

Vanessa Freerks

**Baudrillard with Nietzsche and Heidegger:
Towards a Genealogical Analysis**

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Abstract

In this study, I seek to show how Baudrillard reactualizes Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*. To my knowledge, no scholar has specifically tried to reconstruct how certain critical elements, strategies and figures within Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* are mobilized in Baudrillard's work.

I first deal with Baudrillard's genealogy of consumer society. I argue that both Nietzsche and Baudrillard are interested in analyzing the power structures and differential relations upholding moral systems. Baudrillard applies the critical tools of genealogy to Saussurean linguistics and he analyzes concepts as symptoms of the powers and forces that have become dominant. For Baudrillard, Saussurean linguistics presents us with a theory of language and it describes the consumer "morality" of late modernity.

Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* anticipates the general outline of Baudrillard's critique of the morality of consumption, but Baudrillard also transforms certain Nietzschean positions, processes, practices and figures. I show how the Nietzschean figure of the "ascetic priest" is turned into the modern advertiser in Baudrillard's works on consumer society. In addition, I discuss whether the "ascetic ideal" lives on in consumer society, despite the "end of transcendence".

After tackling Baudrillard's consumer society, I scrutinize his genealogy of the orders of simulacra in relation to Nietzsche's "reversal of Platonism". In addition, I deal with Baudrillard's genealogy of death and in the process, I examine Baudrillard's (problematic) relation to Heidegger, which I do to accentuate Baudrillard's closeness to Nietzsche.

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Introduction

This study seeks to bring to light how Baudrillard reconstructs certain critical elements, strategies and figures in Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*. To my knowledge, no scholar has specifically tried to show how Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* is remobilized in Baudrillard's work.¹

In chapters 1, 2 and 3, I deal with Baudrillard's genealogy of consumer society as outlined in *Consumer Society* (1970; 1998).

In chapter 4 and 5, I go through his genealogy of the image and of simulation, as analyzed in the books *Simulacra and Simulations* (1981; 1994) as well as *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976; 1993).

In chapter 6, I tackle Baudrillard's genealogy of death as sketched in his book *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. In this final chapter on Baudrillard's genealogy of death, I discuss Baudrillard's (problematic) relation to Heidegger, which as we shall see, further underlines Baudrillard's closeness to Nietzsche.²

I will start the following introduction to my study with some comments made by Baudrillard regarding his relation to Nietzsche. This serves as a background to clarify why I find it important to focus on certain elements within Nietzschean genealogy to better understand Baudrillard.

Baudrillard's direct and explicit references to Nietzsche are rare but comments he has made in interviews show the importance of Nietzsche to his thought. In the following excerpt

¹ For a general overview of the influence of Nietzsche on Baudrillard see Lepers (2009); Pawlett (2007, 112-113) and interviews between François L'Yvonnet and Baudrillard (2001; 2004).

² In the following excerpt from an interview collected as *D'un fragment l'autre* Baudrillard discusses his philosophical trajectory and he mentions Heidegger: "my philosophical background is shaky, particularly where the classical philosophers are concerned, such as Kant and Hegel or even Heidegger. I have read Heidegger of course, but not in German, and fragmentarily. Perhaps one only ever studies one philosopher seriously, just as one has only one godfather, as one has only one idea in one's life. Nietzsche is, then, the author beneath whose broad shadow I moved, though involuntarily and without really knowing what I was doing" (Baudrillard 2004, 2).

from an interview collected as *D'un fragment l'autre* Baudrillard says:

"I read [Nietzsche] very early ... I held him in a kind of quasi-visceral memory, but I'd retained only what I wanted to" (Baudrillard 2004, 1).

Baudrillard, in the footsteps of Nietzsche, advocates an "interpretative violence" at the heart of his approach and it is in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that Nietzsche suggests that interpretation is always a matter of "forcing, adjusting, shortening, omitting, filling-out, inventing, falsifying and everything else *essential* to interpretation" (Nietzsche 2007, 112; italics in the text). In addition, Baudrillard follows Nietzsche in regarding all interpretation as polemical: to support one view is to combat another view. The subtitle of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* is *A Polemic* and a characteristic of Nietzsche's genealogical study is that it combats interpretations which claim to be self-evident, beyond dispute, necessary and eternal.

In interviews, Baudrillard admits that he indirectly extends Nietzsche's work and creates an afterlife for Nietzsche's ideas. Baudrillard says:

"I find it curious, all those people who've read Nietzsche ... but nothing has rubbed off on them. How can you go on doing your own thing in your own little discipline as though nothing had happened?" (Baudrillard 2004, 56).

Here we see how Baudrillard highlights the transformative effect of Nietzsche's writing. For Baudrillard, it is only possible to study a single philosopher seriously and he claims that the one philosopher he did study was Nietzsche.³ Engaging with Nietzsche's thought, in Baudrillard's eyes, does not entail explicit interpretation and detailed analysis of Nietzsche or becoming involved in the debate regarding (the value of) Nietzsche's philosophy.

³ In the collection of interviews *D'un fragment l'autre*, Baudrillard says: "Perhaps one only ever studies one philosopher seriously, just as one has only one godfather, as one has only one idea in one's life. Nietzsche is, then, the author beneath whose broad shadow I moved, though involuntarily and without really knowing what I was doing" (Baudrillard 2004, 2).

Baudrillard does not follow Nietzsche in any systematic way but secondary critics often underscore (without systematic, in depth or prolonged analysis, however) the clear and “profound influence” (Pawlett 2007, 3) of Nietzsche on Baudrillard. Holger Zapf (2010, 12; my translation) claims that Baudrillard can be regarded as the “Nietzsche of social scientific theory” (he does not go into further detail on this, however).

Baudrillard is constantly in search of radical otherness and seeks to lift any anchors that fix thoughts or the world. He disputes the meaningfulness of the fundamental concepts of the social sciences as well as the appropriateness of social scientific methods; he throws out normative orientations and declares many theoretical enterprises (from Marxism, Positivism up to “Post Modernism”) as redundant. He thereby constitutes the degree zero of theory.

Baudrillard disputes in a certain sense that social reality can be grasped within theoretical statements and even denies the existence of “the social” and “the political” as categories that pick out their corresponding referent. When he does provide a description of social reality, he uses neither a rigorous conceptual set of instruments nor an explicit theory that clearly states its epistemological premises. Rather, according to the Baudrillard critic, Peter W. Zima (2010, 104), Baudrillard makes use of alarming metaphors to create a conceptual fog and shows no interest in theoretical coherence.

One of Baudrillard’s sharpest critics, Alex Callinicos, claims that in Baudrillard’s work all that is left are “*belles lettres*”, where unsubstantial theoretical propositions encounter “*banal aperçus*” (Callinicos 1989, 147). This is a valid criticism and Baudrillard indeed has more in common with a novelist than with a theoretician. For King (1998, 99; italics in the text), Baudrillard’s

“writing is merely an earnest but stripped form of academic writing, which moves from *asserted* claim to claim, rather than from *sustained* claim to claim for the slow but rigorous building of an argument”.

The building of arguments indeed does not interest Baudrillard as much as the stylistic figures that make up the literary and rhetori-

cal charge of a text. It is obvious, however, that behind his literary mediated perspective there lies an indirect semiology (such as that of Ferdinand de Saussure), anthropology (such as that of Marcel Mauss), philosophy (such as Nietzsche) and theology, in short a 'theory', which can be made explicit by the secondary literature (for instance Gary Genosko's (1994) *Baudrillard and Signs. Signification Ablaze*, Holger Zapf's (2010) book on *The Radical Thinking of Jean Baudrillard as a Political Theory*, James Walters's (2012) book on *Baudrillard and Theology* and Charles Levin's (1996) book on *Baudrillard's Cultural Metaphysics*).

What differentiates Baudrillard from a literary figure is his heterodox notion of theory. With no evident method, with no explicit premise, Baudrillard only equips himself with a set of arbitrary hypotheses and theorems which most of the time contradict each other and make a coherent theory impossible. For example, he claims "All things," (including statements on these things) "are ambivalent and reversible" (Baudrillard 1993 TE, 77). Regarding political facts, he says "this confusion of the fact with its model...allows each time for all possible interpretations, even the most contradictory" (Baudrillard 1981, 32; 1994, 17).

Baudrillard's work can by no means comply with theoretical standards, because he himself declares these standards inadequate. As a result, his thinking cannot qualify as theoretical. Critics of Baudrillard do mostly agree, however, that he has many important insights.

How does Baudrillard come to these perspectives and what scope do they have? To investigate this, one would have to reconstruct a theory from his fragmented insights, as one does with works of literature.

Perhaps there is a theory in Baudrillard's work, which he himself eliminated. For Baudrillard, a good theory is "reversible"; it eliminates itself. Reversibility is in tune with Baudrillard's rejection of any notion of linear progress and his Nietzschean view⁴

⁴ As Nietzsche puts it in the Third Essay, paragraph 27 of *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "the law of necessary 'self-overcoming' is the essence of life" (Nietzsche 2007, 119).

that systems have a built-in obsolescence.⁵ Baudrillard's own work follows a strategy of reversibility, which according to Rex Butler means that the "basic axioms of the system" under examination must be pushed "to the point where they begin to turn upon themselves, to produce the opposite effects from those intended" (Butler 1997, 52).

For Baudrillard, the rationality of the Enlightenment produces "the orders of simulacra" that destroy it (chapter 4 and 5). 'Reality', in Baudrillard's eyes, has become hyperreal. A central Baudrillardian concept I will study is hyperreality (chapter 5), which is the new ruling linguistic condition of society. Hyperreality puts an end to distinctions between object and representation, thing and idea. It is a world composed of models or simulacra, which have no referent or ground in any 'reality' except their own, and I will show how this parallels Nietzsche's definition of nihilism: the highest values cannot resist their own reversal and devaluation.

Generally speaking, nihilism takes two forms in Nietzsche. The first is when life is judged lacking in relation to something super-sensuous beyond it, as in the case of Platonism or Christianity. In this case, truth, meaning and value is derived from a transcendent origin. The second form of nihilism is when these higher values are devalued, as in the case of the Enlightenment. In this case, meaning and value are questioned. For Nietzsche, any philosophy must decide how to deal with these two problems, which are integral to thought. According to Nietzsche, passive nihilism remains locked within the recognition that the world is without true foundation, ground and meaning. Active nihilism, on the other hand, arises from the general insight that "the meaning and value of life depend on fictions that we must accept as true" (Winkler 2018, 105).

⁵ In his entry "Nihilism" in *The Baudrillard Dictionary*, Rex Butler (2010, 139) says: "Nietzsche is one of Baudrillard defining influences. He is one of the few thinkers whose presumptions are not turned against them" as Baudrillard did with Marx in *The Mirror of Production* (1975) and Saussure as well as Freud in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1993).

In chapter 4, I show how Nietzsche problematizes the value of truth (without simply overturning the super-sensuous Platonic value structure, for instance, by privileging appearances). Nietzsche's early essay "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense" (1873; 1999) overcomes the dualistic and hierarchical ordering between sensuous and super-sensuous, illusion and reality, appearance and essence. This is because, for Nietzsche, the production of truth is itself an illusionary process. I will start chapter 4 (section 1) by discussing Nietzsche's reversal of Platonism and I do so by examining Nietzsche's early text "On Truth and Lie in the Non-Moral Sense" as well as his later text *Twilight of the Idols*.⁶

Christopher Norris (2000, 364) regards Baudrillard's own project as "a species of inverted Platonism". For Norris,

"Baudrillard's ...discourse... systematically promotes the negative terms (rhetoric, appearance, ideology) above their positive counterparts. It is no longer possible to maintain the old economy of truth and representation in a world where 'reality' is entirely constructed through forms of mass media feedback, where values are determined by consumer demand (itself brought about by the endless circulation of meanings, images and advertising codes), and where nothing could serve as a means of distinguishing true from merely true-seeming (or logical) habits of belief. Such is the world we inhabit, according to Baudrillard" (Norris 2000, 364).

Norris does not mention, however, the extent to which Baudrillard, like Nietzsche, breaks down privileged hierarchical relations altogether. In my view, Baudrillard does not triumph the rise of the simulacrum nor does he lament a loss of the real in simulation, rather, Baudrillard's work seeks to challenge processes of simulation that try to bring about a real, that create effects of the real ("hyperreality", as we shall see in more detail in chapter 5).

Rex Butler (1997, 54) rightly claims that "Baudrillard's point is that each system he analyses (and the work of any great thinker) creates its own reality, sets out the very terms in which it must be understood". Yet, in Baudrillard's work, as Butler also points out,

⁶ I follow R.L. Anderson (2005, 185) in this regard.

there is another side to any attempt to create the real in simulation, a side which resists any method of simulation.⁷

Baudrillard's reversible and "anagrammatic"⁸ theory is necessarily radical and aims straight at its own roots. For Baudrillard, the real joy in writing is to sacrifice a whole chapter for a sentence, a whole sentence for a word. A theory that destroys itself is not merely something that has vanished to nothing. After the anagrammatic "implosion", (Nietzsche's "Twilight of the Idols", dealt with in chapter 4) there remains a moment of silence, uncertainty and doubt. The theory ends as it started: with "wonder". In this sense, Baudrillard's crime was almost perfect: he managed to erase the theoretical traces of his enterprise and he transformed his theory into an uncomfortable but surprising story, with many insights (Zapf 2010, 13).

One should not be swayed by rhetorical strategy; one must (while keeping in mind Baudrillard's assertion regarding the connection between thought and event) suspend one's own judgment when the text's theses collide. Only then perhaps is it possible to glimpse Baudrillard's theory.

The Baudrillard critic, Charles Levin (1996), prefers to speak of a "metaphysics" rather than "theory" in Baudrillard's work. Instead of "post-modern," Levin opts for the label "cultural metaphysics" because metaphysics has relinquished its demand for seriousness and legitimacy (Levin 1996, 15). Theory is associated with intellectual seriousness and involves "academic responsibility" (Levin 1996, 15) even though Baudrillard uses the word himself and plays with its seriousness. Levin's study seeks to emphasize the non-systematic aspects of Baudrillard's work, and how Baudrillard strips his work to referentiality and practicality (espe-

⁷ "It is this real, excluded by any attempt to speak of it, that is the limit to every system – it is the Platonic paradox that Baudrillard means by the real" (Butler 1999, 53). The paradox first raised by Plato in his dialogue *Cratylus* (1875, 257) has been treated by Derrida in his essay *Plato's Pharmacy*.

⁸ Baudrillard's chapter "The Extermination of the Name of God" in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* starts with a section on 'The Anagram'. In his book on Baudrillard entitled *Baudrillard's Bestiary*, Mike Gane (1991b, 118-121) discusses the intricacies of the anagram in his chapter "Anagrammatic Resolutions".

cially the case in Baudrillard's later work)⁹ and the importance it places on the power of criticism to actually end up making reality (Levin 1996, 15). Among other cultural metaphysicians Levin includes Nietzsche, Bataille and Deleuze (Levin 1996, 16) who also have a prominent place in my study.

According to Rex Butler (1999, 15), Levin's approach does not provide examples of exactly how Baudrillard avoids referentiality and practicality or how Baudrillard transforms them in his work. This means that Levin does not focus systematically enough on Baudrillard's writing and how its inner logic functions. For Baudrillard, writing is always in the process of being formed and literature becomes the avatar of philosophical renewal. Literature challenges philosophy and in so doing, it triggers the creation of new perspectives, as well as new modes of thinking and writing.

As Rex Butler (1999, 5; italics in the text) explains:

"Criticism or theory understands itself no longer as responding to or explaining a previous real, but as bringing about its own real. Or Baudrillard's work engages with the real, but not in the way this is usually understood. It is a real not external but *internal* to the work. The model for Baudrillard's writing, though he rarely mentions him by name, is...Nietzsche."

The position Baudrillard reaches towards the end of his work is that writing creates its own reality. Writing redirects and transforms external circumstances. For Baudrillard, the distinctive aspect of significant thought is that it overhauls the influences upon it and makes something else of them.

Philippe Lepers (2009, 337-350) in his article "Baudrillard und Nietzsche: vademecum, vadetecum" provides a general overview of the relationship between Baudrillard and Nietzsche, and he investigates to what extent Baudrillard moves under Nie-

⁹ *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, published in French in 1976, is the most all-encompassing exposition of Baudrillard's ideas and it is the last of his works that proceeds in an overall systematic and scientific style. Here, Baudrillard provides a "genealogy" of death, but death is here already a figure of speech for the more general notion of symbolic exchange. After this book, Baudrillard steadily leaves the conventions of academic writing behind and he attempts to critique all systematic thought (by delving into the 'simulations' he describes).

tzsche's shadow, as well as how Nietzsche's work serves as a platform for Baudrillard's own projects. Baudrillard is loyal to Nietzsche's adage "vademecum, vadetecum" (Lepers 2009, 349), and in his conclusion, Lepers questions to what extent Baudrillard's reception of Nietzsche can bring forth new interpretations of Nietzsche's philosophy, specifically whether Nietzsche can now be regarded (after Baudrillard) as a philosopher of "alterity", which in Baudrillard's work encompasses all that which challenges the homogeneous and universal discourse or code (Lepers 2009, 350). This transformative aspect of Baudrillard's reading of Nietzsche will also be important for my study. Nietzsche can be seen to anticipate many of Baudrillard's ideas, but this study will also emphasize how Baudrillard transforms Nietzschean concepts.

Lepers (2009, 344; my translation) identifies certain areas of Nietzschean critique that may have influenced Baudrillard. Below are the ones he identifies that are also important to bear in mind for my study.

- Nietzsche's allergic reaction to any form of Socialism;
- Nietzsche's critique of Utilitarianism;
- Nietzsche's rejection of any objective meaning that is natural or free of human involvement;
- Nietzsche critique of the autonomous rational subject. The human being is the result of a constant struggle of forces and everything the human does is symptomatic, a sign of sickness or health; and
- Nietzsche's critical position towards any idea of continuous progress of European culture.

In my own study, relating Nietzsche to Baudrillard (and making explicit what Baudrillard left implicit), I will try to reveal the subtle 'genealogical foundation' that is hidden behind Baudrillard's disturbing yet brilliant rhetoric. Baudrillard must be regarded as an intellectual who decides to present his political and social interventions in a disturbing and provocative way. As Anthony King puts it:

“[t]he importance of Baudrillard lies in the fact that he both demonstrates the most extreme symptoms of contemporary intellectual malaise and simultaneously provides the cure for that disease” (King 1998, 106).

Baudrillard, in the footsteps of Nietzsche does not read philosophical truth claims according to their alleged accurate reflection of reality (as it is in-itself), but as symptoms of a certain form of life.¹⁰ Nietzsche and Baudrillard use genealogy to undermine modern moral practices expressing a “will to truth”. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche rejects the idea that there can be one account of truth that corresponds with the way things are in themselves, “independently of the mediation of perspectives by relations of willing” (Allsobrook 2009, 703).

A central claim in *On the Genealogy of Morals* is that our unconditional will to truth has brought us to the point of nihilism. An unconditional commitment to the value of truth disempowers us as agents. Truth can never be above our interest in truth and our perspectives (from which truth claims are made) are affected by the things we value. Baudrillard, I argue, follows Nietzsche in emphasizing the importance of exploring different perspectives, drives, affects or passions.

Genealogy, as practiced by Nietzsche and Baudrillard, reminds readers not only of the contingency of their perspectives but proposes different perspectives. It motivates readers to assess the value of their perspectives in relation to other perspectives.

Chapter Outline

In chapters 1, 2 and 3, I investigate to what extent Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* anticipates the general outline of Baudrillard’s critique of the morality of consumption, which Baudrillard develops in his first two published works, *The System of Objects* (1968; 2005) and *Consumer Society* (1970; 1998).

¹⁰ For an analysis of Nietzschean symptomatology see for example van Tongeren (2000, 7,9,140-141).

In chapters 4 and 5, I go through Baudrillard's genealogy of the image and of simulation. In the final chapter 6, I deal with Baudrillard's genealogy of death.

In chapter 1, I show that both Nietzsche and Baudrillard are interested in analyzing the power structures and differential relations upholding moral systems. Baudrillard applies the critical tools of genealogy to Saussurean linguistics and he analyzes concepts as symptoms of the dominant powers and forces. For Baudrillard, Saussurean linguistics presents us with a theory of language and it describes the consumer "morality" of late modernity (Baudrillard 1998, 79). Baudrillard thereby argues that neither structural linguistics nor our current morality of consumption is inevitable or universal.

Baudrillard seeks to show that structural linguistics ignores that it is a historically-based semiological structure, not a universal truth about language. The sign, separated from the referent and understandable only at the level of signifier relations, is a reduction of what Baudrillard calls the symbolic. Baudrillard argues that so-called "primitive societies" engage in symbolic communications: the signifier, signified and referent are all united in the act of communication. In symbolic communication, "signs include[...] words that [are] attached to referents and [are] uttered in a context that held open their possible reversal by others" (Poster 1988, 4).¹¹

Unlike capitalist political economy, which isolates objects from their cultural meaning and subjects them to a specific (and therefore non-ambiguous) code of signs, symbolic exchange is ambivalent. Signs are detached from lived relations, and this makes possible their endless combination and recombination in a limitless process of integration. Signs even replace lived relation; they present a coded version of lived (symbolic) relation, one that is controlled and less threatening.

¹¹ With her emphasis on 'forgiveness', Hannah Arendt holds out the possibility of constructing a symbolic world in which the consequences of our actions can be reversed. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University Press 1958, 237-8). It would be important to pursue the connection between Arendt and Baudrillard on this point.

The consumption of sign-value is based on a meaningful “totality” which is unreachable (Baudrillard 2005, 224). Sign value always defers satisfaction by referring the process of consumption to another object/sign in the system. Like Christian morality, I claim that for Baudrillard, consumer society exposes man to a “piercing sensation of his nothingness” (Nietzsche 2007, 115).

Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* ‘foretells’ the general outline of Baudrillard’s critique of the morality of consumption, but Baudrillard also transforms certain Nietzschean positions, processes, practices and figures. In chapter 2, I show how the Nietzschean figure of the ascetic priest becomes the modern advertiser in Baudrillard’s works on consumer society.

In chapter 3, one of the central questions I will tackle is whether the sign-object sold by the advertiser to the consumer is otherworldly and non-sensuous – or in some way close to or identical with the features that pertain to the world of being in Plato. The ascetic ideal propagated by the priest is something that does not bear the features of the sensuous world, like truth; as a result, it can only reject this world.

I discuss to what extent consumption as it is outlined by Baudrillard represents an “*impoverishment of life*” (Nietzsche 2007, 114; italics in the text). In the final section of chapter 3, I focus on how consumer society is run by pseudo-objects and pseudo-events. Consumer society is beyond the true and the false and this will allow me to introduce the concept of simulation to which I dedicate the next chapter 4.

It was already in his short text “On Truth and Lie in a Non-Moral Sense” that Nietzsche (1999, 143) saw the “pure drive towards truth” as an effect of deception. I start chapter 4 (section 1) with a background discussion to Nietzsche’s reversal of Platonism by scrutinizing Nietzsche’s early text “On Truth and Lie in the Non-Moral Sense” as well as his later text *Twilight of the Idols*.

Nietzsche calls into question (a) the moral interpretation of the difference between truth and error (that truth is something good and error something evil), (b) the metaphysical interpretation of the difference between truth and error (that truth represents a world of unchanging facts, and error, a world of becom-

ing), (c) the logical interpretation of the bivalence between truth and error (truth is not opposed to error). In this scepticism, 'error' becomes the metaphor for a world without vertical antitheses and oppositions between good and evil, being and becoming, beauty and ugly.

According to Deleuze (2004, 300), living after Nietzsche's reversal of Platonism means living in a world where "simulacra" at last prevail over immutable Platonic Ideas. Nietzsche's reversal of Platonism thus sets the scene for my comparison between Deleuze's view of the simulacrum and Baudrillard's (chapter 4, sections 2 and 3). I regard Deleuze's view as close to Baudrillard, as they both stress the undecidability between appearance and reality in simulacra. For Deleuze (2004, 295), the simulacrum produces an "effect of resemblance" that simulates the real. Resemblance for Deleuze here continues only as an external effect of the internal differential dynamic of the simulacrum. For Baudrillard, there now only exists an "empty space of representation", which produces "effects of the real" (Baudrillard 1993, 70). Baudrillard calls this situation "the hyperreal", to which I dedicate chapter 5 (Baudrillard 1993, 70). In chapter 5, I take a closer look at Baudrillard's problematization of the true and false in hyperreal simulation.

In chapter 6, I tackle Baudrillard's problematization of the separation between life and death and how this recalls Heidegger's analysis of human existence as constituted by its relation to death. Nick Hanlon's (2004: 518) article entitled "Death, Subjectivity, Temporality in Baudrillard and Heidegger"¹² shows how Baudrillard's analysis of Heidegger raises the problem of subjectivity, a problem crucially connected with death. Baudrillard critiques the economization and compartmentalization of death by investigating the social role and place of death

¹² This is the only in-depth study that scrutinizes the relation between Heidegger and Baudrillard's view on death.

away from a certain “tour subjectif”, which he identifies in Heidegger’s conception of death (Baudrillard 1976, 228-29).¹³

In Hanlon’s view, Baudrillard’s analysis of Heidegger as subject-centred leads him away from the situatedness (*Befindlichkeit*) entailed in the *Jemeinigkeit* of death. For Hanlon (2004, 524), Baudrillard places all the emphasis on the contingent and the aleatory and regards “his theorising as somehow outside any structural conception of temporality and history – in a sense ahistorical”. Hanlon (2004, 513) claims that Baudrillard takes on an approach that revolves around “pure critique” rather than the proposition of “alternative structures” which can be critiqued. Hanlon uses Heidegger to claim that this leaves us with a conception of subjectivity that does not take account of our “situatedness” in a temporal framework. According to Hanlon,

“[t]he aporia concerning ‘situatedness’ in Baudrillard is clearly an aporia concerning Baudrillard’s approach to history, historicity and temporality. It may be understood as a weakness in Baudrillard’s theorizing in as much as if he is employing a Heraclitean ontology of flux, implying a conception of temporality along the lines of Nietzschean *Werden* and with his concept of reversibility being explicitly related to Nietzsche’s notion of ‘eternal recurrence’, then there must be an acceptance that identity implies difference, that the eternal recurrence of the same also implies the absolute particularity of a moment and vice versa” (Hanlon 2004, 524).

In my view, and contra Hanlon, Baudrillard’s reversible temporality is not “ahistorical” and it does very well permit us to consider our immersion (“situatedness”) in a historical context. Genealogy as practiced by Baudrillard (in the footsteps of Nietzsche) chal-

¹³ In chapter 6, I focus on Heidegger’s early work *Sein und Zeit* published in 1927. During the 1920s, as Rafael Winkler (2018, xv) explains, Heidegger “leans towards transcendental idealism ..., identifying the intelligibility of entities (their being) with Dasein’s understanding of being. During the 1930s and 1940s, Heidegger thinks of the relation of being and Dasein as a relation of reciprocal implication or mutual dependency (*belonging* and *need* are his two key terms, the first for Dasein’s relation to being, the second for being’s relation to Dasein), which means that he does not collapse one into the other. Being, the intelligibility of entities, unfolds as a play of differences and contrasts (*Auseinander-setzung*), whereas Dasein shelters that play in beings (at least as long as it exists authentically)” (Winkler 2018, xv).

lenges assumptions based upon linear and progressive orders of descent that would enable one to derive notions and practices from a natural single and stable origin. But I also think that Baudrillard (following Nietzsche) does want to show how the past inheres in the present.¹⁴

Nietzsche and Baudrillard's genealogies are interested in constructing fictionalized hypothetical primal scenes through for instance so-called noble morality (in the case of Nietzsche) and primitive symbolic exchange (in the case of Baudrillard). These "alternative structures" are hypothetical and serve as a contrast to current self-understandings.

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche uses the story of masters and slaves to narrate the origin of our most basic moral values and to suggest a difference between the values "good and bad" and "good and evil". Nietzsche thereby claims that there cannot be an original or true designation of value since the master and the slave always evaluate the world in different ways.

Like Nietzsche, Baudrillard does not claim to discover an ideal society of symbolic exchange in 'non-Western' cultures. Symbolic exchange is presented as a form or principle, rather than as the specific 'content' of cultural practices. Baudrillard's discourse on symbolic exchange (like Nietzsche's noble morality) has no representational content or truth value. Baudrillard's notion of symbolic exchange is a figure of speech or metaphor¹⁵ that serves

¹⁴ Michel Foucault's reading of genealogy places undue emphasis on the role Nietzsche accords to contingency and discontinuity within history. See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History" (1971), in *The Essential Works of Foucault*, Volume II: 1954-84, ed. James Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley and others (London: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 369-93.

¹⁵ It must be borne in mind that in the final chapter of *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, in the section 'An Anti-Materialist Theory of Language', Baudrillard (1993, 235) differentiates the "symbolic operation" from "a positive economy of metaphor: the idea of a reconciliation between the 'thing' and the word given back its materiality."

For Baudrillard (1993, 236) "[t]here is no materialist reference in the symbolic operation, not even an 'unconscious one; rather there is the operation of an 'anti-matter.'"

Quoting Julia Kristeva (from *Poésie et Négativité*), Baudrillard (1993, 220) claims that metaphor is simply the transfer of value from one field to another

to enable us to make sense of what we do and what we believe. Baudrillard's genealogical narrative seeks to integrate multiple genealogical perspectives into our conception of moral values.

In the words of Rafael Winkler, I intend to show that Baudrillard and Nietzsche are thinkers "of the limit of metaphysics" (Winkler 2018, 88). According to Winkler (2018, 87) Nietzsche does not aim to "neutralise metaphysical characterisations of the world whether as reality or appearance, being or becoming". Winkler claims that Nietzsche proposes a "new practice of self-discipline", whose aim is

"to incorporate the insight that the totality of propositions that has defined Western humanity's self-understanding since Plato rests on simplifications, errors or fictions. The principal question here is not *Is that insight true?* but, rather, *What would that insight do to me, how would it transform me, if it were true?* and *Am I able to overcome resistances to it?* In Nietzsche's eyes, what remains at the end of metaphysics, once the distinction between the super-sensuous and the sensuous worlds have collapsed in the general insight of our most cherished and prized truths rests on illusions, is a practice that uses the so-called truths as a means and tests of self-overcoming. Nietzsche is, like Heidegger, a thinker of the limit of metaphysics." (Winkler 2018, 88)

In my study, I show that genealogy is mobilized by Baudrillard as such a practice at the limit of metaphysics. For Baudrillard (1993, 159) "[t]he subject needs a myth of its end, as of its origin, to form its identity". Science demands an end to mythological thought. Nietzsche, Heidegger and Baudrillard criticize the attempt of science to regard subjects, objects and practices as examples of scientific laws; as unilateral irreversible facts; as universal and interchangeable.

This book shows that Baudrillard seeks to expose the myths surrounding consumer society (e.g., surrounding 'needs' and 'per-

to the point of the 'absorption of a multiplicity of texts (meanings) in the message.'" Against this multiplicity of meaning and value, Baudrillard (1993, 220) advocates "radical ambivalence ... non-valence".

In the above, I use metaphor merely to emphasize that 'symbolic exchange' is not to be taken literally (i.e., it does not refer to specific practices in 'primitive societies'). The symbolic does not refer to anything directly, nor does it seek to represent or express a repressed dimension (emanating for instance from an 'unconscious'). I use 'metaphor' in the non-technical, non-psycho-analytic sense of the term.

sonalisation'), hyperreality and biological, natural, impersonal death. In the process, Baudrillard proposes alternative myths (in the form of symbolic exchange). Baudrillard, in my view, like Nietzsche provides a theory of the historical variables that give rise to subjectivity. Genealogy, as practised by Nietzsche and Baudrillard, is a critically motivated art of drastic presentation, which should help us overcome our current perspectives of the world and ourselves. But before this transformation can take place their work seeks to enable us to make sense of what we do and what we believe in.