

# **A discussion of need and insatiability**

a Thesis submitted by  
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# Table of content

TABLE OF CONTENT	2
ACKNOLWEDGEMENTS	7
DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP	7
ABBREVIATIONS	7
ABSTRACT	9
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Outline</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>PART I: CHAPTER 2: MARX’S VIEW ON USE-VALUE AND NEED</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>The relation between need and labour in Manuscripts 1844</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Marx’s view on need in later work</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Necessity and luxury</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Heller and Fraser’s view on needs in Marx’s texts</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: A REVIEW OF JEAN BAUDRILLARD’S THEORY</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Theoretical background</b>	<b>39</b>
Marcel Mauss’s <i>The Gift</i> : Gift exchange and Potlatch	39
Mauss’s question:	40
Supernatural explanations of the obligation to reciprocate:	41
The difference between gift exchange and commodity economy:	43
The gift exchange as the starting point	46
Levi-Strauss’s view of Mauss	46
George Bataille and the idea of waste	49
An unfinished circulation:	54
<i>Potlatch</i> as a starting point	54
<b>Baudrillard’s concept of sign value</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Baudrillard’s criticism of Marx</b>	<b>56</b>
The function of waste	57

The symbolic exchange, sign value, and the general theory of value	58
Death and Baudrillard's criticism of Marx	60
<b>A discussion of counterarguments to Baudrillard</b>	<b>63</b>
On Baudrillard's view of Marx	63
Use-value and production	65
Use and abuse of semiology	67
Discussion	69
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: BAUDRILLARD'S IDEA OF REVERSIBILITY</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Introduction:</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Simulation</b>	<b>77</b>
Simulation in <i>The Symbolic Exchange and Death</i>	77
Some features of the third order of the simulacra	80
Simulation in <i>Simulacra and Simulation</i>	82
The fourth order of simulation	83
The relation between symbolic exchange and simulacra	85
<b>Seduction</b>	<b>87</b>
The concept of seduction	87
The connection between seduction and simulation	89
<b>Discussion:</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Conclusion:</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: THE ROLE OF FREE WILL IN BAUDRILLARD AND FREUD'S THEORY</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Free-will as a necessary condition in Baudrillard's argument</b>	<b>100</b>
On the concept of production	101
On the concept of symbolic exchange, seduction, and fatal strategy	104
The demonstration of reversibility	105
The first kind of demonstration and its implication	105
The second kind of demonstration of reversibility	110
<b>Determinism and free will in Freud's illustration</b>	<b>113</b>
From <i>A Project for Scientific Psychology</i> to <i>Interpretation of Dreams</i>	114
Freud's primary and secondary process	114
Freud's abandon of <i>A Project for Scientific Psychology</i>	116
The determinist approach on the psychical level	117
The role of free will in Freud's illustration	120
Free will in <i>A Project for Scientific Psychology</i>	120
The function of the <i>Ego</i> in therapy and jokes	123
Transference and the <i>Ego's</i> power to overcome resistances	125
<i>Ego</i> , <i>Superego</i> , and <i>Id</i>	127
About discussions of Freud's view of free will	130
<b>A refutation of Baudrillard's criticism of the primary and secondary process</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>A question from the libertarian sense of free will</b>	<b>135</b>

<b>Conclusion:</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>PART II: CHAPTER 6: APPROACHING BAUDRILLARD'S CONCERN THROUGH KIERKEGAARD</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>A brief review of Kierkegaard's key concepts</b>	<b>141</b>
The aesthetic and ethical spheres	141
Beyond Ethics	145
Inwardness	148
Connecting the aesthetic sphere and ethics sphere	149
Paradox and reason	150
The suffering	153
Irony and humour as a <i>confinium</i>	156
<b>An end</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Conclusion:</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7: THE CONCEPT OF MONEY</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Introduction:</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>An overview of money</b>	<b>162</b>
Origin of money	162
Nature of money	164
Money under the context of social phenomena	167
Conclusion	176
<b>Money and language</b>	<b>177</b>
Marx's view on the relationship between money and language	177
Searle's theorisation on the relationship between language and money	179
Discussion:	182
<b>Marx on money</b>	<b>186</b>
Marx on money, value and price	187
Hegel's three stages of dialectics	189
From the tension between commodity and money to the end of the exchange	191
Money as the object of greed	193
The universal and the particular in Hegel	195
About the gap between an individual and God	196
Commodity or debt?	198
<b>Conclusion:</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8: A REVIEW OF SOME OF LACAN'S SOME BASIC CONCEPTS</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Introduction:</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Desire, need and demand</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Lack</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>The object a</b>	<b>208</b>

<b>Love and desire</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>Drive</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>Drive and Demand</b>	<b>212</b>
<b><i>Jouissance</i></b>	<b>213</b>
The origin of the idea of <i>jouissance</i> in Freud's text	213
Freud and Lacan's illustration of the 'Thing'	215
From the Thing to the question of ethics	217
From <i>Jouissance</i> to the Thing	218
<b>Lacan's four discourses</b>	<b>220</b>
A reading of Oedipus	221
Master signifier and suppression of truth	222
S2 as knowledge and its relation to S1	223
<b>Some of Lacan's basic views on Marx</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Conclusion:</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>CHAPTER 9: JOHNSTON VS. TOMŠIČ ON INSATIABILITY</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>About Adrian Johnston</b>	<b>232</b>
Transcendental materialism and multiplicity of drive	233
Johnston's view of money, insatiability, and selfishness	236
A background of Lacanian Otherness to Johnston's argument of insatiability	238
Johnston's view of insatiability	242
A counter-argument	245
<b>Tomšič's The Capitalist Unconscious</b>	<b>251</b>
Tomšič's view	251
Johnston's critique of Tomšič's view	256
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>Conclusion:</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>POSTSCRIPT</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>APPENDIX:</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>Appendix 1: The Primary and Secondary process in the <i>Project for a scientific psychology</i></b>	<b>269</b>
The Interpretation of Dreams and after:	272
<b>Appendix 2: Literature review on the discussions of Freud's concept of free will</b>	<b>274</b>
Hard Determinism	274
Compatibilism	275
<b>Appendix 3: Simulation and seduction in The System of Objects</b>	<b>282</b>

Chapter 1	282
Chapter 2	284
Chapter 3	287
Chapter 4	288
A summary:	289
<b>Appendix 4: Imagined market</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>REFERENCE:</b>	<b>299</b>

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## Declaration of Authorship

I hereby certify that this thesis has been composed by me and is based on my own work, unless stated otherwise. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in this thesis. All references and verbatim extracts have been quoted, and all sources of information, including graphs and data sets, have been specifically acknowledged.

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Signature: Yunou Gong

## Abbreviations

SE = The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud

Tractatus = Wittgenstein, L., & Russell, B. (2001). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Routledge Classics) (2nd ed.). Routledge.

PS = Hegel, G. W. F., & Miller, A. V. (1977). *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Revised ed.). Oxford University Press.

EL = Hegel, G. W. F., Geraets, T. F., Suchting, W. A., & Harris, H. S. (1991). *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze (Hackett Classics)* (UK ed.). Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

# Abstract

This thesis discusses the relationship between insatiability and needs through a review of several philosophers' works. It is driven by the question: how much is enough? The thesis has two parts. The first part examines Baudrillard's theory, especially his critique of Marx. I accept his view that needs are insatiable because they are incessant constructions in value systems. He argues for a logical alternative to production, but I argue the key problem is that individuals do not want the alternative and individuals' capability to choose an alternative is conditional. His theory is thus flawed. The second part of this thesis explores other ways to deal with the relationship between individuals and systems. This part explores three types of guarantors in three situations. It firstly discusses Christian theorist Søren Kierkegaard's view on God. His view provides a situation in which the guarantor is outside value systems. The thesis then reviews the debates over money, which is a situation where the guarantor is embodied in the value system. Finally, I review Adrian Johnston and Samo Tomšič's views on the relationship between insatiability and capitalism. Both draw on Lacanian psychoanalysis which provides a situation in which individuals do not seek to abandon the system but recognise its vanity. The thesis concludes that an individual cannot end insatiable needs by finding the ultimate reason to stop, because insatiability is an effect of an individual's use of a system and the system is endorsed by the individual him/herself. When an individual leaves the value system, he/she defines how much is enough by and for him/herself.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

In their book *How Much is Enough? Money and the Good Life* (2012), Robert and Edward Skidelsky mention an interesting point of view from the 20th-century British economist, John Maynard Keynes: in the relatively rich Western countries, people's working hours will decrease – three hours of work per day would be enough for satisfying all needs. People even should consider learning how to spend their leisure time. This scenario is especially desirable for the author of this thesis, who is Chinese, and whose friends in China suffer from a life of working overtime to pay for astronomically high mortgages. There seems no solution in sight to this hamster-in-a-wheel working life. Although China has merely just become a developed country, some of its cities are becoming increasingly like top Western capital cities, like London and Paris, in terms of the quality of infrastructure, work and lifestyle conditions, and the availability of the type of jobs. However, when Keynes's view is explained to the author's friends, they laugh, as though they are hearing a joke.

Skidelsky and Skidelsky indeed notice that Keynes's prediction probably does not come into being. They argue that insatiability is rooted in never-ending competitions facilitated by capitalism, which was not Keynes's focus. In Keynes's era (1883-1946), during the two World Wars, people, on the whole, owned material goods out of necessity for living within a zeitgeist spirit of 'make do and mend', whilst today consumption is largely facilitated by competition. Skidelsky and Skidelsky think, this somehow made Keynes ignore the problem brought about by competition. They finally provide a list of the standard of what is perceived as 'the good life' and argue that this can only be practised by a government to some extent, although it can be justified by economic data.

Although Skidelsky and Skidelsky's argument is lucid, their approach is still reliant on a supposed necessary/basic/good-enough lifestyle and then hope for a social organisation based on this belief. The drawback of this is obvious: the supposed standard of good can never justify itself. It is always based on a lifestyle taken for granted by those who believe it as natural/neutral/necessary. For example, Skidelsky and Skidelsky think that life, belonging to the category of health, is a basic factor for the good life partly because it is indispensable to all other factors. Namely, life is not a means for anything but an end. However, it is a brutal fact that a nationalist or

religious extremist could sacrifice their life for a belief. In this case, life can be sacrificed for other things like all other things.

What is not stressed enough in Skidelsky and Skidelsky's work is the dimension which cannot be assimilated into any value system. The approach that puts several factors at the end clearly shows that they notice there have been endless discussions about finding a reason to justify what basic/good/necessary is. However, they still fall into the old way which hopes to find a more solid reason for defining what basic is, rather than discussing what cannot be discussed and justified first.

This dissertation discusses the issue of insatiability as well. This is inspired by a theoretical question: did Karl Marx predict his own failure if commodities can be treated as signs? This question was raised when I read Marx through Jacques Lacan: from the Lacanian psychoanalytic view, insatiability is rooted in the level which is constituted by signs, this level is defined by Lacan as desire, in contrast to need and demand. Simply speaking, the function of signs is to represent something else, and by representing a thing, a sign marks the absence of the thing. Lacanian desire is constituted by signs, which means it is constitutively addressed to something absent, rather than any concrete thing. The insatiability of desire is due to this absence as the effect brought about by the function of signs. This is related to Marx's theory because of the connection between commodity and money. For Marx, both commodity and money are not simply concrete things, but roughly speaking, objectified social relations which, from Lacan's perspective, are embodied in the relations of signs as well. A connection between commodities, money, and signs is therefore formed, which is exemplified in modern consumption, like the zeal for a brand. But clearly, money itself, if it is simultaneously commodity and sign, probably is the most direct example of this connection.

Thus, if Marx, because of this connection, systematically explained how people's seemingly naive activities for earning a living will be driven by profits, Lacan, by contrast, shows how this profit-seeking logic perfectly fits in the constitution of human beings' desire.

My questions emerge here: does it mean profit-seeking productive relationship, which is the key to capitalism, is a kind of 'human nature'? Does it mean Marx's own analysis of commodity and money, especially, the transition from CMC' to MCM', implies that capitalism can never be abolished? Clearly, these two questions are

merely another version of my primary question: did Marx's theory imply that capitalism cannot be stopped?

This primary question is naive, even problematic, because it is based on at least two premises: 1) the validity of treating commodities as signs, and 2) taking the Lacanian psychoanalytic concept of desire for granted. Therefore, my exploration of this question faces a plight: on the one hand, these two premises are far from self-evident; on the other, it would be impossible for this dissertation to explore this question until these premises are fully justified because it requires a complete examination of Marx's and Lacan's theories.

Based on this consideration, this dissertation approaches this question by examining the theory of a French thinker, Jean Baudrillard. I take this approach because Baudrillard, as a contemporary of Lacan, read Marx from a similar angle: he argues for the failure of Marx by taking Saussure's structural linguistic theory into account as well. Baudrillard's theory, therefore, is a case which critiques Marx by focusing on the connection between commodities, money, and signs. By discussing Baudrillard's view as a case, this dissertation explores my primary question by examining the related aspects of the theories of Marx and Lacan, which are highlighted by Baudrillard, without taking their theories for granted.

Another reason to choose Baudrillard's theory is that, compared with Skidelsky and Skidelsky, Baudrillard's approach to the question of insatiability represents a shift, and therefore overcomes Skidelsky and Skidelsky's drawback: Baudrillard does not seek any so-called 'ultimate nature' of needs, but aims to dismantle all attempts of finding this. Following Marcel Mauss's and George Bataille's concern about the gift exchange, he proposes a concept called the 'symbolic exchange', which is more fundamental than any value, in order to question the foundation of the idea of 'basic'. Through this approach, he sharply criticised Marx and Freud, because he thinks both of their theories are too based on a supposed 'basic' concept: in Marx's theory, it is the concept of need; in Freud's theory, it is the concept of the unconscious. Both these two concepts, in Baudrillard's view, are intimately related to the idea of production. Without these 'basic' concepts, their theoretical edifice collapse; without basic need, our value system collapse. These are homogenous for Baudrillard. Thus, Baudrillard's approach makes the discussions of commodities, consumption and need directly encounter the question of nihilism: after all, the main target of Baudrillard's critique is the foundation of all value systems, so that nothing can have a value.

However, this dissertation argues that an individual cannot resolve insatiability by finding the guarantor of his/her value system. He/she has to decide by him/herself whether committing to a system of value/sign with the awareness that the system is doomed to fail as Baudrillard argues. This means I accept Baudrillard's critique on the idea of production but still choose a position opposite to him, in which highlighting the role of commitment and human beings' free will is the key difference between Baudrillard's approach and mine. From this perspective, the question about 'how much is enough' has a simple answer: it is only by setting what is ideal or luxurious that the basic can be defined, because setting the ideal is the way to set what the system is addressed to. In Baudrillard's terminology, it is the way to set what can replace the whole system, so that gives the system a potlatch. Thus, it is not health that is the basic factor of good life Skidelsky and Skidelsky argued, rather, before a life can be treated as basic and indispensable, it is by human agency's act of defining a sense of good life that the life and health become basic *in this sense*.

Although this view seems common sense, there is a difficulty in arguing it: How can I challenge Baudrillard's theory if it has relied on nothing? Namely, by embracing a kind of nihilism, it seems Baudrillard does not presuppose anything, but only questions others' presuppositions. Be that as it may, I found a fundamental flaw in his argument when examining his critique of Freud: he ignored that he had presupposed the existence of the free will. This mistake makes his view of Freud biased. Especially, I think, there is an echo between Baudrillard and Freud, which Baudrillard would not ignore if he had been aware of his presupposition of free will. This flaw is not so distinctive in Baudrillard's critique of Marx, probably because the role free will plays in an individual's mind is foremost, in the broadest sense, a psychological question, instead of political economic question. Freud's theory, therefore, is a good 'mirror' to reflect Baudrillard's flaw. The concept of free will is a bridge between their theories to condition this comparison.

As it can be seen, this dissertation needs to answer two questions: firstly, as to insatiability, what is the flaw of Baudrillard's approach? Secondly, if that is flawed, what is an alternative approach? This dissertation therefore has two parts: the first is an examination of Baudrillard's theory. It aims to show the concern of his theory and the flaw of his conclusion. The second is an illustration of my view on an alternative approach to facing insatiability, which values Baudrillard's concern without accepting his conclusion. These two parts will explain, step by step, why the idea of free will is a

missing piece of the puzzle when discussing insatiability.

By highlighting his implicit presupposition of free will, this thesis overcome Baudrillard's nihilism. Baudrillard does not recognise this presupposition. The consequence is that committing a value system is not an option in his theory. But this consequence dialectically makes his nihilism unfeasible.

## Outline

The first part includes chapters 2, 3 and 4. Chapter 2 is a review of Marx's concept of need. It will firstly review Marx's illustrations of the concept of need in several key texts, and then review Ian Fraser's and Agnes Heller's discussions on this topic. Overall, Marx defines several concepts of need. For him, needs can be changed in different social contexts, but there are two concepts which seem more fundamental: the natural need and the necessary need. These definitions cause further controversies: for Marx, both necessary needs and natural needs do not simply refer to biological needs but includes something else. But what is this 'something else'? And how can we distinguish this from so-called 'unnecessary'/'luxury' needs? The divergence between Heller and Fraser emerges here: whilst Heller thinks that the concept of necessary need is the fundamental one among all other concepts of needs in Marx's theory, Fraser prioritises the concept of natural need. This divergence is related to their different views on the relation between Marx's and Hegel's theory, which conversely impacts their view of Marx's view of revolution.

The aim of this chapter is not so much to answer any question as to raise the awareness of the connection between questions, so as to pave the way to further discussions: it, first of all, provides a background for the discussion of Baudrillard's critique of Marx; but moreover, by seeking the constitutive factor of needs, Heller and Fraser's debate demonstrate how the ideas of 'universal' and 'particular' are related to the question of insatiability: how could we find out a constitutive factor of needs which is universally true for everyone without ignoring the particularity in each individual? A similar concern will re-emerge in chapter 6.

Chapter 3 then reviews Baudrillard's critique of Marx, including a discussion of some counterarguments to Baudrillard. It argues that many of these counterarguments

cannot defend Marx's theory from Baudrillard's attack. Baudrillard's conclusion of Marx might be one-sided, but his central concern is valid. For this reason, an effective counterargument to Baudrillard requires an examination of his central logic, the idea of reversibility, which bridges his concern and conclusion. This chapter aims to provide a background of Baudrillard's theory and prelude the discussions of reversibility in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 throws light upon Baudrillard's concept of reversibility and aims to highlight the connection between the foundation of Baudrillard's theory and human beings' freedom. I will firstly review the logic of reversibility in Baudrillard's several works. Simply speaking, the concept of reversibility means that all systems, in which needs are constructed, can be overturned, and can never have any solid foundation. Needs are insatiable because the system defining needs is always 'rootless'. The idea of needs is the root created by the economic system for itself. By arguing for reversibility, Baudrillard think this rootlessness cannot be eliminated by a system itself. From this perspective, the difficulty of answering the question 'how much is enough?' lies in the impossibility of validating the system which defines what 'enough' is.

But why cannot a system have a solid foundation? By discussing the view of Gary Genosko and Ashley Woodward, this chapter will also explain how this question is related to the question of human beings' freedom and nihilism: Baudrillard's nihilism is based on the idea of reversibility, which is based on affirming the capability to practise the reversibility. This is nevertheless the limit of Baudrillard's approach.

Chapter 5 provides my own argument showing this fundamental limit of Baudrillard's approach by highlighting the role of free will in his theory through a comparison between Baudrillard and Freudian psychoanalytic theory. It shows how the absence of the openness damages Baudrillard's argument. By drawing on terms (e.g., libertarian and compatible) from the discussions of free will in the context of philosophy of mind, it shows a plight Baudrillard's theory has to face, which is related to the inconsistency pointed out by Genosko's argument: the strength that seduction requires implies that a certain sense of free will is presupposed in Baudrillard's theory, but it nevertheless reveals that even if the strength of seduction is presupposed, seduction is still at risk. For arguing this, it has four sections: the first and second section will review the role of free will in Baudrillard and Freud's theory respectively. They argue that certain senses of free will are in fact presupposed by both thinkers. Thirdly, Baudrillard's critique of Freud's primary and secondary process is examined.

I will show Baudrillard's misunderstanding of Freud. Based on this reading, the fourth section stresses the echo between them when the idea of free will is considered. Through the echo, I will demonstrate that Baudrillard's concern can be read through Freud's terminology, which is helpful to show the problem in Baudrillard's theory as well. The question 'what role does the concept of free will play in the theory?' functions as an approach to examine their theories. It is the question they face which conditions my comparison between their theories.

This chapter aims to highlight a question implied in Baudrillard's approach: by making the comparison between Baudrillard and Freud, it seems the question at stake is not whether we can find the fundamental need as a referent for a value system and cease the insatiable needs, rather, a new question is, how could a free-will agency choose a value system when he/she has been enclosed by the system already? This is a plight in which I think Baudrillard's idea of seduction 'is under siege', which is especially clear if we consider that Freud deals with the question at the unconscious level. Namely, the system which defines one's needs functions at the unconscious level already, and it also forms the ideal for an individual. The seduction is under siege because the ideal, as I will explain in this chapter, is by definition the most seductive for a system and therefore there is even no room for Baudrillard's idea of seduction if we do not value the role of free will. Here we can see how Baudrillard's theory is incomplete: since seduction still requires certain strength, it is at risk to lose its heterogeneity to production. Seduction is never as free as Baudrillard argues.

The second part, thus, is a try at dealing with this plight, which includes chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. The way out from the plight requires a free-will agency to choose without the sufficient reason because the value system is the very register that provides reasons. This is not easy. The question of free will and commitment is not a new topic, and a view is usually made: a value system is chosen and maintained by the free-will agency, which conversely makes the value system function as the guarantor which endorses one's choices. I think this is the central logic in Marx's argument of commodity fetishism, which, however, does not prevent people from still wanting to find a reason before making a choice, like the economic data in Skidelsky and Skidelsky's argument.

By contrast, my approach is to discuss three different ways of seeking the guarantor of a system: 1) seeking the guarantor from the outside of the system

(chapter 6); 2) seeking it from the inside of the system (chapter 7); 3) recognising it as if it exists (chapter 9).

I take this approach due to a consideration: Making an argument implies to provide sufficient reasons of a position, but if what I argue for is a position which commits a system without sufficient reason, even takes a risk, how can I find out the sufficient reason to do things in a way which despises the tendency of seeking the sufficient reason? Without falling into a long metaphysical debate about whether everything must have a reason, the only option addressing my question directly is to demonstrate the futility of this tendency. Through these chapters as a trajectory, the second part aims to demonstrate why seeking the guarantor from the outside and inside of the system is impossible, and what it is like to recognise the guarantor as if it exists. Compared with Marx's view on commodity fetishism, recognising the guarantor as if it exists is a little step further: this approach suggests committing a system with the awareness of the futility of the system.

Chapter 6 will review Søren Kierkegaard's reflection on the relationship between an individual and God, because this relationship is another form of the relationship between an individual and the 'voice' from their ideal, as well as between an individual and the guarantor of his/her value. God is not necessarily portrayed as being outside the world and value systems. Kierkegaard's argument is chosen here because his theology is characteristic of stressing the gap between human individual and God. He wrote pages and pages in order to debate why, even if God is omnipotent, an individual has to take responsibility for themselves to sustain the value system, which also means to bear the tension between 'particular' and 'universal'. This chapter, therefore, aims to show it is futile to seeking the guarantor of the value system to stop insatiable needs.

Chapter 7 throws light upon the debates on money. Money straddles the broader relationship between an object, commodity, and sign. The discussions of money thus involve how objects, signs, and value are correlated. This correlation is Baudrillard's central concern. This chapter has two parts. The first is a review of sociological discussions of money. The second focuses on Marx's discussions of money. As we will see, all these discussions are about the nature of value. This chapter shows that the nature of value is inequality. The gap between 'particular' and 'universal' makes room for value systems. The function of value systems is to suture the gap. 'Particular' and 'universal' are by definition unequal. Value systems embody the inequality. They

make the gap seemingly measurable. Thus, the idea of value stems from the gap being measured. Money makes the gap appear to be measured.

By showing this, this chapter aims to show the approach of seeking the guarantor within the system is futile too. Suturing the gap is by definition impossible. This means the function of systems is impossible to achieve. Thus, the system cannot guarantee itself.

Chapter 8 is a review of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's basic concepts, which aims to pave the way for a discussion of two contemporary scholars, Adrian Johnston and Samo Tomšič, whose arguments are set out in chapter 9. It is necessary to provide some background on Lacanian psychoanalysis to examine Johnston and Tomšič's views. Besides, Lacan's exploration of subjectivity shows a conclusion similar to Kierkegaard without presupposing God.

Finally, chapter 9 is a discussion of my primary question by examining Johnston and Tomšič's views. Both these two thinkers read Marx through a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective and try to throw light upon the question about the insatiability, money, and the end of capitalism, but make a different diagnosis of the nature of insatiability. Although I only partially agree with Johnston's argument, this chapter will highlight the question shared by Johnston and Tomšič, that is, the insatiability stems from the existence of the Other, whilst the Other as a dimension is unavoidable for a subject. Consequently, the possibility of getting rid of insatiability lies in a subject's own possibility of realising the Other does not exist, which probably can only be achieved by each subject him/herself.

# Part I: Chapter 2: Marx's view on use-value and need

## Introduction

This chapter reviews Marx's concept of 'need'. It aims to map out Marx's considerations about what need actually is and entails, and what factors impact on our needs, in order to provide a general background for further discussions of Baudrillard's critique.

Needing something is a common occurrence in everyday life, be it a need for sustenance in order to survive to needing material things or a service carried out. The idea of need is, then, synonymous with living and thus can be taken for granted: everyone has needs, and needs are the source of a myriad human behaviours. Probably, this is the reason why the concept of need seems the presupposition for many discussions of economic issues, as Baudrillard critiques. It seems Marx too rarely pays attention to individual psychology and does not dive into questions like what/why/how we need, but swiftly moves on to elaborating the social aspect of a commodity. For example, in *Das Kapital*, published in 1867, Karl Marx's idea on the value of the commodity is straightforward: A commodity is foremost something made for satisfying human needs, and the 'usefulness of things makes it a use-value' ((1867) 1992, p.126). Hereof, the concept of need is very broad as it refers to 'whatever kind' ((1867) 1992, p.125). Namely, Marx's analysis of economy is based on the generalisation of individuals' particular experiences to a certain extent, which enables him to argue that the utility of commodities can be abstracted as use-value in general ((1867) 1992, p.128).

This chapter, however, will start off by reviewing Marx's theories of alienated labour in his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844. It is one of the earliest works in which Marx directly proclaims his view of human nature, it precludes his controversial key ideas in *Das Kapital*, and it connects Marx's view on politics, humanity, and economics. This work clearly indicates how Marx's consideration of needs is more complicated than a generalisation in economic debates. The following sections will briefly review Marx's view on need, and then discuss interpretations and opinions of

this view by philosopher Agnes Heller and academic Ian Fraser. Heller provides a coherent reading of Marx's theorisation, whilst Fraser strongly refutes many reviews of Marx's text including Heller's and provides a reading which especially values the role of Hegelian dialectics in Marx's theorisation.

Before starting the review of Marx's illustration, it should be helpful to sketch Hegelian dialectics very briefly. It is widely known that Marx's approach is significantly influenced by Hegel's dialectics, which, however, cannot be the focus here. This dissertation will add some rudimentary explanation of Hegel's view on need, especially in chapter 5. But for readers who are not familiar with Hegel's dialectics, I think a wonderful explanation can be found from Julie E. Maybee.

As Maybee (2009) illustrates, the 'dialectic' can be traced back to Plato who, through the character of Socrates and his interlocutors, sets dialogues. The interlocutor, by Socrates' questioning, see the contradictions of different views and (re-)formulate a more sophisticated one. Very simply speaking, this is like a child, who believes books are made of paper, changes his/her idea when he/she comes across digital books. He/she then has a more abstract and sophisticated definition of book. The dialectics can be seen as a process that the contradictory ideas converge into a more complex idea in which the contradictions are resolved. This central logic does not change in Hegel and Marx's doctrine, the main difference lies in what is challenged and become more 'sophisticated'. For Hegel, dialectics means the process that opposing sides sublimate themselves, namely overcome their one-sidedness to 'passing into their opposite' (EL, §81). Whilst for Marx, his dialectics is opposite to the Hegelian one, in the sense that 'the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought' (Marx & Mandel, 1990, p.102), so that the dialectical process is for people to gradually get the correct consciousness of the material world by labour (Marx, (1844)1992, pp.379–458).

## **The relation between need and labour in Manuscripts 1844**

In Marx's Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, there are two concepts of need: natural need and need for self-realisation. The second one is called 'human need' by both Fraser and Heller (Fraser, 1998; Heller, 1976). It seems natural need

refers to our biological needs, whilst the need for self-realisation includes some mental factors, as Marx wrote: 'The wealthy man is the man who needs a complete manifestation of human life and a man in whom his own realisation exists as an inner necessity, as a need' (Marx, (1844) 1992, p.356)). This statement is a little strange because it blurs the boundary between luxury and necessity. Usually, biological needs for survival are treated as a necessary need, while human-constructed concepts such as dignity, honour, self-fulfilment are regarded as something beyond primal necessities. This was, for example, argued by Abraham Maslow (Maslow, 2013). By contrast, Jean Baudrillard, for instance, would argue that need/desire/want/demand is socially constructed. But Marx treated it as *inner necessity*, so it is on the one hand a universal necessity but on the other it is related to a wealthy man - a status seems only achievable for the select few.

Marx's explanation is shown in his analysis of alienated labour. After emphasising economists' failure in explaining how private property is formed, he argues that the economic relationship actually devalued the human beings, and workers somehow become suffering from their own product by alienation. There are four forms of alienation: 1) the products are the alienated object of workers, because they become commodities; 2) the act of work is alienated from labour because labour is not for workers' own sake; 3) the human being is alienated to him/herself; 4) the alienation between individuals.

The first two forms are about the relationship between workers and commodity: the product is produced by the labour of workers. Hereof, Marx used some similar terms to describe different aspects or forms of the same process: appropriation, externalisation (Entäußerung), realisation, objectification, and alienation (Entfremdung). Their relationship is this: for labouring, workers need to appropriate materials; by labouring, a worker spends his/her time and power to make products, so the products consist not only of materials, but also workers' labour. Marx calls the product the objectification of labour. This objectification realises<sup>1</sup> the labour, so Marx concludes that 'the realisation of labour is its objectification' ((1867) 1992, p.324). For workers, this process is also that of loss because, although the products are made by workers, they do not retain ownership. This is the process of externalisation of labour, and this process of externalisation means both that the product is outside workers'

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<sup>1</sup> That is, making potential come into being.

bodies and out of their control. These products become something independent to workers in terms of ownership, the externalisation thus becomes the alienation. Consequently, workers do not have ownership of their products. This is the first form of alienation.

But for Marx, the problem is that not only the products become commodities but the workers too. Although this seems merely common sense in the modern labour market, Marx argues that this means workers do not work for their own sake, rather they are forced to work for a living. This is because, in a private property-based form of production, production materials usually do not belong to workers and thus the products do not belong to them either. This is the second form of alienation.

This second form subsequently leads to the third form of alienation: workers become animals, even machines. And it is here Marx provides his definition of 'natural need'. Due to the private property-based production, workers face a plight: the more they invest their own life to work, the less they have. What they get are salaries, only part of value consisting of the whole commodities. However, workers have to accept this as there is no better alternative for them. Consequently, Marx thinks workers are compelled to live as animals; their work is driven by 'animal functions' ((1867) 1992, p.327) in order to sate basic primal needs such as eating and drinking. Although Marx did not use the term need here, clearly it involves those needs for survival. In the discussion on Hegel, Marx provides a more straightforward explanation:

Hunger is a natural need; it therefore requires a nature and an object outside itself in order to satisfy and still itself. Hunger is the acknowledged need of my body for an object which exists outside itself and which is indispensable to its integration and to the essential nature. (Marx, (1867) 1992, p.390)

But what is the boundary between animals and human beings? In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Marx propounded that the key difference is that humans' activities transcend those of survival. Humans can direct their life by consciousness, so the function of consciousness is the precondition of human freedom. This is why Marx thought workers lived as animals when they work for survival only. However, the boundary between human beings and animal changes in The German Ideology, co-authored by Marx and fellow radical thinker, Friedrich Engels:

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. (Marx, (1846) 1987, p.42)

Thus, the boundary lies in labour. The context here is that Marx criticised German idealism and argued that it is material production in normal people's real life that determined one's other conditions. The material condition of life is the precondition of any thought, culture, religion political systems and so forth, because the foremost precondition of human history is the existence of human beings, and it requires human labour to satisfy natural needs. The history of human beings is unfolded through the interaction between human beings and materials. The line between human beings and animal now become the production of 'their means of subsistence' (Marx, (1846) 1987, p.42).

In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, these three forms of alienation lead to the fourth one: the alienation between individuals. This view was repeatedly stressed in the chapter on alienated labour, but the concrete mechanism was only explained fully in his *Comments on James Mill*, also written in 1844 but prior to *Manuscripts*. Mill, who published *Elements of Political Economy* in 1821, thinks the end of production is the consumption; exchanges and distributions are only means to help maintaining and facilitating the production. So, a person produces more than they need because they *want* to exchange with others to get something they do not produce. But Marx argues that this tendency to exchange is the root of alienation between individuals: the production, in this situation, is no longer the realisation of the nature of human, but the means of earning a living. So, the products are treated as 'the objectified self-interest' ((1844) 1992, p.275), and other individuals are treated as the means of satisfying one's own need as well: If an individual earns a living by farming, lands and other tools are means used for maintaining life. There is thus a circulation of materials between lands, tools and individual. But if an individual has to earning a living by selling his/her product, the circulation must also involve other consumers who, in this sense, are 'tools' for the worker to complete the whole

circulation of production for maintaining his/her life. The relationship between human beings therefore becomes 'the abstract relation of private property to private property' ((1844) 1992, p.261). That is to say, a relationship between real human beings is represented (to some extent) the relationship between commodities (namely, the relationship between the worker's product and the consumer's money), because it is this relationship define a consumer for a worker 'who you are for me.'

But what factors compel a person to alienate their own labour, if it seems so bad? One possible answer is private property. As mentioned in the second form of alienation, a worker's product does not belong to themselves, so their labour has to be alienated. However, Marx argued that, although the private property and alienated labour went hand in hand in later stages, private property is actually the consequence of alienated labour rather than the opposite. This is because, as previously mentioned, it is alienated labour that brings about the alienated relationship between individuals, which in turn causes the private property. That is, the nature of the private property is the objectified relationship between human beings in the relationship between products ((1844) 1992, p.330).

The real cause of alienated labour is the division of labour, Marx argues in *The German Ideology*. As aforementioned, Marx argued that human history starts with people's productive activities to earn a living; thus, it is clear labour activities and productivity are conditioned and limited by materials. This is manifested macrocosmically in the division of labour within a nation and between nations. That is, everyone can only produce a part of all they need, for earning a living, their labours have to be alienated one. Consequently, 'the existing stage in the division of labour also determines the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument, and product of labour' (Marx, (1846) 1987, p.43).' Thus, the real cause of alienated labour, in Marx's view, is the limited productivity.

Marx also proposed another kind of production in *Comments on James Mill*: production for expression. When the end of production is consumption, workers make things for possession. They produce what they lack. By contrast, the production for expression is to enjoy ones' own life. Moreover, the consumption of this product connects the producers and the consumers: production is the embodiment of the producers' identity. Marx especially believed this was a cherished experience because 'I would experience my personality as an objective sensuously perceptible power beyond all shadow of doubt' (Marx, (1844)1992, p. 277). This seems a narcissistic

process. Furthermore, by consuming the product, the satisfaction therefore also means a recognition of the producer. This means the producer successfully objectifies human nature, which is confirmed by both producer and consumer. From the perspective of the consumer, this means the producer uses their product to connect the consumer with human nature, therefore become part of consumers' self. Therefore, the product functions as a medium, connecting both producer and consumers with human nature.

In summary, although there are some questions left unresolved, it is clear there are two kinds of need in Marx's early writings: the natural need and a need for self-realisation. Marx portrayed a very desirable scenario: when production is a self-realisation, there seems to be a kind of echo between subjects mediated by labour and product. For instance, this might be closer to the experience felt when moved by a particular painting, or when a chef's artistic culinary display is appreciated by a customer. This somehow turns a product as a kind of channel of communication.

As a need, Marx did not treat self-realisation as something only available for riches or certain elite groups, which conditioned his subsequent doctrine of communist society. However, there are some questions still left open: it seems that, although both natural need and self-realisation are necessary, the first one is more important than the second one; it is possible to give up self-realisation for natural need but not vice versa. This understanding led to a risk that reduced Marx's doctrine to the political economic tradition which Marx attacked. Namely, the need for self-realisation can be postponed by prioritising the need for survival, and therefore works in a relevantly bad working condition should be treated as an acceptable option, and even in line with the aim of perusing self-realisation in the future. If so, the need for self-realisation can only be available for riches.

This is also connected to Marx's view on the difference between humans and animals. It raises certain questions, namely: why is self-realisation necessary for human beings? And: what is the boundary between necessity and luxury? Although Marx appealed to conscious activities to distinguish humans from animals, this view is arguably outdated. Modern science has shown that animals are not as basic as believed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has been shown, for example, that animals can also have culture, and that their activities are not simply driven by instinct (Allen et al., 2013). Perhaps, our knowledge has not achieved a stage to conclude a clear line between human beings and animals. But back to the question of need, I hope readers

have seen the question here: Marx does not give the need for survival the most privilege position, but this view brings about a further question that what 'enough' is.

## Marx's view on need in later work

In Marx's later work, the concept of need has altered. In *Das Kapital*, Marx also described 'natural need':

His means of subsistence must therefore be sufficient to maintain him in his normal state as a working individual. His natural needs, such as food, clothing, fuel and housing vary according to the climatic and other physical peculiarities of his history ((1867) 1992, p.275).

It is clear that the concept of natural need concerns the biological processes of the body in order to survive. The context of this statement is similar to the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in which Marx argued that a capitalist system of production must guarantee the health and strength of workers in order to condition their work. However, it is clearly not enough for a worker to be equipped with a strong body. Especially in the modern age, certain employees require re-skilling or training in order to acquire new knowledge. Of course, modern workplaces are vastly different from what Marx observed, but his view had taken this into account:

...the number and extent of his so-called necessary requirements, as also the manner in which they are satisfied, are themselves products of history. In particular they depend on the conditions in which, and consequently on the habits and expectations with which, the class of free workers has been formed. ((1867) 1992, p.275)

So, Marx argues that the materials and equipment that workers need are different depending on the level of productive force. In a certain age, the level of necessary things for maintaining labour power do exist, although it seems difficult to know it exactly. In his own words, it is 'a known datum' ((1867) 1992, p.275).

In *Grundrisse*, written in 1857-58, Marx mentioned another concept: socially created need (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, pp. 90-93). The socially created need is

opposed to natural need, which refers to the need created by consumption. He mentioned this concept when he argued about the identity of production and consumption. Production, distribution, exchange, and consumption – in the context of economics – belong to a coherent process, which starts with production and ends in consumption. Marx argued there were three facets of identity of productions and consumptions: immediate, mutual, and dialectic.

The first facet of identity is that production is simultaneously the consumption of materials. This can be called productive consumption. This may seem like common sense, but what Marx tried to illustrate was the metaphysical relationship. This facet was defined by Marx using Baruch Spinoza's dictum that '*determinatio est negatio*' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p. 90). The literal meaning is 'determination is negation', which is from Spinoza's letter to his friend Jarig Jelles (Spinoza et al., 1995, p. 258). This statement should be understood within the context of his general philosophical pursuit; and one central theme of Spinoza's philosophy was to resolve a dilemma in Cartesian Dualism. Descartes famously raised, to put simply, the question of dualism of mind and body. This question stems from the debate between rationalism and empiricism over where human knowledge comes from, and how we could know whether types of knowledge are universally true. Spinoza tried to resolve this by arguing that the world, God, and substance are one. God is infinite and unlimited, nothing is out of it by going outside of it (della Rocca, 2008). So, the mind and physical matter are not two kinds of substance, but two attributes of God. The concrete things are different models of material attribute of the substance, and the same holds true in different ideas in the mind.

Thus, in this letter, Spinoza argued that, when someone talks about one particular thing, he/she has to presuppose a genus to which the thing belongs. Spinoza's own example is that a pound and a penny can only be called two coins when the bigger concept (coin) exists. But there is no bigger concept than God, so God cannot be defined in this way. In fact, this is because people never speak out the essence of things, but just give the form of it. Namely, just because a penny and a pound are called as coins does not mean they are coins in nature. Rather, they are called in this way because we define them through the concept of coin. Therefore, to define a particular thing is to negate its identity within the world. In this sense, the so-called productive consumption is a process of giving shapes to materials taken from the material worlds. Compared with the simple idea that production is consumption of

materials, the Marxist view clearly stresses the shaping effect of production on the material condition.

By contrast, the second layer of identity is based on viewing production and consumption as mutually dependent processes, although it also means they are conceptualised as separated. Production not only creates products for consumption in general, but in particular. Namely, every product has its concrete form, and therefore has its specific way of consumption. Production therefore provides the means of consumptions and creates consumers. Meanwhile, consumption creates the need for product, because by consumption, the consumer forms the idea of what it is like to consume this certain product. By these means, a need is created, which shapes the aim of production. Although Marx does not directly claim this, the concept of socially created need is arguably created within this perspective.

The evidence for this can be found in Marx's illustration of the third aspect concerning the identity between consumption and production. This third aspect is that consumption/production is in itself a production/consumption, and each half completes itself by creating the other<sup>2</sup>. This is based on Marx's view that a product is fully realised by being used. His own example is 'a garment becomes a real garment only in the act of being worn' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.91). Consumption in this sense is created by production for finishing itself, because not only 'the product becomes product' but also 'the producer becomes producer' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.93). By the same token, production is created by consumption, in the sense that of letting production form the means and need to consume – through producing 'a subject for the object' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.91), consumption realises itself. Marx stated that 'this last identity ...[is] frequently cited in economics in the relation of demand and supply, of objects and needs, of socially created and natural needs' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.93). This is followed by a short criticism of economists who treat production and consumption separately, in contrast to his own view that consumption is within the whole process of production; the producer actually achieves a self-reproduction through consuming a product (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.93). Thus, the third facet is where the natural and socially created needs achieve a dialectical unity, which implies that the concept of socially created need is present at the second facet.

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<sup>2</sup> Or, in Marx's own words, 'creates the other in completing itself (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, pp. 92).'

In short, Marx argues for three facets of the identities between production and consumption. Firstly, production is also the consumption of materials. Secondly, production creates consumers, and consumption creates producers. Production and consumption thus are mutually created through creating needs. This is the 'socially created need'. Thirdly, the producer and consumer complete him/herself by satisfying the opposite side.

Both second and third facet involve a creation of need. But the concept of 'socially created need' refers to the need created in the second facet. By contrast, the third facet echoes Marx's view in *Comments on James Mill*, which argues for a mutual recognition between the producer and consumer. Marx does not link human nature with the third facet in *Grundrisse*, but it clearly implies a psychological aspect when he said: 'Consumption ideally posits the object of production as an internal image, as a need, as drive and as purpose. It creates the object of production in a still subjective form' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.91.). Thus, being a dialectical unity means the third facet achieves the unity within an individual (e.g., the producer becomes producer). In contrast, the second facet is about the aim of production, which can be thought of a social issue (i.e., what a factory should produce to achieve a profit). In this sense, consumption and production are outside each other.

So, the need created in the second facet is by consumption for production, whilst in the third facet, the created need is by and for production through consumption.

In *Das Kapital*, volume 3, there are three concepts that are correlated: social need, genuine social need, and demand. The pivotal idea is a discussion about the changes of needs in a society. Marx used the concept of social need to mean the society's need for products: 'the quantity for which the society is able to pay the market value' (Marx et al., 1993b, p.280). That is, it is the affordable quantity of products by society that can be called social need. Marx stated: 'to say that a commodity has use-value is simply to assert that it satisfies some kind of social need' (Marx et al., 1993b, p.288). But there is also a 'genuine social need' (Marx et al., 1993b, p.290); that is, 'the quantity that would be demanded at other money prices, or with the buyers being in different financial and living conditions' (Marx et al., 1993b, p.290). Here, the demand means 'the extent to which the need for commodities as represented on the market' (Marx et al., 1993, p.290).' So, the needs for production are represented in the market, but they are a social need only when affordable to society. This sense of demand had

already emerged in Comments on James Mill (Marx, (1844) 1992, pp.273-274). Here, the context of these concepts is the discussion of the relationship between supply and demand, rather than the nature of human beings directly.

## **Necessity and luxury**

An unavoidable question is: if need can be created, what is the boundary between necessity and luxury? The answer might be clear if necessity simply means biological needs or means of subsistence. This seems true in Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy*, published in 1847. In this book, Marx did not provide any concrete criterion for luxury, but just treated corn and meat as 'indispensable' (Marx & McLellan, 2000, p.214), whilst artichokes and asparagus are a luxury. The context of his argument is his refutation of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's view on labour time and value. According to Marc, Proudhon thought the less labour time required to produce a product, the more useful it is. This is because, he theorised, the value of a commodity is the labour-time spent on the commodity, and society and industry always develop from a lower level, namely, an industry starts with consuming less valuable things (which means these things require less labours to produce). Thus, 'the things whose production costs the least time are the most immediately useful (Marx & McLellan, 2000, p.213).' Based on this, Proudhon argues that every current price of a thing is already in the balance between demand and supply of this thing. There should be a fixed value of a product, which Proudhon called 'constituted value' (Marx & McLellan, 2000, p.225); the demand and supply of this product will gradually achieve a balance according to labour time.

But Marx thinks the opposite is true: the value indeed expresses the labour-time used in a product, but it is determined by the productive force in every age, so that the labour-time in a product is dynamic. This is because, Marx asserted, the progression of society is driven by antagonism between classes. Consumers from different classes will determine how they use products, so that the demand is relatively independent to the value of products. Therefore, he postulates, some luxury items could be cheaper than necessary products, so the criterion to distinguish necessity and luxury is not the price. In this sense, it seems Marx bases his definition of luxury is on social/cultural lifestyle. But considering Marx thinks class consciousness depended on productive relations, it leaves open to questioning how this lifestyle will be changed.

By contrast, in *Das Kapital*, volume 2, Marx proposed that the consumption of the working class also formed the consumption of the capitalist class. The luxury items can be only bought by owning surplus value, which would never be achievable for those of lowly status (Marx et al., 1993a). In *Grundrisse*, Marx developed his argument and placed 'luxury' and 'naturally necessary' as polar opposites, stating that 'necessary needs are those of the individual reduced to a natural subject' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.527). He stated the luxury need becomes necessary with the development of industry:

...it is because of this, that what previously appeared as a luxury is now necessary, and that so-called luxury needs appear... as a necessity for the most naturally necessary and down-to-earth industry of all. (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.527)

In the above quotation, 'this' refers to the separated status between agriculture and natural conditions which refers to the conditions which is natural available for the workers in contrast to technology-based conditions. Clearly, the fundamental need is for sustenance, so a fundamental industry is agriculture. However, modern agriculture is reliant on many other industries such as machine manufacture so that these, too, appear as necessary. In fact, all industry is based on the 'general exchange' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.528), which refers to the general exchanges in society. So, if natural needs only cover biological needs, what Marx called 'necessary' should be more than 'natural'. But, as previously mentioned, the natural need is related to more than sating hunger. It seems the natural need is therefore similar to the necessary need, considering both of them involve the social aspect. Nevertheless, it inspires the question of how to make a distinction between the natural need and the socially created need.

# Heller and Fraser's view on needs in Marx's texts

As can be seen, there are always some obscurities in Marx's explanations when he attempts to define 'natural' and 'necessary', which are what Jean Baudrillard argues to abandon. The pivotal question in Marx's illustration of need can be thought of as a struggle about creating a boundary: the boundary between basic and luxury, natural and social, production and consumption, and so on. Before moving onto a discussion of Baudrillard, it would be fruitful to review Heller and Fraser's postulations, because both of them tend to save a certain sense of 'natural' and 'necessary'.

## Agnes Heller's view on Marx's concept of need

Heller's reading of Marx can be generally divided into three aspects: necessary need, social need, and radical need (1976). There is an overlap between the necessary need and the social need, because needs produced and satisfied by social environment could be necessary as well. For Heller, the limit of existence is always linked with the material condition in certain ages, and human beings' need is not identical to animals. For example, cloth is necessary for an individual in modern everyday life, but an animal does not need this. For this reason, the concept of necessary need clearly should involve natural need, which becomes the most basic concept of need in Marx's theorisation. The key to her view lies in understanding what necessary need is on a societal level rather than individual:

...if we investigate empirically what needs ought to be satisfied so that the members of a given society or class should have the feeling and the conviction that their life... is 'normal', then we arrive at the concept of 'necessary needs'. (1976, p.33)

That is, there is no individual need at all; the concept of necessary is defined within the context of society and therefore implies a connection to the concept of luxury. Heller's view of 'luxury' is in line with that of Marx: that things are deemed a luxury

because 'by custom do not belong to the system of the need of the labour force' (1976, p.36) rather than because they are simply expensive. The system of need here refers to the socially constructed system about what is needed. In Heller's reading, a person's concrete needs can never solely belong to themselves but is always formed within the context of social factors, especially the division of labour (1976). In this sense, this criterion of luxury implies a production-based culture: what the working-class should/could (not) buy, use, and need. Of course, As a product becomes more commonplace by dint of mass manufacturing, its value also changes, therefore, the luxury status of a commodity may only be temporary.

But this notion engenders a further question: what is the role of an individual's preference? Paradoxically, Heller places individual needs beyond the category of necessary need. This is because necessary and luxury needs are based on productivity, whilst the individual need in Heller's reading is somehow based on the spiritual and not on production (1976, p.34). Consequently, Heller proposes a concept called 'radical need', which is not only outside the system of needs but also which the system is based on:

According to Marx, radical needs are inherent aspects of the capitalist structure of need: without them, as we have said, capitalism cannot function, so it creates them afresh every day. 'Radical needs' cannot be 'eliminated' from capitalism because they are necessary to its functioning. (1976, p.71).

Heller does not mention the text in which Marx uses the term 'radical need'. The evidence she provided is from a reading of Marx's view on revolution: in short, Marx argues that a theory can only be actualised when it actualises people's needs, thus what drives revolution is the need that cannot be actualised by current society. Thus, 'capitalist society itself gives rise to radical needs, thus producing its own gravediggers' (1976, p.82).

Heller's discussion implies a much bigger discussion: what is the relationship between Hegel and Marx in terms of dialectics? Heller clearly distinguishes two understandings: one is to treat this trajectory of revolution as being governed by natural law, in this sense the so-called radical need is not radical for the dialectics (1976, p.73); the other, which Heller prefers, is to treat that law as quasi-law. It is exactly by believing in this trajectory as a natural law that 'man is subordinated to the

production' (1976, p.75). So, Heller argues for a dimension outside the current system as the changing factor.

## Ian Fraser's critique of Heller

Fraser's discussion in his *Hegel and Marx: The Concept of Need* (1998) can be linked with this topic here. Generally, he stresses the similarity rather than the difference between Marx and Hegel in terms of dialectics, which is shown in his view of Marx's theorisation of need.

In contrast to Heller who thinks the necessary need includes the natural need, Fraser argues that necessary need should be a form of natural need. Necessary need may be formed by historical conditions and culture, but it is a means to satisfy the natural need, he argued. For example, in modern Western culture, the need for food incorporates the need for a knife and fork. So, it is the natural need that is the most fundamental concept in Marx's theorisation, whilst the necessary needs vary according to different periods of history (Fraser, 1998, p.129). From this perspective, the natural need could even involve the radical need proposed by Heller, and therefore bridges Hegel and Marx. That is, the natural need is the most fundamental category that is universal in all societies. In Hegel's theorisation, it is in order to satisfy the natural need that the Will passes through the dialectical trajectory. Similarly, in Marx, it is for the natural need that individuals undertake class struggles and push for social reform (Fraser, 1998, p.165-66).

As to the relationship between natural need and the trajectory of social progression, Fraser's position is more in line with Hegel in this respect. Firstly, Fraser rejects Heller's radical need because the natural need always takes different forms of needs, and therefore at least partially positive for the progression of a society. So, in his view, it is not a radical need that overthrows a social system and makes a change. Secondly, like Heller, Fraser also values the role of Marx's view of freedom and argues that both Hegel and Marx think natural needs are something that will be more effectively satisfied by machines because these free individuals from labour to some extent (Fraser, 1998, p.168-71). Beyond the needs that the machines can satisfy, there is a spiritual need which is related to Marx's explanation in *Comments on James Mill*, as aforementioned (Fraser, 1998, p.145-6), whilst for Hegel, it is Will, or 'world

spirit', which undertakes and goes beyond the natural need for freedom (Fraser, 1998, p.167). The spiritual need, too, belongs to the natural need. Thirdly, Fraser stresses that natural need is not a concrete or specific need, and that Marx never defines it as an ultimate human need, or the sum of all possible human needs. Rather, natural need is a deduction from his observations of human beings' needs in everyday life. Namely, if the natural need is somehow universal, and all specific forms of need can be thought of as particular, they have a dialectical unity. In Fraser's own words: '...he [Marx] is seeing how the universal or essential need emerges out of the particular or relative' (Fraser, 1998, p.153). These points make Fraser to suggest a view compatible with Hegelian dialectics and eliminates the distinction considered by Heller.

Fraser's tendency to bridging Marx and Hegel is clearer in another work. In reviewing the relationship between Hegel and Marx in terms of dialectics, Fraser and his co-writer Tony Burns list three positions in the debates of the relationship: 1) Marx refuses Hegelian idealism dialectics; 2) Marx accepts it; 3) both Hegel and Marx are materialists (Burns & Fraser, 2000).

The debate revolves around whether Hegel is an idealist and whether dialectics is merely a social doctrine, very roughly speaking. Fraser's view is allocated into the third position. From this perspective, Heller's consideration of natural law is dissolved, because the trajectory of Hegelian dialectics is about materials. If Hegel is also a materialist, his doctrine can also be treated as a political economic theory. This reading clearly paves the way for further arguments that stress their similarities rather than differences between Marx and Hegel.

## Conclusion

To summarise, there are four types of need in Marx's theorisation: natural need, necessary need, social need, and the need for self-realisation. Their definitions are intertwined with the context of social activities; so, what constitutes these needs change over time. Whilst Heller wholly places the social factor at the fundamental level and argues for this through a reading of the concept of necessary need, Fraser grants natural need a certain independence from other forms of needs by drawing on

Hegelian dialectics. This so-called independence is therefore not *outside* but *inside* particular needs. The central difference between them is exemplified in their attitudes on Heller's concept of radical needs: what Fraser sees is a dialectical unity between universal and particular needs, so that there is no room for Heller's concept of radical need as being heterogeneous to the needs which have been socially constructed already. Namely, Heller's concept of radical need suggests a particularity which cannot be assimilated into 'universal', whilst Fraser refuse the existence of this gap.

A detailed discussion of the relationship between Marx and Hegel is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the tension between 'universal' and 'particular' will constantly emerge in this thesis, and all following discussions of insatiability can be thought of as a response to it in one way or another.

# Chapter 3: A review of Jean Baudrillard's theory

## Introduction

The last chapter has explained Marx's several concepts of need although, as is wont with the complex nature of what need is, there are still questions left unanswered. Generally, however, Marx propounded that human beings' needs for specific things could be changed, and the idea of need is the cornerstone of Marx's understanding of the individual and society.

However, it is also clear that such experiences are conceptualised by the use of words or, semiotically speaking, signs. Based on Saussurean semiotics, Jean Baudrillard argues that our idea of needs is entirely a construction, which is clearly more radical than Fraser's reading.

This chapter will review Baudrillard's argument. It will focus on Baudrillard's early works: *The System of Objects*; *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*; *Consumer Society*; *The Mirror of Production*; and *The Symbolic Exchange and Death*, because these are the main texts in which Baudrillard targets Marx.

Firstly, this chapter will outline Baudrillard's theoretical background. Baudrillard's argument is based on some of his contemporary discussions, in which he sometimes assumed that his readers were familiar with all of them, or even directly gave his own alternative understanding and believed his readers would agree. In order to avoid confusion, this chapter will provide a reading of Marcel Mauss's, Claude Levi-Strauss's, and George Bataille's key points for showing the logic that Baudrillard uses. Secondly, this chapter will explain Baudrillard's doctrine of sign-value. Then, it will explain Baudrillard's criticism of Marx's concept of need. Finally, there will be a discussion of some of the refutations to Baudrillard's thinking. This chapter aims to offer a foundation for a further discussion of Baudrillard's approach in the following chapter.

Although the following paragraphs try to provide some contexts and explanations of Baudrillard's doctrine, some obscurity is unavoidable. In a sense, this is because he is specifically trying to talk about ineffability. This obscurity was apparently shown

in the concept of *hau* in Mauss's work. There is no clear definition of *hau*, and researchers start to discuss this before they really know what it is. Mauss's transcription about *hau* will be quoted, in order to provide the readers some sense of it. However, it is good to remind readers that it is better to leave the question about defining *hau* open, in order to avoid oversampling the question. There is no so-called answer, and the value of all subsequent researchers' work does not lie in providing a solid answer. Rather, inspired by this concept, Levi-Strauss, Bataille, and Baudrillard's works share a concern about something outside a well-defined system in which all components are connected with each other based on some relevantly clear definitions (e.g., a language). But if this so-called 'something' is outside of language, how to speak about it? Baudrillard's work can be treated as trying to speak something impossible to speak.

That is to say, Baudrillard's doctrine is difficult to examine exactly because he tries to undermine all systems that are based on a supposed cornerstone. If there is no cornerstone, how could we critique and evaluate Baudrillard's own view? As to this, Rex Butler's view is helpful here:

It is only through the attempt to be systematic that we can show what cannot be systematised, just as with the systems Baudrillard analyses it is only through understanding them as completely representing the world that he can show what they cannot represent. (Butler, 1999, p.20)

That is, if there is no clear cornerstone or definition in Baudrillard's doctrine, the way to critique it is to read others through his view. In a sense, Baudrillard tries to point out a perspective which is usually treated as natural and neutral. It is only through others' limits that Baudrillard's own perspective is revealed, or more precisely, constructed. And it is only after his perspective is constructed, his own limit could be revealed.

For readers who feel Baudrillard's illustration always involves a kind of obscurity, it is hoped this explanation could appease the annoying feeling provoked by the obscurity. On the one hand, as demonstrating rather than informing, Baudrillard's use of the concept of *potlatch* and symbolic exchange is a way, like a story, to metaphorically grasp an idea, so the obscurity is unavoidable; on the other hand, Baudrillard's demonstration specifically aims at challenging his readers, and the

feeling of obscurity emerges when the well-defined ideas start to become questionable. An explanation of Baudrillard's works should also show this dimension of the act of challenging.

## **Theoretical background**

Despite the differences between Heller and Fraser, the last chapter also shows a consensus between them: both of them conceptualise a dimension which is outside 'necessary need'. For Heller, there is a radical need outside the current social structure; for Fraser, it is the natural need which is beyond any socially created need. What they share is a conceptualisation about a dimension which is outside the social structure, which is also the central topic of Baudrillard and his contemporaries. For Baudrillard, this dimension is revealed by making a contrast between commodity exchanges and the concept behind a tribal ceremony called *potlatch*, introduced by ethnologist Marcel Mauss, in his book *The Gift* which will be discussed below.

The significance of *The Gift* is not so much about solving the question as provoking questions. Levi-Strauss and George Bataille, whose views will be also sketched, are two exemplars who develop their views by targeting on the obscurity in Mauss' work: the force which makes reciprocation. Both are useful clues to understand Baudrillard's consideration. The following paragraphs, starting with highlighting the central question pursued by Mauss, aims at showing how Mauss, Levi-Strauss and Bataille inspired and preluded Baudrillard point of view.

## **Marcel Mauss's *The Gift*: Gift exchange and Potlatch**

## Mauss's question:

In his book *The Gift*, Mauss offered a systematic review of a kind of gift-exchange activities based on several ethnographic studies. It examines an exchange system of gifts, within – and between – native tribes in Polynesia, Melanesia, and the American Northwest, called *potlatch*. The original term involves a lavish ceremony during which possessions are given away or destroyed as a symbol of a leader's prosperity, which thus enhances his prestige. Mauss used the term to refer to a whole set of gift-giving exchange practices in tribal societies that create political, religious, kinship, and economic implications.

The central question, for Mauss, is about the nature of rule in the process of gift-giving. In his own word, 'What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?' (Mauss, (1925)2014, p.4). It is not all gift-exchanges that can be called *potlatch*, but it seems for him all of them share this rule of obligatory reciprocation. The question is extremely interesting, because, as Mauss noted, that the gift-exchanges seem voluntary but actually obligatory, and the reciprocated gift usually should be more than the received one in terms of quantity or/and value. Thus, there seems a kind of rule in the circulations and exchanges of things different from the law in a market in which the deals are based on equivalency to some extent. The root of this question lies in the tension between the obligation and voluntariness: if there is no such rule, why, even in modern society, would we feel a need to reciprocate a gift? But if there is a rule, how is it possible to conceptualise the gift-giving as voluntary?<sup>3</sup>

To explain this, Mauss highlights two features of gift exchange: comprehensive and competitive. These two features go hand in hand and indicate how the gift exchange includes the market but is more than a market.

As to the first, Mauss reports that a *potlatch*, as a big celebration or festival, almost involves everything including markets for exchanges of goods, although in local language it literally means 'to feed' and 'to consume':

Everything – clans, marriages, initiations, Shamanist seances and meetings for the worship of the great gods, the totems or the collective or individual

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it is for this reason that Derrida argues that the gift does not exist. Cf. Derrida, J. (2017). *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money: 1* (P. Kamuf, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.

ancestors of the clan – is woven into an inextricable network of rites, of total legal and economic services, of assignment to political ranks in the society of men, in the tribe, and in the confederations of tribes, and even internationally. (Mauss, (1925)2014, pp.7-8)

Thus, *potlatches* involve markets because things can be exchanged based on equivalency. But compared with the market in which everyone can participate and is supposed to aim at economic profits, Mauss stresses that the *potlatch* is in ‘noble fashion’ (Mauss, 2002[1950], p.28), because it is mainly between two tribes, represented by the chiefs, and is not for economic profit. In fact, participants would be looked down upon if they merely pursue economic interests in this practice. For example, the act of a sole economic exchange in Trobriand islands is called *gimwali* which has the negative connotation of ‘very hard bargaining between the two parties’ (Mauss, (1925)2014., p.28). So, ‘noble’ here, at least partially, means that it belongs to the ‘upper class’, and implies a concern of dignity. In this sense, a *potlatch* is and aims at the process of defining or maintaining social ranks, whilst a market is more often a device to valorise things.

Consequently, *potlatch* is highly competitive. The destruction and exchange of goods and precious items shows off the wealth of a chief, that his surplus of riches is so great he can give away or destroy things. Scratching beneath the surface of the generous gift-giving ceremony, *potlatch* becomes a socially and politically motivated competition of who has the most goods to give away. *Potlatch* functions as a performance in the sense that chiefs and locals deliver certain meanings by their acts of destruction and expenditure. Neither the act nor the objects they use aim to satisfy immediate needs or make use of the object’s function.

## Supernatural explanations of the obligation to reciprocate:

The competition for the social rank itself seems enough to explain why the gift must be reciprocated, but this is probably because, as a modern reader of Mauss’s work, I can imagine the feelings in such kind of competitions due to having experienced or viewed such situations in my own life. In fact, such an understanding

does not explain exactly and concretely how the feeling of obligation occurs but merely reduces the gift exchange into a supposed 'common' sense. It is indeed possible that a chief of a tribe can get more benefits if he/she does not reciprocate, which means the obligation to reciprocate does not necessarily function. Moreover, it is also difficult to imagine the 'dignity' gained from gift-exchanges can have nothing to do with concrete profit, because the higher social position, if it means to consume more, requires better material conditions. Such a position cannot be maintained for the long run if an individual does not benefit from it in terms of materials. That means, an explanation of the rule of gift-exchanges requires a dimension or facet which can be conceptualised as being heterogeneous to the material condition.

As to this, those natives studied by Mauss use some supernatural factors to explain the non-material reason. For instance, in northwest America, the prestige is linked to one's soul. A failure to reciprocate gifts in a *potlatch* literally means to lose one's 'face' – the dance mask which embodies a corresponding 'spirit' (Mauss, (1925)2014, p.50). Similarly, it is a kind of supernatural force that compels a person to reciprocate. Mauss here reported a concept called *hau* which is a spirit of a thing or gift. Passing on a gift will also pass the spirit, and having a gift means to have the spirit as well. The Maori law therefore is a tie between spirits. This implies the exchange of gifts is the exchange of a part of self (Mauss, (1925)2014, p.14).

Moreover, this spirit is believed to have powers over human life. An unfair act of gift-giving will instigate negative consequences for the receiver. Although the full rules of what is considered to be fair are not clear, it is reasonable to suppose these ethics are endorsed by their metaphysical presupposition. This is evident when the exchange with tribal gods is taken into account. According to Mauss, the logic behind the gift-exchanging process mentioned above is also applicable to the relationship between human beings and gods in northeast Siberia and the Eskimos of west Alaska. The locals believe that things, animals, and nature have their own spirits. By giving these spirits and the gods gifts, they will return an abundance of riches (Mauss, (1925)2014, p.19).

A similar attitude to objects can also be found on Trobriand Island, in which the power of the spirit determines the sequence of the circulation of gifts: the essential object exchanged is *vaygu'a*, which functions as a monetary currency that can be exchanged for goods. But, unlike money, *vaygu'a* is not the same for everyone. For example, *solava* is a kind of *vaygu'a* mainly worn by women, and only worn by men

on special occasions. Moreover, many *vaygu'a* have their own names and even their own legends. It is depicted as having the capability to bring about exchange (Mauss, (1925)2014, p.29-33).

However, such explanations do not work either, not only because they are not convincing for those non-believers of their religions, but also because it closes the question again. In a sense, the spirit functions as an omnipotent factor that is *by definition* able to solve the question, namely, it is *by definition* non-material and able to compel reciprocation, which is nothing more than giving the supposed powerful factor a name.

Moreover, in a sense, the spiritual factor dissolves the aspect of voluntariness. Namely, if the natives reciprocate the gifts because of the foreseen punishments, how are natives' behaviours different from what Jeremy Bentham argues, namely, that human behaviours are governed by pleasure and pains under the name of principle of utility (Burns & Hart 1970; Schofield, P. (2006))? Such concern about punishments is evident as shown in Mauss's text, like Maori's explanation of *hau*:

I must give them to you because they are a *hau* of the *taonga* that you gave me. If I kept this other *taonga* for myself, serious harm might befall me, even death. (Mauss, (1925)2014, p.14)

In this sense, the spiritual factor actually shows a similarity, rather than difference, between the gift and the commodity economy: both are based on weighing benefits and damages. Such factor is not enough to answer Mauss's question and differentiate two kinds of economies.

## The difference between gift exchange and commodity economy:

Although a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the relationship between Bentham's principle of utility and the classic economic theories provides an angle to understand the difference between the gift and the commodity economies.

Hereof, it is helpful to highlight a difference between Bentham's position and John

Mill's idea of 'economic man': if, for the former, the principle of utility is always the case, for Mill this 'economic man' is a supposed subject in the economic activities, it is merely about a certain way in which everyone *ideally should* behave in certain situations (Bentham, (1970)2010; Dzionek-Kozłowska, 2017; Schofield, 2006). Thus, there is a gap between what is in reality and what is supposed to be. From this perspective, compared with the commodity economy, the gift economy lacks a kind of supposed organisation in the deposition of things, which precludes Baudrillard's concept of the symbolic exchange.

This is evident in Mauss's own observations. For him, there are at least three intersected aspects that act as distinguishing features between the two kinds of economy: 1) the supposed subjectivity of exchangers; 2) the relationship between things, and between a thing and an exchanger; 3) the relationship built by the exchanges.

First of all, there is no 'pure economic relationship' between human individuals in a *potlach*. Namely, economic transactions in a market presupposes the human subject as an actor, but in *potlatch* there is no such fixed 'subject'. To understand this, it is good to draw on Micheal Callon's understanding of market: as Callon (1998) said, 'the market implies an organisation' (p.3). This means making a deal with someone in a market implies that both sides will follow certain rules or laws, which presupposes that both sides can understand what those rules are and have the capability to fulfil them. By contrast, the gift exchange includes the exchanges with gods and the dead ancestors who cannot be supposed to be at the equal position with the living natives and need to follow shared laws with the lived individuals (Mauss, (1925)2014, pp.18-20).

Put another way, the communications between the human individual and a spirit are demonstrated, for example, by William H. Davenport (1988) based on his research in the Solomon Islands. As Davenport argues, the objects used in rituals have undergone a process of mystification in which aesthetical factor plays a central role. Making an object beautiful is an essential condition to make a secular thing become sacred. Through this process, a spiritual value is added to the object, so that this object can be used for rituals. The object could already have economic value, of course. Therefore 'these ritual events are occasions on which two kinds of values, economic and spiritual, are fused' (p.108). In this sense, the pure economic relationship cannot involve all factors valued by human beings, which seems a feature crossing cultures.

Secondly, compared with market transactions, the gift exchange is not clear-cut. According to Mauss, in order to attain prestige, the gifts that are reciprocated are usually more than the original gift-giver received – the objects are appropriated based on a sense of symbolic function. Furthermore, the value of things exchanged is not always calculable, sometimes even individuals are exchanged. For example, in Samoa: ‘the child, belonging to the mother’s side, is the channel through which the goods of the maternal kin are exchanged against those of the paternal kin’ (Mauss, (1925)2014, p.12). By contrast, a fair trade usually means both sides think the object has been exchanged for the right price. In a sense, as Gregory (1982, p.45) noted, the economy in a market builds a relationship between commodities, whilst the gift exchange, when it happens between two individuals, builds that between two subjects.

The second aspect seems contradicted with the first, considering the first suggests there is no ‘fixed subject’ whilst the second suggests there is a relationship built between subjects. However, this contradiction does not exist, and the third aspect in Mauss’s observation of the gift exchange explains this: due to the gift and individuals are not separated, such relationships are built based on the debt. Namely, by receiving a gift from others, an individual holds a part of the gift-giver, and therefore owed to the giver. By contrast, in a market, a finished transaction could mean a finish of relationship as well. So, there is no contradiction between the first and the second aspects, because the subject which does not exist in *pottlatch* refers to the subject in economic relations, like an economic man, whilst the subject whose relationship built by gift-exchanges refers to a real individual who does not necessarily build the economic relationship with others.

Of course, Mauss observed that the rule of gift exchange and market-exchange are not completely separated in modern society. The obligation to reciprocate more is also shown in modern life, like ‘the round of drinks’ (Mauss, (1925)2014, p.84). As Douglas & Isherwood (2002) argue, the relationship between goods can be treated as a system of information of social relationships, in which consumption should be treated as a process of consumers’ act of making sense of the worlds. Consumption, they argue, should be defined as ‘a use of material possessions that is beyond commerce and free within the law’ (p.37). It means consumption occurs between trades in a market and legal obligations, and the consumption is a demonstration of a consumer’s will of disposition of goods. By being used and arranged in certain way, a good is granted meanings and senses from consumers. The arrangement of goods is

therefore about how meanings embodied in goods are correlated. The conflict between the morality of gift exchange and trades is somehow reconciled in the consumptions of goods.

Thus, the difference between gift-exchange and commodity economy is key to Baudrillard's concern because gift-exchange introduce a dimension of inequality. Equal relationships cannot be taken for granted because it is relied on the existence of law.

## The gift exchange as the starting point

As it can be seen, although Mauss's question has not been answered completely, it would be safe to conclude that, the difference between the gift economy and the commodity economy lies in their relationship to the rule. If the latter is about the exchanges based on the given rules or laws, the former is a process of *defining* the rules/laws through defining the position of individuals. In both economies, the question of 'who you are' is intimately linked with the question 'how you distribute and dispose of things', but the gift economy seems more fundamental than the commodity economy. This difference, we will see, becomes an essential source used by Jean Baudrillard to argue for an alternative social system to capitalism, but, paradoxically, his arguments are exactly based on such difference is not sustainable.

## Levi-Strauss's view of Mauss

Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss argues, in his Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss ((1987)2014), that Mauss's explanation is insufficient for non-followers of Māori religion to understand where the feeling of obligation in a gift-exchange comes from. He then tries to resolve this by presupposing a symbolic structure operating at an unconscious level: the *mana* and *hau* are not like physical entities or laws and do not take effect on a physical level but belong to 'the order of thinking'. This is the key step in Levi-Strauss's review; it suggests an understanding of *mana/hau* can be reached through epistemology and linguistics rather than through the concept of entity: if both giving/receiving and buying/selling can be described by one word, this is probably

because the *mana/hau* refers to something that can originally be the synthesis of these opposite sides, rather than because *mana/hau* is antithetical in itself (Levi-Strauss, 1987).

However, if the *mana/hau* belong to the order of thinking, how can thinking exist without antithesis, considering thinking is about operations of signs, and signs can only exist by being opposed to other signs? The answer is the concept of a 'floating signifier'. Similar to Saussure's ((1916) 2013) structural linguistics, Levi-Strauss supposes that a language as a system of signifiers can only emerge at once, because it is a synchronic system, whilst the exploration of the world is a diachronic progression. For example, in the English language, we can create a word that is related to other words even if it does not have meaning: after 'apple', there could be 'bpple', 'cpple', 'dpple' and so on. When English words are decided (no matter by who) by combining 26 letters of the alphabet, all possible combinations are determined. Some combinations will have a meaning, but the possibility of the combinations precedes the meaning. In a sense, acquiring knowledge is the process for a society to make signifiers match the signified.

Thus, a tension emerges: there are always some signifiers that do not have a signified, and some types of signified (e.g., feelings and phenomena) cannot have adequate signifiers because getting a matched signifier also means to have a position in the network of signifiers. If every signifier has relations with other signifiers, having a position in the network of signifiers means to have relations with other signifiers too. An example would be getting marriage: if I marry a woman, I not only become her husband, but also get fixed relationship with her parents and brothers. Usually, marriage is possible only when most family members agree from both sides. Similarly, there are some excess signifiers and types of signified, when the signified cannot be described or articulated by a known relationship in a group of signifiers, and some known relationships which a signifier connects with others cannot find a thing to match in real world. The 'floating signifiers' are those signifiers that do not have specific types of signified.

The significance of the floating signifier lies in signifying something unknown, mythical, and contradictory and a sense of totality. In a sense, if making a signifier corresponds to a signified can be thought of as a process of separating, classifying things, then the floating signifier refers to the thing that cannot be separated and unclassified.

But how? And why is it related to totality? Hereof, the characteristic of being uncategorised and unable to find the match signified makes Levi-Strauss link the concept of *mana* as a floating signifier to Jakobson's zero phoneme: as a zero phoneme, *mana* has 'zero symbol value'. It is zero not because it does not exist but is absent from distinctive and constant characteristics to other signs (Jakobson & Lotz, 1949). It is like the white noise which, from one perspective, contains many different sounds, but from another, more common, perspective that it is treated as meaningless background. Similarly, a floating signifier, due to it does not refers to specified and classified signified, leaves the room for unclassified signified (things or meanings) which has to be treated as contradictory in nature from the perspective of the signifier system. It is thus connected to totality because it implies an unclassified state of the signified from which the classified signified originates. This makes the floating signifier function as the foundation of the whole signifier system, just like the white light seems the foundation of all other coloured lights, and the white noise seems the foundation of all sounds.

The power of *mana/hua* lies in the factor of totality. In Levi-Strauss' reading, indigenous people presuppose a sense of totality. What a gift-exchange brings about is the 'symbolic thought' which Levi-Strauss refers to as a sense of totality or continuity in different or even contradictory things. But more importantly, it is not *hau/mana* that joins contradictory or separated parts together or makes an individual obligated to reciprocate. Rather, it is based on a reflection of the process of giving and receiving as a whole:

It has to be admitted that, like *hau*, *mana* is no more than the subjective reflection of the need to supply an unperceived totality. Exchange is not a complex edifice built on the obligation of giving, receiving, and returning, with the help of some emotional-mystical cement. It is a synthesis immediately given to, and given by, symbolic thought, which, in exchange as in any other form of communication, surmounts the contradiction inherent in it, that is the contradiction of perceiving things as elements of dialogue, in respect of self and others simultaneously, and destined by nature to pass from the one to the other (Levi-Strauss, 1987, pp.58-59).

Namely, it is not *mana* and *hau* that have the power to make individuals reciprocate

gifts, but individuals have named the idea of the circulation of gifts, including the feeling of obligation to return the favour, and the connection between giving and receiving, as *mana*. *Hau/mana* is moving with circulation, as if it pushes the circulation of things.

As Siegel (2013) points out, Levi-Strauss's argument sophisticatedly gets rid of the question of an individual's obligation to reciprocate by presupposing the totality. But, to return to the question of the function of *hau*, Levi-Strauss also explains nothing: if giving and receiving can be treated as a whole, this 'wholeness' or 'totality' should be also the case in every commodity exchange. For Baudrillard, this impotence of explanation lies in Levi-Strauss' hope to using the structure to ride on the symbolic exchange:

'The dualistic form with which Lévi-Strauss would like to grace primitive societies is only ever our structural logic, our own code. Indeed, it is the very structure of our domination of 'archaic' societies. Lévi-Strauss is kind enough to slip this to them in the form of the mental structures common to the human race. So they will be all the better prepared to receive the baptism of the West (Baudrillard, 1993, note 7, p86).'

In this sense, the foaling signifier, as a signifier which does not find its signified yet (Baudrillard, 1993, p21), is nothing more than the residue indicating where the binary logic does not work.

## George Bataille and the idea of waste

Compared with Levi-Strauss's idea of totality, George Bataille's view of waste and expenditure provides a more concrete reason for the obligation, which is also another helpful reference for understanding Baudrillard. According to Hollier (2013), Bataille writes *The Notion of Expenditure* (1933) after reading *The Gift*, although his idea of expenditure is not a *potlatch* because there is no reciprocating action<sup>4</sup>. Overall, Bataille's pivot logic is a top-down structure: The sun is the model which Bataille use to explain his 'expenditure': there is no so-call 'reciprocate' to the sun from human

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<sup>4</sup> That is, the sun is the model which Bataille use to explain his 'expenditure': there is no so-call 'reciprocate' to the sun from human beings.

beings, but the whole eco-system on earth takes energies from the sun in sequence (from plants to animals, roughly speaking). As William Pawlett (2007) notes, Bataille identifies the fundamental issue of human consumption, not as having too little energies, but as having too much of it, and therefore the key question is how to get rid of them.

Hereof, three points need to be explained here:

Firstly, the opening points of Bataille's argument precludes those of Baudrillard in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981): the concept of utility is rootless; there is nothing that can provide a referent to help us to define what is useful. Similar to Baudrillard, Bataille also draws on Mauss' discussion of *potlatch*. Contrary to Baudrillard, Bataille's argument is not supported by a reading which deconstructs the concept of usefulness by signs but appeals to his observation on personal experience: 'It is constantly necessary to return, in the most unjustifiable way, to principles that one would like to situate beyond utility and pleasure' (Bataille & Stoekl, 1985, p.116). That is, the concept of utility and pleasure can only be defined by some principles beyond them, on which these concepts can be based. However, these principles, therefore, are themselves rootless because that is already presupposed, like a god or innate good nature in everyone; that is at the boundary of our knowledge. But on the other hand, this also implies that there always seems to be something beyond the dimension of utility, which means life cannot be understood and organised as an aim-driven procedure, rather, conservation has meaning only when it is for expenditure.

Secondly, by referencing Mauss's view, Bataille also thinks the sumptuary consumption is noble. Bataille appears to define this from the function (or role) which the act of consumption plays in society: sumptuary consumption is noble because it is more powerful, and the bourgeoisie's profit is actually based on the sumptuary consumption of the noble classes. Namely, it is the competition between persons within noble classes that decides what social structure is followed by all others. The bourgeoisie believes their capability stems from their 'habit of accumulation' (Bataille & Stoekl, 1985, p.125), but this can only be possible after the social structure is decided and maintained. A vivid example can be found in international relations: it is America today that makes and maintain the rules concerning global issues, the 'fair trade' is only the case when no one challenges America's leading position. It is for this

reason that Bataille thinks upper class ideology is a response to the real challenge in *potlatch*: their dominance is supported by their refusal to join the *potlatch-like* relationship and avoid the obligation of expenditure because accumulation can only be possible when a person takes without expenditure. Therefore, there are two different ethics: whilst the noble class tend to degrade rivals based on the obligation of expenditure, the bourgeoisie tends to forge an ideology of equality to avoid this obligation.

Thirdly, the distinction between utility and unproductive expenditure for Bataille is clear, this is different from Baudrillard's view because, for Baudrillard, the symbolic exchange is a continual process like Mauss's interpretation of *potlatch* (which will be explained later). Perhaps, for this reason, there is still a concept of symbolic value in Bataille's text. For him, consumption involves two parts: one is for necessary need, the other is for unproductive expenditure. Luxury consumption, like war and *potlatch*, is an expenditure too, according to Bataille. Bataille provides four examples of unproductive expenditure: 1) jewels; 2) cults; 3) competitive games; 4) artistic production. The concept of symbolic value appears in his description of jewels:

This fact must be seen in relation to the symbolic value of jewels, universal in psychoanalysis. When in a dream a diamond signifies excrement, it is not only a question of association by contrast; in the unconscious, jewels, like excrement, are cursed matter that flows from a wound: they are a part of oneself destined for open sacrifice (they serve, in fact, as sumptuous gifts charged with sexual love). (Bataille & Stoekl, 1985, p.119)

The background to this statement is the connection between jewels, money, and excrement discussed by Freud. In short, excrement is the first thing that is an infant's body excretes and can be detached from this body. Their narcissism linked with the body is therefore also related to excrement:

Defecation affords the first occasion on which the child must decide between a narcissistic and an object-loving attitude. He either parts obediently with his faeces, 'sacrifices' them to his love, or else retains them for purposes of auto-erotic satisfaction and later as a means of asserting his own will. (Freud, 1917, SE17, p.130)

The context here is about the symbolic language of dreams in Freud's discussion of substitutive relations between baby, penis, money, and faeces. The central idea is how biological parts or excrement get meanings through and within social relations. Bataille does not dive into discussions of how such symbolic value is made but stresses the sacrificial dimension in the deposition of things. But, in order to process this sacrifice, there must be a thing that has symbolic value, and therefore the symbolic value must be produced first. Here, Bataille is talking about the value which is consumed rather than created by sacrifices.

Another example is gambling, also mentioned by Baudrillard. In gambling, the money is spent as a risk. Compared with salaries gained from work, gamblers' wealth is at risk of loss and therefore leads to a kind of intensive experience that is linked to 'the danger of death (Bataille & Stoekl, 1985, p.119)'. It seems Bataille even thinks this experience is the object of 'unconscious attraction' (Bataille & Stoekl, 1985, p.119). Moreover, gambling is a distribution of wealth, which is a charge of gamblers' passion in the competition with loss of money. Therefore, gambling functions as a *potlatch*, which provides riches for competitions. As to the gambling, there is a key statement in Bataille's text:

As a game, potlatch is the opposite of a principle of conservation: it puts an end to the stability of fortunes as it existed within the totemic economy, where possession was hereditary. An activity of excessive exchange replaced heredity (as source of possession) with a kind of deliriously formed ritual poker. But the players can never retire from the game, their fortunes made; they remain at the mercy of provocation. At no time does a fortune serve to *shelter its owner from need*. On the contrary, it functionally remains – as does its possessor – at the mercy of a need for limitless loss, which exists endemically in a social group. (Bataille & Stoekl, 1985, pp.122-123., italic original).

This is linked to Baudrillard's discussion (Baudrillard & Levin, 1981, p.117, note 4), in which Baudrillard argues that wager money must be returned to the wager to pay this money into a gambling again. Baudrillard's view will be discussed later. However,

Bataille also does not provide a clear reason why 'the mercy of provocation' can always work, and why this provocation is rather a tendency of wanting more, which is in line with the capitalists' wish for investment, instead of the tendency of loss.

As the later work, Bataille's standpoint in *The Accursed Share* ((1967)1991) is almost the same as in *The Notion of Expenditure*. Namely, the loss and expenditure is more foundational than production and conservation. A key difference lies in a metaphysical presupposition provided by Bataille to support this argument, by which Bataille shifts the paradigm of political economy: the adequate approach to study economy should be to start the analysis by viewing the system as a whole.

Bataille proposes that the economic system should not be studied separately like another type of science, like physics or engineering. It would be common sense that economic activities are part of the universe we live in and cannot be separated from all phenomena in the world. What is important here is a shift of paradigm: when things are studied separately, it potentially means researchers believe the collective movement of a system or phenomena is determined by factors at a micro-level. That is, every factor has its own properties and moves independently, and the status of a system is the consequence of interaction among these factors governed by certain natural laws. This perspective prevails in natural science (the movement of atoms determines the properties of things), which is also widely applied in social science.

By contrast, Bataille's approach seems closer to a kind of teleology: the movement of the universe is presupposed, and it has its own end. Human beings can only appropriate the energy from this universe like taking water from a river. This presupposition has two implications: firstly, human beings' activities are largely determined by the movement of the universe, as our construction of a city is largely determined by geographical conditions. In this sense, individuals are a side-effect of the movement of the universe and will reproduce to occupy a space wherever they can, like weeds on the ground. Secondly, there is always excess energy for all living organisms, and this excess energy must be spent wastefully. Therefore, there must always be excess and the utility on which rational economy is based is opposite to the waste, although the development of technology is for human beings to extend the capability of appropriating energy.

The act of eating, death and reproduction are three natural forms of waste: plants absorb energy from the sun, herbivores eat plants, and carnivores eat other animals. At each level, the consumable energy decreases, so the food chain in the natural world

is a consumption chain as well. Because of this, the death of living organisms brought about by eating is a dissipation of energy too, not only without any return to the ecosystem but also to make room for the new-borns who will be killed again. Sexual intercourse, too, is a luxury expenditure of energy, because sexual reproduction is a 'detour' (Bataille, 1991, p.35) in terms of growth because it is first of all a process of giving energy to another one. Besides, sexual reproduction is an intensified moment of energy consumption. This echoes his view on wagers.

## An unfinished circulation:

For Baudrillard, Bataille's conceptualisation of excess explains the foundation of the rules but misses the aspect of circulation. That is why, from Baudrillard's model of incessant circulation of the symbolic exchange, Bataille's idea of sacrificial expenditure is still to 'seek the security of an ideally prodigious nature, as opposed to the economists' ideally circulating nature' (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.168). Namely, if there is only an incessant circulation, there is no need to suppose an ultimate source, like the sun or the universe, to be located at the top of a system and define the structure.

## ***Potlatch as a starting point***

Although there are also many other discussions about Mauss's work which cannot be discussed fully.(Adloff, 2017; Derrida, 2017; Godelier, 1999; Henaff, 2003; James & Allen, 1998; MacCormack, 1982; Mallard, 2011; Olson, 2002; Panoff, 1970; Weiner, 1992), the central question Baudrillard faced would be clear: This is about a tension between the gift/gratuitousness and the law/: when Mauss tried to explain the rules in the gift exchanges between individuals, the conclusion he made was to conceptualise the circulation of gifts as a whole. When Levi-Strauss drew on structural linguistics, the concept of the floating-signifier referred to something unassimilable for the structure of signifiers. Bataille's idea of general economy essentially about the gratuitousness conditions the laws.

In the following chapters, we will see that the questions about rule/law/'should' are always linked with the question 'what is outside/beyond the rule/law/'should''.

## Baudrillard's concept of sign value

The concept of sign value was already present in Baudrillard's first book, *The System of Objects* (Baudrillard, 2006). Like Saussure's view on the value of a signifier in a language, Baudrillard argues that the sign value of a commodity is determined by its relationship to other objects. The function of things is not for usage, but for integrating into the system; consumption does not mean we make use of things to satisfy our need: furniture and colours are used for constructing a certain atmosphere which is not the tone of a place, but 'the systematic cultural connotation at the level of objects (Baudrillard, 2006, p47)'. Thus, they function as signs to denote cultural meaning. Antiques, similarly, are for signifying a kind of historicalness, or a trace of the unique/irreproducible moment of creation.

The meaning and relative relation among objects is determined by code. The code here means 'a differential structure that establishes the social relation, and not the subject as such' (Baudrillard & Levin, 1981, p.75). Namely, it is a set of rules in a culture that defines the position and relative value of every object, or even brands. This is not a clear and rigid law, but more like a rough understanding. For example, British residents would regard Tesco and Sainsbury's as having a similar rank among UK supermarkets; they are superior to Aldi and Iceland but not as good as M&S and Waitrose. These supermarkets could be compared in terms of concrete data, but it is not always the case that data matters. It could be that one item from Waitrose is not necessarily better than one from Tesco, but it is perceived to be better because of the image of Waitrose as a good-quality supermarket and the domain of the middle classes. This ranking system represents an obscure sense of hierarchy, and there is always something like this in people's minds. In short, Baudrillard's analysis on the system of objects is actually the system of values represented by objects. His definition of consumption, therefore, is 'systematic manipulation of signs' (Baudrillard, (1968) 1996, p.218).

In *Consumer Society*, Baudrillard continues his analysis of consumption through semiotic perspective:

[social logic of consumption] is a logic not of satisfaction, but of the production and manipulation of social signifiers.... consumption here is a system of exchange, and the equivalent of a language. (Baudrillard, (1970) 1998, p.61)

In this volume, he continues the argument by connecting the consumption of sign-value with his critique on need and affluence: our need for consumption cannot be relieved by growth because it is the system of commodities, rather than a sole commodity that is consumed. What the order of production produces is not a sole need for the certain product. Rather, it is the system of the need for a system of objects that is produced. Again, objects in the system function as the sign of social status, and a concrete commodity is arbitrary at this level. Consequently, commodities are portrayed by advertising, shop windows, and brand awareness as a coherent and indissociable set, which, Baudrillard thinks, become 'a chain of signifiers' ((1970) 1998, p.27). These are bait to lure the consumer into wanting to purchase as much as they can. These commodities constitute a discourse that denotes the so-called 'super-objects'.

Here, Baudrillard makes a parallel between needs for objects and hysterical symptoms: from his reading on psychoanalysis, the relationship between hysterics symptoms and organs is arbitrary, unlike organ diseases where the symptoms are caused by the organ in question. Hysterics symptoms could be treated as a process in which organs function as signifiers to construct a discourse. Similarly, objects function as signs, they are not utilised for needs (which Baudrillard refers to as rational pursuit for the object as finality), but for desire and unconscious social logic. This can be described as Lacanian desire, although Baudrillard does not clearly define his definition of desire as Lacanian.

## **Baudrillard's criticism of Marx**

Baudrillard's criticism of Marxism emerges from his following three books: *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1981), *The Mirror of Production* (1975), and *Symbolic Exchange and Death* ((1976)1993). The first two books are still related to sign value but pay less attention to consumption. They provide the clearest explanation of his view on the relation between the sign value, use-value, exchange-value. The third book approaches this through the concept of death. The central

argument of Baudrillard criticises a production-based way of understanding human nature. Baudrillard reached this conclusion by considering through three intercorrelated facets: 1) waste; 2) the symbolic exchange and its relation to the sign value; and 3) death.

## The function of waste

Overall, Baudrillard's criticism is influenced by Bataille and Nietzsche. Bataille's view, in Baudrillard's reading, is based on a Nietzschean presupposition that human beings have excessive energy and should expend this: 'A living thing wants above all to discharge its force: 'preservation' is only a consequence of this....; the rule is much rather the struggle for power, the ambition to have 'more' and 'better' and 'quicker' and 'more often'" (Nietzsche cited by Baudrillard, (1970)1998, p.45). In this sense, expenditure and destruction are treated as more fundamental than production. This understanding of human nature structures Baudrillard's arguments: in *Consumer Society*, he argues that growth will not resolve inequality as some economists believe, and the waste in a society cannot be removed, because 'it is in the consumption of a surplus, of superfluity that individual – and society – feel not merely that they exist, but that they are alive' ((1970) 1998, p.44). He argues, then, that it is naïve to believe that economic growth will automatically make the rich donate money to the poor or shorten employees' working time simply because we have enough goods.

In this text, Baudrillard's definition of waste is simply the consumption of things that are beyond the need for survival. This argument implies a kind of signifying process because it is not by possessing but by wasting that prestige and affluence are signified and meanings are created. The production of the whole society, he argues, is driven by waste. This is, as we can see, different from Bataille's idea of the sacrifice of symbolic value. Baudrillard's idea of the meaning of life was developed in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Following the structural linguistics movement, Baudrillard also connected social norms and language because both of them precede individuals. Therefore, the dimension of meaning already exists at least simultaneously, if not precedingly, when an individual is born. We are born into a system of signs which is full of norms. This view legitimises Baudrillard to argue that social norms organise individuals' lives and encourage them to live meaningfully,

because 'one-for-the other exist before one and the other exist for themselves (Baudrillard & Levin, 1981, p.74)'. Individual need, in this sense, is no longer more fundamental than needs created by the social environment. Consequently, 'even before survival has been assured, every group or individual experiences a vital pressure to produce themselves meaningfully in a system of exchange and relationship' (Baudrillard & Levin, 1981, p.74).

## **The symbolic exchange, sign value, and the general theory of value**

Throughout Baudrillard's arguments at this stage, the symbolic exchange functions as the concept binds most of his other concepts. Especially in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* and *The Mirror of Production*, his central concern is to criticise Marxism and the ideology of political economy rather than the consumption, in which the symbolic exchange becomes the pivot connecting the sign value, use-value, exchange-value. This concept refers to 'the uninterrupted cycle of giving and receiving, which, in primitive exchange, includes the consumption of the 'surplus' and deliberate anti-production (Baudrillard, 1975, p.143).

This concept, again, hails from anthropological research, especially Mauss's *The Gift*. Baudrillard's version of the nature of the symbolic exchange is, however, controversial. In Mauss's text, the symbolic exchange is a metaphysical presupposition because the tribes' explanation of *hau* is based on their religion. However, as Pawlett (2007) argues, the symbolic exchange is not a metaphysical concept in Baudrillard's doctrine, at least not like that of the Māori. This will be clearer in the next chapter which will focus on concepts following Baudrillard's abandonment of the concept of symbolic exchange. For now, the aforementioned definition should be sufficient for following paragraphs to explain his general theory of sign value and criticism of Marx. In essence, what Baudrillard propose is a dimension or a possibility of unclassified states, like the *hau* as a floating signifier in Levi-Strauss' understanding and 'radical need' in Heller's reading of Marx. It therefore contains everything and is the foundation of a system.

Based on the idea of the symbolic exchange, Baudrillard provides a general theory of sign value in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, which aims to show the homology of different forms of values. This theory includes a set of analogies between them:

Firstly, the sign value is to the symbolic exchange what the exchange-value is to use-value. As Marx also argued, there is a reduction from use-value to exchange-value: the different utility of things is reduced into the system of values in markets based on the principle of equivalence, so that the usefulness of the thing is represented by its price. By the same token, the sign-value is the reduction of symbolic exchange into the system of the sign. The key difference between the symbolic exchange and sign value lies in its relationship with people: it is reasonable to think a gift also functions as a sign and represents a social relationship, but it represents a concrete relationship between specific individuals, groups, or even between a god and a human being. In contrast, an object or a commodity as a sign represents a social relationship by its difference to another object. A 'sign object' only embodies a fixed relationship by the difference between objects according to a code. For example, when consumers buy some pork belly from M&S, they never built any personal relationship with Marks or/and Spencer, nor do they receive any part of their 'soul' or 'spirit' as part of the transaction. These two processes are treated as a reduction, because the former contains more affluent content which is squeezed when it is represented by another system: one thing could be treated as useful in many different senses, and even has some unpredicted potential, but this is not shown in its price. Similarly, a personal relationship built by gift exchange between individuals does not merely show the gifts they exchange are equally good (Baudrillard & Levin, 1981).

Secondly, there is also a reduction from the sign value to the exchange-value, as well as from symbolic exchange to the use-value: the social prestige (sign value) could bring about the concrete economic benefit (exchange-value), but usually it implies more than that. The significance of a gift is also more than its utility. Clearly, the symbolic exchange contains the most affluent content of social relationships, whatever form of value is merely part of its function. Thus, Baudrillard stresses that there is no symbolic exchange-value, only the symbolic exchange: when we say 'the value' of something, it implies we apply a system of valorisation to it, and thus a reduction (Baudrillard & Levin, 1981).

## Death and Baudrillard's criticism of Marx

There are three interconnected points in Baudrillard's attitude to Marx's political economy. Firstly, use value is not the foundation of a commodity; secondly, everything is governed by code; thirdly, the central logic of capitalism lies in production rather than exploitation of labours.

The general theory of value is like an extension of Marxist critique of commodity, but just because there is a reductive relation between exchange-value and use-value does not mean the use-value of a commodity is still the foundation of its exchange-value. On the contrary, Baudrillard states that 'use-value and needs are only an effect of exchange-value' (Baudrillard & Levin, 1981, p.137), just as 'signified (and referent) are only effects of the signifier' (Baudrillard & Levin, 1981, p.137). Namely, signifiers and exchange-value are more fundamental than signified and use-value. The root of this standpoint had already emerged in his discussion on waste. If expenditure is more important than survival, it seems reasonable to think there is no concrete thing necessarily needed. Everything needed is based on an explanation<sup>5</sup> of why things are needed. If it is adequate to think every individual is thrown into an existing social norm embodied in a language, nothing needed by an individual is not determined by the norm, including why not to commit suicide. In this sense, the use-value should not be treated as an innate factor of the commodity, because it is not an innate factor of anything at all.

In *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, Baudrillard's argument was developed by discussing the concept of ideology. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* ((1895)1992), Marx argues that the progression of history includes 'the material transformation of the economic conditions of production ((1895)1992, p426)' and 'ideological forms ((1895)1992, p426)' including legal, political, religious, and art. The former is based on natural science, and the latter is based on human beings' understanding and ideas on the material condition (Marx, Livingstone, et al., 1992). But Baudrillard thinks this definition of ideology makes it only refer to 'the content of thought' (Baudrillard & Levin, 1981, p.144) which is merely at the signified level of the culture, whilst the key is the form of thought, which lies in the process of forming these ideas. He proposed that 'ideology seizes all production, material or

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<sup>5</sup> 'explanation', clearly, is about constructing an idea through signs.

symbolic, in the same process of abstraction, reduction, general equivalence and exploitation' (Baudrillard & Levin, 1981, p.146). That is to say, the ideology functions as the structure of reduction, rather than the products of the reduction (e.g., philosophy, art, and religion). Thus, it is not adequate to say the exchange-value stems from the reduction of sign value or use-value. Rather, all three types of value simultaneously stem from the reduction of the symbolic exchange, based on ideologies.

If we can assume the analogy between signifier/signified and exchange-value/use-value, it is clear that the correspondence between the exchange-value and the use-value is also governed by a law of signification, like that between signifier and signified. This law of signification is the aforementioned code. If, in *The system of Objects*, code is about the relations of signs, in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, by overturning the fundamental position of need and life, the production of commodities and the production of signs converge to be the same process. There is no so-called personal need for an object because both object and subject are constructed by code.

The argument is developed further in *The Mirror of Production* (1975), in which Baudrillard claims that Marx's criticism on capitalism and political economy are homogeneous, the difference between them merely is that Marxism seeks to liberate human labour from alienation, whilst capitalism seeks to control and utilise it.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), Marx proposes that there are three stages of capitalism: firstly, only the surplus products are exchanged; secondly, with the development of industry productivity, all products are involved on the market; thirdly, not only products of industrial production but also some human attributes such as love, virtue and knowledge will be alienated for exchange. For Marx, the third stage is merely an extension of the first and second one. In Marx's understanding, productivity is the foundation of a society, which determines the productive relations. Culture and knowledge are the superstructures which are determined by productive relations. So, it is natural for him to imagine that, in the near future, people's way of treating their bodies, ideas and personal relationships will be influenced by capitalism; that is, to treat these as their personal properties which can/should be utilised for profit.

However, Baudrillard thinks the third one is a mutation. Knowledge, culture, and personal relationships are not material products, but a set of signs containing meanings. As aforementioned, this kind of meaning is determined by the code. Then,

if what is produced is useful and meaningful things, the central logic of production must be foremost about the sign of usefulness or meaningfulness, only after this the relevant things could come into existence. Consequently, in the third stage, the production is dominated by code, and the production is that of difference:

...the signified and the referent are not abolished to the sole profit of the play of signifiers, of a generalised formalisation in which the code no longer refers back to any subjective or objective 'reality', but to its own logic. The signifier becomes its own referent and the use-value of the sign disappears to the benefit of its communication and exchange-value alone. The sign no longer designates anything at all. (Baudrillard, 1975, pp.127-128)

For example, although Apple launches a new iPhone every year, and always claims there are some new features added to the design, it does not necessarily mean consumers already had needs for these new features. But, clearly, by launching the new iPhone, the new one and the old one become a pair of opposition, which could be used to signify another opposition, like rich and poor, or geek and non-geek. The difference between them does not directly connect to any concrete need, but just functions as different letters in words, so that it can be differentiated and utilised as a signifier. Consequently, the nature of production lies in making a new difference, and therefore construct new needs. This is why, in *The System of Objects* (1968), consumption is defined as the manipulation of signs. Although Marx, too, claims that some needs are socially created, what Baudrillard here tries to point out is the difference itself as the object of consumption.

Thus, for Baudrillard, the production-based social critical theories were doomed to fail. The real problem of capitalism does not lie in the exploitation of labour power, nor is there unfree labour needed to be freed, but in its endless production, because it is easy for industries to make new differences. If there is nothing new in technology, they can make changes in styles. If there is nothing new in styles, they can use old styles and label it as 'retro'. The consumption and production are merged, not in the sense that something is produced by the process of consumption, but in the sense that these two concepts are the effect of the capitalist exchange, so that 'in every way, exchange-value makes concrete production, concrete consumption, and concrete signification

appear only in distorted, abstract forms (Baudrillard, 1975, p.30)'. Consequently, the dialectic relationship between demand and supply no longer exists, and there is no internal dialectical contradiction which pushes the social structure to move forward. Baudrillard, therefore, believes Marx's critique cannot effectively shake capitalism. The concept of production functions as a mirror in which human beings construct and then identify an imaged self.

In everyday life, bodily experiences are undoubtedly imposing and irrefutable, so it is hard to imagine how they could be ideological. This was explained further in his theories on *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, in which Baudrillard's criticism of productivism achieve a summit. The overall point is that life and death are reversible as a symbolic exchange, whilst the Western culture – including dialectics, psychoanalysis, political economy, and modern science – is built on the repression of death. This will be revisited in the next chapter.

## **A discussion of counterarguments to Baudrillard**

In the following paragraphs, I will briefly review some discussions on Baudrillard's viewpoints, especially his criticism on Marx and capitalism, and provide a rudimentary discussion. The critiques of Baudrillard's view can be divided into three categories in terms of their approaches, although they are usually interconnected: 1) Baudrillard's reading of Marx; 2) the relationship among sign-value, use-value, and production; and 3) Baudrillard's relation to semiology.

### **On Baudrillard's view of Marx**

The foremost critique of Baudrillard is that his reading of Marx is too simplified. Douglas Kellner (1989) argues that Baudrillard's reading of Marx is questionable, because:

1) Marx's concept of need had already taken the social aspect into account. By drawing on Robert D'Amico's work, Kellner tries to argue that the concept of 'natural

need' does not imply a fixed need, but 'to the form of appearance of objects' (1989, p.35). That is, natural need could appear in the socially constructed form as well.

2) Kellner argues that Marx indeed noticed human needs will be developed by satisfactions and the development of productivity in *The German Ideology* and *Grundrisse*, which plays a central role in historical materialism.

3) Kellner thinks Marx's view in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, that private property will make people treat others as tools of satisfying their own need and try to make others dependent on self, foresaw Baudrillard's view on consumption, like the manipulation of signs for consumption. Thus, these three all argue that Baudrillard's socially constructed need is not a new understanding for Marx.

4) By drawing on Alvin Gouldner's book, *The Two Marxisms* (1980), Kellner argues that there are at least two kinds of Marxism. The one is 'scientific Marxism', the other is 'critical Marxism'. The scientific Marxism treat Marx's historical materialism as a kind of science, so, the change of social stage function as a natural law. This means the history of society will inevitably follow the trajectory Marx portrays and communism will be achieved sooner or later. By contrast, 'critical Marxism' is a perspective of critique, so less deterministic, or at least in a different way. So, Kellner argues that while Baudrillard's argument could be 'devastating' (1989, p.224) for scientific Marxism, it does not have the same power in relation to critical Marxism. That is, Baudrillard's readings and critique are based on an oversimplified version of Marxism.

Regarding historical materialism, Kellner admits that classic Marxism did not provide an adequate explanation on primitive society, because 'it is imperialistic and reductive to fit these societies into rigid Marxist categories and schema' (1989, p.47). However, he avoids providing a direct response to this aspect because this should be done by Marxist anthropologists. In his *Introduction for Baudrillard's Mirror of Production* (1975), Mark Poster also suggests that Baudrillard's approach is somewhat precarious. Indeed, a supposed universal theory means it is applicable to all society, but it is questionable for Baudrillard when Marx's doctrine and Marxism are applied to the primitive society. However, if there is indeed a rupture between the primitive and modern form of society, is it possible for modern scholars to explain this? This question is especially necessary to answer because, as Poster stresses, a theory is only intelligible when it is able to provide a continuous explanation of history. For this reason, he thinks Baudrillard's view is on a 'theoretical thin ice' (Poster, 1975,

p14). Due to this being presented as a translator's introduction, Poster does not develop his argument in great detail, probably because he was writing his viewpoint in an introduction to *The Mirror of Production*.

## Use-value and production

Another focus of critique is about use-value, production, and sign value. The central point is that use-value and production cannot be dismissed by sign value and code. Kellner (1989) tries to defend the significance and existence of use-value by appealing to fact. He argues that, although a need is not fixed, the commodities are still produced and consumed purposefully, and a person more or less senses how useful a thing is, so that they can determine by themselves the value of things against the price defined by markets. Moreover, he also suggests there is a consensus of basic need within each different age and society (this appears to be the same as Marx's understanding of necessary need), and people treat utility as the foremost reason for driving their consumption. Consequently, Kellner's view on people's sense of usefulness is very optimistic:

I believe that we can discover what will fill our various needs and develop our various potentials through critical scrutiny of our experience with commodities and consumption, combined with observation of other consumer practices. With effort, we can discern what we need to be healthy, happy and creative (or whatever we take our ultimate values to be) and what products or activities neither provide genuine satisfaction and well-being nor fulfil whatever goals and values we posit (1989, p.38)

Therefore, although he compromises that the definition of usefulness and use-value is obscure, Kellner insists there is a relatively objective criterion.

As to production, Kellner thinks that Baudrillard values the signification too much, and it is not every production that can be reduced to a reproduction of signs. This, in Keller's view, is rooted in capitalist fantasy – that everything can be precisely controlled and calculated based on abstracted forms and through formal rules. Thus, Baudrillard's view seems no more than a 'mirror of signification', in which he saw a

'cybernetic imaginary' (1989, p.51), and materiality will no longer play any role in social theory for Baudrillard. By contrast, Kellner argues that production still plays the central role in contemporary social life, more so than signification and the production of signs and meanings. Moreover, as aforementioned in the first point, Marx's own theory also involves cultural interactions; it means Marx's understanding of production also does not mean material production only but involves cultural (re-)production as well.

Similarly, Tony Smith (1990) also claims that biological needs cannot solely be substituted by sign-value, human needs must have the biological basis as well as being influenced by the social/cultural condition. However, he thinks the root of this question consists in Baudrillard's postmodernist position. That is, just because our view is formulated and constructed by signs does not mean we can never know any truth, including the truth of human needs. Smith connects Baudrillard's reading of the Watergate scandal to his general view on people's knowledge and media and argues that Baudrillard's view is that there is no truth if no one can know it. Smith thinks this implies a presupposition that 'a cognitive validity claim necessarily implies a claim to possess absolute truth' (1990., p281). Namely, an individual can perceive things in the right way without knowing the truth or right answer and, in this case, it is still reasonable for them to believe there is an objective truth that can and will be found. Another reason Smith uses to refute Baudrillard is philosopher Jürgen Habermas's general critique of postmodernism. According to Smith, Habermas argues that many postmodernist theorists fall into a self-referential paradox, and Baudrillard should be one of them. Seeing as this is not Smith's own argument, and Habermas' argument is related to a much bigger topic, this point will not be discussed further in this thesis.

Pär-ola Zander (2014) argues that Baudrillard's deconstruction of use-value lacks empirical support. This is because Baudrillard claims that 'there are no longer any exchange-value transactions untouched by sign-values. That begs for empirical evidence' (p.392). For Zander, however, transactions are not necessarily dominated by sign-value. Interestingly, Zander claims that this empirical evidence should be provided by Baudrillard himself, and he does not accept non-empirical explanations in support, because 'that is not the way Baudrillard frames the discussion' (2014, p.392.). However, Zander does not provide page numbers of this reading. Moreover, Zander also claims that Baudrillard's view on sign-value is far-fetched because if he is right, hard-up workers should be able to enjoy the consumption of sign-value, rather than lament their plight.

## Use and abuse of semiology

Clearly, all of these criticisms are related to Baudrillard's use of semiology in his theories. Kellner and Smith's view were mentioned in the last section. Both of them think the sign should be not treated with such universality. Zander (2014) argues that Baudrillard tends to use the concept of code to explain every aspect, so that they 'totalise the system of society' (p.393). Zander thinks this viewpoint will rule out any possibility of 'political strategy, including his own theoretical interventions' (2014, p.393). However, Zander does not explain what 'political strategy' refers to exactly. A more productive view is mentioned by Poster (1979), but he discusses this alongside media theory: Baudrillard almost takes semiology for granted and treats it as the basis of his concept of code, but the function of signs is not only about transmission in media, but also involves how subjects read, accept, and refuse signs. Poster thinks this is beyond Baudrillard's knowledge. However, in that essay, Poster mainly focuses on the relation between Baudrillard and Habermas, so he did not develop his discussion in detail.

James A. Fitchett & Michael Saren (1998) argue for another type of value, *Dasein* value, which can neither be assimilated into Baudrillard's terminology of sign-value, nor use-value. This argument is based on an investigation of visitors' experiences in museums. They sharply notice the difficulty of conceptualising the experiences of visiting museum in terms of consumption lies in defining the object of consumption, because the experiences cannot simply be gained by monetary exchanges, nor they can be simply attributed to sign-value, because a visitor are not necessarily aware of cultural and historical meanings of an object in a museum. For this reason, by drawing on Heidegger's famous concept, *Dasein*, they argue a visitor's live experiences of physical presence of things in a museum 'appear to be of value to the visitor' (ibid., p.327). In their interview, more than one visitor reported that they were interested in the lived experiences in the museum, a man claim that the difference is like 'looking at a woman in a movie and actually have one' (ibid., p.325), another visitor even suggests museums to allow visitor to touch, which could improve visitors' experiences. This value, for Fitchett and Saren, stems from 'the physical presence of the objects' (ibid., p.327).

Based on this, they also argue for 'sign-use value' and 'use-sign value'. The former refers to a situation in which the utility of a thing's functions as a sign, like the utility of an old thing in a museum signifying an old-fashioned lifestyle; the latter refers to using signs to refer to something, so that a sign can have use-value. In their case of a museum, objects can be used as signs to construct narratives, and therefore are signs in a discourse.

In contrast to Fitchett and Saren's argument for another form of value, Gary Genosko (1994) provides an insightful critique: alongside a fruitful review that contextualises Baudrillard within the debates of semiology and semiotics, Genosko sharply points out that Baudrillard mistakes exactly in the way criticised by himself. As this chapter has shown, the nature of Baudrillard's logic is to show a kind of weakness. As Genosko points out, 'The symbolic must remain as weak as possible in the face of those who wish to find a place and a function for it in a system' (1994, p.83). But Baudrillard nevertheless put 'ambivalence' as an 'affirmative weakness', which means such presupposition itself is a 'strong hypothesis' (ibid., p.88). The problem for this is that, such a position of affirmative weakness still needs certain power to maintain. The meaning of this will be clearer in the next chapter which provides a full review of Baudrillard's idea of reversibility. But in short, Genosko thinks that maintaining the least strength for showing affirmative weakness is the difficulty Baudrillard has to face.

Besides, Sean McQueen's *DELEUZE AND BAUDRILLARD: From Cyberpunk to Biopunk* (2016) provides a systematic comparison between Baudrillard and Deleuze approached through scientific fictions. It argues for a position called 'becoming Deleuzian' seemingly from critiques of scientific fiction, which prefer a Deleuzian reading of capitalism to Baudrillard's critique. This dissertation cannot examine McQueen's view considering it requires a detailed review of Deleuze's works, nor can it involve a discussion of scientific fictions. However, it would still be good to point a difference between McQueen's position and mine: whilst McQueen thinks 'Baudrillard's revelation is, at bottom, the modest conclusion that vulgar Marxism provides an insufficient account of contemporary capitalism' (p.23), I think Baudrillard's theory matters for all approaches which hope to make use of Marx's theory to put capitalism at an end. This concern of 'end' is probably not McQueen's interest when he still has more empathy with Deleuzian concept of desire. After all, McQueen's work is still relied on as the bar between 'bio' and 'cyber'. But whether this

bar can be 'burned', namely, whether the distinction between them can be eliminated, is an open question, I think.

## Discussion

Firstly, as to Kellner's view that Baudrillard's critique mainly focuses on 'scientific Marxism', I reserve my opinion, and I think its impact on other types of Marxism or marxist works requires further examination, because most Marxists probably share a dialectic approach and a kind of productivism that are rooted in Hegelian philosophy.

Secondly, Kellner's view on the relation between Marx and Baudrillard on the concept of need seems questionable, because his critique does not take Baudrillard's concept of sign-value into account accurately. Namely, Baudrillard's sign-value refers to the difference between signifiers rather than the signifier and the signified. This error is the case in all three groups of criticisms.

For instance, in Kellner's understanding, Baudrillard's central point is that:

'...both needs and uses are socially constructed, through a system of political economy that produce sign-values whereby objects acquire meanings or allure which seduce the consumer into purchasing commodities as objects of desire and prestige. (Kellner, 1989, p.34)

He adds that the notion of utility 'rationalise[s] and functionalise[s] an economic subject (1989, p.34). However, as this thesis has mentioned above, Baudrillard clearly states that his conception of sign-value is not just for the consumer's prestige. In particular, he clearly stresses that 'the finalities of prestige and distinction still corresponded to a traditional status of the sign.... Still referred back to what one could call the use-value of sign' (Baudrillard, 1975, p.127). That is, from Baudrillard's perspective, Kellner's reading is still the old way to conceptualise commodity. The so-called sign-value used by Kellner is no more than the use-value, and in this sense, we can say that showing off is to use a thing as a sign, so the concept of sign-value is meaningless.

By contrast, the sign-value which Baudrillard proposes is the relation between signifiers. That is, 'the signified and the referent are now abolished to the sole profit of the play of signifiers, of a generalised formalisation in which the code no longer refers back to any subjective or objective 'reality'' (Baudrillard, 1975, p.127). So, it is merely a relative relationship, and it is fundamentally at odds with the concept of use-value. For example, having leisure time is a way to show one's capability to be free from work (Veblen, 2009). The more leisure time an individual has, the higher status they might have. In this case, sign-value is only about how much leisure time an individual has. Whenever we start to talk about the individual's status based on their leisure time, it is about use-value. Namely, sign-value is merely about comparison at the level of signs (e.g., two hours a day of leisure time is more than one hour a day), but whenever the person uses this difference to show something, they deploy it to denote something outside the dimension of signs (e.g., 'I am better than you'). In this case, it is about the use-value of the difference between signs.

In this sense, Kellner's defence of use-value can be successful only when Baudrillard's conception of sign-value is abandoned completely. In Baudrillard's opinion, whatever use-value is attributed to a commodity, it is ideological; whatever consensus of basic need is reached by theorists, it is ideological; and whatever ideas about how and why life is worth living, they are ideological. Thus, there is an unsuturable rupture between Marx and Baudrillard in terms of use-value, sign-value, and need. In Marx's terminology, whatever kind of need (natural, socially constructed, necessary, luxury) an individual has, it is a linear way to conceptualise an individual's use of signs: the connection between a sign and its referent exists before the existence of the relations between signs. Consequently, like the individual's own biography, one's need has a start and an end point, which changes with the dynamic of subjectivity. However, Baudrillard's conception of sign-value is a non-linear dimension which endorses our concept of usefulness and refuses to naturalise all kinds of need. Clearly, this is intimately connected to the (post-) structuralism in France in the last century, which will not be discussed here. However, it is enough to state that Marx and Baudrillard discuss the question on a different level, and Kellner's challenge to Baudrillard does not work.

Thirdly, Smith's position shares similar problems, but there is also another to challenge his argument. Baudrillard's view on the case of the Watergate scandal and hyperreality is not the same as Smith understands, which means that Smith's

argument on the relation between truth and need does not work as well. Indeed, Baudrillard argues that, in the third-order simulacra, the connection between real and simulation is threatened, but this is not because no one can know the reality or truth, but because the simulation is real without an origin (Baudrillard & Poster, 1988). The simulation means 'an imaginary effect concealing that reality no more exists outside than inside the bounds of the artificial perimeter' (Baudrillard & Poster, 1988., p.172). Namely, it is a perfect performativity which removes the concept and significance of the gap between a simulated thing and the real thing. Baudrillard's own example is about illness. An individual could pretend to be ill by going to bed and resting, but they are simulating an illness if the symptoms are produced. That is, due to an illness being diagnosed through symptoms, the person has to be treated as ill when the symptoms can be produced. In this case, the question of whether they are really ill is meaningless.

In the case of Watergate, what Baudrillard was trying to say is that what Nixon did was not a scandal because it is in line with capitalist logic. The real scandal is that the Watergate event was constructed as a scandal and criticised from the perspective of a political morality as if that morality still functioned. By this criticism, the political morality is sustained so that capitalism is maintained under the veil of political morality again. Therefore, Baudrillard's analysis is not about whether we can know the truth of what Nixon did, but that the whole event is a process of forming a scandal so that there is no so-called truth that needs to be known outside what the media already covered.

Finally, if Baudrillard's approach is based on the presupposed universal influence of language and code, Zander's view is clearly questionable. Simply speaking, the condition of Baudrillard's argument is that we have to conceptualise subjective experience through language-like signs and there is always a type of code that connects them. Thus, the subject matter here is about an *a priori* factor in subjectivity, rather than *a posteriori* fact in society.

By the same token, Kellner's argument about semiology is also questionable. Even if Baudrillard places too much value on semiotics and signification, it is not because of an imaginary cybernetics management. Baudrillard's approach and cybernetics management indeed look similar but are not homogeneous. If the cybernetics management hopes to control a procedure via a computer's capability of calculating signs, Baudrillard nevertheless aims to show that we can never talk about

what is outside the dimension of signs without the effect of this dimension. This is why it is futile to defend production by listing how important production is in modern society. For Baudrillard, a linear process can only be conceptualised as a productive process, a process of accumulation with time. No matter how good a process of production works, it does not prevent us from conceptualising everything as 'production', not to mention it actually justifies us to do so. Therefore, even if Kellner can conceptualise many social phenomena as a kind of production, it does not shake Baudrillard's presupposition.

As to Fitchett and Saren's argument, their mistake is similar to Kellner's. The fundamental problem is their misunderstanding of the concept of value in Baudrillard's terminology. Because of this, their conceptualisation of *Dasein*-value, use-sign value and sign-use value cannot shake Baudrillard's argument at all. Again, for Baudrillard, the idea of value is by definition about distinctions, rather than referent or semiotic meanings. That is why Baudrillard claims that the prestige and distinctions, when they are used as an aim, are still about use-value (Baudrillard, 1975, p.127). For Baudrillard, whenever the physical lived experiences are conceptualised as a value, it is based on a sense of distinction which is conditioned by a system of signs. Such effects of the system of signs are evident in Fitchett and Saren's case, for example, when they try to conceptualise sign-use value: '... visitors do not perceive all objects to be equally valuable, some objects are considered to be more valuable than others' (Fitchett & Saren, 1998, p.328). Although they then focus on how and why the objects from other cultures in a museum seem more valuable for visitors, but the more fundamental question is, what conditions the idea of 'more'. After the idea of 'more' appears, whatever this 'more' refers to, it is about the use-value.

But in addition, Fitchett and Saren's view implies an empathy with the 'productionism' on which Baudrillard targets. This is shown in their conceptualisation of '*Dasein* value'. As Kockelmans (1984) stressed, '*Dasein*' involves a meaning of 'being unveiled' (p.10), which is exactly what Baudrillard defined as production in the sense of 'to render visible or make appear' (Baudrillard, 1990, p.34). Thus, Fitchett and Saren's approach is to use a concept which Baudrillard criticises to against Baudrillard. If this approach can be successful, they need first of all to explain why Baudrillard's 'anti-productionist position' is wrong.

Moreover, the '*Dasein* value' in a museum, if it exists, can only be an effect or consequence of production. This is because the idea of production necessarily

involves the idea of accumulation, whilst museums are typical places where the idea of accumulation is at work. Both ideas are based on the existence of a system of signs which can *count*. For example, if I accumulate cups, it means things that can be treated as a cup are put together; if I produce cups, it means things are, in a sense, 'licked into shape' based on a definition of a cup, in which the properties of things that meet the definition are accumulated. Namely, production is conditioned by accumulation and is for accumulation, both share the logic of linear process. It is for this reason that Baudrillard claims the exchange-value/use-value dialectic makes accumulation and production possible (Baudrillard, 1993).

The root of their misunderstanding lies in Fitchett and Saren's narrowed definition of sign value, which makes the boundary of discourses narrowed too. For them, when an object does not refer to cultural/historical meanings, it is not consumed in terms of its sign value. But I think, if Baudrillard's concept of sign value can challenge Marx's definition of use-value, it is because Baudrillard tries to throw light upon the start point where an object is a sign. For example, in Baudrillard's reading of hysteria aforementioned,<sup>6</sup> what conditions his argument that organs can function as signifiers, and the symptoms are discourses? In my reading, perhaps being influenced by his contemporary Lacanian psychoanalysis, Baudrillard indeed thinks the relations between signifiers can override the causal relation at the physical level to some extent. This capability of overriding conditions a discourse to function regardless of the biological activities and an individual's control. That is to say, the boundary of a discourse is not whether an object makes any sense. A discourse can precede and participate in forming our views and feelings, precede the moment that we treat an object as useful.

Back to their concept of *Dasein* value, how does this feeling of 'presence of real' (Fitchett & Saren, 1998, p.328) appear? After all, the presences of things are everywhere, so such experiences of 'realness' is probably from *Dasein*, not from a museum. But how does a museum bring about the effect of the experience of 'realness'? For Fitchett and Saren, the 'realness' stems from the property of being used, and therefore they conclude that 'Museum objects are valued not because they are useful but because they signify that they were once useful' (1998, p.330). However, this is nothing other than introducing a temporality as an effect of the system

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. the end of the section: *Baudrillard's concept of sign value* in this chapter.

of signs, which Baudrillard has explained in his first book, *The system of objects* (1988). To cut the long story short, Baudrillard argues that an antique in a collection mediates the past and present by signifying a past time, which introduces the dimension of time.<sup>7</sup> The idea of 'real' exactly relies on the endorsement of the whole system embodying in the museum which *tells* the visitor that it is real, whilst the system itself is maintained by the political economical capacity of introducing this temporality. Thus, it is not 'being used' witness 'realness', but the power of putting a used thing there in a certain way fabricates this 'realness'. A museum is by definition a simulation, which creates its own real as the referent.

So, the idea of value cannot be conceptualised without the existence of the system of signs. *Dasein* could be free from the system of signs, but '*Dasein* value' is not.

## Conclusion

This chapter reviewed Baudrillard's critique of Marx, which is based on the presupposition from structural anthropology. Baudrillard's argument seems powerful, not only because his concern is foreshadowed by the reflections from anthropologic research since Mauss, but also because he pushes the question into an extreme situation: if life is not necessarily pursued, there is neither a so-called 'natural' or 'necessary' need.

Kellner's defence, although correctly distinguishes two kinds of Marxism, does not respond to Baudrillard's central concern: if need is the foundation of Marx's theory, does it really have critical power to change capitalism? Kellner's defence of use-value betrays himself that he still hopes there can be some referent point, like use-value. Poster's argument, too, does not touch this, and reduce the concern to a methodological question in sociology. Truly no one can guarantee Baudrillard's idea is applicable everywhere, but it does not prevent his theory to challenge Marx. The critiques onto Baudrillard's use of semiological concepts does not challenge the validity of Baudrillard's concern as well. Fundamentally, a concern is a question, rather than an answer. Saussure's semiology could be flawed, Baudrillard's reading of Marx could be too, I would also add that, Baudrillard is a layman on Freudian psychoanalysis, but the question whether we can treat 'need' as the foundation of our

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. chapter 2, *The system of objects* (1988). For a more detailed review, cf. Appendix 3

theory of economy, sociology, and ethics is still a live question. It is for the same reason that Fitchett and Saren as well as McQueen's arguments do not work: Baudrillard's critique of Marx does not care about how many 'values' can be listed, nor about the future of desire, in whatever sense.

In order to examine Baudrillard's doctrine, the next chapter will focus on his idea of reversibility which plays the central role in all of his concepts. Fundamentally, Baudrillard's concern clearly touches the aspect of ethics in general and has to be responded to in terms of that aspects. It is the idea of reversibility that connects his view on Marx with a broader discussion of ethics: Baudrillard sharply notices that the idea of death is what the idea of life must exclude, no matter the idea of death merely refers to biological inanimate states or metaphorically refers to indeterminate states. All discussions about life's needs, property, characteristics, and ethics etc., are based on this exclusion. But the nature of reversibility, we will see, is to dismantle the exclusion. Gary Genosko's view is sketched in this chapter but will be discussed in the next one, because his view indeed touches the question of reversibility.

# Chapter 4: Baudrillard's idea of reversibility

## Introduction:

The last chapter has reviewed Baudrillard's critique of Marx and explained some of Baudrillard's key concepts. It has shown that the concept of symbolic exchange is fundamental for Baudrillard to contrast with Marx's perspective. But Mauss's illustration of this concept is obscure, and neither Levi-Strauss's structuralist approach nor Bataille's Nietzschean reading is completely taken by Baudrillard. Consequently, the symbolic exchange theory remains obscure. A definition from Baudrillard's own illustration can be found in *The Symbolic Exchange and Death*:

The symbolic is neither a concept, an agency, a category, nor a 'structure', but an act of exchange and a social relation which puts an end to the real, which resolves the real, and, at the same time, puts an end to the opposition between the real and the imaginary. (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.115)

However, this definition merely stresses its function of revolting. The relationship between the symbolic exchange and the real mentioned here is best explained along with the concept of simulation and seduction, which are the other concepts that illustrate ideas of the symbolic exchange. But, as Baudrillard himself claims, the central idea is still about an idea of 'reversibility' (*Le Journal des Psychologues*, 1993).

This chapter therefore aims to revisit the concept<sup>8</sup> of the symbolic exchange by discussing his views in his later works. It involves three sections: the first section will trace Baudrillard's theorisation of simulation from his understanding of copying to showing the development of his logic. The second section then explains the concept

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<sup>8</sup> Although Baudrillard claimed that symbolic exchange is not a concept (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.115), this thesis will still call it a concept to refer to Baudrillard's idea or view of it.

of seduction, which is detached by Baudrillard from the context of a sexual relationship to some extent. It will explain how it is related to the question of gender identity but has little to do with sexual attraction. This section will also explain the relationship between the concept of seduction and simulation. The third section discusses Gary Genosko and Ashley Woodward's views of Baudrillard, whose views examine Baudrillard within the context of ethical debates.

This chapter aims to pave the way for a critique of Baudrillard's approach in the subsequent chapters. As previously mentioned in the introduction of chapter 2, a critique of Baudrillard should be based on a reading of him on his own terms (Butler, 1999). If so, a clarification of the idea of reversibility is necessary to have a fuller understanding of Baudrillard's approach, which conditions the explanation of the foundation on which Baudrillard's views on need can be challenged.

## Simulation

### Simulation in *The Symbolic Exchange and Death*

The concept of simulation is most intensively discussed in the chapter 2 (*The Order of Simulacra*) in *The Symbolic Exchange and Death* ((1976)1993) as well as in Chapter 1 (*The Precession of Simulacra*) in *Simulacra and Simulation* ((1981) 1994), and *The Transparency of Evil* ((1990)2009).

In *The Symbolic Exchange and Death*, the term 'simulation' is the name of the third order of simulacra. At first, he defined them in terms of ages:

There are three orders of simulacra, running parallel to the successive mutations of the law of value since the Renaissance:

- The counterfeit is the dominant schema in the classical period, from the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution.
  - Production is the dominant schema in the industrial era.
  - Simulation is the dominant schema in the current code-governed phase.
- (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.50)

Baudrillard claims that each order is governed by a certain law of value, namely, how we could valorise an object. The first order is governed by natural law, the second is by market, the third is by code (1976)1993, p.50).

The difference between these three orders lies in the relation between the copies and the original thing. The first order is related to The Renaissance and ends with the industrial revolution. The Renaissance, Baudrillard thought, was an era of the collapse of feudalism in which there was a clear distinction between the upper class and lower class in terms of what they could use, so that the use of an object, as a sign of status, was restricted. When those objects are liberated, they are used freely by all classes. Counterfeits are useful in this context since their value is only shown by their appearance, like a fake necklace made by cheaper materials is used to show the same value based on its appearance. Clearly, the value of counterfeit is still dependent on the real thing it copies.

Thus, the order of counterfeit conditions a detachment between the material of a thing and the meaning of the thing, and furthermore the detachment between the real thing and its appearance. This logic brings about a kind of hegemony because it unifies things at a certain level. For example, when stucco is used for decoration, it is the sole material for reproducing everything on the level of appearance as opposed to a real level. Similarly, the project of Jesuits, according to Baudrillard, aims at using a homogeneous doctrine to 'reunify the world' (1976)1993 p.52). Both of them try to dismiss the difference on a real level and remain on the level of appearance. This shares 'the productive rationalist of capital' (Baudrillard, (1976)1993 p.52), because it aims to achieve a universal control based on a ready-made coherent principle of the system. In short, as long as there is a valid original referent against the copy, the copy follows the first order of simulacra.

However, the industrial revolution also engendered the second order of simulacra. If the first order is about the copying of appearance, the second is that of function: a fake necklace looks like a real one, whilst a machine functions like the real labour of human beings. Human beings work as a means to achieve sustenance, whilst machines do not have a conscious work purpose. Ironically, machines as non-living workers are more effective, so they become the 'men's perfect double' ((1976)1993, p.54) in terms of function. This epitomises an ideology that treats human beings as things, which makes the 'dead labour over living labour' ((1976)1993, p.54), and as if it explains the nature of human beings. Consequently, in the second order of

simulacra, every product is the referent of each other. The objects manufactured by machines in the industrial era does not originally aim to signify any uniqueness, like things in feudalism, but to be produced on large scale. So it is no longer adequate to say whether a product is counterfeit: they could only be treated as the copies of each other. Consequently, what is governing the society is the law of equivalence in the market, because the foremost thing is the calculation of labour power as the measurement of things. This is, according to Baudrillard, also hegemonic in the sense that it abolishes the difference by function.

The third order, simulation, is about copying structure. The nature of copying a function is, in a sense, to copy a structure that brings about a certain effect. For example, a noodle-making machine copies the acts of human hands to knead dough and churn out noodles – it specifically copies a series of repeated actions. These actions can be formalised into a fixed procedure, and the procedure can be treated as a (dynamic) structure, namely, the certain relations between the parts of hands with each other. The noodle machine copies this structure and replaces the parts of the hand with mechanical processes. Thus, the production of simulacrum becomes the reproduction of a combination of materials. This is an idea Baudrillard borrows from DNA. The genetic code of a person is a combination of components, which is to organise signs based on a presumed 'structure'. The structure functions as a template, so its relation to other copies is the 'diffraction'. It is like beam of light being waved as it is shone through a hole: the direction of light changes but the frequency of the light wave remains the same. The third order of simulacra, therefore, does not refer to any outside referent but reconstructs the structural relation. This is the view where Baudrillard refutes Marx, as the last chapter discussed.

As can be seen, these three orders are intimately connected, and the simulation is the process of realising models by combinations of signs. Noteworthy, the following order does not simply kick out the former one, but 'every order subsumes the previous order' (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.57). That is, every order of simulacra seems more abstract and to have better ability to delineate the nature of the thing being copied than the previous order: when things are manufactured by machines according to a scheme, they can appear to be the same as each other, when examined, in terms of every facet. In this sense, they are perfect counterfeits of each other. The central theme in *The Symbolic Exchange and Death* is to argue that the symbolic exchange,

as the dimension outside the simulacra, destroys the language and law of signs. This will be discussed later.

## **Some features of the third order of the simulacra**

As an order of simulacra, Baudrillard does not restrict his doctrine to the field of sociology but extends it to every field which aims to use signs to explain things by constructing a system. That is to say, as long as a system is artificially built according to a model, the system is a simulation. But, more importantly, for him, there is no so-called model outside the system:

The code itself is nothing other than a genetic, generative cell where the myriad intersections produce all the questions and all the possible solutions from which to select (for whom?). There is no finality to these 'questions' (informational signals, impulses) other than the response which is either genetic and immutable or inflected with minuscule and aleatory differences. (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.58)

That is, if the value of signs is determined by code, the code itself is no more than the combination of signs. The imaginary and the copies therefore cannot be distinguished. This is also the reason for him that the process of simulation is not dialectic, and the third order of simulacra is not a representation of the real. It is here that the question about Hegelian dialectics re-emerges: if for Fraser the natural need is the universal form of need induced from particular needs, for Baudrillard such supposition of the universal form does not have validity. As outlined in the introduction, dialectics is basically about a process of achieving consensus from two opposite sides. Although there are some differences between Marx and Hegel, both agree there is a real world and what we have in mind is a representation of it. This representation at least partly contains the truth of the world, and we will have knowledge of the truth via the dialectical process. Nevertheless, this is not the case for Baudrillard: he argues,

as is the case in the reproduction of DNA, the process of reproduction is that of creation as well<sup>9</sup> (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.72-3).

The objectivity of science is questionable because what we see and know could be no more than a construction of signs, and the objectivity which modern science is based on is no more than a repeated construction: the repeatability of experience that every finding is merely based on means, that scientists make the same experimental environment so that they get the same results and believe this is the evidence of objectivity of the result. Thus, 'Science explains things which have been defined and formalised in advance and which subsequently conform to these explanations, that's all that 'objectivity is' (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.61). That is, while scientists think the repeatable experiment removes the effect of experimenters, Baudrillard thinks the approach itself always embodies the effect of the subject, so that the so-called objectivity is still a construction. This construction is called 'hyper-reality' by Baudrillard, in contrast to real or reality which can never be represented ((1976) 1993, p.72).

Similarly, media coverage becomes hyper-realities that are constructed by signs, because 'the entire communications system has passed from a complex syntactic structure of language to a binary system of question/answer signal - perpetual testing' (Baudrillard, (1976) 1993, p.62). It absorbs both politics and economics into a hyper-reality. On the one hand, the election and referendum are reduced to a pre-structured test. On the other hand, production is the reproduction of a model by consumption which cannot be distinguished from the combining of signs, not to mention people understanding production via abstract data such as Gross Daily Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP). Consequently, politics and economy 'are abolished in another reality or media hyperreality' (Baudrillard, (1976) 1993, p.65).

It is here that Baudrillard introduces Marshall McLuhan's view that 'the medium is a message'. For McLuhan, the media not only conveys messages but themselves are the messages because it already changes the way we organise an individual's life and society, no matter what information they deliver (2001). One good example would be the imagined community argued by Benedict Anderson (2016), which shows the

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<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, both Lacan and Baudrillard claim that what is real is shown in what is repeating (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p73 & Lacan, 1998 [1973], p49, also, c.f., p53-62). However, while Baudrillard laments the real can never be reached, Lacan prefers to stress the effect of real. That is, the repetition is always cantered around a missing representation which is in the real (Lacan, 1998, p60).

intimate relationship between national identity and the publication of local newspapers. By the same token, technologies function as media because they help us see and do more than what we could do, so they are the extension of man too, like media. In this sense, the technology for production and media for communication-are homogeneous in terms of the role they play in human beings' life. Based on this, Baudrillard argues that the real message of industrial production is not the use-value in the sense that it can help human beings to have more things, but the reproducibility of product in the sense that it changes our relations to the things.<sup>3</sup>

## **Simulation in *Simulacra and Simulation***

In the first article of *Simulacra and Simulation*, *Precession of Simulacra*, Baudrillard developed his explanation further. As the title indicates, the central theme of this article is the deviation of the centre of simulacra. That is, just as the precession is the change of rotational axis of a rotating thing (like a wheel or a planet), the centre of the third order of simulacra has changed since the third order of simulacra creates its own referent as if there is a 'real' it could refer to.

One example is a criticism on anthropology: The discovery in 1971 of a seemingly ancient, isolated tribe of Philippine indigenous people called The Tasaday was hailed as the anthropological discovery of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was later suspected that this cave-dwelling, primitive tribe was not real but part of a publicity hoax by the then Philippine president. Whether they were genuine or indeed pretending to be an ancient tribe, Baudrillard stresses reversibility: The ethnology itself becomes a simulacrum, because anthropologists were participating in forming what the Tasaday was, and therefore in constructing the object of ethnology. Consequently, if the research objects can be constructed, then the difference between an object and its knowing subject is blurred, the system of signs and knowledge, which is based on this difference, is therefore shaken. Moreover, Baudrillard thinks the whole Western society has become the research object of ethnology, because, by defining the object, the society also defines itself; by defining the opposite culture, it defines its own culture.

Other examples Baudrillard cites include Disneyland and the Watergate Scandal, the latter of which was mentioned in the last chapter. Disneyland is hyperreal, he states, because its imaginary setting makes the rest of America seemingly real.

Similarly, he claims Watergate is hyperreal as it only portrayed as a scandal in order to present the rest of American politics as free of corruption and in order to have citizens' faith restored in the justice system. Indeed, these views appear far-fetched, and it is nonsense to proclaim Watergate as a non-scandal. However, Baudrillard's reading needs to be understood through his view of production and enlightenment. That is, what he targets is a sense of rationalism that aims to make everything clear and coherent based on a universal principle; one which constitutes a complete system in which every part has a fixed value to each other. This process, Baudrillard stresses, cannot be separated from setting an 'other' in opposition to the system which is by definition unreal, unclear, concealed, so that the universal principle has a space to produce.

Thus, the act of simulating is that of creating. This becomes a dead circuit: the existence of a system is based on a structure/organisation which makes the values of each part in the system possible. Then, if, in Saussure's sense, a structure is based on the opposition between signs, the possibility of signs should also lie in the bar between signifier and signified (Genosko, 1994), namely, it should lie in the power which can draw a line which defining an opposition. However, the simulation is exactly this act of drawing, which somehow pushes the system away from real, in the sense that, paradoxically, nothing can be used for separating the representation and real.

## **The fourth order of simulation**

In the *Transparency of Evil* ((1990) 2009), Baudrillard added a fourth order of simulacra called fractal. The term comes from the Latin word *fracturs*, which is the past participle form of the verb *frangere* and means 'to break' (Oxford English Dictionary). This concept was first proposed by French mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot. In his book *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*, Mandelbrot (1982) argued that the Euclid geometry only focuses on regular shapes, like square and circle, whilst in the natural environment, the shapes of things are irregular, like that of clouds or a coastline. The term fractal therefore refers to those irregular and fragmental shapes. Mandelbrot's interest is investigating these shapes by applying mathematics. One important characteristic of the fractal shape is that 'once enlarged, [it] has the same statistical character as the original' (Lechte, 2003, p.86). Namely, it is a form that can be found

in a structure, and when the perspective is zoomed out, the same or similar of form can be found in the-structure as well.

Baudrillard does not use fractal within its mathematical context; his use of the term involves two metaphorical meanings. Firstly, what is reproduced is not something sharply defined; secondly, fractals are not solid and stable structures. In the first chapter of 1990's *Transparency of Evil*, Baudrillard argues that we are in the stage of 'after-the-orgy'. The orgy here refers to those movements of liberation, like the liberation of sexuality and labour. After these movements, there is nothing that can be liberated, so these liberations can be simulated instead, as if there is something still needed to be liberated. The reason for this is the collapse of value system itself. For example, sexual differences are treated as stereotypes. He argued that the sexual revolution of the 1960s confused the categories of man and woman. By breaking so-called stereotypes (woman is not necessarily weak, having a penis is not necessarily masculine etc.), the concept of sex loses its referent as well. Different sexualities are indifferent to sex, he states, and they are homogenous in their relation to the concept of pleasure.

Consequently, the boundary between different sexualities is dismissed and the concept of transvestism is questionable, Baudrillard asserts, because there is no line to cross. In a sense, everyone is symbolically transexual (Baudrillard, (1990) 1993, p.21): what is reproduced is not a structure containing two opposite poles of sexuality, but transsexuality as the only sexuality. This is what Baudrillard called the fractal order of simulacra: if the industrial production moved to simulation in the sense the meaning of production is reproduction, the reproduction of 'mode' means to make a model everywhere, just like the enlarge of a fractal shape still keeps its character. However, in the fourth order, he thinks even that referent disappears as well. The fourth order of simulation therefore is a preproduction without an internal value system.

But, as can be seen, this fourth order of simulacra is still based on the third order, because such a reproduction of structure/model has been the case in the third. This is why, as Butler (1999) points out, the fourth order of simulacra actually is no-different from the third on in nature.

## The relation between symbolic exchange and simulacra

The central theme in *The Symbolic Exchange and Death* is to argue that the symbolic exchange as the dimension outside the simulacra destroys the language and law of signs. Its mechanism lies in the idea that the reversibility cannot be removed by systems, so that the fixed connections among signs are under threat. For this reason, the need constructed by signs cannot be treated as fundamental as well. To explain this, there are three concepts that need to be explored: power, reversibility, and death.

Power is used by Baudrillard as a concept about the ability to stop symbolic exchange and sustain an asymmetric relationship. The clearest explanation would be his discussion about media in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, in which he argues that modern-day media has created a structure that substitutes the real response of audiences with a simulated one. It is in this context that Baudrillard defines the concept of power:

Power belongs to the one who can give and cannot be repaid. To give, and to do it in such a way that one is unable to repay, is to disrupt the exchange to your profit and to institute a monopoly. (p.170)

That is, the one, who can define a system and force others to accept, has power. The symbolic exchange between two individuals is about reversing the other's power.

Real relationship features reversibility. As mentioned in the last chapter, Mauss introduced the significance of the *potlatch* tribal ceremony as a contrast with Western capitalist structures. In a *potlatch* ceremony, chiefs exchange gifts with each other in an ostensible act of wealth-generated generosity, but with the subtext being a display of power and status. Aside from that, this process implies a reversibility in the sense that what is treated as valuable for one chief could be regarded as non-valuable by another. That is, the gifts do not have fixed values, they are not valorised by any system or based on a consensus (e.g., iPhone is better than android; Waitrose is better than Tesco) or endorsed by any ideology or belief but evaluated by individuals. Especially, by *potlatch*, the believed value of the gifts is shattered, and it is at this moment the distinction between the imaginary value and real value of the gifts stop to exist, and it is in this sense that 'the symbolic is...an act of exchange and a social

relation which puts an end to the real, which resolves the real, and, at the same time, puts an end to the opposition between the real and the imaginary ((1976) 1993, p.133). Namely, there is no real in symbolic because there is no separation between real and imaginary. In this sense, the concept of symbolic exchange, although Baudrillard talks plenty about death and life, has nothing to do with those metaphysical topics about the afterlife.

In Baudrillard's terminology, death means 'a form in which the determinacy of the subject and of value is lost' ((1976) 1993, p.5). What is opposite is not 'life' in the usual sense of animated things, but the concept of production. Although this concept plays a very important role in Baudrillard's critique since his early work, the clearest definition is provided in *Seduction*:

To produce is to materialise by force what belongs to another order....  
Seduction removes something from the order of the visible, while production constructs everything in full view, be it an object, a number or concept.  
(Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.34)

Baudrillard then laments production as a concept that is widely (ab)used, as making latent things become visible, real and accountable, and then builds up 'a system of concepts or measurable energy' (Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.34). The context here is about the opposition between production and seduction, which will be discussed later. But clearly, in Baudrillard's view, production is intimately related to simulation, in the sense that to produce is to construct a system, which means to build up a simulacrum by simulation, whilst death is the collapse of a determined relationship in a system. Therefore, life and death in Baudrillard's terminology is mainly about the organisation of a system and its collapse, although he indeed claims that, in a primitive culture, there is no distinction between life and death (see Baudrillard, (1976) 1993, p188, note 8).

Returning to the topic, what he was trying to say here is that the existence of a system stems from the stopping of the symbolic exchange. That is, if the symbolic exchange can be treated as a process of creation and destruction of meaning or value, then production is the creation without destruction, and on which accumulation is conditioned. In this sense, the symbolic exchange should be regarded as a whole in which there is no so-called creation and destruction, in which no accumulation is

possible. That's why 'death is ultimately nothing more than the social line of demarcation separating the 'dead' from the 'living' (Baudrillard, (1976) 1993, p.127).

Thus, no matter whether Baudrillard's view is feasible, the basic logic is this: 'only symbolic disorder can bring about an interruption in the code' (Baudrillard, (1976) 1993, p.4). That is, if the existence of a system is based on separating life from death, then the way to shake the system is to restore the process of symbolic exchange, namely, giving the system a 'death'.

## **Seduction**

### **The concept of seduction**

This section will now explain the reversibility in Baudrillard's concept of seduction. Seduction takes the place of symbolic exchange in Baudrillard's later work. But reversibility still plays a very important role in this concept. In basic terms, the meaning of this concept in Baudrillard's terminology is about an effect which make a person deviate from their own aim, which could be linked with the term's Latin origin, 'to divert from one's path' (Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.22).

In this book, seduction is seen as a force that is able to subvert mechanical, orgasm-centred sexuality, and reality in general. Baudrillard links masculinity with the concept of production. Both masculinity and production are related to an irreversible process which tend to make determinacy. When a gender is treated as an identity, it is a sign whose meaning is supported by a system to which it belongs. So, no matter what femininity means, it is no more than another sign sharing the logic with masculinity if it is used to refer to the nature of woman, and such female identity is no more than a result of a try to make the nature of femininity visible and clear.

In contrast, and in line with Freud's theories of the libido, Baudrillard argues that femininity is different from masculinity not because it is another pole, but because of its emptiness. That is, there is no parallel entity or trait in contrast to masculinity, but only masculinity and the process of seducing masculinity. This sense of feminine challenges masculinity in the sense that it is uncertain and unstable, so that it asks masculinity to define it, and therefore push its force/ability to its limit. It is like the situation that a person keeps trying to say something ineffable. The ineffable feeling

exhausts their words, so that challenges their language-ability. That is why 'feminine seduces because it is never where it thinks it is, or where it thinks itself' (Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.6). So, disregarding the provocative statements about femininity, Baudrillard's concept of seduction does not focus on any physical sexual relationship but concerns certainty/uncertainty, structure/unstructured, determinacy and indeterminacy.

This is exemplified in Baudrillard's view on transvestism. If masculinity represents certainty, and the power of feminine lies in its uncertainty, the most uncertain is the uncertainty of the uncertainty itself, that is, the oscillation between certain and uncertain. There is seduction in transvestism since it does not refer to a gender but creates a female-like appearance by using female traits, so that the connection between the male body and female traits is shaken. The appearance of transvestism is thus an over-signification of the female sex (Baudrillard, (1979)1991), it creates an image of femininity according to men's imagination, whilst there is no so-called nature of femininity behind this image.

On the contrary, the film *Salò, or 120 days of Sodom* is an example of sex without seduction. The basic plot of this film, based on the 1904 novel by the Marquis de Sade, centres around four fascist libertines in World War II Italy kidnapping a group of children and subjecting them to 120 days of physical, mental and sexual torture. The film, in Baudrillard's perspective, exemplifies an extreme situation dominated by masculine power: the ruthless abusers create a machine-like system, and sexual pleasure is its product. This is thus an irreversible process of producing. This is the reason that Baudrillard criticised feminist movements as he believed it produced disadvantages for women. He is not speaking of the women's movement in terms of rights to vote, equal pay or education, as this follows the cultural logic of production, but he opposes the aspect of feminism that defines woman as the other being in contrast to man. This is doomed to fail because the logic of masculinity is by definition 'to define'. All efforts to define what woman is ends up being viewed by masculine logic, he argues. The only way to be heterogenous to this logic is not to 'be'.

## The connection between seduction and simulation

If a cross-dressing boy is projecting a female image as his identity, it is the simulation as well. That is, in this case, seduction is achieved by constructing the third-order simulacra. If so, what is the difference between seduction and simulation?

If feminine is not simply the opposite to masculine in Baudrillard's terminology, this is because seduction is not simply the opposite to simulation. Rather, it witnesses the gap between the real and simulacra and enables simulation through this gap. That is, it is the missing thing or dimension that seduces simulation. For example, in the case of transvestism, if a man dons women's clothes and applies make up to look like a woman, all he can achieve, at best, is no more than his imagined image of what a woman should look like. All language or signs he uses for defining a woman are from the system to which these signs belong (namely, his own culture), so that the definition of woman, no matter how real he feels in a dress, is no more than an effect of this system, and only meaningful in this system. The man (and of course, everyone) can never truly escape his own culture, so the real nature of women can never be achievable in the system – namely, it's a missing dimension in the system. But clearly, it is those presuppositions of the nature of the female that conditions the body of knowledge defining 'the female'. These presuppositions or beliefs must exist before the existence of the system, and they must be validated for the system so that the system can validate itself, which is paradoxically impossible because the system clearly cannot be its own foundation, and there is nothing else to validate them.

Similarly, as an example of seduction outside the context of sexuality. *Trompe l'oeil* – an art technique that based on creating three-dimensional optical illusions – cheats our eyes by using realistic imagery and imitating geometric dimensions, like depth, to make a flat picture look like something in real life. It looks like real because it conforms to the rules of graphic perspective, but it is actually not., Pere Borrell del Caso's *Escaping Criticism* is an 1874 painting of a bewildered-looking boy who is climbing out of the picture frame. Those rules of graphic perspective cannot be represented in any representation directly, but only embodied in representations. In this sense, they are both the limit and condition of our representation. In fact, based on this logic, even if it could be supposed that simulation can be completed, it is paradoxically impossible for the real to be involved in the simulacra. That is, if a

simulacrum can successfully simulate the real, the consequence is no more than that it becomes the real itself, which still cannot be distinguished from third order simulacra.

Therefore, if this missing dimension is necessary for simulation, and seduction lies in where simulation constantly fails, the only thing needed to do to seduce simulation is to show its own incompleteness. This is why 'all seduction is in this sense narcissistic' (Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.68). To seduce simulation, the only thing needed is something that can function as a mirror; the simulation will then see itself and is seduced by itself. Simulation is seduced, only because it witnesses its own flaws in its image. It is in this sense that seduction is different from challenge. Both of them are ways to resist a system. But challenge, in Baudrillard's terminology, achieves this by a stronger power, whilst seduction, by a mirror, make use of the simulation's own power, by showing 'weakness' (Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.83).

Production is almost a synonym of simulation. A copy is produced to simulate the supposed real. The production/simulation is seduced by what it cannot reach, so that 'we seduce with our death, our vulnerability, and with the void that haunts us' (Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.83). The consequence is hyper-reality which has something which does not exist in the real. Therefore, there is always a gap between simulacra/system and the real. This gap connects the real and simulacra/system, not because it is something that can mediate real and the system, but because it indicates that, at the root, the distance between the real and the system does not exist; namely, because, at the root, this distinction between real and simulacra is created by simulation/production itself. Thus, 'in seduction the distance between the real and its double, and the distortion between the Same and the Other, is abolished' (Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.67).

The final question is, what kind of thing can be the mirror of simulation to show this 'non-existent distance'? The answer to this question could be very complex, because in each case what functions as 'mirror' is different. But a possible underlining principle should be that the mirror is something that can show death to simulacra. As mentioned before, death in Baudrillard's terminology basically means 'indeterminacy', so there is a concrete and small example, which exemplifies this principle and also demonstrates the connection between symbolic exchange and seduction. This is his reading of Zhuangzi's Butcher.

Simply speaking, Zhuangzi's Butcher is a story about how to care in life, which illustrates Zhuangzi's thoughts about ethics. The central plot is a dialogue: Lord

Wenhui asks a butcher how his butchery skills can be as beautiful as dancing when he cuts up an ox. The butcher replies that he does not directly cut the bones and flesh, but only moves the knife through the gap between bones and flesh, and 'follow things as they are' (Zhuangzi & Watson, 2013, p. 21). By doing so, the knife will receive minimal damage. The original aim of this story was to illustrate Zhuangzi's idea that man should live less actively and follow nature, so that by 'a course of action that is not founded on purposeful motives of gain or striving...man becomes one with Nature' (Zhuangzi & Watson, 2013, p. xi), so the central point is that the butcher is able to get things done with minimal effort and minimal damage to his knife because he follows the nature of things.

But what is most relevant to Baudrillard's work is the way that the butcher cuts the ox. In Baudrillard's reading, due to butcher's knife only going through the empty space, it functions as a void for the ox. Consequently, it means the butcher does not cut the ox but makes an exchange with it, which exemplifies Baudrillard's view on how death (indeterminacy, or nothingness) can be exchanged like a thing: the death/lack/indeterminacy has always already been innate in a system, and the knife just 'articulates the body's lack' (Baudrillard, (1976) 1993, p.120). That is, if 'to articulate' could mean to represent something by signs, then the movement of knife mirrors or outlines the limitation of the ox and abolishes the ox's body's power of defining value amongst each part, whilst the ox cannot do the same to the knife. This is a symbolic exchange, because it does not adhere to any value system but makes use of a 'nothing' which, by definition, cannot exist in the system at all.

The connection between symbolic exchange and seduction can also be shown here: whatever meaning they could have, a possibility of reversing the value system is the key in these two concepts. Just as the void can be treated as exchanged with a knife, it can always be treated as the mirror of what it is exchanged to: if exchange must be between two things, then putting them together into an exchange relation implies that these two things are now mutually defined, so that stands for the limit of each other as a 'mirror', metaphorically speaking. By contrast, a normal butcher who cuts the bone directly echoes what Baudrillard called 'challenge'. That is, challenge 'draws the other into one's area of strength' (Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.83), whilst seduction 'draws the other into one's area of weakness, which is also his or her area of weakness' (Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.83). Whereas for Zhuangzi the aim is to have

an effortless life and achieve a unity with nature, for Baudrillard it is this way that also touches the weakness of the system, which is conversely the strength of this strategy.

Therefore, if there is a kind of mirror, it functions by putting production/simulation into the extreme. The so-called boundary between simulacra/production and real is where it stops. In this sense, a mirror simultaneously shows the ideal/impossibility and truth.

Besides, seduction is a concept used in everyday life, whereas Baudrillard uses it to illustrate his idea of reversibility. One possible advantage of this use of the idea of seduction is that it bridges personal experiences and the structure of systems of signs, in which the latter is free of personal feelings. Thus, whereas seduction lies where production fails, being seductive is being able to challenge or even abolish a fixed value of signs. In this sense, one's feeling of seeing something/someone seductive is what it is like to be a subject when the system by which the subject is constructed is being shaken.

## **Discussion:**

So far, this chapter has shown the key idea, reversibility, in Baudrillard's theory. It is time to stress the value of Gary Genosko's critique.

As the previous chapter mentioned, Genosko thinks a key difficulty for Baudrillard is to keep the strength of maintaining affirmative weakness. Through this chapter, it should be clear that, the reason for keeping this strength is due to the nature of seduction. That is, in order to seduce production, the position of seduction must be able to keep a gap in the system, so that it shows the failure of production. That is the reason Genosko thinks that keeping the gap does not simply mean nothingness: 'a weak force must produce more and more irregularly its already sly motions and movements' (1994, p.91). In the case of Zhuangzi's ox, for example, not only the knife must be sharp, but also the butcher must be able to see the gap of the ox's body accurately. In a sense, this means the ox's body can never 'catch' the knife.

Such strength is not easy to keep, but there is another problem: keeping strength is against Baudrillard's own approach as playing weakness. As Genosko stresses through Lyotard's argument:

.... one remains soundly weak by resisting the seductive request to occupy the space of theory with one's own strong hypotheses. Baudrillard could not resist: he does not know his own strength! Flight is a strength of the weak, even though certain rhetorical birds may try to fly through plateglass windows. (Genosko, 1994, p.88)

Hereof, flight is a beautiful example of seduction. Just as seduction makes use of the power of production, birds fly by making use of the power of winds. But Baudrillard cannot be completely weak, because his theory of weakness paradoxically occupies the place of theory in order to leave a room for seduction to play weakness. It is for this reason Genosko concludes that 'one could not maintain an affirmative weakness without building up a strong base, a place of one's own' (1994, p.90).

Based on this, Genosko makes a comparison between Baudrillard and Heidegger through Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo. According to Genosko, Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*, in Vattimo's understanding, straightforwardly admits the requirement of an openness, 'so as to maintain a place for movement' (Genosko, 1994, p.90), whilst Baudrillard's approach of 'affirmative weakness' cannot admit this.

I think this aspect of 'openness' in Heidegger's text is evident, at least in *Being and Time*:

The 'essence' of *Da-sein* lies in its existence. The characteristics to be found in this being are thus not objectively present 'attributes' of an objectively present being which has such and such an 'outward appearance,' but rather possible ways for it to be, and only this. (Heidegger & Stambaugh, 1996, p.40)

and, this is also shown in a later text, *The Essence of Truth*:

To see in light means to become free for what makes-free, to which I comport myself. In this comportment I am able to be authentically free, i.e. I can acquire power by binding myself to what lets-through. Such binding is not loss of power, but a taking into one's possession. This explains the interrelation between light and freedom. (Heidegger, 2009(1988), p.44)

Very simply speaking, a view shared in these two texts is that a human individual, as *Dasein*, is characteristic of a capability and possibility to become. Namely, 'I (*Dasein*)' can be a being, although 'I' am not identical to a certain being merely. This

capability itself is 'my' power, and that 'becoming a being' and 'binding myself' do not mean to lose 'my' power and freedom, but an instance of performing my capability. By contrast, for Genosko, Baudrillard's 'affirmative weakness' paradoxically has lost the condition to be weak. In Genosko's own words, 'An affirmative weakness must not displace in order to emplace itself; yet, it seems that it cannot help but do the latter' (1994, p.90). Consequently, seduction ironically needs certain strength against production which, for Baudrillard, represents the logic of strength.

However, in his discussion of nihilism, Ashley Woodward (2009) considers Genosko's term 'affirmative weakness' is a 'affirmation of life in the face of nihilism' (p.187), so that it is an alternative to the position of wanting to actively overcome nihilism. But I think, as aforementioned, this is a disadvantage, rather than advantage of Baudrillard.

For Woodward, there are two kinds of nihilism: reductive nihilism and abyssal nihilism. The former refers to a reduction of meanings into a theory. A concrete example would be reducing the meaning of everyday experiences into the economic value. The other is about the dilemma of life-choice. In Woodward's own words, 'This term expresses the radical absence of any necessity governing the meaning and value of human life' (2009, p.11). Simply speaking, it can be understood in a form of a question like this: what should 'I' choose if there is no one can tell 'me' which 'should' is ultimately valid?

Woodward has some empathy with Baudrillard's position since it successfully refuted the reductive nihilism whilst he does not abandon the abyssal one. For Woodward, the latter is a position arguing for 'a more 'enchanted' order of meaning that takes reversibility as its principle' (Woodward, 2009, p.149). Woodward does not treat this position as problematic, because Baudrillard's concept of reversibility and simulation have already contained the dimension of self-destruction. All critiques of nihilism cannot avoid being a simulacrum, and therefore 'the analysis of nihilism remains within the purview of nihilism' (Woodward, 2009, p.100). Thus, it seems adequate to say Baudrillard does not want to overcome the abyssal nihilism because he thinks the self-destructive aspect should remain.

Nevertheless, I think Genosko's argument does not value Baudrillard's approach so much as Woodward does. From Genosko's perspective, if Heidegger directly values the openness of *Dasein*, Baudrillard's approach unfortunately does not allow itself to do so.

## Conclusion:

So far, this chapter has explained the idea of reversibility through Baudrillard's illustration of simulation and seduction, which hopes to throw light upon a metaphysical dimension of Baudrillard's work. This idea has already been embodied in his critique of Marx due to it is the central logic of the idea of symbolic exchange. As the previous chapter argues, the concept of symbolic exchange is not reliant on the empirical evidence from anthropology studies, nor does it defend controversy and violence (such as the Watergate scandal or domestic violence against women). Rather, following Mauss's concern, it provides a possibility to image a social rule alternative to the commercial relationship. The idea of symbolic exchange is hard to grasp, probably because it by definition does not have a concrete form and is supposed to contain all forms of relationships. That is why Baudrillard refuses to define the symbolic exchange as a concept or structure (Baudrillard, (1976)1993).

In this chapter, from the concept of simulation and seduction, we can see Baudrillard somehow discussed the implication of his idea of the symbolic exchange from the other side: if a system (of signs, economy, social relationships etc.) can never eliminate its own death and has always relied on the symbolic exchange, it is because the system by definition is a simulation of the symbolic exchange, and it is the symbolic exchange that shows an impossibility for the system, which seduces the system and leads the system to collapse, like the ox in Zhuangzi's story. The way a system defends itself from being challenged is to be applied in judging concrete things and behaviours in reality as if the realities do work as the system describes. But Baudrillard argues such realities are perfectly in line with the system because it is the system that creates its own realities. This is what Baudrillard called hyperreality. We can see this is also how Baudrillard reads Marx, although at first, he does not use the concept of 'hyperreality'. For Baudrillard, it is paradoxically by using concepts such as need, labour, value, and production that Marx cannot challenge capitalism fundamentally but falls into the 'mirror of production', because Marx uses the same perspective to conceptualise human societies.

Thus, chapters 3 and 4 have shown that the idea of reversibility threads Baudrillard's concepts of symbolic exchange, simulation, and seduction.

However, just because a system is doomed to fail, does not mean an individual cannot take its side. As Genosko argues, Baudrillard's approach is based on certain strength, but he cannot admit it. Truly Baudrillard might sophisticatedly avoid providing a critique of nihilism so that does not fall into the trap of simulacra, but this approach cannot be completely carried out without the help of its enemy.

The next chapter will critique Baudrillard's view through a comparison between Freud and Baudrillard, which will more clearly show that Baudrillard is unaware of the condition of his theory, and how this unawareness damages his argument.

# Chapter 5: The role of free will in Baudrillard and Freud's theory

## Introduction

From previous chapters, it should be clear that the central conflict between Marx and Baudrillard is the question about whether there is an or some irreducible ideas of human needs which can be the foundation for the economic system. Baudrillard thinks all ideas of needs are constructions and defining a natural/basic/necessity needs to explain that the organisation of a society is a futile approach, because all systems of signs are irreversible in nature whilst the reversibility cannot be eliminated. However, as Genosko argues, Baudrillard's approach relied on maintaining a certain gap in a system/production for seduction/symbolic exchange, which paradoxically requires certain strength which is incompatible with the logic of reversibility.

This chapter is a critique of Baudrillard's approach as well. It will show the fundamental flaw in Baudrillard's approach through a comparison between Baudrillard and Freud's theory in terms of the concept of free will. This chapter argues that the concept of free will is an essential presupposition for Baudrillard's approach, but he is unaware of this, this unawareness not only damages his critique of Freud, but also blinds him to the flaw that Genosko pointed out in his theory. The connection between Genosko's argument and mine is that, if, as Genosko argues, the requirement of a certain strength is an internal contradiction in Baudrillard's approach, this chapter adds that, this strength is provided by the presupposition of free will. Thus, the aim of this chapter is not using Freud's theory to repeat Genosko's view, but to clarify the cornerstone of Baudrillard's approach further, which paves the way for arguing an alternative approach in the second part of this dissertation.

It should be helpful to provide a background about the discussions of free will. Readers might be already aware of the question about human beings' free will in Baudrillard's theory when the discussions are related to Heidegger's concept of

*Dasein*, although Heidegger does not use the term 'free will' in the context of modern debates in the philosophy of mind, which nevertheless is the context I will draw on.

The wide spectrum of viewpoints in the philosophy of mind can be generally reduced to a number of key points. Firstly, a central problem lies in explaining the metaphysical states of free will in a determined world (at least seemingly so). Scholars can be divided into two camps: 1) libertarians, who think free will means an individual is able to determine subsequent events while not being determined by preceding events to some extent, and therefore free will is incompatible with determinism; and 2) determinists, who think there is no such thing which can be self-caused like libertarians propose. The determinist camp can also be further divided into: 1) hard determinism and 2) compatibilism. The former recognises determinism but rejects the notion that it is compatible with free will. This is also related to the view that believes human beings' sense of free will is merely an illusion. In contrast, the compatibilists try to reconcile the conflict and argue, in different approaches, that determinism and free will can co-exist. A typical example is David Hume's view that free will means an individual's will is not to be coerced, rather than that will is self-determined or self-created (Hume, 2008). In short, libertarianism and determinism are each other's opposites but share the idea that free will and determinism are incompatible. Compatibilism tries to reconcile this conflict by accepting the determinist position and reconsidering the definition of free will (Clarke, 1993; Kane, 1999; Smilansky, 2001; Strawson, 1994; Vargas, 2004).

As it can be seen, the debate on free will involves not only the existence of free will, but also which definition of free will is valid. This dissertation will not dive into these debates, but merely focuses on clarifying which senses of free will are needed for Baudrillard.

Before starting the examination of Baudrillard and Freud, there are two questions needed to explain: 1) Why discuss Baudrillard's criticism on Freud rather than Marx? 2) Why discuss the concept of free will?

As to the first question, there are two points:

First of all, it is feasible to show the flaw in Baudrillard's critiques on Marx through his criticism on Freud, because Baudrillard's logic in his criticism of Marx and Freud is homogeneous – for him, both Marx's and Freud's doctrines are based on the idea of linear-causality and therefore can be treated as being within *The Mirror of Production*.

Therefore, the counterargument to his criticism of Freud is also applicable to his view on Marx in terms of reversibility.

Secondly, Freud's discussions would be a better context to examine the free will in Baudrillard's illustrations, because Freud paid more attention to the individual psychological aspects (in the broadest sense) concerning the question of free will: do human beings really have free will, if all mental activities are biological based? His work straddles a crossroads of ideas: 1) He aims to explain mental activities based on determinism; 2) Mental activities are by definition simulacra-producing processes; 3) If human beings have free will, it must be taken into account in the theorisation of mental activities, which is a question which all determinist theories must face – even arguing that free will does not exist. Thus, Freud had already come across the dilemma that Baudrillard constantly lamented, namely, how a free-will agency faces production.

This second point is also related to the answer of the second question: Why this dissertation chooses to discuss the concept of free will to examine Baudrillard?

The foremost reason, of course, is that the concept of free will is related to the flaw of Baudrillard's theory, as this chapter will argue.

The second reason is that the question of free will conditions the comparison between Baudrillard and Freud. As aforementioned in chapter 1, a difficulty to examine Baudrillard's approach is that it seems 'rootless' because challenging the foundation of others' theories is the very aim of his approach. But the concept of free will is special. Although I do think this is presupposed by Baudrillard, the concept of free will itself cannot provide any firm proposition, like Newton's first law, to function as the foundation of further judgements, namely, of a system, not to mention the definition of free will and whether it exists are still open questions. Thus, free will is too *weak* to be the target of Baudrillard's approach. This weakness is an advantage because it opens up questions. Namely, my examination does not rely on propositions about what free will is or what Baudrillard thinks about free will, but is about throwing light upon how a theory projects its own answer about what free will brings about. We will see, in this chapter, this examination is not so much about what concept of free will which Baudrillard and Freud claim as what sense of free will which their theories allow and require.

In this sense, this chapter has relied on the question of free will, rather than the concept of free will. The question of free will functions as a prism which can break up white light into spectral coloured lights. A prism does not condition or create lights, it

only reveals the attributes by letting lights go through. The question of free will, similarly, does not validate or condition a theory, but is where the differences emerge.

This chapter has four sections:

The first and second section examine Baudrillard and Freud's theories respectively in terms of free will. Based on their texts, I argue that both need the libertarian sense of free will.

The third section argues Baudrillard's critique of Freud's concepts of primary and secondary processes is wrong. Moreover, there is an echo between them when the concept of free will is considered.

The fourth section concludes my view. It not only shows an echo between them when the concept of free will is considered, but also points out Baudrillard's problem from Freudian psychoanalytic perspective. I call it 'Seduction is under siege', which means production encloses seduction. It aims to show Freud had faced Baudrillard's problem but chose another way.

## **Free-will as a necessary condition in Baudrillard's argument**

A discussion of Baudrillard's argument revolves around which notion of free will his concept requires. As the previous chapter shows, Baudrillard's central logic is opposite to those systems constructed on fixed value. Thus, there are at least two possible senses of free that his idea could involve: 1) a compatibilist sense of not being determined by the law or code; and 2), a libertarian sense of being able to act alternatively to the code. This thesis argues that the concept of production requires the compatibilist sense, whilst the opposite sides (symbolic exchange, seduction, fatal strategy) require the libertarian sense. The first one is clearly less demanding than the second one: just because not being determined by the code does not mean it is not being determined by anything else. Considering 'symbolic exchange' is the fundamental dimension for Baudrillard, it can be concluded that the libertarian sense of free will is required for his argument.

## On the concept of production

As to his concept of production, the reason to stress the role of free will is a concern about the boundary of the concept of production. Namely, what is not production? What makes the concept of production refer to something rather than everything? For example, a camera 'produces' images by keeping the traces from incoming lights, whilst stones by a seashore also keep traces of sea waves. In both cases the traces are left based on the physical laws, so how is possible that the former is treated as a process of production, whilst the latter is not? It is true that we could call both cases 'production', but the concept itself is then meaningless. If the concept of production can be applied to everything, Baudrillard's argument that both Capitalism and Marx-based doctrines on production loses its critical force in this case. In this section, it is argued that the compatibilist definition of free will is required for making this separation, because it leaves room for a concept of intentionality.

This can be separated into two situations in terms of whether there is a predetermined aim of the universe. Firstly, if we do not presuppose the whole universe has its own aim, Baudrillard's definition of production can be treated as being different from a totally random world, because it is opposed to indeterminacy and gives rise to a system which is doomed to go back to indeterminate. This implies a process of transformation from indeterminacy to determinacy, and therefore a kind of intentionality in the sense of selecting and deciding, which implies the process of demarcation and the criteria of a 'product'. Namely, a camera 'produces' pictures because it is driven by intentions, whilst there is no aim or intention for waves to leave traces on stones. Both activities follow physical laws but only a camera could be faulty or broken so that it fails to achieve a designed aim. By opposing indeterminacy, production introduces a coherent logic (code) which defines what things should be.

Secondly, regarding the universe where an aim of universe is presupposed, this implies a teleological cosmology in which everything is determined, and everything also has an ultimate goal. In this case, intentionality clearly cannot be the criterion to separate man-made process and the movements in nature, because everything has its own aim like a human being. However, such presupposition is clearly not the case in Baudrillard's theoretical context, because his concept of death as the status of indeterminacy is not possible as well in this universe, and the concept of production in this sense is not possible either. This does not mean the teleological cosmology is

necessarily impossible but means Baudrillard's concern and argument are dissolved if this cosmology is the case.

Based on the presuppositions in terms of the teleology of the universe and determinacy of human beings' free will, there are four possible situations to chart that can show where Baudrillard's definition of production is:

Chart 1:

Free will	Determined	Undetermined
Universe		
Aimless	1) Free will is determined by an aimless law	2) Free will is totally undetermined by any preceding cause
Aimed	3) Free will is determined by the aim of the universe	4) Although human beings' action is undetermined, but there is an aim of the universe

There are four possible situations of free will based on combinations between the existence of the aim of universe and whether free will is determined: 1) free will totally be determined by an aimless law; 2) free will totally indeterminate and there is no so-called aim of universe; 3) free will is totally determined and driven by an aim of the universe; 4) free will is partially determined by an aim of the universe. The fourth category is probably the most paradoxical. In fact, many discussions of free will during the medieval period are about this. For example, why God, on the one hand, knows everything and is the highest good, but on the other, gives human beings free will to commit crimes? However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore theological conundrums.

This chart 1 shows that the compatibilist free will could exist in the first and third situations, whilst the libertarian free will is only possible in the second and fourth. However, if the teleological universe is not a supposed situation in Baudrillard's theorisation (as aforementioned) then both third and fourth situations are excluded as well. Moreover, from a modern scientific perspective, the second situation is more demanding because it has to explain many questions stemming from the presupposition of the libertarian free will. In particular, how is it possible a libertarian free human agency can impact on the physically determined materials? Namely, if it

can be free from the influence of physical law, how is it possible to use physical law to influence materials? Fortunately, Baudrillard's discussion of 'production' merely requires the first situation, because the compatibilist concept of free will is enough; as many scientists believe, the world is fully determined by a coherence law, but we can still attribute a deed to a person rather than to another, like attributing a work to a computer rather than to another computer (Goff, 2017). Clearly, this is exactly the reason that human beings can be compared with and substituted by machines in terms of works, which is related to Baudrillard's second order of simulacra.

The last chapter will show that Adrian Johnston holds a similar view, and how this is related to his reading of Marx, Lacan and money. But, it should be good to stress that, although Baudrillard's idea of production could be based on a materialist determinism, it is not that all materialism is determinism. This is a central concern in the study of the relationship between legal accountability and brain activities. For example, Paul G. Nestor (2019) argues that the neuro-scientific mode understands free will as being formed by complex interactions, which does not simply treat any factors (thoughts, feelings etc.) as the direct cause of a volition. Moreover, Nestor also draws on Steven Horst's 'cognitive pluralism' (2011, pp.8-9) which argues that human beings' cognitive capability is not necessarily able to formulate the coherent knowledge of law as God is supposed to have, which means our knowledge of law is not enough to support determinism.

Compared with other philosophers, who focus on the validity of propositions, Baudrillard targets ideology. The mind-body problem therefore is an extension of 'productionism' in terms of the conceptualisation of body. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, he claims that the separation of mind and body embodies an idea separating life and death, it is the 'separation' that conditions that of mind and body. Life and death should be treated as inseparable parts in an incessant process, namely, the symbolic exchange. By contrast, through using the concept of the biological body, the body is conceptualised as mortal in contrast to an (imaged) immortal mind, like a machine which is working but can be broken. But from this perspective, the difficulty of separating human beings' activities from the movement of the physical world lies precisely in the difficulty of locating the metaphysical states of the act of separating. Namely, if human beings' activities are not different from other movements in the physical world at all, there is no so-called question of production; if there is the

difference, how is the act of giving in the so-called symbolic exchange of *potlatch* compatible with a supposed incessant process?

In fact, the cases Baudrillard used are usually man-made processes, and so avoids the serious discussions about the metaphysical state of the force that is separating and driving production. For example, in *The System of Objects*, the system of commodities is arguably treated by him as a cultural construction, consumption aims at completing it in consumers' everyday lives. Also, what a collector seeks is to finish their collection in which they see themselves (Baudrillard, 1968). Likewise, in *The Symbolic Exchange and Death*, all of the three orders of simulacra are all artificial and nothing but human beings' attempt of coping (Baudrillard, 1976). This is even more obvious in *Seduction*, when he defined production as that 'to produce is to materialise by force what belongs to another order, that of the secret and of seduction' (Baudrillard, 1979, p.34). Clearly, what is missing here is a subject of the verbs (produce, materialise) and the subject which/who employs the 'force'. By writing in this way, Baudrillard arguably intended to leave the subject as open to any possibility, but which nevertheless makes the free will as the condition less obvious.

In summary, Baudrillard's definition of production needs the concept of free will which the production is attributed to, so that it can be separated from aimless natural movement. This 'will' could be determined by other factors, so that is compatible with determinism. Thus, the compatible sense of free will is enough for Baudrillard's concept of production.

## **On the concept of symbolic exchange, seduction, and fatal strategy**

As to those concepts being opposite to production (symbolic exchange, seduction, and fatal strategy), this thesis argues that a compatibilist sense of free will is not enough – the libertarian sense is necessary. The reason is simple: logically, an act being an alternative to a code or law must be not determined by it. This means the reversibility of the system must be practical, otherwise Baudrillard's argument is even impossible to image, because to image implies a possibility of creating images different from the external world, very simply speaking.

However, there are at least two difficulties. Firstly, free will is far from a concrete 'entity' which can be identified in everyday life, nor a well-defined concept which can be found in Baudrillard's texts. This is partly because the libertarianism of free will itself does not necessarily argue for the existence of free will, it merely means that free will is not compatible with determinism. It is also beyond the scope of this thesis to clarify how the libertarian free will is metaphysically possible, and Baudrillard does not appear to provide any explanation either. In fact, the libertarianism of free will itself involves a range of arguments, which probably has to be treated as an open debate. Perhaps, as Bergson ((1913) 2015) argues, even if the libertarian free will exists, it cannot be translated into language. This is linked with the second difficulty: Baudrillard's argument is indeed highly based on imagination, as he himself calls it 'pataphysics' (Baudrillard, 2008). This means it is impossible to find any concrete presupposition. This is a main difficulty when evaluating Baudrillard's viewpoints: in contrast to many arguments which start with a supposed self-evident proposition, Baudrillard starts with hypothesising something that is the opposite to common sense. In this manner, his argument becomes a *potlatch* to those common sense, or widely accepted theories. Thus, the argument of this thesis in the following section is based on an examination of the condition of act in his concepts, including the act of imaging.

## **The demonstration of reversibility**

### **The first kind of demonstration and its implication**

There are at least two kinds of demonstration of reversibility which can be found in Baudrillard's arguments: the first is to actively dissolve the system, like *potlatch* and symbolic exchange. This is exemplified in the case of the butcher's ox: the butcher kills the ox as overturning a system by passing the knife through the gap between meat and bone. In this case, the butcher's act clearly should not be determined by the ox.

But this brings about two contradictory views: firstly, it seems the compatibilist definition of free will is enough, because the butcher's act could still be determined by other reasons. This understanding can be exemplified in AI-based self-driving cars. A self-driving car can adjust itself dynamically but is still determined by algorithms.

Secondly, Baudrillard himself arguably refused both senses of free will, because he wanted precisely to stress an obligation in the symbolic exchange which he sees in the *potlatch* introduced by Mauss. For example, the case of Zhuangzi's butcher, which mentioned in the chapter 3, involves an incomplete reciprocation, because the ox's collapse results from being unable to reciprocate the 'gift' given by the butcher. Therefore, no matter at which level Baudrillard places his theory, he not only discusses facets where choosing alternatives is not an option, but also the concept of choosing does not exist. Consequently, there is no room for the compatibilist sense of free will.

It is exactly this seeming conflict between these two views that indicates the evidence that the libertarian sense of free will is presupposed by Baudrillard. First of all, when Baudrillard talks about biological death as a conceptualisation of the conscious mind, it is of course not really about the possibility of being immortal, or any knowledge of after-life. If anything, it is the death of a subject. The connection between Baudrillard's illustration and Althusser's discussion of the subject is clear: simply speaking, Althusser argues that every individual is always in an ideology, in which their subject is constituted. 'Subject' is therefore a category constructed within a system of signs through which meanings are defined. Whenever a language is used between individuals, individuals interact with each other through subjects that infer a position. This is obvious in everyday life when people call another a friend, teacher, or even stranger (Althusser, 2014).

This connection between Baudrillard's and Althusser's concerns is evident when Baudrillard states:

Only in the infinitesimal space of the individual conscious subject does death take on an irreversible meaning. Even here, death is not an event, but a myth experienced as anticipation. The subject needs a myth of its end, as of its origin, to form its identity (Baudrillard, (1976) 1993, p.159).

Compared with Althusser's argument, Baudrillard's illustration seems more radical, which is somehow coloured by a kind of supernatural aura, as if he is not merely talking about a sociological issue but about a possibility that biological death is an illusion and can be overcome. However, as previously mentioned, his criticism of Marx is mainly about the value-system as a coherent structure, like the system of signs, which refuses the reversibility of the symbolic exchange. Thus, when he talks about the reversibility

of life and death being replaced by an irreversible death of the biological body, this at least includes the death of the subject and the system in which the subject is constructed.

Be that as it may, this supernatural aura probably stems from the fact that the subject does not need a conscious mind. This is evident in Althusser's argument which repeatedly uses 'interpellation' to describe the relation between subject and individual. Namely, as a position and a construction, a subject is what an individual is called to be. When Baudrillard attributes the act of separating mind and body to the conscious subject, it is not 'subject', but 'conscious' that he does not explain. That is, the agency which/who acts out this call and which/who takes this calling.

Here we can see how the first aforementioned view is dissolved: the AI-based self-driving car is at best driven by a subject. It still aims to perform based on certain rules and is designed to self-preserve. If there is a kind of compatibilist free will which can fit in Baudrillard's symbolic exchange, it must aim towards its own death no matter what it is determined by, because the compatibilism saves the concept of free will by attributing to it a subject: free will is the subject's will. But if so, the concept of 'will' itself is dissolved in the symbolic exchange, which actually means such a will should have never existed, because this death is merely for the death of will.

Therefore, there are two correlated senses of death in Baudrillard's illustration: the death of subject and 'Death' as indeterminacy. Whilst the death of a subject means to overturn a determinacy in a system, the 'Death' as the indeterminacy is a proposition. This is, I think, where Baudrillard mistakenly takes the place of theory, mentioned by Genosko. In my understanding, this theorisation is nothing other than presupposing a supposed 'absolute nothingness' at a meta-level, beyond both existence and dissolution of concrete things, although this is not enough for reversibility (cf., Genosko, 1994, p91). In nature, Baudrillard's argument speaks from the perspective of this meta-level nothingness to argue that all 'being' is doomed to be nothing. This is how the first view is linked to the second: Baudrillard's argument lies in using a 'determinacy' to refute another determinacy, in the sense that the symbolic exchange involves the ground level of Death which is waiting to override the determinacy of all systems (production, value, etc.). In his own words, 'death is confused with the law of value' (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.185). For instance, this is how Baudrillard refutes Freud's death drive: if symbolic exchange is an incessant movement, there has never been death as an end point, therefore there is no life as the start. The Freudian death

drive, by arguing for a drive toward death, still conceptualises life at the same level of death, as if there is a 'dialectical relation' between life and death (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.150). This critique means all drives are death drives, therefore 'death drive' cannot be conceptualised. From this perspective, the death of subjects is the effects of the Death on subjects.

With the first view being dissolved, it is clear that the compatible sense of free will is not enough for reversibility, because this sense is attributed to the production. If there is any will of a subject, it will be a target of Baudrillard. The difficulty for locating the role of free will, then, lies in examine the second view, namely, how to show its role when Baudrillard seems to refute all sense of free will.

As to the second view, 'Death' as indeterminacy, Baudrillard's approach requires the libertarian sense of free will, because there is a dilemma in his argument which, I think, can only be reconciled by this sense. This dilemma can be found in his view of chance. With this question of how to locate the 'free' conscious mind, it is understandable why Baudrillard argues, in *Fatal Strategies*, that 'chance never existed' ((1983)2008, p.187). Baudrillard hypothesised two definitions of 'chance': 1) chance as an accidental break in an ordered world; 2) chance as accidental meeting in a chaotic world. In the first world, everything is connected, and something is disconnected by chance; in the second world, everything is indifferent to each other, only meets by chance. In both cases, however, chance is actually an impossible concept because, in the first world, chance is what order aims to eliminate, or use as an alibi when order does not work perfectly. In this sense the concept of chance saves the necessity by functioning as an excuse. In the second world, chance becomes an indication of order in a disordered world. Chance is willed by reason (namely, order) so that it makes itself possible.

Baudrillard himself does not argue for the second one but prefers to think that the concept of chance is impossible in both hypothetical worlds, because there must be a void in relation to the supposed order in both worlds. Chance is impossible because this void is impossible: in the first world the order is everywhere; and in the second world, void cannot be conceptualised because it is everywhere. In a sense, the concept of chance could reconcile the conflict between determinism and 'free', which is, once again, the central question of free will. At this point, Baudrillard seems to think such a reconciliation is conceptually impossible.

Again, the context here is his metaphysical argument of reversibility against the coherence implied and pursued by every system. What is slightly different from *Symbolic Exchange and Death* is the introduction of Manichaeism. According to Pawlett (2014), this is influenced by Bataille's reading of Manichaeism and Gnosticism. To make a long story short, Baudrillard proposes a dualism against 'production' as Monism, which is achieved by supposing the symbolic exchange as the dimension of indeterminacy. Thus, Baudrillard's dualism does not involve two entities, but one entity and its death in which another emerges. If a force wants to 'produce' an order, it has to face its own overturn as though there was an opposite side.

This is exemplified in the current US-China relationship. In a sense, China and the Chinese Communist Party are doomed to be treated as a rival or even as an enemy by the US due to unsolved domestic problems of the US. Such problems leave room for others, and for the US itself, at least to imagine, if not to think and practice, an alternative system of value or regime. It does not mean that alternative is really a better answer, but means another 'system' is heterogenous to that of the US. For Baudrillard, if a system, following its own internal logic, can only define itself as 'right', every heterogeneity has to be conceptualised as 'evil' from the system's perspective.

This is what Butler (2011) called 'imitating nothing' of Baudrillard's approach. In order to argue the fatality of production, Baudrillard takes the side of nothing. His doctrine is an imitation of nothing in the sense of 'speaking for' nothing. Thus, the concept of symbolic exchange is in between 'being' and 'nothing'; as a theoretical construction, it aims to demonstrate 'nothing' for all other constructions. The symbolic exchange cannot be simply treated as chaotic, because there are indeed simulacra produced. It cannot be treated as determined either, because it eliminates all determinism as production. Consequently, by imitating nothing, what is placed as the alternative cannot be a concrete entity but be able to form or follow certain rules. But here we can see why, as Genosko argues (1994, p91), the concept of nothing is not enough for reversibility: being nothing means not to be a concrete entity, but imitating nothing means to show the heterogeneousness for a system so that the symbolic exchange/seduction is practised. The dilemma in Baudrillard's approach is clear here: whilst indeterminacy has to be a proposition for Baudrillard, which enables Baudrillard to speak for 'nothing', he has to explain how the nothingness is *shown* without falling into the trap of being a fixed simulacrum. For me, the libertarian sense of free will is arguably one of the few options, if not the only one.

## The second kind of demonstration of reversibility

Baudrillard's second kind of demonstration of reversibility is shown in his concept of seduction and fatal strategy, in which the gap of a system keeps being maintained. Like the first kind, in these cases it appears free will is not necessarily required. For example, in Baudrillard's reading, the seduction that attracts Narcissus is the gap between him and his image, which simulation tries to cross (Butler, 1999). Neither water (as mirror) nor image of self in the water do anything to actively seduce the subject but wait instead. So, the libertarian sense of free will seems not necessary in this case.

However, using Baudrillard's logic, the relationship between production and seduction is dynamic, which means the second kind of demonstration of reversibility share the same logic with the first. This is because seduction is by definition able to keep annulling the progression of production on the one hand, whilst allowing production to continue on the other, so that makes production a futile process of 'finishing'.

The most vivid case would be Baudrillard's reading of Kierkegaard's *The Seducer's Diary*: the main plot is that a man tries to seduce a girl and then abandons her when he succeeds in an indirect way. That is, he makes the girl keep guessing about his attitude, feeling that the man might have affection for her but can never be sure. Baudrillard especially appreciated this indirect (or, in his word, 'oblique') approach. For him, the seducer's strategy is clearly illustrated in Kierkegaard's metaphor about fencing:

...you feint a high quart, as fencers say, and attack in second... The moment of the feint is indescribable. The opponent, as it were, feels the slash, he is touched! Aye, that is true, but in quite a different place from where he thought. (Kierkegaard, 1843 cited by Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.106).

In the quotation, a fencer's act is 'seduced' by the opponent's feint and leaks a flaw. Similarly, the seducer pretends to encounter the girl unexpectedly and does not show any intention. This makes the girl feel curious and makes her want to find out more and, more importantly, to verify her supposed reason. Thus, the key to a process of

seduction involves what he calls 'two simultaneous moments' ((1979)1991, p.107): mobilisation and suspension. That is, to mobilise the force driving production, as a fencer's act luring the girl's curiosity, and therefore the girl's curiosity is suspended, which means to fall into the trap of seduction ((1979)1991, p.107). In this relation, production has a supposed freedom, as if the process of production only follows its own internal logic. Whilst, if the gap is successfully sustained, production is doomed to fall into this trap. That is why 'seduction engages a fate' ((1979)1991, p.108).

In this sense, the libertarian sense must be presupposed, because the seducer is supposed to do something other than girl's production. The central argument here exactly lies in the fact that the seducer is beyond what determines the girl's belief. If the girl's acts only require the compatibilist sense of free will, the seducer must be able to get rid of the determinate factor impacting on the girl.<sup>10</sup> The same holds true in the example of Narcissus, although it is much less obvious. It is his act of identifying himself with the image that makes him be seduced by self-image. It is he who participates in a setting which reflects a gap, as if the identity is almost finishing. It is the boy's free will, which means to be undetermined, fissures a gap in the identity between the image and him.

The libertarian sense of free will is even more important for the concept of fatal strategy. Pataphysics, as an imaged situation, requires a possibility that the fact can be intentionally changed alternative to it appears. For example, in *Fatal Strategies*:

Stories of reversibility are always the funniest, like the one about the rat and the psychologist: the rat tells about how he ended up by perfectly conditioning the psychologist to give him a piece of bread every time he lifted the gate of this cage. Based on this story you could imagine, on the level of scientific observation, that the experiment would have been faked – not involuntarily altered by the observer, but faked by the object, with the purpose of amusement or vengeance (as in the unintelligible trajectories of particles), or better yet: that the object only pretends to obey the laws of physics because

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<sup>10</sup> One may think that there could be other factors determining the seducer's acts. These factors could be unknown to the girl. In this situation, seduction could still occur. But the seducer only has a compatibilist sense of free will.

However, this situation is not included in Baudrillard's theory. This is because the seducer's act is addressing to the girl. If there is any determining factor of the seducer's act, it must be from the girl. There could be more determining factors in the seducer's acts. But such factors are beyond the situation in which Baudrillard illustrated his concept of seduction.

it gives so much pleasure to the observer. Such would be the pataphysics ...  
that lies in wait for all physics at its inadmissible limits. (1983, p.112)

The context here is a kind of web of concepts illustrated in *Fatal Strategies*, which revolves around several coupled concepts, like visible/invisible; true/false; scene/obscene; love/seduction; law/rule and so on. These concepts can be divided into two groups: one is a couple of binary concepts, like visible/invisible; the other is a concept and its radicalised form, like scene/obscene. Through these two ways of opposition, the concepts in the book are mutually defined as a discourse. But the central logic is same as that in *The Symbolic Exchange and Seduction*. For example, in *Fatal Strategies*, production in the extreme end is obscene, which refers to the status that things and signs 'infinitely proliferate' (1983, p.25), and does not stop by a concrete finality. Following the logic in *Seduction*, if production is about making visible then obscene, as more visible than visible, is in the third order of simulacra, namely simulation. The status of obscenity thus becomes the end of production.

By contrast, he writes in *Fatal Strategies* that the concept of the secret is 'more invisible than the invisible' ((1983)2008, p.79), which is related to the evil principle. 'Evil' here is not foremost about morality but refers to what cannot be represented or absorbed by simulation. That is, this is the category defined by Baudrillard against the logic of making everything visible. A system constituted by signs as the product of simulation is a law about what can be defined, what is acceptable, and therefore what is good. In this sense, what cannot be defined has to be conceptualised as evil for the side of production and fall into the same category of seduction (Baudrillard, 2009, p107).

In short, if the visible and the invisible are determined by the law in a system, the obscene and secret are extreme statuses in which that the law is abolished.

Under this logic, the object of scientific research could be outside the horizon of scientists too, and thus can reverse scientific knowledge. This is supported by recent developments in quantum physics as uncertainty, Baudrillard believes, in which the observation can be impacted by the observer ((1983)2008). This therefore conditions a possibility of the reversibility that the real status or property of the object is outside the horizon of scientific knowledge production. Compared with many discussions on the limitation of human beings' reason (like Hume and Kant) which provide a more direct argument, it is hard to find a foundation for this reversibility in Baudrillard's

argument, because it by definition cannot be absorbed into any system and is exactly the possibility of failure of any formalisation. After all, what Baudrillard can say is 'let's believe for a single instant the hypothesis that there is a fatal and enigmatic bias in the order of things' ((1983)2008, p.230). This statement is quite reasonable in the context of his discussion, but it conversely also betrays the condition of his argument: Baudrillard must not say anything about the condition of his hypothesis. Consequently, the libertarian sense of free will is the only choice for him.

## **Determinism and free will in Freud's illustration**

This section will review the role of free will in Freudian psychoanalysis. Firstly, it will throw light upon Freud's illustration of primary and secondary processes in his two early works: *A Project for Scientific Psychology* and *Interpretation of Dreams*, because they are targets of Baudrillard. Moreover, it also aims to show a shift in Freud's theoretical construction. This shift marks the abandonment of Freud's first determinist presupposition, which shows how the question of free will emerges, even if Freud did not plan to discuss. This part provides a detailed explanation of the logic of Freud's determinism. This is the background knowledge for the discussion in the next part.

Secondly, several key texts of Freud will be examined in terms of the question of free will. I argue that the libertarian sense of free will has to be Freud's presupposition, although he had never claimed this directly.

Thirdly, I will sketch some debates on the role of free will in Freudian psychoanalysis, I argue that those who believe Freud simply holds a determinism are wrong.

Through reviewing Freud's early works, this section argues Freud also presupposes an idea of free will. The key to understand Freud's position is that he is not a philosopher who focuses on the metaphysical question of mind, but a doctor who wants to treat patients. For this reason, he has to leave open to the question of free will. His claims on determinism are merely working hypotheses for certain arguments, they should not be treated as the metaphysical presupposition of Freudian psychoanalysis.

## ***From A Project for Scientific Psychology to Interpretation of Dreams***

This section will sketch the primary and secondary processes in Freud's two works, *A Project for Scientific Psychology* and *Interpretation of Dreams*. It has two aims: firstly, it aims to provide a background of Freud's concepts, so that paves the way for further discussion of Baudrillard's critique. Secondly, it aims to show a shift in Freud's theoretical presupposition in terms of determinism, which indicates how the question of free will emerged in Freud's exploration.

### **Freud's primary and secondary process**

*A Project for a Scientific Psychology* is Freud's first systematic explanation of the primary and secondary process. It shows how he had the central idea of the relationship between conscious and unconscious activity from the start of his psychoanalytical career, refining the theory over decades in publications including *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and *The Unconscious* (1915). Simply put, the two processes are opposing but complementary modes of operation within a person's psychical apparatus. The primary process classifies the primal, free-flowing energy that stems from unconscious drives that in turn serve to maximise pleasure (the pleasure principle). The experience of pleasure, Freud think, stems from the discharge of energy. The secondary process harnesses the energy and serves as a system of control that is governed by the reality principle (the mind's ability to assess and act upon the reality of the external world).

In *The Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Freud tried to build a doctrine on mental processes based on basic quantitative energy<sup>11</sup> states and changes of material

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<sup>11</sup> Freud defined two kinds of energies, Q and Q $\dot{\eta}$ . The former refers to excitations from outside, while the latter refers to excitations from inside or reminds after Q passed the filter. In the following paragraph I will use excitations or the current of excitations to call both. For more detailed explanation, see, Strachy, (Freud, 1950[1895], SE1, P392)

particles, like physical energy<sup>12</sup> (Freud, (1950[1895]), SE1, p. 295). He proposed that the basic particles are neurons which can be electrically charged. The whole nervous system is governed by two principles: the first is the principle of inertia (Freud, (1950[1895]), SE1, p.296): the neurons tend to get rid of a state caused by intensive excitation. The highly charged neurons will lead to experiences of pain (Freud, (1950[1895]), SE1, p.307). However, the first principle is based on the mode of a single neuron, a more complex organisation of neurons will bring about internal excitation from within.

This is the origin of biological needs, Freud thinks, like hunger and thirst. External stimuli could be stopped by withdrawing from it, but internal stimuli have to be restored and impeded for discharge, at least at certain times, in order to maintain the conditions that make specific corresponding actions possible (Freud, (1950[1895]), SE1, p.297). For example, before we can eat something due to hunger, we have to endure the feeling of hunger from internal stimuli for a while in order to cook or hunt. This requirement for enduring stored excitations is defined as the second principle, and this function of store is called the secondary function of the nervous system. Moreover, Freud therefore hypothesised the function of resistance existed in between neurons, which is defined as a 'contact-barrier' (Freud, (1950[1895]), SE1, p.299). To sum up, the first principle is linked to the primary function, which is about discharging excitation, whilst the second is to store.

To explain how the function of control works, Freud introduces three systems in the nervous system:  $\Phi$ ,  $\psi$ , and  $\omega$ : The excitation received by neurons are only quantitatively different, and both  $\Phi$  and  $\psi$  only involve quantitative processes (Freud, (1950[1895]), SE1, p. 295). The function of  $\Phi$  is perception, whilst that of  $\psi$  is to store memory. He supposes that the system  $\omega$  can transfer the quantitative data to the qualitative one, so that provide a judgement of reality to allow the  $\psi$  system to release the discharge. This process is called reality test.

The part of  $\psi$  system which can perform the function of inhibition is defined as *ego* (Freud, (1950(1895)), SE1, P323). Freud hypothesised, that the contact-barrier of a neuron can be decreased by the current of excitation. A riverbank can be widened and deepened by the constant flux of water. Similarly, some neurons will have the lower resistance due to the currents of excitation. The lower resistance makes these neurons

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<sup>12</sup> See SE1, P.305, note 3.

attract more flux of excitations. Thus, these neurons can congregate most excitations. The part of the  $\psi$  system constituted by these neurons is defined as *ego*. The *ego* has the function of inhibition because it can redirect a current of excitation to itself. The redirection in effect inhibits the current to pass through other neurons. Clearly, in a reality test, *ego* cooperates with the system  $\omega$ .

The concept of primary and secondary process share the logic of primary and secondary principle, but refers to the more complicated organisation of neurons: the primary process refers to the activities of the  $\psi$  system, which include hallucinations and primary defences, whilst under the condition that the *Ego* can manage excitation and maintain the function of the reality test, the process of excitation and discharge is defined as the secondary process. That is, the secondary process only refers to the status in which the  $\omega$  system is at work.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), The fundamental premise does not differ much from *The Project for a Scientific Psychology*, but there are two important differences between these two works. Firstly, Freud gave up building a coherent theory involving both physical and psychical sides, and the whole mental apparatus in this book is a temporal order of mental activities only (Freud, (2001[1900]), SE5, p.536-7). Secondly, the  $\psi$  and  $\phi$  system in *The Project for a Scientific Psychology* are combined into one system, named as  $\psi$ . It involves the functions of both memory and perception which had belonged to  $\psi$  and  $\phi$  separately, although they are still 'mutually exclusive' (Freud, (2001[1900]), SE5, p.540). Consequently, activities in the  $\psi$  system are defined as the primary process<sup>13</sup>.

## Freud's abandon of A Project for Scientific Psychology

As a posthumously published work, *A Project for Scientific Psychology* is characteristic of an ambition of 'scientificity', in which Freud hopes to explain the mental activity somehow as a automatic mechanism. But the first difference aforementioned implies a shift in Freud's theoretical construction, which, I think, indicates his renouncement of *A Project for Scientific Psychology*.

The earliest indication of his renouncement is shown in Freud's letter to his friend Wilhelm Fliess in 1898, in which Freud confessed that, although he still thought

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<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed review and explanation of Freud's considerations, see Appendix 1.

psychological processes should have a biological basis, his theory nevertheless cannot be developed through this approach, and he would have to 'behave as if only the psychological were under consideration (Freud cited in Masson, 1986, p.326)'. Why he cannot build a coherent theory, he also admits, is unknown to him.

The earliest published statement is in Chapter 7 of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in which he had stressed this before explaining the mental apparatus:

I shall entirely disregard the fact that the mental apparatus with which we are here concerned is also known to us in the form of anatomical preparation, and I shall carefully avoid the temptation to determine psychical locality in any anatomical fashion (Freud, 1900, SE5, p.536).

Freud's reluctance here is obvious: to build a scientific theory by disregarding a fact is probably already a recognition of failure, and this is clearly different from the start point of *A Project for Scientific Psychology*. In Freud's last work, *Outline of psychoanalysis* (1940) he finally left the gap between mental and biological activities, defined as the target of psychoanalytic research for the future.

## The determinist approach on the psychical level

As it can be seen, the shift in Freud's theoretical construction is about his presupposition of determinism: If mental activities are somehow biologically and quantitatively determined in *A Project for Scientific Psychology*, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, it is based on 'psychical value' and 'psychical intensity', which are essential elements for Freud to describe the mechanism of dreams. But what psychical value and intensity are?

For explaining these two concepts, it should be good to sketch the basic view of this work first. Generally, Freud's central point is that dream contents are not random but a distorted way of expressing a wish. A dream involves two parts: the 'manifest dream-content' and 'latent dream-thought'. Freud treated them as two ways to express the same content. There are two mechanisms of dream-formation: condensation and displacement. The condensation is the consequence of over-determination of elements in a dream. The cause for an element to appear in manifest dream-content

is its connections with other ideas. One element is connected with multiple dream-thoughts, and one dream-thought is also connected with multiple elements. Consequently, a network of elements is formed and finally several elements will be 'intensified' (Freud, 1900, SE4, P330; SE5, P595) so that they become representatives that appear as the manifest dream-content. Freud made an analogy between this and an election: the appeared element is like the highest voted representative. Therefore, a dream usually looks very fragmental and like a combination of many irrelevant memories. By contrast, the displacement is about one element replaced by another. This is achieved by transferring the intensity from a high psychological value element to another low psychological value element. Meanwhile, due to the condensation, the low psychological value element will gain value, so that a former low value element takes the former high psychological value element's place.

The concept of psychological value and psychological intensity on which condensation and displacement are based indicate a divergence *from A Project for Scientific Psychology*. As to psychological value, Freud had never clearly defined it, even before *The Interpretation of Dreams*. But based on its usage, it generally refers to the value that mental apparatus imposes on the internal/external stimulus. The first time he used it was in chapter one, in which Freud reviewed a discussion on the relation between dream and stimuli. Freud provided several dreams where external stimuli were integrated in the dreams, like an alarm clock becomes noises. Under this context, Freud introduced his contemporary scholar Strumpell's view about impressions: psychological value is what impressions get from its combination with aroused memories (Freud, 1900, SE 4, P29). That is, external stimuli bring about impressions, but a clear impression on an object can only be formed with a relevantly stable and long-lasting impression, otherwise, what we get is a constant varying illusion. In the course of recognising the object from the received impression, an impression arises and connects with memories so that it registers onto the mental apparatus as the traces of stimuli.

Another context involving psychological value is in a discussion of extraneousness of dreams. The extraneousness refers to the experience that, although dreams are mental activities like thinking, it usually seems to happen to the subject, rather than a thought performed by the person. Freud considered this should be explained as being caused by a psychological process rather than by material stimuli, because sensory materials are the same in both waking and sleeping. Again, it is Strumpell whose view

Freud discussed, which proposed that extraneousness is due to the link between a mnemonic image and 'feelings, interests and judgement of value' (Freud, 1900, SE4, p.54) is broken because of a kind of 'obscure pressure' (Freud, 1900, SE4, p.54). In this sense, psychological value refers to a judgement imposed on mnemonic images and is defined as 'some particular degree of interest' (Freud, 1900, SE4, p.306) which is attached to an idea. Namely, it is about the importance of this idea, and extraneousness involves a disentanglement between the idea itself and a feeling of importance.

Furthermore, it could also be an example of on how restrictive Freud's determinism is. Although Freud seems to value Strumpell's conceptualisation, a criticism is nevertheless made in terms of the choice of memory aroused. Namely, why does the alarm clock form a certain dream for one person, but forms another dream during another person's sleep? For Freud, Strumpell the connections are arbitrary, and this should be deemed as a theoretical flaw.

As to the concept of psychological intensity, it seems to refer to the strong and weak of a mnemonic image. There is also no direct definition of this concept illustrated as well, but Freud clearly stresses that psychological intensity should not be confused with sensory intensity. Namely, psychological intensity is not about how vivid an image is perceived. The most direct explanation is a comparison of psychological value and psychological intensity (Freud, 1900, SE4, P206, note 1), in which Freud stated that, in the dream thought, 'physical intensity coincides with psychological value: the most intense elements are also the most important one' (Freud, 1900, SE4, p.330).' But this statement is hardly more than a tautology. A more illuminating explanation is from Jean Laplanche, who indicates the homogeneousness between the concept of intensity in a dream and Q (current of excitation) in *A Project for Scientific Psychology*. That is, just as displacement is about transferring intensity from one idea to another, primary and secondary processes involve the discharge of excitation by (re-)cathexing an idea (Laplanche, 1988). Clearly, the concept of 'intensity' can be at best a metaphor, due to Freud giving up linking it with a strong biological grounding, but the influence of *A Project for Scientific Psychology* in Freud's conceptualisation is evident.

Overall, the central logic of *The Interpretation of Dreams* is to decipher dreams as an operation of mnemonic images. These images hold a certain degree of psychological intensity, marked and related by psychological value, and triggered by stimuli so that it emerges into a dream. If Freud held a kind of determinism in *The Interpretation of*

Dreams, this should be based on a system constituted by psychical value which grasp its materials from everyday life. The cases Freud used in this volume clearly shows that elements representing ideas gain their value and intensity in social life, which means the determinants of these elements therefore cannot be simply reduced to the somatic factor. By comparing it with computers, it seems, in *A Project for Scientific Psychology*, that Freud's determinism is based on a hardware level, whilst in *The Interpretation of Dreams* it is on a software level. This form of determinism had no longer changed in his career and became the central logic of the following works (c.f. Freud, 1901b, 1906, 1910, and 1919).

The next section is a review of Freud's works in terms of the question of free will. It starts with explaining how this shift is because Freud cannot locate free will in his presupposition of mental apparatus.

## **The role of free will in Freud's illustration**

Freud's insistence on a determinist view is seen throughout his works, but it is always involved with some senses of free will as well. In the following paragraph, this thesis will show 'one and a half' of free agency in Freud's work. 'One' refers to the *Ego's* function which meets the compatibilist sense of free will; 'half' refers to the free will we sense in everyday life and implies the liberationist sense of free will. It is defined as 'half' here because Freud used it to explain the therapeutic mechanism but had never clearly explained it. This section argues that, like Baudrillard, Freud presupposes ideas of free will in his theoretical construction. This reading aims to condition my comparison between Baudrillard and Freud.

### **Free will in *A Project for Scientific Psychology***

As the last section shows, Freud abandoned a biological determinism, but did not explain the reason concretely. Hereof, I argue that it is the question of how to locate the concept of free will in the mental apparatus that make him have to renounce this determinism in *A Project for Scientific Psychology*. From arguing this, this section aims to show the question of free will in Freud's works. Freud kept struggling to locate, or even somehow dissolve, free will in the mental apparatus, but has never succeeded.

In A Project for Scientific Psychology, it seems the existence of the second process presumes a kind of function which can be independent of the automatic biological activities. As Freud said:

In order to accomplish such an action, ..., an effort is required which is independent of endogenous Q and in general greater, since the individual is being subjected to conditions which may be described as the exigencies of life. In consequence, the nervous system is obliged to abandon its original trend to inertia ((1950[1895]), SE1, p.297).'

Then, in the later section of the same part, Freud argued that 'sleep is characterised by motor paralysis (paralysis of the will)' ((1950[1895]), SE1, p.337), which means the secondary process does not work in sleeping. Furthermore, a concept of 'will' emerges, as if to stop it makes room for the automatic primary process. The context here is a discussion of dreams and the primary process. Freud considered that falling asleep is conditioned by a lower level of internal excitation in the  $\psi$  system, so that the second process is not at work. This is most clear in children: a child can only fall asleep when they eat enough and are not disturbed by any other somatic urges (e.g., hungry). For adults who have a mature *Ego*, these excitations will be stored in the *Ego*. Thus, in the status of sleeping Freud supposed there is no excitation being stored, which means the *Ego* is not loaded by excitations and does not use its function of inhibition.

However, neither will nor the *Ego*'s function is free from biological determination. Hereof, by 'will' Freud only refers to the name of impulsion where endogenous excitations take the forms in the  $\psi$  system which supports the whole  $\psi$  system. The constant endogenous stimulations make the  $\psi$  system increasingly facilitated and reduce the resistance to the least level for all types of neurons. This least level or resistance becomes the threshold for excitation to enter the neuron system. Thus, the central part of the  $\psi$  system is most facilitated and becomes the interface between mental apparatus and body. 'Will' is the name of the current of excitations which pass the threshold and perfuse the  $\psi$  system. Meanwhile, if the *Ego* is 'the totality of the  $\psi$  cathexes' ((1950[1895]), SE1, p.323), it seems will should be under the *Ego*'s control. Similarly, in our everyday life, it seems 'paying attention to something' is a volitional act. But as aforementioned, the concept of 'attention' is explained as an effect of

perception: the endogenous tension makes a wishful idea cathected and expects its fulfilment. The nature of attention lies in keeping this state until a similar idea arrives onto the  $\psi$  system and passes the reality test through the  $\omega$  system (1950[1895]), SE1, p361). Consequently, the *Ego* itself should be nothing but the consequence of excitations from stimuli.

But the price Freud paid for this determinism is the internal conflict in his explanation of dreams. As aforementioned, consciousness relies on the  $\omega$  system. So, when a sleeper has a dream, excitations should be strong enough to activate the  $\omega$  system so that it triggers consciousness. If the  $\omega$  system's excitation comes from the  $\psi$  system and the *Ego* is by definition the most facilitated part of the  $\psi$  system, it means that whenever the  $\omega$  system is triggered, the *Ego* already has been triggered. But this is opposite to the condition of sleeping as the unloading of excitations in the *Ego*, and the *Ego*'s withdrawal from will. A triggered *Ego* has access to will, which leads to more excitations entering. Moreover, excitations in the  $\psi$  system will not be discharged until the discharge of the  $\omega$  system takes place. Consequently, this is actually a one-way process for waking up. Whenever we have a dream, the mental apparatus has to be in a loop of wakening.

This process seems nothing new, considering we usually have experiences of waking up from an intensive dream, like feeling thirsty and dreaming of drinking water, but finally waking up at the moment of drinking. But the problem is that no one can fall asleep from a waking status if the mental apparatus operates mechanically like this, because the loop guarantees the accumulation of excitations and internal bodily excitations never stop. Namely, due to a reality test being achieved by the discharge of the  $\omega$  system, whenever it is not discharged the excitation in the  $\psi$  system remains as well, so that the *Ego* cannot be unloaded. The whole process falls into the wakening loop again until the *Ego* acts by itself regardless the  $\omega$  system. Freud finally compromised, stating that dreams need further investigation, considering consciousness is at work without triggering the *Ego* ((1950[1895]), SE1, p340).

But, as this thesis has shown, the whole process is impossible in his paradigm, except introducing a switch-like function that can turn the direction of the loop. This function is indeed supposed by Freud, as the *Ego*'s withdrawal from perception. But what is left is merely the statement of tautology-like presupposition, as he states: 'it is a highly interesting fact that the state of sleep begins and is evoked by a closure of those sense organs that are capable of being closed' ((1950[1895]), SE1, p.337).

Based on this, he then started again to explain how the excitations from the system of  $\Phi$  to  $\psi$  are stopped as an 'automatic mechanism ((1950[1895]), SE1, p.337).'

This holds true in Interpretation of dreams, Freud once again mentioned this by drawing on Strumpell's experiment on anaesthesia patients and our daily experience of sleeping. Although he recognised there are still many stimuli even if the eyes are closed, a 'supposed-to-be-able-to-act' subject is taken for granted:

...we close our most important sensory channels, our eyes, and try to protect the other sense from all stimuli or from any modification of the stimuli acting on them. (Freud, 1900, SE4, p.23)

This act of closing or withdrawal is what this thesis dubs a 'half' sense of free will in Freud's early works, and it is arguably here that indicates why the A Project for Scientific Psychology failed: an automatic process cannot be the cause of itself, but Freud closed what should remain open.

## The function of the *Ego* in therapy and jokes

Although A Project for Scientific Psychology had been abandoned, the *Ego*'s function of regulating the current of excitations through its bound status ((1950[1895]), SE1, p368) shone through and became a basic idea in Freud's later work, on which a compatibilist sense of free will is based. In Study on Hysteria (1895), Freud argues that the method of treating hysteria is to allow affects to be expressed by speech, and consequently corrected by normal consciousness. This is because the central problem of hysteria lies in that the *Ego* cannot control the affects which are linked with stressful ideas. Here, the basis of Freud's argument is that an idea accepted as real by the *Ego* implies being connected with a network of existing idea in the *Ego*. The mechanism of deciding the connection is defined as censorship, which is controlled over by a part of the *Ego*. Clearly, the incompatible idea keeps being exiled. Speech is the way to trace the repressed idea by consciousness and this act soon will confront the resistance in the form that the patient's association is broken – they feel that they have nothing to say. Here, Freud stated, the way therapists can help to overcome the resistance is to use 'psychical compulsion to direct the patient's attention to the ideational traces of

which he is in search' (Freud, 1895, SE2, p.270). Once again, it seems the *Ego*, although under another person's help, has a certain capacity to use its function of attention against itself. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, this procedure is even clearly stated as 'involuntary' ideas that are transformed into 'voluntary' ones (Freud, 1900, SE4, p.102), which requires a kind of relaxation of critical function.

This capability to have control over the critical function is also the key in Freud's theory of jokes, which is mainly illustrated in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905). The central point of this work is that the pleasure of jokes stems from saving psychical expenditure. By this saving, we restore the states in childhood in which psychical expenditure is at a lower level. This explanation starts with supposing that a child's pleasure in their play of words is somehow an instinct or drive for a child to use this capability. By using the capacity of disposal to link words and thoughts together, Freud considered, there should be a pleasurable effect of this practice of linking, which is from the repetition and rediscovery of what is familiar and similar. However, the child has to abandon their play because of a critical faculty. Consequently, the child seeks to get pleasure by going against the critical restraint. The central function of the technique of a joke is to silence the critical restraint, which is achieved by techniques including nonsense words formed by wordplay or the double meaning of a word (Freud, 1905, SE8, P128-9).

As to the concept of critical faculty, it is not explained in detail, and at that time Freud had not developed the concept of the *Superego*. In *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), Freud argues that the mechanism of humour lies in the listener's understanding and sympathy with the humourist's own negative feelings. Such feelings are saved and transferred into something less important. Namely, the *Ego* takes a more powerful and mature position to treat the suffering *Ego* as childish. This explanation is remade with the concept of the *Superego* in *On Humour* (1927), in which Freud linked the mechanism of humour with the *Superego*: the subject rearranges psychical energies to the *Superego*, so that stand from the *Superego* console the *Ego* as what parents do for a child. As it can be seen, the *Ego* can not only lift the critical function but can also identify with the critical side in need. In this sense, it is not fully determined by the past status.

## Transference and the *Ego's* power to overcome resistances

The conflict between the *Ego* and resistance is the central topic throughout Freud's 1910 works, and relevant discussion is intimately involved with the concept of transference. In *Observations on Transference Love* (1915), Freud set the aim of psychoanalysis as getting 'the extra piece of mental freedom' which enables patient to distinguish the conscious from the unconscious by overcoming transference. The question here is, then, what does 'mental freedom' mean?

The explanation of this has to be based on a summary of Freud's view on transference. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, transference refers to transferring intensity in the mechanism of displacement (Freud, 1900, SE5, P561-3). In *Studies on Hysteria*, the meaning changes as it refers to the phenomenon that the patient transfers the repressed unconscious wish to the analyst (Freud, 1895, SE2, P301-3). This later became the basic sense of this concept, and overcoming transference became the central part of psychoanalytic treatment. The most detailed illustration is in *The Dynamics of Transference* (1912), in which Freud introduced the idea of an oscillation of libido between conscious reality and the unconscious part of infantile complex. The former is manageable for the conscious part. But usually, it cannot satisfy the whole libido, so a part of libido is attracted by the unconscious part of the complex. This attraction becomes the source of power for the resistance. The psychoanalytic treatment involves two steps: an analyst should firstly diminish the conscious reality to which the libido is directed, which will increase the portion of libido attached to the unconscious part of the complex; and then, secondly, track the unconscious part of complex and make it accessible to the conscious part.

This explanation should be contextualised in Freud's terminology of the unconscious. During the 1910s, Freud's concept of the unconscious became more mature. The 'conscious' and 'unconscious' used in *Observations on Transference Love* is distinguished 'in the systematic sense' (Freud, 1915, SE12, p.170) which is from *A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis* (1912). As Strachey (SE12, P258) noted, this is the first time Freud gave a detailed illustration on his concept of unconscious. The article distinguished dynamic from the descriptive unconscious. The descriptive way treats whatever ideas being not in the conscious as unconscious; the dynamic way treats only those ideas which resist being accessible to the conscious as unconscious. The key difference lies in the foreconscious (or, preconscious)

content, which refers to something a person does not bear in mind but can do so when they want, such as daily routines. From a descriptive sense, foreconscious experience is allocated to the unconscious because it is not in the conscious mind. But from a dynamic perspective, it belongs to the conscious because there is no resistance for the subject to be aware of it. The 'systematic sense' in the 1910s is no different from 'dynamic sense', in the sense that Freud proposed unconsciousness as a system rather than a split part from the *Ego* (Freud, 1912, SE12, P263-4), which precludes the further change in 1923. In short, transference is conceptualised in a mode which is indeed characteristic of its 'cause-effect', as Baudrillard criticised.

But no matter whether the unconscious is a repressed thing or system, the key for mental freedom is a capability to distinguish. The mental freedom in *Observations on Transference Love* thus refers to the libido's freedom from the attraction of the unconscious complex, so it is able to distinguish reality and the figure of the analyst coloured by unconscious complex. This is a typical compatibilist sense of free will because the libido as 'sexual instinct' is biological-based (Freud, 1905, SE7, p.135) and completely determined. The change psychoanalysis helps an analysand make merely lies in a kind of reorganisation or redirection.

But this change cannot occur automatically. In order to overcome resistance, Freud claimed in *A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis* that 'a certain amount of exertion is needed for this task' (Freud, 1912, SE12, p.264), which clearly presupposes an agency that can perform this exertion. Such exertion cannot simply be attributed to the conscious or unconscious process, because in this work Freud's main point is that all psychical acts start with an unconscious process, and only some of them register into consciousness, so that the fragmental conscious contents are a sign of a bigger unconscious system.

As can be seen, the libertarian sense of free shines through again. Freud did not specify the foundation of the act of exertion, and conscious processes are clearly subsumed into the unconscious one. But this paradoxically indicates that exertion to overcome resistance cannot be based on a compatibilist sense of free will, because there is no agency that can be an alternative force against the unconscious if the compatibilist sense is the case.

Moreover, there are some small but necessary things that presuppose a sense of free will more than those determined by the mental apparatus: in *The Dynamics of Transference* (1912), Freud mentioned that, at the end of the treatment, a suggestion

should be given to the patient for them to work on. The aim of these suggestions was to let the patient understand the impulsion by its 'psychical value' (Freud, 1912, SE12, p.108), so that it connects with their personal history. The condition on the patient's side for an intentional transformation from acting to understanding was still not clear. The analyst of course plays some role in this change, but the patient can never simply acquire the suggestion like an act of obtaining information (Freud, 1914, SE12, P155), not to mention that the suggestions, as mere constructions, could be wrong (Freud, 1937, SE23, P261). Moreover, Freud also stressed that 'every single association, every act of the person under treatment must reckon with the resistance and represents a compromise' (Freud, 1912, SE12, p.103).' This surely means a patient's speech act is never free from the unconscious complex. But, conversely, the word 'compromise' also indicates that something is supposed to be alternative to the force of resistance. Moreover, Freud considered, due to the patient's *Ego* being in regression, they should postpone any important decisions because during the treatment the transference is intensified, which would impact on the patient's impressions on things or event in everyday life (e.g., love-object or profession) (Freud, 1912, SE12, P153). Although planning one's life is a very common activity for most people, Freud's suggestions undoubtedly imply that an individual has the capability to do things alternatively to a choice which is coloured by transference, namely, by an unconscious process.

Clearly, Freud just set a compatibilist sense of free will as a therapeutic aim but, strictly speaking, the practice itself is based on a sense of free will more than a compatibilist one.

## *Ego, Superego, and Id*

After the 1910s, *Ego and Id* (1923) was one of Freud's most important works because the concepts of the Superego and the Id were first introduced. Freud tried to put all his three central sets of terminologies together: the conscious/pre-conscious/unconscious, the *Ego/Superego/Id*, and the Eros/Death instinct. The previous section has already shown that an unexplained sense of free will is attributed to the *Ego*/consciousness, but introducing the Superego pushes the question about need to another level.

Generally, the *Ego* is still defined as 'a coherent organisation of mental processes' (Freud, 1923, SE19, p.17). The *Superego* (or *Ego Ideal*) is formed in a triangular relationship (mother – father – infant). It is the form which the *Ego* takes from the figure of the father when it is too weak to maintain control over the *Id*. The direct reference to the concept of the *Id* is from a scholar Georg Groddeck, who is mentioned by Freud. Groddeck uses German word *Es* (means 'it' in English, and 'id' in Latin) to refer to an unknown force within in life (Groddeck, 1928, p9; also, Freud, 1923, SE19, p.23). What Freud here appeals to is a passiveness in life: as Groddeck, said, 'man is lived by the *Es* (1928, p.9)'. But there is a clear difference: for Groddeck, this might be more than biological instincts, considering he stated that man's behaviour to make a stomach full is from *Es*'s wish to be pregnant symbolically (1928, p14). By contrast, Freud merely stated that, compared with the *Ego*, which is coherent and can perform the function reason, the *id* involves passions (1923, SE19, p25). Finally, the concepts of *Eros* and death instincts are also introduced in this work. They are at play in all mental activities in different areas, struggling in the *Id*, and also embodied in its interactions with the *Ego* and the *Super-ego*.

The *Ego* and *Id* also rebuilt the concept of the unconscious again. It proposes three senses of the unconscious: descriptive, dynamic, and systematic. Compared with the work in the 1910s, the systematic sense now specifically refers to the three agencies: the *Ego*, the *Superego*, and the *Id*, whilst in a dynamic sense of the mental apparatus, the unconscious and conscious are still separated by the effect of the repression. Thus, in the 1910s works, the 'dynamic' and 'systematic' senses are the same, whilst in 1923 they become different. In the discussion on the relation between the three agencies and the unconscious/conscious, Freud mainly uses the dynamic sense: the *Id* is completely in the unconscious, whilst the *Superego* and the *Ego* are partly in the unconscious. The unconscious part of the *Ego* is 'the repressed (1923, SE19, P15)'. It is a part of the *Ego* being cut off by resistance and communicates with the *Ego* via the *Id*. Whilst the *Superego* is intrinsically connected with the *Id*, it is partially in the unconscious.

The question on the *Ego*'s freedom appears in the question of its relationship to the *Super-ego*. Freud portrayed a very poor scenario for the *Ego*'s situation, as it is utilised by 'three masters' (1923, SE19, p.56) simultaneously: the *Id*, the *Superego*, and the external world, because it is the *Ego*'s function to repress and to be responsible for balancing conflicts between the external world and the *Id*.

The Superego's uniqueness lies in its ambivalent relationship to the *Ego*. It is formed by influences outside of the mental apparatus but is simultaneously a part of the *Ego*. As a 'precipitate' (Freud, 1923, SE19, p.34) left from the *Ego*'s identification to the father figure, it is not so much an independent source of force as a perfect model of the *Ego*: being able to help the *Ego* implies that it can cater for the Id better, because, in the Oedipus Complex it was the father who can have access to the love-object (mother) so that it satisfied the Id. The Superego as a more powerful figure seems like a final answer for the *Ego*. But, if so, in facing the Superego, the *Ego* is always on the inferior side. The Superego, therefore, is simultaneously what the *Ego* wants to be and can never be. Considering both of them are powered by the Id, the Superego is actually the representative of the Id against the *Ego*, because when the Id powers both of them, a hierarchical relation is reactivated. This hierarchical relationship conditions the sense of guilt. For Freud, the sense of guilt is 'the perception in the ego answering' to the criticism from superego (Freud, 1923, SE19, p.53). It is powered by the death instinct (the tendency to destroy) in the Id, which is directed to the *Ego* through the Superego. In this sense, one's self-criticism is self-destruction in nature. Consequently, the so-called conflicts among the 'three masters' are centralised at the opposition between the *Ego* (representative of the real world) and the Superego (representative of the Id). *Ego*'s question is how to attract the Id from its own ideal.

As to the question of free will, the compatibilist sense probably can only bring about a very pessimistic conclusion. This is most obvious if we consider the nature of the *Ego*'s function assumed in *A Project for a Scientific Psychology* is its capacity to bind energies. That is, the *Ego* is the most facilitated part of the system of  $\psi$ , but the Superego is by definition even more facilitated than the *Ego*. What the *Ego* do can be no more than enjoying leftovers. In Freud's own words: 'In its (the *Ego*'s) position midway between the Id and reality, it only too often yields to the temptation to become sycophantic, opportunist and lying, like a politician who sees the truth but wants to keep his place in popular favour (Freud, 1923, SE19, p.56).' However, a libertarian sense of free will plays a certain part in Freud's construction of doctrine. If the

existence of this sense of free will is metaphysically unintelligible from the determinist perspective, the lack of it is practically impossible from a clinical perspective<sup>14</sup>.

Thus, considering the role of the *Superego*, the real problem is, even if libertarian sense of free will can be presupposed in the *Ego*, what can *Ego* do in this situation? Usually, many discussions on free will focus on how a self-determined agency is possible if the past determines the present. But what is at stake here is that the *Superego* is related to the future in the sense that it is what the *Ego* expects to achieve, so that determines what the *Ego* should be. It in this sense blurs the distinction between 'need' and 'should'. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

## About discussions of Freud's view of free will

Although this thesis is not intended as a piece of research on Freud's sense of free will, it would be beneficial to locate where the thesis author's view lies in contemporary discussions. This author's reading of Freud is far from the consensus in psychoanalytic circles and there is probably no so-called consensus on this question.

The positions on the question can be divided roughly into two camps roughly: 1) Freud holds a hard determinism; 2) he holds compatibilism. The first position argues that Freud simply holds an incompatibilist determinism. For example, Jonathan Bricklin (2015) argues that there is no room for free will in Freudian psychoanalysis, so treatment could only aim to revive a patient's sense of free will as an illusion. The second position is to treat Freud's view as a kind of compatibilism. Namely, the *ego's* function is determined (Wallace, 1985 & 2008; Dilman, 1999; Wallwork, 1991). Clearly, this position does not leave much room for the *ego* to play an active role. But, as aforementioned, Freud's discussion of transference needs the *ego* to play an active role. Perhaps, for this reason, some scholars also argue that there is a break in Freud's

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<sup>14</sup> The author of this thesis is confident for his reading of Freud. But for readers who hope to have an outline of the debates about the Freud's understanding of free will, see Appendix 2

works and he holds compatibilism only in his later works (Meissner, 2003; Cavell, 2003; Dailey, 2018; Belavsky, 2020).

However, I disagree with all these positions. As I have shown in this section, Freud simply cannot have any conclusion on the question of free will. The most vivid illustration of my position would be Tauber's (2010) example: Freud uses the function of the *ego* as given, simply as a carpenter use a hammer. Thus, I think Freud presupposed the libertarian sense of free will, not because he provided a sustainable argument, but because he needs a sense of free will to explain the inhibition/secondary process as the *ego's* function, whilst the compatibilist sense of free will is not enough for his practice. Consequently, somehow like Baudrillard, the libertarian sense of free will is the last option for Freud<sup>15</sup>.

## **A refutation of Baudrillard's criticism of the primary and secondary process**

Baudrillard's critique of Freud does not work. The concept of free will is a mirror to show this. He does not see the relationship between free will and the secondary process. This makes him oversimplify Freud's theory.

The central logic of Baudrillard's critique is still reversibility. He opposes hierarchical structures, because they presuppose something as its foundation. Freud's concept of repression and secondary process are this kind of presupposition. For example, repression seems to mean something is underneath the appearance, as if a so-called truth or reality can be found.

One of the clearest illustrations is at the end of *The Symbolic Exchange and Death*:

The question is this: is there room to offer a hypothesis of the unconscious – this energy and affective potential which, in its repression and in its labour, lies at the basis of the 'expressive' disturbance and dislocation of the order of discourse, and opposes its primary to its secondary processes? Evidently everything hangs together: if the unconscious is this irreversible agency, then

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<sup>15</sup> For readers who want a more detailed examination of this debate, see Appendix 2

the duality of the primary and the secondary processes is also irreducible, and the work of meaning can only consist in the return of the repressed, in its transparency in the repressing agency of discourse....Conversely, however, the mere hypothesis of a different order, a symbolic order that provided the economy of the unconscious, prohibition and repression and which basically resolved the distinction between the primary and the secondary processes, is enough to relativise the whole psychoanalytic perspective...it cannot be ruled out that psychoanalysis, which originates from the distinction between the primary and the secondary processes, will one day die when this distinction is abolished. The symbolic is already beyond the psychoanalytic unconscious, beyond libidinal economy, just as it is beyond value and political economy (Baudrillard, (1976)1993, p.236-237).

As the last chapter demonstrated, the central logic of Baudrillard's argument is to place the separation of terms or concepts – a bar between them like that between signifier and signified, and between signifiers – priori to terms/concepts themselves. Namely, the idea of the distinction between led and right precedes the left side and right side. This separation is the foundation of a system/structure/simulacra. Following this logic, if a system is produced by addressing something that cannot be produced, its cause can only logically precede<sup>16</sup> the system, but is not temporally before it. That is why Baudrillard said: 'This event without precedent is seduction' (Baudrillard & Pettman, 2008, p.171). Therefore, in his view, psychoanalysis is based on the idea of the separation of unconscious and conscious: it is not psychoanalysis find out or explore the unconscious, but by believing in and conceptualising the separation between unconscious and conscious, psychoanalysis creates itself. The concept of primary and secondary process, as Freud's start point of conceptualising the unconscious, is the cornerstone of psychoanalysis.

However, I think his reading of psychoanalysis is not valid. there are two reasons: firstly, Baudrillard misunderstands Freud. Neither the concept of primary nor secondary processes alone can be treated as production in Baudrillard's sense: as

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<sup>16</sup> Hereof, by 'logically precede', I want to stress an aspect of causal relationships: if an event A logically precedes an event B, it is possible for A and B to happen simultaneously. For example, when I push a table, my pushing logically precedes the movement of the table, but my hand and the table moves simultaneously.

previously mentioned, the former refers to a reaction process. It is not so much about making something concealed come into being and determining something undetermined (or brings about determinacy), as getting rid of this something. Similarly, the secondary process is not that kind of production either, because it is foremostly a re-direction by changing the contact-barrier. It is an organised process of 'getting rid of it'. His critique of Freud is a perfect example to show why Genosko thinks his theory needs a certain strength: without the secondary processes or similar functions in another form, Baudrillard's argument is quite ridiculous. A so-called *potlatch* in primitive society can be nothing more than a 'collective toileting' because no one can hold what they drink.

As previous section shows, Freud's psychoanalytic theory concerns how an individual acts or fails to act: for example, Anna. O., the famous case studied by Freud and Bleuler (Freud's collaborator and teacher), suffered from paresis of muscles and disturbances of vision (Freud and Bleuler, 1955, SE2); the 'wolfman', a patient from Russia, who suffered from animal phobia (Freud, 1918[1914], SE17); 'ratman' had the obsessional ideas that bad things will happen to his father and his beloved lady; Schreber, who is diagnosed with paranoia, cannot stop hearing voices in his mind (Schreber, 2000) Truly all his reading could be wrong, but it is a fact that, the foremost question Freud faced is why an individual cannot act in certain ways.

Secondly, Baudrillard mistakenly treats psychoanalytic theory as what Freud called 'worldview' (Freud, 1940, SE23). Psychoanalysis is not a worldview, so it cannot be simulacra in Baudrillard's sense. Simply speaking, the 'worldview' refers to a comprehensive description of the world. Freud had never treated his theory as that. By contrast, he critiqued a scientific worldview in his age. This view believes science will explain everything. This, for Freud, means the current scientific research methods can apply to unknown things. But, if this is the case, are these things really unknown? Thus, Freud stresses a gap in psychoanalysis. It means psychoanalytic theory cannot be used like that scientific worldview. A scientist could believe he/she will explain the universal truth, but a psychoanalyst must not think so and aim at this.

For this reason, it is necessary to stress a pragmatic dimension in his approach, which is evidently shown in Freud's letter to his friend, Wilhelm Fliess, in which he complained: 'All I was trying to do was to explain defence, but just try to explain something from the very core of nature! I have to work my way through the problem of quality, sleep, memory – in short, all of psychology. Now I want to hear no more of it'

(cited in Masson, 1986, p.136). Alongside Freud's suffering from his work, it is clear that his start point is not to develop a general psychology, but an explanation of the defence mechanism of psychical system to stimuli. The difference between them lies in that the former tried to provide a universal and singular answer, whilst the latter could be an open theory which uses concepts at hand, if not just a talking point.

If, in his early work, Freud was still dreaming of a coherency between clinical explanation and general biology and neuroscience, the pragmatics-directed theoretical concern is more obvious in Freud's later work, like *Constructions in Analysis* (Freud, 1937, SE23) in which Freud argues that interpretation should be more adequately called construction, and analysts should be open to abandoning it. Moreover, neither patients' negative nor formative replies to analysts verify the truth value of interpretations. What makes a construction valuable is rather whether it allows new material for an analysand to recollect, and even false construction is still supposed to be related to the truth to some extent. Indeed, in Freud's later works the treatment is related to rationalising unconscious processes, so that meets Baudrillard's definition of production in the sense of eliminating seduction (Coulter, 2004). But this becomes Freud's technique merely because understanding or verbalising symptoms have effects of elimination. Namely, the hope of eliminating symptoms is not based on understanding the final meaning of an answer.

Baudrillard might think those psychoanalytic constructions about a patient's past are hyperrealities. But it does not matter for Freud. The constructions Freud talked about are arguably based on what are given. That is to say, analysts' construction should be treated as reluctantly reciprocating the given 'gift' from the real. We can read this through Baudrillard's logic: if symptoms are discourse (or systems) made by signs, aiming to get rid of symptoms can be treated as shattering the discourses through an act of (re-)defining words, namely, through the act of speech. This is like in the potlatch a chef redefines the system through his/her own act of giving things order. If Baudrillard does not blind himself with his own theory, he might notice an echo between psychoanalysis and his theory. Freud's idea of construction neither is, nor intended to be, the full representation of real. Rather, it aims to get rid of the 'exchange' which has already occurred.

But how? The next section will explain this.

## A question from the libertarian sense of free will

Now, it is the time to point out the problem of Baudrillard's approach, considering both Baudrillard and Freud's theoretical construction relies on the libertarian sense of free will. Under the compatibilist sense, Baudrillard's criticism of Freud is meaningless. The concept of production per se is dissolved because it is hard to separate an intentional human behaviour from unintentional physical movement, and hard to separate brain activities from a computer, so that there is no room for Baudrillard's 'seduction'.

By contrast, under the libertarian sense, the question becomes more complex. Although it seems quite the opposite, Baudrillard's logic in the symbolic exchange is in fact shared by Freud's treatment. This is because so-called meanings of dreams or symptoms in Freud's sense are not referents, finalities, or aims like Baudrillard supposes, but a transformation. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud defined 'interpretation' as the following:

For 'interpreting' a dream implies assigning a 'meaning' to it – that is, replacing it by something which fits into the chain of our mental acts as a link having a validity and importance equal to the rest. (1900, SE4, p.96)

At first sight, interpretation is about giving a 'meaning' to a dream based on 'equal' value between them. But even if we suppose that dreams, meanings, and the belief of equality between these two are all simulacra in Baudrillard's sense and fit for Baudrillard's criticism, an interchangeability that Baudrillard values is nevertheless clear in Freud's illustration. Namely, it is the interchangeability between the dream and meaning which serves the aim of interpretation, rather than posing meaning as the basis of dream. This made Freud think that 'we have only to undo the substitution correctly in order to arrive at this hidden meaning' (1900, p.96). That is, it is not the meaning that explains the dream as a signs system, but the integration of a set of signs into the whole language system that the dreamer uses defines whether this set of signs is the meaning of the dream. And the formulations of the set of signs is called interpretation.

The condition of the interchangeability is that both meanings and dreams are formed at a level of mental act. For Freud, a dream, as a mental act, is a combination of psychological elements (Freud, 1900, SE4, p.122-3). The typical example is that we might have a dream about drinking water when we are thirsty while sleeping. The act of drinking in a dream compensates for the real behaviour so that protects the sleeping. This mental act is homogeneous to thinking in waking life, like daydreaming (see. Freud, 1905, 1907). In fact, he can only conceptualise these two at the same level, because the only thing he can rely on is the conscious content, as he states in *Ego and id*: '...the property of being conscious or not is in the last resort our one beacon-light in the darkness of depth-psychology' (Freud, 1923, SE19, p.18).

That is to say, whatever so-called 'underlying' or 'underneath' can be supposed, what Freud could use to make a substitution must be representable in consciousness, and therefore must be imposed by a priori categories. The repressed meaning must be at the level of psychological elements, because Id can never be representable, whilst what is repressed is the representative, rather than the Id itself or what the drive is in the Id (see. SE. 14, p154 -156& p177-8). Thus, when Baudrillard stated in *Seduction* that interpretation is about 'turn[ing] the manifest discourse towards its truth... by taking up the latent discourse, delivers the real meaning' (Baudrillard, (1979)1991, p.53), he is wrong, because both dreams/symptoms and their interpretation/meanings are equivalent at the level of representations, rather than one being underneath the other.

If this reading is correct, the interchangeability exactly relies on the reversibility in Baudrillard's sense, because recognising the equivalency between a meaning and a dream or symptom is to reverse the form which is produced by a mental act. By this substitution, a libertarian sense of free will takes over the process of production driven by a compatibilist sense free will, and therefore 'the involuntary' ideas are transformed into 'voluntary' ones' (Freud, 1900, SE4, p.102). This is exactly the logic of the symbolic exchange in the sense that it defeats the form by lifting the other side of the 'bar' which the form is against, namely, the repressed representation. But, it is also different from Baudrillard's symbolic exchange because Freud does not conceptualise the incessant circular process as an indeterminate form. By recognising the reversibility, the substitution occurs by using a production to replace another production, which serves the aim of getting rid of symptoms. Psychoanalysis, in this sense, put Baudrillard's reversibility into practice.

From this perspective, the real problem left is why we cannot change one simulacrum as we please. In the 'rabbit-duck illusion', the image which can be treated as a rabbit and/or a duck. Those who see both are not bothered whether rabbit or duck is true. If Marx's analysis and capitalist economics are all based on the concept of need and production, does it mean we can turn a capitalist society to a communist one as easy as turning a coin? Clearly, the real question is why we cannot turning the 'coin' as we please. When we can change simulacra, the question of her-reality does not matter at all.

Compared with Baudrillard, Freud's approach provides the third way between criticising production and mocking it by seduction: what makes change is not abandoning production but taking over what is being produced. Namely, if Baudrillard insightfully pointed out a kind of obsession on the closed and perfect system which eliminates the room for human free agency, he nevertheless gave up the possibility of building cooperation between free agency and a system and turned to throwing light upon the futility of system-producing. Whilst, in the reading of this thesis's author, the substitution described by Freud implies a recognition of the libertarian sense of free will on which seduction is based, but nonetheless chooses to take the side of production, so that it avoids falling into a nihilism by taking the side of seduction like Baudrillard.

What Baudrillard does not directly address, which is nevertheless implied in his approach, is a question that Freud's doctrine proposes. This question can be formulated through Baudrillard's own terminology: what is the meaning of seduction if the consequence of it is no more than production? In this question, the concept of the *Superego* actually pushes the question of the concept of need to another level. As previously mentioned, the uniqueness of the *Superego* is that, it is, on the one hand, powered by the *Id* (so, being determined), but on the other hand is the ideal that the *Ego* tends to achieve<sup>17</sup>. Namely, for the *Ego*, the *Superego* connects the past (the *Id* as the biological foundation and the cause preceding the *Ego*) and the future (the ideal form for the *Ego* as a 'want-to-be'). Even if the libertarian sense of free will is presupposed, the *Ego* is determined in the sense that what 'I want' is set up by the *Id*

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<sup>17</sup> It is for this reason, Freud perceptively pointed out that the *Superego* "can be supermoral and then become as cruel as only the *Id* can be" (Freud, 1923, SE XIX, p.54). Namely, the *Superego* functions as an extension of the *Id*, which allows the power of the *Id* to go ahead of the *Ego*.

through the *Superego*, so that the *Ego* merely oscillates between 'being subject to the Id' and 'failing to be subject to the Id ideally'.

Here we can see how Freud's formulation is connected to Baudrillard's view. If, from Baudrillard's perspective, Freud's concept of 'the repressed' is located in the past symptoms so that it becomes a supposed cause (Baudrillard, (1976) 1993, p.171) and seduction seduces production at the place of the future of production.<sup>18</sup> From Freud's perspective, it would be adequate to say the *Ego's* act as production has always been regulated by the *Superego*, so seduction is never simply in front of the system as Baudrillard argues. If Baudrillard's strategies (symbolic exchange, seduction, or fatal strategy) must use the system's own logic opposite to itself rather than merely indicating a failure of production, by doing so it is not irrelevant to the internal logic of production: if the butcher does not understand the structure of ox's body, his move of the knife will become a normal cut; if a painter does not understand the rules of perspective, they cannot draw the picture that cheats human eyes. Consequently, just as a need consciously perceived by the *Ego* is actually unconsciously regulated by the *Superego*, seduction is defined by the past of the system because it is being circled by production. This is why, as formerly argued, a libertarian free will has to be presupposed by Baudrillard: it is seduction that is under siege, because the *Superego* does not leave room for it.

Here, my reading of Freud demonstrates the flaw pointed by Genosko in Baudrillard's approach, but the difference and connection between Genosko's argument and mine is clear: If Baudrillard's concept of seduction needs certain strength as Genosko argues, then the presupposition of the libertarian sense of free will is the first factor for which the strength makes room. And, if the contradiction in Baudrillard's theory lies in that his approach must avoid taking the place of theory, I think this contradiction means it is a forbidden option for Baudrillard's approach to simply take on a system, which is nevertheless an essential move for an act in *potlatch*.

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<sup>18</sup> To recap, Baudrillard argues that seduction seduces production – by being at the place where production wants to achieve and simultaneously cannot achieve. However, this thesis argues that the concept of the *Superego* goes ahead of the *Ego* (which functions free will, and therefore seduction), so that cages the *Ego*.

## Conclusion:

This chapter argues that Baudrillard's approach is at a dead end. His approach requires the libertarian sense of free will. Without it, his concepts, like the symbolic exchange, seduction, and fatal strategy, are unfeasible. Freud's theory requires the same kind of free will as its presupposition. Without it, his clinical works are impossible. Both of them did not focus on the question of free will, both take free will for granted to some extent. But Freud does not rely on a coherent theory. He tried to build one but failed. The failure yet left room for libertarian free will. Baudrillard's approach fights against coherent theories. But when he insists on his approach coherently, he is against himself. The only option left for him is to presuppose libertarian free will.

The presupposition of libertarian free will matters for the question of insatiability. For Baudrillard, needs are constructions. They function as the foundation of value systems to eliminate death. These constructions cannot succeed because death is ineliminable. But the failures do not stop constructing, they are the reason for it. Needs are insatiable because the construction of needs can never finish. By contrast, Freud is concerned about why construction is in a certain form and how we can change it. Symptoms are constructions too. Freud's approach takes free will into account through the function of the *ego*. *Ego* can intervene in constructions, the libertarian free will conditions its strength.

But, if a free-will agency can intervene in construction, why does he/she not stop constructing needs? This is because 'seduction is under siege'. *Ego* cannot abandon super-*ego*, when the latter is most ideal for the former. A free will agency cannot abandon a value system when the latter is most seductive for the former. So, when the system forms the need, the free-will agency can need nothing else but the system itself. Seduction thus loses its foundation.

The first part of this dissertation finishes here. In the next part, this dissertation will discuss how to overcome this plight.

# Part II: Chapter 6: Approaching Baudrillard's concern through Kierkegaard

## Introduction

The first part of this dissertation reviewed Baudrillard's key concepts. He points out that a system creates its own reality as its root. This root functions as the reason to exist for the system. The concept of needs exemplifies this. People compare things on what and how much a thing satisfies needs. The concept of need thus becomes the root of a value system. Needs become people's reason to choose. But his approach is at a dead end. His approach requires a certain strength. The libertarian free will conditions this strength. Moreover, the comparison between Baudrillard and Freud shows seduction can lose its strength. The question at stake is not whether needs are constructions, nor whether death awaits systems. Rather, there is a more difficult question. That is, how is it possible for a free-will agency to choose an alternative when the best option is already there? A system would not be dead when the free-will agency wants it alive.

Thus, there is a shift in my exploration. The first part aims to show that Baudrillard ignores his presupposition of free will. From this chapter onwards, this dissertation presupposes libertarian free will. It continues to explore the question of insatiability and re-examine Baudrillard's concern. That is, can a free-will agency find the root of a value system, so that it justifies or/and regulates his/her values and needs? This is a difficult question, because it is about justifying or/and regulating.

As chapter 1 mentioned, the second part will explore three approaches. This chapter explores the first one. It explores the possibility of seeking the root from outside the system by reviewing Søren Kierkegaard's arguments. Kierkegaard throws light upon the relationship between an individual and the Christian God. The Christian God is the supposed ultimate reason for everything, including an individual's values. This relationship is thus the best example of the approach because God is outside all value systems. In the Christian context, God creates the value, no value can create God. There is no so-called hyperreality in Baudrillard's sense. It is also impossible to

find the root within the value system.

Kierkegaard shows that an individual is responsible for his/her acts, even if God exist. Thus, his argument reveals the futility of this approach, because it means an individual cannot use the root of the value system to justify the system he/she believes in, even if the root exists. This is because there is a gap between 'universal' and 'particular'. Chapter 2 has mentioned the tension between the concepts of 'universal' and 'particular'. This tension emerges in the question of needs. It also plays the pivot role in Heller and Fraser's views on dialectics. After all, it is Hegel who argues for a trajectory of overcoming this gap through his dialectics. But Kierkegaard disagrees with Hegel. He insists that the gap between 'universal' and 'particular' is unremovable. His view thus highlights the limitation of the individual human being. The evidence for this gap is subjective experiences, like pathos.

This chapter focuses on explaining Kierkegaard's concepts of three spheres. It is enough to show how the approach of seeking the root of a value system from the outside is futile by presenting his argument. As Marcus Pound (2016) argues, Baudrillard's position does not achieve the ethical sphere. For Kierkegaard, moving to the ethical sphere means breaking the chain of nature. This makes the room for a kind of freedom (Caputo, 2008). The meaning of this will be clear after explaining Kierkegaard's concepts. Readers will see how Pound's reading echoes Genosko's view.

A difficulty of explaining Kierkegaard's text is due to the names he used. He used several pseudonyms for different works. It implies that he keeps a distance to the position of each work. For avoiding oversimplifying his view, I will review four works in chronological sequence: *Either/Or* ((1987)1992); *Fear and Trembling* (1843(2006)), *Philosophical Fragments* ((1844)1985), and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* ((1846)2009). Readers will see they have slight differences but share a central view.

## **A brief review of Kierkegaard's key concepts**

### **The aesthetic and ethical spheres**

*Either/Or* has two parts: *Either* and *Or*, written under two different pseudonyms: 'A' and 'B'. A represents aesthetic existence as a way of life, B represents the ethical way

of life. The aesthetic existence sphere is characteristic of immediacy because A believes life is driven by the past only, whilst B, the ethical one, is characteristic of obligation – a sense of ‘should’. The distinction between them is representatively shown in B’s letter to A:

If it were a married man he might exclaim with the bonhomie of the paterfamilias, ‘yes, marriage, that’s life’s aesthetic’. If it were a young man he might rather vaguely and unreflectively chime in, ‘yes, love, you are life’s aesthetic’. But neither of them would be able to grasp why it should occur to me to want to save the aesthetic reputation of marriage. (Kierkegaard et al., 1992), p.383).

As B, Kierkegaard here distinguished ‘should’ from ‘want’ as a dimension which the aesthetic existence sphere does not involve. Struggling to choose between either this or that in the aesthetic way of life can never uncover the right choice, because fundamentally the one who stays in this sphere constantly tries to rely on the conditions outside themselves, like health, beauty, talent, satisfaction of natural need, or desire. (Kierkegaard et al., 1992, p.493-7). Desire in Either/Or is the most diverse form because it seems the most fundamental factor that defines what a life could pursue. Kierkegaard states that one can finally say what life should pursue is whatever one desires (Kierkegaard et al., 1992, p496). But it does not free an individual from immediacy. As long as a condition is outside a person, it is determined by the finite things caused by history before the person existed. Choosing external conditions is therefore choosing to follow the past, to be determined by the past, and to be the immediate consequence of the past. This also means the person then chooses to be determined by an accidental event<sup>19</sup>, because the condition of satisfaction cannot be controlled by that person (Kierkegaard et al., 1992, p502-5).

Thus, according to Kierkegaard, an aesthetic life is built only on accidental and non-essential conditions, it ‘exists in the instant’ (Kierkegaard et al., 1992, p.505). The consequence of this way of life is despair because the individual is doomed to see the vanity of each moment, which leads to despairing each moment and ultimately to despairing the aesthetic life-view. The transition from the aesthetic sphere to the

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<sup>19</sup> Namely, an even does not necessarily happen, but an actualisation among all possibilities.

ethical sphere occurs here. The term 'ethical' is fundamentally related to the act of choosing, which B called 'to choose absolutely' (Kierkegaard et al., 1992, p.485), in the sense that an individual does not choose either this or that but 'choose to choose'. In B's sense, to choose aesthetically is about choosing between good or evil, but to choose ethically is about choosing 'good and evil' or 'excludes them' (Kierkegaard et al., 1992, p.486).

Choosing aesthetically can only be the case after choosing ethically, whilst choosing ethically does not mean to be separated from aesthetical choice, it happens only through choosing aesthetically: by choosing ethically, the dimension of ethics is established, choosing aesthetically only means choosing relatively because it is only about choosing good or evil after the existence of the ethical dimension. For example, if a person is struggling with whether they should buy butter (more tasty but less healthy) or margarine (more healthy but less tasty), this is about choosing aesthetically because that person is weighing which one is more beneficial for them in a general sense. Choosing ethically means to commit to an ethic including its good and bad: the person chooses butter for its tastiness, even if it is not healthy. By choosing the butter for its tastiness, the person aims to choose aesthetically, but it is conditioned by committing an ethic which values the tastiness more. That is why:

...it is the ethical that constitutes choice. It is less a matter, then, of choosing between willing good or evil than of choosing to will but, with this latter, good and evil are posited once again. (Kierkegaard et al., 1992, pp.486-7)

If what is finally left from an aesthetical way of life is despair, then choosing ethically is consequently to choose despair. Kierkegaard explains this in *Either/Or* by comparing doubt and despair: 'Doubt is a despair of thought, despair is a doubt of the personality' (Kierkegaard et al., 1992, p.514). That is, doubting one's own thought is to consider whether the thought is necessarily true, and therefore still appeals to an impersonal reason or logic which connects the past and the present. But it does not mean the doubter loses faith in human beings' capacity of thought in general, they are not despairing the 'personality'. When a person is in despair, as aforementioned, they choose to stop hoping for that kind of necessity in thought, and in this way, they choose 'eternal validity' in themselves. It is in this sense that:

'one cannot despair at all unless one wants to ...; when one has truly chosen despair one has truly chosen what despair chooses, namely, oneself in one's eternal validity'. (K Kierkegaard et al., 1992, p.515)

For example, in the above example of choosing butter or not, the person is struggling with which one they should buy because they are doubting whether the tastiness should really/necessarily be valued more than healthiness. But finally, with being in despair, they realise there will never be a water-tight conclusion, and then decide to choose the tastiness option. This realisation can never be based on sufficient evidence because they can never make a choice after finishing full research on the effects of butter on the body. Thus, in this way, the person endorses this ethic. Even if they could be wrong in many senses, it is they who finally trust a reason to choose. It is also in this sense that 'choosing despair is choosing self' and 'this absolute choice is my freedom' (Kierkegaard et al., 1992, p.524).

Choosing ethically therefore is much harder than choosing aesthetically, because it posits the individual as the absolute: 'I choose the absolute which chooses me, I posit the absolute which posits me', and in this sense what the individual chooses is their own 'eternal validity' (Kierkegaard et al., 1992, p.516).

However, human beings can never always choose absolutely. In fact, to choose 'good' is endorsing an ethic, but in choosing 'despair' the ethic cannot be endorsed. For example, to use the butter analogy again, by choosing the tastiness of butter, the person indeed consequently endorses a 'tasty-first' value. But the person cannot really make any choice if they still want to justify this 'tasty-first' value. Only after the person realises there is no further value they can rely on for this justification, can they make a choice. If the problem in the aesthetic sphere is that the reason to choose can never been enough and solid, for the ethical sphere the problem is the person can never find out another reason to justify/support their reason, because it is them who justifies it. Moreover, biological conditions can never be ignored in a life choice, not to mention addicts who are struggling with alcohol or drugs. Those who repeatedly fail to stop smoking would be in despair but cannot choose the alternative life. Thus, as Evans (2009) pointed out, choosing despair does not give an individual power to endorse an ethic but conversely dissolves their power. So, there requires something else that can support ethics. In this sense, not matter a need is purely constructed in a value system, the object we 'need' can never be value-free.

## Beyond Ethics

This question about the endorsement of ethics is addressed in Kierkegaard's following work, *Fear and Trembling* ((1843)2006) in which Kierkegaard uses another pseudonym<sup>20</sup>, Johannes de Silentio. The central topic is an analysis of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in the Christian bible. God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, his only son, in order to testify his faith. Abraham follows the instructions and finally receives God's message to allow him to stop. For Johannes de Silentio, Abraham's act can only be justified by faith, otherwise he is no more than a cruel murderer. What he does is exactly opposite to his moral values – a father should love his son, a person should not kill another person, and so on. Thus, at the centre of the story is a paradox: Abraham keeps Isaac alive exactly by following God's instruction to go against his own morals and kill. In this sense believing in a faith requires an individual to make a leap, which is neither caused by the past as that in the aesthetic stage, nor justifiable by any ethic.

The case of Abraham provides a glimpse of a religious existence sphere, in a superficial sense that Abraham has faith in God. But why does this story matter? If God is by definition infinitely powerful, he of course can do whatever he wants, like commanding Abraham and devising faith-testing tests. How is this meaningful, especially for a non-believer?

There are at least two points needed to explain this: firstly, the uniqueness of Abraham lies in his fulfilment, rather than God manufacturing him through its power. The key here is exactly that it is entirely Abraham's own action to sacrifice Isaac, and his action must be completely supported by his faith. Secondly, it is important to note that de Silentio is not a believer, which is why, he is not brave enough to act like Abraham (Evans & Walsh, (1843)2006, p.115). If Johannes's perspective is a non-believer's one, what he does is not in praise of God, but probably should be read as powerful questioning on the relationship between God and ethics.

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<sup>20</sup> As Evans (2006) pointed out, ideas in the works under pseudonym should not be simply treated as Kierkegaard's own view. It might be treated as a messenger who conveys message but does not fully understand what is conveyed.

Regarding the first point, it can be approached from Abraham's perspective that 'he cannot speak' (Evans & Walsh, (1843)2006, p.60). Ethics as rules or norms is universal to everyone, which is embodied in language. Speaking is therefore the expression of the universal. Then, if ethical value is the ultimate goal that an individual can pursue, nothing can justify Abraham because he himself violates it. This is the key paradox Johannes identifies: according to Hegelian speculative philosophy, the universal is higher than the individual as a particular; whilst in Abraham's situation, the individual is higher than the universal (Evans & Walsh, (1843)2006, p.54-5). The existence of this paradox conditions the possibility of the justification of Abraham because, in this case, 'the ethic is suspended' ((1843) 2006, p.65).'

Consequently, when Isaac asks Abraham about where the lamb for the sacrifice was, Abraham's answer must meet these criteria in order to maintain the paradox: firstly, he cannot tell Isaac that it is he who is the lamb, because this will mean Abraham does not take full responsibility for his act. By saying this, Abraham registers his act within the realm of language and at the level of ethics and the universal (Evans & Walsh, (1843)2006, p.82, p.87 & p.118).

Secondly, he cannot speak in an understandable way. On the one hand, he does not really understand God's purpose: why God has asked him to commit this horrifying act. If he explains what he does not understand in an intelligible way, he lies. But on the other, speaking is effective only if it is an effective communication, namely being understandable by others and therefore registered on the ethics level (Lippitt, 2003). It is in this sense Abraham 'cannot speak' rather than 'does not speak'.

Thirdly, Abraham cannot simply say 'I don't know', not only because he indeed knows what he is going to do, although not fully understand what will happen, but also because he once again does not take the responsibility fully if he says so. He does not appeal to any justification from ethics, only when he is fully responsible for his choice of believing. Only in that case is his action fully supported by his faith, and in this sense he 'as a single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute' ((1843) 2006, p.120).

Under these criteria, according to Johannes, Abraham actually speaks with irony: 'God himself will provide the lamb from the burnt offering, my son' ((1843) 2006, p.116). This is an irony, de Silentio thinks, because it actually says nothing. But in this way Abraham does not say anything untrue, even if he does not fully understand God's purpose. Thus, Abraham's fulfilment is based on that he does not have recourse to

any justification. Using irony, what Abraham said reconciles this contradiction in a coherent form. Thus, Abraham's act is wholly private, he is in this way isolated and as an individual higher than the universal. Compared with choosing ethically, which treats ethics as the goal, Abraham's act poses a goal higher than ethics: for the will of God. On the edge of what is ethical, one can only maintain an ethic by anchoring to God's will, but this connection cannot be said. As an absurd situation, it cannot be understood.

Regarding the second main point, however, it is questionable to say Abraham's act is based simply on God's will. Rather, as Lippitt (2003) argues, *Fear and Trembling* can be read as de Silentio's questioning, rather than arguing, the proposition that 'ethic is universal'. That is, as a non-believer, he points out the paradox that it seems no ethics can justify Abraham's action if an ethic is universal. Again, de Silentio's target is the Hegelian view of ethics, which posits the universal to be higher than an individual, an outer higher than an inner. If an individual follows an ethical code to conduct their life, they must obey God's order, considering God is by definition higher than all ethics. However, this also means the existence of God seems unimportant and Abraham cannot be justified even by God, because obeying God cannot be distinguished from obeying an ethic. Thus, if Abraham can be justified by God, the paradox here is that either he must have a direct relation to God without being mediated by any language and ethics, or an individual is higher than the universal. Both propositions oppose the view that 'ethic is universal'. It is in this sense that the final conclusion is still an either/or: 'either there is a paradox, that the single individual as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute, or Abraham is lost' ((1843) 2006, p.120).'

There are many other readings which cannot be covered here, but the reason it is just a glimpse is that *Fear and Trembling* is from the perspective of an observer. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* ((1846)2009), under another pseudonym, Johannes Climacus, Kierkegaard portrays de Silentio as one who tries to communicate a subjective experience in a direct and objective form. Therefore, 'where 'fear and trembling' first become fearful and, if expressed, can only be so in a deceptive form' (Kierkegaard & Hannay, 2009, p.220). However, it does not mean de Silentio's view is wrong and should be abandoned. When Climacus talks about humour as a *cognito* for the religious person, he recognises that a similar portrayal is made in *Fear and Trembling*, although he still stresses that it is from an observer's view. According

to Lippitt (2003), de Silentio should not be regarded directly as a representative of Kierkegaard's point of view, but could still be treated as 'a genuine attempt' (2003, p.206) for de Silentio's imaginary identification to Abraham.

## Inwardness

*Fear and Trembling* shows that a completely subjective dimension is the key factor in the religious sphere. A more direct illustration of the religious existence sphere in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is that 'religiousness is hidden inwardness' ((1846) 2009, p.419). Inwardness here means, simply speaking, a subjectivity of thinking. It is clear that this concept is connected to Abraham's ineffable experience, but here this is argued by a reading of a theologian, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. *Climacus* separates objective thinking and subjective thinking. The objective thinking is indifferent to the thinker, whilst in the subjective thinking, the thinker is 'interested' ((1846) 2009, pp.61-62).

For example, the relations between numbers are indifferent to human beings, it is human beings who care about mathematics. Mathematics matters for each individual through their own understanding of these numbers and mathematics. Consider the stock markets; any investor knows the price fluctuates and should, in theory, buy stock at a lower price and sell at a higher price. This method is straightforward and there are clear patterns and predictions to follow regarding rises and drops in the stock charts, as if there is an internal law or even a Hegelian spirit governing the fluctuation of value. But this solid theorising changes when one invests actual money. It is ultimately a gamble, so despite predictability and concrete analyses of stock prices, the act of investing remains unreliable. If one's property defines who they are, then they who invest money in the stock market is forced to be aware of their 'becoming' rich or poor.

Therefore, in subjective thinking there is a double reflection: above the level of objective thinking, a thinker also reflects on how they are related to their thinking. By this double reflection, the subjective thinker is existing in this thinking, and therefore is in the process of becoming. This also means the subjective thinker is the result of their own question, whilst the objective answer is omitted, because the subjective thinker is exactly the approach to the answer itself and are continuously in the process of 'becoming'. In this sense, inwardness is the subjectivity in subjective thinking: 'The

reflection of inwardness is the subjective thinkers' double-reflection' ((1846) 2009, p.62).

## **Connecting the aesthetic sphere and ethics sphere**

The context of Climacus's illustration of inwardness is about introducing Lessing's view and refuting Hegelian speculative thinking. In Climacus's view, speculative thinking is objective thinking, which seeks truth in historical movement. But it can never achieve truth: just because something happened does not mean it necessarily happens in that time. A happened event is merely an actualisation among possibilities (Kierkegaard & Hannay, (1846)2009), p.73-7). This involves Kierkegaard's almost lifelong criticism of Hegelian philosophy, which is beyond the scope of this discussion. But it is noteworthy to cite Lippitt's (2003) conclusive comment that 'central to Kierkegaard's approach to philosophy is the idea of an interested, 'subjective' rationality, much to be preferred to a disengaged, 'pure' or 'abstract' rationality (p.205-6). In short, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* states that objective thinking is more about the 'what', subjective thinking is more about 'how' (Kierkegaard & Hannay, (1846)2009), p.170). Because of this, inwardness is the key factor that separates the ethics sphere and religious sphere from the aesthetic sphere. If the aesthetic sphere is dependent on accidental past, due to inwardness the ethical and religious spheres contain a dimension about knowing how the past is related to an individual as a knower ((1846) 2009, p.166). The act of choosing ethically argued in *Either/Or* is conditioned by this. Although choosing ethically means to follow the chosen ethic completely, it conversely also means this is 'something' heterogenous to the ethics, namely, the subject as existing who is approaching to the ethics, so that, 'all essential knowledge essentially relates to existence and to existing' (Kierkegaard & Hannay, (1846)2009), p.166). It is in this sense, in contrast with the aesthetic life-view on suffering as accidental, that the ethical and religious life-views treat suffering as 'essential' ((1846) 2009, p.364).

Noteworthy, there is a change in the meaning of 'ethical' from *Fear and Trembling* to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, which paves the way for the movement from the ethical sphere to the religious sphere. As aforementioned, in *Fear and Trembling*, the concept of ethical is related to social rules but, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*,

ethical is about the task towards self-actualisation, which is set by God. For Climacus, Hegelian speculative philosophy understands world history by thinking and ignores concrete human experience. The single individual's action is removed, and their fate is determined by the logic of the world history. By contrast, Climacus argues, a child born in a Christian family cannot automatically become a Christian (at least by Climacus's and Kierkegaard's standards). They need to learn many things and try to develop themselves to achieve entry into the religious sphere. This clearly can only be made by one's own efforts. Thus, the 'development of spirit is self-activity' ((1846) 2009, p.290). It is not merely stressing an individual's free action and choice, rather, it is an individual's task to 'become a whole human being; just as it is the ethical presupposition that everyone is born in the state of being able to become one ((1846) 2009, p.290). Here, 'whole human beings' is in contrast to being the 'abstract-scientific definition' of human being ((1846) 2009, p.290). An individual, as the 'whole' human being, does not value abstract thinking more than feeling and imaginations but unites all of these aspects which belongs to human beings simultaneously ((1846) 2009, p.292).

This in turn directs the question of ethics to human beings' relationship with God, and what it means to be a religious person: For Kierkegaard, this is about staying in a state of suffering due to recognising the limit of reason and dependency to God. In order to explain this, there are two essential points to explain: firstly, the relation between paradox and reason; secondly, suffering as an essential expression of pathos.

## Paradox and reason

The first point is intensively discussed in *Philosophical Fragments* (1844), which is also written under the name Johannes Climacus. The central argument is that the paradox is the limit of reason; God is beyond reason. This is illustrated in a comparison with Socrates's famous 'midwife' method. According to Climacus, Socrates thinks we are born with an innate truth, and that learning is just a case of recollecting. This is because truth cannot be learned: to learn something means to seek it, and an act of seeking presupposes the existence of what is sought. Thus, what one does not know cannot be learned and sought as well ((1844) 1985, p.9). In this sense, everyone has already been invested with the condition of knowledge; a teacher's role is merely an

occasion. Socrates's argument aims at a demonstration of the immoral soul but, Climacus thinks, there is no moment that can be a kind of turning point from 'unknown' to 'known': 'the temporal point of departure is a nothing, because in the same moment I discover that I have known the truth from eternity without knowing it, in the same instant that moment is hidden in the eternal.' ((1844) 1985, p.13). Namely, 'eternal' is by definition non-temporal so that it is always in the present. It is impossible to distinguish the 'recollected known' from 'unrecollected known' because the recollection is about bearing what is in the past at the present ((1844) 1985, p.280).

By contrast, Climacus hypothesises the converse way: human beings do not have truth. But, if so, the teacher not only needs to give the student the truth, but also give them the condition of knowing it (e.g., for knowing colour we need eyes). Climacus thinks in this sense this is not about teaching, but creating, and it could only be done by God. Compared with the teaching in Socrates's sense in which the learner is completely independent to the teacher, the learner in Climacus's sense is fully conditioned by the teacher. But it does not mean human beings therefore automatically can know everything God tells them. Human beings can still be in an 'untruth' because they could lose the condition of knowing the truth given by God. And human beings are fully responsible for this, because: 1) It is not deprived by God, otherwise God does not need to give; 2) It is not lost accidentally, otherwise the condition itself is not an essential condition that human beings necessarily have. This status of losing condition to having truth by human beings themselves is Climacus's understanding of 'sin' ((1844) 1985, p.15).

Moreover, Socrates's sense of relationship between teacher and pupils implies a mutual development, which is not the case between God and human beings. A pupil is also 'the occasion for the teacher to understand himself' ((1844) 1985, p.24). For example, in *The Republic* (2008), Socrates always claims his ignorance of the question of what justice is, and asks another interlocutor to answer, and keeps questioning the answer. By being questioned, the interlocutors have a better understanding of their own knowledge on justice and abandon their old one. During this course of questioning, Socrates does not refute the interlocutors by another answer, but merely by pointing out the contradiction of their answer. Thus, as a teacher, Socrates acts like a student. The distinction between student and teacher is blurred. His interlocutor, no matter if treated as a teacher or student, gains a better understanding of their own thoughts by attempting to answer. In Climacus's reading,

Socrates already provides ‘the highest relation’ ((1844) 1985, p.10) between human beings because, in the relation to truth, a midwife as a midpoint is the best thing that can be done for another person. It is in this sense Socrates claims that God does not allow him to give birth, namely, to create.

By contrast, God does not need human beings to understand himself, he by definition needs nothing from human beings. God becomes a teacher only because of his love<sup>21</sup> of human beings. Moreover, this is a kind of unhappiness, for a lover, that the beloved one does not understand the lover’s love. Thus, if there could be a moment for human beings changing from not having truth to having truth, human beings must take responsibility to have knowledge, even if it is conditioned by a God who will never directly tell the truth. For God, the question is how to make human beings gain understanding, which is only possible in an equal relationship, whilst God is by definition not equal to human beings.

This is resolved by God moving himself to appear to the human beings in the form of humans, so that lets human beings understand things in an equal relationship. Hereof Climacus uses a king’s love to a maid as the example. In order to let the maid love him rather than his social position, the king needs to disguise his identity and become someone of equal status to the maid. Only in this way can the maid be confident in this love relationship, and the king’s love can be understood without the maid’s worries about social class. Although in this way, God is in the form of a paradox. That is, eternity in temporal form. By gradually guiding a human’s reason to develop, their sense of reason is fulfilled in the sense that they finally recognise its limit. It seems Climacus thinks this realisation of its own limit brings about a ‘happy passion’ between reason and paradox, which is defined as faith ((1844) 1985, p.59). Namely, it seems a status that the learner has tried their best and is content to this result: ‘there is something more than my reason can understand, and it shows itself in my reason as a paradox’. This status is clearly conditioned by the paradox rather than reason, otherwise the learner’s reason still holds the truth to some extent. Thus, even the

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<sup>21</sup> This idea of God’s love is related to Aristotle’s argument in *Metaphysics*: The final cause by definition only moves others rather than being moved, all others are moved. What cannot be moved is necessary, namely its way of existence is of necessity. This mode of existence is therefore by definition ‘good’. The first mover only causes and does not to be caused, in this sense it produces. And this producing and moving is ascribed by Aristotle as love (see. Kierkegaard & Hong & Hong, (1843)1983), Hong’s note 11, p.283).

recognition of this inability is conditioned by God, and this recognition is the condition of faith.

So, through the paradox, an individual knows there is something they do not know and cannot know; their capability and incapability are conditioned by something else which must be greater than them. The object of faith is not knowledge, but God itself.

The further question would be that if truth is conditioned by God, what can human beings do? The question of free will is clearly at stake here. It is worth noting that the paradox here is not logical contradiction but, similar to Kantian antinomy, an indication of the limit of reason (Evans, 2009). Thus, being able to exert one's ability of reason does not conflict with the view that this ability is given by God. In fact, considering a central point for Kierkegaard is to argue for a subjectivity not determined by the past, his view of free will should be the libertarian one, as he states in *Concept of anxiety* (Kierkegaard et al., (1844)1981): 'Freedom presupposes itself' ((1844) 1981, p.112). Compared with those aforementioned supporters of libertarian free will, Kierkegaard can appeal for the existence of free will which seems unexplainable by science to God (Jackson, 2006).

## The suffering

The second point can be explained in this context. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus thinks if the subjective thinker, as a synthesis of the finite and infinite, is striving to the infinite, this striving is pathetic. This is existential pathos which is rooted in the contradiction in human beings as subjective thinkers. Climacus stressed a concept of eternal happiness as 'the highest good', and pathos means 'the transformation by this conception of the whole of his existence' ((1846) 2009, p.325).' The eternal happiness is simply about a human's relation to God. According to Evans (2009), what Climacus refers to is a kind of ideal wholeness: 'a religious person sees himself as in some way broken and finds in the God-relationship grounds to hope that the self can be made whole again' (p.117). It also involves life after death.

However, it does not refer to any external reward (2009). For an individual as existing which is striving toward the infinite, pathos is also related to eternal happiness. What makes pathos essential and religious, instead of aesthetic and poetical, is Climacus's concept of actuality. Climacus values actuality more than possibility because, from the perspective of ethics, what is actual is what comes into being by an

individual's action amongst all other possibilities. This way of thinking is clearly based on inwardness and echoes *Either/Or*, as aforementioned, which in the aesthetic sphere one could be struggling with choosing whilst in the ethical sphere one chooses to choose. But here, ethical does not stress the aspect of universal rules but an individual's role in exertion. If actuality is formed by each individual's action, then it belongs to the private rather than the public. For Climacus, it seems theoretically impossible for an individual to copy another's actuality. If one follows the suit of another's actuality, they create another new actuality, if they think about another's actuality, this thinking is merely a possibility.

In this sense there is a heterogeneity between subjects: one's actuality can never be communal, because the act of actualisation of an ethics is to support the ethics by an individual, and in this sense 'actuality is internality infinitely interested in existing, which the ethical individual is for himself' ((1846)2009, p.272).' Moreover, by making an ethics come into being, the individual achieves an ideal, so that 'ethically, the ideality is the actuality within the individual himself ((1846)2009, p.272). Pathos, as being caused by striving towards the infinite and towards the highest good, exists in existing and therefore is in action, which is based on the resignation from all other immediacies and relating oneself to the eternal happiness solely ((1846) 2009, p.331). This action must not be based on certainty, because in order to be related to God as the absolute and infinite, all relative and finite things must be suspended. In this sense Christianity requires individuals to risk everything without any guarantee of immortality. This is a key difference between Christianity and paganism, which promises many things in the afterlife. It is clear that Kierkegaard, using the voice of Climacus, re-addresses the situation of Abraham in *Fear and Trembling*: the infinite resignation to one's beloved and absolutely values their relationship with God.

Suffering is the essential expression of existential pathos. If 'essential' separates the ethical sphere and above from the aesthetic sphere, suffering 'marks religious action' ((1846) 2009, p.363). Religious action is changing one's existence through resignation to relate one's self to the absolute absolutely, so changing one's existence, as inwardness, is by changing one's goal. So religious action does not aim at changing the external but changing one's self, and this change is achieved by recognising the action of changing the eternal being futile and merely seeking immediacy. In this sense, existential suffering is rooted in an experience of being unable to change one's self:

... the essential existential pathos relates to existing essentially; and to exist essentially is inwardness; and the action of inwardness is suffering, because changing himself is something the individual cannot do, it becomes a kind of putting on of airs, and that's why suffering is the highest action in the inner life. ((1846) 2009, p.363)

Thus, one's relationship to God is fundamentally to devalue immediacy, and suffering is because of one's dying to immediacy but can do nothing. It therefore means self-annihilation ((1846) 2009, p.386). It is necessary for a religious person to demand this suffering because it is suffering as a guarantee that he/she is in the religious sphere. This does not mean eternal happiness with suffering is a masochistic experience but means the experience of suffering signifies the relation to the joy in eternal happiness ((1846) 2009, p.379).

Although it seems simple, the relationship to God is a confusing and difficult part of Kierkegaard's illustrations. However, it demonstrates an exploration about the relationship between an individual and the supposed guarantor of his/her ethics. From the aesthetic sphere to the ethical sphere, Kierkegaard's works refute a life which follows the past, because the ethical dimension can never be really avoided. From the ethical sphere to the religious sphere, however, a central question in Kierkegaard's discussions is whether we can find a concrete guarantor to justify an ethic we chose. For Kierkegaard, the answer is no. Such guarantor cannot be found in objective things, because being an individual means to be an existing subject which has inwardness. God cannot be the guarantor as well, even if it is the source of everything. This is because, if God directly give a hand to an individual, the inwardness is eliminated. Namely, as an existing subject, he/she cannot choose essentially because God choose for him/her. Here we can see, for Kierkegaard, God does not do things in the Freudian super-ego's way, and, by the same token, Kierkegaard's God cannot be equated with the source of production in Baudrillard's sense.

## Irony and humour as a *confinium*

In the preceding sections, it has been discussed what Kierkegaard's three existence spheres mean: they are different ways of life. In a sense, living in the aesthetic sphere is to organise life based on immediate experience; the ethical sphere is about pursuing to insistently implement a rule; in the religious sphere, the impossibility of the ethical sphere is actively realised by one's own ability, whilst the individual living in this sphere is happy with this realisation and limitation.

In this context, irony and humour are two *confiniums* (border territories) between spheres. The irony is between the aesthetic and the ethical sphere, and humour is between the ethical and the religious. A *confinium* is not a kind of sub-stage, but a border area in which two spheres cannot be distinctly separated.

Kierkegaard's first illustration about irony is in *The Concept of Irony* ((1841)1992), which is an intensive discussion on ancient Greek philosophy, especially Socrates. In short, for Kierkegaard, irony is about being able to see the coherence in a contradicted form. The pleasure of irony therefore is the superiority which the listener and speaker feel from being able to understand the coherency between the lines. Irony also implies a kind of freedom because the speaker who recognises and vocalises the irony is not responsible for the listener's understanding, and therefore withdraws from a conversation and plays with social norms. By the same token, the ironist leaves a gap for themselves as well, and therefore keeps a distance to immediacy (Kierkegaard, Hong, et al., (1841)1992), p.204-5)

Thus, an irony involves contradictions between an ironist's internal/personal idea and an external/social norm. However, this freedom is only achieved by a kind of nihilism: 'in irony, the subject continually wants to get outside the object, and he achieves this by realising at every moment that the object has no reality' ((1844)1981, p.257), and 'preserve[s] itself in negative independence of everything ((1841)1981, p.257). Consequently, as Andrew Cross (1998) argues, this concept of irony cannot be applied to the ironist themselves. If the ironist cannot treat themselves in an ironic way, their approach is not complete and they become an exclusion who stay in the immediacy; but if the ironist treats themselves in this way, they can take nothing seriously in their own lives because everything seemingly realistic is possibly otherwise. This is why Kierkegaard said that the ironist's life view will be that 'the phenomenon never acquires any reality for the subject' ((1841)1981, p.257).

Thus, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscripts*, Climacus argues that the irony in The Concept of Irony only stresses the negative side. By contrast, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscripts*, irony 'arises from continually placing the particularities of the finite with the infinite ethical requirement and letting the contradiction to come about' (Kierkegaard & Hannay, (1846)2009, p.421). What Climacus adds, according to Cross (1998), is the understanding from the ethical sphere. From the ethical sphere, the immediacy-centred life can be overcome by 'choosing to choose', as aforementioned. This realisation of self-determinacy allows an individual to see the contradictions in life without painful struggling, which is called comic by Climacus. But with the realisation, the ironist nevertheless plays with this immediacy and seeming determinacy without moving towards the ethical life.

Humour as a confinement also involves contradictions and belongs to the comic. Both comic and tragic consist in the contradiction between the infinite and finite in the existing as 'becoming' (Kierkegaard & Hannay, (1846)2009, p.76), and the existence as striving is 'as pathetic as comic' (Kierkegaard & Hannay, (1846)2009, p.78). The difference between a humourist and a religious person is that the humourist intellectually recognises the religious standpoint but does not stay in the suffering. They seek to avoid the existential contradiction which brings about the suffering, whilst the religious person is 'grasping the suffering and remaining in it' (Kierkegaard & Hannay, (1846)2009, p.372). For the religious person, the contradiction is reconciled by appealing to God, the humourist also does so by 'putting [a] God-idea with other things and brings about the contradiction (Kierkegaard & Hannay, (1846)2009, p.424). Perhaps, a humourist can see how everything is limited and they themselves are limited. But just because there is this recognition of limitation does not mean they will therefore believe in the existence of God as the fundamental condition of themselves.

## **An end**

There are many more aspects to discuss on Kierkegaard's view on Christianity, but what is important here is that Kierkegaard has demonstrated the limit of human individual. This is not only because God is a supposed ultimate cause/origin of the world, but also, more concretely, this is the end of Baudrillard's approach, and therefore the end-of his critique of Marx's argument on commodity.

Both Baudrillard and Kierkegaard would agree that it is futile to stick to a system as the final aim. However, when Baudrillard, without stressing his presupposition of libertarian sense of free will, keeps criticising an obsession of systematisation embodied in the production of values, Kierkegaard, by accentuating both human beings' free will and limitation embodied in the concept of 'becoming', traverses this obsession and place it as 'relative'. Marcus Pound (2016) thinks Baudrillard is at the phase of irony. This is reasonable. Baudrillard's critique is sharp, but he does not choose to choose any value system.

From this perspective, if there is a way to reconfigure what the Freudian *Ego* 'should' do and wants to be, this way should be an act, like Abraham did, which is beyond the ethic as a universal rule and directly related to something more valuable than any ethical value. In this sense what Abraham did to the universal ethic echoes Baudrillardian *potlatch*, although the latter aims for a more radical result.

Consequently, the consumption, as deposition of objects, is always ethical, because choosing a value system (choose to choose) precedes choosing any specific things, even if an individual chooses to stay in the aesthetic sphere. By addressing something outside the system, the meaning of consumption always lies in what cannot be acquired completely. Perhaps, to stop consumerism, the first thing is to stop asking 'why do I want to buy...?', because it is to justify a purchase by using terms conditioned by the system of terms.

Here we can see Kierkegaard's work argues a futile situation of an individual in two aspects: 1) it is futile to sustain the unlimited imperative or requirement from a value system; 2) it is futile to get help from God.

Even if God is the ultimate cause of the value system in which needs are constructed, God does not directly satisfy needs once for all. That is, the existence of God does not resolve insatiability, because God is the cause of needs as well.

Such a conclusion is not only useless for governments and marketers, but also for an individual consumer in everyday life. After all, we have to choose to choose. The gap between an individual and an objective system/law is there.

## Conclusion:

This chapter concentrated on providing a detailed explanation of how

Kierkegaard's argument is developed. Although consumption was not his focus, the chapter showed how Kierkegaard provides an alternative theoretical position in the face of Baudrillard's plight. The last chapter shows the question of insatiability is a question of justifying a value system. If we can have a sufficient reason to justify a value, needs being constructed in this value could have a solid end. This chapter explores this question within a specific context. It presupposes a source of sufficient reason, that is, God. It excludes the possibility that a hyperreality functions as the root of the value. That is, God creates value, but value cannot create God.

But, as Kierkegaard shows, the subjective experiences reveal a gap. This is because individuals are limited, whilst law is unlimited. An individual cannot perform a law forever. He/she cannot be identical to the law. This gap between an individual subject and the law is thus evident. He/she cannot embrace the value embodied in the law forever too. Even if there is a guarantor of the law or value system, it is not achievable for an individual.

In this sense, an individual is tortured by needs because he/she cannot achieve the imperative from the law forever. If insatiability can be eliminated, it is because a gap between an individual and the value system/law is opened. That is, individuals do not have to *need* anymore.

However, how can an individual open this gap? This question echoes the question about the relationship between *ego* and *super-ego*, as the last chapter pointed out. That is, if the *super-ego* is by definition the ideal for the *ego*, how can the *ego* stop to want/need the *super-ego*?

God does not remove insatiability for individuals. This is not only because God does not keep the gap for individuals, but also does not make us to believe in a value. After all, it is by Abraham's own act that he achieves the direct relation between individual and God beyond the law.

The next chapter will examine the question of insatiability in the secular context.

# Chapter 7: The concept of Money

## Introduction:

The previous chapter discusses insatiability in the context that God is assumed. This chapter approaches discussions about this concept through a discussion of money.

Money plays a special role in the discussions of need, not only because it is usually related to greed in everyday life and literature but, also, it is seemingly both limited and unlimited, which perfectly fits at the edge of a system. As the most abstract form of value, money is supposed to be the closest to the guarantor of the value system. Consequently, similar to language, money seems to be created by human beings but not simply controlled by us. Moreover, value is a sister of need. Marx's discussions of need are almost simultaneously about value. This chapter will show how the discussion of money is rooted in the question of where the value of money is from, which can be thought of as another way to ask: what factor sustains the need?

Nevertheless, there is a key difference between questioning the concept of need and that of money. Whilst need can be discussed through personal experiences, the idea of money is by definition purely social. This is clear in Marx in his money theory: money is the pure form of value, and value is the socially average labour time. Through this conceptualisation, it seems each individual labourer can be generalised, so that eliminates the specificity of each individual. Thus, by throwing light upon money, this chapter aims to examine the question of need and insatiability through purely social aspects.

This chapter has three parts. Firstly, it will outline the sociological discussions of money. It aims to provide a general background of this topic. It will show how the nature of money fluctuates between debt and commodity.

Secondly, this chapter will focus on the relationship between money and language. It will compare John Searle and Karl Marx's arguments. For Searle, both money and language are institutional facts. But, for Marx, money is different from language because money transforms values. Through this comparison, I argue that the nature of value is inequality between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. Without this connection between the concept of value and this inequality, a theorisation of money

is incomplete.

There is a confession I have to make. My view of value is based on a premise: the 'universal' and the 'particular' are by definition unequal. This seems obvious in the relationship between individual and God's law. But I cannot make an argument to prove this. This is perhaps because there is something that cannot be spoken. An individual's use of a language is also a confrontation between the 'particular' and the 'universal'. So it cannot explain itself. For this reason, I confess that, I take the inequality between them for granted.

Based on this, the third section focuses on the question of insatiability in Marx's theory. It starts with reviewing Marx's discussion of greed. Money is the object of greed because it represents 'wealth'. The separation between price and value conditions this function of money. This separation is due to the tension between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. The tension is rooted in Marx's use of dialectics. Thus, the role of dialectics plays in the question of insatiability is unavoidable to discuss. That is, is insatiability due to Marx's dialectical method? Hereof, Kierkegaard's critique of Hegelian dialectics is illuminating. Hegel's dialectical process pursues a unity between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. Kierkegaard, by contrast, insists on the gap between them. Marx is a reader of Hegel, but he left the gap that Kierkegaard insists on. Thus, his dialectics is different from the Hegelian one. This means Marx's analysis of money does not imply a trajectory to achieve a so-called unity as the end. Money is not a unity of the 'universal' and the 'particular'.

This section ends with reviewing the debate between Ingham and Lapavistas on Marx. They discuss whether money is a debt or a commodity in the context of Marx's theory. Thus, their debate connects the general discussions of money and Marx's view. I disagree with both of them. The review of their debate aims to show the importance of the co-existence of the 'universal' and the 'particular' in the concept of money. Money is not a unity of the 'universal' and the 'particular' but is where they clash.

## **An overview of money**

Overall, discussions about money can be roughly divided into three categories: 1) the origin and nature of money; 2) money's relationship with other social phenomena/activities, such as economy, language, states, and consumptions; and 3) the future of money. These three categories are intimately intertwined with each other. In a sense, they can be treated as different angles or starting points to approach questions about money. The following paragraphs start with discussions of the origin of money, and then moves to the nature of money, followed by some selected discussions on the topic of money and society in general.

### **Origin of money**

Discussions about the origin of money can be divided into three points of view: the first is that money naturally originates from a need for exchange. For example, Carl Menger (1892) argues that people need something widely recognised and saleable for fulfilling an exchange during negotiations, otherwise it is difficult (or at least inconvenient) for a person to buy what they directly want. The most saleable commodity becomes money. In this sense, there is no need for the government or other kinds of authority to 'create' anything functioning as money.

Criticism of Menger's view includes that it is historically not true (Einzig, 2014; Goodhart, 2008; Graeber, 2011) and that it is a flaw in logic (Ingham, 2004; Orlan, 2013). As to the first point, for example, Graeber (2011) argues that bartering is not the universal mode of exchange but usually only between strangers. In this sense, whether such a bartering-based society had really existed before the emergence of money would be another big question. Perhaps, it is the existence of money that has conditioned such a society rather than the opposite. This is linked with the second point of criticism. For example, Ingham (2004) argues that Menger logically presupposes the existence of money as an institution and tries to explain why it exists. For Ingham, this is a logical fallacy. As Goodhart (2008) pointed out, Menger's hypothesis perfectly matches modern economists' understanding of the market, which is based on individual free agency. In this mode, no government is required to sustain the monetary system and mathematics seems applicable to describe the objective

internal logic of a market as it does in natural science. Therefore, the hypothesis is that it is only hindsight that answers this reasoning on the significance of money. It neither means this is the reason that makes money come into being nor means that money-based society is the only possible form of society.

The second group links money with the concept of debt, especially the debt to God (Peacock 2011; Graeber, 2011; Einzig 2014; Hudson 2005; Simmel ((1900)2004); Mauss, 1923, 1914). For example, Hudson (2005) argues money is originally a means of payment for sacrifice for Germanic people during the 5th and 6th centuries. This historical evidence clearly implies a connection between money and authority (social power, state, and government etc.). Mauss's work on gifts exchange also suggests that money, too, originates from gifts. Like a gift, money involves social power and able to clear debt, and is directly linked with (Mauss, 2014). Discussions on the relationship between money and exchange naturally link questions about language, signs, and symbols (Simmel, (1900)2004; Marx, (1982)1990; Parsons, 1991; Parsons and Smelser, 2010; Shell, 1978; Polanyi, 1968; Codere, 1968; Goux, 1990, 1994, 1999). These views are put into one group because the role of human beings in creating money is obscure. It seems debt and language are man-made, but they are clearly not controlled by the individuals who use them. Moreover, considering this involves the idea of God or a supernatural power like *mana* in a gift, it seems inadequate to simply treat monetary debt as man-made.

Thirdly, the obscurity also engenders a question about whether the monetary system needs to be endorsed by something else, or even created by this. For example, Graeber (2011) argues that many debts were created by warfare. It is the violence in combat that makes incalculable human beings take the calculable form as a value in money. According to Dodd (1994), Michel Aglietta and Andre Orléan, by contrast, explore the connection between violence and religions. They argue that the imitation of each other makes human beings want what others want, which brings about violent conflicts. Religion as an institution sets rules for people which becomes a mediating field and alleviates conflicts. Money, as the symbol of authority, embodies this power. It is therefore not only used by people as a means of exchange in the market but also conditions the market because it is the rule of the market itself. In this sense, social power not only is embodied in money but the very reason for the existence of money.

## Nature of money

These discussions are intimately connected with discussions on the nature of money. A central question here is: what really makes a thing function as money, no matter where it stems from? Whereas Menger's bartering-based hypothesis is historically untrue, it nevertheless touches on this concern. The orthodox way to understand money is through commodity exchange, which must be considered under the context of political-economic debates. This view can be dated back the 4th century BC with ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. In *Politics*, Aristotle argues that exchange is conditioned by 'some men having more, and others less, than suffices for their needs' (Aristotle, trans, 2009, I.9). When this exchange is from a very far place, many goods are not portable. Certain commodities, like metals, are 'agreed' by people as means of exchange (Aristotle, trans, 2009).

In the modern age, Dodd (1994) argues that there are two parallel approaches in the origin of political economy. One is the (neo-)classical economist approach which can be dated back to Adam Smith, another is from Karl Marx. Before Menger, Smith had already argued that exchanges are inconvenient in bartering, so money is required. In *The Wealth of Nations* (WN, Smith & Skinner, 1982), Smith considered that the increase in productivity and the division of labour goes hand in hand because higher productivity requires more professional skills. The reason for the division of labour is human beings' 'propensity to truck, barter, and exchange not thing for another' (WN, I.ii.1). Both the division of labour and increased productivity leads to a producer needing to exchange, because the producer will have a surplus amount of his own product and lack others' products. Regarding instruments of commerce, Smith noted that many things had been used as money in different societies (cattle, salt, shells etc.), but that finally metals were chosen. He thinks this is because metal was easy to store for a long time and easier to be divided (WN, I.iv).

For Menger, however, Smith (and many other theorists) did not explain how a certain commodity became money. Marx similarly approached the nature of money through commodities, but he stressed that the value of a commodity is made by human labour, whilst Smith did not make such a direct connection (cf. WN, I.v). This means the value is something attached to a commodity and makes it become money; money is the expression of value and therefore has the function of measurement, circulation, and hoarding.

What underlies this conceptualisation is the idea that treats money as the medium of exchange, which also conditions an idea that treats money as a symbol or representative of a commodity rather than the commodity itself. According to Ingham (2004), this view can be dated back to Joseph A. Schumpeter. In *History of Economic Analysis* ((1954)1986), Schumpeter argued that money does not really impact on transactions:

Money enters the picture only in the modest role of a technical device that has been adopted in order to facilitate transactions....so long as it functions normally, it does not affect the economic process, which behaves in the same way as it would in a barter economy. ((1954)1986, p.264)

The context here is an introductory explanation of 'real analysis', which means the analysis of the economic analysis without money, because 'all essential phenomena of economic life' ((1954)1986, p.264) are exchanges between goods and services; money is merely a device that veils things (Jevons, (1875)2015).

However, for Ingham (2004), the main difficulty of this approach lies in explaining the relationship between money and credit. On the one hand, this approach does not conceptualise money as credit in nature, but on the other, many scholars agree that loans create money, and therefore contradicts the view that money only mediates transactions but does not create value. Moreover, Dodd (1994) also points out that this does not explain people's intention to save money for later use. That is, if money is merely a symbol of value, keeping money is actually less productive than having real things. By contrast, Dodd thinks keeping money is clearly associated with many other cultural meanings, such as power and freedom, which means money is not neutral in social activities, including transactions.

As to the relationship between money and debt, it should first of all be noted that both Smith and Marx indeed noticed this. For Smith, a banknote becomes money when a bank is trusted by a country, which is supposed to always be able to provide the same value of metal money for these notes. Gradually, more and more notes are in circulation, and the bank earns the interest from loans. Consequently, redeeming funds is occasional and less metal money is required for a bank to maintain their loans (WN, I, ii). It is also inadequate to simply allocate Marx's view in the 'commodity money' camp. By attributing value to labour, he stressed that the value in money (gold) is based on people's imaginary factor of gold (Marx & Mandel, (1976)1990, p.190),

although gold is used as an example of money in Marx's work (Marx & Mandel, (1976)1990, p.188; Williams, 2010). This conditions the further detachment between the time of purchase and that of payment. Namely, one can buy something now and pay for it later. In this sense, buyers and sellers actually become debtors and creditors.

Moreover, at least partly because of the historical origin, many researchers continue to explore the conceptual relations between money, debt and authority (Graeber, 2011; Ruskin, 1997; Knapp, 1924; Schmitt, 1975; Del Mar, 1885; Mitchell-Innes, 1913; Keynes, 1930; Wary, 1998, 2004a; Ingham, 2001). For example, Georg Simmel ((1900) 2005) argues that 'money is only a claim upon society' (p.176), which is outside of the existing value system and activities of social exchange. That is, in the relationship of exchange, payment can be done by providing another service/thing, or a claim to provide it. As Ingham (2004) pointed out, money in Simmel's view is not a thing, so that its material does not matter. This system clearly requires the users' trust, which, Simmel thinks, involves a 'social psychological quasi-religious faith (Simmel, (1990) 2005, p.178), and also involves a question on the role of authority. Similarly, Knapp (1924) argues that the key factor that defines a kind of thing as money is because the government recognises money as the means of payment for tax, which involves an idea about clearing a debt to a state.

However, whether a debt must be endorsed by a government is another question. In *Economy and Society* ((1921) 1978), Max Weber appraised Knapp's work as 'the most imposing' but still 'incomplete for substantive monetary problems' (p.78). Weber's theory of money also starts with conceptualising it as the means of exchange, stating that money does not have independent value in itself. A form of money could be imposed and endorsed by an authority or not. Money without endorsement by an authority is defined as 'natural' money ((1921) 1978, p.76). Thus, for Weber, Knapp's view is incomplete because chartal money is only one of the possible forms. In some communities, money could be based on convention. What really matters is the existence of norms, no matter what endorses it. Similarly, Mitchell-Innes (1913) agrees with this connection between debt and money but disagrees with the privilege of the state. Rather, banks, too, can issue money. By the same token, although Keynes recognised 'the earliest beginnings of bank money...are lost in antiquity', he thought 'bank money may have existed almost as long as money proper' (1930, p.13) because the transference of bank money and that of debt are practically interchangeable: 'a tile to a debt is a tile to money at one remove' (1930, p.13). But Ingham (2004), conversely,

pointed out that, just because everyone could be a debtor or creditor and money in nature is credit, it does not mean every credit can become money. According to him, a shred of historical evidence is in 17th century Europe, during which time it is a third party between a creditor and a debtor that makes the debt between them as a bill become money. Namely, it is the intervention of a mediator that makes the debt move away from a dyadic relationship.

Although more materials can be listed, this view of money, called Modern Money Theory (MMT), now is the main alternative against money theory in traditional economics. The question of endorsement is not so much theoretical as practical. It is more helpful to throw light upon specific societies to investigate what functions as the endorsement of power for money. This is not the focus of this thesis, but some connections with social phenomena still need to be highlighted, which nevertheless causes the question of authority to constantly re-emerge.

## **Money under the context of social phenomena**

Through the questions on the role of commodity and debt, the nature of money is thus connected with broader social, psychological, and political questions, and its nature could be defined in different ways (Searle, 1995; Weber, 1978; Simmel, (1900) 2005; Zelizer, 1997; Karatani, 2003; Smithin, 2008; Hart, 2001; Maurer, 2007; Harvey, 2006; Yuran, 2014).

For example, Zelizer (1994) surveys the social meanings that money has had in everyday use in the US from 1870 to 1930. It seems reasonable to believe the value of money is impersonal if it only expresses abstractive human labour, or it is merely a lubricating device of exchanges of real valuable goods. This sense of 'impersonalness' could usually cancel out a social relationship, like giving money instead of a kiss after having sex with a lover. Even if treating money as a debt and essentially chartal, it seems this impression of money is not significantly changed, because its only source is an authority. However, Zelizer argues that this is a misunderstanding of the role of money in everyday life. People in different groups and different contexts create monies like different languages (1994, pp.18-19). This phenomenon had already been evident in many anthropological researches (Shipton, 1989; Parry and Bloch, 1989; Belk and Wallendorf, 1990). For Zelizer, the differentiation is through earmarking. Namely,

allocating a different meaning and purpose of an amount of money. This also includes everyday consumption, because people are constantly concerned about what should be bought, which implies a process of selection: 'proper spending was differentiated spending; effective spending requires earmarks' (1994, p.31). Zelizer especially stresses the role of the user in making meaning: it is not necessarily the things bought that make the differentiation. For example, money can be directly used as a gift for weddings, funerals or even entering school and graduation in Japan (1994, p.117), its meaning is thus context-sensitive, rather than things already bought (household expenses or saving for children's education etc.).

Ingham (2004)'s view is even more radical: money is not a 'thing' functioning as a medium of exchange, but as a social relation. Considering he agrees with money as debt and following Keynes's view that the fundamental condition for money is 'measure of abstract value' and a 'means of storing and transporting value' (2004, p.70), this view seems just a natural consequence. However, what makes Ingham's view distinctive is that he thinks money itself has an independent value rather than just a symbol expressing values of commodities. That also means it is not the value of a commodity that gives money purchasing power, but the power within social relations. Consequently, it is commodities that should be treated as a means of payment for clearing debt. Money is therefore based on a 'social organisation of monetary system' (2004, p.71). As previously mentioned, Ingham thinks all money is debt, but it is not every debt that is money. The key factor that distinguishes money and other debts are transferability: 'money is assignable trust' (2004, p.74). For this reason, Ingham thinks of generalised debt as money derived from the nature of money as the social relationship.

Another field is the relationship between money and geopolitical space. As is clear, money is not simply debts issued and endorsed by the state government. This opens up further questions, like how and what factor determines the price of money between international transactions. According to Dodd (2014), there are three main approaches to understand this relation: geopolitically, historically, and ideologically. The first is to treat money as a part of the 'infrastructural power of the state', the second is to see it as a consequence of trade, and the third is to think about the 'mental image' of money (p.212). Under this scope, the role of the state in sustaining monetary systems is questioned again because there is a decline in the state's power over money, for which Dodd listed six aspects: firstly, private monies are developed in the

form of financial derivatives; secondly, some states' authorities prefer to use another state's money (e.g., US dollar); thirdly, the existence of a monetary union beyond the boundary of states (e.g., the EU); fourthly, competitive relations between currencies; fifthly, with the decline of the US dollar, the international organisation plays a more important role in worldwide money flows, like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Special Drawing Rights; and finally, the recent emergence of non-state issued currency like the cryptocurrency Bitcoin. Nevertheless, it is still adequate to say that, although no authority issues money for worldwide transactions, sustaining and circulating money are fundamentally based on political power. The expansion and competition of monies between states are just like earmarking meanings of money in everyday life, as Zelizer demonstrated.

Many discussions then centre on what forms of money are used worldwide and its relations with state power (Agnes, 2000; Sassen, 1991; 1999; O'Brien, 1992; Strange, 1999; Wendt, 1992; Schmitt, 2003; Harvey, 1996; Hardt, 2001; Ohmae, 1990). Today's international law is largely based on the Westphalian system, which recognises the political self-determinacy of each state. Money, therefore, becomes the link between states due to economic relations. But the question then is: what endorses the monetary system in international relations? In history, private credit and metal money (issued by the state government) co-existed (Dodd, 2014). However, Susan Strange (1999) argues that this model is not sustainable and that, today, money is issued by privately owned organisations. She listed three failures by worldwide organisations for regulating debt and money issues concerning international problems: 1) International debt for helping developing countries; 2) Corporations for environmental issues; and 3) For helping poor countries by taxation. Fundamentally, Strange thought, respecting each states' self-determinacy means the Westphalian system cannot have the real political power to regulate a state's policy, whilst every cooperation deeply involves national interests. For example, as to the issue of reducing chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) gas for climate change, the deadlock between developed countries and China is whether and how much developed countries should financially pay for the reductions of emissions. Strange clearly understands China's standpoint: 'the environmental dangers you (the developed countries) perceive today were the result of your past industrialisation, not ours. Why should you expect us to be more environmentally aware today than you were yesterday?' (1999, p.351). Clearly, no third-party authority can mediate the debate/conflict like this. If debts can

only become money via third-party mediation between debt and creditor so that it makes them transferable (Ingram, 2004; Dodd, 2014), then state-issued money seems impossible in this context.

However, does it mean there is no possible money that can be endorsed by a third party for international trades? As to this, Dodd's reading on Carl Schmitt is quite insightful, which implies that the lack of order is also important for money to some extent. Schmitt ((1974) 2003) reviewed the relation between trade and order throughout the world from a historical perspective. The concept of 'nomos' plays the pivotal role in his work, which is a Greek word that basically means 'law'. What Schmitt focuses on is the common rule of the world as a community. What is relevant to money is a sense of 'free' as the historical condition. According to Schmitt, the idea of free competition and free trade is historically related to an idea of 'free' space. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Christian European countries treated seas as free spaces in the sense of being free from the law. This free zone is therefore linked with a conceptualisation of a space that is full of conflicts and individual's free agency, even egoism, which is shown in some theorisation of society doctrines by the likes of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke. Consequently, because of colonies the worldwide international law was the application of European international law, because the relationship between colonial lands is treated as the relationship between colonies mother countries.

According to Schmitt's reading, this understanding was prevailing, which is exemplified in Alphonse Rivier's work. However, Schmitt argues that this application was mistaken because newly joined counties did not have 'any spatial or spiritual consciousness of what they once had in common' (Schmitt & Ulmen, 2003, p.234) which was shared among those European countries. Be as it may – based on that idea of free space – money, labour, and capitals circulate worldwide as if the world is an international community. Thus, this global economy in which the circulation of money appears is conditioned by treating states' borders as a non-states sphere based on international law. For Dodd (2014), although there are many people arguing that money needs an endorsement, Schmitt shows that 'money relies for its positivity on specific forms of negativity...not only law but the absence of law; not only order but lack of order (2014, p.226).

In this sense, it seems there are two options left: the first is that the money is endorsed by an authority which, on the one hand, is based on a certain consensus

and common interest and, on the other, opens up a politically free space at a certain level for conflicts and negotiations. This authority would probably be able to gain some political interest. Another is an internationally circulated money not issued by any state authority, like Bitcoin (if it can succeed). As to the first, it requires more general discussions about whether the third-party guarantor is essential for a system. It seems possible as, just because money is endorsed by an authority, it does not mean the authority has to facilitate corporations directly and concretely. For example, money existed long ago before children were born in this year, and many children do not need money during their early life. But the idea of the relationship between creditor and debtor is always possible, even always there as the relationship between parents and child (Greaber, 2011). Namely, the question here is whether the requirement of a third-party authority is an innate factor in human beings' social relationships which is corresponding to the psychoanalytic Oedipus complex, or whether it should be conceptualised as a dyadic relationship like a duel, in Baudrillard's sense.

This is where Baudrillard's view can be located within the discussions of money. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, in line with his central argument, Baudrillard argues that money is treated as a sign. Baudrillard's concern is still on the simulated nature of the money system. Money becomes an independent system that is unanchored from its reference, namely, production. As a sign of value, money is not only detached from use-value, but also from exchange-value. The former detachment refers to the relationship between money and concrete goods, in the sense that the amount of money can be treated as the signifier representing a commodity (also including labour) at the level of the monetary system. Baudrillard does not presume the dialectical connection between money and commodity like Marx, and in this sense 'money is the first 'commodity' to assume the status of a sign and to escape use-value' ((1976) 1993, p.22). The detachment from exchange-value probably refers to today's financial market, especially the foreign exchange futures, in which the price of money fluctuates does not rely on the concrete exchange of goods, but merely on money itself. This self-referentiality is the nature of the third order of simulacra, as aforementioned. Baudrillard therefore even claims that money is freed from the market. Although it probably does not make any sense to say exchanges are free from the market, his concern is clear: the system does not represent any outside referent, it is an autonomous movement. Money in this sense seems not a commodity any longer.

However, it seems Baudrillard demonstrates the dialectics exactly by arguing for this dead end: money is conversely connected with death in the sense that both can be thought of as the general equivalence. If, for Marx, money stems from the commodity being the universal equivalent of all other commodities, which consequently paves the way for the commodity fetishism (Marx & Mandel, 1990), for Baudrillard, death always goes hand in hand with it because the existence of value exactly aims to against death, namely, nothingness. This is evident when Marx stressed that adding value does not rely on workers' concrete labour, but by being counted as an abstractive labour and measured by time (Marx & Mandel, 1990, p.308). Marx aims to distinguish the register of value from the use-value of particular things, but it also implies a concept of registration. That is, in which sense, and at which level, the time can be kept. Baudrillard, in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, makes use of a more realistic sense of death: for a living being who is going to die, death can mean not having time, the accumulation of time (value) therefore means to defer death ((1976) 1993, p146-147).

Although he then claims that there is no dialectical revolution as the end, it is also clear that the money is dialectically death, just as being is dialectically nothing<sup>22</sup> ((1976) 1993). Baudrillard's aim here is to refute that the Marxist revolution can achieve an alternative form of capitalism, but this failure also does not escape from dialectics. Consequently, the ultimate referent of a value system is nothingness. This conclusion once again directs the question to an end: if nothing can prevent the abstraction of value from the form of concrete commodities to the form of pure signs, and nothing prevents all social relations to be conceived as the relations of signs, then what underlines – and dialectically supports the system – is what cannot be counted within the system. In short, all Baudrillard's views of signs, structure, system and waste are connected to that of money (Dodd, 2016), and the central concern is always the alternative dimension and collapse of the system.

The second option, Bitcoin, is also related to the bigger questions about the future form of money. Although it is not the only alternative form of currency, it is a good example because it pushes the question of authority to the extreme and hopes to resolve the question of trust completely.

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<sup>22</sup> There will be a more detailed sketch of Hegelian logic in the section of 'Marx on money'.

The concept of Bitcoin was first shown in Satoshi Nakamoto's article *Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System* (2008). As a digital currency, it is 'a chain of digital signature', each signature is defined as a 'digital coin'. The central question Nakamoto aims to address is trust. Although many technical details can be discussed, the central aim of these is to achieve a status that transactions are relied on an objective power independent of each participant and the third-party authority.

In traditional transactions, the payer and payee need a third party to guarantee the validity of the money (debts). What Nakamoto hopes is 'a system for electronic transactions without relying on trust' (2008, p.8). First of all, when a transaction occurs between two parties, each party has a public key. The process of the transaction is to add the payee's public key into the digital signature so that each coin is a record of the transaction. However, this does not prevent a payer to pay the coin to more than one payee, considering all coins are merely information. Nakamoto's solution is a timestamp, which means adding information of time into a Bitcoin 'block', and then publishing the block so that it gets recognised by every node in the Bitcoin network. A block is also a form of information based on encryption technology. Transactions are encrypted in this way so that they become blocks, each block contains several transactions. Due to Bitcoin seeking to achieve a decentralised approach to endorse the validity, every participant (node) in the network needs to have the same information of transactions, so that they collectively recognise every transaction. The network of participants itself is the ledger of a bank.

A ledger should not be changed easily, so there is a requirement for changing and adding information in a block. This is achieved by a 'proof-of-work' system, which prevents conflicts between participants' records and those who use fake records. When an information transaction is published in the network, every node (participant) collects it and starts to work on 'proof-of-work'. The first node that finishes the task broadcasts the block, and then all other nodes accept this if all transactions are valid. These blocks then form a chain. Therefore, each transaction is published and can be traced back from the start, the history of the transaction guarantees the validity of the current owner of the coin.

As to its relationship to authority, supporters believe Bitcoin can substitute a central bank and avoid typical banking problems such as inflation because of printing more money (Antonopoulos, 2014), whilst others are less optimistic, especially when Bitcoin helps illegal trading such as drugs (Turpin, 2014; Tsukerman, 2015; Warren,

2020). But the more fundamental question is: if Bitcoin is not endorsed by a government or bank, what then backs it up? As Giddens (1990) argues, money as a 'disembedding device' is passed, overcrossing the time-space context, and 'all disembedding mechanisms...depend upon trust' (p.26). The context of Giddens's statement is his discussion on modernity, especially the transition from pre-modern to the modern era. For him, the historical materialism argued by Marx is a grand narrative, even if this is achieved by an evolution, which portrays history as being threaded by an underlying logic or principle.

By contrast, Giddens proposes a 'discontinuities' view which argues for a gap between modern and pre-modern society. This gap is conditioned by the separation between time and space. That is, whilst in the pre-modern era time was always a local time, the invention of the clock made it possible for people in different locations to share the same schedule and are influenced by remote social relationships than the local relationships. This is more evident in the current Covid-19 pandemic age, considering people communicate more through the internet and across countries. This withdrawing from a social context is defined as disembedding. Money is a disembedding mechanism in the sense that, not only does it mediate exchange but also, as a credit, is a mode of deferral. This means money makes it possible to take values to another social context.

But the trust that technology can substitute in Nakamoto's article is that between payer and payee, which does not include people's trust in acceptance of the whole money system. It is still not clear how Bitcoin can resolve this question, which probably is the fundamental one for all monetary systems: just because it is a watertight system does not mean we have to use it. Based on previous discussions, it should be adequate to say that money, as debt, is the embodiment of political power and social relationships. So, one of the key determinants for the popularity of Bitcoin is whether it can be supported by enough political power.

As to this, William J. Luther (2016) made a pessimistic conclusion. As he pointed out, the government can limit the use of Bitcoin by refusing it as a means of tax payment and punish merchants who receive it. He argues that there are two factors needed to consider when to change the monetary system: 1) network effect; and 2) switching cost. The first means money cannot be used solely. Unlike a beer which can be consumed without any external factors, money needs to be part of a system in order to function. The second refers to the costs that arise from changing facilities, like

cashpoint machines and software development. Bitcoin can never gain enough popularity because the government can make the cost high enough so that using Bitcoin for payment is not attractive to members of the general public (Luther, 2013). Although it is very difficult for a government to prohibit Bitcoin in every transaction (Hendrickson et al., 2015; O'Sullivan, 2018), few people would be tempted to use it as currency if Bitcoin payment is not accepted in most stores (Luther, 2017). Without an authority's endorsement and forced requirement, what is left is users' belief (Tsukerman, 2015; Turpin, 2014).

As to the question of its relationship to authority, it seems Bitcoin does not have an advantage compared with Fiat money. Fiat money is any money that a government declares as legal tender. As it is not backed by a commodity such as gold or silver, it has no intrinsic value and it does not have use value; instead, its value is determined by market forces. The new technology only wants to avoid the sociological question, as Dodd (2014) pointed out, by basing itself on 'the promise of machine' (p.371). But by this means, money is conceptualised as a thing rather than a social relationship, as if the value is guaranteed by a non-human device or mechanism so that it becomes a reliable, independent method for 'hoarding' values.

Of course, just because Bitcoin avoids answering the question, does not mean the question itself is closed, nor does it mean that Bitcoin is based on a wrong premise. For example, Keith Hart (2001) argues that money does not need support from a single authority, but functions like a religion which Acts a mediator for individuals. Moreover, due to comprehensive digital recording of transactions and personal information, digital money is an instrument of collective memory. Therefore, for Hart, money is a token of society that consists of three senses: state, nation, and community. They are ideas about how money is related to social structure. From the perspective of the state, money embodies power; when treating society as a community, money embodies people's trust. When seeing society as a nation, money combines both hierarchical structure (power) and trust (bonding power). The political power that makes and sustains a hierarchical structure is defined as vertical, whilst bonding power in a community is defined as horizontal. Money, from the conception of a nation, therefore, unites both vertical and horizontal powers. Money in this sense cannot be simply treated as a thing for hoarding values, and not even merely a debt between creditor and debtor.

As it can be seen, the question of money is intimately linked with the question of 'otherness'. Otherness is a dimension of subjectivity, which is the alterity in and for a subject. The subject does not simply accept it as a given but keeps trying to subjectivise it. Money is relevant to this because social relations, which is embodied in money, are constitutive for subjectivity. On the one hand, we are born in social relationships but, on the other, everyone's life consists of creating and breaking them. In Dodd's reading, Keith Hart's work approached this tension by reconciling the opposition between market and state. In past theorisations of money, it is conceptualised as either commodity or credit, which implies a dichotomy between 'determinist' and 'voluntarist'. Treating money as a commodity is a 'structural account of money' in the sense that the money is treated as an expression of objective value, whilst the idea of credit money is an 'agent-centred approach' which treats money as a user's creation (Dodd, 2014, pp.305-306). By contrast, by drawing on Malinovsky's research on *kula*, Hart argues that market and state as two aspects co-exist in the circulation of goods. The ceremonial exchange is between the leaders of the community, which is more about politically determining goods distribution, whilst commodity exchanges also widely exist, and they are based on values. Hart thinks, although there is no money in *kula*, states and the market as two sides already exist. Despite that Malinowski himself did not treat things in *kula* as a form of money, it seems Hart is more in line with Mauss's reading which recognises the function of money in these things (Hart, 1986).

From this perspective, it seems Bitcoin is a project hoping to master otherness by eliminating real other people. Namely, by hoping a guarantee from technological solution, Bitcoin users want to abstract the function of the guarantor from the authority and lock this function in a non-human device. Namely, it aims to tame the otherness, as if a monetary system can gain the guarantee from the other whilst excluding the other. In this way, the separation between market and state is conditioned because the function of state seems separable from state.

## Conclusion

This section has provided a general overview of sociological discussions on money. Most of them are worth much more detailed examination which cannot be in

this thesis. But a constantly haunting question remains about the nature of the endorsement for money, which conversely echoes the difficulty that Baudrillard and Kierkegaard face.

Both Kierkegaard and Baudrillard discuss language, because language embodies social norms and values. Money and language have a similarity. Both are man-made but cannot be controlled by an individual. It is good to compare them for exploring their nature.

The next section will compare John Searle and Marx's view on money and language. Both philosophers notice the similarity between money and language but make different conclusions. By examining their views, this chapter aims to show a key in the value of money: inequality.

## **Money and language**

Similar to money, it seems a language, too, can be actively performed by its user, whilst it is largely beyond an individual's control. Moreover, it seems also natural to link money with language when it is treated as the medium of exchange (Smith, (1776) 1982; Polanyi, 1968; Codere, 1968; Gregory, 1997; Giddens, 1990; Maurer, 2002, 2006). For example, Smith supposed that the propensity of the barter and exchange process might result from 'faculties of reason and speech' (WN, I.ii.1). For Simmel, thoughts can only be understood thereafter by taking form in a shared language. Similarly, possession of money is the way to keep the value to be recognised in the future (2004, p.210), whilst for Zelizer, people create different monies to create different languages for different contexts (1994, p.19).

## **Marx's view on the relationship between money and language**

By contrast, Marx's view here is special. At least in a prima facie manner, there is indeed a connection between his view on money and language. In *The Capital* (1900), Marx claims value as the 'language of commodity' (p.143). The context here is an

explanation on exchange and a quantitative comparison of linen and coats. They are qualitatively different, and the use-value for different people cannot be compared. The foundation of comparison is their 'value-relation' (p.143), which paves the way for his further argument on value as a socially necessary labour time. It is human labour that creates value and, because of this, two qualitatively different things can be quantitatively compared. Then, money as the measure of value is a symbol. Although gold is used as money, it is only an ideal form. The value of things 'is signified through their equality with gold' (p.189). Thus, it would be very hard to ignore the similarity in the role of money and language within the process of exchange.

However, in *Grundrisse* (1858), Marx thinks the analogy between these two things is inadequate. This is because 'language does not transform ideas' and 'ideas do not exist separately from language' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.163). But why is this the reason distinguishing money and language? Does it mean money transforms value? The context here is also an illustration of the relationship between money and social relations. Marx argues that the reason that money can be used for the exchanges of commodities is that both of them are objectified social relations. The exchange value is 'relative labour time', and money is the exchange value separated from substance. However, he notes, commodity, even if it is a real product of social labour time, cannot directly be 'transformed into money' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.160) because it seems people have faith in money. As the media of exchange, it seems money functions as a collateral in the process of purchase. The source of this faith in money, Marx thinks, is because of the objectified social relation in money. Here, the debt relation as an aspect in money is therefore stressed: 'money serves...as the 'dead pledge of society'' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.160). This view refers to Aristotle's argument on justice in *Nicomachean Ethics* (2009b), in which he argues that money is needed for exchange equally. For Aristotle, money is a 'representative of needs' (2009b, p.89) because it shows how many of one thing is equal to another thing in exchange. It is not clear how this equality is achieved, but Aristotle stressed the etymological connection in Greek between money (*nomisma*) and law (*nomos*) as Schmitt also mentioned, which implies a factor recognised by human beings rather than naturally innate in a thing: 'it is our power to change it and make it useless' (2009b., p.89). Marx in *Grundrisse* clearly

agrees with Aristotle's view on this point, although he more clearly claimed the commensurability between things is the social labour time<sup>23</sup>.

The key reason for transformation is this: money embodies social relations, so a concrete commodity, which consists of the use-value for an individual, and the time spent by individual labour, is transformed into a social valorisation system in which the social labour time is an abstractive form in a process of the sale. This implies that a social system, to which a concrete labour time registers, is contextualising or endorsing this transformation. This objectified factor for commensurability between things is what Aristotle pointed out but is clarified by Marx. Therefore, a purchase is not only about using a form of labour time (money) to exchange another form of that (commodity) but also using a universally recognised time (money) to exchange a particular individual's time (a concrete commodity).<sup>24</sup> It is in this sense that Marx claims that the social relation in money is a social relation between 'people's productive activities' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.160). By contrast, Marx thought ideas are always in language; that there is never an idea without symbols and concepts which constitute the idea. Therefore, language, as a derivative of social interactions, does not transform ideas. Even if an idea is raised by an individual, this occurs at the register of social relationships.

In this sense, ideas belong to the field of 'universal', but value can belong to the field of 'universal' and that of 'particular'. The exchanges between commodities and money involve transformations between the field of the 'universal' and the field of the 'particular'.

## **Searle's theorisation on the relationship between language and money**

There can be more discussions drawing the parallel between language and money, but here this thesis will discuss John Searle's view on money in *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995). This is not only because this is a careful and systematic piece of research on the connection between language and money, but also because his

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<sup>23</sup> See., Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p. 231, note on 1133a

<sup>24</sup> Namely, if money is more valuable than specific commodity, universal is higher than individual. This echoes Kierkegaard's reading on Hegel.

approach is a contrast to Marx. Money, he argues, is an institutional fact in which the role of language is constitutive. To explain this, this section will outline his general theory of social reality.

First of all, Searle clearly sets out his world view: the world is made by physical particles, and the current function and status stems from biological evolution. Consciousness is a biological feature of the neuronal system. There are two kinds of facts: brute fact and institutional fact. The brute fact is independent of human institution, whilst institutional facts exist only based on human institution. A human institution is based on collective intentionality. Collective intentionality refers to not only 'collective behaviours' but also 'intentional states' (1995, p.23) shared by a group of people. The intentional states not only include intentions, but also belief and desire. Searle uses a football game as an example: every player's behaviour is understood within the team's general aim. Every player also believes that others are believing in the same game rules and the same aim, and believe others have the same belief as themselves. Searle considered that collective intentionality cannot be further reduced and treated as a sum of individual intentionality because an individual's intention can be different from collective one, and that one person's belief does not necessarily contain another's beliefs. For a belief to become collective, a group of people needs to have 'a sense of doing (wanting, believing etc.) something together and each intentionality 'is derived from the collective intentionality' (1995, p.24-25).

However, if we suppose all thoughts are in an individual's brain, what is wrong with the view that collective intentionality is a sum of an individual's intentionality? For Searle, this is because it is not every intention's subject is 'I' (1995, p.26). Furthermore, it is not every belief or idea that can be addressed to 'me' solely. In the case of the football game, a team member's task could be different from the content of the general aim of the team. The collective intentionality is defined by Searle as 'social fact', institutional fact is a sub-class of social fact. It is not only based on collective awareness but also formalised by institutions, like government and money. An institution consists of rules, and Searle distinguishes two kinds of rules: regulative and constitutive. Regulative rules are about rules that should be obeyed, like cars should drive on the left-hand side in the UK. The constitutive rules, by contrast, conditions activities (like in a football game, on which criteria a team get point, and so forth). Through the constitutive rules, Searle formulated the general form of creating institutional fact: 'X counts as Y in context C' (1995, p.28). That is, a team (X) counts

as a win (Y) in a football game (C). In short, an institutional fact can only exist in a system based on constitutive rules.

So, an institutional fact is created by using constitutive rules. The act of using constitutive rules is defined as an 'assignment of function', which means to impose a function or feature to a thing. Like the concept of fact, Searle also distinguishes two kinds of feature: intrinsic feature and observer-relative feature. An intrinsic feature is independent of any observer to exist, whilst an observer-relative feature is based on the observer. For example, the surface of a thing reflects light and appears in a different colour. The property of the surface is an intrinsic feature, whilst the colour is an observer-relative feature. Due to being relative to the observer's consciousness, an observer-relative feature is always because of the observer's intentionality and is created by the observer. Then, a function of thing belongs to the observer-relative feature of the things, e.g., sitting is the function of a chair, and therefore always observer-relative. Although some functions seem independent to any observer, like the function of the heart for the human body, Searle thought this idea of function embodies a value that implies intentionality. Namely, to say the function of the heart is to maintain the circulation of blood implies the idea that body life should be maintained.

But indeed, this kind of function is still different from the function of a chair as used for sitting. Searle defines the function of the heart as a non-agentive function, and the function of a chair is agentive. The difference lies in that the non-agentive function is not imposed by an agency directly (i.e., the function of the heart is determined by the biological system), whilst the agentive function is imposed by a user (i.e., a stone can function as a chair when it is sat on). The category of agentive function also includes the use of a symbol to mean something. That is, when I use a symbol to signify another thing or meaning, I impose a function on this symbol. To recap, the institutional fact is created by the assignment of agentive function on an object through constitutive rules.

The role of language is clear, Searle asserts: language is essential to institutional facts. If institutional facts are made by constitutive rules, then assigning a function or feature Y to an object X is to move from brute level to institutional level. In this way, X means something because it has the feature or function Y (like a wall means a boundary). But considering Y as an institutional fact that can only exist in institutions, there is no pre-linguistic tool to present Y. Thus, language is essential for the process

of this assignment, because creating institutional fact is exactly using language – institutional fact is constituted partly by language.

Based on this, Searle argues that money is an institutional fact. Gold or certain kinds of paper are given a function by society so that it becomes money. In this way, money is a developed state of collective intentionality. Searle believed the primitive form of money can be also found in animals, like collective behaviours of hunting. What makes human beings different from animals is the long-standing recognition of the social fact attached on a thing, which is, at least, relevantly independent of the physical feature of the thing. However, this does not explain the central question attracting Searle: what makes people believe it? Can we doubt money? Similar to Marx, Searle's answer is people's collective belief. It ceases to be money when no one believes it. But this answer is not enough, it does not explain why people believe it.

## **Discussion:**

There could be a further exploration of Searle's question that what makes people believe in the value of money. Through this exploration, I argue that the nature of value is inequality.

Searle's question implies a concern about historical factors. This implication is evident because this question is intimately linked with his understanding of the origin of money. Namely, if he believes money simply originates from the endorsement of government violently, no matter if this belief is correct, he would not have such a question. However, as to the origins of money, Searle does not directly explain it but claimed an illustration of 'logical relation' (1995, p.42) among different understandings of money: money as a commodity, as a contract and as fiat money. At first, gold is simultaneously a commodity and money, and in nature using commodity money is 'a form of barter' (1995, p.42). What backed the value of gold as money at first is its value as a commodity. Thus, Searle considered this as a case of the imposition of function on a thing according to its physical nature. But because of 'a stroke of genius' (1995, p.43), people worked out it was possible to use a contract representing real gold. Then, because of a similar process, human beings finally found the connection between contract and gold was not necessary.

Thus, Searle's view implies that money originates from the commodity. Although

he does not claim this, the language he used betrayed him. He called this movement from commodity to fiat money 'evolution' (1995, p.41), and the movement to the next form of money is because of 'figure out' (p.43). This logical sequence of development inevitably implies the temporal sequence. That is, if money as a commodity logically precedes other forms of money, the commodity form cannot be temporally later than other forms. However, this claim is untenable if debt precedes commodity as money as aforementioned. Consequently, Searle avoided answering the question about what factors endorse the system. He does not think the nature of money is a commodity but cannot explain the role of the commodity in the history of money. The so-called 'stroke of genius' explains nothing. That is to say, there is a missing factor in Searle's explanation of commodity money.

This missing factor is an inequality in the concept of money. This factor is evident in Marx's theorisation of money. The inequality is shown in two relationships. The one is the relationship between 'universal' and 'particular'. The other is the relationship between subject and object. Marx's theorisation of material conditions embodies both relationships.

Marx's concept of money shows the unequal relationship between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. As previously mentioned, Marx argued that money is not a language because language does not transform ideas. This implies a dissymmetrical relationship between a particular commodity and money, namely, between a certain labour time spent in producing a particular commodity and the socially necessary labour time required in this commodity as the universal equivalence. That is why Zizek places Marx's theory of money in a seemingly asymmetrical relationship (Zizek, 2009). From this perspective, Searle's explanation of money never escapes the field of language, nothing needs to be transformed. Thus, asymmetry is missing in Searle's theory.

The inequality is also shown in the relationship between object and subject. As Yuran (2014) argues, Marx is different from Searle in the sense that 'things are objects because they embody a certain aspect of social life that cannot be subjectivised, that entails a denunciation of subjectivity' (p.48). Namely, the value of money seems objective because it embodies social power relations that a subject cannot shake. Money is not merely an agreement between subjects, but the objectified agreements which cannot be subjective for subjects anymore. Thus, money embodies an inequality, because it seems to involve something other than the realm of subjects.

The question is how this inequality emerges.

Marx's discussions of material conditions demonstrate an emergence of inequality. Chapter 1 has explained Marx's view of the division of labour. That is, limited material conditions and productivities bring about the division of labour. The division of labour forms productive relations. Everyone is born in a social relationship determined by the given material conditions. These material conditions are an effect of past social activities. It is an open question whether Marx's historical materialism foresaw communism. But, in a sense, limitation brings about differences. Individuals are different in terms of his/her material conditions. The differences bring about the exchanges of products. The exchanges create the idea of value. This idea supposes a register in which everything can be compared. This register functions as the representative of the 'universal', which sutures the gap between particular products and individuals. Money, if it is a collective agreement between individuals as Searle argues, is a historically determined collective agreement. It is a historical product of social activities by requirement.

The material conditions are not the only reason that brings about dissymmetrical relationships. Kierkegaard's argument has shown this. An individual can never achieve God's law. The most unequal relationship should be the relationship between God's law and human individuals, namely, between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. But, Marx also explains how material conditions bring about undeniable effects on everyone's everyday life. When we compare our products, we compare ourselves<sup>25</sup>. Even in a *potlach*, as Mauss argued, chefs compete with each other by depositions of things. Thus, the key factor is inequality. God, material conditions and the act of giving gifts are reasons supporting the inequality. It means the 'particular' cannot achieve the 'universal' but do not lose their connection.

For this reason, I argue that the nature of value is inequality. If a thing has a value, it means it connects to the 'universal' which defines value. That is, it defines what a particular thing/signifier is for a system. For example, Marx defines the value of a commodity as the required universal labour time. This means how the time-based value system defines a particular thing. The co-existence between the 'universal' and the 'particular' is obvious. Saussure defines value as the difference between signifiers.

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<sup>25</sup> The reader could recall Marx's argument of alienated labour in chapter 1. That is, if we treat our products as tools for earning a living, then we will also treat our customers as the tools for finishing the exchanges.

It means a particular signifier gains a connection with other signifiers through the idea of differences. It thus means for a signifier to gain a relationship to a set of the signifier as a whole. Hereof, it is inaccurate to define this as a 'relationship'. This is because the gap between the 'individual' and the 'particular' are not sutured.

This answers Searle's question. The belief in the value of money stems from a belief that money represents the constitutive factor that causes inequality. Searle's view lacks a factor embodying inequality. The agreements in his illustration seem just man-made between equal subjects. They cannot have an aura of a supposed higher being, like Hegelian logic, God's will, Smithian 'invisible hand', and so forth. Even if these so-called higher beings are all man-made too.

There could be a further exploration of Searle's view of unconsciousness. Searle's conceptualisation of 'conscious-only' social agreements cannot allow that unsubjectivisable social aspect. He refused to use the concept of the unconscious to theorise the objectivity of money because we can always be conscious of social agreements. He spends a whole chapter arguing this in another book, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (1992), but his reading on Freud is limited by his own physicalism: 'On my account, talk of the unconscious mind is simply talk of the causal capacity of neurophysiology to cause conscious states and conscious behaviour' (1992, p.152), and Freudian unconscious flaws because it cannot be coherent to his neurological-based view on the human psyche (1992, pp.169-170). This refutation again ignores the gap in Freud's doctrine in which he remains open. Because of his negative attitude toward the concept of unconsciousness, Searle missed an explanation on money, which is exactly the point Zizek (2009) makes when he bridges Marx and Freud through Lacanian unconsciousness. That is, there is no room in Searle's theory for a thing being man-made but being seemingly not man-made.

To sum up, I think the nature of value is inequality. If Kierkegaard is right, the most fundamental inequality is in the relationship between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. In the next section, I will continue to review Marx's theory of money, which shows how the tension between the 'particular' and the 'universal' is related to greed, namely, insatiability.

## Marx on money

The last section has compared Marx and Searle's views on the relationship between language and money. It argues that the nature of value is inequality. If money represents value, it is because it represents inequality. The inequality is lost in Searle's theorisation of money but is shown in Marx's argument. This section continues to explore the role of inequality in Marx's theory of money. It aims to explain the connection between inequality and insatiability.

It will start with reviewing Marx's view on the separation between value and price. This separation allows Marx to argue that the price of commodities is fluctuating. The fluctuations are fundamentally due to class struggles. Money conditions this separation because it abstracts value from concrete commodities. By drawing dialectics, Marx's theorisation of money involves the contradiction between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. More importantly, money embodies insatiability, namely, greed. This is because it connects the 'particular' with the 'universal'. The money thus connects the 'limited' with the 'unlimited' by representing a general idea of 'wealth'.

Marx's understanding of dialectics is largely from Hegel. This section then discusses a question about dialectics in Marx's theory: is insatiability rooted in dialectics? This seems a big question. But we will see, a key to answering it lies in how we believe in the 'universal'. As to this, Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel is illuminating.

Finally, this section returns to the question discussed in the first section: is money a commodity or a debt? I will focus on the debate between Ingham and Lapavitsas's view on Marx's argument on money. I disagree with both of them. But the flaws of their arguments show the importance of inequality in the concept of money.

Overall, Marx's analysis centres on the internal contradiction in the concept of money. This section demonstrates how the contradiction is related to insatiability and

embodies the inequality between the 'universal' and the 'particular' in the concept of money.

## **Marx on money, value and price**

This section focuses on Marx's view on the separation between value and price. Marx illustrates this in his discussion of Mill's view of money in *Elements of Political Economy* ((1821) 2014) and Proud's view in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847).

Mill's view on price is based on his theory of money. For him, money is a commodity for exchange. It makes exchange effective, so money is a medium of exchange. The determining factor that makes the exchange come into being with a determined price is the cost of production. Clearly, merchants' motives stem from the gap between price and cost. The higher cost of production, including that of logistics, makes the production less profitable – even meaningless for them. The lower cost of a commodity brings about higher motives, and then also brings about more of this commodity. It seems a kind of equilibrium will be achieved. Then, Mill argues that capital and human labour are two kinds of cost, and the price of a commodity involves three parts: 1) invested money for production (capital); 2) an ordinary profit; 3) the labours' wages. The context here is a discussion about what determines workers' wages and capitalists' profits. Mill argues that the capitalist should get profit too because capital is consumed in the process of production (Mill, (1821)2014).

But it is not clear what defines a profit as so-called 'ordinary'. Namely, how much is ordinary for a capitalist? Mill does not answer it. Another context where Mill uses this concept is where he defends a view that all of the cost of production belongs to capital. The wages that a capitalist paid to workers are counted as part of it. After paying wages, the capitalist can expect this 'ordinary profit' in return. This idea of ordinary profit also emerges many times in later chapters, but it seems he just takes it for granted as a given fact (1821)2014).

This supposed 'ordinary' is a belief on which Marx targets. This is because this belief sutures the gap between price and value. That is, compared with the wage of labour and invested money, the profit is more flexible. If there is a supposed standard of 'ordinary', the profit is fixed as well. The connection between price and value is thus fixed.

For Marx, the connection between price and value is unstable because of class struggle.

Marx agrees with Mill's view of money as a medium of exchange but stresses that the need for exchange stems from the division of labour. Exchanges imply the existence of private property and a value in common between private properties. It is this idea of value, or the form of being as value, that constitutes money. Namely, money is rooted in the idea of evaluating different things on a common plane. As an embodiment of social relation, money itself is further alienation of private property because a real social relation is linked with specific individuals, whilst money, by abstracting the social relation, only contains a relationship that is indifferent to any specific person.

From this perspective, Mill's view on the connection between the value of money and the cost of production is questionable, because his view fundamentally treats money as a commodity, and through this way, the value of things can only be seen in its exchange value. Namely, in Mill's theory, nothing can separate the concrete relationship between commodities and the abstract relationship as money.

Thus, money conditions the detachment between value and price because it is an abstraction. A product is produced by spending labour; it becomes a commodity in the moment of exchange; the value of a commodity is measured by the labour time used; value, due to it being the social relation of a commodity, can go beyond a specific commodity and become 'general social existence' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.147). Money is a further abstraction of value from a commodity; value is a property shared by commodity and money. Marx, in *Grundrisse*, also calls value the 'money-property' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.147) of a commodity.

Clearly, value is abstracted from concrete commodities, money is a further abstraction. Value has a strong foundation to be measured in terms of labour time, whilst price could be more flexible to some extent and does not show the social relations and conditions of production.

Another illustration of the separation between value and price can be found in Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) which is a criticism of Proudhon's work: *System of Economic Contradictions or the Philosophy of Poverty* (1846). For Marx, although Proudhon also links value with the cost of production, he nevertheless still believes in a law regulating the price. The value and price are therefore clearly connected: a commodity is expensive because it contains more labour time. This leads

to Proudhon making a strange conclusion: the most needed things require the least labour time because they are usually the cheapest things. It is wrong. If this is always the case, poverty does not exist.

What is missed, from Marx's perspective, is antagonism. It is the antagonism between 'accumulated labour' and 'actual labour' that drives the progression. Luxury things could become cheap, and foods could be expensive. Consumption is largely determined by the social conditions of the consumer, and it is the class struggle that determines this social relation and condition (Marx & McLellan, 2000, p. 214).

Thus, Marx claims that 'the relation of the product to itself as exchange value becomes its relation to money, existing alongside it; or becomes the relation of all products to money, external to them all' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.147). Money, in this sense, is a form of value born out of the commodity form of value.

But what does it mean by 'the relation of product to itself'? The exchange value is indeed about one product's relationship to another product, but a relation to oneself usually refers to human beings in a psychological sense, like an individual adopts a certain way of life in terms of attitude, world view, and lifestyle, which is conditioned by a capacity of having belief. But, why there is a thing that can have a relation to itself as if it has a belief, or such a relation is internal to the product?

Here, it is impossible to ignore Hegelian dialectics as the underlying logic in Marx's conceptualisation. It is Marx himself, in *Grundrisse*, who claims that the price is equated to exchange value by the 'constant non-equation of itself' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.136), which is related to Hegel's *Science of Logic* (Hegel & Giovanni, (1816)2015). Nelson (2014) even suggests a reading that money is somehow 'a subject like consciousness' (2014, p.50).

## **Hegel's three stages of dialectics**

Hegel's general illustration of dialectics is from § 79 to § 82. There are three aspects of logic in *Science of Logic*: 1) the abstract side or that of the understanding; 2) the dialectical side or the negatively rational side; and 3) the speculative, or positively rational side (EL, § 79). They are not, Hegel stressed, three separate parts in logic or a concept, but are 'moments of every properly logical content, that is to say, of every

concept or everything true in general' (EL, § 79). To understand this, each aspect needs to be explained first.

The aspect of understanding is about having a fixed definition of a thing through its distinction compared with others. It sticks to characteristic abstractions of the thing. For example, an understanding of the book could be that a book is a bundle of paper on which many words are written. Such a way of defining a thing is to seek a universal factor in their 'kind'. Thus, Hegel thinks, 'the understanding's activity generally consists in imparting the form of universality to its contents' (EL, § 80).

The second aspect, the dialectical (or negative rational) side, is the moment of 'self-sublation of such finite determination by themselves and transition into their opposites' (§ 81). Here, the term 'sublate' is translated from the German word *aufheben*, which means 'pick up' in English. Hegel uses this term to refer to a process that combines the act of abandoning and grasping. That is, the new forms in each stage reserves part of the former form and, meanwhile, gets rid of it, so that it becomes the opposite one. In the example of books, if the aforementioned definition is accepted, it means any other thing which does not meet this definition is not a book. However, this can be easily refuted by facts that nowadays many books are in digital format, not to mention in ancient times books existed before paper had been invented. Moreover, a bundle of papers could include no words at all. Thus, this definition is a one-sided understanding of the concept of a book. However, in dialectics, this understanding is not simply treated as wrong due to its one-sidedness, which means the aforementioned understanding is still an intelligible one.

The third aspect, speculative thinking, is driven by this simultaneous recognition and refutation. It achieves unity in both opposite understandings: a paper book is indeed a book, but a book is not necessarily written on paper, so that a new understanding is brought about, like a book is a written form of human ideas, for example. In this sense 'the affirmative that is contained in their dissolution and their passing over into something else' (§ 82). Noteworthy, these moments are driven by internal contradiction and do not need new examples from outside the realm of logic, because it is the determinacy and finiteness of a concept that has to pass into its opposite.

Based on this, Hegel starts his analysis of being and nothing. As pure 'being', it is not determined and does not involve any characters or content. It is merely presence. But being then entails 'nothing' already because the opposite state of presence is

absence. Similar to being, nothing is indeterminate, and merely a negation of being. Then, what bridges being and nothing is 'becoming'. It is neither being nor nothing, whilst involves both of them (EL, § 86 - 88).

## **From the tension between commodity and money to the end of the exchange**

Similar to Hegel's dialectics, Marx argues that a product becomes a commodity in exchange, which means that a product, in the relationship of exchange, implies the absence of the other product that is qualitatively different. Exchange value, as the cost for making the product come into being, bridges two products as if these two products simultaneously exist on the plane of value. Possibly, a worker does not have to exchange their product to satisfy needs (in an extreme example, by deciding to commit suicide, there is no need to satisfy any so-called natural/basic/biological needs). Even if they want to resolve the need through purchasing a product, there could be a range of options. Namely, it is the exchange that defines which product is the opposite side of an owner's product as an 'absence'. Thus, exchange value determines how and what another product that a person's own product can 'become'. In this sense 'the product becomes a commodity, i.e., a mere moment of exchange' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.145).

Therefore, as to the question of what 'the relation of product to itself' means, the answer could be: if there is a relation between a product and itself, it is because in Hegelian dialectics it is a kind of innate contradiction in a concept that moves itself to its opposite so that a thing simultaneously bears a contradiction. It has a relation to itself because it is the relationship between two parts in the internal contradiction.

Hegelian dialectics plays a pivotal role in Marx's argument of money as the end of an exchange, which is shown in his illustration on the transition from 'commodity – money – money - commodity (CMMC)' to 'money – commodity – commodity - money (MCCM)' is clear.

First of all, the trajectory from product to money is a movement of contradiction: commodity involves a contradiction as being both particular (a product for satisfying specific needs) and general (exchange value). This contradiction leads to a separation

in exchange: sale is about using a particular commodity to get the general exchange value, whilst the purchase is about using the general exchange value to get a particular commodity. Money actually becomes independent of the commodity exchanges and goes alongside them (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.148). That is, the exchange involves two layers of dialectical movements: not only is a product exchanged for another product, but also the particularity is exchanged for the generality. Meanwhile, the circulation of money and goods are now based on the exchange value, which is detached from real producers and is not foremostly based on producers' needs (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.149). Consequently, money becomes the end of an exchange that is brought about as the general form of value, it is higher than a particular thing. It does not mean money itself is free from this contradiction because the use of money is still limited by practical conditions (like whether the commodity is available). That is why Marx, in *Grundrisse*, still thinks money relies on the exchanges of real commodity, and even feels that the trajectory of money as the movement of negation seems like 'the idealist' and needs to correct it (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.151).

What makes money become privileged is its capacity to overcome the contradiction between qualitatively different commodities. Being only quantitatively different, money is clearly easier to be divided. When the circulation of commodities is treated as a whole, 'money serves only to balance the accounts of the 'arithmetical division' arising from the division of labour' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.215). Thus, the more division of labour, the more exchanges rely on money. Consequently, exchange value, Marx claimed is 'the quantitatively specific expression of its capacity for serving as a medium of exchange' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.199). Namely, it represents to what extent a commodity can be registered onto the dimension of money which exists alongside commodities. This indicates a tension between money and commodity as if money or exchange value functions as a ruler. The turn from CMMC to MCCM is firmly conditioned, therefore, because exchangeability must be guaranteed, which corresponds to the division of labour.

Money submits or concludes the circulation of commodities, because the third function of money includes the previous two functions. This is the condition, Marx thought, that makes money worth being accumulated because only when money negates the function of measure and medium can it maintain a relationship with the circulation of commodities, which is independent of the circulation whilst also always (ideally) having access to it. In his own words, money 'appears in itself as a result of

circulation; by way of circulation, it closes the circle with itself' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.216). Consequently, when wealth is defined as 'exchange value as a totality as well as an abstraction' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.221), money is then the 'universal material representative of wealth' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, pp.216-217), which conditions money to be the object of greed.

## **Money as the object of greed**

Now, Marx's view on greed is easy to understand. In the second notebook of *Grundrisse*, Marx addresses a topic intimately related to human desire: the relationship between money and greed. This seems a natural consequence that money, as the general representative of wealth, is wanted by everyone. But what Marx tried to illustrate is a change of subjectivity due to the development from commodity to money. First of all, he reminds us, the accumulation of natural wealth develops individuality. Here, Marx does not directly define what he means by 'natural wealth'. It should refer to those products made for satisfying needs, as in his examples, 'wealth in sheep, the development of the individual as shepherd, wealth in grain, his development as agriculturist, etc (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.222). Money as a concrete thing (e.g., gold, paper) can be possessed by an individual. But more importantly, by being the representative of general wealth, it is the 'divine existence of commodity' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.221). That is, it represents all commodities. Consequently, possessing money means having everything but excepts individuality, because it loses the particularity of commodities. Money is a 'social result' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.221) from circulation.

This view echoes Marx's argument in *Comments on James Mill*, in which it argues human beings' need for full development and it is through labour that an individual achieves the realisation of their nature, and through the mutual recognition of products that a communal relationship is built ((1844), 2000). This development of money is rooted in waged labour. This also can be traced back to the argument in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, in which Marx argues that the alienation of labour stems from the division of labour. That is, the division of labour brings about private property and then the exchanges of commodities. Waged labour emerges when a worker needs to work to earn a living before the need for the realisation of

human nature ((Marx et al., (1844)1992)). But the third function of money stops at greed for money which seems to be between earning a living and the need for human nature realisation because labour no longer aims at satisfying particular needs, only general wealth. This is perhaps the strangest thing: 'general wealth is produced to seize hold of its representative' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.224).

After penning *Grundrisse* in 1857-58, there was no significant change in Marx's view of money, and Marx continued to throw light upon the relationship between 'general' and 'particular'. For example, in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1904), in which Marx provides the most completed illustration of money. An interesting view here is related to needs. Due to greed and hoarding being a want for general wealth, Marx thinks that 'the particular wants must be treated as so much luxury and excess' because the capitalist needs to reduce the consumption to lower costs. Echoing Weber's observation of 'abstinence', we also encounter a question repeatedly raised by Kierkegaard: positing the universal over the individual.

Similarly, in *The Capital, Volume One* (1867), the relationship between money and greed is discussed in the function of hoarding. What is called 'the representative of general wealth' in *Grundrisse* is now called the 'universal representative of material wealth' (Marx & Mandel, 1992, p.231). Nevertheless, their meanings are the same: money is distinct from all other commodities and can be exchanged for any other commodities, which is brought about by the separation of sale and purchase. This separation is conditioned by money's other two functions: measure and medium of exchange, on which money's function of hoarding is based. Consequently, money makes the exchange value a social power that can be possessed by an individual, so that becomes a private power. In a sense, money has a universal value for every particular individual. To put it in another way, the contradiction is also shown in the form between the quantitative factor and the qualitative factor: the exchange-value, in particular money (a piece of paper, a pound of gold etc.), is quantitatively limited, but as the exchange-value can by definition be exchanged to every commodity, it is qualitatively unlimited. It is this contradiction that drives the hoarder to accumulate more money (Marx & Mandel, 1992, p.231), which conditions the MCM.

With Kierkegaard's challenge on Hegel, it produces a further question: is the insatiability, representatively shown in money (as Marx illustrated), rooted in Hegelian dialectics? Namely, to what extent does Hegelian dialectics indeed imply an idea that

posits the universal over the particular, an idea which is then embodied in Marx's concept of money? If so, what is Marx's relationship to this idea?

## The universal and the particular in Hegel

At prima facie level, there is no reason for Hegel to undervalue the concept of 'particular'. This is evident when he stresses, in *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, that the 'Logic' is embodied in the changes of things and concepts, rather than a kind of law being outside and applied to the physical world (EL, § 6 & 14). But what cannot be ignored is that Hegel's position is intimately related to his view of God. In the *Encyclopaedia of Logic* (1812), he starts by claiming that the object of philosophy is the highest truth, which is the same for religion in the sense that God is the ultimate truth. A key point here is that Hegel thinks that philosophy deals with both finite things, human spirits, and their relation to the ultimate truth. To achieve this, philosophy must presuppose a 'familiarity' (1812, § 1) with these objects, because knowing a thing starts with representing it.

More specifically, for moving beyond these immediate experiences and achieving 'a knowing that comprehends things (*begreifendes Erkennen*)' (1812, § 2), it requires reflections (or 'thinking over' (*Nachdenken*) (1812, § 2)) on immediate experiences in consciousness because, whenever we think about something, what appear first in our consciousness are still sensory experiences. That is, by 'thinking over', experiences are transformed into thought. Moreover, knowing a thing beyond mere representations is to know the necessity in it, namely: how this thing is determined? Why is this thing is necessarily like this? In this sense, this is 'to prove not only its being, but...the determinations of its objects' (1812, § 1). Thus, real philosophical thinking is seeking 'the necessity in general' (1812, § 9.). This is beyond the governing law of immediate experiences and representations, not only because some objects, like God, are not included in experiences, but also because sciences (including natural science and political economy) seek 'the thought of what there is' (1812, § 7).

The problem of these sciences lies in that they aim at a law governing particular things in a way external to them and have to appeal to the certainty of this law by connecting empirical data. In this way, the universal law and the real world are external to each other, and the universal law lacks an intrinsic connection through a particular

thing. Moreover, such empirical sciences can only start with contingent data. An example could be the relation between mathematics and the real world. Modern science is keen on using mathematics to describe and even predicate the world, and their certainty is based on scientist's sense of certainty about the mathematical method, or research method in general. But, although scientists can collect numeric data of almost everything in the physical world, it is not clear how such data can explain what a thing is like and why it is there.

By contrast, philosophy, as speculative thinking, through acknowledging and using empirical sciences, aims to overcome these drawbacks and seeks the necessity in reality. That is, the object of philosophy, as truth, as God, is always embodied in realities rather than something potential or a 'should be'. From this perspective, an idea which philosophy deals with is the actuality of things. It deals with what always comes into being, and therefore is the necessity. After all, to say something should be true implies the possibility of it not being the case.

Based on this, Hegel argues for a term for 'idea' that is universal and particular: 'free and genuine thought is concrete in itself and as such it is an idea, and in its full universality the idea, or the absolute' (1812, § 14). Then, the key difference between 'thinking direct experience over' (as aforementioned) and philosophy is to move beyond a limited idea and strive for the idea as the absolute. This is why Hegel claimed that speculative thinking is 'both the same as and different from' the aforementioned 'thinking over': there is only one thinking over, speculative thinking involves scientific thinking as well. Logic is defined as 'the science of the pure idea, i.e., the idea in the abstract element of thinking' (1812, § 19.).

## **About the gap between an individual and God**

As can be seen, the echo between Hegel and Kierkegaard's view on 'general' can be found in their attitudes on science and actuality. However, if, for Hegel, the absolute is the aim to be achieved, for Kierkegaard, generally speaking, the gap between human beings and God cannot be closed. As to this, philosopher Merold Westphal's illustration in Kierkegaard and Hegel (1998) is helpful. We can start by thinking about a question which every challenger of Hegel's philosophy probably has to face: how can one avoid being assimilated into a sublation (*Aufhebung*) of Hegel, and therefore

save Hegel 'dialectically'? For Kierkegaard, the answer is to attack Hegel's annihilation of subjectivity, which is exactly brought about by Hegel's view of the universal and the particular.

In short, a key difference between Hegel and Kierkegaard lies in the manner of overcoming contradiction. Whilst Hegelian dialectics maintain the dialectical identity between individual and social (family, states, etc.), Kierkegaard, as the previous chapter shows, argues for a direct relationship between the individual and God, which means to relativise the social dimension. The whole text of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (1843), in short, argues for this paradox: there must be something higher (namely, God) than ethics as the universal rule. Otherwise, from the perspective of ethics, Abraham will be simply a murderer. Thus, for Kierkegaard, the absolute is different from the universal. But for Hegel, the absolute and the universal are one. This is an unavoidable conclusion based on Hegel's approach, as we can see in the last section: God (i.e., the absolute), by definition, includes everything and is always actual. If there is the actual social relationship, and social forms can be treated as secondary or, in some sense, be relativised by an individual's relationship to the absolute, then such social relationships and forms are not (a part of) the absolute. There might be an argument about whether the absolute's negation of the universal can be treated as a dialectical unity, which eliminates the difference between Hegel and Kierkegaard. But, as least in Westphal's reading, this difference is decisive.

A subsequent question is, as Westphal pointed out: 'how one might know the higher law that relativises the norms of one's culture?' (Westphal, 1998, p.111). Kierkegaard's view of Socratics plays a central role here. As previously sketched, Socratics, too, seek the truth, but his 'midwife' method makes him only as a medium of truth (FT, P10). What is left is an individual's passion for truth. By contrast, Hegel's claim of the absolute requires him to have knowledge of the absolute, which, for Kierkegaard, is impossible because of the gap between human individuals and God. Namely, Hegel is talking about what he cannot know. As to this, Kierkegaard provides a sharp observation: surely Hegel starts with 'sense-certainty' or 'immediate experience' in his philosophical edifice, but such a view is actually based on 'reflection', rather than the so-called immediate experience (Westphal, 1998, p.118). Consequently, although it seems still reasonable to believe the absolute should involve everything, we don't really know that. After all, 'God, but not Hegel, can be Hegelian' (Westphal, 1998, p.117).

Behind the connection between the actual and the absolute, it is Hegel's aim to respond to the Cartesian epistemological question around certainty of knowledge and its relationship to human free will. By introducing Lessing's argument, Kierkegaard argues for the inwardness between the subject and object. In a sense, truth is subjectivity because it is subjectivity that makes reality come into being, rather than living in the predetermined logic by the absolute whatever the subject chooses. In this sense, Hegel's approach eliminates subjectivity and therefore is 'less as *Aufhebung* than as annihilation' (Westphal, 1998, p.114).

Although a full review of the relationship between Marx and Hegel is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is evident that Marx's dialectics is different from Hegel exactly in terms of the presupposition of the absolute. As Althusser (2006) pointed out: what is 'whole' for Marxists is the real class struggle which includes political, economic, and ideological struggles, rather than abstractive ideas (pp.214-216). Thus, Marx does not need to suppose the absolute to define the root of the value of money, and therefore does not fall into the trap of Hegelian dialectics, as pointed out by Kierkegaard. Meanwhile, in the consideration of the difference between language and money, and greed and money, Marx does not abandon the dimension of the particular/individual in his conceptualisation. From this perspective, there is a risk in Fraser's reading of Marx to fall into this trap.

However, such a dimension is still challenged by Ingham, who insists that Marx does not value the money of account enough as the primary dimension. Why?

## **Commodity or debt?**

Indeed, Marx's text is obscure on this question because the illustration of 'commodity money' and 'debt-money' co-exist. In *Grundrisse*, he too thinks money overcomes the contradiction in barter. Moreover, the functions of money are 'developed sequentially', from measure and medium of exchange to hoarding (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.173). Meanwhile, he also claims that the circulation of money is that of 'titles of ownership' (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.194), which implies the notion of 'credit'. A more direct contrast between these two views of money appears in a later text in the same book, in which Marx criticises Smith's view of the connection between money and barter, because Smith ignores the suppressive effect of monetary circulation on barter, which

stems from the privilege of money. Namely, the underlying logic of Smith's view is to treat the exchange for money and that for a commodity are the same thing because both of them are commodities, but this ignores the effect of the circulations of commodities as a whole.

This obscurity becomes a central reason in the debate between Ingham and Costas Lapavitsas. As aforementioned, Ingham argues that money is a social relation in nature. But what is the difference between Ingham and Marx? As Lapavitsas (2005) argued, the social aspect of money has never been ignored by Marx. He, therefore, thinks that Ingham overvalues the facet of credit/debit and mistakenly treats this facet as the general form of money. For him, 'promise to pay' is still imaginary; it is the monopolisation of the ability to pay that is the foundation of money. In this sense, Marx's concept of a 'universal equivalent' is necessary for the conceptualisation of money – it is, on the one hand, not limited in commodity form but, on the other, remains the connection with commodity.

Lapavitsas' argument seems reasonable from the Hegelian perspective. The dialectical movement from product to money, which Marx reveals, can be treated as being not essentially a historical truth, nor a logical cause, but about what is the more purified or abstracted form at work in exchanges. This more abstracted form also means it becomes a richer rather than a reduced form. That is to say, Hegelian dialectics provides a theoretical connection, linking the movement from commodity to money. However, in his refutation of Ingham's attack, Lapavitsas firmly claims his view is Marxist rather than Hegelian because the concept of money he proposes is based on social interactions between owners of commodities. Thus, he still thinks, on the one hand, money remains an intimate connection with commodity but, on the other, it is not merely a commodity but an abstract universal equivalent. This is in contrast to Ingham, who thinks the money of account precedes the idea of the commodity (Ingham, 2004, 2006). In this sense, Lapavitsas makes a sharp distinction between Marx's and Hegel's approaches.

However, such an argument brings about a further question: if not Hegelian logic, what really brings about money as a more abstract form of value, and a more widely accepted means of payment amongst all commodities? Surprisingly, Lapavitsas argues that the attractiveness of money stems from the relationship between strangers:

On the contrary, it is both materialist and Marxist because it shows money to be the outcome of social relations among commodity owners. Fundamental to it is the assumption that commodity owners approach each other as 'foreign' individuals. The term 'foreign' is used to denote the absence of pre-existing ties of kinship, hierarchy, tradition and morality among commodity owners that might determine the fundamental content of their exchanges. Commodity owners are disinterested individuals who simply aim at obtaining an equivalent for what they bring to market. Similarly, they do not even need to know each other, or, in neoclassical terms, the market is 'anonymous'. (2005, p.392)

This is a strange argument because it is not clear why he believes such 'foreignness' is possible. Surely, nowadays most exchanges happen between strangers, but it is far from a situation in which 'pre-existing ties of kinship, hierarchy, tradition and morality' is absent. As Karl Polanyi (2001) famously argued, a market must be based on other social relationships. These other relationships should be taken into account in Althusser's view as part of complex contradictions. Perhaps, for this reason, Ingham refuses Lapavitsas's argument and insists that Lapavitsas's presupposition is Hegelian and still rooted in barter (2006). Consequently, without Hegelian logic, it seems Lapavitsas' money theory is not complete. By contrast, Ingham's money theory is elegantly simple: the money of account, as an abstractive idea, precedes concrete commodity and money. According to him, it is historically true in Babylon: barley can be exchanged with silver based on their weight, and such equivalence is clearly based on real human's recognition, rather than any so-called objective universal equivalence. The ideas of pay and debt already worked here, and money had not existed. From this perspective, even if money exists, its function is probably nothing but 'transferable credit' (Ingham, 2006, p.267). Of course, in the long run, such credit needs endorsement, like from a government.

Nevertheless, it is not clear how Ingham's view theorises money as the object of greed. This role of money is a key target in Marx's criticism of capitalism and commodity fetishism. Ingham seems happy with locating money within a government-endorsed debt: a central facet of capitalism is the monetised debtor-creditor relations (Ingham, 2008). From this perspective, money plays no role in facilitating an individual's insatiability. This effect of his theorisation probably results from the idea of how money of account dismisses the contradiction of commodity and money. If there

is any so-called contradiction, it straightforwardly lies in the relationship between creditor and debtor, namely, between two subjects which an individual is always conscious of rather than an objective relationship which can be objectified in things, namely, commodity fetishism. This concern is important to understand consumption, especially luxury consumption. If consumers would like to use the money to exchange some seemingly useless things, what debt do they want to pay?

Seeing this in the debate between Hegel and Kierkegaard, it is clear the concept of credit directly answers the questions about where the universality of money is from and avoids the question of the objectivity of value. This makes Ingham agree with Searle's view that money is an institution (Ingham, 2006). But the question consequently returns to Kierkegaard's concern about the factor beyond the universal. If money is endorsed by a government, what endorses the government? As Paul Du Gay repeatedly stressed, the bureaucratic organisation of a state is not value-free (Du Gay, 2000, 2005). After all, a government is still endorsed by a shared value that prefers order to chaos. Money is seemingly value-free, because a certain extent of freedom is constitutive to money – as Schmitt argued. This allows some people, like Lapavistas, to believe the exchange is absent of value without noticing their consensus is embodied in money. Bitcoin is an example: the application of blockchain on money is nothing more than a device for an ideal of global order, which aims at formalising the social relations of real people and the 'de-personalisation of power' (Reijers & Coeckelbergh, 2018, p.126).

## **Conclusion:**

What can we learn from this exploration of the nature of money?

First of all, I hope readers are aware of the contrast in the conclusions between this and the last chapter. The last chapter presupposes the existence of God but concludes that an individual has to bear a value system by him/herself. This chapter does not presuppose God, but it shows a value system could appear to have a guarantor too. This contrast means whether there is a concrete guarantor does not matter for a value system to exist. Rather, the key question is what makes a value system appear to be endorsed.

This chapter starts with a review of the debates on money. It shows the central

debate is about what factor endorses a monetary system. This question emerges in a paradox: a free-will agency seems to be the bearer of value systems, including monetary systems, but he/she cannot make it as he/she pleases. This paradox is the case in language too. Both Searle and Marx notice this similarity between language and money. This chapter then compares their views. The comparison shows that the tension between the 'universal' and the 'particular' plays a central role in the concept of money. This tension has been pointed out by Kierkegaard in the last chapter through the relationship between the individual, law, and God.

But this chapter aims to show that the tension between the 'individual' and the 'particular' is conceptual. It does not rely on God. Money exemplifies this tension too.

I suggest the nature of value is inequality between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. This is inequality because the 'universal' and the 'particular' are by definition unequal. The concept of value involves the co-existence of the ideas of the 'universal' and the 'particular'. This is the case in both Saussure and Marx's definitions. To say a thing has value is to locate a particular thing in a system which embodies an idea of the 'universal'.

If money represents value, it is because money functions as a veil, as if it sutures the gap between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. This function makes money seem to connect the 'universal' and the 'particular' as if an individual can possess the 'universal' by possessing a particular thing.

This is not a deduction based on a premise, but an induction based on the review of the debate about money. If money is debt in nature, it must be a transferable debt for individuals to possess. If money is a commodity in nature, it must embody a supposed commonality which all commodities are supposed to share. The commonality conditions the comparisons between commodities. Money cannot get rid of the co-existence between the 'universal' and the 'particular'.

By being a veil of the gap, money is related to greed. Marx's illustration is largely about the contradiction between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. Based on dialectics, Marx argues this contradiction brings about a movement in order to overcome the contradiction. But it cannot succeed. Marx, unlike Hegel, does not suppose the gap between the 'particular' and the 'universal' can be sutured. Money is the object of greed because it appears as an impossible object. It is impossible to suture the gap between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. But money seems to achieve it.

Thus, if the gap between the 'universal' and the 'particular' can be measured and divided into many pieces, money seems a piece of unlimited pieces. For this reason, money is neither debt nor commodity in nature. I thus disagree with both Ingham and Lapavitsas.

So, if insatiability stems from this conflict between the 'universal' and the 'particular', how to deal with it? This question is unavoidable if we cannot abolish the use of money. As to this, Adrian Johnston, based on his reading of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marx's historical materialism, suggests a solution. Interestingly, Samo Tomšič, by drawing on same theoretical resource, makes a different conclusion. The next chapter will sketch some key ideas of Lacanian psychoanalysis. It paves the way to an examination of Johnston and Tomšič's view on insatiability in chapter 9

# Chapter 8: A review of some of Lacan's some basic concepts

## Introduction:

This chapter offers a brief review of Jacques Lacan's key concepts. It aims to provide a background to explain Adrian Johnston's and Samo Tomšič's arguments, who focus intensively on explaining the question of money and capitalism by drawing on Lacan and Marx's doctrines. However, both of them suppose their readers to be familiar with Lacan's doctrine. This chapter hopes to explain Lacan's logic and premise in a clear manner. Lacan's connection with Marx is based on a set of terms that are mutually defined: desire, phallus, love, *jouissance*, 'object a' and drive. The following explanation is based on a supposition the reader already knows that Lacan, like Baudrillard, heavily drew on Saussurean semiotics in his theoretical construction. Alongside it, the 'imaginary register' is a construction that originates from the 'mirror stage', whilst the 'real register' is what is beyond the symbolic and cannot be symbolised, including the biological plane of the body.

The relationship between these three registers is worth a book-long discussion, but there is a simple model used by Lacan himself in Seminar 1 ((1975)1988) to exemplify it: a camera. By taking a photo, an image is transferred into geometric relations of points and print onto a photo. From this perspective, the symbolic register for the imaginary register is the geometric relation for the photo. It seems, then, 'the real' as a register is simply the real world that the camera takes the photo of. But there is no clear boundary between the imaginary and the real, as Lacan noticed. A subjective perspective is always embodied in a photo, and we can never see a so-called real world outside our perception. This precluded the concept of 'real' and 'thing' in Seminar 7 ((1986)1992), which will be outlined later.

# Desire, need and demand

The concept of desire is based on Lacan's use of anthropology research and separates a field from biological 'need':

What distinguishes a society grounded in language from an animal society, which the ethological standpoint allows us to see – namely, the fact that the exchange that characterises such a society has other foundations than needs (even if it satisfies them), specifically, what has been called the gift 'as total social fact' – can then be taken much further, so far as to constitute objection to defining this society as a collection of individuals, since the immixing of subjects makes it a group with a very different structure. (Lacan & Fink, 2007, p. 346)

Here it is clear Lacan is referring to the concept of 'total social fact' in Mauss's *The Gift*. Beyond the biological needs which human beings share with animals, structure involves organising the relationship among individuals, which is shown in the process of exchanges. The existence of structure refutes the view that treats society merely as a sum of individuals. This structure, embodied in language and acts of exchange, is the plane on which Lacanian desire is situated.

On the other hand, desire is also separated from the concept of demand. Human beings' needs are always expressed in language as a need for some specific thing. This situation is learnt from babyhood. The biological separation from the mother means the newborn must try to use signs to communicate. The mother, based on her guess, satisfies her child's needs, such as feeding them or changing their nappy. She may repeat related words so that, eventually, the child may grasp the connection between what they want and how to verbalise it. But, noteworthy, such an idea of what they want is always formulated by those words offered by the mother. For example, the baby may cry because he/she feels uncomfortable, but this discomfort could only be associated with a dirty or full nappy once the nappy was invented. Thus, demand is about what is formulated in a language. In this sense 'needs are subjected to demand, they come back to him in an alienated form' (Lacan & Fink, 2007, p.579). Namely, the baby can only conceptualise what they are demanding through the

language offered by the mother (the 'Other'). The concept of desire is defined as the gap between need and demand, and between these two poles is the field of language. Language formulates the immediate biological impulse as demand for a specific thing. In Lacan's own words, 'desire beings to take shape in the margin in which demand rips away from need' (Lacan & Fink, 2007, p.689).

The expression (and alienation) of needs in language occurs in the child's confrontation with the mother, who introduces the dimension of 'otherness'. It is the mother's reaction that guarantees whether the infant speaks the 'mother language' correctly, so it is the other that guarantees a subject's use of language. Therefore, one's demand has never been merely about a concrete object, but more fundamentally, there is the demand for the Other's (mother)'s presence, and this presence is uncontrollable for the child. Consequently, the Other seems to have a privileged position for the baby, and thus the baby demands the unconditionality of the satisfaction of need provided by the Other. Lacan calls this 'the proof of love and is achieved by the child's insatiability for the things provided by the mother, so that it keeps asking the mother to come. The unsatisfied needs paradoxically make room for the mother (Other) to demonstrate this unconditionality. This is another way to see that desire lies in the gap between need and demand. In Lacan's words, it 'is neither the appetite for satisfaction nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the very phenomenon of their splitting' (Lacan & Fink, 2007, p.580).

## **Lack**

Alongside these concepts, the concept of lack, phallus, and castration are introduced. The dimension of lack is already clear due to the separation between mother and child. There is no lack for an infant if they are directly connected to the mother through the navel string. What Lacan mainly focuses on is how this biological gap is gradually mediated by language, through which subjectivity is constituted. So, castration is not about cutting a biological organ, and the phallus does not refer to the male organ but is a signifier. Rather, both of them are related to the dimension of law. It can be generally thought of as being forbidden to have access to the mother.

Lacan's illustration of this dimension of law/order dates back to Seminar 3 (1955-1956). He argues that children's identification<sup>26</sup> is an imaginary relationship with others, but behaviours based on purely imitating others will be doomed to collide with other and order must be introduced. This dimension of order is introduced under the name of the father (Lacan et al., 1997). The father is a vehicle of the phallus, not because he biologically has this organ but because of his effect on the child through the mother as the fear of castration. The correlation between father, phallus and castration is the main topic of seminar 4 (Lacan & Price, 2021), in which Lacan distinguishes the phallus and castration on three different levels (imaginary, symbolic and real). The detailed examination of these is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it should suffice to note that the concept of Phallus as a signifier is the symbolic one, which is the signifier of the mother (Other)'s desire (Lacan & Fink, 2007, p. 582).

That is to say, its function lies in its place, rather than its figure or biological function. To gain the mother's love, what the mother desires is inevitably the infant's central concern: excepting 'me', 'my' mother seems to care about something (or someone) else. If 'I' can be or have that 'something', 'I' am the only one the mother cares for. Thus, Lacan states that 'man's desire is the desire of the Other'. On the one hand, it means an individual's desire is formulated in the field of Other, on the other, it means the individual desire of what the Other (mother) desires (Lacan, 1998). The phallus is at this place, as what the mother (Other) desires.

The phallus here also signifies the lack in the Other, as S(A). A (*Autre*) here means the Other. It is barred because this is something the Other cannot achieve or have. S(A) is the signifier that is only posited here without any concrete signified (Lacan & Fink, 2007). This also means a 'something else' can never be clear – the gap between the child and the mother can never be closed. The child has to face this: it seems mother indeed lacks something, and 'I' neither am nor have the 'phallus' with which to satisfy mother. The child's relations to the phallus, as having or being it, becomes the central factor in Lacan's theoretical construction of sexual difference (Lacan & Fink, 2007).

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<sup>26</sup> This identification is constituted in what Lacan called 'mirror stage', in which a child starts to have the idea of 'me' through seeing their own image in the mirror (Lacan & Fink, 2007, pp. 75-81).

# The object a

Based on this, the concept of '*objet petit a*' can be explained. To say the signified of the phallus can never be clear also means the biological gap between mother and child means the 'answer' of mother (Other)'s desire can never be symbolised in the symbolic register. The 'object a' refers to what is leftover in the symbolisation, as if something constantly refuses or cannot be articulated clearly. The phallus and the object a, therefore, have a dialectical relation. The phallus signifies something that cannot be signified because it cannot be symbolised. Whilst it is exactly because of this, it is signified by phallus as a signifier.

But why not simply define object a as the signified of the phallus? At least one of the reasons is that it is not so much a concrete thing outside the symbolic as a point where the symbolisation fails. Another reason is phallus as a signifier is repressed.

As to the first, the French expression *objet petit a* literally means 'little object other'. In Seminars 1 and 2, 'a' merely refers to an 'other' (*autre*) individual. It also involves the subject's *Ego* because it is formed as an other in the mirror (Lacan, 1988, 1991). Following this perspective, in Seminar 3, Lacan thinks human beings are interesting in what others desire because of the identification with others. That is, an object is wanted by a subject because the other who the subject identifies wants it. This implies that the other, whom the subject encounters, is a desiring subject as well <sup>27</sup>(Lacan, 1993). Both the image of the other and what the other wants are not simply something outside the Other, but an effect emerged within the Other.

As to the second, it is linked with a development that the idea of 'little a' as the object of the Other's desire is formulated with the development of his so-called 'graph of desire' in Seminar 5 (Lacan et al., 2020) and Seminar 6 (Lacan & Fink, 2021), which is also intimately connected with so-called 'Schema L' in Seminar 4. The most condensed illustration of the graph is in his article 'The subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious' in 1960, in which he uses to explain S(A), the phallus. This is not real mathematics but makes use of the complex number in math. That is, just as  $i = \sqrt{-1}$  is only an imaginary one which is used for

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<sup>27</sup> The question of insatiability has already emerged here. Lacan's approach will lead to a conclusion which is similar to Rousseau's view that insatiability stems from considerations of others, like competition, rather than innates in needs (cf. Slater, 1999, p78).

denoting those numbers being not in real numbers, the phallus is 'unpronounceable' (Lacan & Fink, 2007, p.694). For Lacan, a signifier is by definition representing a subject to another signifier, or, in other words, a subject is located between two signifiers. There is a signifier that finally cannot be represented. It is at the end of signifying chains, and it is the subject that holds the gap between this final signifier and other signifiers. As can be seen, to say this signifier is signifying object a is inaccurate, because it does not exist in the symbolic register to denote object a. In a sense, it is not so much as a mark indicating what the Other desires as the mark denoting that the Other is desiring.

This dialectical relation between the phallus and object a is intensively explained by Lacan using the case of Alcibiades' love of Socrates in Plato's *Symposium* (2008), in Seminar 8. The main plot of the *Symposium* is a party in which several people talk about what love is. In it, Alcibiades claims that he loves Socrates because he sees an *agalma* in Socrates, which literally means statue, or effigies. Alcibiades speaks about this *agalma* with passion, and he can only use examples to talk about the effect of Socrates's inside God, whilst Socrates does not recognise it. In Lacan's reading, this means Alcibiades was talking about something more than a set of signs. The object that impassions a subject is the object a for the subject, which is an *agalma* that the subject sees inside or behind a concrete object, like Socrates' 'ugly face' (Lacan, 2017, p.146). But Socrates achieves this effect exactly by refusing to be desirable.

In this way, Socrates is 'empty' for Alcibiades (Lacan, 2017, p.154-155). Lacan stresses here that the *agalma* is not God in the Greek story, but a 'daemon' who send messages for God (Lacan, 2017). For him, this constitutes a relationship that 'God is eclipsed' (Lacan, 2017, p.179) and the *agalma* is a 'partial object'. That is, if God can be supposed to be the ultimate cause or guarantor of the Other, it (he) is not present in the relationship in this love relationship. Socrates's emptiness in this sense negates any clues or parts of God which function as an imaginary phallus, and therefore in effect denotes something beyond his knowledge – that is, the object of the Other's desire. That is why Socrates does not know what he desires: his desire is the Other's desire; this knowledge only belongs to the Other. Alcibiades is redirected towards the object of the Other's desire through his love of Socrates. In short, object a is like the *agalma*, its effect stems from negating any concrete and specific object imaged as a phallus.

# Love and desire

The concept of love here seems very similar to desire, considering both of them are somehow seeking the object a, or are driven by it. However, in Bruce Fink's reading, desire can never be satisfied because it disappears whenever the object is possessed, whilst 'one can love what one has' (Fink, 2015, p.182). Namely, the object of love is sustained. This reading is supported by Lacan's text that Alcibiades is not neurotic, because Alcibiades does not tend to refuse the lack in a neurotic way so that he is 'imbued with desire' (Lacan, 2017, p.157); whilst a neurotic futilely tries to deny the castration by his *Ego*, namely, deny their lack.

Here, it is another point to understand demand through a child's relationship with the mother's love. Considering they cannot control the mother at all, the only thing which unconditionality can be relied on is that the mother sees the object a in the infant. Namely, the mother loves them in the sense that to love is to give what one does not have, and the object a is a 'something' that one lacks (Fink, 2015). For the same reason, the child has to ask: 'what do you want from me?'<sup>28</sup> which is another form of the question 'what is object a?'. This question is embodied in everyday life because our attitudes to someone is always embodied between the lines. The difference is clear, for example, when a mother asks her adopted child to clean the table after dinner, whilst asks her biological child to choose a preferred dessert.

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<sup>28</sup> Hereof, a related question is what is the meaning of 'Chè Vuoi?'. This is an expression Lacan borrow from a 18th century novel *Le diable amoureux*. It literally means 'what do you want' which is the question a devil asks the protagonist.

There are two meanings of 'Chè Vuoi?' in Lacan's text. It firstly a question that the mother (Other) asks the infant. Namely, by constantly concerning the infant's demand, the infant's desire is formulated by Mother (Other). This aspect is mentioned in Zizek's explanation (2009, p125-126).

However, in seminar 5 and 6, Lacan turned his view from another side. 'Chè Vuoi?' becomes the question that an infant asks to the mother (Other). Namely, as previously mentioned in this dissertation, the infant's question about what mother wants from me (also, cf. Pluth, 2007).

It seems these two aspects co-exist. In *The Subversion of the subject and the Dialectic of desire*, Lacan pointed two aspects of 'man's desire is the desire of the Other'. In one sense it is Other who desires and asks the question 'Chè Vuoi?'; whilst in the other sense it is the subject who asks the question addressing to the Other, so that 'qua Other that man desires (Lacan & Fink, 2007, p690)'.

# Drive

It is in the gap between the symbolic and the real, where symbolisation fails, that the concept of 'drive' is introduced. Lacan's concept of drive is defined as a constant force that circulates object a, which is from a reading of Freud. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Freud builds his theories of sexuality on the assumption of 'sexual instinct' which is a direct experience like hunger and distinguishes the object from the aim of the sexual instinct. The sexual object is the person who provokes the sexual instinct, whilst the aim is the act which a sexual instinct tends to perform so that a release of tension provoked. Both object and aim could change, in which the mechanism of perversion consists.

This question of instinct is more condensed illustrated in Freud's later essay *Instinct and their Vicissitudes* (1915) and *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1932). Similar to *A Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Freud hypothesises that the nervous system tends to reduce stimuli and defines need as the stimulus from within the organ. Instinct is a constant force that is a 'psychical representative...between the mental and the somatic' (Freud, (1950[1895]), SE1, p.122). Although it is constant, instinct is not conceptualised as a unified or singular force like Schopenhauer's concept of will. Its constancy is merely because its cause is from internal stimuli and cannot simply be stopped by avoiding a certain environment. But there are still two instincts treated as primary: *Ego* instinct and sexual instinct. The first is to self-preserve, the second is for sexual copulation. The aim of an instinct could change, so that it gets partial satisfaction via a detour. The change of aim conditions Freud's doctrine of the development of sexual organisation: different organs (oral, anal, phallic) function as the 'erotogenic zone' to partially satisfy sexual instinct.

*In Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud suggests two new concepts: the death instinct and the principle of compulsive repetition. The latter is 'beyond the pleasure principle' in the sense of being prior to it, which refers to the mental reactions to overwhelming excitations, which breaches the mental apparatus. The compulsion to repeat is to re-experience a traumatic moment in order to master it, even if it is unpleasurable. Thus, it shares the aim with the pleasure principle. – both principles can be thought of as bringing the psychical apparatus back to the former state. It is

here Freud controversially takes one step further: if the old state of life is the inanimate state and both principles share the aim of return, then the more fundamental instinct than seeking pleasure is to go back to the inanimate state in a life's fashion. This is what Freud called the death instinct.

Lacan's conceptualisation of Freudian drive starts with his famous argument that Freud's concept of instinct does not mean the biological nature of a species, but more likely about an experience of urge (Lacan, 1998). This is the reason he thinks the English standard translation by James Strachey is questionable. Instinct is translated from the German word *Trieb*, which, according to Lacan, would be better translated as 'drive'; the German word *instinkt* is more corresponding to instinct in English. But, more importantly, Lacan stresses that drive is a constant, whilst biological needs usually have a rhythm (Lacan, 1998). Moreover, he constantly stresses drive is about a rim and moves back and forth. That is, it undergoes a circular process because it can, at best, circulate around an absent object. Mother's feeding not only brings about biological satisfaction but also leaves experiences of the act of the mouth. The oral drive is the tendency that aims at re-experiencing the feeling of this act. It seeks to (re-)grasp the lost object, so that the aim is the detour that drive takes or tricks the object, that is, the object a. Satisfaction as the goal of drive, which means to complete the detour (Lacan, 1998). This paradox is a key characteristic of drive: being content with being not content, or experiencing pleasure with displeasure. In this way, Lacan argues, 'the category of impossibility' (Lacan, 1998, p.166) is introduced. The drive is therefore located in the real register, in contrast with desire being in the symbolic.

## Drive and Demand

Based on the previous paragraphs, it seems Lacan's concept of drive and the concept of demand are very similar – both are related to the other and to lack. This is even more confusing when Lacan says that 'the drive is what becomes of demand when the subject vanishes from it' (Lacan & Fink, 2007, p.692). To explain this, it is important to understand the reason that drive is partial: for Lacan, it is not because it is a part of a whole of the drive (or will etc.), but because it exists in a function of the body, and only circulates (and represents, or accentuates) a part of this function. Demand participates in forming a drive, because of the transition from one drive to another

drive, e.g., from oral to anal. That is, it is the mother's feeding that gives the infant the first object; it is the mother (Other)'s request that the infant to control their behaviours of toileting so that excrements are noticed as objects. In this sense, a drive is the most intensified stage of the implementation of a demand, which is at the edge of the field that can be subjectified through signs.

Thus, Lacan calls drive a 'headless subjectification, a subjectification without subject' (Lacan, 1998, p.184), and the demand vanishes at the stage of drive as well, where only a 'cut' remains (Lacan & Fink, 2007, p.693). Namely, it is a rim-like biological organ in the body that drives for the object, as if it has been cut. Drive can be thought of as the residues of demand from the Other. Through the circuit way of drive, there is something else circled, which is object a.

## ***Jouissance***

### **The origin of the idea of *jouissance* in Freud's text**

Another key concept to understand when studying Lacan is *jouissance*, which probably is the most obscure concept in his terminology. *Jouissance* literally means enjoyment, but here Lacan specifically refers to something beyond the limit or restriction.

Again, this conceptualisation stems from a reading of Freud, which involves *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). Alongside *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), these three works are representative demonstrations of Freud's application of psychoanalysis to read social phenomena. The central idea, that bridges individual psychology and sociological phenomena, is the Oedipus complex, which has been gradually formulated in Freud's work. The term is firstly about the type of object-choice and refers to a boy's desire for his mother and hate for the father (Freud, 1910, SE11, p171). In the note added in 1920 in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Freud re-stressed the universal validity of the Oedipus complex, arguing that it is shown in infants' sexual fantasies as the prototype of symptoms and dreams. Considering Freud's argument is based on his clinical cases, they cannot be discussed here (Freud, 1905, SE7, p226).

The existence of the Oedipus complex could be open for discussion, but it should be safe to say that every infant is born into an entangled relationship among 'I' (the child), 'what I want' (mother), and 'what is the obstacle/bridge' (father). Family is the first social environment where the child learns to tame their biological impulses. This environment therefore forms and makes sense for the child what a 'subject' is in social relationships; although, in reality, it is not always the father who says 'no' to the child and not always the mother who feeds. The father, as a position in this triangle, is ambivalent towards the child. It can be an obstacle exactly because it can mediate.<sup>29</sup>

These three works share this logic in a construction which is firstly argued in *Totem and Taboo*: there was an omnipotent father who owns everything and every woman. Then, because of jealousy, his sons co-operatively kill him and eat his body, and then set the taboo of incest in order to build the social organisation. The sons' attitude to the father is ambivalent: their hostility to the father because he has what they want. Admiration underlies the fear, cannibalism is just a way of 'identification'. An animal totem of a clan is a substitute for this 'primary father' whom a primitive clan treats as powerful, even fearful. Thus, a clan usually prohibits the killing of the totem animal in normal days but sacrifices it and shares its meat at their festival. The victory of the sons is indeed a triumph, but identification also brings about guilt: if 'I' recognise the good of the father, should I kill him? If he is what 'I' want to be, is it not that the law is against me? Thus, by collectively doing what should not be done, they share the guilt, especially by sharing the 'should'. Through this way, they gain an identification with each other (Freud, 1913, SE13).

Of course, this is merely a hypothesis and even Freud knew that the anthropologist research he cited was controversial. But he still valued its similarity to the neurosis that he observed first-hand<sup>30</sup>. In the case of Little Hans, which was mentioned as an example in *Totem and Taboo*, he argued a little boy was horse-phobic because the horse took the place of the father on the unconscious level (Freud, 1909, SE10). What is shared is a logic that the father is repressed, but then is worshipped as compensation. This is defined by Freud as 'deferred obedience' (Freud, 1913, SE13, p.143).'

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<sup>29</sup> Hereof, there can be a contrast between Lacan and Searle. As previously mentioned, Searle argues for 'restrictive' and 'constitutive' law. From this view, the Lacanian function of 'father' has both functions. It not only prohibits the infant's behaviours but also introduces the constitutive law (what is good and should be done).

<sup>30</sup> see. Freud, SE 23, p131-132)

About 20 years later, this view became the central idea in his reading of Judaism and Christianity in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939): the underlying logic in Judaism and Christianity is that a killed leader was worshipped thereafter. This reading is also based on historiographical works showing that Moses was killed by 'his refractory and stiff-necked people' (1939, SE23, p.36). The real historical fact was obscure, but Freud thought the legacy in Jewish culture was a redemption for this murder, namely, a positive affection to God as culture. Similarly, in Christianity, Jesus is the son of God and dies for human beings' sin whilst Jesus himself does not have any sin. For Freud, this ambivalence in Jesus is a veil for believers in order to avoid recognising they were violent to God, which is the nature of the original sin (Freud, 1939, SE23, p134-136).

## **Freud and Lacan's illustration of the 'Thing'**

The concept of *jouissance* cannot be separated from Lacan's other concept: *Das Ding* (the Thing), which is from Freud's *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. As aforementioned, there are three systems hypothesised by Freud:  $\phi$ ,  $\psi$  and  $\omega$ . The  $\omega$  system is responsible for generating qualitative data, on which the reality test is based. The only way that the whole psychical system can testify the reality is to check whether an experience emerges again. This function is developed with the need for discharge. This reality test is not so much seeking the reality and gathers knowledge as serving for discharging the tensions. Only after passing the reality test is the psyche system safe to do the 'specific action' to discharge tension.

Based on this, Freud introduces the concept of the 'Thing' by supposing that an infant needs to know the subject (another human being) as the one who satisfies their needs. This is clearly not possible in the early stages of life. Such knowledge has to be gathered separately at first, which will gradually form a more unified idea of human beings in due course. The infant's knowledge of this, Freud thought, has two sources: one is from perception, the other is from the infant's own experience of the body. The second is based on the first. That is, when an infant sees another person's action, it triggers their memories of doing similar actions. They, therefore, gain a sense of what the other is doing. The Thing refers to the first source, which is the other's figure of body and other objective characteristics. For Freud, the second source explains how we understand others (Freud, ((1985)1950, SE1, p331). From this perspective, the

Thing cannot be understood. What is understood is a judgement made on the Thing. Therefore, for Freud, the relationship between the Thing and the experiences of it is that between 'subject' and 'predicate' in language (Freud, (1985)1950), SE1, p.328).

Lacan's reading starts with targeting this relationship between the Thing and language in Freud's illustration. That is, how can an infant actively accede to the symbolic register without being able to use language? Unlike visual image and bodily experience, the symbolic register does not originate in the infant's own body. How does the bodily experience become predicates of the Thing before the infant can speak? As aforementioned, desire stems from mother (Other)'s concern of '*Cheï vouï?*' This concern cannot be separated from human language in which questions are formulated. As Lacan stresses, Freud introduces the Thing under the context that the mother (Other) is a speaking subject. It is the mother (Other) who can treat the infant's act as signing and give a response and, through this way, she brings the infant into the symbolic register. Usually, the first sign of a baby is their cry. It is hard to define whether an infant's cry is intentional, namely, whether it is from their free will because it is at first triggered by bodily experience as well. A cry therefore bridges subjective experience, which is linked with consciousness, and the mother (Other), which is linked with the Lacanian unconscious, in the sense that the baby does not know what their cry means (Lacan, 1992, p.37-38).

Therefore, Lacanian unconscious is what gives a baby's cry the context and what treats it as a word. A child's speaking starts with being treated as speaking. This status of speaking more than knowing what is spoken is where the unconscious is located. That is why 'the unconscious itself has, in the end, no other structure than the structure of language' (Lacan,1992, p 37-38).

The Thing is in the real register in the sense that it is beyond what can be signified. First of all, if the reality test is merely based on re-experiencing, what can be found again is by definition real, and the apparatus does not have any other way to verify it. Secondly, the psychical apparatus is limited by the pleasure principle. Before the discharge, the tensions keep being accumulated, so the apparatus is doomed to fail to hold. Furthermore, to say something can be found again has already implied that some traces were left, so the finding again means to re-experience a past that belongs to the second source defined by Freud. In this sense, if the reality test is about seeking the guarantor of the real, it is about seeking the guarantor of the Thing as the first source within the second source. Thus, that the real 'is that which is always in the

same place' (Lacan, 1992, p.85) implies that it can never be directly found, but merely be constructed as reality, so that passes the reality test passed. This is why 'what you were looking for in the same place of the object that cannot be found again is the object that one always finds again in reality' (Lacan, 1992, p.85).

Thus, the Thing is outside the field of experience. Experiences are the signified which words can signify, the Thing is 'the beyond-of-the-signified (ibid., p65)' and shows for the subject only through words (Lacan, 1992, p.66). There is always a gap between the subject and the Thing and it is the failure of the subject that constitutes the gap (Lacan, 1992, p.65). Consequently, the Thing is at the centre of the unconscious, which is the origin to which the whole signifying chain is addressed. But paradoxically it is also 'outside' the unconscious (Lacan, 1992, p.87).

## **From the Thing to the question of ethics**

Based on this, Lacan approaches the question of ethics. The concept of pleasure is usually connected, even identified, with that of good (Lacan, 1992). Lacan here especially refers to Jeremy Bentham and Aristotle. For example, Bentham is famous for his utilitarianism, in which the concept of utility is defined as a property that brings about pleasure and prevents pain (Bentham, (1970) 2010). Freud's pleasure principle similarly proposes a tendency for seeking the pleasure and avoiding pains and provides a biological explanation, but Lacan tried to point out a further implication of Freud's concept: if the Thing must be 'found again' by the psychical apparatus to discharge tensions, the apparatus must hold the tensions and bear the pains at least for a while. In this sense, the Thing is by definition at the opposite end to which the pleasure principle directs.

The subject's attitude to the Thing is therefore ambivalent: on the one hand, the Thing is shown as good because it is the origin of the signifying chains (the unconscious) in which the concept of good is formulated through the experience of pleasure. This is like the sun that is naturally supposed to be warmer than its sunlight. However, there is a gap between the Thing and the law embodied in the unconscious: the law is imposed through the 'resolution of the tension' (Lacan, 1992, p88-89). Namely, if the repetition of signs convinces the psychical apparatus about what the reality is, it is also combined with the experience of pleasure to define what the good

is because the repetition passes the reality test and brings about discharge and pleasure. In this sense, the signs are called by Lacan as 'successful lures' (Lacan, 1992, p88-89.) and analogises it with the representative currency. That is, the fulfilment of the signs, like a representative currency, is suspended, although its value is endorsed by the availability of fulfilment. Consequently, the subject is actively imposed by the law embodied in the unconscious.

But on the other hand, the Thing is placed as bad because it is unbearable for the subject. Considering the gap between the subject and the Thing, there is nothing that guarantees that the Thing is the 'best' as supposed. In the example of the sun, although scientifically speaking the temperature on the sun is much higher, it is not the case for an individual to feel warmer because their body is destroyed before they get onto the sun. Similarly, beyond the law, there is no so-called good because it is the Thing that is placed at the fundamental level. The law is imposed, it does not stem from a good reason but defines 'good'. That is why Lacan states that '*das Ding* presents itself at the level of unconscious experience as that which already makes the law' (Lacan, 1992, p.89). In other words, the Thing is placed as outside of the symbolic register, and therefore the guarantor of the unconscious, namely, that of the Other. But such an 'Other of Other' never really exists, as previously mentioned, and thus Lacan says it 'only exists as a place' (Lacan, 1992, p.80).

## **From *Jouissance* to the Thing**

This conceptualisation of the Thing conditions the oppositional relation between *jouissance* and pleasure: what an individual wants to do is not necessarily driven by pleasure, they are even doomed to be suffering. This dimension is a little obscure in Freud's text, considering what the primal father has is nothing special, but merely what the sons want and, by killing the father, they will get. From this view, what is prohibited is what has been desired because no one will prohibit anything which is desired by no one (Freud, 1913, SE13, p.70). This is not a logical deduction that the prohibited thing is necessarily desirable in itself, but a construction that explains the effect of prohibition.

However, *jouissance* is not like something in a box, which can be accessed after the box is opened. As Lacan notices, Freud also argues that violating the law or a

commandment does not make *jouissance* accessible, rather it brings about the effect of prohibiting it (Lacan, 1992). The supposed pleasure belonging to the primal father can only be conceptualised through a sense of limit and transgression:

...without a transgression there is no access to *jouissance*.... Transgression in the direction of *jouissance* only takes place if it is supported by the oppositional principle, by the forms of the law (Lacan, 1992, p.217).

The reason for this paradox had already been discussed by Freud. The death of God/primal father does not make *jouissance* accessible, because the death unleashes the Superego so that the prohibition to the *jouissance* is even more strict. In Freud's terminology, the Superego is formed within the infant's interaction with external authority and becomes the internalised authority that functions as the source of conscience. An external authority can forgive a person after punishments, the reproach from the Superego will not stop at confession because it is maintained by the individual themselves. In this situation, the believers would feel they do not get promised a reward by embracing the law and conceptualises the consequence as their fault, namely, having sin. This becomes a dead-end: seeing 'my' self from the law, 'I' have not been 'perfect' yet, because it is 'my' imperfectness/fault, 'I' must/should continue to pursue the law/the perfection/progression. The effect of the law lies in this must/should. This is where the law and personal experience are intimately connected.

Embracing a law, therefore, is achieved by thinking 'I am wrong' in the perspective of the law. As he argued in *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud, (1934-38) 1939), this is like a drama in which Christians keep the dead God alive. Whenever the dead God is sustained by a believer in their belief, the believer can never get the award from God and always feels themselves wrong. However, as previously mentioned, while Searle distinguishes restrictive and constitutive rules in language, it seems Lacan would suggest a dialectical relation between prohibitive and constitutive functions of law. This brings about the question that, how does a father's 'no', a prohibitive statement, provide constitutive function? This fissure is potentially related to how Lacan re-conceptualised the Oedipus complex in Seminar 17 (Lacan & Grigg, 2008)

To sum up, *jouissance* is about the experience of an individual who is driving toward the Thing. It is therefore about seeking toward the more intensified rather direction than a 'good' direction, so that it is about seeking toward beyond the pleasure

principle. Also, it is in the direction of the return to the Thing as the beginning of the signifying chains and therefore it is moving toward death. As aforementioned, desire is constituted by signs within the Other, whilst drive lies on the edge of subjectification by signs. Because of this, Lacan said that desire comes from the Other, and *jouissance* is located on the side of the Thing (Lacan & Fink, 2007).

## Lacan's four discourses

Lacan's intensive discussion of the connection between *jouissance* and Marx's surplus value is within the context of the induction of four discourses<sup>31</sup>.

In Seminar 17 (1969-70), Lacan first of all defines four positions: agent, other, truth, and product:

$$\frac{\textit{agent}}{\textit{truth}} \rightarrow \frac{\textit{other}}{\textit{production}}$$

Then, there are four terms: S1 (master signifier), S2 (the battery of signifiers; knowledge), a (the object a) and \$ (the barred subject). They are placed in those positions. Each term is placed on the agent in turn so that it constitutes four different discourses: Master's, University's, Hysteric's, and Analyst's:

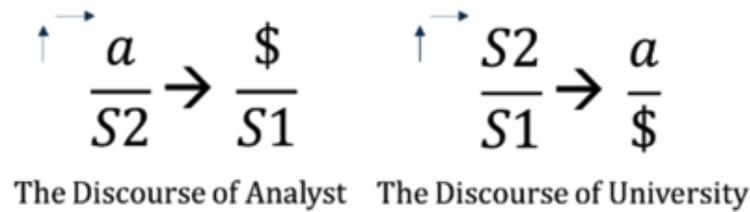
$$\begin{array}{cc} \frac{S1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S2}{a} & \begin{array}{c} \uparrow \rightarrow \\ \frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S1}{S2} \end{array} \\ \text{The Discourse of Master} & \text{The Discourse of Hysteric} \end{array}$$

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<sup>31</sup> In the Seminar XVIII and XIX, Lacan also makes some changes in terms of his concept and introduces 'semblance' within this. Moreover, several years later, he argues the fifth discourse called capitalist discourse in his speech in Milan, which is also a variant of Master discourse.

The central motif of these later concepts still centres on the 'impossible' relationship between structure and 'real/truth/object a' etc. For example, the fifth discourse is to put the S1 on the position of truth, whilst the barred subject on the agent. That is to say, the capitalism is seeking to fetishize itself, as if the structure represented by the master signifier is already the truth. It is for this reason that Tomšič argues that the capitalism 'tends towards the foreclosure of castration (Tomšič, 2015, p226).' That is, capitalism is refusing to be castrated, refusing to have lack, so that being unlimited.

However, these will not be sketched in this thesis, because they do not affect reader to understand subsequent discussions on money and insatiability.



This is a circular order, so the sequence of each term is fixed. As Fink (1995) stresses, there clearly could be more discourses if this sequence is changed, but only these four were proposed by Lacan, which probably means it is this sequence that is valued by Lacan most. All discourses stem from the master discourse, which is used by Lacan to explain those four positions. Generally speaking, the central logic of the master discourse is that the master signifier suppresses the subject and functions as a reference point. This means, by saying what is ineffable, the order is built but the cost is that truth is covered. Here, a reading of the story of Oedipus is helpful to exemplify Lacan's view.

## A reading of Oedipus

Lacan's reading centres on an ambiguity of truth: Oedipus became the king by answering the Sphinx's question<sup>32</sup>, but in a way of 'suppressing the suspense' (Lacan & Grigg, 2008, p.120). Namely, he merely provided one possible version of the answer: it is the man who walks on four feet in the morning, and then two and three in the afternoon and the evening. But in another version, the answer could be Oedipus himself, in the sense that in the final stage he is blind, and Antigone is his cane (Lacan & Grigg, 2008, p.120). Of course, this is not Lacan's proposition of the true meaning of the story. Quite oppositely, it is by excluding all other answers that enables Oedipus to speak out an answer as if it is the only one and then became the king. For this reason, exclusion makes an order, but truth can only be half-said.

As king of Thebes, Oedipus must find the solution to the plague that has taken over the city. The question of his fate re-emerges here when he is told that he himself is the reason for the plague. At first sight, the plot seems merely an artificial coincidence made by Sophocles because Oedipus does not have to have this fate. He

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<sup>32</sup> The riddle about the creature which has four, two and three feet.

neither necessarily hears his fate, nor has to encounter his real father, Laius, at the crossroads. However, it is because Oedipus wants to avoid the oracle that he leaves home, and it is because he wants to solve the plague that he insists on knowing the truth. In both cases, he is not content with oracles and wants to make the truth clear for himself and controlled over by himself. In this way, he takes the fate by taking the position of the master and ask the oracle to produce the truth, but consequently, he is overturned.

## **Master signifier and suppression of truth**

The master signifier (S1) is placed at the position of the agent by suppressing the subject as truth. Pierre Bruno even calls S1 'the signifier of truth' (2019, p.120). The concept of subject in Seminar 17 is mutually defined with signifiers, as being represented by one signifier to another. Lacan's conceptualisation is based on a relation between human individuals and language in which symbolic structure is embodied, which implies a sense of alienation. As he claims in Seminar 11: 'the subject is subject only from being subjected to the field of the Other (Lacan & Miller, 1998, p.188). Because of this, S1 is the starting point of the subject in the Other, which is also, in Lacan's reading of Freud, linked with symbolic identification, namely, by taking the desired position by having a trait (Freud, 1921, SE18).

As to the meaning of truth, it is not so much explaining what the idea of supposed truth is as to how it is related to the formation of subjectivity: Oedipus becomes the king by giving an answer, but it is not necessarily the only right one. In Seminar 17, Lacan explains this through a discussion of Ludwig Wittgenstein's view in his 1921 philosophical tract, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. What is relevant here is that, by setting a parallel between the world and propositions, Wittgenstein argues for a/the limit of language. The most elementary form of a proposition is an assertion that merely asserts fact (*Tractatus*, 4.21). Lacan targets this statement by arguing that, behind a statement, there is always an 'I' who states. This 'I' makes the 'implication' of statements, which is always between the lines, so that 'the true is not internal to proposition' (Lacan & Grigg, 2008, p.60).

This idea of true is clearly in the dimension which cannot be involved in language from Wittgenstein's perspective, in the sense that a proposition is true either because

of fact outside language or of being a tautology. A tautology, however, says nothing (*Tractatus*, 5.142), according to Wittgenstein. In other words, if the sense of a proposition is based on its corresponding fact, it is 'I', literally speaking, who makes the sense of the statement. For this reason, truth is indeed related to what is said, but because it is the act of a statement which forms and sustains the truth as the sense of a statement. So, truth, in Lacan's terminology, is the supposed meaning or knowledge of statements or unconscious, but it does not have concrete form. This is why, in the master discourse, the master signifier represents the subject.

## S2 as knowledge and its relation to S1

S2 is the battery of signifiers in Seminar 17, which refers to the rest of the signifiers except S1. It is also related to knowledge in the sense that there has already been structures or relationships among signifiers. Knowledge then is the Other's *jouissance* or, in other words, a means of *jouissance*, in the sense that the rise of S1 is an intervention in the field of signifiers, which gives the existing relationship among signifiers a sense. As his reading of Oedipus shows, it is a certain angle that defines the whole scenario.

Thus, the master signifier is a successor of the concept of phallus. But unlike phallus, S1 is not conceptualised as a special signifier but belongs to the Other like all other signifiers. It becomes the master signifier only when it takes the place of the agent. This change is because Lacan rethinks the Oedipus complex in Seminar 17. As mentioned above, in Seminar 7 there is an obscurity in the relation between the law and *jouissance*: it seems Freud thought the primal father's pleasure preceded the prohibition, but Lacan, rather, argues that the law triggers *jouissance*, as if *jouissance* is an effect of prohibition. Lacan's argument here is to point out the impossibility of conceptualising the dead father without giving its place on the level of symbolic<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> It would be helpful to provide a context here. Lacan's point stems from a reading of a dream in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, in which a patient reports that his father is alive, but 'he (the father) had really died, only he did not know it (Freud, (2001[1900]), SE5, p430).' Freud thinks this dream makes sense when add another sentence: 'in consequence of dreamer's wish (ibid.).' Namely, he wishes his father's death. This case is treated as an example of Freud's thesis 'dream is wish-fulfilment'.

But what does it exactly mean by fulfilling a wish in a dream? Clearly getting the wishful object is not an option. This seems a more difficult question when it is about death because the idea of death is not direct fact but a living person's judgement on facts of a body, whilst in the dream there is no dead man appear. In Seminar 6, Lacan argues that wish-fulfilment should be understood as making a wish

Namely, the primal father, as the dead father, which is argued by Freud in Totem and Taboo, does not fit in the so-called triangle of the Oedipus complex because the primal father is sustained by sons, whilst the Oedipus complex is based on a strong living father. If the 'name-of-father' as a signifier is about the father's 'no', the primal father is a mark that sons want to bear because he is too weak. Within this construction, the dead father in the real register (real father) is an effect of language, which must be believed in order for it to be sustained.

However, Lacan also mentioned the so-called master's knowledge, which means formalised knowledge like science and mathematics. Such difference is clearly shown, for Lacan, in Aristotle's Politics, which argued that all knowledge of housework belongs to slaves – a master only needs to know how to make use of slaves. Namely, slaves know how to get things done, but the master knows episteme, which is about how knowledge is expressed in a language. Similarly, in Plato's Meno, Socratics argue that the soul is immortal and there is instinctive knowledge: slaves, without learning geometry, can recollect geometric knowledge by itself. But for Lacan, this is an exploitation by transferring knowledge from a slave into the episteme form. The master's knowledge seems to belong to S1 but is also connected to S2. This echoes Mladen Dolar's (2006) reading that philosophy is at the transitional point between the master discourse and the university discourse. Namely, it aims to set the universal knowledge at the position of agent.

The question of product emerges here. In the master discourse, object a is placed at the position of the product, which is linked with *jouissance* that is lost but conceptualised as surplus. The master signifier suppresses the subject and functions as a reference point. Then, the knowledge is the given relations of signs in the field of the Other, which, by setting the master signifier, the subject can learn from. The object a is the point where the signs system/The symbolic fails and constantly tries to symbolise. By persistently driving to whether it fails, it is towards a point of impossibility for this discourse and the knowledge. *Jouissance* can only be conceptualised as lost *jouissance* because it is beyond what knowledge can have access to. The lost *jouissance* can only be treated as the surplus *jouissance* because, simply speaking, the existing master signifier and knowledge make the *jouissance* seemingly

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come into being at the level of Symbolic, namely, formulating it by signifying chains (Lacan & Fink, 2021, p45). Thus, wish-fulfilment is not so much about getting satisfaction by an object as being articulated.

accessible, as if everything can be said. This is exemplified in the reading of Oedipus previously mentioned: although Oedipus wants to know the truth, there is always something missing that drives Oedipus to want this knowledge. But on the other hand, such truth is surplus for Oedipus to be the king.

For this reason, the master's discourse is portrayed by Lacan as a machine. *Jouissance* is to the master's formalised knowledge as energy is to the machine. A machine lacks 'something' because it is a formalised procedure of getting things done, which also means it is separated from real works. It can only work when it is passed by energy. Similarly, *jouissance* is between the line, the object a is the point of impossibility which, for example, drives Oedipus to know more.

## Some of Lacan's basic views on Marx

Although this is not a comprehensive review of Lacan and Marx, there are some points that need to be highlighted. First of all, because of the concept of *jouissance*, Lacan does not directly link reason and needs. This is evident in Seminar 7, in which he argues that Freud would be in line with Marx in terms of the fragile connection between human beings' needs and reason. That is, 'need and reason are only harmonised in law' (Lacan, 1992, p.257). The context here is related to Lacan's emphatic statement that human beings are captivated in the structure preceding the subject, in which one's need is constructed. Therefore, there is always a split (*spaltung*), and Lacan then links this with desire and drive.

In seminar 17, the characteristic of half-said is the point where Lacan separates surplus *jouissance* and Marx's surplus value: surplus value can be thought of as the concretised surplus *jouissance*. In Lacan's own words, it is 'a memorial' or 'equivalence' (Lacan & Grigg, 2008, p.257) of surplus *jouissance*. This means the concept of surplus value is not identical to that surplus *jouissance*, but a seeming answer of what *jouissance* is. Surplus-value is at the symbolic register, whilst (surplus)*jouissance* cannot. Lacan then provides his view of consumer society: consumer society is based on the supposed homogeneousness of all human beings in terms of accessing *jouissance*, so that it seems possible to make *jouissance* have a concrete form.

In Seminar 7, Lacan does not think, by taking the position of the master signifier (namely by nationalising properties of production) that the surplus value can be gotten rid of so that the exploited relationship between master/capitalist and slave/worker can be eliminated (Lacan, 1992, p108), because the supposed identity between slaves' work and masters' knowledge in the master discourse does not change. As to this identity, Lacan means that the slaves' knowledge of work takes the place of the masters' knowledge. The question here is that, when work is conceptualised as value, the role of the master/structure is veiled. It is the master who maintains the structure that counts work as value. This formalised knowledge is heterogeneous compared with the slaves' knowledge, and therefore cannot be eliminated simply by letting slaves take the place of the master. For this reason, Lacan disagrees with Marx in terms of conceptualising labour fundamentally as value. By contrast, slaves' knowledge is more intimately related to the use of knowledge. This is also illustrated in Seminar 20: '...for the foundation of knowledge is that the *jouissance* of its exercise is the same as that of its acquisition' (Lacan & Miller, 2000, p. 97).

The context is a distinction between Descartes' view of knowledge and his own. Again, for Lacan, the value of knowledge lies in its use. By actively using knowledge (the given structure within the Other), a subject can try to articulate what is ineffable, namely, so-called truth. If the knowledge exists in the Other in the sense that it is formalised by signs, it is the subjects' uses of knowledge and the experiences of using the knowledge that sustains the Other, because this knowledge is those signs that are signifying (Lacan & Miller, 2000, p.97-98). In short, the slaves' work sustains the master/the Other by constantly trying to follow the masters' orders to work on what the masters cannot themselves achieve.

Therefore, Lacan has arguably implied a facet of the identity of use-value and exchange-value, in the sense that the exchange-value is not only an expression of use-value within the process of exchanges. Rather, it is based on the experience of the use of things and doing the business that use-value is translated into the exchange-value. For example, a good seller needs to know why a product is useful for a customer, which means the seller should be able to adopt the customer's perspective to know what it is like to use the product. Thus, the knowledge of use weaves through every stage of exchanges, from production and exchange to consumption. This is the reason that Lacan can place it as the 'true nature of use value' (Lacan & Miller, 2000, p.97).

This inspires a further question: what makes and sustains the relationship between S1 and S2? Or, in Lacan's own words in Seminar 17, 'why does he (the slave) owe this surplus *jouissance* to the master?' (Lacan & Grigg, 2008, p.107). Indeed, to say that S1 suppresses truth and S is alienated in the symbolic are merely describing a consequence of the loss, namely, the heterogeneousness between human beings and a formalised sign system.

There are two aspects involved: firstly, Lacan uses Hegel's dialectic between master and slave for his explanations. Simply speaking, for Hegel in *Phenomenology of spirit* (PS), the master wins the struggle because the slave finally chooses life rather than be independent (PS, ¶ 187-9). In a sense, the slave is enslaved by their *jouissance*, whilst the master's power is over things. Consequently, on the one hand, the master and the slave are mediated by things, because the master makes use of things to enslave; but, on the other, the master and things are mediated by the slave, because the slave works for the master. An important difference in their relationship to things is that the master enjoys things whilst slave only works with them, because things and the slave are independent to each other whilst, through the slave's work, things are made for the master (PS, ¶ 190). From this perspective, the master acquires the position by going beyond *jouissance*, which also implies that the master is stronger. This is related to broader discussions about whether there is a solution in getting rid of a surplus, value-driven social structure, and is related to a question about whether there is a way out of the master/slave dialectic, and whether historical materialist approach, in which Marx's use of Hegel's dialectics, is promising.

Secondly, however, Lacan differs from Hegel by arguing that psychoanalysis is on the other side of the master discourse. In fact, Hegel's philosophy seems to fit within every discourse except the analytic one: university discourse is the formalised knowledge that takes the position of master, which is what Hegel aims for; whilst in the hysteric discourse this position is taken by the barred subject, which, for Lacan, is a key facet in Hegelian philosophy. As to this relationship with the hysteric, Žižek (1991) read this in terms of the body: a hysteric subject articulates the truth through their bodily symptoms. Due to truth being, by definition, ineffable in Lacan's terminology, the hysteric subject is doomed to fail to find a way out, just as Hegelian self-consciousness wants to find a way to guarantee its certainty. Namely, finding out a certainty is to find out one's guarantor in the Other. This, therefore, means to articulate oneself through the Other. But, as previously shown, it is the gap in the Other

in which an individual lies, and therefore there is no other of the Other as the guarantor has to be the unquestionable master signifier for the hysteric. Paradoxically, the hysteric desire exactly lies in the desire for this impossibility, and, for this reason, Žižek argues that the final end of the phenomenology of spirit is to perceive the negativity in the positivity<sup>34</sup> (1991).

Thus, Lacan postulates that, by giving an order, the master 'renounced everything' (Lacan & Grigg, 2008, p 107). He leaves his *jouissance* to the slave, in the sense that it is the slave who uses the knowledge. Thus, it is the slave's body handed over to the master on which the master inscribes the rest of the signifiers, namely, all signifiers except for the master signifier (Lacan & Grigg, 2008, p.89). The master is castrated in the sense that he cannot directly have access to *jouissance*, whilst the slave's production is addressing the truth, which consequently has to be defined as the surplus *jouissance* because it is beyond the master's knowledge (Lacan & Grigg, 2008, p.90). Here we can see an echo of Lacan's critique of Marxism in Seminar 20. What he refers to about Marxism is the historical materialism that argues for a track of human history. This means Marxism is still a world view, which is based on a discourse of philosophy and hopes to overturn the current one. The context here is related to analytic discourse, which does not rely on any world view which promises its capability of explaining everything, as Freud already argued in New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1933, SE22). Thus, Lacan argues, Marxism, which is not Marx's critique of political economy, does not work because it is nothing other than capitalism which hopes for a knowledge-based discourse (Lacan & Miller, 2000).

It is clear that Lacan, Baudrillard and Kierkegaard are consumed by a similar question – Žižek's position can be located between Baudrillard and Kierkegaard. For Žižek, the act which can change the symbolic is to function as a master signifier. In Žižek's analysis of ideology (2009), the master signifier is what holds different parts

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<sup>34</sup> This can be understood in a patient's dream in *Interpretation of Dream*, Chapter 4. In the dream, the female patient wants to prepare dishes for a party but fails because there is only salmon in the larder. She finally had to give up making dinner because shops are closed, and the telephone does not work as well (Freud, 1900, p158). The context here is that Freud tries to defend his basic argument that dream is wish-fulfilment and explain why some dreams are painful or disappointed.

In Freud's reading, the patient does not really want to hold that party, because one of her female friends of whom the patient's husband speaks very highly, wants to visit their home and have dinner with them. The patient has a relevantly ample body which her husband prefers, whilst her friend is extremely thin and had said that she wants to become fuller, because she supposes the food in the patient's home is good. The failure in the dream, therefore, satisfies the patient's wish to refuse her friend.

together. 'The act qua real' (Zizek, 2007, p.146) is the master signifier in the sense that it is the paradox for the discourse: it is simultaneously the foundation of the symbolic and the impossible symbolic gesture. The act and master signifier in this sense are 'one and the same entity, conceived either in the mode of 'becoming' or in the mode of 'being'' (2007, p.147).

Here, the similarities between Zizek and Kierkegaard is clear. Both of them argue for a paradox that is at the edge of symbolic structure (i.e., a system) as the foundation for sustaining the system itself, rather than merely complain that the simulacra are produced, as Baudrillard did. But, as Pound (2016) pointed out, Zizek followed a kenotic reading of Christianity: what was dead was God himself, and the Holy Spirit was then shared by all believers (2016, p.37). Through this way, it seems Zizek reconciles the conflict between atheism that bases human beings' power on secular material and the demand for God as an outside endorsement of the universal system, and it is individuals who, in fact, take the responsibility for changing and sustaining ethics as systems. But for Pound, Zizek's position is at 'humourist' in Kierkegaard's doctrine, because it is a 'secularised vision of Kierkegaard's 'teleological suspension of the ethical'' (2016, p.41), whilst for Kierkegaard, the ethical life already means the awareness of God (Evans, 2006). Such secularisation implies that Christianity in Zizek's position is still not taken seriously, but merely as an imagined possibility, like the possibility of an alternative scenario in Baudrillard's fatal strategy. Consequently, for Pound, Zizek does not stay in the religious sphere but only intellectually recognises it (Pound, 2016).

## **Conclusion:**

This chapter has outlined some of Lacan's basic concepts. It aims to provide a key background of Lacanian psychoanalysis. This background is essential for understanding Adrian Johnston and Samo Tomšič's arguments about insatiability in the next chapter.

This chapter mainly focuses on Lacan's early works, although it also involves a concern in his later work regarding the connection between bodily experiences and signs. This connection, which precedes an individual's act of choosing, is a clear component in the debate concerning the origin of needs and ethics. It focuses on the

stage of following immediate experiences and choosing an ethical standpoint, which was conceptualised by Kierkegaard.

In the first chapter, I mentioned that my primary question is inspired by my reading of Lacan. But the first part of the dissertation focuses on Baudrillard's theory. Now, it should be clear for readers to see a similarity between Lacan and Baudrillard. Both of them draw on Saussurean semiology and have a similar view on insatiability. That is, insatiability lies in an incessant attempt to represent through signs. But they have a different view on the future of signs. Baudrillard refers to a complete abolishment of signs. Lacan, by contrast, would like to recognise the symbolic as a constitutive dimension of subjectivity.

An echo between Kierkegaard and Lacan's exploration is also clear. For Kierkegaard, Abraham bears anxiety when he goes beyond the law. At that moment, he has a direct relationship with God. For Lacan, an individual goes beyond the law grasping the Thing by virtue of Freud's  $\omega$  system. But *jouissance* is not identical to pleasure. Beyond the law, *jouissance* is painful.

This echo indicates the plight of individuals. The last chapter shows insatiability stems from inequality. Inequality exists when the idea of 'universal' exists. But Lacan's exploration shows it is not easy for an individual to abandon the 'universal'. This is regardless of God.

In the next chapter, Johnston and Tomšič's views demonstrate what conclusion that Lacan's approach could bring about.

## **Chapter 9: Johnston vs. Tomšič on insatiability**

### **Introduction**

So far, this dissertation has explored the question of insatiability. It should be

helpful to review previous chapters here.

The first part reviews Baudrillard's theory and his critique of Marx. It stops at a question: how is it possible for an individual not to need? I raise this question in the context of Freudian psychoanalysis. By stressing the role of free will in their theories, I show their similarity. In a sense, both Baudrillard and Freud share a concern about a plight of the free-will agency. That is, how can 'I' fight a value system that 'I' embrace? This question matters because needs are constructed in the value system. Insatiable needs torture an individual because, by embracing a value, he/she cannot stop needing.

The second part then explores possible solutions. Can we find a root of the value system that gives the system a stop? Chapter 6 provides a negative answer by exploring Kierkegaard's theory. Kierkegaard shows that, even if God exists, he may give no help. Kierkegaard could be wrong. But, if God does help, his will should be everywhere, including in our value systems. Chapter 7 thus discusses the question of a value system in a secular context. It stresses the role of the conflict between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. This conflict gives the money an aura as if something endorses its value. This conflict is also the root of insatiability. It makes the gap between the 'universal' and the 'particular' appear to be measured. The last chapter thus stops at the question: how to deal with insatiability if money involves the conflict between the 'universal' and the 'particular'?

Adrian Johnston and Samo Tomšič's views can be treated as responses to this question. Both of them throw light upon the question of insatiability by drawing on Marx and Lacan. From the last chapter, a similarity between Lacan and Baudrillard should be clear. Both draw on Saussure's semiology. But Baudrillard's concept of need is closer to Lacan's definition of desire. Both concepts refer to construction by signs. Need/desire is insatiable because it cannot finish its construction. Money is the objectified construction of need/desire.

Johnston directly addresses the question concerning the relationship between money and insatiability. He has several works examining the Lacanian concept of drive, Marx's theory, and theology (Johnston, 2005; 2008; 2009; 2013; 2014) which also involves the relationship between human agency and materialism. After providing a brief review of his position on materialism, the chapter will focus on Johnston's article *From Closed Need to Infinite Greed: Marx's Drive Theory* (2017), because it is specifically about the subject of money.

Johnston's work should be discussed in contrast with Samo Tomšič's reading of Lacan and Marx. While both current philosophers similarly connect insatiability with a quantitative dimension, Johnston's key argument nevertheless involves a critique of Tomšič's view. Compared with Johnston, Tomšič's conclusion is less optimistic. He agrees that insatiability and capitalism go hand in hand, but the solution to the question of insatiability is still open. Marx's theory does not provide a clear solution, because, Tomšič thinks, Marx's theory should be treated as a critical tool, rather than an answer to the nature and future of human society.

This chapter argues that Johnston's solution to insatiability is questionable. Johnston's argument is based on a misuse of Marx's concept, and his view does not have a fundamental conflict with Tomšič. That is, Johnston's critique of Tomšič is not successful. I thus agree with Tomšič's position. The key difficulty lies in how to build a society which recognises the idea that 'the Other does not exist'. That is, this is about eliminating the aura of money. The Other embodies the idea of 'universal'. Eliminating the aura of money means to end the belief on the 'universal'. This dissolves the conflict between the 'universal' and the 'particular'. However, Lacanian psychoanalytic treatment could at best provide a transformation at the individual level. But money and things embody social relations. How to transform society to solve insatiability is a bigger question.

This conclusion echoes a view called the 'imagined market' (Mackenzie, 2002). It is Lacan himself who connects the symbolic register and the market, but this topic has been intensively discussed since Michael Callon and his followers without drawing on psychoanalytic terminology. Appendix 4 reviews the debate of the 'imaged market', it proves a context to understand my conclusion in a non-psychoanalytic context.

This chapter will first discuss Johnston's argument, followed by a discussion of Tomšič's view, and ends with a brief review of the discussions of the imagined market.

## **About Adrian Johnston**

Johnston's argument is based on his reading of a connection between Marx and the psychoanalytic concept of drive. Fundamentally, he argues that capitalism and the axis of alteration of drive goes hand in hand, which forms capitalist insatiability. My

counterargument therefore lies in questioning this connection. This section involves five parts: firstly, I will sketch Johnston's view of drive in his earlier works, because it paves the way for his connection between Marx and psychoanalysis. Secondly, his view of money and capitalist drive, and of selfishness, will be outlined. This is followed by an explanation of the Lacanian concept of Otherness and unconsciousness, in order to show the reasons for insatiability. Fourthly, the section will explain Johnston's view that insatiability has an innate structural reason. And finally, I refute Johnston's view. I will argue that Johnston's view is based on a misreading of Marx's *Grundrisse*. I will explain how Johnston's misreading of *Grundrisse* damages his view of selfishness and insatiability.

## **Transcendental materialism and multiplicity of drive**

Preceding the article *From Closed Need to Infinite Greed: Marx's Drive Theory* (2017), Johnston had already argued for an acknowledgement of freedom as an essential factor in the conceptualisation of Lacanian psychoanalysis. This was done in a review of Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek because both of them argue for something heterogenous to a system (Badiou's 'event' and Žižek's 'act') (Johnston, 2008, 2009). However, this kind of conceptualisation, as Chapter 4 has shown, has to face the subject of metaphysical states of free will. This involves how we picture the universe we live in, and what we believe in underneath this picture. From this perspective, materialism is not necessarily atheist when it presupposes that everything in the universe can be reduced to material, because the material is seen as God in materialists' belief (Lacan & Grigg, 2008). This is evident in modern science, which seeks the 'final answer' of everything within physics (Goff, 2017, p.14). As the previous chapter has shown, this concern is also shared by Baudrillard. But, compared with Baudrillard's anti-materialism (Pawlett, 2014), Johnston argues for transcendental materialism (2008, 2014).

The motif of transcendental materialism lies in making room for the autonomous subject on the one hand, whilst avoiding a fall into idealism on the other. This is based, first of all, on:

...a decision to commit to an axiomatic positing of the real existence of subjects as transcendental, autonomous, and irreducible free agents of negativity nonetheless immanent/internal to the physical realities constituted by material bodies. (Johnston, 2014, p.18)

That is to say, at the fundamental level, there is no argument that can be made to prove this. Thus, a large part of his works lies in defending this from the varieties of monism, especially pointing out the internal conflict within monist determinism.

Johnston's argument includes a systematic review of German idealism. This is not the focus of this thesis but, very simply speaking, he argues for a fissure in the Lacanian register of the real, which means to refute the supposed unified One or wholeness. This is demonstrated in his refutation of Kant's 'things-in-themselves' (Kant, (1781)1999) and Spinoza's monism through Hegelian dialectical perspective. For example, as Chapter 1 of this thesis has mentioned, Spinoza argues for a sense of God/substance which is the world itself, and for a view that determination is negation. But Johnston thinks that such a view implies an exclusion of the thinking subject. That is, the thinking subject is outside the substance and performs this act of determination. By contrast, Kant's project, although it seems compatible with the libertarian sense of free will, leaves room for a subjective idealism in which the free will of the subject can be based on a concept of 'soul' in the Christian sense (Johnston, 2013, 2014). In both cases, the central question is how to avoid excluding or separating a space from the material world.

As to this, Johnston suggests a 'more-than-material-subject' (Johnston, 2008, p. xxiv). This is not only because, from a biological aspect, a human brain is open to be changed by external causes so that a pure biological reductionism is simply inadequate (Johnston, 2013) but, more importantly, true atheism means to stop seeking the fundamental guarantor of the coherency of the material world. This is the case in the atheistic outcome of Lacanian psychoanalysis, which requires the analysand to see there is no other of the Other. Such a position is rooted in Lacan's theorisation of the symbolic register based on the interaction with the mother (the Other) and based on the inaccessible Thing, as previously shown. In a sense, the

symbolic register is created out of nothing<sup>35</sup>. This is, paradoxically, the key to Christianity – because the believers are hoping to maintain a dead ‘father’, a not-strong-and-clear-enough God – and also the key to atheism – because it leaves the room for a non-unified ‘real’. As philosophy academics Lorenzo Chiesa and Alberto Toscano’s view postulates, language, or the symbolic register in general, is unnatural in the sense that it cannot be deduced from nature as a continuous One. Thus, the material world proposed by atheistic materialism, from a Lacanian perspective, is fundamentally a ruptured world (Chiesa & Toscano cited by Johnston, 2013).

Seeing this from another angle, this means we probably should not understand events in the material world through a linear causality (i.e., the past determines the present, the so-called unconscious drive determines actions etc.). Based on Jacques-Alain Miller’s and Žižek’s arguments, Johnston highlights a conflict between two kinds of temporality in Lacan’s work: on the one hand, the drive seems timeless and keeps re-emerging but, on the other, it seems to imply causality and determinism, which suggests the influence of the past onto the present. Johnston especially values Žižek’s conceptualisation of this by proposing two axes of drive (*Trieb*): the axis of iteration and that of alteration. The alteration axis is about the structure constituted by signifiers and representations, whilst the iteration axis is about the constant pressures on the symbolic axis. Lacanian drive straddles both and therefore is fundamentally split (Johnston & Žižek, 2005). This position is similarly argued by Chenyang Wang (2019) that the temporality of the subject proposed by Lacan consists of ‘real’ time (bodily rhythm) and ‘symbolic’ time (a machine-like autonomous movement based on the sequence of signifiers). According to Wang, these two heterogeneous times precedes our linear conscious sense of time (past, present, and future). This means human beings’ acts cannot be understood as a consequence of conscious reasoning or unconscious.

Thus, the libertarian sense of free will is possible if it is the material world itself that cannot be conceptualised as unified and coherent. For Johnston, the material world and drives of human beings are more likely to be multi-dimensionally complex. From this perspective, the split material world allows for a split subjectivity, the split

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<sup>35</sup> see. Lacan’s seminar 7 (1992). p142-157. Lacan here somehow use Heidegger’s discussion of ‘thing’ as an example, although that is different from Lacan’s concept of Thing. To cut a long story in short, the vase can be an example of the relationship between Lacanian signifier and Thing. A vase is an empty space encircled and circumvented by materials. Similarly, signifiers are organised based on and around a gap.

subjectivity then allows for the separation of the symbolic register and the material/biological body.

## **Johnston's view of money, insatiability, and selfishness**

If the split material world makes the room for the multi-dimensional drive, the problem of capitalism lies in facilitating one dimension of drive as the dominant one; that is, the axis of alteration. In nature, this axis suggests a relative independence of the signifier to the signified, which perfectly matches the characteristics of money. Again, like a signifier, money seemingly can be exchanged with something else.

Johnston's discussion of money starts by introducing the concept of 'capitalist drive' as the 'modern greed'. Namely, Johnston thinks the pre-modern greed is more about qualitative factors, whilst modern greed is more about quantitative factors. In his own words, the former is a 'difference-in-kind' libidinal configuration whilst the modern greed is a 'difference-of-degree' configuration (2017, p.272). He then connects Marx's MCM with the Freudian psychoanalytical concept of drive, because both are characteristic of 'plasticity' (2017, p.283). Similar to Freudian drive, where an object and aim can be changed, money conditions a consumer to change their object as well. Here, Johnston distinguishes two types of commodity fetishism: 'abstract-qua-quantitative' and 'concrete-qua-qualitative' hedonism (2017, p.287-8). The former refers to the capitalist greed which aims at M' as the abstract-qua-quantitative, whilst it is qualitative factors that concern consumers in their everyday consumption (2017, p.292).

But these two types merge in the capitalist drive because of the plasticity of drive. Following Marx's illustration of greed in *Grundrisse*, Johnston thinks that MCM' is the pattern of a subject which an individual capitalist bears. That is, when consumers' purchasing insatiability is combined with capitalist greed for money, it actually means consumers' commodity fetishism treats exchange-value as use-value, whilst capitalism fetishizes money as a commodity – it treats use-value merely as exchange-value. This is because exchange-value is the only final plane on which use-value is meaningful (2017, p.290). In this sense, commodity fetishism is a symptom of capitalist

commodity (money) fetishism. This is what Johnston calls 'capitalist commodity fetishism' (2017, p.288). Capitalism is responsible for forming this because drive itself is plastic. In Johnston's words, capitalism is 'inducing' the drive (2017, p.283).

In short, although he focuses most on connecting this Marxist conceptualisation of capitalist drive with Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis, his diagnosis of the insatiability of capitalism lies in the unlimited possibility of quantitative increase (2017, p.309).

But based on this, Johnston thinks that it can be satisfied purely symbolically. An insightful point about selfishness here is that the supposed selfishness underlying neo-liberalism is actually the opposite to the expansion of capital. Here, he distinguishes two kinds of selfishness: material selfishness and social selfishness. The material selfishness is about concrete material things, whilst the social selfishness is about social recognition, including quantitative accumulation or expansion, which is supposed to be satisfied by money (2017, p.294). If the social dimension is constitutive in the concept of money, an individual who selfishly wants to possess more money is pursuing recognition on a social level or, in Lacan's terminology, pursuing an *Ego* under the gaze of the Other (2017, p.294). This paradoxically implies an aspect of altruism because the individual has to sustain the existence of the Other in order to make the recognition from the Other possible. Thus, an innate factor of capitalism is about pursuing its own survival as a system, which means individuals might sometimes sacrifice their own interests (2017, p.296). Because of this, Johnston thinks:

If the drives of capitalists (and even of many, if not all, consumers in late-capitalism) ultimately are about things social rather than material, then there is no reason why such 'selfish' impulses and ambitions cannot be at least symbolically satisfied in a post-capitalist arrangement of a socialist or communist sort. (2017, p.295)

Namely, if the social dimension and the material dimension are relevantly independent, it is possible to satisfy the social aspect within a social/symbolic system whilst enabling the eagerness for materials to stop. Johnston therefore portrays a very desirable future of a communist society that:

...promises the abolition of this self-sacrificial capitalist service and, after it, the free indulgence of everyone in human selfishness, the egalitarian appreciations of both comfortable material quality of life as well as socio-symbolic recognition. (2017, p.300)

Indeed, if 'there is no other of the Other (Lacan & Fink, 2007, p.688), those neo-liberalists have to maintain their desire by maintaining the Other for themselves. This answers Alice Wickstrom, Lain Denny and Joel Hietanen's question: if the collective consumption can only provide a temporary sense of wholeness, whilst it 'feeds upon constant separation and individualisation' then the question is 'whether that would be desirable at all (2020, p.9)?'. From Johnston's perspective, it would be adequate to say that it is, literally speaking, desirable because supporting the Other, in which a desire can be constituted, is more fundamental than the satisfaction of desire. This is at least the case if the concept of 'lack' constitutes part of the conceptualisation of desire.

## **A background of Lacanian Otherness to Johnston's argument of insatiability**

The view that quantity can be increased unlimitedly is nothing new. The key question connecting money, consumption, and insatiability is rather the issue of 'lack': after all, what is really lacking? This is a fundamental question for Johnston's argument because it is about how an individual sustains their Other. If the desire is triggered by the sense of something being missing, then how can the register of signs be separated from that of things in order to judge that what is missing is a sign or a thing? If we cannot draw a line between them, how is it possible to satisfy the need for material things in limited numbers whilst satisfying unlimited drive symbolically? As Lacan repeatedly demonstrated, lack goes hand in hand with the other of the Other, because they are concerned with the questions: where is the stop? and what is the final answer? It seems the concept of sign-value can be easily equated with use-value, or at least partially, because the so-called sign-value of a commodity is nothing other

than its use-value: a commodity is usually utilised as a sign to signify something (e.g., showing reputation).

Within psychoanalytic literature, the question about the distinction between sign and thing can be traced back to Freud's discussion of sign-presentation and thing-presentation. Johnston's approach is to argue that Lacanian unconsciousness includes them both.

In his meta-psychological work, *The Unconscious* (1915), Freud argues:

The conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone. (Freud, 1915, SE14, p. 201)

The thing presentation is the first presentation the psyche system gets by being impressed by an object; it is the result of the cathexis of memory traces of a thing and therefore belongs to the primary process. The word presentation is built on thing presentation. It is a cathexis of a word linking to a thing presentation and thus belongs to the secondary process. Namely, the word presentation is the presentation of thing presentation.

But how is this separation possible if both of them stem from perceptions? Freud's answer is that the word presentations can be relatively remote to the original impression of things. This also conditions the function of word presentations to represent something existing without the original thing, because a word can be defined purely by its relation to other words. This view clearly echoes Levi-Strauss's concept of the floating signifier. In this sense, these two layers enable two relevantly independent orders to connect representations. Consequently, the word presentation is attributed to the function of pre-consciousness. Freud's consideration is clear: in order to be independent of the thing-representation to some extent, the word presentations must be done by another system. The pre-consciousness is the closest<sup>36</sup> one to the unconsciousness, compared with consciousness. Thus, although it brings about further questions surrounding the relationship between pre-consciousness and consciousness, it is clear the word presentation and the thing presentation do not

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<sup>36</sup> Although Freud's concept of psyche systems is not specified with concrete locations in the brain, he indeed use 'psychical locality (Freud, 1912, SE14, p.174)' to describe these systems. So spatial concepts should be valid to describe the relationship between them, at least metaphorically.

belong to the same order. From this perspective, Freud would agree with Baudrillard that, when a thing is treated as a sign, it is less defined by its immediate impression than its connection with other signs.

As it can be seen, Johnston's idea of the 'axis of iteration' and that of 'alteration' had already emerged in Freud's text. The word presentations constitute a dimension in which the thing presentations needs to register. However, it does not mean the signifier in Lacanian unconsciousness is identified with the presentation. This is important because the other of the Other, if it exists, is by definition located outside the Other (or it is located in the gap of the Other), whilst the thing presentations are still presentations and therefore are part of the Other. If what is questioned is still part of the Other, the supposed final answer (namely, the other of the Other) will escape again, and brings about the old question of: what endorses the Other? Similar to the question posed in the discussion on money. Thus, it is no surprise that, as aforementioned, Lacanian unconsciousness involves both word presentations and thing presentations.

But, For Lacan, the gap, or lack, in the Other is the field where drive rather than desire lies in . This leads to further questions: on the one hand, what is heterogeneous to the symbolic register is the biological body, so what is the difference or relationship between drive and the biological activities? On the other hand, why not simply to equate desire with the axis of alteration of drive, considering both of them are constituted by signifiers?

The first question is especially relevant here because the biological need can be satisfied, and we can sense a concrete stop (becoming full while eating dinner, for example). Through Baudrillard's work, it has been clear that needs are not merely biological, but Chapter 5 has also shown that the concept of a collectively recognised sign (i.e., debt money) does not explain the insatiability too. Thus, there is something else that needs to be questioned here, which is Johnston throws light upon.

Lacan's concepts of language (including *le langage*; *la langue*; *lalangue*) plays a pivotal role, which Johnston uses to criticise the readings that treats Lacan as a structuralist. For Johnston, Lacan is not a structuralist because, simply, he never argues for a structure being fundamental to explaining everything about human beings. This leaves the argument open for energy, libido, drive, or any other concepts which are supposed to be unrepresentable and cannot be assimilated into a structure. Indeed, it seems the non-structuralism aspect is not so distinctive in Seminar 11 in

which Lacan addresses the same topic, especially when he claims that 'it is in the dimension of a synchrony that you must situate the unconscious' (1998, p.26). However, the context here is a comparison of Freudian and Lacan's own concept of the unconscious. What Lacan argues for is a split shown by the synchronic sign system. The unconscious can be extended, but nevertheless shows the split it cannot reach.

The difference between French words *la langue* and *le langage* is not obvious in English. *Le langage* refers to the system of signs which constitutes the subjectivity of an individual, whilst *la langue* means 'a language', like English and French. When Lacan states: 'the unconscious is structured like a language' (1998, p.149), it refers to 'the dimension in which the subject is determined (1998, p.149), and thus refers to *le langage*. In the Seminar 20, Lacan discusses the difference between *la langue*, *le langage*, and *lalangue*. The last is translated as 'llanguage', which specifically refers to the acoustic facet of language (Lacan, 1999, pp.44-45). It is through signifiers as sounds that human beings identify the signified, but this also means that a language (*le langage*) is a construction because the signified is made by our reading. At the fundamental level, 'language (*le langage*) is made up of llanguage (*lalangue*)' (1999, p.139). It is in order to understand those sounds that language (*le langage*) is constituted based on llanguage (*lalangue*), although hypothetically (1999). That is why 'language, first of all, doesn't exist. Language is what we try to know concerning the function of llanguage' (1999, p.138). The Lacanian unconscious is constituted, not by a language, but like a language. This means that what Lacan tried to talk about is 'assemblages' (Lacan, 1999, pp.4-48), in the sense that signifiers are put together as a set. Namely, the language as a general coherent structure (*le langage*) is only supposed based on llanguage (*lalangue*). For Johnston, trying to conceptualise and reconcile the conflict between *le langage* and the unassailable 'real' is central to Lacan's work, whilst Laplanche neglects Lacan's concern on this difference (Johnston & Zizek, 2005).

On top of this, knowledge, which is defined as S2 in the doctrine of 'four discourses', is linked with llanguage (*lalangue*) in the sense that it is about 'how to do things with llanguage' (1999, p.139). As the last chapter mentioned, before the formalised knowledge, knowledge and its use are inseparable, which Lacan argues for this through the discussion of Plato's *meno*. This 'use of knowledge' also involves signifiers because, as Soler (2015) argues, 'a signifier that has been transformed into

*jouissance* in the process of its acquisition...will be enjoyed with the same *jouissance* (that is, without loss) in the exercise of knowledge' (p.111). Thus, learning how to do things is about having the relevant experiences, including acquisition of signifiers as a sound related to the experiences with one's own body. At this level, the acquired signifiers is at the level of real rather than symbolic, even if the concept of drive and that of desire seems to converge here. This gap between desire and drive is decisive in Johnston's argument: 'Desire is the outcome of the temporalisation of *Trieb*' (Johnston & Zizek, 2005, p.207). Namely, drive becomes tangible when it is represented through signs in the course of constantly being driven towards a concrete sign as its aim.

Thus, if the unconscious is about an assemblage, this is because the language (*le langage*) itself is an assemblage of letters based on language (*lalangue*), and such an assemblage becomes a unity at the level of the language we use in everyday life (*le langage*). The signifier as a sound straddles the biological and the symbolic registers. From this perspective, both the Freudian thing presentation and word presentation should be at the level of *le langage*, because it is at this level that representations have linked with each other to form Lacanian unconscious. The thing-presentation and word-presentation are therefore not distinguished at this level (Johnston & Zizek, 2005). The other of the Other questioned here neither lies at the symbolic register nor a simply biological one, although it still lies at the Real register. Also, it is constitutive to, but not controlled by, our conscious mind. This is the register that the concept of chartal money does not reach, because money is merely treated as the consequence of a conscious-based institution.

## **Johnston's view of insatiability**

Based on Lacan's theory of drive and language (*lalangue*), Johnston argues two kinds of real: The axis of iteration indicates a real that cannot be represented in the symbolic register. By contrast, the axis of alteration involves a limit of the symbolic register itself, because whenever the drive keeps seeking its object, it is always based on the previous presentation. That is, each representation is introduced as a negation of the previous one, and therefore the representation is constantly replaced. This is

not simply about taking the place of the old one because what each representation<sup>37</sup> signifies always involves the previous presentation.

For Johnston (2005), this is exemplified in Hegel's dialectical approach in the *Philosophy of Mind*. Simply speaking, the mind starts with 'sense certainty' and constantly tries to get full self-realisation. Each stage Hegel describes is a sublation of the previous, in the sense that each stage has its own immanent problem and therefore has to move onto the next. In everyday life, our impression/idea of a thing is always a combination of the past impressions/ideas and the new one. This might also be the case when a writer senses a whisper of inspiration but forgets the concrete expression. They might keep trying to recollect the original expression and find the most accurate words connected to their feelings. Sometimes a writer consequently can only use an expression including several negations to accurately articulate the idea, like 'he is not bad' to indicate a nuance that is not fully 'good'. Thus, the new representation is doomed to be even more distanced from which it tends to grasp. Consequently, at the axis of alteration, drive is necessarily an 'aim-inhibition' because each representation, as the aim of drive, is covered and therefore 'altered' (Johnston & Žižek, 2005, p324). The real outside the symbolic is defined as 'the-real-as-content', and the limit due to the 'aim-inhibition' is defined as 'the-real-as-form' (Johnston & Žižek, 2005, p323).

Thus, it is clear how the sense of inducing in capitalism, that Johnston mentioned, can take effect on the drive. If the central reason of the insatiability of the capitalist drive lies in 'the abstract-qua-quantitative' as aforementioned, then it is 'the-real-as-form' at work here. Meanwhile, the quantitative dimension not only allows us to conceptualise an infinite accumulation (i.e., to say 'more' is to say quantitatively bigger), but also provides a hierarchical system which concretely articulates what it is like to have 'more', because the temporalisation of drive involves the process that each unit is superimposed by another. The capitalist drive, as MCM', is the demonstration of this sequence of superimposition through money.

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<sup>37</sup> The more accurate expression here should be *Vorstellung*, which literally means idea or representation. The meaning and translation related to this word is still open to discuss. For example, Fink (1995a, p227) suggests that although it literally means representation, it seems to refer to the idea represented by signifier. In this sense, *Vorstellung* is the supposed real idea and therefore in the Real register rather than the Symbolic (see. Also, Frink 1995b, Chapter 6, note 11, p117-8).

The chapter merely focus on clarifying Johnston's argument, so it will not discuss it further. But Johnston is clearly aware of related questions, as he uses 'the signifier-like *Vorstellung* of the drive-object (Johnston, 2005, p.320).' Be as it may, he indeed wants to talk about an issue at the Symbolic level, in which the reference he based is Lacan's discussion about signifier and 'the Thing'.

An obstacle for avoiding insatiability is therefore revealed here: the axis of alteration by definition has a hierarchical structure if each moment distinguishes itself from the previous one by adding new signifiers. That is to say, the Lacanian desire is a device for hierarchical demarcation. Each moment might not be merely or mainly different in terms of quantitative factors, but there must be a sense of progression toward the Thing/ object a, otherwise each moment itself is not distinguishable from the previous one with regard to the Thing/ object a. Namely, a new signifier not only adds the difference, but seems also to add a direction.

This issue is exemplified in Zygmunt Bauman's (2007) concept of the 'under-class'. It refers to those 'failed consumers' (p.124) in a consumerist society. The key here is that under-class people are treated as a danger for the society of consumers, so that they function as a point that maintains the identity of this society. The central mechanism is this:

Every type of social setting produces its own visions of the dangers that threaten its identity, visions made to the measure of the kind of social order it struggles to achieve or to retain. If the self-definition, simultaneously descriptive and postulative, can be thought of as a photographic replica of the setting, visions of threats tend to be the negatives of those photographs. Or, to put this in psychoanalytical terms, threats are projections of a society's own inner ambivalence, and anxieties born of that ambivalence, about its own ways and means, about the fashion in which that society lives and intends to live. (Bauman, 2007, p.128)

This mechanism is approached through two aspects: firstly, from a social practice aspect, Bauman claims that an identity of a group has an ambivalent relationship with its enemy: it is worried about being threatened by the danger, and the identity group is defined by its enemy in the sense that the enemy is 'the measure of the kind of social order' (Bauman, 2007, p.130) on which the identity group relies. Secondly, by drawing on psychoanalytic terminology, Bauman explains this kind of group psychology in parallel with individual psychological experiences: just as individuals feel less anxious by creating a concrete enemy outside itself, society creates its own image of threats. Fundamentally, there is nothing to justify a social system of hierarchy. Traditionally, this conflict takes the form of regime and revolution whilst, in

the society of consumers, the capability of consumption is the cornerstone. If we review Wickstrom, Denny and Hietanen (2020)'s concern about whether the collective consumption as a 'constant separation and individualisation' is really desirable (p.9), a possible response might be that it *is* desirable because to desire is by definition to separate.

This is the structural reason which this thesis believes Johnston rightly highlights. The quantitative difference measured by money perfectly fits in this hierarchy, which is arguably one of reasons that capitalism seems unshakeable. An alternative society probably needs to be able to tame the hierarchical relationship whilst also stripping its connection with money and quantitative dimension of things in everyday consumptions. How this is possible is beyond the scope of this thesis; considering that Big Data and AI technology are increasingly used in the marketing and finance industries, keeping the quantitative factor from the social relationship becomes much difficult than before. For the same reason, this thesis disagrees with Johnston's view the selfishness can be satisfied symbolically on a certain level. The next section will explain this in detail.

## **A counter-argument**

As it can be seen, Johnston spent a sizeable amount of time researching the connection and split in drive: concrete-qua-qualitative and abstract-qua-quantitative hedonism; difference-of-degree and difference-in-kind; the axis of iteration and that of alteration. All of these terms target the tension between the quantitative and the qualitative factors that shapes our way of treating things.

However, this thesis is less optimistic about Johnston's view of selfishness because maintaining a system as the Other effectively cannot be separated from the material conditions of the system. Alongside Johnston's own argument about the material root of signifiers (*Llanguage*), this issue is revealed when we locate the scenario Johnston portrays within Marx's threefold identity of production and consumption: if the need for materials and the drive/desire can be satisfied separately, it means the second facet and the third facet of the identity can be completely separated. As previously argued in Chapter 1, Marx's two illustrations in his introduction (1857) and Notebook IV in *Grundrisse* (1858) should be defined as the

third facet and second facet separately, and therefore should not be treated as identical. This separation is compatible with – even perfectly matches – Johnston’s distinction between quantitative and qualitative, but the problem is that when he argues for his view of selfishness, the connection between the third and second facet is confused. This is because he treats these two facets simply as two axes of the same drive.

In this article about money (2017), Johnston directly equates Marx’s illustration of drive in the introduction of *Grundrisse* with that in Notebook IV. After citing Marx’s introduction, Johnston directly moves onto Notebook IV and treats it as a further explanation of that view in the introduction to *Grundrisse* (Johnston, 2017). However, I think Marx talks about two different things in these two parts. In the introduction to *Grundrisse*, it stresses a kind of productive consumption, which has already been discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis: the drive that Johnston cited is from the third facet. In his reading, ‘Marx literally refers to a ‘*Trieb*’ on the side of consumption, with a corresponding ‘*Anlage*’ on the side of production (an ‘inclination’ that itself has a drive-like character, as will be seen soon enough)’ (2017, p.279). As Johnston argues, the third facet is about transforming an individual through consumption. It seems adequate to link Lacanian drive (*Trieb*) with Marx’s ‘inclination’ considering Lacan’s illustration that drive is brought about by demand. That is, by demanding a concrete thing and getting it, the trace of bodily experiences is left; drive straddles the boundary between bodily experiences and consciousness. Similar to both Freudian and Lacanian *Trieb* whose object can be changed, by ‘inclination’ Marx does not specifically refer to the drive caused by socially created needs, even if it is the case after the initial state. The concept of drive in this context generally means subject’s drive to consume an object. At least, Marx’s view includes Lacanian drive.

By contrast, the illustration cited by Johnston in Notebook IV is about proliferation of surplus value and capital. Marx here indeed argues that, in order to expand surplus value based on the increase of productivity, the increase of consumption is required for maintaining the circulation in three ways: 1) the expansion of existing consumption; 2) creating new needs; and 3) the production of new needs and creation of new use-value (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993; Johnston, 2017). It is also true that ‘drive’ in the introduction to *Grundrisse* can also help the proliferation of surplus-value, but there is arguably a slight difference between Marx’s ‘inclination’ in this introduction and the one in Notebook IV: if the former is somehow still related to an individual’s

psychological experience, the latter is an issue on a social and organisational level. Evidence comes from Marx's illustration a little before the part that Johnston cites:

The main point here – where we are concerned with the general concept of capital – is that it is this unity of production and realisation, not immediately but only as a process, which is linked to certain conditions, and, as it appeared, external conditions. (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.407)

This short paragraph outlines the context that paves the way for Marx's further discussions: absolute surplus value and relative surplus value. The paragraphs cited by Johnston is about relative surplus value (Johnston, 2017).

It is the evidence of Johnston's misreading of Marx, because the unity of production and realisation does not involve the third facet of identity between production and consumption, in which the aforementioned concept of drive is formulated in the introduction to *Grundrisse*. In the above paragraph, Marx wants to shed light upon a unity that is conditioned by external factors. In the footnote for this paragraph, he links it with Marx's illustration in a few pages earlier that provides further context: realisation here refers to the process of increasing surplus value, through which capital finishes its own proliferation (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993). Thus, by using money to produce, capital is transformed into products. These products contain a higher value than that money is invested in because it contains more objectified labour. But the proliferation of capital is only achieved by the successful sale of products, through which the value in products is transformed back into money (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993).

The related context here is a long discussion by Marx on barriers for the process: a commodity must have use-value otherwise no one would buy it. But human needs are not unlimited, so a barrier for circulation is the limit of needs for commodity. In this sense, the exchange-value in the commodity, as the objectified labour, is measured by the use-value. Or, namely, a quantitative factor is measured in terms of a qualitative factor. Conversely, in the circulation of commodities, the use-value of a commodity is not merely measured in terms of usefulness, but the amount of consumption. For example, one mobile phone might be enough for many people's daily use. One can have ten mobile phones, but nine of them are useless. However, possibly, when a person does have ten mobile phones, they might get other ideas on how to utilise all

of them, like using them as weapons. In this case, a new use-value emerges. This is the way that the amount of commodity also influences the use-value. Consequently, as Marx states, the measure of a commodity in circulation is neither purely determined by 'usefulness' nor the amount of 'objectified labour' <sup>38</sup>(Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.404-406).

It is for this reason that, 'as value, it encounters its barrier in alien production, just as, as use value, its barrier is alien consumption (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.404-406). That is, both exchange-value and use-value has to appear in another form which is limited by the factor outside itself in the process of circulation. They are the reason for the barrier to each other. It is in this sense, then, the unity of production and realisation is only as a process rather than something can be immediately finished: the unity here does not refer to a productive process forming a subject that realises the product, but points out the fact that capitalist production must secure circulation. Whether its production can really achieve this, or whether a kind of subjectivity is formed because of this, is another question.

Therefore, the need created by capitalist circulation is not identical to that need (and drive) in the introduction to *Grundrisse*, because in Notebook IV Marx specifically refers to the need created for the proliferation of capital. The context here is more related to Marx's analysis of two possible ways to overcome the limit of the circulation: lengthening working days and decreasing necessary labour by increasing productivity. The first way brings about absolute surplus value, which tends to enlarge the magnitude of circulations and therefore enlarges its market. The second is related to relative surplus value, which is to create new needs – namely, the market for qualitatively different commodities in order to digest newly increased productivity. This is because, with the increase of productivity, the capital can be paid less on old form labour and so that a part of this capital is left over. This leftover part must be invested in new labour for production, otherwise it is not fully used (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993). Therefore, the creation of new need in this context is, at least mainly, pushed by the logic of capital, although it could be true that, by exploring new needs, human beings are developed in production and consumption (Marx & Nicolaus, 1993, p.409).

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<sup>38</sup> Marx's approach clearly echoes Hegelian dialectics being demonstrated in the relationship among quality, quantity, and measure. Hereof, although the detailed explanation is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but their relationship follows that 'being-nothing-becoming' aforementioned, and it should be helpful to cite Hegel's own brief explanation. Simply speaking, measure takes both quantity and quality into account, (see, EL, §85)

In other words, the unity in Notebook IV lies at the second facet of identity between production and consumption, whilst the drive (or inclination) lies at the third. That is to say, the underlying difference between two concepts of need is that the former is about a construction within a given system, whilst the latter is a unity within the individual experience already and is not impelled by the pressure of the circulation. The difference between these two facets, therefore, demonstrates a gap between the individual and the symbolic register. It is important, because if the market is an imagined construction (MacKenzie, 2002), it is constructed only based on the second facet of the identity.

This difference is crucial for Johnston's argument, because treating the second facet simply as a drive ignores the practical aspect of the pressure of circulation. A concrete example is that the consequence of inflation is the devaluation of a normal worker's salary. If a worker uses financial tools to balance this effect, it would be unfair to say there is a so-called libidinal configuration in these workers. The problem is, when Johnston talks about capitalism, it is foremost about the second facet, whilst his discussion of 'real-in-form' lies in the third facet. The connection between the second and third facet enables him to argue for the capitalist drive, but this arguably does not make room for satisfying insatiability solely at the symbolic level. Without this confusion, he would arguably not reach the conclusion of 'symbolical satisfaction regardless of material condition', as aforementioned. After all, he places his argument in a scenario when communist society is achieved, but the real problem is exactly the effect of the hierarchical symbolic system on the material distribution.

Thus, the question lies in how to treat the relationship between the second and the third facet. If only the difference is considered, one might conclude that the second or third can be satisfied solely. On the one hand, Johnston needs to explain, at the level of 'abstract-qua-quantitative' hedonism, what is meant by production that is created by consumption. Following his logic, the production, which is created by consumption and fuelled by capitalism, can be nothing more than a Baudrillardian simulation, namely the combinations of signs. It therefore confronts the issue that Baudrillard challenges Marx with: the dialectical process will be stopped by simulation. Moreover, as previously mentioned, the libertarian free will is necessary for holding a system of signs. Johnston would arguably agree with this view (especially in the sense that free will is not separated from the material world) rather than the views of Kant or Spinoza. But, if so, how is it possible for a free will agency to conduct productions for

satisfying their socially constructed need or 'abstract-qua-quantitative' hedonist drive without maintaining a relevantly correct or valid correspondence between a system of signs and material deposition and distribution? Whenever the connection between the second and third facet is considered (namely, the circulation of consumption and production brings about the subjectivity), we have to face the question that how the hierarchical distribution of materials is formed by the hierarchical structure of the Symbolic dimension.

The separation Johnston proposes in the satisfaction of selfishness seems incompatible with the third facet of identity between production and consumption because at the third facet, the consumption needs to complete itself through production, including the distribution of materials. Again, the selfishness must be satisfied through a hierarchical system, as Johnston himself argued.

A possible refutation from Johnston could be that the pure social-political recognition he argues for is achieved in a communist society (Johnston, 2017), and therefore there is no surprise that this kind of recognition is not the case in the current capitalist society. Moreover, as Marx claims, also cited by Johnston, the aim of capitalist production is not immediate consumption or the means of capitalist enjoyment, but for the surplus value (Johnston, 2017; Marx & Mandel, 1992). This appears to mean that capitalism, by definition, cannot achieve the third facet of the identity between consumer and producer. However, alongside the question whether those threefold identities are sequential stages or simultaneous aspects, it is a conundrum why even in a communist society the third stage/facet identity will still not be achieved. Namely, why in a communist society is there still a selfish need to be satisfied on the symbolic level?

To recap, the 'difference-of-degree' indeed provides a schema to formulate a hierarchical system, in which a sense of 'more' can be easily defined. But it is not clear in Johnston's argument how it is possible that desire can (or the axis of alteration of drive) constantly seek to make a difference at each moment through the depositing/distribution/allocation of materials, whilst it can be satisfied by a way that strips a material-based hierarchy. Fundamentally, Johnston needs to explain how it is possible that the meaning and hierarchy-creation can be separated from material distribution. This separation is not the case in Marx's text. Baudrillard's view is helpful to highlight the problem: production involves a sense of reserving or counting so that

makes accumulation possible. That is why his anti-productionist argument lies in abolishing the whole system on which the reserving and counting is relied.

## Tomšič's The Capitalist Unconscious

Samo Tomšič has a similar argument in *The Capitalist Unconscious* (2015), conceptualising a correspondence between Marx and Lacanian psychoanalysis through Marx's view of commodity and money and Lacanian desire and drive. Like Johnston, Tomšič attributes the insatiability of capitalism to the symbolic register, but Johnston differs from Tomšič on the question of selfishness. The following paragraphs will outline Tomšič's view and then discuss Johnston's criticism of Tomšič.

### Tomšič's view

As a survey of the connection between Marx and Lacanian psychoanalysis, the central question that needs answering is: what validates Tomšič's reading of this connection? Alongside Lacan's own illustration, a concern of the role of Saussure's view in Lacanian psychoanalysis plays a central role. It is by refuting Saussure's structuralism that the concept of *jouissance* can be introduced, which echoes Marx's concept of surplus value.

Tomšič's discussion of Saussure can be linked with what Colette Soler (2003) called 'the second return to Freud' (p.87). The first return is about Lacan's re-reading of Freud through Saussurean semiotics, whilst the second deals with the relation between the symbolic register and the body, which involves *jouissance* and affects. For Tomšič, the autonomy of language is overstated in Saussure's theorisation of language as a synchronic system constituted by the relations of signs. This consequently makes Saussure mistakenly equate the signifier with the wage and the signified with labour (Tomšič, 2015) as if the wage is a representation of real labour. The problem lies in the confusion of labour and labour power: it is labour power as the objectified real human labour that is represented by wages – for example, the physical act of selling at a market rather than human labour as a process. This confusion stems

from Tomšič using the synchronic dimension of language as the nature of language, whilst the diachronic one is introduced in the act of speech.

The construction of a totalised synchronic system constituted by signs is doomed to fail, because, as Johnston's argument also mentions, the pure relations of values can be expanded without limit, and therefore the language 'knows no outside' (Tomšič, 2015, p.33). Meanwhile, by supposing the ultimate guarantor, the language must be conceptualised as atemporal and eternal, which means to exclude negativity. It is therefore not whole. This logic of argument echoes Johnston's refutation of Kant and Spinoza through dialectics, as previously mentioned: by being defined as eternal, the eternal thing becomes one-sided and loses its dialectical relationship with the opposite side. Consequently, a system of value constituted by signs is seemingly unlimited but always incomplete.

From this perspective, the market does not exist. Those economists who believe in the 'invisible hand' of the free market suppose a market as the Other, whilst the so-called invisible hand is the other of the Other (Tomšič, 2015). But, just like the signifiers/signs<sup>39</sup> in the language, commodities are related to each other through exchange-values, so the exchanges of commodities can be thought of as being structured like a language (Tomšič, 2015, p.36). Therefore, as the language, the market, like the language (*le langage*), does not exist (Tomšič, 2015, p.48). Namely, when a concept is reliant on a kind of consistency, it does not exist because the consistency does not exist. Of course, just because the Other does not exist, does not mean the other of the Other cannot be supposed. The most vivid example is about God: nothing prevents a believer from believing that everything is the consequence of God's will, no matter whether God exists or not (Lacan, 1999, p.45). By contrast, for Marx and Lacan, if the exchanges of commodities can be parallel to that of signs, it at least means both are depending on the given conditions. For a language, it is language (*lalangue*), whilst for commodity, it is history –specifically, the history of class struggle (Tomšič, 2015).

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<sup>39</sup> Although there is a difference in conceptualisation of signs between Saussure and Lacan, this does not prevent Tomšič to treat Saussurean language as a synchronic system, because the signified is encapsulated in the sign, and the relation between signs is synchronic. Thus, at this level, signifier and sign are interchangeable. This also means, the Saussurean sign is different from Marx's concept of commodity, because the signified is not as independent and heterogeneous to the signifier as the use-value to the exchange-value.

The parallel between market and language plays a pivotal role for Lacan to locate the concept of surplus value in his doctrine. In Seminar 16<sup>40</sup>, Lacan argues that there can be thought of discourse like a market in the Other, in the sense that a market implies an organisation of choices and preferences (Lacan, 2006, p.17). As aforementioned, there is seemingly something left over after that discourse is determined by the master signifier, defined as object a. Seminar 16 starts with approaching this dimension through the concept of 'surplus enjoying' (*plus de jouir*). It refers to the effect of discourse that makes it appear there is a more *jouissance*. The surplus-enjoying therefore can be thought of as being produced by discourse, like surplus value is produced by a market as the sum of all activities of exchanges. The subject is constructed in the discourse, so that individuals can be pulled in to enjoy (Lacan, 2006, p.17). Lacan then makes a parallel between the commodity (marchandise) and the function or place of object a. That is, within the capitalist circulation, a commodity, in which a certain amount of human labour is objectified, can be thought of containing something of the surplus value. Similarly, by the renunciation of *jouissance* and the introduction of the surplus-enjoying, something about object a is identified<sup>41</sup>.

If this parallel is valid, the Lacanian subject constituted in the symbolic echoes the labour power in Marx's discussions. Just as there is an alienation from individual to subject, the real process of human labour is translated as labour power (Tomšič, 2015). It is clear, too, how a commodity is linked to a formulation of the subject: a commodity functions as a canned enjoyment and an individual who uses it becomes the subject who enjoys it in a certain way. Based on this concern, Lacanian

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<sup>40</sup> So far there is no official translation of Lacan's seminar 16 in English. My reading is based on Cormac Gallagher's translation, which can be found in <http://www.lacaninireland.com>, visited on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021

<sup>41</sup> There is an obscurity. Unlike a commodity which is usually tangible, the object a is linked with an effect of discourse and it by definition cannot be represented. So, it is difficult to find a noun to name that effect. Hereof, it seems Lacan aims to locate the object a at the level of the Symbolic, because he uses 'giving a place of the object a' to describe the function of this effect (C'est ce qui donne sa place a l'objet a (Lacan, 2006, p19)). It should be safe to say that, just like the surplus-value of a commodity is not identical to but somehow anchoring on its exchange-value, that 'place' is not identical to the surplus enjoying and the object a.

Besides, the word 'la fonction' in French text is missing in Gallagher's translation. The published French version is '*Ainsi le plu-de-jouir est-il ce qui permet d'isoler la fonction de l'objet a* (Lacan, 2006, p19).' Gallagher's translation here is that 'in the same way surplus enjoying is what allows the isolation of the o-object', rather than 'allows the isolation of the function of the object a (or, o-object).'

Hereof, I follow the French version, and suggests that the function of the object a and the function of surplus enjoying are same. Both refers to the effect of discourse, which is a place that the object a and surplus enjoying are related to each other: the object a, as the place where the symbolic representations fail, indicates the possibility of more enjoyment than that contained in discourse.

psychoanalysis and Marx's discussions of political economy is bridged (Tomšič, 2015).

However, according to Lacan's definition, a subject is what is represented by a signifier to another signifier. Does it mean, then, that labour power is what is represented by an exchange-value to another exchange-value? For Lacan, this formulation misses the role of real human labours and makes the process of production look like a change of numbers. Although it seems Marx's theorisation of MCM' suggests that the surplus value is solely about the quantitative increase of value, and therefore should be located at the Lacanian symbolic register, it is actually in the gap between the exchange-value and use-value, like that between the signifier and the signified, in which the surplus-enjoying (and, surplus value) is located. It is the real labour power that makes the increase of value, but the subject is what the exchange-value represents to the use-value (Lacan, 2006; Tomšič, 2015). That is to say, Lacan does not treat the use-value as a fundamental referent, which Baudrillard attacked.

Moreover, it does not mean that the alienation functions as a repression to obstruct the production or expression of an original individual need or real human labour. Quite the opposite, as Tomšič stresses: it is exactly because of the repression that conditions the production of (surplus) *jouissance*. Namely, the introduction of the symbolic dimension through the introduction of the master signifier is the constitutive repression for the subject (Tomšič, 2015). Without this dimension, there is no so-called surplus made by the symbolisation as well. More specifically, this is because production is dialectically a renunciation in which the master renounces everything for giving an order and makes the production through the slave's body in the master discourse. The autonomy of signifiers should be treated as a 'foreign body of biological body' (Tomšič, 2015, p.53). Capitalism in this sense is involved in a double production: production of lack and that of surplus simultaneously, similarly, in Tomšič's reading, Freud argues about the repression: a simultaneous process of repression and symptoms (Tomšič, 2015, p.140-2; p.184-5).

In this sense, the surplus value is the object-cause of the capitalist social link, like object a. What Tomšič tried to point out is a transformation of the materiality of a commodity into the dimension of values, and that of labour into labour power (Tomšič, 2015, p.53). But there is a question: If the existence of the symbolic register is the precondition of the subject, it should logically precede object a. By contrast, if the surplus value is the object-cause of the capitalist link, does it mean the capitalist mode

of production logically precedes the surplus value? This seems true, considering it seems Marx also thinks a product has the use-value first and only becomes a commodity in an exchange process. The surplus value is produced only when the commodity is produced for more money thereafter, namely when the transformation from CMC to MCM' occurs.

However, Tomšič argues that CMC is merely a fantasy. The reason for this stems from Lacan's view in Seminar 16, in which he argues that the surplus value is when a consumer pays for sustaining the market:

We pay labour with money, because we are on the market. We pay it according to its true price, as it is defined on the market by the function of exchange-value. But there is unpaid value in what appears as the fruit of labour, because the true price of this fruit is in its use-value. This unpaid labour, which is nevertheless paid in a just way in relation to the consistency of the market in the functioning of capitalist discourse, is surplus value. (Lacan, 2006, cited in Tomšič, 2015, p.63, translated by Tomšič)

The context here is, again, about structuralism. Lacan seems to make a distinction between structure and discourse: structure is real, whilst discourse is a construction aiming to formulate the structure. Structure as the real, as an impossibility, is the cause of discourse (c.f., Lacan, 2006, p30-1, Gallagher, II2). Thus, Lacan argues that discourse is necessary for conceptualising labour or energy because the logic used for articulating them must precede the conceptualisations. Similarly, labour is defined in the concept of the market. It is 'the absolutisation of the market' (Tomšič, 2015, p.63) that conditions the surplus value to appear because it is defined through the use of money.

Thus, the insatiability based on the Lacanian symbolic register and brought about by MCM' can be thought of as another facet of the position of the master. The master renounces everything to give an order, just as the only use-value of money is to sustain the exchanges. What is coagulated in a seemingly symmetrical relationship between purchase and sale is an asymmetric relationship like that between the master and the slave: just as the slave produces more *jouissance* than the master can define and therefore it is surplus *jouissance*, the labourer's work produces more value than the capitalist invested so that it is defined as surplus value. This transformation is

conditioned by the existence of the discourse, and consequently 'what the worker is selling is not the same thing as what the capitalist is buying' (Tomšič, 2015, p.63). Thus, because the subject is constituted as the subject of labour within the symbolic register (Tomšič, 2015, p.137-9), the symbolic register is where the endless imperative of labour comes from. It is also here that Tomšič's reading of Lacan echoes Baudrillard: the subject is indebted to the system, which lies in being constituted by – and in – the system (c.f., Baudrillard, (1976)1993).

In short, before the equivalence of work and salary, there is an unequal relationship between structure and real. That is, whilst Johnston locates the reason of insatiability at the level of the symbolic, Tomšič focuses more on the asymmetry because of the relationship between the symbolic and the real.

## **Johnston's critique of Tomšič's view**

Johnston agrees with Tomšič's view of insatiability, which similarly lies in the generalisation of lack at the symbolic level through the quantitative infinity (Johnston, 2017), but his most central criticism is Tomšič's view of selfishness. At the end of the book, Tomšič claims that one of the key factors to get rid of capitalism is a kind of position or awareness of anti-scientism. That is, although both Marx and Freud recognised the value of science, it is also important to demote science to a less lofty level. It means to decentralise the role of human beings, because the capability of reason was defined as the central factor of human beings. For Marx, the development of technology frees the labourer from labour power, whilst the existence of unconsciousness shakes the supposed totality of the *Ego* (Tomšič, 2015).

This view is based on his reading of fetishism. He rejects a simplified generalisation of the psychoanalytic reading of perversion and fetishism, and refuses to link them with Marx's concept of commodity fetishism because that misses the role of autonomy of signifiers (Tomšič, 2015). Rather, by taking Lacan's view into account, Tomšič reads fetishism as a double operation: 'inclusive exclusion' and 'exclusive inclusion' (Tomšič, 2015, p.160). This is introduced by drawing on Alfonso M. lacono's argument on colonialism and fetishism: when western colonialists portray other spaces as primitive, they fetishize their idea of history, because they treat other civilisations as a part of the history of civilisation (inclusive exclusion) and place their

own as universal (exclusive inclusion). For Tomšič, Marx's concept of commodity fetishism reveals a similar mode in capitalism: capitalism makes the exchange-value as the universal logic coagulated in the commodity.

Again, through fetishising the exchange-value as universal, capitalism is about closing the gap between real human labour and the labour power, and the situation turns back to the relationship argued by Saussure between wages and labour. If this gap is closed, there is no alienation, because nothing is alienated, everything is constructed. For this reason, Tomšič conversely stresses a positive meaning in Marx's concept of alienation: the difference and heterogeneity between the labour power and the real human beings. To close the gap, in Tomšič's reading, is to go against the lack, which builds a mirage of what human beings are. This mirage, in the form of 'subject', which conceals the lack by supposing to produce more, becomes a new answer substituting the concept of 'soul' to maintain the narcissism, although it questions the idea of the *Ego* as an independent agency (Tomšič, 2015). But again, this idea of 'more' is constructed within a structure, namely, it is based on a set of signifiers contracted as knowledge, which is embodied in the formation of the subject and the commodity. This narcissism is what Freud's argument of anti-world view tends to break (Tomšič, 2015).

But for Johnston, it is questionable to equate narcissism with liberalist selfishness (e.g., independent *Ego*, economic man etc.). The problem is that Tomšič's conclusion argues for a social link based on a non-narcissistic love, which is a level of narcissism different from the capitalist social link. However, as previously shown, Johnston does not think selfishness only exists in capitalism. Moreover, he stresses that capitalism facilitates the dependence of individuals (Johnston, 2017). Indeed, this point is clearly shown in today's city life, in which more and more things are man-made so that they need to be maintained by other labourers more than ever before.

However, there is arguably no direct conflict between Tomšič and Johnston in terms of the concept of selfishness. Two concepts of selfishness can be defined. Firstly, I think, if Tomšič's selfishness and narcissism refer to the subject supposed by the liberalists, it should be about those naïve 'conscious *Egos*' who believe their wealth is solely based on their effort and calculation. Both Johnston and Tomšič would arguably agree that the problem lies in the liberalists valuing 'self' too much. Secondly, however, the problem lies in how to locate the real individual who can be alienated. This is about a concept of selfishness that is not based on the subjectivity constructed

within the symbolic register. This is why Johnston thinks liberalist selfishness can be satisfied symbolically on the one hand, whilst there is another selfishness which is based on the qualitative factor of things (Johnston, 2017). Such selfishness clearly must be based on an individual's bodily experiences. But Johnston, therefore, thinks the communist social relationship is compatible with a certain idea of selfishness, which Tomšič disagrees with. Namely, whenever language is used, a subject is constructed, and therefore individuals have to face a hierarchical system. The question is therefore back to the old one: could biological need be the fundamental referent? It seems Johnston's answer is 'yes', whilst Tomšič, similar to Baudrillard, says 'no'<sup>42</sup>. I think this is why Tomšič also links Marx and Lacan in the view that 'there is no structure of political emancipation' (Tomšič, 2015, p.232).

In other words, if 'there is no other of the Other' could mean there is no meta-language, then whenever the language is used in a society, the society has to face the question: what is the relationship between everyday language and the language of mathematics? If there is no ontological demarcation that can be made between them, how is it possible to constitute a subject without quantitative differences and hierarchy? It would be clear that Baudrillard's idea of *potlatch*, as abolishing the system totally, would be more radical. He already does not have hope for any system/structure but thinks the only possible relationship left is an antagonistic *potlatch* between two free agencies. Therefore, the incompatibility Tomšič points to is that between a real individual and the constructed subject, whilst the relationship Johnston shows as the counter-argument is still a relationship between subjects, so he does not resolve the question that Tomšič posed.

Besides, by drawing on Lacan's doctrine of discourse, a facet of dependence is indeed considered. The dialectical relationship between production and renunciation already implies that, no matter who takes the position of the master signifier, they always rely on others who play the role of S2 or the slave in social relations (Tomšič, 2015). It is hard to imagine that Tomšič does not notice the dependence that Johnston stresses.

To recap, it is clear there is a slight difference between Tomšič and Johnston in terms of theorisation. Whilst Johnston embarks on linking MCM' with drive and argues for a capitalist drive and a concept of the subject, Tomšič approaches this through the

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<sup>42</sup> As previously mentioned, Tomšič argues that CMC is a consequence of MCM.

idea of production and that the concept of subject is foremost about the subject of labour (labour power). This leads to a consequence that, for Johnston, insatiability is intimately linked with capitalism's induction, and therefore not necessarily in a communist society; whilst for Tomšič, insatiability lies in the repressive/productive effect of the existence of the symbolic. However, it would be wrong to overstate their difference: drive is not unrelated with the Symbolic register. Johnston would agree that the repression from the Other brings about an insatiable drive, and Tomšič also does not ignore the function of MCM' in forming the subjectivity.

## Discussion

So far, this chapter thus reviews two approaches based on Lacanian psychoanalysis. Through this review, I think the key to resolving insatiability lies in a prevalent question: how is it possible to break the hierarchical symbolic structure embodied in the deposition of things on the level of society, rather than on the level of the individual? If the end of Lacanian psychoanalysis is to see that 'the Other does not exist', how could this insight be helpful for the governor of a market, considering, as Michael Callon (2010) argues, a market presupposes an organisation to some extent?<sup>43</sup> This thesis is not able to answer this question, it merely shows that, if as Skidelsky and Skidelsky argue, the insatiability is due to human beings' competitiveness, such competition is not because we desire to be better than others but desiring is a process of discriminating. This property of system is a key obstacle to resolving insatiability.

However, it is worth noting that Lacan's reading of Alcibiades shows an alternative option. That is, as chapter 8 mentioned, in facing of Socratics, Alcibiades is not neurotic. This is because he does not want to refuse his lack. It does not matter whether the idea of lack is a fantasy or construction. What matters is that he does not refuse. By being happy with his/her lack, Alcibiades, as the actual guarantor, freeing himself from his value system. In a sense, the case of Alcibiades echoes a way

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<sup>43</sup> Indeed, although this thesis focuses on a semiotics-based approach picked by Baudrillard and Lacan, this approach is not necessary for many market researchers to question the concept of market. For a brief review of discussions of the view that 'market does not exist', see Appendix 4.

mentioned by Tomšič: 'detaching the subject from the ego and politics from private interest' (Tomšič, 2015, p.208), in the sense that Alcibiades is happy to be wrong, simply speaking. Compared with Kierkegaard's reading of Abraham, Alcibiades' situation is more desirable.

From this perspective, there seem to be two options for an individual to face insatiability: 1) he/she could commit his/her own value system; 2) he/she leave the value system by relativising it. Baudrillard's concept of symbolic exchange seems the third option. But, as previously argued, his theory does not leave room for an individual.

But, in the case of Alcibiades, we can also find out the logic of potlatch. That is, by being happy to be wrong, Alcibiades receives a gift in Baudrillard's sense. This gift makes Alcibiades see his ideal. It is a gift because it is given. That seeing the ideal is not a process controlled by Alcibiades. By seeing his ideal, he sees the root of his value system. This root is not a concrete thing, but is, in Lacan's terminology, the object a.

However, as a gift, this thesis cannot explain how this happens.

## Conclusion:

What can we learn from this discussion of Johnston and Tomšič's views?

I have used a large number of words to discuss Johnston's argument, because he suggests a desirable scenario. But unfortunately, I think his argument is flawed.

Johnston conceptualises insatiability through the connection between capitalism and the axis of alteration of the Lacanian drive. Because of this connection, the distribution of materials, including money, is fundamentally hierarchical. The temporisation of drive is a process of demarcation. Based on this, he concludes that insatiability will be resolved in communist society by symbolically social recognition. However, I argue that Johnston's conclusion is questionable because his conclusion is based on a misreading of Marx. Johnston needs to explain how the separation between the second and third facet identity between production and consumption is possible. This separation conditions his resolution of selfishness. He thinks that Marx points out this separation in *Grundrisse*. But this chapter shows Marx's text does not support Johnston's view.

In short, I doubt whether insatiability and selfishness can be satisfied purely at the symbolic level. This is because objects and signs cannot be separated at the root. This connection between objects and signs is implied by Lacan's conceptualisation of *language*.

By contrast, Tomšič's view is more direct. Marx's MCM' is connected with Lacanian desire. The surplus value is linked with the object a. As Lacan places signifiers over signified, Tomšič places MCM' over CMC'. He thinks CMC' is a fantasy because structure/discourse conditions the ideas of use-value and exchange value. When structure/discourse exists, the idea of use-value and exchange value exist simultaneously. The idea of use-value is a construction. In short, the dissymmetry between the symbolic and the real precedes the hierarchical relations within the symbolic. This dissymmetry is the inequality between the 'universal' and the 'particular'.

Hereof, it is clear how Tomšič's reading is similar to Baudrillard's, and how the relationship between the 'universal' and the 'particular' is involved. After all, the object can only be defined as singular in the Lacanian psychoanalysis context. The object a is thus 'particular'. But, like Baudrillard, Tomšič does not provide a concrete solution to insatiability. I suggest that Lacan's reading of Alcibiades could be a case, but it is far from applicable to every individual.

The only clear conclusion is that, from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective, it is also futile for an individual to seek the ultimate reason from the value system to stop insatiable needs. This is because the system is maintained by the individual him/herself. The systems of signs enable an individual to discriminate and 'think' a sense of 'more'. From this perspective, insatiability is an effect of individuals' use of systems of signs.

## Chapter 10: Conclusion

This thesis is an exploration of the question of insatiability. It is inspired by a question about Marx's prediction of capitalism and Skidelsky and Skidelsky's question, 'how much is enough?' Through this exploration, I conclude that an individual cannot resolve insatiability by finding the guarantor of his/her value system. If needs are constructed in value systems, it is an individual who endorses the value system. Insatiability is an effect of the value system sustained by the individual. The determining factor for an individual to sustain a value system is feasibility. That is, a value system collapses when the individual is incapable of sustaining it. In a sense, we do not need to resolve insatiability, because there is no need outside value systems. Insatiability is a price of an individual's use of system. The individual has to decide to commit and/or leave the system by him/herself.

My primary question about Marx's theory is still open. Insatiability could no longer bother an individual. But it is far from clear how to avoid the effects of value systems on an individual. This is because it is not feasible to abandon value systems in an individual's everyday social life.

To explain my conclusion, it is helpful to review some key ideas in previous chapters.

The first part of this thesis opens up a question in Baudrillard's approach. Baudrillard's critique of Marx is sharp, but his theory is flawed. He presupposes a possibility of an acting alternative to the order of value systems. This presupposition requires the libertarian sense of free will. This sense of free will does not mean to suggest there is an entity of 'I', like soul etc. Rather, it means a possibility for an individual to act without sufficient reason. Thus, the question of insatiability is the question of the relationship between 'actor' and the value system. One may think, then, that if we know the clear reason for embracing a value system, we know the criteria for satisfaction. If we know the criteria, we know where to stop needing. The reason for an individual to embrace a value system is what guarantees the validity of the system. The second part thus discusses the relationship between value systems and their guarantors.

The second part presupposes the libertarian free will. It aims to explore a free-will agency's solution for getting rid of insatiability. It starts with a situation presupposing

the guarantor. The idea of God is the best choice for this presupposition. It is clear, omnipotent, and independent of value system. But Kierkegaard shows that God does not make an individual embrace a value. The individual must traverse the secular value system by him/herself. Only in this way he/she could build a particular relationship with God. But such a relationship is in the individual's belief. It is the individual who endorses the belief. The advent of God cannot be the premise for an individual to have this belief. Kierkegaard's discussion reveals a dilemma of individuals as free-will agencies. That is, a free-will agency must not act and choose because of a sufficient reason. Otherwise, he/she is not responsible for his/her act. The causal relations in this context exclude the room for the libertarian free will.

Baudrillard would agree with Kierkegaard's view. Baudrillard also criticises the tendency of seeking a cause of acts, like needs. But he is inclined to refute the existence of the guarantor. Kierkegaard's discussion, by contrast, shows the existence of a guarantor does not matter. From this perspective, insatiability exists regardless of the existence of an outside guarantor. In a sense, Kierkegaard's discussion implies that insatiability is a side-effect of an easier option. That is, individuals bear pathos and anxiety in their direct relationship with God. The story of Abraham shows this. It would be easier for an individual to embrace a secular value system. He/she could suppose this value is universal for everyone, so that he/she feels that they get support from others. The price he/she pays is to bear insatiability. In this sense, an individual must choose one to commit to: either God or a value system.

The second part then moves on to a discussion of money. This is a situation in which the guarantor ostensibly exists. Moreover, if the guarantor exists, it exists through the value system. That is, money embodies its guarantor. The debates on money, even so, show the difficulty of defining the guarantor of its value. People exchange money like commodities. But the determining factor in the value of a commodity is not solid and clear like God. People also pay off their debt with money. But no one wants debts like wanting money. Thus, money is neither identical to a commodity nor debt. Rather, money is a veil on the conflict between the ideas of the 'universal' and the 'particular'. This conflict also implies the co-existence of the 'universal' and the 'particular'.

This conflict is key to Marx's analysis of greed. This is the difference between Marx's and Searle's conceptualisation of money. This does not mean Marx thinks the 'universal' exists. Unlike Kierkegaard, Marx does not believe in God. Unlike Hegel,

Marx also does not suggest an end that achieves the 'universal'. The ostensible co-existence of the ideas of 'universal' and 'particular' is enough to make money have an aura. This is because this co-existence makes inequality appear. This inequality is the nature of value. Through the concept of value, it seems we can measure inequality. The concept of value makes the heterogeneous relationship appear to be homogeneous. It thus seems to connect the 'universal' and the 'particular'. By functioning as a measure of value, money gains the aura of being the 'universal'.

If it is the individual him/herself who shoulders a belief of a 'universal', can he/she abandon this belief? I do not think so. Chapters 8 and 9 explore Lacanian psychoanalytic approaches on this question. Compared with Baudrillard, Lacan does not suggest abandoning the system. He values the role of interactions between an individual and his/her environment. The use of language is born in this interaction. By contrast, Baudrillard wants to point out a more fundamental logic. This logic is an alternative to the system based on a supposed well-defined code. But Baudrillard's argument is far from enough to make a system-free 'society' come into being. After all, Baudrillard speaks, writes and uses money. He had never been able to have a life which follows the symbolic exchange only. His argument is impotent. It does not provide any foundation for a feasible social constitution, including a constitution for protecting individuals' ability to *seduce*. The symbolic exchange probably does not require any constitution, but it goes with death.

Johnston's argument shares a similar problem. We cannot separate material objects and signs in creating meanings. People use objects to signify. Signs are foremost material objects. Thus, we cannot meet selfishness/needs in a purely symbolic manner. This is because all depositions of signs are depositions of materials.

My refutation of Baudrillard and Johnston is based on a simple perspective. If an individual can only bear value systems by him/herself, a condition for a value system to exist is the individual's capability to exist. When an individual cannot exist, he/she cannot act. When he/she cannot act, he/she can neither embrace a value system nor make a symbolic exchange/seduction. It is, for this reason, I approach Baudrillard's argument through the concept of free will.

If a supposed 'universal' being has to be maintained by individuals' capability, it does not necessarily exist. If a being does not necessarily exist, it is not 'universal'. Thus, there is no insatiability to resolve, because the foundation of insatiable needs is not necessary to exist. The foundation is the value system embraced by individuals.

None of God, government, or social agreements can guarantee the system for the individual. Individuals embrace a value system because he/she still believes the value system embodies an idea of 'universal'.

Therefore, a system is limited by its guarantor. Outside the system, it is the realm of the symbolic exchange. For an individual who has not yet wanted to join the symbolic exchange, what matters is a practical question: how to leave one's own value system? This is a different question from the question of insatiability. I will finish here.

There is a clear and acknowledged limitation in this thesis: it concentrates on Baudrillard's critique of consumption and needs and does not contextualise his view within a broader philosophical debate. As Butler (1999) notices, Baudrillard's idea of a gift is intimately linked to Jacques Derrida's view of gifts based on his reading of Martin Heidegger (Derrida, 2017), which also involves a debate with Marion. Moreover, as Baudrillard's contemporary scholars, Michael Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's works are not involved in this thesis. Baudrillard is a critical reader of Foucault, whilst Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a desire machine provides another mode to understand human desire which tries to abolish the privilege of a sign-system but still keep the concept of production (Deleuze et al., 2009). There are more names that can be listed, and many of them are linked to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who would be one of most important thinkers for Baudrillard, but whose works this thesis does not discuss. It is Nietzsche's dictum 'God is dead' that, in Baudrillard's reading, is a challenge posed by Nietzsche to seduce God (Colless, Kelly & Cholodenko, 1993). Indeed, Nietzsche famously critiques Hegel like Kierkegaard, but in a different position about God. This brings about a further question about how to read Baudrillard's view in the broader context a bigger debate between Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Hegel in the history of philosophy.

Be as it may, the author thinks this thesis overcome Baudrillard's nihilism and achieves Butler's criteria, namely, to read Baudrillard's text in his own term (1999). It follows Baudrillard's own logic in each text to clarify his concern. Based on this, this thesis focuses on the feasibility and limits of Baudrillard's own approach and discuss his own view within in the context, which is set by himself, rather than setting another context to compare Baudrillard and others. For example, although it is necessary to clarify some his misunderstandings of Freud's primary/secondary processes, this thesis stressed the connection in the questions that Baudrillard and Freud formulated,

rather than argues for whose definition is better. This means the thesis focuses on the question that Baudrillard try to ask, rather than the answers he provides. It is the question he concerns that links his theoretical constructions with Kierkegaard, Freud and Lacan, and it is the question which seduces responses.

## Postscript

As I mentioned in chapter 1, this thesis starts with my primary question. If Lacan is right, does it mean Marx predicted his failure? It sounds ironic, and soon I noticed Baudrillard's critique. During that time, I was lucky to meet Douglas B. Holt. My reading of Baudrillard started with his *The Consumer Society Reader*. But, he was not interested in my examination of Baudrillard at all. He asked me, 'How to examine Baudrillard?' This is the first question for my thesis.

For me, Holt is not brave enough. He recognises Baudrillard's significance in contemporary consumer theories but does not face it. If he faces Baudrillard's concern, he would not be happy with the question he asked me. Modern consumers do not need Baudrillard to realise they are consuming signs. Rather, Baudrillard's perspective implies that we can consume nothing but signs. This means there is no room for Holt to argue 'cultural strategy'. This is because every marketing strategy is a 'cultural strategy'.

But, the price I paid for facing Baudrillard's theoretical concern is high. Firstly, I bear the feeling of boredom. Like Lacan, Baudrillard's text does not need to be intricate like this. His texts have some insightful ideas but are not exciting. But my feeling of boredom has a deeper root. As a nihilism, Baudrillard's view does not leave room for others to say more. Facing his concern means bearing a feeling of having nothing to say whilst still finding a way to say. This feeling of boredom belongs to this age. This is because having nothing to say means having nothing new to say. 'New' is difficult to find because it means unexpectedness. Unexpectedness is heterogenous to the modernity. This is exactly the issue Baudrillard pointed out. Thus, I start my critique of Baudrillard by falling into the dilemma pointed out by him.

Another difficulty is finding a way to critique. I explained this difficulty in chapter 1. After a long journey of reading, I re-encounter Freud. He claims that the 'superego can be supermoral and then become as cruel as only the Id can be' (Freud, 1923, SE XIX, p.54). This point threads everything I had read. Superego is a puppet of the *id*. Like the *id*, the superego is given. To leave the superego, 'I' must be wrong. This is because the superego is by definition right. If modern time is boring, this is because everything is 'right'. If Baudrillard's text is boring, this is because I take his view for granted.

This realisation reminds me to focus on the practical aspect of theories. All theories are about practice. But discussions of a theory could be about theoretical aspects only. Baudrillard's flaw is that all concepts he uses, like symbolic exchange, seduction etc., seem to work unconditionally. From this perspective, the concepts he uses constitute a simulacrum for him. Whenever the simulacrum works, he is always right.

A better way to challenge Baudrillard is to leave him. Only practical issues question one's simulacrum. What matters is not whether a supposed reality is hyperreality, but why we cannot do it in an alternative way. Baudrillard's theory has nothing to do with the later question. After all, it is our limit, rather than power, that grants us a value system. When an individual cannot protect his/her free will, he/she can neither practice symbolic exchange/seduction, nor believe in a simulacrum.

I hope my view is helpful for some people to leave Baudrillard's nihilism.

## Appendix:

### Appendix 1: The Primary and Secondary process in the *Project for a scientific psychology*

The Project for a Scientific Psychology is characteristic of this ambition of 'scientificity', in which Freud hopes to explain the mental activity somehow as a automatic mechanism. This appendix provides a detailed explanation of the mechanism described by Freud for readers who want a fuller explanation of his consideration.

The central difference between psyche systems lies in what Freud called 'contact-barrier' between neurons, which provide the basis of memory function. The contact-barrier is the resistance the current of excitation comes across, and only exists in between neurons in the  $\psi$  system. Freud's consideration is that perception and memory cannot be in the same system, because the system of perception should be able to maintain its state dynamically; namely, being changed by stimuli and then return back to its former state to prepare for new stimuli. By contrast, the system for memory function must be able to keep its change caused by stimuli. This is like a computer: a pressed keyboard button must be able to recover in order to be pressed again, whilst the computer's RAM (short-term memory) and the hard disk (long-term memory) retain information and being changed less frequently.

Memory traces occur, Freud wrote, as the effect of excitations are achieved by alteration of the contact-barrier. This is like swimming: we can move on the surface of water smoothly but can leave no trace. By contrast, an inscription on a stone is hard so traces remain. Moreover, the passing of the excitation will also make neurons more receptive, which is defined as 'facilitation' (SE1, p.300). The facilitation relies on the repeated occurrences of excitation, just like how our memory is strengthened by repetition.

However, quantity does not automatically produce quality, so another system is required. The system  $\omega$  has the function to transfer quantitative excitation to a qualitative experience, which is the conscious sensation. Freud recognised that the central mechanism of how quantity can be transferred to quality is still unclear.

To sum up, it would be helpful to imagine this neurons system as a computer. There is an input device ( $\Phi$ , like a keyboard), a memory device ( $\psi$ , like a hard disc), and an information transformer ( $\omega$ , like formatting options in a word processor). In a computer, it is the central processing unit (CPU) that organises all information; in Freud's theorisation of neuron system, it is the *Ego*. Of course, this analogy is not rigid –  $\Psi$  seems to be the most fundamental part and it is not merely about memory.

According to Freud, the concept of *Ego* (*Ich*) is defined as an organisation built in the  $\psi$  system. It originates from a group of neurons being constantly filled by excitation. As mentioned above, constant excitations lead to their facilitation, the more excitation passed, the more facilitated they are, and the more likely the current of excitations channels through this part. Consequently, an area is doomed to be more facilitated than others, which becomes the *Ego*. The *Ego* is the set of neurons that is the most facilitated and continues to be facilitated. It is therefore able to control all currents of excitations and become 'the vehicle of the store required by the secondary function' (p.323).

Because of this, the *Ego* has the function of inhibiting discharge: a neuron is connected with multiple neurons. If a current of excitation passes through from one neuron to another, its passage is conditioned by being quantitatively stronger than the contact-barrier. But if the neuron is connected by other neurons with a lower contact-barrier, the excitation will be directed to it. This is like how an electric current would go through the channel with the lowest resistance in a network. The *Ego* is made up of the neurons that offer the lowest resistance so it can absorb the currents of excitations from other neurons. Because of the *Ego*'s 'attention' (SE1, p.323), a path is temporarily facilitated by 'side-cathexes' (SE1, p.324), so that it inhibits the current of excitation going through its original aim – this process is defined as 'inhibition'. This attention seems an act which requires a human being's free will, but Freud leaves this open.

This is the fundamental mechanism to the 'primary repression or defence': both satisfaction and pain leave memories in the  $\psi$  system. The experience of satisfaction is brought about when the action makes change effectively, which makes more cathexis of quantity on the corresponding memory image. This is a 'wishful state' and

brings about 'wishful attraction' (SE1, p.322). By contrast, pains bring about the tendency to abandon the related mnemonic images, because these images can be triggered by other objects so that brings about more painful experiences. This tendency to defend the nervous system from painful images is here defined as 'primary defence or repression' (SE1, p.322). The primary defence, or repression, is clearly a natural consequence of the tendency to avoid excitations, like a child who wants to avoid fire after a minor burn injury. If memory is achieved by a repeated passage of excitation, the *Ego* can divert excitations from painful images by inhibition, so that achieves the effect of avoiding the painful memory.

However, an action to discharge requires a kind of reality test, because excitations are by definition only different in terms of quantity in the nervous system  $\psi$ , which means the  $\psi$  system cannot distinguish a vivid mnemonic image from the real object. This reality test is achieved by the discharge, not the excitation, from the  $\omega$  system. When the  $\psi$  system experiences excitation, the  $\omega$  system also experiences excitations and transforms the excitations into a qualitative form. Then, after effective action is taken, the  $\omega$  system not only discharges the excitations but also sends information to the  $\psi$  system as an 'indication of reality' (p.325). This is like a mark of a successful action for the discharge of the  $\psi$  system, whilst the excitation of the  $\omega$  system has no meaning for the  $\psi$  system. However, if the  $\omega$  system is excited with the  $\psi$  system, when the mnemonic image is very strongly cathectic, the information from the  $\omega$  system is ineffective because in this situation the excitation and discharge in the  $\omega$  system is not-because of a real object. Freud thinks this is the reason why hallucinations occur. By contrast, if the excitation of this wished mnemonic image is directed by the *Ego's* facilitation, the current of excitation could be not shunted into the  $\omega$  system, so that its reality test is able to re-function.

The function of attention is further discussed in Part III of *The Project for a Scientific Psychology*, in which Freud argues that the *Ego* can bind currents of excitations so that a state of high cathexis is kept with a low discharge. This state is the condition for the process of thinking because thinking involves intensively cathecting on memory images without releasing energy through actions. Although, as James Strachey noted in his Appendix C, reality-test and binding are not completely the same thing (Strachey Appendix C, SE1, p.394), both are based on the mechanism of facilitation.

The meaning of the primary and secondary processes are only clear based on theoretical suppositions above: the primary process refers to the activities of the  $\psi$  system, which include hallucinations and primary defences, whilst under the condition that the *Ego* can manage excitation and maintain the function of the reality test, the process of excitation and discharge is defined as the secondary process. That is, the secondary process only refers to the status in which the  $\omega$  system is at work.

## **The Interpretation of Dreams and after:**

Overall, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) argues that a dream is an act of wish fulfilment. The fundamental premise does not differ much from *The Project for a Scientific Psychology*: the mental apparatus is seeking to reduce excitations from stimuli. These excitations compel the infant body to take action until they achieve satisfaction. That is, as aforementioned, the body takes effective action to stop internal stimuli, like eating to stop hunger. These internal stimuli are defined as 'need', and this process leaves memory traces in the mental apparatus in the form of links of mnemonic images. When needs re-emerge, they will excite the mental apparatus and trigger those memory traces again as a perception. The nature of 'wish' is the current of excitement which is experienced as an impulse for discharge by revoking old experiences of satisfaction. In this sense, a wish is fundamentally the wish to repeat, and wish is fulfilled if the perception indeed reappears.

But there are two important differences. First of all, Freud gave up building a coherent theory involving both physical and psychic sides, and the whole mental apparatus in this book is a temporal order of mental activities only. Secondly, the  $\psi$  and  $\phi$  system in *The Project for a Scientific Psychology* are combined into one system, named as  $\psi$ . It involves the functions of both memory and perception which had belonged to  $\psi$  and  $\phi$  separately, although they are still 'mutually exclusive' (p.540). Consequently, activities in the  $\psi$  system are defined as the primary process, in which wishes are formed.

The secondary process, as postulated in *The Project for a Scientific Psychology*, still refers to the system that can inhibit the primary process. There are two significances of the secondary process: 1) saving energy; 2) conditioning the act of thinking. Regarding the first, Freud considers that discharge will lead to cathexes on

the mnemonic images, which is the mechanism of hallucination. The body must be able to save energies from this to create effective actions of discharge later on. Regarding the second, he argues that the act of thinking is to connect ideas that were left in memory. It cannot be possessed by the first system solely because it will be led by the tendency of discharge and becomes a process of association. Thus, there must be another system that can limit the discharge, so that the process of thinking can grasp the ideas through the path of their links, whilst avoiding being led away.

Freud used telescopes to make analogies for explaining these systems. In a telescope, a light goes through lenses from the first to the end and reaches the eyes. Similarly, the stimuli bring about perception in the mental apparatus and finally reaches the preconscious, while leaving memories along the way. Neurons, like lenses, receive stimuli and reserve it as mnemonic traces. The primary process is shown in between perception and preconscious, in which internal stimuli trigger mnemonic traces, like a speck of dust dropping on the lens of the telescope so that it damages its function of imaging. In this sense, a dream is a process of regression because excitations go backwards to the perception end.

The primary process is defined as unconscious, whilst the second process is allocated to the preconscious whilst the  $\omega$  system, which transfers quantities to qualities, are attributed to consciousness. This terminology was not changed significantly after *The Interpretation of Dreams*, although the later concept, *Id*, was inserted into the primary process because Freud defined it as belonging to the unconscious. The key difference between primary and secondary processes is that, in the former, the excitations discharge freely, and the later excitations are bound up by the *Ego*.

## **Appendix 2: Literature review on the discussions of Freud's concept of free will**

The discussions on the role that free will plays in Freud's theories mainly focus on a set of intercorrelated questions: considering Freud's determinist approach, how he could reconcile the relationship between determinism and the *Ego's* function? What possibility is left for psychotherapy to make changes on a patient? In which sense could an individual take moral/legal responsibility in their daily life if conscious content is largely determined by unconscious motives?

### **Hard Determinism**

As it can be seen, Freud undoubtedly holds a certain sense of determinism. A few scholars therefore believe he is also an incompatibilist in terms of determinism. For example, John Hospers (1950) claims that psychoanalysis suggests conscious decisions and volitions are no more than effects of unconscious activities. Similarly, Jonathan Bricklin (2015) argues that Freud's determinism is so strict that every moment one's idea is determined by unconscious process. However, it is hard to find out any meaning if humans' behaviours are completely determined. The way to reconcile the conflict between free will and determinism from this position is to treat the sense of free will as an illusion. For example, Robert P. Knight (1946) thinks the sense of free will is a subjective experience, and therefore, as Vera Mildred Gatch (1963) pointed out, the psychoanalytic treatment is regarded as restoring the illusion of the free will of the *Ego*. However, such an incompatible determinist position is unsustainable. This is not only because, as previously shown, a complete determinism at metaphysical level is impossible for Freud's clinical work, but also because they mistakenly treated Freud's work as a complete doctrine.

For example, based on Freud's certain statement on determinism in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) and *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916), Bricklin (2015) concludes that Freud makes the appearance for readers that he 'discovered a closed system of determined interactions' (p.54). But

this conclusion clearly ignores the position Freud claimed in the *New Introductory Lectures of Psychoanalysis* (1933) that psychoanalysis cannot and does not need to create a world view which explain everything. Bricklin's reading narrows the complicity of Freud's attitude on science, which has consequently misled him to believe that Freud's determinism in later work is still a 'material interaction' (2015, p.55) rather than the psychological determinism this thesis has shown. As to Bricklin's support for his view of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Anne C. Dailey (2018) pointed out that Freud's determinist statement in this context was in opposition to randomness rather than free will. This is supported by Wallwork's (1991) reading of the *New Introductory Lectures of Psychoanalysis* which, ironically, Bricklin also cited as evidence for his argument (2015). Wallwork (1916-17, p.104) argued that *Willkürlichkeit* should be translated as 'arbitrariness' rather than 'free will'. So, in this text, what Freud intended to say is that it is faith in arbitrariness that is unscientific, rather than free will. In a sense, Freud simply did not talk about free will in this work, but merely claimed intuition that a complete arbitrariness in the mental activities is impossible for him to image.

## Compatibilism

A more promising position is to treat Freud as a compatibilist, which argues that Freud's sense of free will refers to the *Ego's* function. The *Ego* is determined as part of the mental apparatus, but it organises unconscious processes and becomes the agency for moral responsibility (Wallace, 1985 & 2008; Meissner, 2003; Dilman, 1999; Wallwork, 1991; Dailey, 2018; Beliavsky, 2020). The debates centre on identifying a compatibilist sense of free will within Freud's text, especially how to interpret his seemingly hard determinist statements. Some researchers argue there is a fissure or turn in Freud's work. In early works it seems he held a hard determinist position, whilst in later works he focused more on the *Ego's* power (Meissner, 2003; Cavell, 2003; Dailey, 2018; Beliavsky, 2020). For example, Beliavsky (2020) argues that the incompatibility of free will in Freud's doctrine is easily resolved by clarifying the difference between libertarian sense and compatibilist sense of free will. The compatibilist view only emerges in Freud's later work, represented by *The Ego and the Id* (1923), whilst *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* is still treated as evidence of Freud's hard determinist position. However, this reading of Freud's early work has

made the same mistakes as Bricklin. That is, if Freud's work is not finished, it would be more adequate to say he simply had no conclusion on free will during his life. Moreover, as Meissner (2007) points out, psychical determination is different from causal relation in the sense that the former is about multiple determination, as I demonstrated previous section about dreams, rather than linear relation. This means unconscious impulses could co-exist with a moral agency, even if they are strongly impacted on conscious decision. That is, a person's decision could be influenced by many reasons, including unconscious impulses. But the moral agency could still play a role in the decision if it is supposed to have functions of taking the action for a wish. In this case, an individual's action is not solely caused by unconscious impulses.

Similarly, Viney and Parker (2016) argue that Freud constantly tried to argue for determinism, whilst a sense of freedom unavoidably became required as the aim of clinical practice. This made Freud finally held a compatibilism on free will. They distinguish 'freedom' from 'free will'. Freedom here involves 'free to vote, read, explore ideas' (2016, p.305), which are based on activities in the environment. Such freedom is therefore about being aware of internal and external stimuli like a kind of organisation gathering and dealing with information, and psychoanalysis in this sense aims to develop the *Ego's* ability to have this sense of freedom. By contrast, by free will they refer to the capacity to make decisions and action independently. It is clear that Viney and Parker's definition of freedom is precisely the compatibilist sense of free will, whilst that of free will is the libertarian sense this thesis refers to. They then conclude that Freud only accepts freedom and refuses free will.

But the problem is that the freedom they defined is too weak. After all, psychoanalysis started and developed with practice, rather than ontological meditation. Their sense of freedom perfectly fits the compatibilist position, but not enough for practical situations. Even asking a patient to lie down on the couch is necessary for Freud to suppose a free will which is more than the compatibilist sense that the *Ego* is just determined by mental apparatus, not to mention that the patient is asked to overcome the resistance. If the *Ego* is simply determined by neural activities, and its freedom is as fragile as they argue, how can analysts' words have a stronger influence than patients' own bodily impulses to ask patient to do thing? It is here Tauber's view is more feasible, which argues that Freud just took the *Ego's* ability of reason as given, like 'a carpenter uses a hammer' (Tauber, 2010). Viney and Parker reject this libertarian reading and list several secondary literatures against this.

However, not only did they themselves not provide a direct counter-argument on how clinical practice is possible if the autonomous *Ego* does not exist, literatures they provide are no more than a reading of the text about Freud's statement. What they lack is to face the question about which sense of free will could make Freud's clinical practice possible, which had never been systematically examined by Freud himself. Lacking this consideration leaves the question open about to what extent Freud would like to hold a view which he himself cannot do. Furthermore, another question is on the extent to which a reading on Freud's text should be like reading a philosophical monograph, considering Viney and Parker have already provided strong evidence from the text but nevertheless make a conclusion which implies that Freud's practice had never been practiced.

Indeed, the question on free will and determinism is always about incoherency, so it is not surprising many people focus on whether Freud's different statements about free will are compatible with each other. However, both determinist and compatibilist readings, by aiming at a coherent position on the question of free will, close the gap which Freud left. As he states in *An Outline of Psycho-analysis*:

We know two kinds of things about what we call our psyche...: firstly its bodily organ and scene of action, the brain...and, on the other hand, our acts of consciousness, which are immediate data and cannot be further explained by any sort of description. Everything that lies between is unknown to us, and the data do not include any direct relation between these two terminal points of our knowledge. (Freud, 1938, SE23, p.144).

Namely, the question about mind-body relations and the mechanism or dilemma of free will, Freud simply does not answer. After all, as a doctor, Freud cannot start to treat patients after finishing the answer of the metaphysical question of free will. Thus, no matter what position he stated, he can at best conclude what he had at hand. Besides, if the translation error pointed by Wallwork is correct, Freud's statement on the opposition between arbitrariness and science is hardly more than a common sense, so that can only be a starting point rather than the final answer for research.

Therefore, even if it is possible for Freud to hold a determinist belief, his doctrine is not necessarily based on it. Before he can explain everything, it is possible for him to have several contradicted positions. This is like finding aliens in the universe: our

exploration could be driven by a belief in the existence of aliens, but our knowledge of the universe and possible form of aliens gained during this exploration is by no means based on alien existence. As Wallace pointed out, Freud had expressed several different positions on the question of mind-body, and therefore it is probably not necessary to fix on one position (Wallace, 2008). Thus, I suggest that even if several texts indicate his determinist position, it is not so much that he is a compatibilist as that he just left the question open in order to avoid rashly making naïve conclusions.

A more deliberated way to deal with this is to separate determinist and compatibilist readings into methodological senses. For example, Medard Boss (1903) argues that Freud's writings should read separately as: 1) A method of treatment and 2) Psychological theory. The theory part is secondary and based on the treatment. The therapy is conditioned by human beings' freedom in the sense of being able to choose and overcome resistance, although Freud's theoretical work implies a telescope-like mental apparatus which seems mechanical and makes no room for free will. Boss's approach is intimately connected with Heidegger's existentialism, so that human beings' freedom is treated as a starting point. The hard determinist understanding on mental apparatus from this perspective closes the possibility of the conscious act. However, this solution is actually an incompatibilist position, in the sense that, although free will and determinism seems to co-exist, the question of their relationship on a metaphysical level is left unexplained.

With regard to Boss's approach, Askay and Farquhar (2006) argue that the freedom that Boss proposed is a misunderstanding. They insist that human beings in Freud's mind are foremostly biological organisations, and that freedom in Freud's text can only be on a mental and biological level. This is because repressions to which psychoanalysis is mainly addressed is at a biological and/or mental level and, therefore, Freud's illustration should have nothing to do with anything beyond this, like Heideggerian *Dasein*, which Boss suggested. Askay and Farquhar's point is strong, but does not really conflict with Boss as much as they think. Once again, if Freud's text is not supposed as a complete doctrine, then the freedom of *Dasein* could exist even if Freud does not attribute it to the mental apparatus.

As to this, Morris N. Eagle, by drawing on Rubinstein's argument, suggested that Freud's determinist statement is more likely pragmatical than philosophical, because the concept Freud uses, like desire, motive, and wish, are not so much psychological as meta-psychological (Eagle, 2011). As Rubinstein (1980) pointed out, clinical

explanation is a hypothesis on unconscious motivation, which is nevertheless based on observations and conscious contents. The analysts have to assume there is a shared logic between conscious and unconscious processes, but this assumption is actually guaranteed by nothing, because whatever can be guarantor, it then requires a further guarantor. That is to say, although our knowledge on the mental apparatus can be accumulated by neuroscience, and a clinical hypothesis is always based on scientific knowledge, the clinic inferences on unconscious motivations can only be a self-evident construction. However, unlike Eagle, Rubinstein still wants to save the coherency in the connection between clinical theory and meta-psychological theory, but his last resort is to go back to the biological determinism which equate unconscious mental activities with neural activities, and believes Freud is in line with him.

As it can be seen, to separate determinist and compatibilist readings in this way is based on a supposed fissure between practical and ontological aspects in Freud's text. But no matter whether such a fissure exists, post-Freudian analysts have to face a serious enquiry on its metaphysical presupposition: how is it possible a determinist mental apparatus does not affect the autonomy? Clearly, the focus goes back to the old debate between determinism and free will. Tauber (2010) stresses the similarity between Freud and Kant on this question: just as Kant remain a gap between reason and practical reason so that save the *a priori* freedom of human beings, Freud also takes this freedom for granted although he had never made any concrete argument. Namely, Freud 'simply avoids the issue' (p.143), so the ontological status of the *Ego*, as previous sections also demonstrate, is not clear. For Tauber, Freud's sense of *Ego* oscillates between Cartesian *Ego* and Kantian 'things-in-itself', in the sense that it seems obvious that the *Ego* can exercise the self-conscious as an act, and therefore 'I am', whilst the function of reason, which preoccupied Kant, is simply taken for granted. In this sense, Freud's view on determinism is not so much a metaphysical position and foundation for psychoanalysis as an assumption. This is supported by Freud's later work where he called his determinism 'opinion' (Freud, 1910, SE11, p.29) or 'belief' (Freud, 1923, SE18, p.238).

One of solution for this gap might be to suppose something in between body and reason. According to Tauber (2010), Schopenhauer played an intermediate role between Kant and Freud in this way, who was not satisfied with Kant's explanation:

For the will or thing-in-itself, found by investigating an unconditioned cause, here appears related to the phenomenon as the cause to the effect. This relation, however, occurs only within the phenomenon, and therefore presupposes it. It cannot connect the phenomenon itself with that which lies outside the phenomenon, and is *toto genere* different from it. (WWR I, p.506)

That is, if causes (thing-in-itself or will) only exist outside the phenomenal realm, they are deductions based on the causal relationship which we understand through representations and concepts. But can we apply this relationship to the relationship between thing-in-itself and phenomenon? Schopenhauer's answer is negative, because it is a contradiction to the presupposition that thing-in-itself is outside the phenomenon. Based on this consideration, he tried to argue a concept of 'will' which is by definition things-in-itself between self and the world so that dissolves the gap: both world and reasoning are based on will. In this way, will is free and pursues its own path, whilst human beings are an expression of will, but our acts are subject to causation in the world.

But can Schopenhauer's approach provide the metaphysical foundation for the Freudian *Ego*? Possibly, although it seems Schopenhauerian will more likely implies a compatibilist way. As both Askay and Farquhar and Tauber illustrate, Schopenhauerian Will is also intimately connected with Freudian Id., rather than *Ego*. The difference between their arguments merely lies in that, whilst Askay and Farquhar link Freud's meta-psychological ground with Schopenhauer's determinist view that everything must have reason (Askay and Farquhar, 2006), Tauber thinks Freudian Id is not based on a metaphysical level like Schopenhauerian will (Tauber, 2010). Thus, the question about to what extent the autonomy of the *Ego* can be found in Schopenhauerian Will requires further discussion. From here the path of debate has gone back to the starting point of discussion, which is connected with many contemporary debates. Thus, the only unarguable, clear statement is that the question is still open.

But it is enough to serve the aim of this thesis, which has shown how the obscurity and complexity of free will is needed for Freud's doctrine, posing questions which he himself was unable to answer, no matter what belief system he followed. Both determinist and compatibilist readings on Freud narrow the question. If determinist readings oversimplify the question by equating the required sense of free will for

psychoanalysis to Freud's statement, those compatibilist readings also hope to find out a coherent sense of Freud's view of free will as the answer to Freud's position. Finally, this thesis asserts, although it is hard for those libertarian readings to provide a concrete metaphysical foundation of the *Ego*, Freud indeed presupposed it and took the libertarian sense of free will into account in his doctrine-building. No matter whether free will is an illusion, the failure that Freud recognised actually makes room for it.

## Conclusion:

To sum, this is a review of discussions about the idea of free will in Freud's doctrine. It insists that, the libertarian sense of free will is necessary for Freud's theoretical construction and clinical practice.

# Appendix 3: Simulation and seduction in The System of Objects

Although *The System of Objects* (1968) was Baudrillard's first major book, in it, he already started discussing the later topics of simulation and seduction. It provides an early example of Baudrillard's view about how our relationship to things, in terms of consumption, is absorbed into a system of signs. It is therefore a good demonstration how Baudrillard's central logic is applied to analyse concrete cases of consumption. The current section is to demonstrate how these two concepts are used by Baudrillard in the field of consumption.

## Chapter 1

The central question Baudrillard explored is 'how objects are experienced' (1968, p.2). There are four chapters in *The System of Objects*: The first chapter deals with the function of furniture and interior decorations, in which Baudrillard argues that what is consumed in things is not their function, but functionality. In his terminology, function is about satisfying needs, whilst functionality is about being integrated into the system of objects. The foremost pre-proposition here is that the relations and arrangement of furniture and objects in a house are an embodiment of social relationships and structure of a family, and therefore an embodiment of ideology. The chapter starts with a contrast between traditional and modern furniture and interior designs: the traditional way of arrangement of furniture in Bourgeoise family is highly integrated, and the function and role of every room and furniture is clearly defined. Spaces are therefore strictly defined, and the function of each room shows a hierarchical system as the hierarchical relationship among inhabitants. By contrast, the modern furniture features its flexibility. Due to the shortage of space, a lot of furniture is designed to be mobile and convertible, so that it seems designed only for usage rather than shaping a social space as traditional furniture.

The system of objects emerges between 'integrated psychological space and fragmented functional space' (1968, p.17). Namely, when the dimension of function

and the dimension of an individual's experience about space are detached, a gap is opened up for a new way of connecting objects, this is where the system of objects is located.

However, the aristocratic interior designs still function as archetypes of modern interior design, as their 'models' (1968, p.17). By being taken apart and re-assembled, (as least a lot of) modern furniture is organised according to 'syntactical calculation' (1968, p.18). That is, the reasons why the furniture is placed here, now, and in a certain way, are determined by the interrelationship amongst the furniture. It therefore marks a turn in the role of furniture from function to functionality: the function of a seat is for seating, but now it is stressed by the pressure of advertisements to create atmosphere. Here, 'atmosphere' is defined as a 'systematic cultural connotation at the level of objects' (1968, p.49) – it refers to the cultural connotations which consists of relations between components within the system. For instance, if, in traditional times, colours usually have a fixed meaning and their values are not determined by comparison with other colours, in modern interior designs, colours lose their fixed psychological and moral meanings as if they are freed from restricted meanings, like furniture from functions, but signify 'naturalness' (1968, p.33) or 'warmth' (1968, p.37) as a connotation in a colour system. Of course, all so-called meanings of colours are man-made; what Baudrillard aims to highlight is that these kinds of characteristics are not independently shown and do not have effects to users as an 'inconsistent and subjective system of taste' (1968, p.40), but function together as a system. Every object's function as signs which might feel warm but means 'warmness'. Atmosphere is therefore a 'sign system' (1968, p.40).

Consequently, a resident's activities are more and more integrated into a pre-given system structured by objects, including furniture and appliances. Just as furniture loses its role in shaping a social space, Baudrillard thinks colours are 'raising the banner of freedom but delivering none to direct experience' (1968, p.32). Similarly, a functional gesture (i.e., using a remote control) replaces the effort to operate objects. The less energies are needed from the operators, the less human beings engage in the operation of the system. Whilst the more perfect the technology is, the more abstractive the labour is for an operator. All of these share a same kind of transformation: by representing a meaning/effect through a set of relations of signs, a system of signs replaces the effect and meaning which connect real objects and human beings in the real world, so that the function (a seat for sitting, the moral

meaning as referent of a colour, effect of labour etc.) is abstracted by relations of signs, and therefore becomes functionality. This conclusion clearly echoes his later works on media and simulation: media coverage as a system of signs are pre-made responses so that it represses audiences' real responses. Consequently, the real nature is 'systematised' (1968, p.68) by the system of objects, which becomes the 'only reality' (1968, p.69) by abstract meanings. Clearly, this view foreshadows the concept of hyper-reality in his later work.

## Chapter 2

The second chapter is about non-functional aspects and subjective experience, which uses antiques and collectables as examples. If a sofa and table still seem to be used by their function, then antiques and collectables are usually merely decorative, so that functionality actually is the only reason to be placed in a room.

As for antiques, their functionality lies in signifying time. But, similar to the previous chapter, here antiques do not signify real time, but 'historicalness' (1968, p.77), which contributes to the atmosphere. This functionality is based on their authenticity. That is, antiques imply a kind of uniqueness which mediates the past and present, in the sense that every trace left on things are unique effects of a certain situation at a certain time, so that it can never be reproduced. For an owner, antiques become a source of certainty. Their obsession for the authenticity of antiques is for certainty. Here, Baudrillard seems make use of Lacan's view on the function of the father<sup>44</sup>:

...the father is the source of value here. And it is this sublime link that antiques evoke in the imagination, along with the return journey to the mother's breast. (1968, p.81)

That is, in this analysis, the Oedipus complex functions as the underlying principle in a user's fantasy: the church needs 'a few bones or relic' (1968, p.82) to become sacred, the architect need antiques and ruins of an old house to build the newly

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<sup>44</sup> For Lacan, father functions as a meta-signifier for the symbolic realm. It is the root and fundamental referent for all other signifiers, because it symbolically marks the fissure between infant and mother. A more detailed explanation will be in the chapter 6 of this dissertation.

reconstructed house in which can make himself at home. In each case, antiques refer to the past so that they endorse the value and authenticity of the system. By the same token, modern objects can signify the future because they seem to be advanced. In Baudrillard's own example, "primitive" peoples (1968, p.87) are interested in modern objects because of their functions, because the powerful function is 'an image of Father as power' (1968, p.88).

The connection between the first and the second chapter therefore is a concern about the relationship between the system and 'absence' or 'lack'. Both chapters address this question: just as the colours of objects signify warmth and naturalness where the objects themselves are neither warm nor natural, bones and relics signify sacred entities where the god is not present. If history is about past events which is not present, then antiques also represent this. But, Baudrillard argues, although the system of atmosphere is complete only if it can involve every dimension of the real world<sup>45</sup>, this system can never be a success. Attempt to establish both synchronic and diachronic dimensions in itself lead to what he calls 'anachronism' (1968, p.86), and it is this anachronism, Baudrillard believes, that also makes the system possible to function.

The anachronism results from the conflict between functional objects and non-functional objects. The less functional an object is, the more meaningful it can be. Clearly, if an object functions well in everyday usage, it cannot be associated with something outside it (the more outdated the function is, the better an antique is associated with the old age). When a system wants to contain the functionality and historicalness simultaneously, anachronism is brought about. Thus, anachronism stems from the wish to connect the past and simultaneously to master the present, that is 'we want at one and the same time to be entirely self-made and yet be descended from someone: to succeed the Father yet simultaneously to proceed from the Father' (1968, p.88). This is most clear in Baudrillard's comparison between primitive man and modern man, as mentioned above: both modern and primitive man's fetishism lies in seeking to gain the power of the father, or take the place of the father,

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<sup>45</sup> 'The system of atmosphere is defined in terms of extension... (SO, p78).'

Here, Baudrillard does not provide concrete explanation about what does it mean by 'extension' here, but his logic of argument is clearly based on the structuralist's concern on the synchronic aspect of a system of signs. Namely, when one sign or concept is created, its opposite also simultaneously come into beings as well. Similarly, if the atmosphere is cultural connotation, then every meaning exists simultaneously as possible options. In this sense, the system of atmosphere had already contained the dimension of time, antiques only are the material bearer.

so that being able to control over past and future. However, mastering the present is simply logically impossible to co-exist with connecting the past, because if we manage to be completely self-made, then there is no past from which to be descended. This paradox, we will see, is the key target of Kierkegaard and also the point where Baudrillard might be overcome.

Similar to the view in the last chapter concerning *The System of Objects*, a system of objects is a third order simulacrum because it attempts to grasp an abstractive quality/property by embodying it in a signs system. Conversely, if there is simulation of the subject, there is also seduction for the subject. The fissure of the system marks the failure of the individual's attempt of defining themselves. It articulates not only the subject, but also its limit/boundary. The seductiveness lies in the conflict between this impossibility and its inevitable 'extension' (1968, p.78).

The tension between fissure and system is clearer in Baudrillard's other example: collection. As a demonstration of a system of objects, his view is basically the same: one's collection is fundamentally addressed to the collector. To collect is to possess an object, and the more an object is about possessing, the less important it is in terms of utility, so the collector is the only reason each object is included into one's collection. The meaning of possession for a collector is to grasp a quality seemingly innate in the object but can only be defined in contrast to other objects. It can never be completed because it is the collector themselves who is the last piece of the collection. In short, the subject is the very gap of the system which it can never close. Clearly, a collection as a system of objects again functions as a mirror to the subject.

However, if a collection is a simulacrum, then there is a seduction as well. There is a fissure which a collector's passion can never close: if an item is collected, it is unique for the collector. But when an item is defined as unique, it is already compared with others, and therefore its so-called uniqueness is always defined in a system. Nothing can prevent the subject giving another item the same quality, because nothing prevents the system from being applied. After all, by collecting, a collector selects. By selecting, the collector abandons the rest of the objects. But no matter how many things they abandon, a value system is kept. Therefore, there is nothing which prevents an object in the future from meeting the criteria of 'unique', and every unique object seems to be the final one for the collection. Seduction thus lies in this paradox between the uniqueness and the system. For Baudrillard, the singularity only stems from the subject. Other values, like exchange values, are from cultural and social

norms (1968, p.96). However, it potentially means this item has some property which the system has never contained before and this can only be shown by the comparisons conditioned by the system.

## Chapter 3

The third chapter is titled *The Metafunctional and Dysfunctional System*. Just as functional and non-functional objects can be integrated into a system in terms of functionality, the dysfunctional objects can too. There are four things discussed: automatism, gadgets, gizmos and robots. Automatism projects an image of human beings. It 'stereotypes' (1968, p.118) a function. It is designed to complete a work independently as a self-sufficient unit. If the usage of traditional tools is limited by a user's knowledge, by using automatism an individual themselves become an 'all-purpose object' (1968, p.121) in today's society. The fascination is more obvious in gadgets. The gadgets referred to here are the sort of technical devices that have a certain function but are actually unnecessary, like a 'solar-powered boiled-egg opener' (1968, p.122). Such objects indeed have some function, but the more important aspect is their functionality; that is, to fascinate us with their designs and unexpected ways of using technologies. Baudrillard thinks this is actually for our 'obsessive manipulation and contemplation' (1968, p.122), and what is behind this is an obsessional idea that every function must be matched with an object. This is called 'subjective functional' by Baudrillard. The same holds true for gizmos. According to Baudrillard, the word 'gizmo' literally means a thing without a name and refers to something people usually have no idea about. But if gadgets are subjective functional, gizmos are 'as-if' functional, in the sense that their utility lies in 'the realm of mental practice' (1968, p.126). It satisfies a fantasy of re-inventing the natural environment by mechanics. In this sense, it still aims at a total control over the environment, namely, to have a 'total simulacrum of an automated nature' (1968, p.125). Finally, the robot can be treated as a summit of this fantasy. The concept of a robot usually appears in science fiction, and Baudrillard reads them as unveiling the psychological motivation of current age. A robot is a 'microcosm of man and the world' (1968, p.129), in the sense that it achieves the synthesis between human beings and the natural world. It is like human beings on the one hand but can be functionally perfect to deal with natural environments on the

other. It is therefore the ultimate status of 'continual and visible functionality' (1968, p.129). This makes it become an all-powerful slave which can do everything as a perfect simulacrum of human beings in terms of function, whilst it is still under human control. It is here all objects meet their logical end.

But once again, when the system is pushed to the extreme, a fissure is revealed. And every time there is a fissure it is always because of the subject themselves. The previous cases have shown that this is because there is a logical dilemma (e.g., antiques) but, in this section, the case of the robot demonstrates that another reason is that humans do not really want the system to be completed. That is, the robot, as the perfect synthesis of human and nature, in fact, makes us anxious, because when the gap is closed, the place of the subject is removed. Thus, due to its multifunctionality, a robot itself is a system of objects. Whilst a robot can always achieve its goal, human beings can do nothing but accept a fate which the system of objects gives us. This dimension therefore is like a need, and also 'demands satisfaction' (1968, p.143).

## Chapter 4

The fourth chapter provides a detailed description of how consumption and ideology go hand in hand. It has three sub-sections, with the most relevant one being the first, entitled Models and Series, which actually foreshadows his view in *The Mirror of Production*. Baudrillard argues that class struggles are absorbed into the system, so that technical progressions cannot make any changes to the social structure. Here, 'model' refers to the ideal form of a product, whilst 'series' refers to 'serial-produced objects' (1968, p.166), namely, those commodities that are mass produced. This dichotomy between model and series works only on an ideological level, because such a dichotomy does not exist in terms of function (like the function of a cup for containing water). In everyday life, the serial objects are consumed based on an imaginary reference to the model, whilst the model is just an idea. The consumption of serial objects is to internalise the model being higher than the object itself, just as a collectible item grasps a quality in the item which is beyond its economic value and makes it unique. Consequently, the consumption for a consumer seems a process of creating one's own identity (personalisation) by imaginatively internalising a model on

the one hand but, on the other hand, integrating into the system by choosing a serial object.

Thus, similar to Baudrillard's argument in his later work, here he argues that such consumptions can never provide us with real diverse choices, but only a coded difference in the system. This is because: 1) What consumers seek is the uniqueness of the model which is unfortunately formulated by a variety of minor differences, whilst this variety of commodities refers to the same model; 2) More fundamentally, the so-called model is the very gap of the system, namely 'a transcendence internal to the system' (1968, p.167). Thus, the differences between objects constitute a hierarchical system, whilst the model is the imagined one which the system centres on and makes reference to. This is why, Baudrillard thinks, 'once a whole society articulates itself around models and focuses on them...then all negation becomes impossible' (1968, p.167).

## **A summary:**

So far, this thesis has demonstrated how the logic of simulation and seduction can be found in Baudrillard's first major work, *The System of Objects* (1968). In his conclusion, Baudrillard makes a bold statement on the definition of consumption, that it is neither about satisfying need nor about showing off status but a 'manipulation of signs' (1968, p.218). He states that Marx's views on humans' need for materials cannot be defined as a kind of consumption but merely the 'precondition of consumption' (1968, p.218). The question as to why Baudrillard makes this claim can be answered quite simply, and even echoes Marx's view of commodity fetishism: if this system can represent anything about human beings, it is only human relationships, because there is no relationship between human beings and things when only the material aspect of things is taken into account. Therefore, what is consumed in objects is the relationship it represents, articulates, formulates by the system of signs, so that 'to become an object of consumption, an object must first become a sign' (1968, p.218). However, compared with gift exchange where the action is with another human, in consumption there is no exchange because it is an action involving an object. It is for this reason Baudrillard claims the object does not fill the void but 'describe[s]' (1968, p.221) the void of a real human relationship for the consumer. Namely, the objects can be at best

mediators, but shows itself seemingly as the end. In a sense, a consumed object is like a battery. By signifying a relationship, it restores an experience of the relationship, whilst consumption is about using it up. In another sense, an object functions like drugs, it provides a transient satisfaction and reduces pleasure into a short-circuit relationship between object and user.

But when such a system is at work, and the whole project of life is articulated and formulated as seeking pleasure by consumption, the consumption can never stop by itself, because it is the way that individuals make life meaningful; the way 'to make up for a reality that is absent' (1968, p.224). The material things are pre-conditions for consumption, because satisfying needs for survival does not answer the question of the meaning of life, namely, why we choose to survive.

## Appendix 4: Imagined market

Psychoanalysis is not the only approach that makes the concept of the market questionable, not to mention that repeatedly stressing the insatiability of Lacanian desire is not practically helpful. Karl Polanyi (2001), for example, famously argues that the market is embedded and stems from social relations, rather than be independent from it. The commercial relationship is only one of all the possible social relationships, but the market is conditioned by treating it as universal. In the UK, this is achieved by the intervention of the government, the historical reasons for which are complex. One example is the enactment of the Poor Laws. It did not protect labourers as it was supposed but destroyed the old lifestyle in which their value was embodied. Consequently, it made room for the commercial logic of the market, which disregards other respects of the social relations. The so-called independent and self-regulated free market is not so much the fundamental rule of a society as a vampire of the complexity of the society. Everything therefore must have a price for becoming a commodity, including labour and land. But both labour and land are not commodities by themselves, nor can their supply be fully controlled by the fluctuation of price. As Colin Crouch (2011) argued, the so-called 'pure market' which is 'externality-free' has never come into being.

The question about externality is similarly stressed by Michel Callon (1998) who draws on Erving Goffman's conceptualisation of framework in social activities (Goffman, 1971, 1986). As Goffman argues, the meaning of behaviour in social interactivities is explained within a framework. For example, touching could be offensive, but it is interpreted differently in the relationship between a doctor and a patient. But this also means the framework is never separated from its outside, and therefore is never purely independent. Callon thus argues for a dynamic process of creating and maintaining the market as an organisation. The starting point is about the theoretical construction in scientific research (Callon, 1986); Callon argues that such construction involves the researchers actively defining and connecting the heterogeneous entities so that they can integrate them into a network. This means translating the characteristics of those entities into a coherent system.

This view paved the way for his concept of the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in later works (Callon, 1999, 2002, 2005). Similar to scientific researchers, the market is actively formed and maintained by every participant. Unlike scientific research in which

the object of a research might not be supposed to calculate as the researcher, in the market both the marketers and consumers are supposed to calculate or evaluate their choices. The point that Callon makes is quite insightful: what are the conditions for a participant to calculate? This question is perhaps even more important than his answers because the question itself already means to refute the independence of the so-called economic man. If the capability and possibility of calculation is limited by its condition, nothing guarantees that the economic man can maximise their self-interest, and the so-called free market can maximise the interest of a society as a whole.

Although the frame can never be complete, it is still the condition of the calculation; just as in scientific research, the characteristics of entities must be translated into a shared network. Each participant's act of (re-)evaluation therefore plays the central role in framing the market, which is defined by Callon as 'qualification'. The most interesting point is that, following Edward Chamberlin (2002, p.201), Callon thinks the quality of a product should be treated as a variable, like a price on the market. This means the price is not supposed to be a so-called fundamental dimension to which every other attribute should be reduced. For Callon, both marketing agencies and consumers are in a process of qualification, de-qualification, and re-qualification of a product. For a consumer, the purchase is merely the starting point to attribute qualities onto the product, which inevitably involves abstracting the product from its former context. Through this way, the consumer will have their own experiences about this product, although it is still based on given qualities portrayed by the marketers. This process is defined by Callon as 'singularisation' (2002, p.198-201).

However, a quality of a product can never completely personal. This is already clear in Kierkegaard's argument: before making a choice, we have to choose to choose. Similarly, when a consumer endows a quality onto a product, especially purchasing the product for that reason, they have already been within a frame defining the quality. This echoes Callon's concern about the condition of qualification and evaluations. One of the main roles of marketers is to provide the frame for this, although fundamentally it is consumers who choose the quality. In a sense, 'goods are temporarily stabilised products' (Appadurai, 1986, cited by Callon, 2002, p.200), because a product is fundamentally a combination of qualities (goods). This also answers another question: why can qualities function as the price, rather than being reduced to price? As previously mentioned, Johnston holds the view that insatiability is ontologically based on the quantitatively unlimited increase. But Callon's approach

provides another paradigm, in which the quantitative measure – namely price – is not the fundamental dimension in forming the consumer's choice. More detailed discussion might be required but, at least, it is clear that quantitative increase is not the sole reason for a consumer to want more. Another reason could be being richer in qualities, like brand associations. Because of this, Callon's definition of calculation is not about numbers, but about connecting factors in general. The calculative agency is not an individual, because the calculation happens amongst individuals' singularisation and re-qualification based on the qualities made by others (Callon, 2005).

The similarities between the network as an organisation in the market and a language in everyday use is clear, because both require active maintenance from participants. It is no surprise that John Langshaw Austin's insight of the performative aspect of language becomes a theoretical resource (Austin, 1962; Muniesa and Callon, 2007; Callon, 2010). This not only implies that treating the market as embodying objective law is an outdated paradigm, but also means that making changes in capitalism lies in transforming the organisation of society, including the market as a collective 'performance' (Muniesa and Callon, 2007, p.15) case by case, rather than building a grand theory of global economy and solving the problems on a 'fundamental' level. The underlying concern is simplification, creating an either/or question of choosing the planned economy or believing in the self-regulated free-market. In fact, both these conceptualisations of market are an attempt to reveal the supposed coherent rule underlying the market. The difference merely lies in what the rule is based on: man-made or God? But, by taking 'performativity' into account, the market cannot be conceptualised as coherent, and there might be no universal rule (Callon, 2007, p350). It is clear how this position echoes Johnston's view on materialism: if the material world is also split in nature, human societies, which are largely founded on the deposition of materials, cannot be coherent in nature either.

While Kierkegaard and Johnston's reading of Lacan might provide ontological supplements for Callon's theory of society, Callon probably does not need this. He repeatedly stressed that his pragmatic approach values the interactions between the specific individual and specific things. After all, no matter what the ontological conditions of free will are, such interactions in everyday life are not merely a linear cause-effect process. However, it does not mean qualities and networks can be constructed on demand. It is here Callon diverges from Judith Butler's concept of

'performativity'. By drawing on Mol's argument, Callon insists on taking the conditions of every specific interaction into account (Callon, 2007, p330). Namely, everyone has different material conditions, and (re-)qualifications differ from case to case because of the differences between conditions. Callon, too, distances himself from the structuralism which supposes the interactions between individuals and things are organised by a given structure, because this approach also eliminates the role of specificity of the conditions in different contexts (Çalışkan, & Callon, 2009). The best way to conceptualise the market, in his view, is still a calculation device that involves both human and non-human, in which the qualification of a thing is merely partially participated by an individuals' will.

This can be contrasted with Baudrillard's argument in *The System of Objects*. While Baudrillard, too, notices the effect of industrial products on everyday life, he nevertheless stopped his lament in this book. Consequently, he falls into an either/or choice about whether or not society should abandon the system completely, which paves the way to his argument on Marx: either need is the fundamental reference of the economic system, so that Marx and classic economists are on opposite sides, or there is no such system, and therefore the use-value is the effect of the supposed structure. However, this is denied by Callon because there is no structure without an individual's active participation. If things are constantly undergoing (re-)qualifications in each exchange, how is it possible to draw a sharp line between the symbolic exchange and production?

So, if the market does not exist, it is because it is merely one of a range of possible relationships amongst individuals. In the words of Baudrillard, the system is never separated from the symbolic exchange. Indeed, each individual only sees concrete transactions in our everyday life, the market is an abstractive idea attributed to the place where the transactions happen. To generalise, the transactional relationship is to ignore the multiplicity of human relationships. As Donald MacKenzie (2002) shows, while the so-called 'economic man' is constantly preached by some economists, human behaviours are actually context-sensitive and only a tiny fraction of people always behave selfishly.

Of course, it does not mean Callon can avoid the question raised by Baudrillard and Johnston: by using a system to demarcate things and persons, a hierarchical system is brought about, so that the minorities group or classes would still be (re-)produced. One way to deal with this is to pay more attention to them, as Cochoy

(2014) explains, but it seems the theoretical discussion has to stop here, because framing the externality is a never-ending process, and ANT is more like an approach to the questions and should be discussed case by case rather than offer a one-for-all solution, not to mention it never promises that it will always make structures run smoothly (Callon, 2010).

However, because of this, I think Callon's approach echoes Lacanian psychoanalysis in terms of the openness of the Symbolic register. Although Callon locates his theory in the pragmatic tradition, Tomšič's criticism on pragmatics is not applicable to Callon. For Tomšič, the pragmatic approach is still based on relevantly clear and stable reference of words which conditions communications (Tomšič, 2015). Moreover, by drawing on Lacan's view of the materiality of the signifier, Tomšič stresses Lacan's overturning of the relationship between the subject and language. In contrast, Aristotle's view that language is the tool (organ) of human beings for communication, Lacan places the signifier over the individual, so that the language speaks through individuals (Lacan & Grigg, 2008, p.65-6). Namely, the language as a given structure is driven by *jouissance* like energy drives a machine. The subject is its effect. Tomšič therefore concludes the language is material and *inexistent*. It is material because it produces concrete effects on the human body; it is *inexistent* because, as the Other, it does not exist but is being supported by the subject itself (Tomšič, 2015).

It is here we can see how Lacan echoes rather than opposes Callon, in the sense that both of them stress the role of individual. Indeed, as to the effect of a structure, Callon refuses to treat valuation the consequence of a structure or frame, and this theoretical construction seems opposite to Lacanian subject. But this is because he thinks people's act can re-qualify things (2009, p.388). Consequently, both of them arrive at the question about how to keep the distance between an individual and a structure. In a sense, for Lacan, the end of psychoanalysis lies in confronting the Thing which is in the 'lack' of the Other so that it goes beyond the Other, which also means a negation of the subject constructed in the Other (Lacan, 1992, p.303-6). Of course, Callon does not suggest any such kind of pursuit, but the concept of singularisation and re-qualification clearly implies that an individual user of things wants more than the given qualities from the social network as the Other.

For this reason, this thesis asserts that the frame that Callon argues for is not so much a positive theorisation of the nature of a society as the limitation of human beings

as an inevitable language user. Regarding this, Paul du Gay (2010) argues that Callon's concept of performativity, like Butler, detaches the original context where the concept emerges, so that it makes the meaning and discussions around the concept deviate from the original concern. Moreover, Callon's conclusion is based on an over-generalisation of empirical evidence. This thesis concurs with his view that the misuse of the performativity concept could result from seeking a so-called universal meaning or truth through a contextualised concept, but here the question is also about the language as a limitation. That is, it is hard to imagine how it is possible that the certain extent of organisation does not exist at all in a market, and in human social activities in general. Whenever the symbolic register exists, nothing prevents the quantitative dimension of things and logical comparison operators (more, less, and equal etc.) come into being in everyday life, so that the hierarchical system and its effects are then formed.

This can also be compared with Jason W. Moore's argument of the unified view of nature. For him, capitalism is based on making use of the products from the natural world, which is not accounted for within the capitalist system. But, compared with Callon's concept of 'externality', Moore refuses the dichotomy between human society and nature, and argues for a relationship in which human beings work in nature, and nature produces in human society (2015). The dichotomy outlined by Moore can be dated back to Descartes's dualism, and Moore thinks that these conditions capitalism and materialism to treat nature as something outside society and as something that can be worked on.

However, it is not clear what the meaning is of treating the world as a whole, especially with a signifier, *oikeios*. Surely, the production of human society is fundamentally based on material conditions which traditionally is called 'natural' and cannot be completely controlled over, but it is not helpful for overcoming the limit brought about by language. After all, using a language by definition means to demarcate, separate, and select, because a sign is only meaningful in relation to others. Whenever language plays a pivotal role in human beings' everyday life, the relations of signs as an organisation have to be the target of analysis for facing the concrete questions.

Moreover, if the dichotomy of society/nature is a construction, so the wholeness is too. To repeat, an obvious link between Marx and the philosophy of the mind is the question about how human beings can be supposed to be an active agency whilst

being determined by the material world. The fashion of applying neuroscience to marketing practice is largely based on the physicalist answer to this question. By contrast, Johnston reconciles this by arguing for a split material world, so that human agency does not have to be determined. In this sense, it is rash to suppose any wholeness of the universe or world because either the world does not run as a whole, or we cannot know whether it does. Moore does describe the whole movement as a 'mosaic', and stresses the multiplicity of the world (Moore, 2015, p.294). But this betrays his conceptualisation in which the wholeness can be nothing more than a sum of its parts, as if these parts are connected in one way or another. This wholeness therefore can recognise everything as the part of the whole, but nevertheless cannot accept the relationship of irrelevance between parts.

The possibility of irrelevance is important, because, as previously mentioned thinkers have shown, a key power of capitalism is about making connections, about linking heterogeneous things through one supposed fundamental aspect – namely, value. That is to say, it is the strength of capitalism to find one way or another to make a unity, or in Boltanski and Chiapello ((1999) 2018). Thus, if the unlimited capitalisation and commodification can be put to a stop, it is probably because it encounters the gap – an irrelevant, heterogeneous dimension. Capitalism surely saves its costs by consuming the given conditions of environment but, by arguing for a holistic perspective of humans and nature, Moore actually avoids conceptualising this gap so that it, ironically, falls into the trap of capitalist logic. After all, just like the concept of need, that of work can only be constructed in a discourse. It is exactly based on actively treating the environmental facts and movements as the process of production so that these movements count as work, rather than random and indifferent movements. To say natural world as unpaid 'work' is already a violence to the nature.

If the market is imagined and does not exist like the Lacanian Other, it is not because it is part of a whole society, but because it connects unrelated things and people through a belief that there is a universal dimension crossing things and individuals (e.g., value, the free market) although this dimension is not fully revealed yet. Just as Freud and Lacan's reading of monotheism as the obsession, the day of 'being fully revealed' will not come because it is practised and maintained by the believers.

If Callon's approach is still reasonable, then putting the unlimited drive for the accumulation of capital might involve a re-qualification of money. As Yuran (2014)

argues, if money is treated as a commodity, it is special because it seems to have value without 'thingness'. For him, money is money because it embodies a 'moreness': a subjectivity which is desiring more. Although he clearly refuses to directly utilise Lacanian concepts, the connection between this view and Johnston's is clear. However, it brings about a further question: does it mean, in order to get rid of the enslavement of capitalist drive for more, a society needs to collectively become Lacanian psychoanalysts (in the sense that everyone, or at least most people, are able to see that the Other does not exist) so that society becomes collectively immune to the fantasy of commodity fetishism? Alongside the risk of generalising psychoanalysis outside the clinic, a more direct problem is that the question about seeing the in-existence of the Other is about the relationship between individual and society, namely about the inwardness stressed by Kierkegaard. From this perspective, the so-called concept of collective psychoanalysts does not make sense.

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