

Jean baudrillard's disneyworld company theory analysis



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In his essay ‘ Disneyworld Company’ (1996), Jean Baudrillard suggests that we are living within “ an immediate synchronism of all the places and all the periods in a single a-temporal virtuality”. Please explain this statement, referencing at least two contemporary digital examples.

In his statement ‘ an immediate synchronism of all the places and all the periods in a single a-temporal virtuality’, Baudrillard is addressing the gap between what we can see as the known and the experienced (Baudrillard, 1996). It is in this sense that Baudrillard is writing against the notion of human nature and revealing only experience as the real and knowledge as merely the imagined. It is due to this gap that Baudrillard is then able to show that virtuality has begun to replace our real perceptions. To understand this in full we must investigate his and other philosopher’s thoughts regarding the digital age in greater detail.

Informed primarily by the role that intelligence and sensual perception plays as it is applied to experience and knowledge, Baudrillard looked at the role of subjectivity as it related to both the objective and the phenomenological world. Beginning his enquiry into humanity and reality and its relationship to the world, Baudrillard focused upon the condition of the free world and its growing technologies with an emphasis that its Medias had placed upon commercialisation, imagery and art consumption. Baudrillard spoke of the new emphasis on the philosophy of self fulfilment suggesting that,

‘ Through planned motivation we find ourselves in an era where advertising takes over the moral responsibility for all of society and replaces a puritan

morality with a hedonistic morality of pure satisfaction, like a new state of nature at the heart of hyper civilisation' (Baudrillard, 1968, p. 3)

After prescribing this current philosophical and moral reality that he believed informed the condition for humanity in the west, Baudrillard then turned to a notion of subject / object consciousness in an attempt to define a link between our knowledge and our experience. Detailing a consumer-able condition that pertained very strongly to post modern, capitalist living, Baudrillard concluded that the relationship between the subject and object now formed the living consciousness of an abstracted life between what he/she identifies with and what is signified in the actual consummation of any chosen object, such as an image, by stating that,

' We can see that what is consumed are not objects but the relation itself - signified and absent, included and excluded at the same time - it is the idea of the relation that is consumed in the series of objects which manifests it.'
(Baudrillard, 1967, p. 11)

What Baudrillard does here is implement the idea of a simulated code acting as our knowledge, rather like that of a robot with artificial intelligence, that works by replacing the old humanised ideological frameworks that once informed society and acted as the gel between experience and knowledge / subject and object. These driving forces once born of experience communicated through culture and language in the forms of social exchange and communal ideology were seen by Baudrillard as being the premise of the image. In this we see that Baudrillard is showing how this simulated code informs a new humanity, devoid of natural origin, that does not live out a life

according to cultural meaning that is supported by a communal language, but instead acts out an imagined life that can be understood and identified by its relationship to the values apparent within the code or what Bakhtin called the 'relationship of the other' - essentially, placing life itself as a simulated relationship to a structural code of knowledge. (Bakhtin, 1993). Writing on the subsequent implications of this reality that he defined as hyper-reality and documenting the cultural shift that supported the change from registering external behaviour of a subject as an indication of a subjective response to the recognition of the other as an objective image of simulated experience, Baudrillard suggested that,

' A whole imagery based on contact, a sensory mimicry and a tactile mysticism, basically ecology in its entirety, comes to be grafted on to this universe of operational simulation, multi-stimulation and multi response. This incessant test of successful adaptation is naturalised by assimilating it to animal mimicry. , and even to the Indians with their innate sense of ecology tropisms, mimicry, and empathy: the ecological evangelism of open systems, with positive or negative feedback, will be engulfed in this breach, with an ideology of regulation with information that is only an avatar, in accordance of a more flexible patten.' (Baudrillard, 1976, p. 9)

With this we can see that all cultures have become divorced from a natural reality born of experience and that the ideas of a structured culture have become replaced by a gap that is filled with the virtual. In this sense, life, according to Baudrillard, is one of virtual imagery that is then rationalised against a simulated code rather than an intrinsic relationship with nature.

Essentially, this ideological code acting as virtual knowledge informs us of <https://assignbuster.com/jean-baudrillards-disneyworld-company-theory-analysis/>

linear time and space and so distorts our experience of life and existence. The virtual imagery presented to us via global technology and media, such as the internet, then reinforces our application to this reality and gives us our user identity that replaces the old systems devised of actual or phenomenological reality. Scepticism towards global medias, technologies and the growing dependency that humanity and society had begun placing upon the cultural apparatus of the globe was put forward by Marxist philosopher Seigfried Kracauers in his concerns about the mass consumption of art. This indicated that reality of the working masses was hidden under the illusion (or virtuality) of mass produced, distributed and unrelated art (Kracauer, 1963). Expanding upon the ideas of mass consumption and art put forward by Kracauer, contemporary Walter Benjamin introduced the notion of time and space to this idea. Focusing upon the history of technological progression and its relationship to art and social reality, Benjamin suggested that,

‘ Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element its presence in time and space, its unique existence as the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of existence. This includes the charges which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes of its ownerships. The traces of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analysis which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original’

(Benjamin, 1935, p. 1)

Bringing the role of time and space into the capitalist reproduction of art, Benjamin was able to expand upon Kracauer's notion that this art was resistant to nature, the individual, the nation and the community. What Benjamin was then able to suggest was that firstly, any one piece of culture belongs to the mass production of art that determines it, and that secondly, every cultural artefact cannot stand free of the time and space in which it was presented as without its mass, it has no meaning or cultural apparatus from which it can be signified or understood (Benjamin, 1935). We can see from this that both Kracauer and Benjamin devised a rationale that applied to the placing of the ideological and virtual conceptual framework within the technological reality of global production. More contemporary thinkers and writers that have concerned themselves with this role of global media and their advancing technologies in the current global condition, have often supported these views providing evidence for the onus placed upon imagery in the process. For instance, in his text *War and Peace in the Global Village* writer Marshall McLuhan commented directly upon the growing dependency of western cultures mass media technologies. The global village mentioned in the title referred to the relationship between the people of the global cities and the mass culture that they consumed and were informed by. In particular, this text observed the actual impact that new technologies such as television and news had on cultural perception and indicated how it affected the perception of time within that perception, suggesting that it was being used to artificially construct a regional global identity based upon a virtual history and world based upon linear time and imagined geographies. For instance, information readily received from actual and real events in the world made the concept of a world and its state of being a direct part of <https://assignbuster.com/jean-baudrillards-disneyworld-company-theory-analysis/>

one's own naturalised condition and experience. Essentially, as this mass of information could be freely accessed by anyone among the global village at any time, then the information could be seen as a virtual universalising reality. Furthermore, using an example of contemporary war coverage, McLuhan was able to demonstrate a clear biasness that was present in the then contemporary manipulation of mass technologies so that invading troops could be portrayed as 'military contractors'. He termed this as 'dichotomization', which would offer two points of view both pertaining to the culture / counter culture of the presiding mass (McLuhan, 1963). This is the gap between knowledge and experience that Baudrillard was referring to, in which he believed synchronisation could flood the space now rendered free of actual time and actual space and portray the virtual as the real.

Although we can see that both Kracauer and Benjamin's theories of mass reproduction and McLuhan's findings on the perceptions of technological medias are still relevant and apply to the presentation of the global world that we now find ourselves deeply immersed in, other theorists have offered another approach, implying that Kracauer and Benjamin's theories contained a fatalistic scepticism that was born of the early twentieth century western modernist perspective. For instance, concerned with the notion of technological expansion, mass culture and the effects of globalisation, contemporary cultural theorist Homi Bhabha engaged in a global perspective that aimed to critique the notion of mass reproduction and its over riding condition. Considering Kracauer and Benjamin's conceptual analysis of the reproduction of the mass and observing the colonial effects placed upon other cultures, Bhabha positioned this dimension in the contemporary sense

by emphasising that it also formed a part of the dichotomy of the mass. Having placed their theory of mass reproduction as one of global scepticism, that was bound by the cultural historicity of their western heritage as is represented by Baudrillard's positioning of Disney Land as a producer of virtuality within the contemporary age, Bhabha then suggested a third way approach that stood outside of the virtual mass and could observe it organically, either as individual or as a community. Having positioned Kracauer and Benjamin's theories as part of the dichotomy of the mass, Bhabha was then able to indicate that the essence of a true global perspective was born of organic community that could be found somewhere outside of the global mass; somewhere away from the 'imaginary' virtual debates of global inter-national territories and free of their dependencies upon linear and grand concepts of history and time elase (Bhabha, 1994). He suggested that the location of this elsewhere was within the unbound psychology of the individual and not in the construct of their ideological positioning within the virtual time and space created by global media, technology and information. Engaging with Benjamin's notion of time and space in this cultural reproduction, Bhabha reasoned that,

'The temporality of negotiation or translation has two main advantages. First, it acknowledges the historical connectedness between the subject and object of critique so that there can be no simplistic, essentialist opposition between ideological misrecognition and revolutionary truth. The progressive reading is crucially determined by the adversarial or agonistic situation itself; it is effective because it uses the subversive, messy mask of camouflage and does not come like a pure avenging angel speaking the truth of a radical

historicity and pure oppositionality. If one is aware of this heterogeneous emergence (not origin) of radical critique, then – and this is my second point – function of theory within the political process becomes double edged. It makes us aware that our political references and priorities – the people, the community, class struggle, anti-racism, gender difference the assertion of an anti-imperialist, black or thir perspective – are not there in some primordial, naturalistic sense. They make sense [only] when they come to be constructed in the discourses of feminism, Marxism.’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 23)

It is from this idea of mass, global communication and its accessible depictions of regionalism and linear time that Baudrillard states that there is a synchronism. This synchronism is understood by Baudrillard as the thing that is manipulated by Disneyland to enforce and reinforce an idea of what is real and what is not that as part of the process negates the actual experience of the object itself. Essentially for Baudrillard, through image Disneyland is set within an ideological and conceptual framework reinforced by mass imagery and perceived as being real rather than being virtual. Through the mass image, the reality of Disneyland appears to us as real as it accords to the simulated code that acts and has replaced our naturalised and cultured knowledge structures, without the real experience itself being captured within an experiential temporality. Therefore, it is through the ideology of image that we view the notion of Disneyland as being fixed and constant and not in a transient state of natural and ultural change as pertains to objects of the organic or civilised worlds. Essentially, it is through a display of established imagery that Disneyland can synchronise all the places and all the periods of the virtually known globe, and its many

cultures, in a single a-temporal virtuality and replace any reality in the process.

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