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**THE „HERMENEUTICS“ OF JEAN  
BAUDRILLARD**

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**SUMMARY OF THE PHD. THESIS**  
**THE „HERMENEUTICS“ OF JEAN BAUDRILLARD**  
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**KEY WORDS:** simulation, semiotics, semiocracy, sign, sign-value, political economy of the sign, critical theory, postmodernism, poststructuralism

Our phd. thesis is focused on the subject of the simulation theory as it appears within the context of the Baudrillardian philosophy. What we tried to do, was to analyze the genealogy of the simulation theory. The hypothesis of our phd. thesis is that simulation represents the effect, the ontological and cultural consequence of a negative dialectics of sign-value. We believe, and this is exactly what we tried to prove in the next chapters, that simulation is, in fact, the critique of the classical paradigm of the sign-form and the implicit critique of the poststructuralist paradigm of thought that dealt with this matter. Moreover, this sign-form absconds/masks the process of a certain hegemony of the code of value, as this code manifests itself at the semiological level. What the French author denounces by criticizing it, is exactly the reality of a semiological determinism, whose coercions can be seen and felt at the level of the cultural systemic structures of the capitalist contemporaneous society.

Jean Baudrillard research relates directly with the mutations that appeared at the level of sign-value, his theories having a major contribution of what is still to come, namely the critique of the theory of value at the level of second order signifying systems. The baudrillardian attempt resembles the marxist exactly because the two authors agree over the matter of the preeminence of value determinism in the constitution of any form of hegemony, no matter if this is a semiological or a political one. This is very succinctly put, the scene in which the history of simulation is played starting from the critique of the political economy of the sign and ending with the total derealization of the real and reality. Almost ironical, Baudrillard is one of the few figures pertaining to French contemporaneous theory that took seriously the Saussurean command of paying attention to the architectonics of value at the level of

the sign. For a better understanding of our theoretical intentions we will proceed here with a brief and synthetic presentation of the structure of our thesis.

### **The structure of the thesis. Brief presentation of chapters**

The first chapter it's of an introductive nature and deals with the typical baudrillardian method of understanding theory and the manner of practicing it. It also contains the presentation of a few debates related to the anti-(post)modern labelling of the baudrillardian theory. The chapter ends with the discussion of the most relevant theoretical project, namely the project of the radical thinking. What we tried to do was to prepare the readers and the ground for the comprehension of the typical baudrillardian manner of thinking and writing about the author's fetish themes and subjects. The first chapter is a sort of prolegomena for the introduction in the style of thinking of our French theoretician – a sort of discourse regarding the methods employed by Jean Baudrillard.

The second chapter represents a short theoretical history of the problems discussed in the first baudrillardian texts. The ideatic parcourse analyzed there starts from the analysis of the system of objects, passes through the critique of consumption and reaches to the breaking of the mirror of production (the last theme being the witness of the baudrillardian separation with the theses and the categories of the orthodox Marxism). This chapter is in fact the presentation of the general context of research in which our thesis takes it's own course in reaching it's particular theoretical interest.

The last three chapters, to which the conclusions are added are the concrete deployment of our argument. In the third chapter we were interested with the presentation and the interpretation of the baudrillardian critique of the sign and the (post)structuralist approach (the critique of the sign constitutes also the departure point of the baudrillardian theory of sign-value). In other words, what we succeeded here was to discuss the critique of the sign-value. This sign-critique is composed of two elements: one one side it regards the critique of the Saussurean theory of the sign, and on the other it relates to the critique of the marxist theory of value. The two branches unite if the perspective is broadened and the entire attempt is situated in a

larger context of a theory that would deconstruct the metaphysical and idealist presuppositions on which the semiocrat attitude reside.

The chapter concentrated on the theory of simulation follows the one focused on the sign-value critique, and in it we tried to show how exactly Baudrillard rewrites and re-thinks the theory of simulation through the lenses of the history of the sign or, better, how that which apparently is just a mere etiquette attached to the contemporary culture represents, in fact, the effect of a movement originally inscribed in the history of Western semiology. In the baudrillardian exegesis the theory of simulation was largely debated and this determined our choice of focusing on one of its aspects that appears to be less cultivated by the baudrillardian interpreters and commentators – we are speaking here about the relations between the simulation theory and the genealogy of the signs, more precisely about that which hides behind the genealogy of the signs, namely the deployment of the logics of (sign) value.

To prove one more time the relevance of the semiotic problem with which we are dealing we consider pertinent the argument that the critical baudrillardian project is centred on the founding opposition between the semiotic and symbolic cultures. If things stand like this, then the critique of the sign implicitly represents a critique of culture, the two projects being articulated into a real semiosis of the contemporaneous times. The last part of the triad mentioned above (chapter five) is the presentation of what we can call a sketch of a baudrillardian semiological project, functioning at once as position of exercising a certain type of critique and as a radical alternative of the official semiotic discourse. There are in Jean Baudrillard's theories some figures that stand outside the law of sign-value; exactly from the perspective of these figures is Baudrillard authorizing his critique. If the project of the political economy of the sign proved to be a form of severe critique of (post)structuralist semiology, then the investigation of sign-value outside the sphere of influence of law of value becomes an alternative theory of the sign. The poetical and speculative character of this theory is evident and instead of denying it or justifying it, we provide an analytical context for its understanding. What ends our thesis is the part of the conclusions.

## **Methods of analysis and research**

The analytical method we employed through out our thesis was that of focusing in descending steps of the spheres of applicability. Being given the subject of our paper the methods employed were of qualitative nature. We were centred on the baudrillardian texts and critique and their interpretation(s). Each chapter starts by preparing the context of the conditions of possibility and of the pillar theories of each matter discussed. To lessen the comprehension of our work hypotheses we chose each time for an anterior positioning of these hypotheses in the general framework of the baudrillardian theory. In defence of our arguments we used interpretations supplied to us by the most important baudrillardian theoreticians of the moment like Douglas Kellner, Mark Gane, Alain Gauthier, Charles Levin, and many others. With regard to the favouring of a certain tradition of interpretation we relied on a strain of anglo-american exegesis. Our choice is justified by the concise and synthetic manner characteristic to these authors, but also by the depth comprehension of the baudrillardian theory they prove.

The baudrillardian theses had and still have a strong impact on the British and the American cultural world, his writings being true work manuals for the spheres of cultural critique, film studies, social postmodern theory or the critique of mass media to name just a few. As for us, we choose to read Baudrillard especially as a semiologist, considering his theories relating to this matter to offer a prolific ideatic questioning of this domain. We also have to mention that our authors' theories have an interdisciplinary quality that can't be suppressed, the baudrillardian thought being carved at the intersection of various domains like philosophy, sociology, cultural antropology, or postmodernism.

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