

society, but also the study of the technoscientific practices tout court. Nevertheless, since the theoretical contribution in the volume's opening, an excessive emphasis is given to the American national context, to such a point that, in the work, the specific features of the American health care system are taken for granted. However, this territorial connotation is slightly mitigated by the conclusive chapter (Adele E. Clarke), which constitutes the volume's epilogue and offers an interesting as innovative transnational study of the biomedicallization processes.

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Tomás Sánchez Criado (ed)
Tecnogénesis: la construcción técnica de las ecologías humanas (2 Vols.)

(*Technogenesis: the technical construction of human ecologies*)

2008, Editorial AIBR - Antropólogos Iberoamericanos en Red, 300 pp. vol. 1, 244 pp. vol. 2

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Postmodernism is an interesting symptom of transition, let's accept it as such, use it to bring about the end of modernism more quickly, and, for goodness sake... let's talk about something else.
 (Latour 2008, 177).

This book edited by Tomás Sánchez Criado compiles a series of works by authors from different disciplines (psychologists, historians of science, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers and primatologists) sharing a constructivist approach. The introductory chapter was written at the time of the enactment of the so-called "Dependency Law" (Act 39/2006 of 14th December for the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care for Dependent Persons), which is the result of the pressures exerted by many social movements strongly supported by the author, and represents one of the most ambitious public policies of the Spanish welfare

state. It is worrying that at the time of the reprint, three years after the launch of the programme, the implementation of the Act is still largely incomplete in some regions.

The chapters of *Tecnogénesis. La construcción tecnológica de las ecologías humanas* are different proposals with a common thrust: to overcome the weaknesses of Western traditional theoretical frameworks, starting from the acknowledgment of the problems of contemporary societies, as pointed out in Criado Sanchez's introduction. The authors challenge traditional dichotomous and simplistic views, questioning the boundaries that have served to separate us from other beings. Thus, providing a better understanding of the many forms of life from a post-humanist perspective, the authors call for a more appropriate co-existence.

In the preamble, Florentino Blanco warns us that what we are going to read might be as disturbing as a concert of vocal music he once attended. The concepts we find in the book are perhaps difficult to understand for those who are not familiar with such approaches. However, in his splendid introduction, the editor makes the reading of the book much easier. Sanchez Criado provides a thorough review of the concepts that allow us to understand how contemporary worlds are populated by human and non-human assemblages. Jorge Castro Tejerina's epilogue is a brilliant closure to the two volumes, combining the key concepts of the

different proposals from an anthropo-technical perspective.

In the first volume, we find a framework that challenges the traditional understanding of human nature from the perspective of a technological construction of human ecologies. According to this "radical constructivism", each of the elements involved in the construction has an impact on the others (Sanchez Criado: XXX). The chapter by Francisco Tirado and Miquel Domènech is a brilliant description of one of these radical trends: the Actor-Network Theory (ANT). These authors have extensive experience both in the ANT field and in providing tools for better understanding ANT-based studies. Their work is made particularly accessible through examples that illustrate "the important role of objects in the establishment of partnerships and of a collective generation" (Tirado and Domènech, 56).

Fernando Domínguez-Rubio emphasises the importance of objects in social sciences, and regards them as constituent sociological elements. He claims that objects become a sociological issue as long as they introduce a difference, overcoming the traditional division between the social and the material. This material turn is also shared by Daniel López's study, which focuses on a set of spaces and objects able to provide a remote care service. Iván Sánchez Moreno questions the artistic object in his analysis of the relationship between technology and music

production, emphasising significant changes in the role of the subjects involved.

Apart from these proposals, which point out the importance of social objects, another issue addressed by the volume is the need to reconsider the modern interpretations of human nature. In the first work focusing on this topic (Rubén Gómez-Soriano and Beto Vianna), it is argued that the definitions of human nature are historically related to the criteria for the classification of primates. Such definition of human nature represents a boundary work (Gieryn, 1983), claiming the existence of an essential social entity, in opposition to the others. The authors here, disagreeing with this view, propose a systemic perspective, stating that “human beings are what they are because of their relational practices” (220).

The perspectives expressed in the second volume, contrary to the first one, start from the analysis of human nature and put it in relation to their technoscientific ecologies. Tom Ingold focuses on the variety of human skills in connection with different ways of life and environments. In opposition to the complementarity thesis, according to which the human being is a sum of body, mind and culture, he takes on a relational perspective, regarding “the organism as a place of growth and development within a system of constant relationships” (31). What David Travieso and Marcos Fernández propose is the convergence of methodologies traditionally

assigned to the natural and social sciences in psychology. To make it possible, they start from a new alternative, the “operational realism”. Jesús Vega reflects on the limits and hybridization of human mind. In his analysis of cognitive authority, he rejects the symmetry between human and non-human.

A core concept in this volume is subjectivity in relation to human nature. Álvaro Pazos Garcíandía focuses on the issue of individual subjectivity, rejecting the dichotomy between individualist and collectivist societies. What he proposes is a new view of subjectivity in other cultures, starting from the analysis of their technologies. José Carlos Loredó Narciandi instead analyses the forms of production of subjectivities from a political perspective.

Latour's contribution is appreciated for his role in the social studies of science, and specifically in the ANT. In his characterization of modernity, Latour's approach is in tune with the one adopted in the first volume. He rejects the naturalistic (modernist) perspective as a means to understand both the others and oneself. He proposes a new constructivist paradigm, which is consistent with some of the concepts used by Europeans to describe the universal.

As pointed out, *Tecnogénesis* includes some interesting constructivist proposals, covering different themes. While great attention is given to the different ways in which Western collectives and technologies have been enhanced by modern

science, there is no reference to the social construction of gender or race. The reflections presented here are in fact mainly theoretical. One of the most surprising things about the volume is that, despite the criticism of modernity and its self-referential analysis, the book does not take account of the precarious employees' perspectives, even if the authors point out the risk of continuing to misunderstand the other. By trying to get a better understanding through the contribution of the now universal sciences, it is probably possible to achieve a merely topological turn, instead of a radical one, as it would be necessary. Nonetheless, the authors, with their proposals, are certainly providing a good starting point to approach realities and problems of our contemporary societies.

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**Le origini del telefono in Italia.
Politica, economia, tecnologia,
società**

*(The Origins of the Telephone in Italy.
Politics, economics, technology, society)*

Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 2011,
226 pp.

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Telecommunications are considered as the most representative infrastructure of contemporary society: they play in fact a crucial role not only in our economic system, which is characterized by an intense and continuous exchange of material and immaterial goods, but also in cultural activities and interpersonal relationships. Even if the word telecommunication can refer to a wide range of different activities that can be dated back to the first attempts to transmit information over significant