

Exploring Hyperreality: A Baudrillardian Analysis of Contemporary Environments with Practical Pluggings

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to explore the concept of hyperreality through Baudrillardian lens, the initiator of the theory, analysing how digital narratives blur the boundaries between reality and simulation. Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality, characterised by the replacement of the real with simulations, serves as a critical framework for examining the unique features of various environments. The paper defines hyperreality with a sound list of its unique features and characteristics. This study highlights the transformative impact of technology on various experiences of life and explores the implications of hyperreality across various contemporary environments, including digital spaces, media, movies, money, food, architecture, health, bioinformatics, etc. The paper has a fine introduction to Jean Baudrillard with his renowned book and essays which are accompanied with crisp insights. The paper lists and argues an exhaustive number of merits and gaps in hyperrealism logically followed by a dynamic list of possible and practical solutions to the missing links or negative impacts. The paper tries to create a more grounded and informed society in the age of advanced simulation.

Keywords: Hyperreality; Baudrillard; Simulation; Media; Musk; Order; Real

Introduction to Jean Baudrillard

The long period of human evolutions from Stone Age to Sumerian or Indus times to 19th century saw lesser fierce technological advancements. The 19th century's steam engine, telegraph and 20th century's TVs, cars, and planes are benign techs of today's technologies. Relatively flat in between these two centuries, mankind has been parabolic and saw inflection points in 2001's movie 'A Space Odyssey' which are striking preludes to what exponential was to come from provocateur, controversial academic, social scientist, philosopher, cultural theorist, post-Marxist, post-modernist thinker, critic, and photographer Jean Baudrillard. He was French, born on 27th July in 1929 in Reims in norther-eastern France and died in 2007. His parents were government workers and so they were regular middle-class people. The last, occupation of photography helped him contribute to media or technology communication. He

has also been a secondary school teacher, specialised in German Social Theory and literature before becoming a Social Professor. *The System of Objects*, *The Consumer Society*, *For A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, *Mirror of Production*, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or, The End of the Social*, *Fatal Strategies*, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, *The Perfect Crime*, *Seduction*, *Simulacra and Simulations*, *America*, *Photographies*, and *The Gulf War did not take place* are some of his crucial books. His writings have a distinctive and original style, declarative, hyperbolic, aphoristic, sceptical, fatalistic, and nihilism combined with sharpness and intelligence. His writings were like bombs that detonate the atmosphere and present a new perspective on postmodern social reality involved with technology. Unlike Marx's world shaped by economic relationships, the belligerently anti-Marxist Baudrillard analysed bricks for sale, with any supreme logo for attracting consumers. *Fatal Strategies*'s reflects his extreme argument like his book titles of other books. *The Consumer Society*, his second book is about objects, which highlights that there is conspicuousness of overload of things everywhere. He calls the shopping centres as 'drugstores which use the law of exchange values.' As per the book, man's needs take him to buy. His *The Ecstasy of Communication* is about the overload of communication in society. *The Perfect Crime* is the story about fact of reality in the 20th century. *The Gulf War did not take place* has been his most provocative book which was in three stages. The book was inspired by "The Gulf War was not taking place", "The Gulf War is not taking place", and "The Gulf War did not take place" which were articles in *The Guardian*. The book was about oil war. His *Seduction* was about interpretations of seductive images which replaced the previous meaning of pornographic seduction to a complete world of empty seductions everywhere. His *America* on America being a cultural desert and identity-less, was an infuriating book. The world was becoming completely aestheticized. Nothing remains aestheticized political or historical anymore when everything becomes completely aesthetic, political, and historical. Everything is xeroxed to infinity. It becomes a trans-aesthetical, trans-political and trans-historical world. In his post-humanist essay, treatise, or book, *Simulacra and Simulacrum*, he introduces hyperreality and begins by evoking a past era of signs, where signs represented reality in his time. It was first published in French in 1981 and translated in English in 1983. In it, he seeks to examine the relationships between reality, symbols, and society, in particular the significations and symbolism of culture and media involved in constructing an understanding of shared existence.

Baudrillard held America responsible for creating this attracting or fake mode to attract people. Prior to him, Daniel Boorstin (1914- 2004) drew attention to the aspects of American life which was a technologically determined world. The former named this techno savvy mode as Hyperreal. In the case of Jean Baudrillard, his defining hyperrealism is preceded by Simulation and Simulacra.

Simulation to Simulacra to Hyperrealism

The process/action of imitation, like drawing and painting is called Simulation. And the copy is called Simulacra. Simulation is an "Illusion of an actuality" to keep us shopping and

entertained. It is the imitation of the operation of a real-world process or system over time. At present, signs do not represent reality which he called simulation which leads to a kind of emptiness and somewhere makes everything equivalent. Simulation is that science which stems from the Utopia of equivalence. To Baudrillard there are four stages or orders of reality which lead to hyperrealism.

Stages or Phases or Orders of Simulation-

- Reflection of basic reality or **Order of Sacrament** or order of the king has been found in premodern age. There have been few copies at that time.
- Basic Reality or **Order of Maleficence** is masked where a new, fake painting which looks like the original. The image is of good appearance; the representation is sacramental. It was observed in the Premodern age. Example of a cooked egg is an egg which actually gets masked into an omelette.
- Absence of basic reality or **Order of Sorcery** is the third stage. To elaborate, Ads done by celebrities, the products which they hardly use. Their images used in the ads make it more appealing. The movie 'Jurassic Park' has no relation to reality or Eggless omelettes are other examples.
- **Order of Appearance or Pure simulation** belongs to no order and here it is hyperreality. In it, the Real and the fictional is confused by the consciousness. We now forget that there is no originality behind it. Physical reality and virtual reality are hard to distinguish. This started taking place during late capitalism or post-modern times. Examples of Plastic eggs or Augmented reality illustrate hyperrealism.

To be more concise, Baudrillard defined hyperreality as, "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality" (Baudrillard, 1983, p.1). It is the simulation between reality and the representation of reality. He says that our current society has replaced all reality and meaning with symbols and signs and that human experience is that simulation of reality. It creates a condition in which falsehood mingles with authenticity; the past mingles with the present; facts are confused with engineering; sign merges with reality; lie is compounded with truth.

Characteristics or features of hyperrealism

- The genesis of hyper reality is *postmodern* context. Jean Baudrillard's theory emerged against the backdrop of postmodernism, a cultural and intellectual movement that questioned grand narratives and embraced a fragmented scholastic world view. In the late 20th c when media and technology proliferated, reality seem to go a profound transformation.
- The signs and symbols replace the real and become real which get transported to different worlds manifested in games, media, electronic literature, money, art, etc. It tries to make the world technically real. There is the rise of *virtual reality*. To Jean Baudrillard, the world is already virtualised because what is real comes out of imagination. It is all virtual reality. We already have a model of the world in our brain.

We shall never get back beyond where real ceased to be real. Reality has metaphysically disappeared.

- Hyperreality signifies a state with a distinction between the real and simulated become increasingly *blurred*. The inability to distinguish between reality and simulation is Hyperreality. It is the blurring of knowledge from reality and simulation. Hyperreality means, we are no longer made to distinguish between simulated and the real. Hyperreal world blurs the lines between authenticity and artifice compelling us to question our perceptions of truth, self and society.
- Simulacra and simulation, Simulation is the game itself. *Simulacrum* is the player in the game. Every game has simulacrum. Story is crucial in the game, where there is the player and the averter.
- The intangible copy of something has *no physicality*.
- There are *unlimited projects* for any aspect from mankind's life. In Baudrillard's terms: 'the revolution of our time is the uncertainty revolution' (Baudrillard, 1993b, p43)

Merits from the examples of hyperrealism

- *Theme parks* like Disneyland creates a real world which gives escapist and relief chances to the visitors.
- *Movies* and *TV Shows* like Jurassic Park, Harry Potter series, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show are precursors to hyperrealisms. And Jean Baudrillard's some of the main thoughts concerning hyperreal has been with film studies.
- The *Gulf War*. Due to so much tech-use, it was not known what was real and fake. Same image or tanks shows thousand times and shown something horrible was taking place. He became infamous for this. It was not known what was true. The same image or tanks shows thousand times and shown something horrible was taking place. At present, Israel and Palestine war is real through media only.
- The *architecture* and intellectual circle also flaunted hyperrealism. The physical Archi we use at homes are extensions of digital hyperrealism. Popular Modular forms being used these days are sound examples.
- Guy Debore's *book The Spectacle* says how a society is dominated by images and which lost touch with the science of lived experience.
- Video games are one of the precursors hyperreal examples. For example, Super Mario world had a Mushroom kingdom where there was princess to be rescued. Gaming involves active participation by us. It requires puzzle solving. Puzzle solving in gaming could be very rewarding. *Sports* are getting redefined with hyperrealism.
- *Media* is inundated with different forms that makes the real go overshadowed. Headlines become story which have been carefully choreographed and looks more real before public.

- *TVs* of the 19th century are also squirted with hyperrealism. For example, Mima, the cartoon movie becomes more powerful. Chota Bheem is the modern hyperreal form of Bheem of Mahabharata. The hyperreal replaces the original in mind.
- *Food* dominates social media. Highly stylised insta post, cooking shows, are elaborately staged. Real food/ and fictional farms get connected. Fictional supermarkets have created fictional farms to create the idea of “real food” that is sourced from a wide variety of (largely anonymous) global suppliers.
- In the world of *Consumer culture*, brand becomes hyper-real entity. Overshadowing actual product it represents. Baudrillard deals with the consumer-based society. Marx of our epoch whose influence will grow in coming decades.
- In the world of *healthcare*- telemedicine, online consultations, health apps, amplified diseases in Instagram are part of hyperrealism only.
- Idea of *money* has become hyperreal too. The exact tangible amount is not physically seen to us in our mobile banking apps.
- *Law* also intersects with hyperrealism.
- *Bioinformatics*’ enabled facial recognition where biology and data create the hyperreal identity.
- The dead people can be made gone to. The prism of creativity can suggestively bring them back to life.
- *Elon Musk*’s Tesla has unbelievable futuristic reality packaged and sold. It has Tesla cyber truck, even commercial space travel like Space X, driverless cars, chipped brains, etc, all sound hyperreal.

Gaps of hyperrealism

- The Real and the Artificial is getting increasingly blurred. It becomes difficult to find out what is real. Disneyland is fictional but it is represented in such a way that it shows it’s all about you and me. Las Vegas is a *Fake Town* of USA which has many dark sides too.
- The world of *Movies and Shows* have become so hyper real that Indian show like Big Boss gives alarming repetitive natures of many films and about their artists. Baudrillard left a sound critique line for them. To him, If you want the cinema to be the vector for some message, you are left with nothing except the worst films ever made’ (1993a, 70)
- It is unknown to us if The Gulf War, Iraq War. Afghanistan and US and its allies war, and the most recent ongoing Israel-Palestine are how much still not covering or repeating the *War* lines.
- *Architecture* has brought the Modular sets at homes. This is replacing the traditional kitchens and natural make-ups created at homes by homemakers.

- **Books** took thousands of years to come to its present self. But the coming of electronic literature, e-books and kindle formats have surfaced alternative readings which have drifted us away from the original classics.
- In the world of **Sports**, Computer games give us football matches today unlike real games in parks. Video games have been the first hyperreal media which squirted one of the earliest hyper literatures.
- In the world of **Media**, even our activism has become susceptible to the hyper real distortion. A hashtag or changed DP become signs and symbols that imply the moral standard. A sense of participating in real change takes place. Technology and Media have succeeded society. We have personal relationships on media than in real. Reality is just copied and pasted. Emotional necessity of parents is not felt today due to the social media. We measure our social arena via subscribers and followers. How much of life do we spend on mobiles and internet and doesn't it affect our daily reality. It becomes a fabricated world. Beloved world of memes which start with photo or catchphrase. And once it goes to internet, it gets reshaped, repurposed so many times that it gains a new kind of reality. It's everywhere and nowhere at the same time, hyperreal and almost poetic. Instagram and Tik Tok bombarded with simulation are accepted as true is scary when it teaches how to live life as we quickly accept simulation. There is the problem of the surplus not the lack. Racism and gender-based issues continue existing in social media too. Direct challenge to people who *claim* creating ownership as we see how Elon Musk buys Twitter and renames it X. Teenagers of 80s and 90s and 80s had no cell phones and if someone wanted to contact, there was landline and so they were free rest of the time unlike now.
- Food can be that hyperreal that Japan's Prof. Miyashata has recently invented lickable TV named TTTV or Taste The TV. If you take out your tongue and lick the TV screen, then you can taste that food item which has been surfacing. According to Miyashata, there are ten tastes available, the canisters of which are attached. They spray a flavour on a film and that film is put on the TV screen. And when told the TV the type of flavour one wants, a transparent film with those respective liquid droplets pops up in a few seconds and one can taste it. But then what about the hygiene of the TV, one TV licking screen for many?
- **Consumer culture** is seeing cancerous rise. This phenomenon overtakes morality play.
- In the world of **Health**, Online med system might not capture our full physical complexity. Mental and sleep disorders have got induced.
- **Money** is also a piece of paper but hyperreal. When we take it to the digital value, cryptocurrency is like bitcoin, entirely virtual yet building an enormous, empowered world. Even a tweet can affect a cryptocurrency to plummet.
- **Law** has become so media-precepted that they don't facilitate reality. If a guy has a gun, it's considered good to uphold law when police couldn't.
- Bioinformatics

- In *Art*, Algorithms make art and even mimics human creativity. But here, the real is suffocated by its own accumulation. There is no original pop, hip-hop, etc in media's art. This new world tries to mimic the realities, where the subject is just type of art or another icon. Representations of representation, two or many steps away from reality. To Jean Baudrillard, we don't lose reality but our imagination. The self is also constructed. No real art possible anymore. True purpose eclipsed.
- *Maps* have navigated and reshaped the physical maps we engage in. Google Maps and GPS have hyper-reeled the sense of time and space. We are caught in between real map and the hyperreal map. To Baudrillard, maps no more represent reality.
- *Elon Musk's* world has become strong prelude to the world of hypers. Hid driverless cars, brain chips, colonising Moon and Mars are creating a new set of human beings which is making others contemplate if to replace themselves too.
- *Saturation* becomes evident and all is lost in the unending meanings.

Practical pluggings to the gaps in hyperrealism

- Contradictions must be embraced. The inevitability of the necessity or seeping of the hyperreal should not radically expelled anymore.
- At one point, we should start accepting the absence of destiny or the endlessness of hyperreal creations.
- Challenges should be made if real law is overtaken by virtual law.
- To Jean Baudrillard, we should not remain in denial of the problem of the real and hyperreal.
- Recognise the point of distortion. There should remain the prism of asking the question of the taboo subjects like racism existing even in hyperreal objects. There should be regular check, admonishings and corrections of gender-based stigmas reeling in hyperreal objects, media or literature.

Conclusion

Lines are getting blurred in this hyperreal world today. It is the relevance of Modern dilemma. Baudrillard had died before the advent of social media like Snapchat, Twitter, etc, which surfaces utmost hyperrealism. It is condition of modern life, a world where technology, media, consumer culture, etc, create an environment that is so convincing, that they become our reality. But there should also remain the prism of asking the question how society is upheld and perceived. The option of scrutinising any aspect of modern life through lens of hyperreality should always be available.

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