networks* hold an “impossibility of depiction,” but “the network is [nonetheless] *imagined*” (156). Thus, with the lessons learned from our case and its three fragments in mind, we argue that “[a]ccidents, failures, and exploits, both imaginative and material, are part and parcel of any network” (157).

Put differently, *networks* and *consciousness-raising* constitute the techno-aesthetic and techno-political *questions* sustaining what we could call contemporary cybernetic societies — in which experience is inseparable from its mediatizations.

Mark Fisher’s *theory-fiction* offers a powerful way to tackle these questions. This method stems from the premise that *capitalist realism* relies on cultural feedback loops that no longer can be understood under the logic of “mirror fiction” and “realism in its mimetic mode,” but, alternatively, as a stage of cybernetic simulation dominated by screens, interfaces, and networks (*Flatline Constructs* 138-141). Thus, once we accept “that the real, far from being opposed to the artificial, is composed of it,” fiction is no longer perceived

as “to be on the side of the false, the fake or the imaginary” (156). That is why — if theory wants to keep offering a critical way to assess reality (155) — we must acknowledge “the becoming-real of fiction,” and thus the necessity of the “becoming-fiction of theory” (156). Therefore, *theory-fiction* can be understood as a *consciousness-raising* operation oriented towards the recognition of *technological objects* and *technological subjects* not as mere stable categories to be known, but rather as uncertain metastable figures to be transformed. Under this perspective, accordingly, theory as fiction holds the potential to *operate* as a *virus* moving through, and like networks, being thus capable of spreading itself and infecting reality in order to change it. In short, *theory-fiction* — by connecting critical thinking with circuits of imagination and invention — not only constitutes the method to assess the three fragments forming the Chilean case in order to signal their current potentials, but rather, it could be the platform through which the *networks* of *technological subjects* and *objects* — which, from within the 2019 social outbreak have activated, say, spontaneous processes of *consciousness-raising* — could become fully aware of their positions, conditions, and, ultimately, of their *operative* possibilities.

Finally, we would like to propose a last movement: it is through *theory-fiction*, and from the *networks* described above, that *operative objects* can be discerned. Thus, against the intellectual rejoicing of an inoperative community governed by a cynical disregard for any form of technology (Nancy 32), we suggest that the lessons drawn from capitalism’s struggle against uncertainties require us to make its functions operable. In other words, we make a call to go beyond imagining networks in order to theorize with fiction the operative conditions for the near future. Then, with the notion of *operative objects* we aim to gather, then to boost, some of

the insights already sketched out in Stafford Beer's cybernetics regarding the unavoidable possibility of intervening in the world we observe, rather than simply participating in its description (*Preface* 63-72; "Reflections of a Cybernetician"). We propose, consequently, that *operative objects* must be understood, by definition, as objects that can only be manipulated by their own logic of operation — that is, from within. All the more, opposing the bivalent logic that separates — as an unsurmountable certainty — the properties of every object from the melancholic critique of subjectivity, the diagram for an operative objectivity we sketch here invites to modify our relationship with the uncertainties derived from those moments where the fissures of *capitalist realism* may have revealed its fragility. Such a diagram can be described through the following properties or premises:

- First, *operative objects* offer a greater degree of reflexivity insofar as they allow us to overcome the old division between form and matter by inserting *the operative* in the processing of their environment. *The operative* must be understood here as a procedural complex formed by both living and artificial machines, which responds and advances through the notion of information.
- Second, the idea of *the operative* pushes us to consider the structure of every *operative object*, accordingly, as the result of an *auto-* or rather *self-construction*. Such a process says nothing about the truth or falsity of an *operative object*, but it certainly says a great deal about the protocols that allow it to be an *adaptive* complex. Its sole existence could act, therefore, against the myths, beliefs, and the so-called *common sense* that associates technology and

machines with their utilitarian or rather instrumental role in *capitalism*.

- Third, it preserves the idea of *object* in order to overcome the hermeneutic tyranny that derives processes of subjective alienation from the reification of the world. Instead, we must give way to *co-informative* relations of production, going beyond every schematism of domination.

In this sense, we propose, the notion of *operative object* challenges any old conception of politics as a field dissociated from the technological — or rather from *technicity* (Simondon, *On the Mode of Existence* 173-190). Thus, as an alternative to the technocracies governed by an elite of "experts" (Habermas 3-28), the existence of *operative objects* make it impossible to refuse *becoming* part of the forces that trigger all further processes of decision-making. In other words, they bring about schemes of operative democracy where the objects of interest emerge from the complex people-technicity, which is the *operative object* itself. Hence, in opposition to the social democratic gaze, *operative objects* question the representative and representational model of power relations, inviting to move towards a phase of multi-nodal production which is, however, not entirely based on multiple subjectivities but, going beyond the anti-oedipal critique, on a hybrid operativity that emerges nonetheless as a new class of objects (Deleuze and Guattari 296-322). Understood in these terms, technology does not lead to any predefined political model — as some may once have intended to characterize the program of cybernetics (Tiqqun 19-32). Rather, (re) considered from its emancipatory potentials, technology provides codes, programs, and the hardware which — although they may have been previously reserved only for a

small elite — signal the model and the actual materiality of an “open machine” (Simondon, *On the Mode of Existence* 17-18) that ultimately constitutes an already ongoing layer of contemporary cultures that we can call a *techno-politics of reality*.

Refusing to Close — 2023

The above can be exemplified, again, by referring to the most current fragment of the Chilean case. Once the October 2019 social uprising externalized the inner reverberations that triggered it in the first place; once the protests spread as an uncontrollable virus whose origin was impossible to discern; once the authorities saw that the escalations that took place in the following days and weeks were in effect uncontrollable, something once unimaginable occurred: after long and desperate discussions and negotiations, in mid-November the Chilean Parliament reached an overnight agreement to open a referendum process in order to ask the people if they *effectively* wanted to replace the constitution and, if that was the case, what would be the best mechanism to pursue such a change (Bartlett, “The Constitution”). Then, the once unsurmountable “there is no alternative” started to vanish.

Almost a year later, right after the first anniversary of the social uprising, on the 25th of October 2020, Chileans voted massively and decidedly: 78% chose to replace the dictatorship’s constitution, and a paradoxically greater 79% opted for a fully elected, free of parliamentarians, constitutional convention as the *organ* to draw up the new charter (BBC News, “Jubilation”).

While the different stages of this transformative process have been constantly rescheduled due to the additional uncertainties brought about by the global pandemic, it

is clear that Chile’s new constitution will be operative in 2023 — coincidentally or not, the year that marks the 50th commemoration of the coup d’état that destroyed an earlier process of multi-nodal emancipation and then installed, indeed as a program, *capitalist realism* in that country and, from there, perhaps everywhere (Fisher, *K-Punk* 424). We would thus like to theorize with and through fiction — which is ultimately an act of hope and imagination — that this upcoming charter will be drawn up as a *technological object* to make uncertainty proliferate, and which, connected to many other *technological objects* and *subjects* will form an always in process complex that in turn, through a new order of *consciousness-raising*, will give way to the *operative object* that will configure our near transindividual future.

— Valdivia, Santiago, and Berlin, 2021.

Notes

[1] It should be noted that by that year, a one-way ticket in the city transit amounted to 0.95€ (800 Chilean pesos), while the median monthly income in the country was circa 476€ (401,000 Chilean pesos). In other words, with thirty round trips a month, and no subsidies available, a median income person in Santiago would have used 57€ or 11.9% of their salary in transportation (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, “Ingreso laboral promedio mensual en Chile”).

[2] It is important to notice here that there is a crucial difference between *technological objects* and *technical* ones. While the latter, in Simondon’s sense, refer to technical tools, instruments and machinery in their evolution, levels of abstraction, and concreteness (*On the Mode of Existence*

25-51), the inclusion of the *logos* in the former signals a twofold condition: they include both non-discursive and discursive components — as in Foucault's apparatus (197) —, and they employ systems of symbols as the basis of their own ongoing constitution.

[3] In 2005, Chilean social-democrat president, Ricardo Lagos, signed what he advertised as a *new Constitution*; by eliminating the articles he considered were the last “authoritarian enclaves” of the text, the legal act was presented as, finally, the true closure to the country's so-called *transition to democracy* (Kennedy 459-461). Soon thereafter, however, both the political and public opinion was that the Constitution had been barely touched, and, coincidentally or not, that year Chile began a long and increasing process of protests and turmoil led by secondary students (Roberts 127).

[4] Although Larraín's *No* and Lelio's *A Fantastic Woman* play a prominent role in the configuration of this machine, it is also formed by films such as Alicia Scherson's *Play*, Sebastián Silva's *The Maid*, Matías Bize's *In Bed*, or, again, Lelio's *The Sacred Family*, and Larraín's *Post Mortem*.

[5] Here we cannot but think of Marx when he says: “At a certain stage of development, [the historical tendency of capital accumulation] brings into the world the material means of its own destruction. From that moment, new forces and new passions spring up in the bosom of society, forces and passions which feel themselves to be fettered by that society” (Marx 928).

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