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### War Over Measure: Latin American Cultural Policy and the Pedagogy of Neoliberal States

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# WAR OVER MEASURE

## LATIN AMERICAN CULTURAL POLICY AND THE PEDAGOGY OF NEOLIBERAL STATES

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*Bret Leraul*

**I**n a seminal 1969 paper in the field of cultural and welfare economics, Alan Peacock broached the now-classic debate about the economic rationale for state support for the arts (Throsby 2006, 19). Fifty years later, the debate rages on as governments around the world—in particular, those of developing economies—come to recognize the economic value and social utility of culture and seek to foment production, consumption, and export of intellectual property intensive-goods and services (Streeten, 402). In an era of ostensibly decreasing state involvement in national economies, why do states continue to subsidize cultural production while cutting other social welfare spending? This apparent paradox raises the question: what is the insertion of cultural production into the imaginary of the neoliberal state?

Prompted by the nearly simultaneous creation of the Mexican and Chilean ministries of culture in 2015, this article will address this question in these two contexts. Chile is widely regarded as the first and perhaps most radical experiment in neoliberal governance. In the context of the Cold War, the electoral victory of socialist president Salvador Allende in 1970 was met by class warfare ending in the 1973 military coup. A small but influential group of young economists at the Universidad Católica—the Chicago Boys, so called for having trained at the University of Chicago—found in Augusto Pinochet a sympathetic ear for their radical policies. And in the absence of democratic representation and with civil society cowed by state violence, they found a political vacuum ripe for the implementation of these policies. Since the 1990 transition from neoliberal dictatorship to neoliberal democracy,

the government has founded bureaucracies to coordinate and implement policies to grow the culture sector, culminating in the 2015 creation of the Ministry of Culture.

Through a close reading of the textual production of the Ministry's predecessor, the National Council for Culture and the Arts (Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes) (CNCA), I contend that Chile's nascent cultural policy has less to do with the official narrative of economic development, in any traditional sense, than with instituting and inculcating the notion of culture as capital. This in turn complements what I see as neoliberalism's principal innovation: the discursive transformation of labor into human capital. By promoting cultural production as a model for self-entrepreneurship and speculative practices of self-valorization, the cultural policy of the neoliberal state acculturates us to precarity as bearers of human capital.<sup>1</sup>

Mexico's transition to neoliberalism was more gradual than Chile's due to the long shadow of the Mexican Revolution and the massive state bureaucracy developed over seventy years of rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Nonetheless, years of recession in the 1980s, monetary crisis in the 1990s, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) succeeded in implementing a neoliberal state within the shell of a revolutionary one. Mexican cultural policy since the late 1980s is less about extending an economistic rationality to realms once considered marginally economic or noneconomic, as in Chile, and more about perpetuating a culture of favor. I claim that this politics of discretion in cultural policy mirrors the informal sector of the Mexican economy from which value is increasingly captured via the financialization of popular life.

We can think of these two strategies—practices for valorizing informality and self-valorizing one's labor—as two lessons about life under neoliberalism that cultural policy in Mexico and Chile teaches to those it touches. My pedagogical language is justified by the fact that cultural and educational policy have been historically linked in Latin America. Moreover, modern state education and discourses of economic development share roots in nineteenth-century liberalism and positivism, which nourished Latin America's recently independent states. As such, Latin American cultural policy has traditionally placed culture in service of education understood as progress toward Western models of civilization. In the twentieth century, cultural and educational

policy slowly divorced. As the Chilean and Mexican cases demonstrate, national culture has been “freed” from its utility for the education of citizens only to be doubly instrumentalized by the state on behalf of capital.

In this article I want to recover the link between cultural and educational policy to understand the importance of the neoliberal state’s discursive institution of culture as capital. On this view, neoliberal cultural policy—like neoliberal education policy—is a tool for the formation of workers who act as bearers of human capital and entrepreneurs of the self. I do not intend to outline the effects of cultural policy on the arts nor will I attend to the friction between state policies and the creative uses and misuses citizens make of them. Rather, cultural policy will serve as a window onto the pedagogy of the neoliberal state.<sup>2</sup> If education is the primary process by which societies reproduce themselves, education *today* has become a process by which subjects internalize the objective conditions of capitalist existence and its corresponding legitimation narratives. Invoking the pedagogy of the neoliberal state seeks to capture this vice grip of neoliberal governmentality, from above and *internalized* from below.

As it is deployed by neoliberal states, culture should acculturate subjects to their status as precarious, flexible, self-managing, and self-valorizing workers, whether in the form of human capital or informal labor. Neoliberal cultural policy in Chile treats culture as a form of capital, presupposing and teaching the countability and accountability of ever-wider realms of life. In Mexico, the valorization of culture mirrors the increasingly direct valorization of informal economies, and the challenges of calculating either make both into vehicles for corruption, that is, a form of informal governance by the deregulatory neoliberal state. The two processes are complementary: the increasingly indirect valorization of self-valorizing labor allows for the increasingly direct valorization of spheres previously deemed marginally economic or noneconomic. Likewise, the calculability and accountability of culture in Chilean cultural policy and the incalculability of Mexico’s culture-of-favor cultural policy are but two sides of one coin issued by the same neoliberal state form. Both depend on the discursive institution (from above) of culture as cultural capital and labor as human capital reflected (from below) in the formation of Latin American subjects to contemporary capitalism.

## NEOLIBERALISM, CAPITAL AND STATE

Many thinkers dispute the common belief that neoliberalism signifies decreased state intervention into national economies. Instead, they see it as the latest iteration of a governance that blends the violence of state sovereignty with economic coercion and control (Brown; Davies; Harvey) that emerges at the dawn of the modern era (Foucault; Vogl) if not earlier (Graeber 2011). As my invocation of the *neoliberal state* makes clear, I agree with this analysis. In the overdeveloped world, one could be forgiven, however, for thinking that neoliberalism has signified the retreat of the state, given the dismantling of once robust social provisioning regimes over the last forty years. From the perspective of the underdeveloped world, where neoliberal policies often have been brutally imposed, there can be no doubt that the state is neoliberal capitalism's henchman. My focus in this article on the neoliberal state derives in part from this clarity from the peripheries of global capitalism.

By invoking the *imaginary* of the *neoliberal state*, my focus is as much on how contemporary capitalism actually works as on how neoliberalism thinks it works. In the terms of an older lexicon, I will focus as much on the (state) superstructure as on the (economic) base. It is not merely that some state cabal willfully misrepresents a neoliberal agenda to a naïve or apathetic citizenry; functionaries at all levels of governance—from central bankers to elected representatives—believe that deregulation frees the market's invisible hand, that less government promotes freedom and democracy, and that these are synonymous with the market. The same is true of a concept like human capital, which has little room in a Marxist political economy and may even be incoherent on neoclassical grounds.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless human capital theory has gained tremendous influence over the last seventy years, filtering down from the cupolas of economic theory into every firm that boasts a human resource department and even into many individuals' self-concepts.

Just as Marx adopted the perspective of liberalism in order to point out the contradictions of industrial capitalism, so should we inhabit the logics of neoliberalism in order to point out those same contradictions now differently disguised. In short, I propose an immanent critique of the ideology of the neoliberal state on its own terms in order

to show how cultural policy propagates a neoliberal rationality in which, among other things, labor has been discursively transformed into human capital, culture is similarly instituted as cultural capital, and both are therefore made to self-valorize. One of the premises of this article is that falsehood is better dismantled by temporarily adopting its premises in order to scuttle it on its own terms. On this plane of self-representation, then, we can pose the question that serves as our point of departure: How can the neoliberal state legitimize subsidizing culture while simultaneously dismantling other social welfare regimes? What logic would explain the state's social provisioning in some sectors with rampant deregulation in others?

Neoliberalism is a term that has become so multidimensional it qualifies as what sociologists call an essentially contested concept. A content analysis of articles in *Latin American Studies* (Boas and Gans-Morse)—where the term has had the longest currency in the North American academy—revealed that it may refer to a set of economic policies, a development model, an ideology, or an academic paradigm.<sup>4</sup> Unlike other essentially contested concepts, in these papers neoliberalism often goes undefined. Perhaps more troubling is its asymmetrical usage across ideological divides (140); only one group, Chile's Chicago Boys, positively identified as neoliberal, and even for them the term signified both a set of economic development policies and staunch anticommunism. The authors point out, "When the use of language expresses only one side of a politically charged argument, choice of terminology takes the place of a direct confrontation of ideas" (139). This problem of definition is compounded by the fact that critiques of an ill-defined neoliberalism often focus on its political dimensions at the expense of its economic ones. This in turn overemphasizes neoliberalism's novelty, which extracts it from longer histories of capitalism, such that these critiques often harbor the desire to return to a gentler form of capitalism (e.g., a Keynesian welfare state) and not the desire to overcome it.<sup>5</sup>

Debates over terminology may seem pedantic, but discursive shifts can have real effects. For example, the expansion of economic calculus or the institution of culture and labor as cultural and human capital begin in the discursive realm. The circulation of these terms and their metaphorical linkages pioneer the conceptual colonization that differentiates neoliberalism from liberalism—political-economic ideologies

to be sure, but ideologies about the ways that capital thinks it works that inflect the ways that capital actually works. For these reasons, it behooves us to interrogate the self-understanding of the neoliberal state and inhabit its logics to begin to identify its immanent contradictions even as we bear in mind the loose coupling of the logics of state and the secular logic of capital (i.e., the tendency of the rate of profit to fall) that drives the former *in the last instance*.

### CULTURE, RESOURCE OR CAPITAL?

Students of cultural policy have sought to explain how culture is subjected to bureaucratic management in the neoliberal era. George Yúdice offers one of the most widely circulated theories in his 2003 study of cultural policy in the Americas, *The Expediency of Culture*. Yúdice identifies a shift, starting in the 1990s, toward utilitarian and then performative conceptions of “culture as resource.” He claims, “Culture is being invoked to solve problems that previously were the province of economics and politics” (25). Specifically, it is “wielded as a resource for both sociopolitical and economic amelioration, that is, for increasing participation . . . conflicts over citizenship . . . and the rise of . . . ‘cultural capitalism’” (9). In addition to the compensatory utility of culture for the ills of neoliberal globalization,<sup>6</sup> Yúdice believes that “cultural expediency underpins *performativity* as the fundamental logic of social life today,” which he understands as the asymptotic approximation of (individual) behavior to (social) norms and models (28, 32; my emphasis). Performativity supersedes instrumentality as the logic of capitalist society—just as Yúdice supersedes Adorno and Horkheimer’s culture industry critique—pointing to the dawning of a postmodern episteme (4, 31). This performative logic of the social is particularly troublesome because it allows for creatively destructive, disorganized, or disruptive capitalism to feed off of failures to correctly approximate social models (33–34), such that social and cultural differences and even willful subversion are valued as much as conformity.

According to Yúdice, this far-reaching transformation centers on the notion of culture as resource (31, 35). Given its centrality to his argument, his usage of the term is rather slippery. He seems to understand “resource” variously as a technology—in the Heideggerian sense of a



“calling-forth” or “enframing” of the phenomenal world (26–27)—as a tool of governance—specifically of a Foucauldian biopolitical governmentality—and in a sense akin to natural resources (1). It becomes possible to think of culture as a resource when it is utilized as a political expedient by governments, civil society organizations, and private enterprise, that is, when it becomes a means to governmental ends (38). Indeed, comparing culture to resource, and natural resources in particular, is important for Yúdice, because it implies a rationality, at once economic and ecological, that reflects a set of managerial behaviors including conservation, distribution, and investment (1,4).<sup>7</sup> In this, it seems to me that Yúdice places too much emphasis on governance while overlooking the accompanying ideological shifts in the mode of capital accumulation.

This is not to say that Yúdice disattends to the economic utility of culture-as-resource. He recognizes that “labor stands at the heart of culture” (330). He rightly extends the notion of cultural labor beyond cultural producers to management, education, and most importantly, the attention of consumers (331). He rightly points out that cultural labor is not merely exploited but often freely given (337). During the 1990s, culture in the broad anthropological sense (see note 2) was also increasingly commodified as postindustrial northern economies pioneered modes of capital accumulation founded largely on the production of immaterial goods and services. Although Yúdice does not make the point, the logic of commodification grounds his comparison of culture to natural resources insofar as both cultural and natural resources are market externalities whose free inputs (e.g., raw materials, social reproduction, cooperation) are nonetheless essential to capitalist production. By invoking this logic he follows Frederic Jameson and the Frankfurt School (despite his claims to the contrary) in seeing contemporary capitalism as transforming *into commodities*, “whatever quality or use value is left” (332).

Yúdice insists, however, that culture-as-resource is more than mere commodity; it is “a mode of cognition. . . . that underpins performativity as the logic of social life today” (28). This raises an apparent contradiction, for unless he is suggesting that what he calls the “cultural economy” supersedes capitalism—perhaps like those who see in immaterial labor the seeds of communism—then the logic of the commodity cannot be escaped. It is clear that Yúdice’s cultural economy

is but capitalism's latest iteration. We can resolve this *real* contradiction between conceptions of culture as resource—which he associates with the performative logic of capitalist postmodernity—and culture-as-commodity—that he associates with the instrumental logic of capitalist modernity—if we take seriously the economic valence of culture-as-resource.

It is not only that governments have come to manage culture like land, natural resources, or nature. Nor is it merely that capital commodifies culture just as it does nature. Rather, neoliberal states treat culture, land, and nature like capital. And while I agree with Yúdice that cultural expediency is not merely political but performative insofar as it reflects an ethics of self-management in accord with models (38), I differ by specifying capital as the preeminent model. Culture is a resource less in the sense of natural resources and more in the sense of human resources. Once market externalities that provided free inputs to capitalist production and sites for its material waste and psycho-social excess, nature and culture are incorporated into the neoliberal logic of capital accumulation insofar as they can be made to perform as capital, where we understand capital in mainstream terms as any produced thing capable of performing economically useful work. In short, nature, culture, and labor *perform* as capital, which *performs* work. Labor and its human bearers are absent from this picture, for labor now also performs as capital. Where Yúdice speaks of performativity, I will speak of discursive institution. I contend that the specifically neoliberal character of culture is its *discursive institution as capital*, itself premised on the same shift to capitalist society's fundamental category: the discursive institution of labor as human capital.

Like Yúdice's claim that culture is treated as a resource, my claim that culture is treated as capital adopts the viewpoint of the neoliberal state and its cultural policy bureaucracy. The cultural policy that promotes such a view facilitates the ongoing originary accumulation of a cultural sphere much larger than mere storehouse of bourgeois modernity's aesthetic commodities. This accumulation takes place under the ideological cover of economistic mathesis and a calculating rationality fueled precisely by the challenges of valuing culture-as-capital that, much like its cousins fictitious and human capital, requires constant calculation to police the boundaries of its discursive institution. As a result, countability substitutes for (aesthetic) judgment and

accountability substitutes for ethical responsibility. In this way neoliberal cultural policy acculturates workers to our value as (human) capital. To explore this series of claims, I turn to my first case study, Chile's National Council for Culture and the Arts (CNCA), the predecessor institution of the recently created Ministry of Culture.

## CHILEAN CULTURAL POLICY

To better understand Chilean cultural policy today, we must briefly return to the roots of the neoliberal state in dictatorship. In this longer historical view, the neoliberalization of cultural policy appears as a dialectical process occurring between state and market preeminence and sociocultural integration and disintegration. Cultural sociologists Gonzalo Catalán and Giselle Munizaga have helpfully periodized cultural policy under the dictatorship into two phases. The first phase (1973–76) was characterized by cultural policies that promoted nationalist integration through the militarized authoritarian state's reconsolidation of Chilean identity through the promotion of elitist and hierarchical modes of restricted cultural production. This reactionary first phase sought to negate the cultural dynamic under Eduardo Frei Montalva's progressive Christian Democratic administration (1964–70) and, especially, Salvador Allende's socialist administration (1970–73), which, in the authors' ventriloquism of the Chilean right, marked "the deepest and most aberrant threat ever faced by both the nation's identity and its cultural heritage" (7).

The second phase (1976–82) saw the resurgent autonomy of cultural production from the state midwifed by reconsolidated art markets for both restricted and mass cultural production. According to Catalán and Munizaga, this period is also one of increasing market segmentation and stratification of consumer publics and of canons of taste (42). The liberal economic policies of the first phase become ideologically dominant in the second phase, with the market coming to supplant the state as the driver of cultural "policy." We could extend this second phase up to the restoration of democracy in 1990.

I would like to suggest a third phase (1990–2011), in which we see cultural policies aimed at national integration<sup>8</sup> but now under the twin rubrics of democracy and free market fundamentalism. The balance

between the two favors liberal economic ideologies so that cultural segmentation keeps pace with gaping income inequality and finally gives rise to a state-sponsored cultural policy that presumes the market value of culture. We might call this the period of “consumer citizenship” in which cultural consumption supplants national identity as the binding agent between people and state. From this brief sketch of the evolution of Chilean cultural policy since 1973, I turn to a closer reading of current policy in order to see how Chilean cultural policy promotes the valorization of culture-as-capital.

Initially proposed under the first postdictatorship administration of Patricio Aylwin (1990–94), the National Council for Culture and the Arts (CNCA) was finally created in 2003 out of the Ministry of Education. Only thirteen years later, the government approved its transformation into the Ministry of Culture. The CNCA and Ministry of Culture are but the latest examples of a series of state organisms for the oversight of culture that began with the founding of the National Library in 1813, just three years after Chile’s declaration of independence. Where previous institutions promoted reception (Ministry of Education), preservation (Dibam),<sup>9</sup> mass cultural production (Corfo),<sup>10</sup> and restricted cultural production (Fondart),<sup>11</sup> the CNCA and, now, Ministry of Culture combine and coordinate these activities. We see in this progression not only increasing state involvement in cultural production but also a shift from a focus on cultural products to cultural production, and within the latter, a shift from corporate to individual production. I would like to suggest that this progression results from the operationalization of the notion of human capital and its application to the field of cultural production.

In making this point, it will be helpful to compare the two reports published by the CNCA, *Chile quiere más cultura. Definiciones de política cultural 2005–2010* (Chile wants more culture: Cultural policy definitions 2005–2010) (2005) and *Política cultural 2011–2015* (Cultural policy 2011–2015) (2011). At first glance, the documents exhibit very different tones. The 2005 report speaks in lofty terms about the flowering of the arts after “the cultural blackout” of the dictatorship (3). Its policy principles are firmly rooted in the language of liberal humanism, pluralism, and the consensus politics of Chile’s long—by some accounts, incomplete—transition to democracy. As such, it lends itself to ideology critique. For example, the line “our culture aspires to know

and make itself known, to relate and exchange with other, more distant cultures, especially those of the Asian Pacific," (CNCA 2005, 15) could just as well be Chilean trade policy attending to the meteoric rise of the Chinese economy.

Although the 2011 policy report espouses the same principles, it does so in an alienating, bureaucratic jargon. It is as if the ideological gloves had been taken off to reveal the CNCA's nature as an apparatus of the state for the technocratic management of culture. For example, the 2005 report's "Autonomous and democratic participation of the citizenry in cultural development" (CNCA 2005, 13) is now divided in three: "Access to public information, to the free circulation of culture and its dissemination"; "Equal opportunity to enjoy and participate in cultural and artistic life"; and "Freedom to choose and exercise cultural practices" (CNCA 2011, 52). The political subject of the 2005 principle—an autonomous and democratic citizenry—is replaced by activities and relations—"access," "equality of opportunity," and "freedom to choose"—that position the now absent subject of Chilean cultural policy before a marketplace of cultural products to be consumed or produced. Similarly, the 2005 principle, "The indispensable role and responsibility of the State" (CNCA 2005, 13) becomes by 2011, "Respect for a State that facilitates opportunities to access culture and that subsidizes cultural activity deemed to be a substantial contribution to the development of the country" (CNCA 2011, 53)—this in a section where the report's authors allow themselves to imagine "the country we want to see" (51). The 2011 qualification of the "role of the state" makes clear what is only latent in the 2005 report: The state intervenes in the cultural sphere only so far as to incentivize a marketplace of cultural goods and promote "development," which in the context of this prose might be confused for economic development. To be sure, the 2005 report makes a similar point if obliquely. But couched in the language of liberal humanism, the appeals to freedom of expression and consumer choice appear more like assurances that the newly created CNCA is neither state propagandist nor censor. In the bureaucratic language of the 2011 report, the same sentiment comes across as a matter-of-fact affirmation of culture as both marketplace and development capital.

Finally, despite its lofty language, the policy recommendations made in the 2005 report are as concrete as modifying a particular law (CNCA 2005, 19) or establishing a performing arts center in Santiago

(17). By contrast, the list of “proposals and strategies” in the 2011 report are as toothless as “Actions will be promoted for the formal and informal training of artists” (CNCA 2011, 55). This could well indicate the CNCA’s increasing institutional autonomy (i.e., bureaucratization) over the five years of operation that separate the two texts. It also points to the CNCA’s primary discursive production in the intervening years: its annual statistical compendia.

### CULTURE, COUNTABLE AND ACCOUNTABLE

Perhaps more important than the CNCA’s policy recommendations is its work measuring Chilean culture. Since its 2003 founding, the CNCA has commissioned annual surveys of culture from the National Statistics Institute (INE). The *Informes de estadísticas culturales* (Cultural statistics reports) employ a methodology first elaborated in the *Marco de estadísticas culturales, Chile 2012* (Framework for cultural statistics, Chile 2012) (MEC) (2012), which sought to “identify the limits of the measurable” (CNCA and INE 2015, 11). Take, for example, the report’s summary of findings for the cultural domain of “Literary arts, books, and journalism.” Here, the report points out the tension between “art and cultural industry” or between a “literary market/ non-market” (CNCA and INE 2015, 15). According to the authors, the primary strategic interest of the art camp is to encourage readership and its primary actors are public libraries and “reading clientele” (*lectores usuarios*, literally “reader-users”) (15). The primary strategic interest of the culture industry camp is to support bookstores “taking as its object the creation of a book industry that actualizes writers as cultural economic actors; its anchor are bookstores and its object readers who buy books” (15). In this framing of the domain, there are two key data points: the number of readers and the number of book buyers. This of course leaves out what its authors deem immeasurable: the motivations of target actors’ enumerated behaviors (reading books and buying books), such as understanding, knowledge, status, edification, appreciation, or pleasure.

The report recognizes as much. It begins the presentation of its methodology by referencing what it calls the “iceberg model of culture” developed by the UNESCO Working Group on Cultural Statistics in

Latin America. On this model, 90 percent of culture is either “below the surface”—such as “tacit rules, things that take some time to recognize, ways of thinking”—or “deep”—such as “unconscious rules, ways of ‘feeling,’ things that can only be recognized when one is familiar with the culture” (CNCA and INE 2015, 11). In the four hundred or so pages of each statistical report, it is easy to forget that these numbers capture only a small portion of the 10 percent of cultural phenomena that are deemed measurable. As we can see in the summary of the cultural domain “literary arts, books and journalism,” measurable culture is the basis of an implied cultural policy. By the time these reach the level of actual policy formation, they have taken the form of technocratic imperatives: “to generate access to artistic-cultural offerings” by subsidizing demand, and “making visible and fomenting the culture industries as a motor of development” by promoting research into supply chains and strengthening distribution networks (CNCA 2011, 56). Oddly, the policy recommendations make no reference to these statistics.

If the statistical compendia play only a minor role in the formation of explicit cultural policy, what is their function? I would suggest that the CNCA’s statistical output—its primary textual product available to the public, at least in quantitative terms—has two functions with the same goal.

The first function is to “institute” culture in the semantic sense that French sociologist Luc Boltanski gives the term. For him, an institution is a “bodiless being whose role is above all to establish the silent, semantic commons of communication, beyond the contract of sender and receiver” (2011, 75). This primary semantic function of institutions rests on the illocutionary force of “denominating the whatness of what is” (75), which must be carefully distinguished from the material force of administrations’ policing functions and organizations’ coordinating functions (79). In this sense, the CNCA is an organization that seeks to coordinate cultural production, but its key function is its particular institution of culture: to denominate that what counts as culture is culture that can be counted.

The second function is pedagogical. The CNCA and INE’s compendia are in fact summaries of statistics provided by reporting institutions, and the MEC methodology relies on cultural managers and producers from each field for its basis and revision. The gathering and coordination of cultural actors not only serve to construct but



also to promote the state's institution of countable culture. *Estadísticas culturales. Informe annual 2015* relates that in one meeting on statistical methodology, it became clear that the conceptual axes of cultural domain and cultural cycle "have not been internalized by all cultural agents in the sector nor by all the cultural institutions and organizations in the country" and that one of the CNCA's primary goals should be "the dissemination of these concepts and training about them" (4). Clearly, the state's statistical rendering countable of culture is not only the result of its work *with* cultural agents; it also works *on* them. Culture's categorization, standardization, and quantification are not merely descriptive but performative; they institute and teach that culture is countable and accountable. This pairing points out how mechanisms of control are devolved to individual cultural actors so long as their self-control can be audited, a key characteristic of neoliberal governance (Power). It also helps explain the gap between the imperatives of Chilean cultural policy and the statistical description of culture: the former represents state action from above; the latter lays the groundwork for self-governance from below. Together these positions constitute the vice grip of neoliberal governmentality.

Despite the developmentalist paradigm that legitimated Chile's CNCA, its policy reports are not primarily about culture as a driver of economic progress. Of course, certain policies, such as those related to culture industries, tourism, and the defense of intellectual property rights, are motivated by economic concerns, but they constitute a fraction of the whole. Moreover, the coordination and administration of the economics of culture are shared with other more established ministries such as those of education, finance, and economy, development, and tourism. I have suggested that the CNCA and its publications play a more ideological role for the reproduction of contemporary Chilean capitalism. It remains to be seen how the institution and promulgation of culture as countable and accountable is specifically neoliberal.

## CAPITAL, CULTURAL AND HUMAN

I outlined above the economic and political approaches to the essentially contested term *neoliberalism*. And I questioned Yúdice's conception of culture-as-resource while retaining the primacy of its expediency



for neoliberal states in the form of culture-as-capital. Finally, we saw just how Chile's nascent cultural policy institutes culture as capital by making it at once countable and accountable. Now, I want to clarify the historical and analogical relationship of the discursive institution of culture as cultural capital to the discursive institution of workers as bearers of human capital. Ironically the challenges of quantifying culture, like the challenges of quantifying human capital investment, mean that both must be constantly counted. This constant counting of culture is essential to the discursive institution of culture as capital. Ultimately, I want to suggest that the expediency of culture in the imaginary of the specifically neoliberal state rests on the *speculative* nature of its value. It should come as little surprise, then, that the institution of culture as capital and labor as human capital parallel the financialization of the Chilean, Mexican, and world economies since the 1980s.

My analysis of the CNCA, its cultural policies and statistical compendia focuses on "neoliberalism from above"—actions that can be attributed to state and supranational organizations like the UN, GATT, IMF, and WTO. But in order to fully understand neoliberalism, we must attend to what Argentinean political theorist Verónica Gago calls "neoliberalism from below."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the key to neoliberal governance is the individual's (Foucault) or organization's (Power, 41–42) internalization of social control experienced as the "freedom" to act on the market. For this reason, I have suggested that the Chilean state's institution of culture as capital has a pedagogical role. Pedagogy is but a technology for governance whereby an educational patient internalizes modes of thinking and conduct at the behest of an educational agent.

What binds these two levels of neoliberal governmentality? What lesson does the CNCA want to teach? Gago suggests that neoliberalism from above and neoliberalism from below find in calculation a common rationality. Neoliberalism in Gago's reading of Foucault rests on a resignification of freedom. "What is neoliberal is the positioning of this freedom as the basis of the calculable" in other words "the inclusion of the incalculable as the stimulus for a calculating rationality" (2017, 163). For Gago this rationality is the primary means by which neoliberal subjects govern themselves, at the very least rendering themselves auditable. We can now say that Chile's CNCA

teaches a similar lesson: that the purportedly incalculable realm of freedom—in this case cultural heritage and artistic expression so often figured as the aesthetic excess of political economy (Caygill; Beech)—becomes the basis of a calculating rationality such that culture becomes a naturalized, self-organizing sphere of ordered freedom not unlike the marketplace.<sup>13</sup>

I should briefly clarify that in this schema culture was never in fact free from political economy, although it was largely untreated by economics. Moreover, that which is not counted is just as constitutive of capitalism as that which is. Its constitutive exclusion makes it part of capital even while it may be noneconomic, where capital is understood as a social relation and economics as the quantitative construction and mediation of that social relation and its parties.<sup>14</sup> So, when I speak of the expansion of economic calculus into traditionally incalculable realms—for example, the discursive institution of culture as cultural capital—this is not to suggest that these realms were previously outside the capital relation, only that now they are recognized and cultivated by states as means for enhancing the performance of economically useful work, to use the mainstream definition of capital. *The discursive institution of culture as capital describes not its becoming economic, but its economic utility coming to be known and exploited.* At the same time, discursive institution is a tool of ongoing originary accumulation, the colonial logic of capitalism's extensive mode of expansion that counteracts its secular logic (i.e., the tendency of the rate of profit to fall).

The neoliberal critique of liberalism turns on the question of labor and its attendant theory of value. Economists like Gary S. Becker, Milton Friedman, Jacob Mincer, and Theodore W. Schultz sought to transmute labor into human capital by bringing wider fields of human activity under the purview of economic calculus—everything from education and health to personal relationships and psychology. If calculation animates capitalist rationality generally, in the neoliberal era, human capital is calculation's primary agent and object. To be sure, the notion of human capital was not unknown to classical economists. In the 1930s, Mincer discovered the seed of human capital theory in the pages of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (Adamson, 272). Marx had already declared the absurdity of thinking of labor-power as interest-bearing capital and wages as interest (1981, 596). The neoliberal

difference is not only the individualization of the concept but also the speculative quality of its corresponding values.

As the labor-capital relation was the linchpin of liberalism, human capital-finance capital is the axis of neoliberalism. As Michel Feher argues, Becker and Schulz conceived human capital in preneoliberal terms of utility, that is, return on investment in the form of income (27). Today, the goal is less maximizing utility in the form of profit than maximizing short-term capital appreciation, a behavior we see in finance capital's speculative tendencies. Returns on individual human capital investment can be readily calculated in the form of earned income. Indeed, human capital theory sought to explain personal income distribution (Mincer 1958). The appreciation of human capital, however, is more elusive, calling for speculation about the future marketability of a skillset, conduct, or disposition. Therefore, our continual subjectification as human capital depends on the constant appraisal and appreciation of our volatile value (Feher, 28; Martin, 95).

The expansion of economic calculus into the realm of culture is similarly speculative. "Speculation" here plays on the term's financial and philosophical valences, for the short-term appreciation of human or cultural capital investments (i.e., speculation in their price) depends on their prior conversion into assets, a decidedly speculative act of discursive institution. It would seem that the more speculative the investment, the more often the asset's value must be calculated as if by some ritual incantation intended to shore up belief in an absent god. Both labor and culture require constant calculation in order to police their discursive institution as human and cultural capital. For example, the explosive growth of global art markets since the 1980s—especially the use of artworks as investment vehicles—and the skyrocketing cost of higher education (a key lever for human capital investment) can be seen as speculative investments in risky assets.<sup>15</sup> Returning to our first case study, we might say that the CNCA's cultural policy not only teaches the calculability of culture-as-capital. The institution of culture as capital teaches the rationality of calculation for the subjectification of workers as bearers, investors, and speculators in their human capital.

Thinkers have pointed out how the artist models the behaviors of workers treated as bearers of human capital. In Michel Foucault's well-known analysis, the entrepreneur of the self is the subject of

neoliberalism. Where once *homo æconomicus* laminated the subjectivity of the governed to liberal governmentality through the fantasy of the laborer who freely sells his labor in equal exchange, now the entrepreneur of the self supplies both capital and labor (226). Writing about the North Atlantic, Sarah Brouillette argues that creative economy discourse also constructs the cultural worker as a model for a flexible, self-managed, self-valorizing workforce (2014, 6, 2). In the postwar period, certain sectors of psychology and policymaking promoted artists, authors, architects, and designers as model “human capitalists,” for whom self-valorization converges with self-actualization. And since the 1980s, bestselling management gurus have helped translate human capital theory into the self-entrepreneurial practices of “the creative class.”<sup>16</sup> In the same period, Brouillette argues that UNESCO makes a similar shift, globalizing a model of cultural sector governance that promotes the “supremacy of market-based imperatives, including the imperative for individuals to organize and manage their creative careers with minimal dependence on state-based supports” (2019, 109). As we already know, Chilean cultural bureaucrats have looked to UNESCO as a model, and Chilean cultural policy mirrors this same shift.

UNESCO and Chilean cultural policy and creative economy discourse represent changes in the capitalist organization of work from the direct management of production to arm’s-length production, outsourcing, subcontracting, and other forms of downward risk distribution from large firms to smaller ones and from capitalists to workers. Thanks again to the imposition of neoliberal policies at the end of a gun, it should come as no surprise that Chile pioneered labor flexibilization, legalizing subcontracting in 1975. By the twenty-first century, 30 to 40 percent of the Chilean workforce was subcontracted, and only 30 percent claimed standard employment with benefits (Narbona, Páez, and Tonelli, 1).

Assuming as I have that Chile’s cultural policy buttresses the edifice of its neoliberal mode of governance, what would explain the almost thirty-year lag between the promulgation of Chile’s neoliberal labor policy and its neoliberal cultural policy? One explanation could be the government’s more recent efforts to foment an intellectual property-intensive service economy—including the culture sector—and concomitant levels of human capital, a transition represented by Chile’s 2010 accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation

and Development (OECD), the high-income countries club. Another explanation for the growing importance of cultural policy may be the wearing thin of the narratives that legitimated Chile's pacted transition from dictatorship to democracy. The massive protest cycles that rocked the country in 2011 and again in 2019, by indicting the neoliberal university, state disinvestment in public health care, the unlivable pensions of the country's privately managed social security, and, most recently, the high cost of public transportation relative to wages would seem to indicate as much. If neoliberal cultural policy is deployed in the place of social provisioning as a palliative for the social ills of contemporary capital accumulation, the protest cycle of the 2010s would seem a propitious moment to found a Ministry of Culture.

The promulgation of culture as capital, like the discursive institution of human capital, reflects the intensive and extensive reorganization of production to stave off the falling rate of profit. Extensively, global labor-value supply chains have displaced value production from the once-industrial Global North to the Global South thanks to the coordination of capitalist states to free the movement of capital across national boundaries while blocking the movement of labor setting up the conditions for the "global labor arbitrage" (Smith). Intensively, surplus value is extracted through the super-exploitation of industrial workers in the Global South and from flexible, self-managing workers figured as bearers of human capital or entrepreneurs of the self.

These forms of self-management are not restricted to the immaterial laborer toiling in the overdeveloped service sectors of overdeveloped metropolitan economies. The self-management of value production is central to informal economies and other nonstandard forms of work. Whether the super-exploited worker at a Tijuana *maquiladora*, the subcontracted subway employee in Santiago, the university student in Concepción actively investing in her human capital, or the tech entrepreneur in Mexico City investing sweat equity into a start-up, their precarity has a common root in this extensive and intensive reorganization of global production. On this economic basis we can link the precarious "human capitalist" of the advanced strata of national economies to the precarious microentrepreneur toiling in the informal economy. Below we will see how Mexico's informal economy and the corruption of its cultural bureaucracy are consonant with the informal governance of the deregulatory neoliberal state.

## MEXICAN CULTURAL POLICY

Mexico's cultural policy has been more robust than Chile's and that of most other Latin American countries. The state has played a greater role in civic and economic life stretching back to the colonial period, when Mexico City was the capital of the viceroyalty of New Spain. In the early twentieth century, the Mexican Revolution and seventy-year rule of the PRI only consolidated the state's centrality. As in Chile, Mexican cultural policy began shortly after independence: protections for the rights of authors were enshrined in the 1824 Constitution, and the National Museum was founded in 1825. And as in Chile, nineteenth-century Mexican cultural policy was largely subsumed to educational policy.

Culture becomes an explicit state concern with the expansion of the bureaucracy under the liberal autocracy of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911) and the founding of the Secretariat of Public Instruction and Fine Arts in 1905. Although it did not survive the revolution (1910–1920), the Secretariat and its first director, Justo Sierra, laid the foundations for the cultural revolution of the 1920s promoted by José Vasconcelos who directed, first, the Department of the University and Fine Arts and then the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), founded at his behest in 1921. In the wake of the revolution's social upheavals, Vasconcelos promulgated a powerful new concept of the nation through cultural policies that recruited intellectuals and artists to the project of a truly nationwide education system. It was Vasconcelos who invited Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros to paint the walls of public buildings granting Mexican muralism a powerful platform to promote a specifically modern Mexican visual vocabulary. This tight relationship between cultural nationalism and national education would persist until the creation of the Secretariat of Culture in 2015. In the intervening years, cultural bureaucracies multiplied: the Department of Fine Arts (1934) was later absorbed into the National Institute of Fine Arts (1946), just as the Department of Historical Artistic and Colonial Monuments (1930) transformed into the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) (1946), and others were founded dedicated to specific media—Film (IMCINE), Radio (IMER), and television (IMEVISION) (1983)—and culture in general—the National Council for Culture and the Arts (Conaculta) (1988), the National Fund

for Culture and the Arts (Fonca) (1989), and National Center for the Arts (Cenart) (1994).

Surveying this brief history, we can discern the progressive autonomy of cultural from educational policy by means of institutional multiplication and specialization. Upon the founding of the Secretariat of Culture in 2015, intellectuals decried the divorce of culture and education as the death of the Vasconcelian project (Amador 2015). For ninety years that project had provided cultural policy with a clear goal (national identity) and the mechanism for attaining it (education). The state's pedagogical role under the PRI complemented its developmentalist policies—education and development being twin discourses born of the nineteenth-century cult of progress. Divorcing cultural policy from the reproduction of the social totality through state-mandated education suggests that its purpose for the state has also changed. This returns us to our guiding question: What is the insertion of culture into the imaginary of the neoliberal state?

To elaborate an answer in the Mexican context, we return to the Secretariat's immediate predecessor, Conaculta, for it was the deep recession of the 1980s and the administration of President De la Madrid (1982–88) that began the process of neoliberalization continued under subsequent administrations.<sup>17</sup> Founded in 1988 by the presidential decree of de la Madrid's successor Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–94), Conaculta was the first attempt to coordinate the various institutes and departments of state working in the cultural sphere through the drafting of explicitly cultural policy. Those policies emphasized "the decentralization of cultural goods and services and the creation of new frameworks of co-responsibility" while closely adhering to the "criteria of efficiency and rationality that have guided the current reform of the administration in all its areas" (Tovar, 77, 65). According to Rafael Tovar y de Teresa, twice Chairman of Conaculta (1992–2000, 2012–15) and later first Secretary of Culture (2015–16), decentralization and co-responsibility were the pillars for the council's "modernization" of Mexican cultural policy (77). His *Modernización y política cultural* (Modernization and cultural policy)(1994) is a fascinating document, for unlike policy briefs it provides an official account of the ideological justification of Conaculta's cultural policy during his long tenure.

Officially speaking, Conaculta's creation was a response to globalization. Mexican cultural policy would guard, on the one hand, against



the “threat of uniformity” posed by globalization and, on the other, against “the resurgence of exclusionary fundamentalisms and traditionalisms” (Tovar, 12). In accord with Yúdice’s thesis, Tovar’s formula makes cultural policy a palliative for the social ills resulting from neoliberalization. It also quarantines nationalism to the cultural sphere preventing the emergence of an economic nationalism that might impede economic liberalization, accumulation by dispossession, and the upward redistribution of wealth engineered into NAFTA.

Tovar is explicit that cultural policy must bind culture to politics and economics. In other words, it should serve as a tool of governance and a motor of the neoliberal development model. To make this case, he articulates a kind of cultural populism that pits an anthropological notion of culture promoted by UNESCO and cultural policy bureaucrats against an aesthetic one.

The challenge for cultural policy has been to change and remake itself into a field associated with economic and political life and not an addendum divorced from reality, a purely recreational activity for one privileged segment of society. Precisely because of its profound meaning as the substrate of our identity and as feature of democracy and quality of life, culture is not . . . a merely aesthetic or intellectual plaything, an ornament or escape from society, but rather an indispensable point of departure for modernization. (19–20)

Culture is the medium of social interaction—the anaphora “through culture” peppers Tovar’s introduction (12–13)—and foundation of national sovereignty (17). Thus, decentralization and co-responsibility in culture become synonymous with the liberalization and democratization of “certain centralizing tendencies—inherited from the years of the viceroyalty—and of paternalistic attitudes on behalf of the State” (76).

The formula is a familiar one used time and again to justify the dismantling of welfare states. So, too, is its pluralist justification, whereby cultural inclusion and representation of marginalized groups paper over the failure of the state to redress economic inequality and political marginalization.<sup>18</sup> Citing the state’s belated recognition of Mexico’s “pluricultural composition originally nourished by indigenous communities” with the 1992 reform of the fourth article of the constitution (Secretaría de Gobernación, 5), Tovar characterizes decentralization and coresponsibility as democratic and inclusionary. In fact,



they co-opt each social class's "capacity for cultural creation" to "identify the problems besetting them to satisfy their needs and find solutions best suited to their means and talents." (76). Rather than state action to redistribute wealth and power, Tovar tasks culture, understood as the medium of everyday life, with the resolution of social ills. This devolution of social responsibility is among the hallmarks of the neoliberal state, one often misperceived as the retreat of the state altogether.

Although formally subordinate to the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), Conaculta had no legal basis for its operation: it was the product of presidential decree not congressional law, and its directors were appointed by the president and served at his pleasure (Secretaría de Gobernación, 12). Although formally it had no fiscal independence, it received its budget directly from the president, bypassing the SEP's legal oversight (Bordat, 231). As such it marks the full albeit *informal* autonomization and institutionalization of cultural policy. So much for the official story.

The unofficial motivations for Conaculta's institution by decree lie in the fraudulent election of President Salinas de Gortari in 1988. The consensus, even among PRI-appointed bureaucrats who served in those first years, is that Salinas founded Conaculta in order to legitimate his rule by co-opting artists and intellectuals—traditionally a powerful component of the PRI's base—through presidential patronage (Ejea Mendoza; Bordat). Under Conaculta's auspices, Salinas created the National Fund for Culture and the Arts (Fonca) one year later to serve as the vehicle for that patronage. As for the criteria of efficient and rational management vaunted by Tovar, in fact Conaculta duplicated many of the same functions already performed by the SEP, INBA, and INAH, for the purpose, some have suggested, of skirting the entrenched unions in the latter two institutions. Víctor Flores Olea, first chairman of the council, later intoned: "Carlos Salinas de Gortari wanted to give culture a leftist image to balance out everything he was going to do in the economic field for the right" (Ejea Mendoza, 23–24). Mexican cultural policy changed little with the end of PRI rule in 2000 (Bordat, 235–39). Conaculta continued to operate as a slush fund and political expedient under the administrations of Vicente Fox (2000–2006) and Felipe Calderón (2006–2012), both leaders from the opposition National Action Party (PAN).

Given these inauspicious beginnings, corruption was endemic to Conaculta's institutional culture under PRI and PAN governments alike. Judges who sat on Fonca's juries awarded funds to their disciples, friends, and (in several instances) to themselves; presidents dedicated hundreds of millions of pesos to archaeological preservation projects that were never completed; and exorbitantly costly vanity projects like the National Center for the Arts (Cenart) (1994) and The Vasconcelos Library (2006) would be hurried to early completions for political reasons, forcing building contractors to take shortcuts that severely limited the functionality of the buildings (García Bermejo, 52).<sup>19</sup> After more than twenty years of growing budgets, "decentralization," and "efficient" and "rational" reform (Tovar, 65–66), Carmen García Bermejo, one of Mexico's leading cultural journalists, estimated that in 2011 some 85 percent of Mexican municipalities lacked any form of state-sponsored cultural infrastructure (López García). Similarly, an analysis (Ejea Mendoza) of the monies distributed by Fonca shows a marked concentration of subsidies to older, individual Mexico City-based artists indicating failed decentralization and distribution. The newly formed Secretariat now rests on firm legal footing since the passage of the long-awaited Law on Culture in 2017. It remains to be seen to what extent the Secretariat will formalize Conaculta's politics of discretion and culture of favor.

## CULTURE OF FAVOR AND INFORMAL GOVERNANCE

As Roberto Schwarz has pointed out in the case of late nineteenth-century Brazil, key concepts in Western European liberalism, such as the autonomy of the individual and of culture, were less implemented by Latin America's neocolonial elites than they were adopted "in an ornamental vein as a proof of modernity and distinction" (28). Moreover, according to Schwarz, liberal European universalisms like the rule of law served as "justification for what was unavoidably arbitrary in a culture of favor" (23). This culture of favor describes how nominally free men and women—slavery was only abolished in 1888—in fact depended on the wealthy for their material survival. Peripheral modernities have always tended to prove the contingency of Western, liberal "universalisms," pointing to the yawning gap between laws

and norms.<sup>20</sup> In fact, this outwardly liberal, inwardly dependent culture of favor comports with Marx's contemporary analysis of capitalism: outwardly, the free laborer sells his abstract labor to the capitalist, when in fact he is compelled to do so by his separation from the means of production, a separation reproduced in the process of capitalist production (1990, 724). We see the persistence of a culture of favor today in so-called philanthrocapitalism, whereby increasingly concentrated wealth combines with states' retreat from social provisioning to place welfare at the discretion of the wealthy.

Conaculta represented a bureaucratic framework for a state-sanctioned culture of favor. Despite Tovar's rhetoric, rather than modernize and democratize cultural policy, the council merely *liberalized* it (Ejea Mendoza, 21–22). Liberalization is a survival strategy for discretionary or authoritarian regimes, like the PRI, through the piecemeal opening of spaces for participation and freedom of expression in order to decompress an impending political crisis (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 9). In the case of Conaculta, liberalization unleashed its culture of favor. By extending this analysis down from state cultural policy to the political economy that drives it, we can say that if liberalism provided ideological cover for economic dependency in the form of legal justification, neoliberalism does away with legal justification by deregulating the purportedly self-regulating market. In this ideological framework, the laborer turned human capitalist and entrepreneur of the self would be neither dependent on the favor of the wealthy nor on the contractual mediation of that dependency. Rather, he would be himself a capitalist, finally and truly free.

In the case of Chilean cultural policy, I recalled the claim that neoliberalism makes freedom the basis for economic calculation rendering culture both countable and accountable. In the case of Mexican cultural policy, that rationality of calculation remains embryonic as a tool for governance.<sup>21</sup> Rather the difficulty of quantifying culture made it an excellent conduit for the PRI's culture of favor and politics of discretion. At the same time, using culture to ameliorate socioeconomic problems makes the outcomes of those cultural-cum-social policies as speculative as the value of the policy instrument itself. In this way, the difficulty of counting culture frees the state from social accountability.<sup>22</sup>

Conaculta's culture of favor can be understood as the governmental complement of Mexico's persistent informal economy—around

23 percent of GDP and 57 percent of workforce participation in 2014 (ILO 2014, 4). Informality has been a topic of scholarly interest since mid-twentieth-century decolonization prompted a reevaluation of now national economies by new state apparatuses.<sup>23</sup> In the 1970s, anthropologist Keith Hart coined the term “informal sector” in his studies of West African economies. And in the 1990s, it was Hart who began to normalize informality as “part of the logic of postcolonial accumulation” (Denning, 90). While in 1993, The International Labor Office had adopted a working definition of the informal sector, by the late 1990s, a cadre of affiliated statisticians began advocating clearer definitions of informality—including subtle distinctions between informal sector, informal economy, employment in the informal sector, and informal employment—for the purposes of better measuring and ultimately capturing values produced under its rubric (ILO, 6–9).<sup>24</sup> Informality signals the nature of the relationship between economy and state. As such it has become a kind of ideological litmus test for neoliberal times. “Neoliberal critics of state regulation have tended to celebrate the informal sector, its micro-enterprises that need only micro-credit to thrive. Defenders of social democratic-welfare states have advocated the formalization of the informal: the extension of social protections and representation in unions” (Denning, 90).

Both economic informality and culture present problems for the measurement and calculation through which the power of the modern state is exercised. While the informal sector functions by the same logic as capital but below the radar of state management, culture blends capitalist and other value systems.<sup>25</sup> Until economists’ acceptance of contingent valuation methods in the 1990s (Throsby 2001, 24), culture in the anthropological sense—for example languages, cultural diversity, immaterial heritage, and life ways—was regarded as non-economic—as opposed to already commodified cultural artifacts in the aesthetic sense (e.g., artworks, books, films, performances). It is not that culture is incalculable or that small-scale or illegal commerce is noneconomic, it is simply that neither lends itself to straightforward economic valuation. The same is true for human beings, which, as we have seen, did not hinder the rise of human capital theory.<sup>26</sup>

The valuation of culture advocated by neoliberal cultural policy mirrors the increasingly direct valorization of informal economies.

Through the lens of Mexican cultural policy, the governmental rationality of Mexican neoliberalism can be understood as part of the institutionalization of discretionary politics and its incumbent culture of favor justified by the ideology of deregulation and, in turn, the value of informality in the political, cultural, and economic spheres. This adds to the overdeveloped discourse on neoliberalism in the overdeveloped world an important lesson from the Global South that allows us to think the neoliberal state as a global form: the neoliberal state exercises informal governance over informal economic subjects. This precarious workforce has always animated capitalist economies beneath the representational capture of economic discourse just as the culture of dependency lurks behind the fiction of contract law. As Marx recognized in articulating the general law of capitalist accumulation (1990, 798), the waged worker is necessarily a “virtual pauper” (1993, 604).

### CALCULATION WITHOUT END

To recall, in the beginning of this essay, I argued that Chile’s cultural policy teaches the calculability of culture-as-capital, and that culture-as-capital, in turn, teaches the rationality of calculation for the subjectification of workers as bearers, investors, and speculators in their human capital. The discursive institution of labor and culture as human and cultural capital depends on the constant appraisal and appreciation of their values, for both are risky assets and investment in them is often quite speculative. In this sense, human and cultural capital resemble finance capital. In the second moment, I claimed that the specifically neoliberal character of Mexican cultural policy since 1989 at once institutes informal governance as a model for the precarity of making a living in a wholly deregulated or informal marketplace. In closing, I would like to return to my earlier suggestion that the problems of measurement that facilitate a neoliberal cultural policy are symptomatic of the most salient economic shift of the last fifty years: the financialization of economies around the world, from the most advanced to the most informal.

I have used Verónica Gago’s analytic “neoliberalism from below” to describe the result of a pedagogical process of neoliberal subject

formation. For the Argentinean theorist, however, “neoliberalism from below” describes the financialization of everyday life from the perspective of the low-capital, often informal economies characteristic of peripheral capitalism. Gago describes how, since Argentina’s 2001 financial collapse impoverished millions, a calculating rationality has become “the motor of a powerful popular economy that combines self-managed community knowledges . . . as a technology of mass self-entrepreneurship” (2015, 14). Calculation for mass self-entrepreneurship is an ambivalent technology of (self) exploitation and survival.

Exploitative calculation drives the financialization of popular life. Credit and debt are two sides of the asymmetrical social relation that grounds finance capital. Financialization can be defined as the extension of credit-debt relations into ever-greater realms of human activity, from informal economies to everyday life.<sup>27</sup> In contemporary capitalism, it becomes impossible to distinguish finance from production, since finance has become integral to every sector of the formal economy.<sup>28</sup> Informal economies, too, operate on credit circulating from below and from above, the latter often in the form of banking micro-credit or state subsidy. If liberalism rendered incalculable freedom the basis of economic calculation by constraining it to the freedom to act on the market, by modulating the debtor’s freedom to a field of behavioral probabilities, financialized “debt economy” further refines control over the incalculable by projecting calculable behavior into the future.<sup>29</sup> Insofar as a behavior is calculable, it is subject to audit, the distributed form of social control by which neoliberal capitalism processes the heightened risk of arm’s-length production and the self-valorization of nominally autonomous entrepreneurs, many of whom behave as bearers of human capital.<sup>30</sup>

While the credit-debt relation is central to the financialization of these informal economies, it is not only because it modulates future behavior compelling workers to self-valorize. In Latin America at large, Gago and Mezzadra argue, an expanded notion of extraction is indispensable for understanding financialization. Finance does not organize the production of value; it extracts value in the form of *rent*. Unlike the extraction of surplus value in industrial capitalism, the extractive operations of finance capital are not directly involved in organizing and managing the production process (Gago 2015; Gago and Mezzadra;

Marazzi; Vercellone).<sup>31</sup> To understand this, we need only consider the debt collector who is not concerned with *how* the debtor returns the principal and interest but simply that they *are* returned. As we have seen, the extraction of surplus value is left to other capitalists, whether firms in the Global South or “human capitalists” with little capital beyond their skills, dispositions, and forms of cooperation. Thus, the reprimarization of Latin American economies does not only herald the region’s return to resource extractive capitalism in order to capitalize on high commodity prices buoyed by the growth of Chinese industrial capital. Reprimarization also signifies a conceptual expansion of extractivism to include the extraction of rent not from the peons who worked the *latifundios* or *haciendas* but from self-managing, self-valorizing labor in the guise of human capital or the informal entrepreneur (Gago and Mezzadra, 588). Via this expanded understanding of extractivism, we can return to the notion of culture-as-resource, but only insofar as it is first discursively instituted as capital.

Before it can be invested in or rent extracted from it, culture must be made countable and accountable. However, this transformation that animates the cultural policy of neoliberal states may be as much symptom as cause. Culture’s purported calculability historically parallels the increasing *incalculability* of our volatile, financialized economies. The insinuation of the valorization process into all aspects of the life world does not rationalize it by making it calculable. It instead indicates the irrationality of markets, the informality of neoliberal governance, the arbitrary violence, and contingent values that underpin the whole crumbling edifice. Likewise, the calculability and accountability of culture in Chilean cultural policy and the incalculability of Mexico’s culture of favor cultural policy are but two sides of one coin issued by the same neoliberal state form.

This uncertainty not only about the measure of culture or finance capital but over their very measurability<sup>32</sup> summons the specter that bourgeois economics and capitalism’s there-is-no-alternative apologists have long sought to exorcise: the contingency of an economy founded on politics. A truly *political* economy would breach the enclosure and rigors of mathesis and opens economics to a war over measure.

Latin American cultural policy has always had a close relationship to education. Even as developmentalist, neoliberal states like Chile and Mexico have granted cultural policy greater institutional autonomy



from education, it is still directed toward forming the citizen and worker. Beyond their common instrumentalization of culture for social cohesion and economic development, Mexican and Chilean cultural policy operate by seemingly different logics. What unites them is that they instruct the subject inside and out, teaching an inward disposition toward one's self and an outward disposition toward others. Inwardly, subjects are taught to see themselves as entrepreneurs of the self, immersed in constant calculation by which they self-manage the valorization of their labor. Outwardly, they are taught to accept the contingency and precarity of living at the behest of another's favor, whether of the capitalist, the politician, or the cultural bureaucrat. By this pedagogical process the neoliberal state forms a hinge between neoliberalism from above and neoliberalism from below. Its primary lesson is the necessity of unending calculation.

Calculation is a means of survival for both the laborer as human capital and the informal worker, two emblematic faces of Latin American neoliberal subjectivity; it is a way for the human capitalist to monitor and control the radical contingency of her self-worth, a way for the entrepreneur in the informal economy to negotiate the precarity of her subsistence. For Gago, there are "victims of the calculations of others" (2017, 160), but those "victims" nonetheless exhibit a vitalist pragmatism that can turn calculation into a means of producing lived realities in excess of those measured and meted out by the relentless drive to (self-) valorize, a pragmatism that can fit calculation to the reproduction of life and not only to the reproduction of abstract labor. As a tool for living, calculation can be wielded to produce and sustain realities beyond measure, surplus (populations), (aesthetic) excess (Gago and Mezzadra, 164).

We should heed Michel Feher's call "to inhabit a certain mode of subjection in order to redirect it or turn it against its instigators" (22) just as Marx inhabited liberal capitalism's subjection of life as living labor in order to make the communist wager. The political subject of neoliberalism—whether in the guise of the precarious entrepreneur or bearer of human capital—can just as well appropriate the apparatuses of its subjection for its liberation.<sup>33</sup> Calculation is a technology. Like all technologies its social construction means it can be socially de- and reconstructed. Today, the discursive institution of culture as capital, like human or finance capital, is secured by little more than



frenetic, unending calculation to paper over the contingency of our *political* economy. The struggle tomorrow will be waged over the rubric of measure.

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## Notes

1. According to Marx, the capitalist mode of production is the union of the labor process, by which value is created, with the valorization process, by which surplus value is extracted from that labor process. Valorization transforms the money laid out in the production process into capital (Marx 1990, 283–306).

From the mystified perspective of the capitalist, capital appears as *self-valorizing* (Marx 1990, 302, 1021) when, in fact, valorization takes place in the commodity labor-power whose use-value (labor) is the source of value. Since the *free* worker possesses and sells his labor-power, the capitalist can only bring about its productive consumption by causing the worker to labor (Marx 1990, 291; Tronti). The general law of capitalist accumulation in turn compels a worker to sell her labor by ensuring greater supply of labor-power than there is demand, generating structural unemployment or what Marx called the reserve army of labor (1990, 793). This organization of the labor process by capital also subordinates the working class to the capitalist class, and it is these thoroughly political social relations of production that underwrite capitalist production.

An individual may only be said to self-valorize if she has so thoroughly adopted this mystified capitalist worldview that she identifies as a form of capital, namely human capital. Just as capital conflates the labor process and the valorization process, by internalizing capitalist ideology, the worker comes to see herself as both bearer of labor and manager of that labor often in the guise of the entrepreneur: that is, the capitalist who must consume her own labor-power. Self-valorization is then the self-management by labor of the valorization process. Thus, the source of value appears as indistinguishable from the extraction of surplus value, which—and this is the ruse—the bearer of human capital then renders unto another capitalist. In this paradigm, capital no longer needs to intervene in the production process (e.g., supplying the means of production) except to subordinate the human capitalist, for it has recomposed labor in its image such that the extraction of not just absolute but also relative surplus value is carried out on its behalf by self-valorizing human capital.

The figure of human capital attempts to realize the capitalist's dream, according to Mario Tronti, "to dismantle and recompose in his own image the antagonistic figure of the collective worker" (29). From the mystified perspective of capital, the figure of human capital represents the sublation of the figures of the worker and the capitalist and its subordination to finance capital. If the craftsman is *formally subsumed* under capital and the wage laborer is *really subsumed*, we might say that the bearer of human capital is *ideally subsumed* for she represents capital's highest dream and deepest delusion. This apparent dialectic (formal, real, ideal) gives grounds for treating neoliberalism as a modality of capitalist production historically distinct from liberalism.

2. Cultural policy is riven by the two understandings of culture: (1) an aesthetic conception of culture that arises with bourgeois modernity and whose products, correspondingly, have been largely commodified, and (2) a broader anthropological conception of culture, largely uncommodified, that has been promoted by UNESCO and cultural policymakers around the globe. Their distinction largely belies the perspective I adopt here, that of cultural policy as education, for aesthetic education inducts members of a community into a way of life.

3. For an early Marxist critique, see Bowles and Gintis (1975). For a more recent heterodox critique but one grounded in the neoclassical literature, see Blair (2018).

4. Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2013) understand these terminological distinctions as describing neoliberalism's *functional* multidimensionality. In addition to neoliberalism as ideology and as economic policy, they see it as productive of social relations and of subjectivities. Taken together, these are "complementary dimensions of a new global rationality" (3).

5. Annie McClanahan (511–12) lodges a similar critique against Wendy Brown's notion of neoliberal rationality in *Undoing the Demos*.

6. It is important to note the different "local" inflections of the expediency of culture. In the U.S., a latent utilitarian legitimation narrative emerges from behind a nationalist one with the end of the Cold War and decreasing state subsidy for cultural production (Yúdice, 11–12). In Latin America and other regions, Yúdice points to the developmental role assigned to culture and promoted by supranational institutions like the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (13). In light of my guiding premise, then, we should note that in the overdeveloped world (specifically the U.S., since Yúdice makes no mention of European cultural policy) culture as resource is tied to declining state subsidy, whereas in the developing world it is tied to increasing investment, whether in the form of national state subsidy, foreign investment, or foreign loans.

7. Throsby draws a similar analogy between natural and cultural capital (69).

8. The primary cultural policies of this type are those that cultivate national memory, such as the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation (1990–91), the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture (2004, 2010–11), or the Museum of Memory and Human Rights (2010). These policies are integrationist

insofar as they seek to heal the wounds of state terrorism and to reconstitute Chilean national identity around that shared trauma.

9. Founded in 1927 as subsidiary of the Ministry of Public Education, the Directorate of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (Dibam) drew together eleven important institutions founded by public and private initiative since independence. Although initially focused on cultural preservation and intellectual property rights, in the 1950s the Dibam became an important actor in fomenting cultural diffusion through its national network of libraries and museums.

10. Founded in 1939, the Corporation for the Advancement of Production (Corfo) was the primary agent of import substitution industrialization, helping to found and manage almost five hundred important firms in mining, heavy industry, utilities, and telecommunications sectors until most were privatized beginning in 1973. Since 1990, Corfo largely oversees public funds that it entrusts to the private financial sector for lending to businesses.

11. Founded in 1992, Fondart was the first state-sponsored grant program for cultural producers. Law 18.891 founded the CNCA in 2003 and also diversified grant offerings following the Fondart model.

12. In her research into the financialization of development through micro-finance, Ananya Roy (2010) speaks of “neoliberal populism” and “the democratization of capital.” Both terms express social phenomena similar to “neoliberalism from below,” but I prefer Gago’s term for its directionality. Roy’s account prioritizes the actions of bankers, states, and supranational organizations. This is reflected in her choice of terminology: democratized capital reaches downward; populism panders from on high to the will of the people. Both cast the poor as victims. By contrast, Gago’s account emphasizes the ingenuity of the economically marginalized in creating their own financial networks and participating in their own self-valorization and governmentalization.

13. If this recalls Pierre Bourdieu’s (1993) account of cultural modernity, one might inquire into the historical and material conditions in which such a theory is produced and circulates. It seems a small step to suggest that the expansion of neoliberal ideology into the realm of culture may have fueled the worldwide dissemination of his notion of cultural capital, even if Bourdieu himself was a critic of capitalism in all its guises.

14. Annie McClanahan (2017) makes a similar argument.

15. In 2009, average annual tuition in Chile was 47 percent of median family income, a ratio only surpassed by the U.S. and the U.K. (Solis 2017, 566). Exorbitant tuition was an immediate cause of the massive protest cycle that began in 2011 and eventually succeeded in securing free tuition for up to 70 percent of Chilean university students.

16. The term “creative class” was coined by Richard Florida, who became one of the most sought-after business and government consultants upon the publication of his bestselling book *The Rise of the Creative Class*.

17. The management and manipulation of economic crises is a central tool for imposing and deepening neoliberal economic policy, whether through the debt

peonage known as structural adjustment (e.g., Mexico 1995, Argentina 2001, and many other developing economies) or through the socialization of private debt and corporate risk that justifies the dismantling of social provisioning commonly referred to as austerity (e.g., the U.S. and UK since the 1980s and many EU states after 2008).

18. Nancy Fraser (2013) makes this same compelling argument with regard to the status of women in the North Atlantic and the different approaches of second- and third-wave feminism. See especially the essays in Part II.

19. Néstor García Canclini's (1987) general description of state patronage in Latin America comports with the workings of Conaculta: "We often find this patronage conception within the state apparatuses in countries that lack adequate institutional structures for promoting culture or democratic organizations that regulate the participation of producers. Thus, the administration of funds for culture and the arts is handled by some relative of the president or other 'cultured man' of confidence, who distributes them to his friends or artists he admires according to personal criteria. On the basis of the current conception of what culture policy should be, one could argue that patronage does not count as policy because it is not organized in relation to collective needs" (30).

20. In the present day, one could see how this discrepancy contributes to the high perception of corruption in many Latin American countries (Transparency International), since governments are judged within the paradigm of Western liberalism.

21. The Mexican state has been collecting basic information about cultural consumption since 1928. According to Nivón and Sánchez Bonilla, the lack of coordination between the producing institutions and participation of the National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Information (INEGI) demonstrate the Mexican state's disinterest in generating cultural statistics (65).

22. Social anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (2000) makes the point that in the audit culture that pervades neoliberal governance "the state's evasion of accountability includes a call to account of those institutions which it funds" (5). This indirect "new management," which devolves accountability via "rituals of verification" (Power) borrowed from finance, only thinly veils a classic understanding of the sovereign as that which creates law, can therefore act outside of it, and, by virtue of that arbitrary power, is disinterested enough to judge those to whom the law does pertain (Graeber, 190–96). For the inability to audit the results of the auditing process, see Power.

23. To name but a few well-known thinkers from the period, Pierre Bourdieu's early work (1963) took into account informal economies in colonial Algeria, José Nun (1968) spoke of the "marginal mass" in Argentina, and Frantz Fanon (2004) mobilized the category of the lumpenproletariat as a subject of revolutionary change against decolonial nationalists and internationalist communists alike.

24. The almost question-begging definition adopted by the ILO in 2002 describes the informal economy as "all economic activities by workers or economic units that are—in law or practice—not covered or sufficiently covered by

formal arrangements" (8). In more practical and descriptive terms "employment in the informal sector basically comprises all jobs in unregistered and/or small-scale private unincorporated enterprises that produce goods or services meant for sale or barter," excluding agrarian work and some forms of domestic labor (3).

25. Barbara Herrnstein Smith speaks of the "double discourse of value," the complementary cost-benefit analyses at work in both the discourse of economic theory and the discourse of aesthetic axiology (125–34). Cultural Economist David Throsby disaggregates cultural value into its constituent parts (e.g., aesthetic, historical, symbolic, and social value) with the goal of "operationalising cultural capital in such a way that its importance alongside economic value may be more vigorously exerted" (31).

26. In a 1989 lecture, Gary S. Becker, foremost advocate of human capital theory and 1992 Nobel laureate for his work in the field, expressed his astonishment at the speed and breadth of its circulation: "It may seem odd now, but I hesitated a while before deciding to call my book *Human Capital*. . . . In the early days, many people were criticizing this term and the underlying analysis because they believed it treated people like slaves or machines. My, how the world has changed! The name and analysis are now readily accepted by most people not only in all the social sciences, but even in the media" (16).

27. On financialization, compare Lapavitsas and Durand.

28. The example used by both Christian Marazzi (27–28) and Lazzarato (22–23) is the automobile industry, that flagship of twentieth-century industry, which is just as much about manufacturing cars as it is about the consumer credit that allows us to purchase these cars by taking on debt.

29. See Lazzarato.

30. Power argues that institutional auditing is "relatively decoupled from formal probabilistic risk assessment" (139) and therefore "a shallow ritual of verification" (123) that merely produces "certificates of comfort." It thus constitutes a real endangerment of neoliberal societies that have become dependent on auditing to manufacture trust—a corollary, I would argue, of the intercapitalist competition resulting from the human capital turn.

31. Marx makes a similar claim in a passage on the genesis of industrial capitalism: "The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation. As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows unproductive money with the power of creation and thus turns it into capital, without forcing it to expose itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even usury" (1990, 919). For Joseph Vogl, this indirect management of value creation through finance transforms sovereignty into the wielding of moral hazard: "He is sovereign, who is capable of transforming his own risks into those of others and who positions himself as the creditor of last resort" (251).

32. The social logic of financialization and the discursive institution of culture and labor as cultural and human capital can be seen as another manifestation of the myth of enlightenment. As Adorno and Horkheimer demonstrated long ago, the mathematization of nature is the untruth of totalitarian enlightenment, for "when

in mathematics the unknown becomes the known quantity in an equation, it is made into something long familiar before any value has been assigned . . . . [E]ven what cannot be assimilated, the insoluble and irrational, is fenced in by mathematical theorems" (18). The equation of thought with mathematics endows thinking with "absolute authority" at the same time it "is reified as an autonomous automatic process, aping the machine it has itself produced, so that it can finally be replaced by the machine" (19). The advent of automated trading and artificially intelligent financial technology makes Adorno and Horkheimer's claim seem prophetic.

33. This is what Gago, referencing Paolo Virno's cynicism of the multitude, calls the ambiguity or promiscuity of neoliberal rationality of calculation: "Then speaking of *neoliberalism from below* is a way of accounting for the dynamic that *resists exploitation and dispossession and at the same time assumes and unfolds in this anthropological space of calculation, which is in turn the basis for an intensification of that exploitation and dispossession*" (2015, 17).

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