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## A critique of the ontology of consumer enchantment

PER OSTERGAARD<sup>1</sup>, JAMES FITCHETT<sup>2\*</sup> and CHRISTIAN JANTZEN<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Marketing & Management, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark*

<sup>2</sup>*School of Management, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK*

<sup>3</sup>*Department of Communication & Psychology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark*

### ABSTRACT

The concept of enchantment offers a plausible explanation of the lures and thrills of consumer culture. We examine the theoretical foundation of the concept through a critique of Ritzer's enchantment thesis. We begin by assessing the enchantment/disenchantment discourse through a review of the main theoretical contributions to the area, first summarizing Max Weber's initial outline of the notion of disenchantment in the Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism. We then consider Colin Campbell's critique of Weber and George Ritzer's development in *Enchanting a Disenchanted World*. Finally, we apply Jean Baudrillard's *Order of Simulacra* to further resolve some of the open questions concerning the possibility of enchantment in contemporary consumer culture. Copyright © 2013 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

### INTRODUCTION

Our objective in this paper is to critically review a prevailing discourse within consumption studies regarding the role and definition of enchantment. This discourse builds upon several well-theorized arguments regarding social change, social futures (Lee, 2010) and cultural transition. Modern industrial societies can be described as disenchanted worlds in that they are characterized as having limited and peripheral space for enchantment, such as magic, religion, mysticism and wonder (Weber, 1905/2002). This modernity is instead characterized by a loss and rejection of enchantment, through a dominance of scientific, rational and economic discourse. Modernity is thus defined as a loss, rejection or movement away from an enchanted world to one that is disenchanted. One of the responses to this disenchanted, rationalized world is to seek to re-enchant it in some way (Ritzer, 2010), and this, some have argued, is a core motivation and explanation of consumer culture. Consumption can be said to constitute an attempt to rediscover the enchanting potential within culture (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995) or, as Ritzer (2010) famously articulated, to 'enchant a disenchanted world'. Our main objective here is to continue the critical dialogue around Ritzer's enchantment thesis, evaluating the plausibility of the implicit claim that consumer culture can be re-enchanting (see, for example, Numerato 2009; Denegri-Knott and Zwick 2012). If re-enchantment is achievable and indeed desirable for consumers and organizations, then further questions are raised regarding the ontological status of this re-enchantment, and whether this represents some kind of return to a set of cultural values and practices that were lost through the process of modernity or whether this re-enchantment is in fact just another manifestation of disenchantment (Jenkins, 2000). To address these questions, we begin by assessing the enchantment/disenchantment discourse through a review and summary of some of the main theoretical contributions to the

area. We begin by summarizing Weber's initial outline of the notion of disenchantment and then move on to consider first Campbell's (1987) and then Ritzer's (2010) development and reaction to the Weberian thesis. We then move on to consider the potential application of Baudrillard's (1993) *Order of Simulacra* to further understand and perhaps resolve some of the open questions concerning the possibility of enchantment in contemporary consumer culture. This opens up a space in which we can frame current debates about enchantment as forms of simulation that are at once consistent with a disenchanted world while appearing to stand in contrast to it.

### ENCHANTING A DISENCHANTED WORLD?

Critically orientated explanations of consumer culture have frequently utilized the concept of disenchantment to account for aspects of contemporary consumer society. The model that is most commonly applied, explicitly or otherwise, is that the onset and progress of modernity, capitalism and industrialisation was characterized by disenchantment. Drawing on Weber's description of the rise of capitalism (Weber, 1905/2002), disenchantment is used with a literal intent, namely that the 'enchanted' aspects of cultural and ideological forms (such as magic) were systematically and radically eliminated and displaced by a rational logic.

It is plausible to suggest that a process of disenchantment (assuming it is an accurate historical analysis) was a necessary, beneficial and progressive consequence of modernity from which numerous benefits and developments are achieved. Reason replaces dogma, science replaces religion and mysticism, and knowledge replaces superstition. There is equal plausibility in the idea that this process of disenchantment left a legacy in which some important, beneficial and positive aspects of social and cultural life were suppressed, marginalized and perhaps even eradicated.

In consumer culture research, the thesis of disenchantment opens up a number of interesting and competing avenues for discussion. For those looking to develop

\*Correspondence to: James Fitchett, Department of Marketing & Management, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark.  
E-mail: jaf30@le.ac.uk

critical and oppositional accounts of consumer culture, the disenchantment discourse can be utilized to justify a view of consumer society that is lacking in some fundamental way. Consumer lifestyles are doomed to a certain insufficiency and inadequacy on the grounds that some important and longed for aspects are unachievable. A life dominated by consumption, shopping and brands is, from this perspective, subject to criticism on the grounds that it is deeply unfulfilling, shallow, surface level and ephemeral (see, for example, Winter, 2002). The disenchanted consumer masses are also disempowered, maybe even de-humanized as a result, and left with the possibility of a deep sense of longing and desire (Belk *et al.*, 2003) for something unknown and ill-defined. Consumer culture can be depicted as decadent, a kind of social pathology (Brown and Reid, 1997).

An alternative, if less common place application of the disenchantment thesis to consumer culture is the notion that the rational, de-mystified economic social relations of modernity enabled for the first time a more open, free and liberated consumer landscape. Modernity brought with it the opportunity for a rational consumer capable of evaluating information and making choices in their own best interests without the restrictive dogma or mysticism of prior eras to impede the progressive development of the modern market. Debates surrounding some of the perceived problems with branding and brand management can be interpreted through this perspective. Brand theory suggests that brand strategies help to achieve efficiencies on the market by providing guarantees of quality and standards, by enabling consumers to make better decisions quickly and easily, and by offering a means for organizations to transfer immaterial value between products. Brands are, in this view, a rational technology. The counter position, however, suggests that brands can produce market inefficiencies and consumer detriment because they reinstate a certain kind of 'marketing mysticism'. Branding requires considerable resources to be invested and spent, which add (unnecessary) cost, and is predicated on the idea that attaching arbitrary signification to what are often relatively standardized products is a source of value. Branding strategies that prey on consumer vulnerabilities and fears, for example, products and services that are marketed to parents with the suggestion that their children will be healthier and higher achievers as a result of consumption, or financial services products that suggest an ability to protect against an uncertain future can be criticized for resorting to a certain 'enchantment' to bewitch and bedazzle the consumer. Instead of enchanting brands, consumers are thus encouraged to examine the facts as rational agents, which tend to refer to the utility of products and services.

There is a third application of this debate that achieves an interesting synthesis of these two oppositions. Ritzer's (2010) disenchantment thesis has features of both traditions in that it builds on the central belief that modernity (and post-modernity) has a legacy that fits to Weber's writing on the disenchanted world. For Ritzer, modernity is characterized by an inevitable disenchantment and has produced a number of undesirable social, cultural and

economic consequences that have to be responded to. Ritzer certainly does not deny the obvious achievements of rationalization and the arguable beneficial consequences of efficiency and standardization in consumer culture. These include low prices, mass-market participation, convenience, and relatively uniform product and service standards. Ritzer epitomizes this legacy most clearly in the McDonaldization thesis (Ritzer, 1998) as well as with analysis of brands such as Starbucks (Ritzer, 2011). Consumers, however, never seem to have lost their appetite and desire for the wondrous and the spectacular, and organizations have sought to exploit the potential of enchantment in order to compete in increasingly rationalized markets. For Ritzer, the modern consumer is not fundamentally different to his or her pre-modern ancestor in that they retain the same longing for enchantment, even in this disenchanted world. To attend to this deficit modern corporations are thus required to embark on a series of strategies that attempt to re-enchant the modern market place. This re-enchantment must take place alongside the consequences of the disenchanted world rather than replacing them. Organizations are tasked with the difficult objective of re-enchanting product and service encounters while continuing to achieve rational objectives of cost and production efficiency, standardisation, and mass-market appeal. Ritzer identifies a number of organizations, sites and settings where these acts of 'enchantment' can be seen to take place. Sites include obvious illustrations such as theme parks, leisure cruises and casinos, as well as slightly more mundane consumption settings and contexts such as malls and credit. These are the 'new cathedrals of consumption', which are analogous to the mediaeval European cathedrals that characterize the pre-modern era with a common purpose of both institutions to instil, maintain and reproduce a sense of enchantment and wonder.

Beyond this analogy, however, Ritzer's application of Weber's notion of enchantment can be vague. The main issue of contention concerns the relationship between the conditions of enchantment as it existed prior to the onset of modernity (i.e. conditions that prevailed prior to the subsequent disenchantment) and the state of re-enchantment as experienced in consumer cultures today (Jenkins, 2000). Re-enchantment could be interpreted as some kind of return to a prior cultural form, a rediscovery of a condition that once existed but does so no longer, a motivation (to seek to be 'enchanted') that was once commonplace and ubiquitous, or a kind of socio-economic process by which aspects of experience are subject to some technology of enchantment (Pinney and Thomas, 2001). It would seem logically problematic to draw a direct relationship or association between that form of enchantment that pre-dates a subsequent disenchantment and that form that is then evidenced through the process of re-enchantment. Whatever similarities that may exist between pre-enchantment and re-enchantment, it is nevertheless the case that many if not most aspects of 'modern' enchantment are quite different to those that existed previously. This leads to a broader question concerning the ontology of enchantment and, by

so doing, enables us to consider the relevance of the enchantment concept to modern and post-modern consumer cultures.

### WEBER'S DISENCHANTMENT

The rise and dissemination of Occidental instrumental rationalism and its consequences is a central theme in Weber's sociology (1905/2002). The disenchantment of religious superstition and myth was crucial for developing capitalism as a mental form and the dominant way of regulating social exchange. In Weber's analysis, the emergence of capitalism is closely connected to the rise of Protestantism in which an ascetic lifestyle and salvation are closely associated, such as in Calvinism and the association between virtue and prosperity. For Weber, these protestant roots, combined with the progress of the rational sciences meant that there was a diminished space for enchantment. While science unveiled superstitious aspects of traditional beliefs, capitalism created the mundane world of goods and services. This transformed the modern world into 'an iron cage' of rationality, eliminating the enchanting aspects of life.

The condition identified as Enchantment in the world prior to the Occidental instrumental rationalism was itself culturally dynamic. In the section on Sociology of Religion in Weber (1978: 399–634) it is described how naturalistic magic and myths were replaced by monotheistic religions, and this fundamentally altered the ontology of religion. Religions based on magic and myths are less influenced by rationalism because these religions do not have a higher purpose. Magical events just happen, and there is no plan for when it will happen again and only a brief connection between the event and the single human being. Contrary to such 'primitive' beliefs, monotheistic religions are guided by prophets spelling out the higher purpose of seemingly accidental occurrences and the hidden rules or law by which things happen. Protestantism was for Weber an ideal type of such a religion where each individual was thought to be accountable for his or her own salvation, and that prosperity, success and wealth in life were its only indication. Religion based on magic and myth represents a form of enchantment, which is further removed from the disenchanted modern world, with Protestantism a recent stage in between. Disenchantment of the (Western) world is a progressive process, originating in the Renaissance and intensified by Enlightenment and the development of the capitalist mode of production:

*Max Weber saw history as having departed a deeply enchanted past en route to a disenchanted future—a journey that would gradually strip the natural world both of its magical properties and of its capacity for meaning (Schneider, 1993: ix).*

For Weber, there is a fundamental difference between cultural conditions of the disenchanted world and the enchanted world superseded. A key question then is to what degree it is possible to reconstruct an enchanted world once having been disenchanted. For many Weberian scholars, the process of disenchantment is irreversible. As Gane (2004) comments,

*This process of disenchantment reduces law from a divine standard that is 'legitimated by God's will' to a technical, this-worldly means of settling questions right (...) Weber argues that there can be no foreseeable reversal of this process and hence no return to a world governed by natural law. The possibility of such a return, reunifying the differentiated life-orders through reference to a religious narrative (thereby reversing the process of Eigengesetzlichkeit), rests on the re-enchantment of the world and with this 'sacrifice of the intellect', a possibility which remains open but which Weber rejects as nothing more than a fantastical form of world-flight (Weltflucht) (Gane, 2004: 41).*

According to Weber, a way back to an enchanted world has been forever lost. The process from magic and mysticism, to Protestantism and then rationalism is one way. But Weber's position does not stand undisputed. There is a dominant current in social theory, and cultural history has stressed enchanting aspects of modernity and consumer culture, on which Campbell's work is central.

### CAMPBELL'S ENCHANTMENT

Despite few exceptions (Sombart, 1912/1967), the traditional explanation of the rise of capitalism has been to put focus on the forces of production. That is also notable in Marx's analysis (1867/1976), as well as in Weber's writings on the emergence of capitalism. This focus on production and the supply side of capitalism treated consumption either as a relatively unimportant and negligible side effect of production, or as a demand-side issue that did not take centre stage until later phases of capitalism (Riesman, 1953; Bell, 1976). In recent decades, this perspective has been questioned by cultural historians who have highlighted the importance of new consumption habits and imaginations in the development of capitalism. McKendrick *et al.* (1982) identifies the British consumer revolution in the 18th century as a driving force in the industrial revolution, and Vries (1993) argues that citizens' new consumptive tastes in the Dutch republic of the 17th century stimulated the development of merchant capitalism. Studies of 19th century consumer culture stress how the emergence of new 'temples of consumption' such as the department stores (Sennett, 1978; Miller, 1981) and world fairs (Williams, 1982) disseminated consumptive appetites to a larger audience of labourers and clerks.

In the sociology of consumption, Campbell's contribution (1987) is seminal for understanding the origins of modern consumption and its enchanting qualities. As a reply to Weber's analysis, Campbell investigates the counter side of asceticism, namely how the restraints implied in self-control increases the awareness of the sensual and emotional sides of the body. Renunciation arouses the senses and draws attention to the body as a locus of pleasure and fantasies. As an unintended consequence, individuals began to perceive themselves as sensitive beings, thereby emphasizing the importance of subjective experiences, imaginations and feelings (Jantzen *et al.* 2012). This sensitivity reached a climax in



Romanticism where experiences, spontaneity and sensuality are defined as positive values against Rationalism, which was criticized for being barren and hostile towards human nature.

For Campbell, the 'spirit' of consumerism is the logical counterpart to the spirit of capitalism, 'rendered necessary by the institutionalized split between production and consumption and the associated need to pattern activities without recourse to the guidance of tradition' (Campbell, 1983: 293). The emergence of modern consumerism is an independent factor of modernization, arising simultaneously with the process of industrialization. This implies that the ethics of Protestantism is more than just an ethics of production that disenchant the world. The Puritan preoccupation with the right use of the body is, from the start, also an ethics of consumption. It does not exterminate lusts or extinguish drives but diverts these towards sensitivity. Pleasure is not caused by the satisfaction of needs but by the fulfilment of a desire that stems from the individuals' imagination, which is fuelled by reticence and abstinence. This desire and these imaginations were advanced because the Puritans tried to conceal sensuality from public life. Attempts at controlling emotions refined sensitivity. There is no absolute distinction between self-actualization and self-control. Campbell states that by fulfilling the duty to serve the self, the Protestant individual would be gratified by experiencing happiness:

*Heaven in such a doctrine is the fulfilment of self, hell the subjugation of the self to constraining demands of custom and convention; hence not rationalizing self-denying activity but consistent self-gratificatory activity becomes a revolutionary force (Campbell, 1983: 293).*

The origins of modern consumer enchantment are located in Puritanism and its renunciation of all worldly exuberance. Moreover, by distinguishing between a traditional and a modern form of hedonism, Campbell (1987) stresses the imaginative aspects of modern enchantment. In its traditional form, the hedonist tried to obtain pleasure by choosing objects which would arouse the senses, and pleasure was a simple sensory response to a pleasing stimulus. In contrast, the modern form of hedonism relies much more on imagination. Pleasure is not so much based on actual experiences with the object but to a larger degree on the self-gratifying meanings individuals can produce about the object. Individuals can long for absent and unattainable objects, they can envision the object completely differently from how it really is and they can even abstain from using the object of desire. Desire is not so much for things but for the experience of desire, embedded in emergent emotional regimes (Jantzen et al. 2012). The modern consumer has become a skilled manipulator of his own impressions and sensations. He or she has become a 'dream-artist' (Boden and Williams, 2002) who has learned to control the world of objects and to modulate their own feelings and senses in order to optimize pleasure. The split between production and consumption in early modernity thus both favoured a spirit of modern capitalism leading to rationalized, disenchanted capitalism as analysed by Weber and a 'spirit' of modern consumerism leading to romantic enchanted capitalism as analysed by Campbell. It differs from enchantment in traditional societies because it emanates from the

individuals' self-actualizing endeavours and by relying crucially on this self's work of imagination. As stated by Ritzer (2010: 64), 'The idea of phantasmagoria is crucial to understanding the new means of consumption as enchanted worlds.'

#### RITZER: ENCHANTING A DISENCHANTED WORLD

Weber's notion of rationalism is the foundation for Ritzer's (2010) analysis of the new means of consumption as the driver in enchanting a disenchanted world. Ritzer builds on Campbell's analysis of the enchanting aspects of Romanticism in consumer culture, drawing direct lines between the religious enchantment and enchantment created by consumption. Ritzer defines the enchanted consumption environment as

*The new means of consumption can be seen as 'cathedrals of consumption'—that is, they are structured, often successfully, to have an enchanted, sometimes even sacred, religious character...As is the case with religious cathedrals, the cathedrals of consumption are not only enchanted, they are also highly rationalized. As they attract more and more consumers, their enchantment must be reproduced over and over on demand (Ritzer, 2010: 7).*

Ritzer does more than simply develop and build on Weber. The *McDonaldization thesis* and *Enchanting a Disenchanted World* recast the Weberian Spirit of Capitalism as a sociology of consumption to such an extent that what many consumer researchers now understand as Weberian theory is more accurately a theory by Ritzer albeit informed by a certain reading of Weber. In Weber's Spirit of Capitalism, consumption and the consumer are minor considerations. For Weber, consumption is only really considered in terms of how Protestant asceticism regulates and restricts a prior existing 'organic' consumption:

*This worldly Protestant asceticism, as we may recapitulate up to this point, acted powerfully against the spontaneous enjoyment of possessions; it restricted consumption, especially of luxuries. On the other hand, it had the psychological effect of freeing the acquisition of goods from the inhibitions of traditionalistic ethics. It broke the bonds of the impulse of acquisition in that it not only legalized it, but looked upon it as directly willed by God. (Weber, 1905/2002: 27).*

There is no real possibility of enchantment in the modern world according to Weber's analysis, and it is only through Campbell's extension and critique that the possibility of enchantment in consumer culture is developed. Ritzer therefore presents a direct challenge to Weber's conclusion rather than adapting it, finding that 'Despite Weber's pessimism, enchantment persists' (Ritzer, 2010: 69). This version of Weber is broadly accurate, although Weber does allude to at least the possibility of futures that exceed rationalism and 'specialists without spirit'. In the final paragraphs of *The Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber contemplates the prospect that there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals someday, but if such a rebirth is to come about, which is by no means likely, it will

do so out with the boundaries and terms of the modern spirit of capitalism. In Ritzer's ontology of enchantment, however, the new means of consumption are not only rationalized and disenchanted, but also enchanted.

For Ritzer, and contrary to Weber, the capitalist system of production has been able to re-enchant the world as fast as it has been disenchanted. Ritzer's (2010) direct comparison between the cathedrals of consumption and the cathedrals associated with organized religions is evident in choice of terms that describe consumer pilgrimages and worship at these 'new means of consumption'. However, the continuing potential for disenchantment and rationalization is an ever-present possibility:

*The idea of cathedrals of consumption emphasizes that these settings are characterized by the enchantment needed to lure consumers, although disenchantment is an ever-present possibility as a result of the process of rationalization (Ritzer, 2010: 8–9).*

The cultural condition prior to the process of disenchantment was not involved in rationalization processes, and therefore, the risk of disenchantment was absent in pre-modern societies. It is a cultural condition characterized by what Baudrillard defines as symbolic exchange and Pawlett (2007) presents as 'a form or principle, rather than as the specific "content" of cultural practices (p. 48)'. Changes in this kind of culture are primarily caused by physical and demographic factors, not by mental structures associated with the rationalization process. Ideas about the absence of the potential for disenchantment and rationalization in pre-modern cultures that Ritzer derives from Baudrillard are not problematic:

*However, in this work, re-enchantment will be viewed as an on going and very real development within the contemporary cathedrals of consumption. It constitutes the way out of the dilemma posed by the disenchantment of the world in general and other means of consumption in particular. To continue to attract, control, and exploit consumers, the cathedrals of consumption undergo a continual process of re-enchantment (Ritzer, 2010: 69–70).*

The process of re-enchantment is based on a rationalization where the level of enchantment connected to a given cathedral of consumption is monitored, evaluated and improved in order to achieve maximum optimisation. When the level or degree of enchantment is inadequate (fewer customers and less money spent), the means of consumption must be re-encharnted. For this line of reasoning to remain consistent, it is necessary to first accept and incorporate a particular ontology of enchantment, one that is essentially historical and linear in character. In this ontology, we can identify the procession from a state (or states) of enchantment, to a state of disenchantment and then to re-enchantment.

#### A BAUDRILLARDIAN CRITIQUE OF THE ONTOLOGY OF ENCHANTMENT

Ritzer uses the enchantment concept both for religious enchantment and the enchantment produced by the new means

of consumption. Baudrillard's (1993) theory of the 'three orders of simulacra' describing the cultural development from the Renaissance onwards can be used to mediate between Weber's rejection of enchantment in capitalism and Ritzer's enchanted world. Baudrillard's writing is infused with discourse that invokes concepts that can be easily associated with ideas of (re)enchantment Ritzer (2010: 69). In this context, Baudrillard's theories are perhaps best thought of in terms of radical re-enchantment or even catastrophic revenge in post-industrial society. Thus, Baudrillard (2001:11) speaks of *impossible exchange* as the illusion or phantasm that lurks behind all value systems and representations of an objective and rational world.

In the progression of simulacra, the order of imitation is superseded by the order of production, which is then superseded by the order of simulation. In broad terms, the first order of simulacra corresponds to Weber's enchanted world, and the second order, to that of industrial production and the world disenchanted through rationality. Baudrillard describes how cultural conditions for discourse and representation have changed in European history from the Middle Ages and beyond, and the ways that people have attached different meanings to their intentions and actions throughout history. Baudrillard's point of departure is a cultural condition based on what he calls 'symbolic exchange'. This condition characterizes so-called primitive cultures where an immediate meaning of life exists through the individual's place in a stable and reciprocal social order. In a European context, the Middle Ages broadly represents the kind of cultural condition that Baudrillard terms the symbolic.

Baudrillard's theory of the three orders of simulacra is an attempt to analyse the cultural changes societies have been subject to since they left the original symbolic order. Here, it is important to note that the empirical reality of the kind of societies mentioned earlier is not central. The idea of former kinds of societies is part of defining a present cultural condition. The order of imitation is a concept of how Western culture has developed since the decline of archaic religions towards the end of The Middle Ages and the emergence of the Renaissance. This altered culture fundamentally. The single human being no longer understands himself as having a binding and unbreakable relationship to God, and understanding of reality in culture changes. The former epoch can be said to be determined by a symbolic order, building on obligation and reciprocity, despite the principle differences between human beings. The order of imitation changes this. Signs are no longer bound to (and hence obliged by) one specific relation but set free. By being loosened from their connection to a specific referent, one can construct new cultural meanings. This relationship can be regarded as the condition for the self-conscious individual, the emergence of the bourgeoisie and science as an institution. This causes that the single individual relates to reason and humanity; that citizens can use clothes as signs to create fashion; and that science can study the world as an object, and independent of God and human beings. The individual imitates reason and humanity when it has to define itself; the citizen imitates the aristocracy when they choose their style in clothes; science finds that true results imitate nature.

Because of the signs' imitative quality, this is called the order of imitation: Signs imitate something, which is perceived as being real. Here in the origins of simulacra, that is, the individual's essence, the Social and Nature only exist as imaginations that can be regarded as an effect of a culture disconnecting the 'natural' order of signs and their referents.

The order of production according to Baudrillard relates to the emergence of classic capitalism, breaking with principles in the order of imitation. In the analysis of this new epoch, Baudrillard relies on Marxist economic theory. Analysis of the logic of capitalism is eminent, but for Baudrillard, Marxist theory does not progress beyond the basic images of classic economy, that is, the capacity for work and the nature of demands. Marx sees capitalism as a historical and social institution that has emerged at a given time and which is not a natural part of the world. In Baudrillard's scheme, capitalism is a semiotic system governed by a specific logic. It is a new way in which orders of simulacra are organized, which in turn redefines value.

With capitalism, exchange value becomes central, and what previously could be regarded as exploitation and real oppositions disappear because everything can be equated in the logic of exchange value. Any reference to something real (which still was very much present in and with imitation) disappears, and only the logic of the exchange value is left. Production is no longer carried out to reach a specific goal. Instead, production serves the purpose of perpetually giving fuel to the system's own reproduction. All actions within this system are directed towards fulfilling the system's own logic. Baudrillard here uses the automaton as a metaphor for the way human beings function in this system. Through rationalization, goods and value are mass-produced, leading to the impression of accumulation of ever more goods. The whole culture becomes organized around reproducing a system as efficiently as possible, and this logic becomes the mainstay of culture, in that any references to a condition before capitalism have evaporated. Thus, the world and culture is disenchanted, with any link to a natural law of value replaced by a common and single form of exchange value defined in solely economic terms.

This second order of simulacra broadly corresponds to the Industrial Revolution, and as Butler points out, this is only an intermediate period in Baudrillard's theory (Butler, 1999: 37). It separates via discontinuity the era of symbolic exchange and its reestablishment as seduction and simulation. This third order, of simulation, succeeds the order of production, and order radically reorganizes the way in which signs function in culture. The pure reproduction of the system and the infinite exchanges of equivalent signs do not constitute a sufficient foundation for culture. Throughout the order of imitation and production, the reference of the sign as something originally binding and thereby symbolic disappeared. Instead, a new kind of culture emerged where obligation and reciprocity are simulated. For Baudrillard, the transition from the order of imitation to the order of production was not as distinct as the transition from the order of production to the order of simulation. Imitation and production are treated as transitional periods from an initial state termed the symbolic to the final (contemporary) state of simulation.

By the order of simulation, classic economy is brought to an end. The goods produced no longer refer to use value (as in the order of imitation) or to exchange value (as in the order of production), but to a sign value having 'the structural play of value' (Baudrillard, 1993: 6) as reference. This means that signs refer to signs that again refer to signs. This perpetual reference, however, does not take place without a certain structural coherence. There is no longer any reference to a reality external to the exchange of signs. Signs mutate by a continuing communication with other signs. Sign value emerges in 'the genesis of simulacra' (Baudrillard, 1993: 57). The sign value is yielded by a program, which in turn is governed by a code. This model precedes what is yielded. In the order of simulation, new models are continuously generated giving the signs the possibility to mutate into new sign values. The very idea is that the sign no longer has any fixed reference and that the referent disappears. It is the basic theme constituting the core in the order of simulation.

*Today we know that it is at the level of reproduction (fashion, the media, advertising, information and communication networks), at the level of what Marx rather carelessly called the faux frais of capital (immense historical irony!), that is, in the sphere of simulacra and the code, that the unity of the whole process of capital is formed (Baudrillard, 1993: 56).*

Here it is shown that all those aspects of organization and management that fall outside classic economy's perception of what is essential in the order of production are aspects that the marketing discipline deals with. Marketing can be regarded as that part of economy that specializes in Marx's 'faux frais' that refers to 'incidental operating expenses' incurred in the productive investment of capital, which do not in themselves add new value to output. This process can be regarded as an example of what Baudrillard characterizes as the model determining what is produced and what meaning the product acquires. According to Baudrillard, this model precedes what is produced. There is a program for what is produced, and this program is governed by a code. In the order of imitation and production, it was anticipated that the code determining the meaning of the signs refers to something given such as a stable social order or the necessity to reproduce. In the order of simulation, the code no longer refers to something real but only to its own logic. By seeing this in the light of the marketing orientation, the code's logic is identical with the logic of the marketing orientation: Every company must constantly keep itself informed about what the customers want and deliver the product at the place and time where the consumers want it, with the design they want, at the price they want. This program that the marketing orientation puts on the agenda becomes a model, as Baudrillard defines it.

#### DISENCHANTMENT AS SIMULATED ENCHANTMENT

Baudrillard's focus is on cultural conditions for meaning construction after the Middle Ages. In the mediaeval



universe, the cultural reference was placed outside the culture itself, in a deity. This era can be compared to Weber's 'original' state of enchantment, which was disenchanted by rationality. Prior to the emergence of the order of imitation meaning was represented by reference to something transcendent to culture, and the Renaissance introduced reason and humanity as something the individual must possess. The individual is defined as imitating these two concepts, and reason and humanity become the guarantee for meanings. From a Weberian perspective, this is the first step in the disenchantment process, whereas for Baudrillard, it represents just another kind of re-enchantment because this new foundation (in reason and humanity) is not understood as a construct but taken as a natural relationship. For Baudrillard this is a simulacrum: a 'truth' concealing that no definite truth exists. It could also be described as the enchantment of reason, which is taken to provide the meaning of life. In the Weberian tradition the capitalistic mode of production is both a source of disenchantment and re-enchantment. For Baudrillard this is the order of production and the transformation from use value to exchange value. This transformation is crucial because Baudrillard perceives the order of production as a semiotic system based on the exchange value. Mass-produced goods gain new meaning as they are transposed into new exchange contexts; signs are detached as a result of the order of production. Because culture does not operate with meaningless signs, this process opens the possibility of attaching new meaning to signs.

The order of simulation marks the end of a traditional conception of society and economy in that the goods provided by production refer to neither use value (as in the order of imitation) nor exchange value (as in the order of production), but to a sign value gaining its reference differently from what had existed under the former orders. Enchantment is no longer transcendent to human existence but immanent in social life. It becomes a man made construction and man is aware of that. It is a 'second order' enchantment. As a consequence, it is what we might term a 'second order' enchantment. That is, enchantment publicly recognized as enchantment and overtly produced and consumed in order to lure, attract and fascinate. This cultural logic is completely different from mediaeval enchantment. In this second order enchantment, consumers know they are surrounded by enchanting objects. This cultural condition is also a premise for the experience economy (e.g. Pine and Gilmore, 1999) because this phenomenon is characterized by the construction of enchantment beyond what can be connected to the branded object. In the order of simulation, everything is constructed with the purpose of signification and attraction. This mode of enchantment requires a new understanding of experiential consumer behaviour.

Both Weber and Baudrillard address an original cultural condition where an initial, 'authentic' enchantment was present. For Weber, this pristine enchantment has gone forever since the beginning of the disenchantment processes of modernity. Baudrillard describes this pristine enchantment as a culture based on symbolic exchange and asserts that such culture based on reciprocity and obligation has been the

premise for any culture whether real or simulated. In the order of imitation, enchantment is no longer a natural foundation for culture. Instead, the monotheistic God became the transcendent foundation for culture. In Protestantism, the relationship to God changed, and it became a duty for the single individual to establish a personal relationship to religion and to reject ritualism and mysticism. This change in focus continues the ideas of the Renaissance, where reason and humanity prescribe how human beings should be constituted. In the transition from Catholicism to the Renaissance and Protestantism, the model for enchantment changed from a focus on the unquestionable rituals to un-reflected belief in the individual determined by reason and humanity. Enchantment is here constituted by a model where individuals imitate the unquestioned ideas of reason, humanity and science.

Baudrillard's order of production corresponds to Weber's era of disenchantment, but it could also be interpreted as an era of a new kind of enchantment or what might be termed a form of 'enchanted disenchantment'. The order of production generates belief in progress and in a better future based on mass-produced goods in rationalized capitalist system. Everything is transformed into exchange value, and because of the enchanted atmosphere, the consequences are obscured. What was left of the use value is repressed, and the sign is no longer obliged by history and tradition. Goods are bestowed with new meaning, and citizens can acquire goods that were earlier retained for aristocracy. The sumptuary laws from the 17th century, which prohibited this kind of imitation, were abolished, and instead, the mass-produced goods overflowed society, and this trickle-down effect could not be stopped. The availability of cheap mass-produced goods was itself an enchanting moment, and even Marx was enchanted by the disenchantment when he critiqued commodity fetishism and identified capitalism as the second highest level of development of the human societies. The order of simulation is based on the sign detached from history and tradition. Signs continue to determine meaning as they float within culture, but this meaning is no longer determined by a stable framework but instead constructed by marketing-oriented companies on the basis of market research and strategic decision. These are the means of enchanted consumption. Individuals in consumer culture know that they are confronted with constructed enchantments when they shop, buy, dream and consume.

Our analysis has highlighted the need to think beyond fixed categories of enchantment and disenchantment. Contemporary consumer cultures should certainly not be understood as a return to enchanted worlds akin to those of Weber's pre-industrialized, pre-modern world or Baudrillard's symbolic exchange, but nor is it the case that they are disenchanted worlds either. In contrast to Ritzer, we suggest that a disenchanted world cannot be re-encharmed in terms of some kind of return or reinstatement of values, which many have existed previously. However, in support of Ritzer, we also suggest that disenchantment is not total or complete and that many of the forces of disenchantment were and are themselves rich in enchanting potential. Consumer cultures are not totally disenchanted worlds where enchantment is but a historical memory. Consumer cultures produce and reproduce and simulate enchantment and disenchantment, perhaps at ever accelerating



rates and in roughly equal measure, and it is this process of reproduction or simulation that requires further analysis rather than the states themselves. Both enchantment and disenchantment imply some nominal cultural referent to a stable cultural order, and this, for Baudrillard, is what has disappeared in consumer culture, as Ritzer notes, 'the enchanted world of symbolic exchange continually haunts, and poses a threat to, the modern disenchanted world of economic exchange' (Ritzer, 2010, 73). What remain and re-appear are systems of signified disenchantment and enchantment bound together only as signs of one another, produced and reproduced (simulated) within consumer culture and consumer identity.

There is a certain irony in using Baudrillard's theories to counteract a discourse of cultural alienation and rationalization because for many commentators Baudrillard's ideas are essentially nihilistic and without progressive potential. Ritzer's contribution illustrates how simulated enchantment can be observed and critiqued through the lens of conventional social theory, but this does not account for the other side of the bargain, namely the production of simulated disenchantment that is more than simply a reflected version of extreme rationalization. Baudrillard, we conclude, does offer several versions of something that comes close to a form of 'simulated' disenchantment, represented across several recurring concepts and ideas. One idea that comes closest to what we might understand as 'total' simulated disenchantment in Baudrillard is *Absolute Evil*, understood as that which is necessarily produced from an 'unchecked proliferation of Good' (Baudrillard, 2010: 109). This idea is a feature of Baudrillard's later writings where 'relative good and evil' has become eclipsed by a totalitarian morality in which infinite progress and development produces a banalized and neutralized world continually shattered by the unpredictable and terrorizing event. Baudrillard offers a vision of a logical and inevitable trajectory that leads 'beyond' enchantment and simulation to a culture of the event and of terror. Good continually folds in on itself to become its opposite. Global power, Baudrillard concludes, has not and cannot have any symbolic response to such events, exposing an immense symbolic powerlessness and impotence.

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