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THE EXPERIENCE OF REALITY IN MARX AND BAUDRILLARD



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Date: August 29, 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend a special thanks to my dissertation supervisor for his guidance and support to Dr. Andrew Chitty. I am heartily thankful to my fiancé, Ibrahim Dalar, for his encouragement and patience. I would also like to thank to my father, Mehmet Sait and to my mother Sara for their moral help and encouragements. I am sincerely grateful to those who have always helped me not only accomplish this aim but also in my whole life.



ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an explanation of Marx's use of the term commodity fetishism, in the context of an analysis of the social constitution of reality, and his thoughts on fetishism becoming a phenomenon of social constitution in the world of commodities. It can be seen that the theory of fetishism is not referred to as an illusion, but it is a property of the commodity. Marx's theory also presumes that the social relations between individuals are turned into a relation between things. Whereas Marx's theory of commodity fetishism considers a mystification in the experience of social life, Baudrillard develops the concept of sign fetishism and object fetishism. These are both structures in the radicalisation of Marx's view of commodity fetishism. The structure of the sign is important to the commodity in the postmodern era. In this structure, commodity is no longer described through its use, but rather what it signifies in the simulacrum world. Thus, consumer society no longer needs simply objects, but rather it consumes objects for symbolic meaning.

Keywords: Marx, Reality, Baudrillard, commodity fetishism, postmodernism

CHAPTER I

Introduction

In this dissertation, I will attempt to address the question of how one could accept the experience of reality, answering it on the grounds of commodity fetishism and objects in Karl Marx and Jean Baudrillard. To respond to this question, I will benefit from, on the one hand, the works of Marx, and particularly his book *The German Ideology* and his essay “*The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret*” in the first chapter of *Capital*, in which the fetishism of the commodity is discussed. On the other hand, for the second chapter, I will draw on some of Baudrillard’s works, in particular *The System of Objects* and *Simulation and Simulacra*.

In Chapter I, I will analyse specifically the views of Marx’s approach to two conceptions, which are characterised as the concept of ideology and commodity fetishism associated with the experience of reality, and the constitution of social reality in the capitalist society. Firstly, I will present a brief summary of Marx’s thoughts, and then I will accentuate my own purpose in Chapter I. In the first section, I will examine the work of Marx and Engels to see to what extent the theory of ideology and the materialist conception of history can be consistently extracted from them. I will begin by describing Marx’s use of the word, specifically what Marx himself really means by these terms ‘ideology’ and ‘materialist conception’.

In the last part of the first Chapter, the first volume of *Capital* will provide the context. I shall be discussing where Marx’s model of commodity fetishism can be seen in its context, and how it is clarified from Marx’s approach to empirical life being certain under capitalism. I will attempt to demonstrate how Marx uses the meaning of fetish character in capital society. It is claimed that the theory of commodity fetishism is not an illusion. The notion of fetishism is a sort of mystification related to an inverse clarifying of what is social reality. The properties of the fetish character appear in the concept of the things, form and capital, and this plays significantly on social relations in capital. Following this, I will look at how commodities or things come to appear in ‘mysterious’ and ‘fantastic’ forms. I will then add my central insights, which include the category

of commodity fetishism as a social reality or experience of reality. I will also interpret critically on this part of Marx's commodity fetishism with some interpreters. I will represent my argument by using the method of commodity fetishism to shed light on what constitutes the experience of social reality. At the end of the Chapter, I will examine the theory of reification in George Lukacs, but specifically I will not aim to discuss Lukacs' theory of reification in this dissertation. However, his thoughts will form an important basis for understanding Baudrillard's fetishism and objects.

In Chapter II, following the main problem of the dissertation, I will try to present how Baudrillard uses the notion of objects, fetishism, simulation and hyperreality to develop a postmodern culture in order to understanding experience reality in the contemporary world, and what he means by these conceptions. Following these questions, I will investigate how we are able to understand and find the social constitution of reality in the contemporary world, in terms of Baudrillard's philosophy. Indeed, I will analyse what the differences between hyperreality and reality, and what are the causes of hyperreality in the contemporary age. The purpose of this section is to describe how Baudrillard presents the transformation of social objects related to signs, structures the framework of consumption, and brings rationality to the objective dimensions of the social world.

Firstly, I would like to introduce some brief information about Baudrillard's thoughts, and then I will aim to answer critically the two questions above. In the second section, I will continue my exploration of Baudrillard's discourses on the system of objects in consumer society. Baudrillard's analysis begins with a definition of the new world of consumption. He argues that human life is determined more by the manipulation of commodities, and thereby by interaction with objects. Consumer society includes analyses of the structure of commodities and objects. At the same time, I will attempt to establish what Baudrillard's supporting for the theory of fetishism consists of. It is essential to criticise Marx's theory of commodity fetishism. Baudrillard's concept of fetishism can be reached in his major works *The System of Objects* (1968) and *The Consumer Society* (1970), in which there is merely a mention of fetishism. His other major study is *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), in which there is a new aspect of contemporary society based on a radicalised Freudian approach, in particular in the chapter titled "*The Body: The Mass Grave of Signs*", in which our understanding of the framework of fetishism becomes clearer. In contrast to the conceptualisation of commodity fetishism, he describes fetishism as a sign fetishism. This

description of fetishism is connected with the notion of signs and objects. I shall look at how Baudrillard has used and understood the sign fetishism in the social constitution of reality. Even though he developed the conception of fetishism to an extent in terms of critical impact, he could not systematically analyse and theorise it. In the last section, I shall examine Baudrillard's notions of simulation and simulacrum, as they are important concepts in understanding his experience of reality and concept of hyperreality in the postmodern world.

In the last part of the dissertation, Chapter III, I will provide a comparative narration of the role played by the experience of reality, specifically to discuss critically the ideas of the theory of commodity and fetishism put forward in Marx and Baudrillard. Firstly, it seems to me that Baudrillard's thoughts evolve between the late 1960s and early 1970s based on the ideas of Marx. The system of objects and simulation, which centres upon Baudrillard's early works, is made possible merely by his radicalisation of the Marxian notions of commodity and fetishism. Specifically, Baudrillard takes up Marx's theory of fetishism and develops it in a more radical way. The discussion will be parallel to the matters of commodity, fetishism and social reality in the modern society as well as in post-modern society. Following that, I will show to what extent Baudrillard's approaches go beyond Marx's and Baudrillard's reflections on the contemporary contribution to social reality, since Baudrillard has seen that the commodity form is in essence a form of the sign, and articulating this sign is the crucial mechanism of consumption.

1 MARX'S CONCEPT OF IDEOLOGY AND COMMODITY FETISHISM

1. 1 Introduction to Marx

Karl Marx (1818-1883), a philosopher, political theorist, economist, and sociologist, writes widely upon a variation of subjects, covering philosophical critiques, sociology and political economy. One of the great merits of Marx is that his thoughts cannot be broken down basically into 'history', 'philosophy', 'economics' and 'politics', since Marxism is a unity. It is generally agreed that Marx and his lifelong, friend Friedrich Engels shared the same views and ideas. His first work is *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, written in Paris, in 1844 (Jonathan, 2017, p.2). Here, he tries to expand on the problems of political economy. His other mainly work, *The German Ideology* of 1845, was written in cooperation with Engels in 1845 but was unpublished. However, we can see where Marx begins to improve his theory of history and ideology.

Marx's chief economic work is the publication of the first volume of *Das Kapital* in Germany in 1867, which had been foreshadowed by an important earlier work, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859)* (Caute, 1967, p.150). Generally, he tries to detail the issues of political economy from the point of view of his "maturing dialectical-materialist and communist perspectives and also to synthesise the results of his critical review of prevailing philosophic and economic theories" (Marx, 1844, p.76). We can see that there are three significant effects upon Marx's thoughts and intellectual improvement, right from an early age through to his later years. These can be represented by German philosophy, French revolutionary politics and the English political economy. Caute (1967) points out that Marx's work has meaning merely in so far as it defines the interpretation of the whole and the parts of men, classes and social structures, in the human condition, and in the real world. *Manuscripts (1844)* is prefaced with the political economy, including capital, profit, labour, and wages, and it also refers to Adam Smith. It covers a wide range of matters, subsuming more interesting material on private property, communism and money. Capitalism indicates the most extreme form of class rule and economic exploitation, and he devotes much of his life to a detailed study of its mechanisms and what he regards as its inherent and self-destructive defects. He attempts to present how government, or the state, generally reflects the

power and interests of the hegemon class, and how the overthrow of the requires the violent, revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state.

Marx prefaces *Capital* Volume I in 1867 with an analysis of the view of commodity production. A commodity, fetishism, and value are described and produced for exchange on a capital or market. The concept of commodity fetishism in his work is significant, since it ensures an ontological discussion of social, structural, and human activity. He relates the consciousness of men, their ideas and beliefs, to their situation in society, and for him, thought and action are inseparable. Furthermore, he attempts to organise a revolutionary workers' movement, and to bring about the rule of the universal class of the future, the proletariat. His economic analysis of capital is related to his own aspect of the labour theory of value, which involves the critique of capitalist profit as the subtraction of surplus value from the exploited labour of the proletariat. Marx's analysis of history and economics come to take place in communism, and his account of economics is separate from a capitalist understanding.

After a brief summary of Marx's philosophy, I will now emphasise my aim in Chapter I. First of all, I am going to describe of how his understanding of ideology and commodity fetishism is associated with the social construction of reality, particularly in the capital epoch. I will look at the text (*The German Ideology*) as a discourse on Marx's philosophical aspect.

1. 2 The Definition of Marx's Concept of Ideology and His Critique of Idealism

In this section, I will examine the work of Marx and Engels to see what consistencies in the theory of ideology and materialist conception history can be extracted from them. Specifically, I want to understand what Marx really means by these terms 'ideology' and 'materialist conception', and here my focus is on the original source, which is '*The German Ideology*'. This work was written by Marx and Engels between November 1845 and the summer of 1846.

It is largely a polemical tract, directed against a group of writers with whom Marx himself had been affiliated up to 1844, the Young Hegelians. The first and most important part criticises the views of Ludwing Feurbach. Also the bulk of *The German Ideology* is composed of detailed step

by step polemics against the writings of some of their intelligentsia, such as Bruno Bauer, Max Stirner, and the other Young Hegelians (Elster, 1986, p.23). The central point of *The German Ideology* is to criticise specifically contemporary theories formulated in its well-known acknowledgments on materialism, alienation and historical method (Browning, 1993, p.455).

The clarification and definition of Marx's conception of "ideology" is as a criticism of philosophical idealism and political conservatism. As a materialist, he would oppose Plato's 'idea'. He has no interest in developing a theory of idea or idealism, compared to Plato or the other idealists. As we know, he merely uses the term in a critical context. Following this reason, it can be said that he does not discuss any treatment of ideology on epistemological grounds. However, it can be seen that Marx judges the term ideology negatively, and I agree with Clegg's interpretation, that calls Marx's ideology a sort of pejorative conception. Clegg (2008) asserts that, in this sense, this ideology might be represented as a pejorative concept for ideas as such, picking out all false ideas, since they are lacking any material or practical reality. He makes "false consciousness" the describing property of an ideological system. Moreover, in the *Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole*, the young Marx fights the *Phenomenology of Spirit* for treating man as a pure spirit or mind (Khazae, 1988, p.13).

Indeed, the intellectuals' labour and their ideas are related to abstractions, so their activity is virtual existence producing mental as a class. I think that this condition can be understood like that of the bourgeois class becoming ideologists in the case of the illusions of economists, so that they are not able to experience reality in the capital condition, while Marx does not suggest that proletarians are incapable of illusion, and he never believes that illusions are essential and required. Hence, I argue that if we talk about the experience of reality in the capital condition, only the proletarian class can experience it. For Marx (1846, p.92), this is why communism is not a set of ideas to be put into practice, but "the real movement which abolishes existing conditions". This means that Marxist theory and practice is a successive unity, and this achievement is called truth. The sufficient idea of communism can merely be thought of as the adequate practice of communisation. Also, he (1846, p.199) argues "that all social life is essentially *practical*. All the mysteries which urge theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice".

Marx seeks to develop the new world through the critique of the old, because the false consciousness or theories of the old world which are demonstrated by society as unchanging are ideological. Additionally, these theories become the central focus of Marx's critical attentions, and his understanding of ideological conceptions and their relation to social reality has become more complicated as his own notion of social consciousness develops. "Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process." (Marx and Engels, 1846, p.13-14). He acknowledges no reality outside man and nature.

In conclusion, in *The German Ideology* Marx aims to develop a materialist theory of consciousness. If we want to understand a framework of Marx's understanding of ideology in relation to empirical reality, his ideas processes must be referred to as materiality, since they are backed up throughout social, material, real, empirical life-conditions, by men and their activities. The content of the direct experience of reality appears in phenomenal form and in his analysis, hence specifically the material conditions are necessary in order to describe of the experience in phenomenal categories.

1. 3 The Materialist Conception of History and Social Reality

What I will now argue is that the claims of historical materialism and the constitution of social reality can be seen as urging the introduction of a section of Marx's concept of commodity fetishism. *The German Ideology* includes several useful references to the materialist method that Marx cannot state in length and breadth throughout his complete works. *The German Ideology* is obviously a key element for historical materialism. Marx and Engels contrast a new materialist theory with the idealism which had formulated previous German ideas. They do this by distinguishing their theory from that of the "*German ideology/ideologists*" or the Young Hegelians, whose membership includes Bauer, Stirner, and Feuerbach. *The German Ideology* is a crucial early text in which Marx firstly begins with a simple view of historical materialism. Here,

Marx attempts to clarify and represent what he means by “materialism”. He is not a traditional materialist, since we can see in the *Theses on Feuerbach* that Marx is always careful to fence himself off from other materialists. Unlike Feuerbach, Marx did not regard sensations as merely the experienced effects of things; they were the effects of the interaction between active man and his surroundings. Experience is a social as well as a biological dimension. Man has a history and a future; the world in which he lives and his consciousness of it are partly shaped by his purposes and his actions (Caute, 1967, p.42).

For Marx, the life is an entirely material structure and is developed not by nature, but by its own material laws. Such an understanding that realises concrete and objective existence, and gives priority to material is called ‘materialism-materialism’. Fromm (2004) asserts that Marx makes a distinction between materialism and idealism. Marx’s materialist process involves the analysis of the actual human life of a human and the effect of a man’s real way of life on his thinking and perceiving. In contrast to Fromm, Lukacs (1975, p.37) has regarded that “it is wrong to evaluate materialism of Marx associated with early Greek materialists. Marx takes into account man consciousness as a late product of material ontological improvement. It is a misconception to evaluate it in the framework of religious conception”. Consciousness is related to praxis, and a process of social being, so the materialist conception is in relation to practice. However, humans have been developing their concrete production with their real world, and also their thinking. Like Elster’s approach, this does not mean that consciousness that determines life, but that life determines consciousness. Following this, the production of the material world itself is a necessary circumstance of all historical development and human beings.

Marx speaks of the actual human being who are active in a certain way based on production. Men are born in social relations independent of their own will, and live in these social real structures. Hence, he argues that “our conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real process of production, starting out from the simple material production of life” (Marx and Engels, p.28-30). He also analyses the distinction between man and animal as a process throughout which man separates himself from animal. Let us now turn to one of Marx’s early writing, *The German Ideology*:

“Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life”

Here, it is clear that the period of man’s distinguishing himself from animal is certainly probable, along with his practical and experiential activity. What expresses this process is a human’s active organisation. For Marx, human activity is as an object because we act freely and consciously. That is why for Marx, man’s life activity can be distinguished from that of an animal. Elster (1986) asserts that the way in which human produces his means of subsistence is firstly based on the nature of the means of subsistence a human actually finds in existence and has to reproduce. Consequently, a human being is a natural thing, and materialism seeks *reality* as being completely *objective*, in the sense that embodying it means no longer a human “subjective” activity. I can argue that if, and only if, the experience of social reality is dependent upon human’s material situation of their production. Here, we are talking about the physical world and men, and active men have a capacity for the condition of social reality. This empirical condition is associated with the relation between men’s activity and social reality in the material world, and we cannot separate these from each other.

The relation of the social construction and economical condition of production mean that they are frequently evolving out of the life process of certain humans who are productively active in a definite way. These definitely have a role in social and economic reality (Elster, 1986, p.26). These individuals act and produce materiality, and therefore they work under certain material structures independent of their own will. In *Manuscripts* in 1844, Marx argues man is the producers of his notions and ideas. That is to say, real, active man, since he is conditioned by a definite development of his productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding with these, up to its furthest forms. The production of conceptions, ideas and consciousness is directly intermingled with the real material practice and the concrete relations of men in the social reality.

Experience is a social thing. Humans possess a history and a future, and the physical world is the way in which we live. In *The German Ideology*, Marx argues that all social construction is importantly *practical*. The whole of the mysteries that insist on method in mysticism find their

rational solution into man's activities and in the grasp of this practice. The general result of which is quoted in *The Holy Family (1845) p.125*:

“...History does nothing, it ‘possesses no immense wealth’, it ‘wages no battles’. It is a man, real living man, that does all that, that possesses and fights; ‘history’ is not a person apart, using man as a means for its own particular aims; history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing this aim...”.

In the passage which follows, contrary to Marx's theory of materialism, for Hegel, the notion of history supposes an *Abstract* or *Spirit*, and the history of humans comes in the history of the abstract spirit of humans. His theory of materialism includes the work of economic life and the experience of reality, and the impact of an individual's actual life on his own feeling and thinking as well. The “evolution of man in all history is characterised by man's struggle with nature” (Marx, 1859, p. 14). He says, “The social reality of nature, and human natural science...are identical terms”. He has explicated consciousness as existence directed from a physical life. In spite of clarifying Marx's work, some interpreters have regarded Marx's view of consciousness as “false consciousness” in comparison to idealism. In general, Marx himself is not completely against ideas; however, he is against ideas that are not rooted in the social constitution of reality and human beings (Marx, 1859, p.19). In *Capital*, he no longer presents an idealist solution to the issue of ideology, and he shows the power of commodities to continue capitalism and select a place outside of this ideology. The understanding of Marx's materialism is associated with the physical and the experience of reality of the world.

1.4 Marx's Development of the Fetishism of Commodities, as a Reality

“...Neither ‘value’ nor ‘exchange-value’ are my subjects, but the *commodity*”. Karl Marx (1880)

I contend that the theory of fetishism becomes social economic character impressed upon things in the process of social production. Fetishism is used as a constitution of social reality. It becomes as dominating mode in the capital world. The conception of commodity fetishism analyses the forms of reification and signs in post-modernist societies. The aim of this chapter is to treat the question of how fetishised forms of capital economics and the forms of fetishism are

fundamentally connected with the reality of social construction, and the social relation of commodities, and the product of labour in capital society. Firstly, I will mention Marx's thought of fetishism and relate it to the social relation of things and of the fetish character of commodities. Additionally, I will look at how commodities or things come to appear in 'mysterious' and 'fantastic' forms. I will then add my chief point, which is the category of commodity fetishism as a social reality or experience reality. Later, I will comment critically on this part of Marx's commodity fetishism with some interpreters. Before beginning with Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, firstly I would like to describe briefly the concept of commodities as a part of Marx's approach, because fetishism is not distinguished from the production of commodities.

A commodity, Marx explains, is 'an external object', 'a thing' in a commodity-producing society. However, a commodity is not simply an object or thing, since it also possesses use value and exchange value. He describes these two perspectives of created value, which are use-value and exchange-value.

"Value (i.e. exchange-value) is a property of things, riches (i.e. use-value) of man. Value, in this sense, necessarily implies exchanges, riches do not. Riches are the attribute of man, value is the attribute of commodities. A man or a commodity is rich, a pearl or a diamond is valuable...A pearl or a diamond is valuable as a pearl or diamond" (Marx, 1976, p.177).

Marx (1976, p.126) argues that use-value is associated with the quality of things or objects and is merely realised within consumption, yet exchange-value is quantifiable in terms of other commodities. On the one hand, exchange-value merely appears in a particular sort of community for particular reasons; on the other hand, use-value, in Marx's account, is basically a way of formulating a useful thing. Therefore, use-value can be noticed in relation to any kind of society, as humans will always reach for useful things, while exchange-value is creative in some societies, but not in others. He says, "The existence of value is a purely social reality." It is a social property which is attached to a product of labour.

Commodity fetishism is an important issue in Marx's theory of commodity. Even though Marx does not use the conception of 'commodity fetishism', most interpreters (Perlman, 1968, Rubin, 1972 and Carver, 1975, for example) call Marx's notion of fetishism 'commodity fetishism' in their literature. Following this literature, I also use commodity fetishism to describe what he

specifies as a 'fetishism'. In 1842, Marx read a German translation (1785) of Charles de Brosses's *Le Culte des dieux fetiches*, (Carver, 2008, p.50). Marx uses the term 'fetish' in this eighteenth and nineteenth century sense. It is an attempt to represent how Marx utilises the statement 'fetishism' and 'fetish'. However, until the Grundrisse (1859), it is not specifically detailed how he emphasises the use of these terms into his critique of the commodity and his analysis of the political economy. Analysing Chapter one section four, '*The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret*, in Capital I, Marx has been introducing the concept of commodity fetishism, and it is a feat well worthy of attention, presenting his ability to combine economic, philosophical and historical material.

“In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent being endowed with life, and entering into both with the product of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.” (Marx, 1938, pp.42-43).

Indeed, the term fetishism identifies the regulation of the social power in which objectified value relations are acquired under the capitalist society. Schulz (2011) points out that it is a social power succeeded by virtue of a process of objectified social relations. In addition to this, the false or counterfeit belief in the way that social features are attributed to fetish carrying things are inherently linked to these indicated as a fetish-induced illusion. It is argued that the theory of fetishism is not a psychological or ideological theory, but it is a mystification that is inner to the construction of the commodity economy. Marx uses 'mystic character' to refer to calling the fetish character of a commodity. The mysterious character of a commodity is described by Marx. He firstly gives a characterisation of that which the fetish character of commodity consists in. The critique of the fetish character would be preferential for fetishism. He also gives an understandable explanation of what he means by fetishism: “Fetishism...metamorphoses the social, economic character impressed on things in the process of social production into a natural character stemming from the material nature of those things” (Marx, 1867, p.135). He indicates that subjects natively contend within fetishism. Indeed, for Marx, fetishism is “*peculiar* to bourgeois Political Economy”. However, Schulz argues that fetishism obviously is not only a fact peculiar to the Political Economy of Marx's time. He gives an example, which is that contemporary orthodox economic theory is similar to fetishism. I believe that Schulz's argument is correct, but his example

is inadequate to criticise of Marx's political economy. Also, Marx's commodity fetishism can be seen as a further philosophical term.

Marx (1859, p.30) indicates that labour produces a commodity in capitalist society: "The social relations of men appear in the reversed form of a social relation of things." In this quotation, the social relations of men can only be seen in the form of objects or things, so the worker's labour and social relations become materialised (reified or objectified). The worker's labour is also sold and bought such as a physical thing. Commodity fetishism is really based on reification. It is essential to note that with Marx's theory of the commodity fetishism or the fetish character, he puts his method into a social contractual reality in which he produces commodities and exchanges them. When we ask what is the fundamental relationship of commodity fetishism, we are asking about the relationship between labour value and the worker and production. In *Manuscripts* in 1844, Marx points out that the product of labour is a labour that has become embodied within an object, which has transformed into a real object or material. De Angelis argues that experience of commodity fetishism diversifies between worker and capital; the capitalist experiences fetishism as things, while the worker experiences it as a form of reification. Finally, it means that the reification of labour, and the labour of realisation is its reification. Under such capital circumstances is interested thorough political economy, this realisation of labour occurs as *loss of reality*, in particular for the workers. For me, here, the meaning of losing reality is not only a part of the worker process, but also it is the relation of the whole of society. It is objectification as the loss of the object, and "object-bondage", appropriation as alienation or as estrangement (Marx, 1844, p.69).

Here, Marx develops his method of alienation. On this point, commodity is utilised within the meaning of political economy, which is commercial things. Also, labour is necessarily a realisation of a human, which is as a worker who produces commodities. The meaning of labour power is an implosion, with labour as a commodity in a market society. In *Manuscripts* in 1844, Marx argues that the worker thus merely feels himself to be outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. Cate (1967, p.56) asserts that Marx's theory of self-alienation is giving way to a more social aspect as he comes to consider alienated labour and the division of labour in capital society. In fact, alienated man is divided against his fellow man, and hence against himself. In the capital

world, the work activity relationship is observed merely as an external object, and possesses the commodity-form. The form of commodity that is actual is the objective character supposed by the work relation.

In *Early Writings* in 1963, Marx speaks of objectification or reification, which is also the practice of alienation. Just as man, so long as he is engrossed in religion, can only objectify his essence of an alien and fantastic being; so under the sway of egoistic need, he can only affirm and produce objects in practice by subordinating his products and his own activity to the domination of an alien entity, and by attributing to them the significance of an alien entity, namely money. The product becomes a commodity, and all commodities are perishable, so money is the imperishable commodity (Marx, 1857, p.149). As soon as individuals begin to work not only for themselves but also for each other, their own labour also accepts a social form. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy of 1859*, Marx states that the reification (objectification or materialisation) of social relations among people seem to be formed of 'reification' in the capitalist society, where labour is a commodity, and they only appear to be objectified. Consequently, this reification is called a "mystification" by Marx. At the same time, it means the reification of labour and losing humanity under capital economic conditions. As Marx notes, "personification of things the reification of persons" (Marx, 1867, p.168). In basic contradictions to the commodity, he formulates the fetish character of the commodity as deeply in the real commodity itself. One can assert the following as special terms, which are alienation and reification, with the counterpart of personification inversion. These classifications make it clear that, according to Marx, alienation cannot be distinguished from the social reality of capitalist economy. However, today, some social scientists can argue that "alienation is not a consequence of capitalism per se but of employment in the large-scale organisations and impersonal bureaucracies that pervade all industrial societies" (Blauner, p15). Following this, Blauner describes the notion of alienation as an individual experience and a psychological one, such a worker's feeling. I believe that if we say alienation is not a consequence of capitalism, this description will be meaningless, particularly when understanding of Marx's alienated labour. This is because wage labour is referred to as alienated labour in the real capitalist society. At the time, the theory of fetishism as alienation was interpreted by Harry Dahms. He (2001, p.102) represents Marx's theory of alienation through the analysis of commodity fetishism. This interpretation shows that alienation becomes a main problem with

Marx's view in the *Manuscripts*. Lefebvre (2008) also states that "fetishism is the economic form of alienation". Consequently, according to these thoughts, alienation is an objective specifically produced by the constitution of capital reality, in this case, human labour becomes alienated from their own labour, as products cut off from their human essence (Fromm, 2006). Ollman also claims that commodity fetishism describes a "human drama" from the point of "activities of inanimate objects". The human drama is undoubtedly a problem of labour in production, which is commonly presented in social life through the grasping of commodities.

Rubin's book, titled *Essay on Marx's Theory of Value*, is an extensive explanation of the central tenet of Marx's writing, the theory of commodity fetishism and value. Marx's theory of value is a crucial point in order to understand his theory of commodity fetishism. Because his theory of value can merely be assumed upon the base of his concept of commodity fetishism, it clarifies the general construction of the commodity-capitalist economy. However, I think that Rubin formulates misconceptions, which have been concluded from cursory interpretations and weaseling considerations of Marx's work. Technically, his target is not to focus on rarity or to study price, nonetheless to criticise how the working activity of humans is determined in a capital economy. The matter of these conceptualisations is a determined social structural reality, in a word commodity-capitalism. The community shape of the economy is one in which human relations are not modulated directly, but by way of things or objects. Following this context, Rubin (1972) interprets that "the specific character of economic theory as a science which deals with the commodity capitalist economy lies precisely in the fact that it deals with production relations which acquire material forms". He demonstrates that Marx's idea of production connects with the capital commodity economy, hence whilst his general theory of value is mostly analysed as a basis of his political economy, it can be simply realised through the content of the theory of commodity fetishism. However, De Angells and Ehrbar discusses Rubin's remark of Marx's theory of value and commodity fetishism because they both believe that Marx does not say that mysterious character does not come from value. I agree with them, because when we look at in section four of chapter one of *Capital*, Marx (1867, p. 164) states, "The mystical character of the commodity does not arise, therefore, from its use value." Following this passage, he also says, "It does not come from the content of the value determinations," i.e., from the (social) stuff of which value is made. The 'content' of value determinations must be distinguished here from the social form which

this content takes in a commodity society. Furthermore, Ehrbar argues that if we look at the relation between the theory of value relation and fetishism, it will give a false impression. Whereas Rubin's argument is that "the complete dialectical ground of Marx's theory of value and theory can only be given on the basis of his theory of commodity fetishism which analyses the general structure of the commodity economy" (Rubin, 1928, p. 61) for them it is the other way around: Marx's theory of value is based on his theory of fetishism. In contrast to Rubin's interpretation, consequently, the meaning of value and that of fetishism come under a different category (De Angells, 1996, p.21).

In conclusion, commodity fetishism is not only determined by how humans work and act, but also by how they perceive and experience reality and understand social change. In the economic forms of capitalism, the modern social relations are translated into commodities, things, and objects. Therefore, the capitalist social structure has become dominant and is ultimately outside of human control. There is a link between Marx's theory of commodity fetishism and the reification of phenomenology. This chapter has provided an examination of Marx's understanding of the theory of fetishism in the context of an analysis of the theory of capitalism, and Marx's approach to the relationship between experience and the physical world and social reality. It can be claimed that this contextualisation of the experience of reality is necessary in order to analyse Marx's development of commodity fetishism and his use of the term. I will summarise this chapter by assessing Lukacs' model of social structure, and by carrying out an analysis of how the concept of fetishism is interpreted by Lukacs, and the main role it plays in his concept of the constitution features of reification. Before looking at the second chapter on Baudrillard, I think that we should have a look at Georg Lukacs' theory of reification, because it will be a great guide to understand Baudrillard's chapter, in particular his conception of fetishism, which is called sign fetishism.

1.5 Lukacs' Theory of Reification

In this part of my work, I want to illustrate how we can understand reification through the concept of fetishism in the social constitution of reality and reified society in Lukacs' thoughts. I will then describe the notion of reification with regard to Lukacs and Marx.

Georg (György) Lukács (1885–1971) is one of the constituents of Western Marxism. He presented the first large scale formulation of the theory of reification (*Verdinglichung*) *History of Class Consciousness*, in 1923, in which there were two main notions: reification and class consciousness. For Lukacs, rationality has transformed a social form, and it thus leads to the labour rationality. In Lukacs' text (*reification*), he states, "What is important is to recognize clearly that all human relations assume increasingly the form of objectivity of the abstract elements of the conceptual systems of the natural sciences and of the abstract substrata of the laws of nature. And also, the subject of this action likewise assumes increasingly the attitude of the pure observer of these artificially abstract experiences, the attitude of the experimenter." (Lukacs, 1923, p.17; Jonathan, 2017, p.6). The meaning of rationality in this context is, certainly influential in terms of critical meaning, and both Marx and Weber mention its institutionalisation in bureaucracies and markets under the capitalism.

In Lukacs' major essay, on reification, titled '*Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat*' and contained in *History of Class Consciousness* in 1923, his basic argument is an enlargement of Marx's argument of 'the commodity of fetishism form' in the first of volume of *Capital*, and Marx relates this to the phenomenon of social relations between producers and commodities that is seen in capital. Reification is constructed on the phenomenon of a description of the social relation between man and manifestation in the shape of a relation between things (Marx, 1867, p.532). Following Marx's examination of the commodity of fetishism, Lukacs' theory of reification causes the term fetishism to be utilised exchangeability with reification.

Drawing on this idea, Lukacs merely puts emphasis upon a conception of reification centered on the transformation of the social constitution of reality or activity into things. He also shows the category of reification via the commodity nature of vulgar economist society and the whole of social relations becoming thingified or objectified. As I have represented above, in Marx's social relations things and fetishes have the characterisation of commodities. This does not mean that this account is interpreted as a notional difference between Marx's account of fetishism and Lukacs' notion of reification, since the mention of fetishism is seen as the basis for reification. The term of reification (*Versachlichung*) as I understand it firstly appears in Marx's work in the *Grundrisse*, but without any specific meaning or contexts. It can be seen to mean basically 'objectification', or

the externalisation and material connection of man's activity in terms of product, or as the important positive perspective of the labour-process itself. In some other places it can be clearly used in the sense of 'fetishisation', and it is transformed to mean relation between humans and things (Marx, 1867, p.78). Whereas, in the posterior economic writings of Marx, the term is becoming gradually displaced by a synonym; that is 'objectification' (*Verdinglichung*), it also acquires a special meaning, which is most apparent in the third volume of *Capital*. Here, we can read that the reification of social relations, in an instant concrescence of the material relationships of production among their historical-social determination, is accomplished. In general, the key term to understanding 'reification' lies in Marx's notion of the functions of man and objects, which are related to the functions of economy, as has been mentioned.

The concept of alienation is also a significant point for our understanding of reification, because Marx and Lukacs both have similarities, in particular Marx's theory of estrangement and reification on the basis of his late works. Marx's "alienation" is understood as an *objective-structural* characteristic of the definite stages of historical development; this is energetically underlined by Marx in his late writings (Feenberg, 2015, p.494). The social character of his labour confronts the labourer not only "in imagination", and "actually" not only as alien, but as inimical and opposed to him, and so objectified and personified in the capital. Markus (1982, p.123) argues that, concerning Marx's theory of alienation, "alienation" is generally understood in the sense ascribed to it in *Manuscripts* in 1844, as regards these two terms: alienation and reification, which are generally as synonyms.

Thus, Lukacs' notion of reification is significantly grounded upon Marx's chapter upon commodity fetishism in *Capital I*. Lukacs broadly analyses Marx's analysis of the whole perspective of capitalist community. For Lukacs, the fetishism of commodities is the fundamental property of capitalism, and its direct outcome is the phenomenon of reification. Through reification, Lukacs (1923) mentions that "the process through which relations between men take on the appearance of relations between things; human society and human history, the products of man, appear not as the products of social activity, but as alien and impersonal forces, laws of nature which impose themselves on humanity from without". This description, associated with the processes of rationalisation and division of labour, causes disruption in every part of society,

thereby making it impossible to form a notion of the whole, of the *totality*. Therefore, the phenomenon of reification leads to the capitalist form of production itself. Following this statement, the “unified structure of consciousness” encompasses the whole of society, both the ruling and the ruled classes, and “stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man” (Lukacs, 1923, p.100).

Lukacs’ conception of totality is related to the whole social process of life as a historical period, and for him, the capitalist mode of production is required as a standpoint of totality at the center of social reality. However, the least one can possess in terms of the total aspect of the whole is the proletariat as a class. Because of this, the proletariat is the “identical subject-object of history” (Lukacs, 1923, p.122). It is not only an object or subject of history as, on the one hand, the object of history is created by the fact of the capitalist social form, resulting in its labour being reified as a commodity, and it is dominated by the bourgeoisie classes. On the other hand, the proletariat is also included as the subject of history because its labour produces and forms the physical world. Therefore, the proletariat appears to be the totality of history, and its consciousness is also the knowledge of the reality.

Consequently, I think there are an important two points where Lukacs makes an essential contribution to Marx’s notion of commodity fetishism. First, he extends Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism, so as to place it at the root of all capitalist society in social reality. Marx’s analyses of political economy hides out of sight of the notion of reification, and for him, capitalism is extended into social production. In other words, Lukacs’ notion of reification generalises this critique of social reality from the capital to society in detail. Secondly, Marx’s aspect of reification only lies on the object, whereas following Lukacs’ totality, the concept of reification not only lies on the object but also, the subject. Reification is not only the chief problem of the economy, but stands “as the central structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects” (Lukacs, 1923, p.83). As a result, the *moment of overcoming* becomes more problematic than ever before (Arato, 1972, p.25). Simply put, I would argue that the main aspect of the Lukacsian notion of totality is the cause of reification in the whole of society. Manipulated reality is needed to form functions with simulations. Referring to this sentence, I will discuss it further in the chapter on Baudrillard. Lukacs evaluated this reification process as comprehending any existence as a certain thing, and

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ignoring its other dimensions. Social life appears dominant outside of individual control. In spite of this fact that, I can see the connection between Marx's account of commodity fetishism and the reification of the phenomenology. Also, commodity fetishism is really about the whole of reification. It leads to our own social relations being translated into commodities or things.



CHAPTER II

2 BAUDRILLARD'S THE SYSTEMS OF OBJECT AND SIMULATION

2.1 Discourses of Baudrillard

Similar to Lukacs and the Frankfurt School, Jean Baudrillard also criticises how the commodity of social life has come to have control over human thought and behaviour within the constitution of social reality. Baudrillard would analyse this aspect and improve his own analysis of domination through the instruments of the system of objects, signs methodology, simulation and simulacra, and hyperreality in the postmodern world. Also, he discusses the virtual reality, which includes codes, symbols, and signs which supersede the conventional production of commodities. This virtual reality is basically founded on our desire for reified images. I will discuss intensively this element of Baudrillard's arguments below, and I shall refer now to the work of Jean Baudrillard in Chapter II. In this chapter, associated with the purpose of experiencing reality in social reality under capital, I will try to discuss the grounding some conceptions, such as objects, fetishism, simulation and hyperreality, respectively in relation to each other.

Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) is a famous French social theorist, philosopher and political interpreter, and also he is well-known for his critique of contemporary culture, economy, and media, as well as his efformation of accounts such as the system of objects, hyperreality and simulation. Baudrillard's early work can be explicated as a reply to neo-capitalism in 1960 (Jonathan, 2017, p.2). He also takes a critical attitude against capital economy, as Marx, and he struggles against political economy and power, consumption and the problems of the real or experiential world. He was heavily inspired by Marx. From this perspective, he combines with the Marxian critique of capitalism along with focuses on consumption, media, sexuality and the consumer society in his work in the 1960s and early 1970s, which can be read as reconstructing the Marxist method in consideration of the new social structures (Kellner, 1989, p.3). The new social constitution is called "the consumer society" by Baudrillard, and Aron called it the "post-industrial society". During this period, Baudrillard met and investigated the works of Henri Lefebvre, since his critiques and analyses of daily life affected him. Indeed, Roland Barthes, and

his semiological theory of the contemporary world had a lasting impression upon his work. (Jonathan, 2017, p.2).

However, Baudrillard later departed from Marx's thought and denied his socialism theory. In *The Mirror of Production* (1975), Baudrillard criticises Marx's claims on political economy. I will discuss this extensively in Chapter III. In his work, he uses the way of deconstruction to examine the concept of political economy. For Baudrillard, Marx has not encompassed the realms of communication and culture in his argues. Gane (2009) has the view that Baudrillard is often linked with postmodern thinking; nevertheless, he is not relevant to postmodernity. Also he describes the notion "postmodernist" as "empty" and "explaining nothing". Furthermore, he supposes the postmodern life to be governed by human's thoughts and behaviour. His main interpretation of reality has been relation to postmodernity. *Simulation and Simulacra* (1981) is one of his major works, which is a social theory that debates the reality and truth in the world.

Obviously, these analyses ranged from Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology to Lacan's structural psychoanalysis and from Althusser's structural Marxism to the theories of textuality and deconstruction advanced by Jacques Derrida. The newly developed structuralist, semiological and deconstructive theories emphasised attention upon representation, language and the significance of descriptions, codes and culture in daily life. In addition, the new theories of representation and signification have broken in particular with the traditional perspectives of the relation between language and reality. From this perspective, Baudrillard is extremely influenced by the semiological processes in which we see expressed the importance of signification, demonstration and the system of objects and signs in the constitution of social reality.

2.2 The System of Objects: Commodity and Symbolic Exchange

Baudrillard undertakes important works in the realms of social analysis, psychoanalysis, and semiology during the 1960s, and *The System of Objects* was his first work, published in 1968. In particular, this book will be a central aspect in order to understand his philosophy on the form of objectification or commodification of the living world below the system of new-capitalism. His other early publications, which are *The Consumer Society*, in 1970, and *For a Critique of the*

Political Economy of the Sign in 1972, should be undertaken inside of the context of analytical sociology, to compound the studies of the experiential world, and also within the studies of the world of signs in physical life. Obviously, among the structuralists and critical theorists such as Georg Lukacs, Theodor Adorno asserts that an object cannot be reducible to the subjects; however, he first examines interpretation as the dialectical limit of analysis. In other words, Baudrillard goes beyond this stage in his arguments on the “system of objects”. I shall evaluate how Baudrillard describes the system of objects that forms our experience of life, and how he criticises the role of objects in consumer capitalist society.

In *The System of Objects*, Baudrillard (1968) argues over the appropriation of semiology to criticise how objects are enciphered in relation to the system of significations and meanings in which constitute consumer society. The other important aspect is, as Baudrillard has asked, what the social role is that objects play in the lack of reification? In *The System of Objects*, Baudrillard examines the new world of objects connected through the explosive proliferation of a bold new life of consumer goods and services (Kellner, 1989, p.8-9). The process evaluates the inclusiveness of the structure of a subject-object dialectic in which the subject has the appearance of a world of objects which allure, and they come to control human’s perception, behaviour and thought. Baudrillard states that the process of social phenomenon and alienation creates a process of “reification” in capital, technologies and commodities, and “objects” or things come to govern individual “subjects”, distinguishing them from their own human natural capacities and qualities. As we have seen, Lukacs has discussed the theory of reification in contemporary society. His aspect of reification refers to the whole of social constitution, due to commodity. Baudrillard is influenced by Lukacs’ reification. However, it can clearly be seen that Baudrillard’s philosophy is not specifically describing the concept of subjects or consumers, nor does he seek to develop a theory of group revolt or class, or any theory of political organisation. Because, for him, today the value of labour is able to be produced and consumed just as with other objects or commodities, hence, labour is not a sort of historical praxis. Hence, his early engagement with objects in *The System of Objects* veered towards a switching point at which his subject based theorising ultimately moved to the side of the objects.

Baudrillard goes upon to speak against the system of objects, to show within the end why there is no such thing as a system of objects, why any “description of the system of objects cannot be divorced from a critique of that system’s practical ideology” (Baudrillard, 1968, p. 10). He argues that the structure of an objects system is formed into a new contemporary life. The system of objects includes not only the actual objects consumed but also aspects of their use, ordering and arrangement. For Baudrillard, the object is not to be comprehended in itself but only in its relationship to its outside. In the functional register of objects, objects are related to other objects (Butler, 1999, p. 123).

Baudrillard’s other main idea is that commodities are part of a system of objects linked with a system of needs. In *Consumer Society* (1970) he looks at how, if the personality of distinctive objects is produced by the system itself, thenceforth so too is their corresponding need or desire. As we consumers do not so much directly desire any specific object, as desire is merely in a competitive association with others (as mediated by such things as status and prestige) (Jonathan, 2017, p.2). We desire just another’s desire. For him, “The desire of the subject is no longer at the center of the world, it is the destiny of the object which is at the center.” Barthes’s *Mythologies* shows how our relationships with objects are not direct but are always mediated by a sign. Objects are taken up not in terms of their use or function, but primarily to communicate. Objects are put into a form of language (Butler, 1999, p.27). Barthes’s approach is inherited by Baudrillard. It has to be made clear that consumption is an active form of relationship with objects in the social constitution of reality. Objects and material things are not in fact the objects of consumption, they are the objects only of needs and of the satisfaction of needs in everyday life. In *The System of Objects*, he also disputes functional or non-functional objectives, meta or dysfunctional. In this symbolic system of consumption and the mechanical value of signs, “commodities are no longer defined by their use, but rather by what they signify, and what they signify is defined not by what they do, but by their relationship to the entire system of commodities and signs” (Baudrillard, 1968, p.27).

At the same time, it is undoubtedly the case that Marx’s theory of value inspired Baudrillard’s development of sign value and symbolic exchange. Also, this stage of values is called a “critique of the political economy of sign” by Baudrillard, in the age of standardised production and mass

consumption. Baudrillard's theory of "symbolic exchange" shows a significant notion within an understanding of why Marx's estimation concerning the collapse of capitalism has not been comprehended. For Baudrillard, today there is a consumer-oriented culture, so commodities take place not only on the stage of a sign value but also on a symbolic value that generates their status and power, and he also introduces the concept of "symbolic exchange". To explain this, Baudrillard asserts that Western countries are particularly "networked" in information cultures, and the origination of symbolic value causes a consistently altering symbolic framework in which new requests and desires to reach symbolic status are emergent. Indeed, he gives us an important example, which is that the United States is the farthest along on the way to a simulated place of symbolic value (Koch & Elmore, 2006, p.556). Baudrillard (1981) states that in the new process of symbolic value, or status, these are provided by the consumer. It indicates a new system of interpretive goods in the analysis of value, which is formulated to increase the descriptor power of use-value and exchange-value in a consumption-oriented society. Consequently, Kellner (1989) argues that even though Baudrillard defines the system of objects as a system of commodities that organise a consumer society, and emphasises his definition of the types of commodities, such as advertising, credit, methods of consumption and so on, there is little discussion of the emergence of the system of objects in the course of the development capitalism.

We are living in the period of objects, which today underlies all practice relative to objects. Manufacturing for symbolic value is associated with the production of fetishism. Such an argument enables Baudrillard to enhance the view of "fetishism" in the production period via a path that he suggests, however he goes beyond the Marxian analysis. I will discuss this extensively in the last chapter of this work. Baudrillard has built a significant of new sorts of fetishism in a simulacrum world. Consequently, he has associated the shift from use-value and exchange-value to the object as a sign and symbolic value, which allows a new fetishism and simulation to develop. Consistent with his political vision of the time, Baudrillard thus celebrates symbolic exchange over control by the code of political economy.

2.3 The Concept of Sign Fetishism

I will continue my consideration of Baudrillard's relationship with objects and signs in this chapter. What I want to mention under this title is how the term "sign fetishism" is used by Baudrillard, and what Baudrillard's supporting for the theory of fetishism has been like. His other major study is *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), in which there is a new aspect of contemporary society based on a radicalised Freudian ideology, in particular in the chapter titled "*The Body: The Mass Grave of Signs*", in which his understanding of the framework of fetishism becomes clearer. Postmodern society is one in which free-floating signs come to constitute a new world of experience. His analyses of the body, sexuality and life point to the essential role that he ascribes to signs in contemporary society, and this led Kellner to brand Baudrillard himself a "sign fetishism" (Kellner, 1989, p.172). I will also use this term in my text.

Baudrillard uses the term of fetishism in relation to psychoanalytical terms as well as Marxist ones. In keeping with Baudrillard's account of the consumer society, he has developed the conception of sign fetishism, body and object fetishism. His general theory of fetishism consists of his deconstruction of Marx's theory of commodity fetishism. However, these are both stages in the radicalisation of Marx's view of commodity fetishism, which benefit from Freud's argument that fetishism is as a perverse structure (Gane, 2011, p.371).

"If it was possible, in the past, to speak of the fetishism of the commodity, of money, of the simulacrum and the spectacle, that was still a limited fetishism (related to sign-value). There stretches beyond this for us today the world of radical fetishism." (Baudrillard, 2005, p.72)

Baudrillard explains the formation of value in objects by social sign values, demonstrating how objects are fetishised in ostentation.

"If perversion as it concerns objects is most clearly discernable in the crystallised form of fetishism, we are perfectly justified in nothing how throughout the system, organized according to the same aims and functioning in the same ways, the possession of objects and the passion for them is, shall we say, a *tempered mode of sexual perversion*" (Baudrillard, 1968, p.99). For a conception of the Freudian notion, when Baudrillard describes the fetishism of objects, we face his inventory, which focuses on the investment of the body stage, or material objects.

“A particular woman is no longer a woman but merely a sex, breasts, belly, things, voice and face... The regressive tendency, ever more specialized and impersonal, may converge on the air or the feet, or, ultimately, crystallise – at the opposite pole to any living being – on a garter or brassiere.” (Baudrillard, 1968, pp.99-100).

These passages from his early work are rethought in an essay from 1981 called “Fetishism and Ideology: The Semiological Reduction in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Here, Baudrillard critiques the use of fetishism to define any objects as a fetish. Nowadays the theory of fetishism is exploited in a summary and empirical fashion: object fetishism, automobile fetishism, sex fetishism, vacation fetishism, and so on (Baudrillard, 1981, p.88). Indeed, he rejects this use as being parasitic on the Christian denunciation of primitive cults. It is also perhaps not even a concept but a metaphor. (Gane, 2011, p.375). Working through this problem, however, he believes that the problem should be rethought through a critical examination of Marx’s concept of the form of commodity fetishism, as it is the *code* that forms the “sign-object, the object eviscerated of its substance and history” (Baudrillard, 1981, p.93). He identifies objects as signs in a code of signification value that can be manipulated between functionality and ostentation. It is the content to which an object illustrates ostentation, a sign of value that reproduces to the owner of the object that which transform the object into a fetish (Dant, 1996, p.506). Baudrillard (1981) gives an example of objects such as the television, which has a sign value which is in excess of their functional capacities. Each object “...finds meaning with other objects, in difference, according to a hierarchical code of signification”.

With money fetishism, the processes itself becomes the objects of a perverse drive to acquire a systematically enclosed abstract perfection. Hence, in the analysis of body, consumer society is defined as a consuming signs society. In explaining how the beauty of the body becomes fetishised, Baudrillard asserts that a model of beauty is built that it is specifically the cult of the body beautiful: “It is the sign in this beauty, the mark (make-up, symmetry) which fascinates; it is the artefact which is the object of desire.” (Baudrillard, 1981, p.94). The signs are there to make the body into a perfect object, thus an analysis of fetishism, if it can be justified, must move from the object, the “golden calf”, to the sign system. Moreover, the fetish-sign can be reached in all kinds of cultural society. His other interpretation is that “tattoos, stretched lips, the bound feet of Chinese women, eyeshadow, rouge, hair removal, mascara, or bracelets, collars, objects, jewellery, accessories: anything will serve to rewrite the cultural order on the body... The erotic is thus the re-inscription

of the erogenous in a homogeneous system of signs... whose goal is closure and logical perfection” (Baudrillard, 1981, p.94). Theoretically, Baudrillard has come to a significant conclusion: fetishism is a product of the modern sign-system, not a property of the primary cultures in which it is diverted in symbolic exchange.

I argue that it is possible to see some issues with Baudrillard’s consideration of the social relations between objects and fetishism. Firstly, material objects appear to possess merely two social formats, which are function and ostentation. The form of social relations with objects leads to fetishisation. I think the other problem is with his discussion of the fetishised female body, after 1972 in particular. Furthermore, he does not supply any satisfactory explanation on this matter.

The other critical comment comes from Kellner. He suggests that Baudrillard’s sign fetishism serves more as a metaphysical imaginary than a political one, and that his fundamental passion is signs, not politics. Thus, it is difficult for a sign fetishist to commit him or herself to a specific political position, so Baudrillard’s sign fetishism might be a metaphysical imaginary (Kellner, 1989, p.199). Although he developed the conception of fetishism to an extent as a critical impact, he could not systematically analyse and theorise it. Levin claims that all of Baudrillard’s signs is a mediation on Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism, even though it does not give him sense of counterpraxis. He does not establish a political discourse relevant to counterpraxis. Pietz criticises Baudrillard as a representative of poststructuralism’s failure to treat fetishism as anything but a problem of ideology.

2.4 The Theory of Simulation and Simulacra, Hyperreality

“The simulacrum is never what hides the truth – it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true”

Ecclesiastes

In this section of the chapter, I will look at the terms of simulation, simulacra and hyperreality, what Baudrillard means by these terms, and what is different between reality and hyperreality in the contemporary age, i.e. how simulacra can govern the social constitution of reality. The concept

of simulacra and simulation does not originate with Baudrillard, although he has played an important role in putting it into circulation in contemporary social and political theory.

Butler (1999) points out that when Baudrillard's interpretations mention simulation, they often mean simply a method of illusion, or the replacement of the world by its image, thus that we do not experience things and reality originally, but only as a copy of something else. He also refers in his work to a definition of the 'take-over' of reality by the sign, like some science-fiction scenario. "Does reality exist? Are we in a real world?". In *Disappearing into the Desert* (1988) Zygmunt Bauman speaks of the world that we know merely through style, change and direction. In a stable world, we could know the difference between a notion and its referent, or an image and its reality. Bauman mentions that Baudrillard has a different meaning of simulation, and as for Baudrillard, now the binary is now incomprehensible. Simulation attempts to be an ambiguous distinction between real and the ideal, subject and object, original and copy. Hence, there is no way to experience what is real in the contemporary age, and there is also no way to establish what real is and what imaginary is. Furthermore, the term simulacrum has a fundamental meaning in Baudrillard's work, in that he identifies various ways that simulacra can be ordered despite their far away from a basis in reality. He clarifies the relation between simulation and signification. Kellner thinks that Baudrillard shows a system of how simulacra came to dominate social life, both historically and phenomenologically. He suggests that the orders of simulacra should be read as a 'historical sketch', a description of the phenomena (empirical and perceptual) which define a long historical process of simulation.

Baudrillard illustrates the systems that simulacra have come to replicate reality, and the process whereby it has become increasingly intricate to express the dissimilarity between simulacra and reality, because hyperreal models come to govern the social constitution of reality. Furthermore, what must be clutched firstly about simulation is that it is not merely the loss of reality, but also the loss of its very probability. Butler (1999, pp.23-24) argues that the purpose of simulation is not to do away with reality, but on the contrary to realise it, and make it real. Simulation in this sense is not a form of illusion, but is opposed to illusion; it is a way of getting rid of the essential illusionality of the world. Baudrillard tries to make this clearer, saying:

“If you start from the idea that the world is a total illusion, then life, thought, become absolutely unbearable. So you have to make every effort to materialise the world, realise it, in order to escape from this total illusion. And the ‘realising’ of the world, through science and technology, is precisely what simulation is – the exorcism of the terror of illusion by the most sophisticated means of the ‘realisation of the world’ (Gane, 1993, p.24).

Butler argues that the mistake which is often made with reference to this is that it is not an experiential phenomenon, but something that essentially take place. Indeed, Baudrillard is very well aware of the paradox that, insofar as the simulation he is defining exists, it makes any way of confirming it not possible. This corresponds that the very reality which we say is lost in simulation and against which we compare it is now only sensible in simulation form. Simulation is not real, then, but a kind of hypothesis. However, the problem here is how to argue against this simulation when there is nothing to which to compare it.

In the essay “*The Others of Simulacra*” Baudrillard aims to write another history of simulation. He identifies three different orders of simulation. Baudrillard calls the influence of simulation the ‘neo-real’: “the effect of cybernetic and operational sciences, and the models they establish, is that ‘reality’ itself is abolished, obliterated, in favour of this neo-reality of the model” (Baudrillard, 1998, 126). However, he takes the term hyperreality from a movement in contemporary society. He says that “reality...is entirely impregnated by an aesthetic...has become inseparable from its own image” (Baudrillard, 1994b, p. 7). At this point, the question is asked directly: “Are we at the end of the real?” Baudrillard’s answers is ‘no...the barriers of representation rotate crazily, an implosive madness...today reality itself is hyperrealist” (Gane, 1993, p.41).

Hyperreality is related to the contemporary experience, and especially distinguishes itself from a particular mode of experiencing the world. One of the most important examples is Baudrillard’s analysis of Disneyland and American culture, in which he presents how American society itself is paradigmatically improved as a sort of simulacra. Disneyland is part of and not separate from the reality of America; or, equivalently, America is part of the hyperreal modernity of Disneyland. (Baudrillard, 1994a, p.14). “America is neither dream nor reality. It is hyperreality...it is hyperreality because it is a utopia which has behaved from the very beginning as though it was

already achieved” (Baudrillard, 1988, p.28). He seems to locate the hyperreal with particular places and experiences in contemporary America.

In his later texts, such as *The Perfect Crime* (1996), a ‘disenchanted’ simulacrum is set against the ‘enchanted’ one. Reality is excessively realised in a virtual order that has become so technically perfect and absolute in its semi-realisation of ‘reality’. Rubenstein suggests that this radicalisation of Baudrillard’s model is ‘ultra-reality’, or virtual reality. This text alludes to the murder of (objective) ‘reality’ by virtual reality, or describes how the real becomes an extreme phenomenon when it is expelled from its own principle. He also talks about disappearance, in what everything disappears, including reality, subjects, knowledge, history, and so on. I would like to ask, what does Baudrillard mean by “disappearance” in his text, *On Disappearance*. The answer is not so clear, according to some interpreters. Reality, in the present media and technological society, is disappearing in a ‘perfect crime’, which includes the ‘destruction of the real’ (Kellner, p.40). In a world of appearance, image, illusion, virtuality and hyperreality, where it is no longer possible to distinguish between the virtual and the real, Baudrillard argues that reality disappears, even though its traces continue to nourish an illusion of the real. The meaning of reality imposes upon the world of the virtual and the media. Poster disagrees with Baudrillard’s approach of the subject of the disappearance. This is because when Baudrillard writes about the subject that is left after the disappearance of the subject, he is talking about everyone on the planet, and this is so in a cultural sense.

In this theory, “the very definition of the real has become *that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction, and the ‘hyperreal’ is that which is always already reproduced*” (Baudrillard, 1994a, p.146). According to Baudrillard, the entire face of neo-capitalist society is hyperreal, and there is no ‘reality’. Many more places in social life are reproductions of models formulated in a system of models and codes, and such a hyperreal culture of simulations involves objects such as fashion, media, architecture, shopping malls, and so on. The experience of reality itself is increasingly problematic as a term, and so the idea of virtual reality becomes available. There is no universal process of the constitution of reality. We can see the real in the Western culture, but it is hyperreality. Baudrillard discusses that the essence of reality, truth and meaning is lost in the contemporary world. He considerably comes to the constructions of terms such as

“hyperreality” and “simulation”, with which we live in a hyperreal and simulacrum world. The essence of reality keeps its centrality, regardless of whether we are living in the real or illusionary world. He finally concludes that reality is absorbed inside the virtual and the artificial. This artificial reality is called simulacrum in his theory which he believes that this is not a real world. Our culture is a death culture into a symbolic world, in that “our modern cities are dead cities and cities of death” (Baudrillard, 1988, p.196).

In 1967, Baudrillard published a reanalyse of Marshall McLuhan’s *Understanding Media*, in which he argues that McLuhan’s idea that the ‘medium is the message’ is ‘the very formula of alienation in a technical society’, but here Baudrillard criticises McLuhan for naturalising that alienation. An important part of Baudrillard’s approach is his reflections on the role of the media in constituting the postmodern world. Until the end of 1970s, Baudrillard had interpreted the media as key to the simulation of objects that accrue images, signs and codes, which in turn come to organise an autonomous framework of (hyper)reality, and also to play a key role in the era of post-modern technology and the obliteration of the social (Gnesko, 1994, p.68). Following that, Baudrillard also states how the ‘TV objects’ are becoming the centre of the household, and how that possessor has become an actual member of consumer society. (Baudrillard, 1968, p.53p). According to Baudrillard, the increasing role of the media in contemporary culture is correspondent to the slight into postmodern society of simulations from the modern world of production. While modernity dominates in the production of things, commodities, and products, postmodernity is centered by radical semiurgy, and by a proliferation of signs. Baudrillard is able to see the function of television and mass media preventing a response by isolating persons, trapping them in a universe of simulacra in which it is impossible to distinguish between the spectacle and the reality.

Moreover, following McLuhan, Baudrillard expresses modernity as a process of an distraction of commodification, mechanisation, objectification, technology and market relations, in opposition to postmodern culture, which is an *implosion* of all regions, boundaries, and distinctions between high and low society, appearance and reality. Furthermore, whereas modernity could be formulated as a process of rising differentiations in the field of life, postmodernity could be understood as a process of *de-differentiation* and attendant implosion. (Kellner, 1989, p.68). In *The Implosion of*

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Meaning in the Media', Baudrillard argues that the increase of signs and information in the media annihilates meaning by imposing meaning and dissolving all content (Baudrillard, 1993, pp96-99). Also, this method causes to both a collapse of meaning and the destruction of distinctions between media and reality.



CHAPTER III

3 The Comparison Between Marx and Baudrillard

3.1 The Commodity Processes: Production and Consumption

Baudrillard is an important figure in post-Marxist social analysis. Firstly, he began as a Marxist theorist of consumer society, and his first two books *The System of Objects* (1968) and *The Consumer Society* (1970) can be read as an addition to and development of the Marxian critique of political economy, as they follow a Marxian explanation of production into the form of consumption, and can be used to develop a neo-Marxian critical theory of capitalism and the problematic shift from the commodity to reality, and its role in the constitution of reality. In these books, Baudrillard argues that sometimes consumption is a form of production, with emphasis upon the commodity and its uses. However, later he became a harsh critique of the Marxist paradigm of political economy (Dunn, 2008, p.54). In his third book, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1973), he starts to criticise Marxian conceptions more strongly, and in his books, *The Mirror of Production* (1973) and *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1993), he rejects Marxism, and hence this constitutes a break with Marxian theory (Kellner, 1989, p.33). Baudrillard also improves some critical arguments on postmodernism, in particular in the Western world, in which empirical life has been altering swiftly. For him, the power of capitalism has changed place to another processes in everyday life, and human relations have become to transformed by the development of high-technology. As a result of this, the essence of reality has been lost, especially in Western society.

It can be seen that both Marx and Baudrillard criticise the problem of political economy. However, Baudrillard has moved out of this problematic production for several reasons. Firstly, for him, in the new world, work is simply a sign, “thenceforth capital and political economy disappear from Baudrillard’s writing” (Gane, 1990, p.322). There is Baudrillard’s critique of, then break with classical Marxism, whereas he does not provide an alternative to the previous theories of political economy. I think as opposite to capitalism, Marx suggests a new system, that is communism, while Baudrillard’ approaches are only a basis of theoretical, and he does not give any suggestion against

capitalism. He also rejects socialism “Social will never have time to realise socialism and the concept of class will have dissolved well before into an extended double or simply into a retrospective simulation of the proletariat” (Baudrillard, 2007, p.93). Also he does not expand on certain realms of political economy such as wages, labour or profit, while he criticises Marx.

Also, these thinkers have the same approaches to interpreting the external life of humans in the objectified world. Marx initially regards alienation as human’s self-alienation, an anthropological circumstance. However, he comes to take into account the division of labour and alienated labour in class society as the root of the condition. In addition to this, Marx has seen the exchange-value of an object as the amount of labour “embedded” in the object, and the inclusion of labour in the creation of value is thereby obscured, due to the abstraction of labour power. However, Baudrillard (1970 p.188) argues that in a culture in which everything becomes a commodity that can be bought and sold, alienation is total. Furthermore, humans being can perceive neither their own true needs nor another way of life, as everyday life is controlled more through the simulation of commodities and interactive relations with objects than with people. I can say that, in terms of Baudrillard, the systems of objects and the processes of human beings come to be governed through objects, and become to dominated by social reality. Baudrillard’s argument is close to Lukacs’ theory of reification. He criticises Marxian categories of ideology and alienation. As with Lukacs, Baudrillard argues that alienation establishes a process of reification in which objects come to control subjects. Baudrillard talks about social and consumer alienation. For Lukacs and Baudrillard, this process of reification, by which individuals become dominated by things and themselves become more thinglike, comes to govern the whole of social life (Lukacs, 1923, p.57).

It is important to note here that a commodity becomes a segment of the system of objects associated with the system of needs in contemporary capitalist societies. According to Baudrillard, if we want to describe why a commodity becomes an object of desire, and why consumption can play an effective role in consumer society, we should provide the theory of signs. I claim that Baudrillard’s claims are more radical than Marx’s in terms of a critique of the commodity. I think a new problem cannot be comprehended by the logic of Marx’s analyses of commodity. Baudrillard’s main contributions to political economy and radical social theory involve his conception of the theory of the sign, which relates to a semiological analysis of sign value, along with the Marxian theory

of commodity and the debate of capitalism. In the postmodern society, capital and political economy become disappearing from Baudrillard's works, and he also argues the end of production. The analyses shown presuppose the theory of commodity of life under a capitalist economy developed by Marxists, as Lukacs and the other critique theorists critique the way in which objects are explained as signs that are constituted into the structure of signs. As we have seen above, the Lukacsian the problem lies in the reification and commodification of the totality of life under contemporary capitalism (Lukacs, 1971, p.83). By showing the homology between objects and sign production, Baudrillard is able to describe the level at which commodities are suddenly produced as signs, and assigns as commodities. As Marx develops two different types of values based upon objects, use-value and exchange-value he analyses this value deeply in his work of *Capital*. Beyond the use value and exchange value of commodities, Baudrillard produces additionally symbolic exchange and sign values in the objectified life, as Baudrillard believes that simply analysing the forms of use-value and exchange-value are no longer enough in our contemporary epoch. However, Marx's theory of values is still inspired on Baudrillard's development of symbolic exchange. He claims that there is no such object as pure use-value or a pure subject with necessary needs for whom objects have essential uses. On this view, he contends that both needs and uses are socially constructed by a system of political economy that produces sign values whereby objects obtain meanings that allure the consumer into purchasing commodities as objects of desire, status and prestige. For example, Baudrillard (1998) points out that the social economic system produces a system of objects, and a subject uses a car as a sign of status as well as for transportation. Therefore, Baudrillard struggles against the conception of crucial human needs and basic human use values for commodities. From this position, I think Kellner's interpretation is very important. He argues that Baudrillard sets up something of a straw-man Marx, and greatly exaggerates the alleged naturalism in Marx's theory of needs and use value. He also suggests that Baudrillard's theory of sign value is compatible with a historical materialist approach to use values, needs and consumption. Contrary to Baudrillard, I believe that the notion of needs and use-values can continue to be useful in the social constitution of reality.

I think that Marx and Baudrillard both discuss on the constitution of social reality in the physical world, but they acquire different conclusions. I say this because Marx describes the difference between ideology and material in *The German Ideology*, and materialism denies the existence of

any Idea or Absolute Spirit which is prior to the material world, and which can account for its development. Consequently, materialism suggests a view of reality; in this sense, he argues that the concept of ideology is itself an idealistic and a metaphysical thing, with not true understanding of social structure and its history. Reality is problematic as a term in Baudrillard's works, in particular his later works which are without any solution. He (1994) claims that how contemporary society has come to the stage in which the real has disappeared and is replaced through forms "more real than the real". For him, we only gain hyperreality as the idea of virtual reality becomes available. Kroker criticises Baudrillard's writings. He argues that Baudrillard speaks from the dark side of postmodernity, and he is simply a pessimist. Because Baudrillard's writings trace the implosion of postmodern experience signified by the signs everywhere today of dead labour, dead power, and dead reality (Baudrillard, 1988, p.170). However, I think that there is a problem with Baudrillard's polemic against the experience of reality, since he has not clear insights about a pure reality, and by contrast in general he describes the hyperreal world. As he believes that we are living in a hyperreal and simulacrum world, that is why reality is impossible in the contemporary age. The real is included in the place of simulation. Consequently, during my reading of Baudrillard's books, I have reached this conclusion: there is no universal process of the social construction of reality. Also, I would like to add that Baudrillard's examination of the real is not located within a philosophical discourse. His own view is that the concept of reality remains an order of illusion, but one of a uniquely object type. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard attempts to sketch his theory that in society where symbolic exchange is the governing doctrine, societies do not relate to the 'reality' of the world but to the world as a radical illusion (Gane, 2010, p.14). Moreover, the era of the real and its ideological mystification is merely in relation to Western cultural history, as the Western societies have developed an ideology of the real and have reproduced a real world. Baudrillard suggests a new postmodern society which is governed through the hyperreal and simulations, and where all political opposition disappears. I think that Baudrillard misjudges Marx in many respects, disregarding his aim of successfully formulating a new method of society. At the same time, his structuralism, specially his interest in the determinedness of the 'code' and 'sign', causes him to promote the idea that true revolution is impossible.

3.2 Commodity Fetishism and Sign Fetishism

It is asserted that the notion of commodity fetishism is not a kind of theory of ideology, nor a theory of psychology, or an illusion. On the one hand, for Marx, fetishism appears where the value of a commodity, that is the product of real social relations that are the result of sensuous human activity, comes to appear as a thing independent of the labour that produced it. The social relations that are constituted by commodity production are understood as a form of illusory visual entertainment that became popular at the end of the eighteenth century (Hetherington, 2011, p.60). There is a definite social relation between humans that presumes, in their eyes, the (phantasmagoric) fantastic form of a relation between things.

Also, Marx (1938, p.43) states that the fetish character of a commodity does not mean it is an illusion, but it is the features of the commodity, that are real, social facts, and this is one of the characteristics of the economic structure of capital society. The commodity has a mysterious character in social relations among people, and its properties are evaluated in the real and nature of that commodity. However, it is the mystical character of commodities that is internal to the construction of the capital economy. Moreover, it is a definition of what is shown to take place when a commodity is exchanged. Marx believes that commodity fetishism is a matter of reality. The concept of ideology, commodity fetishism and reification clearly suit into a Marxian attitude to consumption. Going beyond Marx, Baudrillard has seen that the commodity form is in essence a form of the sign (Gane, 1990, p.327).

On the other hand, Baudrillard (1981, p.88) produces a new fetishism, which has become the icing on the cake of contemporary analysis. In his early work particularly, he attacks Marx's theory of commodity fetishism. Whereas Marx still attaches it (though very ambiguously) to a form (commodity, money), and thus locates it at a theoretically comprehensive level, today the notion of fetishism is abused in an empirical fashion, such as body and beauty fetishism, car fetishism, object fetishism, and so on. Material objects have been increasing in the contemporary age. This fetishism is actually attached to the signs and objects, today there is a place where the fetishist logic of the commodity can be shown more clearly. Signs to make the body into a perfect object.

Conclusion

This dissertation concerns the ways in which one could accept the experience of reality in a physical world. We contextualise this question associated with the commodity fetishism and objects in the context of both modern and contemporary world. I will touch on the question how fetishised forms of capital economics and the forms of fetishism are essentially associated with the social constitution of reality, and the relation of commodity in capital society.

I argue that Marx base himself entirely concrete relationship with the reality whereas in Baudrillard reality disappears in hyperreality and what is experienced is only hyperreality. Marx focuses on material reality in social constitution. He rejects ideologies, whereas Baudrillard makes a distinction between reality and hyperreality. Hyperreality refers to the postmodern world but reality has disappeared in high-tech contemporary age, particularly, in Western culture. Both Marx and Baudrillard argue that fetishism is not an illusion or psychological theory. I have argued that Baudrillard's sign fetishism goes beyond Marx's commodity fetishism. Because the concept of fetishism encompasses the whole society. Sign fetishism develops in consumer society and radicalizes Marx's commodity fetishism. Marx gives us the broadest discussion in Capital Volume I, he outlines his own concept of the theory of commodity fetishism and the objectification of commodities, whereas Baudrillard develops the system of objects and sign fetishism in hyperreal world. Marx primarily focuses on the form of human relation between humans and things, and he has used the term 'commodity-fetishism' to define human relation accompanied by material objects that is non-human things in the external world, so the counterfeit human relations are constituted. Fetishism is a mystification, as in a commodity and cannot be regarded as an illusion. What Baudrillard accentuates is that sign fetishism has replaced commodity fetishism and sign-value and transformed into exchange-value and use-value. While Marx's theory of commodity fetishism considers a mystification in the experience of social life, Baudrillard develops the concept of sign-fetishism and object fetishism. Baudrillard describes a postmodern society in which a radical way produces sign, simulations and simulacra, and hyperreality that in turn create new forms of social constitution of reality and postmodern experience.

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