

The Power Theory: Simulation: from the codes of social relation and social power

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Abstract— The present study entitled “The Power Theory: Simulation: from the codes of Social relations and Social Power”. Baudrillard’s work is characterized by a historical awareness of the literary tradition and the practice of writing typical of post-modernism. This is a qualitative work through the lens of Hyperreality to study exaggeration in post-modernism .

Although simulation is a major term in Baudrillard's vocabulary, it is not his 'key' concept or primary idea, as is sometimes assumed. Indeed, the phrase has largely vanished from Baudrillard's work over the last two decades. It does, however, play a significant part in the development of Baudrillard's theories, The link between 'real' and simulated, as well as between simulacrum and simulation, is one of Baudrillard's most misunderstood concepts, hence its explication is critical. Simulacrum is a Latin word that means "image, “semblance,” or "likeness." The material element of the simulacrum, the image as thing, as fashioned and produced, is emphasised by the Oxford English Dictionary. Baudrillard explores the phases or stages of the image in modern Western culture from the Renaissance to the present day, the arising the orders of 'simulacra' (plural form). Baudrillard, who was influenced by Nietzsche and Pierre Klossowski, considers the simulacrum to be entire or total: "everything" is simulacral (2005d: 39–47). There are only images or illusions; there are additional images 'beyond' images; and there is no moment where the last illusion is torn away to reveal. Reality. The concept of 'reality,' then, is an illusion in and of itself, and one of recent origin; Baudrillard situates the development of the concept of 'reality' within the orders of simulacra (1998b: 23, 2005d: 39). Of obviously, the concept of 'reality' is not static. The first order of simulacra appears, with its clear binary oppositions of real/unreal and true/false. The concept of the 'real' reaches its pinnacle in the second level of simulacra, where life, sex, and labour are regarded as absolute realities.

Index Terms— Simulation, Reality, Simulacra, Signs, Commodities

I. INTRODUCTION

Everything changes with the device of simulation.

(Baudrillard, 1983: 21)

The Counterfeit is Baudrillard's phrase for the first order of simulacra, which he uses to introduce each order in turn. It is based on the notion of equivalence known as the "natural law of value" or "use-value." The order of Production, based on the 'market law of value' or 'economic exchange-value,' is the second order of simulacra. The Code, or 'structural law of value,' governs the third tier of simulacra, an era of equivalence based on 'sign exchange-value.'³ Each of these orders is characterized by its model of the world, which is based on the idea of 'generic equivalence,' which allows for comparisons, classifications, and orderly exchange between system constituents. Symbolic exchanges, on the other hand, lack an equivalence principle and a law of value; the meaning of the objects transferred cannot be separated from the exchange process and the participants. Furthermore, symbolic commerce never ends since it establishes a chain of duties that must be acknowledged and returned over time. According to Baudrillard, we are now approaching a fourth order, a fractal or viral order in which "value radiates out in all directions."...without reference...there is no longer any equivalence, no law of value' (1993b: 5). The object - the sign - is more important to Baudrillard than subjects or 'historical actors' like classes or capitalist companies. The orders, of course, are only established and maintained via social practise. Actors, on the other hand, are subjected to impersonal and unconscious constraints as a result of the directives. Furthermore, according to Baudrillard's appropriation of structuralist and poststructuralist theory, codes - first languages, then condensed codes of consumption -

offer the circumstances for the fundamental conceptions of agent, self, and identity to take shape and become meaningful. In other words, the self-coherence and unity of the thinking, knowing subject is a linguistic quality, a discourse effect, or a simulation. 'Simulacra do not consist merely of the play of signs, they involve social relations and social power,' says Baudrillard (1993a: 52). Signals, and the social logic of distinction that signs mark and replicate, actuate class power (1981: 29–62, 1998a: 49–68). Each order's main goal is to increase control over the planet, nature, and people. Unlike Marxist theory, no identifiable class, group, or individual is 'behind' this desire for power. Power, according to Baudrillard, is a system quality rather than an individual trait. 'Knowledge acts as a tool of power,' according to Nietzsche. (1968: 266), and each level of simulacra, according to Baudrillard, provides knowledge, ideas, and perceptions that preserve and re-simulate social order. Power is diffused throughout the system, infusing all of its relations, transactions, and activities. Knowledge is never neutral, and power is never located at a single location within it.

II. THE COUNTERFEIT IS THE FIRST ORDER OF SIMULACRA

Through the creation of democratic parliamentary and legal institutions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the emerging bourgeois class undermined the feudal order's fixed positions and restricted exchanges. 'Overt rivalry at the level of signage' was created by the bourgeoisie (Baudrillard, 1993a: 50). The creation of the 'game of signs' of fashion and conspicuous consumption (1990a: 91–2, 1993a: 87–100) was permitted by the freer exchange of signs, which were no longer bound by the status or rank of birth.

Because "signs are protected by a restriction that ensures their absolute clarity and puts an unmistakable status on each," fashion and competitive consumption could not exist in the symbolic order. (1993a, p. 50) The symbolic order, on the other hand, is not an absolute reality, a domain of unmediated, assured, or direct access to truth. Baudrillard sees the symbolic order as a game of trades, challenges, and appearances: masks, dances, feasts, and rituals. Of course, signs exist as a channel of communication, but

they are relatively fixed, 'certain,' assigned, and bound. Signs in the symbolic order, crucially, are neither referential nor arbitrary:

The arbitrariness of the sign begins when instead of bonding two persons in an inescapable reciprocity, the signifier starts to refer to a disenchanted universe of the signified, the common denominator of the real world, towards which no-one any longer has the least obligation. (Baudrillard, 1993a: 50)

Arbitrary signs are 'fake' in the sense that they are merely a 'simulation of symbolic duty' (ibid.). They appear to be connected to the world, but they are actually abstract, referential (re)presentations of it. When the world is posited on the one hand, and the representational exchange of signs is posited on the other, the world and the sign are separated, fundamentally distinct things: the sign and the referent. The sign and referent are linked by convention, with the sign actively representing the ostensibly 'passive' referent or object. To put it another way, cutting off symbolic interactions causes a qualitative shift on both sides of the newly formed binary opposition 'world' and 'signs.' In symbolic commerce, or, we could suppose, in symbolic order, this qualitative difference is meaningless. In the first or counterfeit order of simulacra, a vast range of new events and social behaviours become possible. This was the era of the baroque, theatrical illusion, and the emergence of new art and architectural trends. The use of stucco and the aesthetic device of *trompe l'oeil*, according to Baudrillard, are particularly emblematic of this period. Stucco is a type of plaster used to coat architectural surfaces to generate smooth mouldings and decorations, a name that dates back to the Italian Renaissance. *Trompe l'oeil* painting, which literally means "deceiving the eye," creates the appearance of three dimensions in two dimensions, and the image can appear "real" by eliminating the frame.

III. THE SECOND ORDER

The second order of simulacra attempts to confine the play of appearances and enforce a higher order of equivalence, hence increasing the amount of control. This is accomplished through using production as an economic/industrial practise as well as a linguistic, referential practise, referred to as "the principle of

operativity" (Baudrillard, 1993a: 54). While the first order operates through a general equivalent at the level of outward form, the second order operates through a general equivalent within class or market relations: the exchange of commodities in terms of economic exchange-value. 'Serial' or industrially generated signs exist without any symbolic obligations. Furthermore, because the ultimate 'origin' or reference of such objects is simply not an issue for mass-produced objects, 'the extinction of the original reference alone facilitates the general law of equivalence.

'Crude, drab, industrial, monotonous, echoless, functional, and efficient' are signs of the second order. (1993a: 57), where the first-order indications were described as "magical, devilish, illusory...enchanted." The second order of simulacra is exceedingly unstable, even 'ephemeral,' because it shades into the third order practically instantly.

Serial production gives way to generation through models...all forms change from the moment that they are no longer mechanically reproduced but conceived according to their very reproducibility...from a generative core called a model. (Baudrillard, 1993a: 56)

IV. HYPERREALITY IS THE THIRD ORDER OF SIMULACRA

With the third tier of simulacra, the sign's status is modified once more: representation tends to be supplanted by simulation. Because meaning is formed through relations between signifiers ('models') rather than in our reflective or 'inner' dialectical thought processes, signifiers lose their relationship to signifieds (the mental 'construction' of meaning within our heads). Because models lack referents, additional signs (or rather pre-modelled signifiers) are disarticulated from referents. Even if we believe that 'referentiality' is always an illusion created by language's apparatus (as Baudrillard believes; see 1981: 143–63), the situation is altered by the development of signifiers that lack even illusory referentiality (2005d: 67–73). The meaning of the term 'Gucci,' for example, is defined by relationships between other signifiers such as 'Prada,' 'Timberland,' 'Marks and Spencer,' and so on. Any 'referent,' such as a sweatshop industrial complex in the Third World, is

overshadowed by the use of signifiers such as 'sexy,' 'chic,' 'rugged,' 'excellent value,' and so on. These are models that do not have a direct or stable reference point. Furthermore, many signifiers, especially virtual or computer-generated pictures, render the referent concept completely useless. Most of us are familiar with the virtual signifier 'Lara Croft,' but when this simulation was simulated by the celebrity signifier Angelina Jolie, the latter, who was already unusually proportioned, took on the role of Lara Croft was digitally enhanced to look more like the original. Searching for the 'real' world referent of 'Lara Croft' or 'Angelina Jolie' is pointless: both are brands, collections of modelled signifiers intended to circulate via the corporate media/entertainment loop. Representation does not disappear or become impossible; in fact, it continues to be dominant; yet, simulation, according to Baudrillard, grows more ubiquitous.

Without the stable equivalence of sign–referent and signifier–signified, meaning becomes highly unstable, and binary distinctions implode, reverse or become radically uncertain in their meaning(s). The binary oppositions that structured the second order, and enabled the very opposition between the real and its representation upon which the notion of the 'real' depends, become increasingly volatile and uncertain. Baudrillard develops brief and somewhat repetitive examples with the oppositions of true/false, beautiful/ugly, art/anti-art, therapy/anti-therapy. The meanings attaching to the first or privileged term are changing and unstable – just what constitutes truth, beauty, art? In the era of simulation the second or negative pole of the opposition is deployed to energise or revivify the oppositions by feeding into the first term, rather than opposing it. For example, the fashion industry draws upon what was formerly considered ugly to generate new or alternative notions of beauty. In the past decade we have seen extreme thinness, 'heroin chic' and clothes that look worn, ripped or dirty. The fashion industry, for example, uses what was once thought unattractive to create new or alternate definitions of beauty. Extreme thinness, 'heroin chic,' and garments that appear torn, tattered, or soiled have all been popular during the last decade. These strategies complement the tried and true, the routine and hackneyed, and actually protect the meaning of the very principle of fashion, as well as the possibility of

capturing and promoting 'the beautiful,' thereby preserving its 'reality' and allowing more and more fashion to be produced and consumed. Another favourite example is Baudrillard's claim that the anti-psychiatry lobby of the 1960s and 1970s gave psychiatry and the therapy industry a new lease on life. The critiques produced by the anti-psychiatry movement associated with R. D. Laing and others were incorporated and actually expanded and nourished the discipline of psychiatry, rather than diminishing it as a branch of knowledge. The critiques acted as an inoculation, strengthening the discipline, making it more resistant to further criticism, and more... real. In the third level, binary opposition concepts take on a more "tactical" significance. Neither phrase is particularly different; rather, they work in tandem to sustain or simulate 'reality.' However, this tactical manoeuvre exacerbates the meanings' instability: over time, the oppositions' or distinctions' energy is diminished to the point where their supposed referents can no longer be retrieved. In other words, the boundary between beauty and ugliness, art and anti-art, truth and falsehood blurs — this is the implosion point. Signs are pushed into hyperreality in an attempt to secure the 'real' and reality. The object avenges itself when the binary oppositions diminish and lose their distinctiveness. The object defies coding and becomes 'transpolitical,' as Baudrillard describes it (1990b: 25–70)

V. CONCLUSION

The relationship between the remnant, residue, or surplus and the notion of defiance must be drawn out in order to comprehend Baudrillard's reasoning here. For Baudrillard, utility was the first-order dominant norm, and 'use and use-value constitute a fundamental ethics,' far from being exceeded. However, it only lives in a simulation of scarcity and calculation' (1983: 78). Utilitarianism is a "cruel and disillusioning moral tradition," according to the author (ibid.). Death is 'sequestered,' isolated, and rendered irrevocable; life is reduced to use-value. It is this assignment of useful (self) management that must be defied, and according to Baudrillard, the system's separation of life and death into binary oppositions can only be defied effectively by confronting the system's separation of life and death into binary oppositions. The equivalency system, which includes sign-value, exchange-value,

and use-value, must be dismantled. The system ensures equality through "managed wasting" (1983: 79), which we can presume applies to both the potlatch ceremonial system and modern consumer cultures. Modern societies no longer make sacrifices in the traditional sense, but they do generate many means of waste, such as in war, consumption, traffic accidents, and, as Baudrillard points out, space exploration, missile systems, and supersonic air travel. However, the sudden and disproportionate 'pouring back' of surplus into the system, according to Baudrillard, threatens the system's demise. These hazy, incomplete, but intriguing thoughts appear to have been put on hold for a while before reappearing in Baudrillard's terrorist theory.

Many would reduce sociology to realist programs and empiricist 'data' at the expense of theory, creativity, and challenge, according to Baudrillard.

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