

The self-determination of desire

Javier de Rivera

Published in *EROMECHANICS. The erotics of the social machinery* book by Saioa Olmo www.ideatomics.com
ISBN 978-84-608-4143-2

Techniques and technologies

A technique is a procedure or skill for achieving a result. It is knowledge that is in-corporated (put into the body) through a learning process. It accompanies us and produces us as subjects that show what it does in the world.

Technology is a systematisation of technique that enables us to externalise it and objectify it in mechanisms, machinery or protocols. In interaction with it, the subject is separate. It also defines us as subjects but exogenously, offering us logic and models which we must adapt to in order to express our desire for action.

Technique belongs to the craftsman as a maker of everyday life, while technology refers to industrial production. The objectification of procedures separates the intellectual work

of design and the manual maker. This opens the way for the alienation of the worker, subsumed in the logic of the machinery that is imposed on them.

The 'scientific' organisation of work requires relational protocols, standards of behaviour and bureaucratic systems that break the organic resistance of the worker against being inserted into the productive machine. Later, the 'scientific' organisation of consumption, marketing, will teach us to desire the results of mass production. In this way, the alienated circle of production and consumption closes.

Eros... being, belonging and owning

Eros is the god of physical love, love of the body and sexual love; a specific form of love. It is not mother love or love of one's country or love of art. However, behind all love there is an erotic drive; all attraction has a physical component. A subtle excitement that runs through us at the proximity—physical or imaginary—of the loved one, the libido as a subconscious motivation that drives us to action, not necessarily 'sexual' in the ordinary sense, but always focused on the stimulating 'object'.

The erotics of power is the most common way of understanding erotics in social relations. Powerful people excites us with

their capacity for action, their accumulation of 'libido' to drive others to act. We obey them because they have resources, or sometimes just because they know how to seduce and attract with their rhetoric and their conviction. Letting ourselves be possessed by the other's desire to govern and control us gives us a pleasant feeling of belonging, of being valuable to someone, if only to be used.

The powerful make us feel that we matter when they ask us to put ourselves at their service, go to war for them, strive for them. They display an eloquent representation of their power so that we can project our desires onto the desire of those who can do anything. The powerful excite us because they concentrate the desire for action of those who have submitted to them. Admiring them and submitting voluntarily, we think that we are participating in their success and we also feel a little 'chosen'.

However, beyond the attraction of power, all social relationships have their own erotic element. Every being has its own portion of libidinal power to share and create with others. In the process of social organisation these portions are distributed according to the flow of power... they gravitate around libidinal accumulations. Social technologies manage this collective desire.

The power of the flesh

The flesh is stronger than steel. So says Thulsa Doom, leader of the Cult of the Serpent, to Conan the Barbarian. Possessing and dominating the mind makes you more powerful than any weapon. Weapons are used by people, whose bodies react to the erotic mechanisms that stimulate them, and they can be made to work at will and at a distance by those who control the macromachinery of social erotics. Like Thulsa, who as a demonstration of his erotic power, nods his head to order a young woman to throw herself off a cliff.

The young woman as an icon of what is desirable is a basic resource of erotic power in male society. The Tiqqun theory of the Young-Girl seeks to criticize the superficialisation of desire associated with consumption. The Young-Girl is someone who has been seduced by material power, and has given up her appeal to it, and is seen as just another asset to increase its power of seduction.

Although the theory of the Young-Girl is also applicable to men, it formally identifies the woman as a model of submission to power. In a sense, it seems to blame the woman-made-object for the eromechanism of alienation, diluting the role in her seduction of the system and of those whose consumption (metaphorical or real) she is intended for. After all, in order to be transformed into an object you need the

participation of someone else, who acts as an objectifying subject when they use us or look at us in a certain way.

What is at issue here is to overcome the captive desire in the cult of the external. The fetishistic desire that drives us to look for in objects what can only be found in subjects, and thus try to objectify the other as an image and piece of Meccano, with which we try to satisfy our desire for approval, belonging and sexuality.

The multi-spectacle of the social networks

In the multi-spectacle of the social networks we all become producers and consumers of illusions, of representations of what is desirable. The medium asks us to become miniature celebrities, or the Young-Girl, worried about our image, about trends and about attracting the attention of others... for no other reason at heart than to feel valued.

The social networks express a new form of 'libidinal market', not exempt from sexual and gender dynamics, in which desires and images are exchanged and consumed. A market of illusions built to 'create value' in the hands of managers, the new Thulsas.

Regardless of the content that we believe/consume, the commercial networks successfully domesticate us by promising us success in exchange for submission to the practices of constant investment in image, physical or virtual.

Self-determination of desire

To se-duce is to lead from the outside, in a subliminal way, to put meanings into an empty body (an 'empty signifier'), so that it can express as its own a desire that is someone else's. The empty soul is set ringing in submission to the institutional that gives it content with which to vibrate.

However, self-determination of desire can allow one to expropriate the libidinal charge accumulated by the institutional machinery of seduction, and redefine the forms of what is desirable. This would be the key to generating situations that can replace the regulated 'libido' markets with games of live interaction and movement, giving back to these subjects the auto-nomy of their 'libido', the ability to create their own meanings.

References:

MILIUS, John. *Conan the Barbarian*. 1982. Available in: https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=IGzOnbr4K2s#t=4243 (Scene 1:10:45)

TIQQUN. *Primeros Materiales Para Una Teoría De La Jovencita*. Madrid: Acuarela Libros y A. Machado Libros, 2012. ISBN 978-84-7774-209-8.

Javier de Rivera is a sociologist specialising in the study of new technologies and social technologies from a critical approach. He is a member of the Ciber-somosaguas (UCM) research group, editor of the Revista Teknokultura (UCM) and lecturer on the Master's course in Communication, Culture and Digital Citizenship (URJC - MediaLab, Madrid). <http://sociologiyaredessociales.com/>



For referring to this article:

DE RIVERA, Javier. "The self-determination of desire". In: OLMO, Saïoa. *Eromechanics. The erotic of the social machinery*. 1rst ed. Bilbao: Ideatomics, 2016. pp. 146-152. ISBN 978-84-608-4143-2