

“The Indivisibility of ‘economy’ and ‘culture’: Marx, Derrida, Baudrillard”

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## **Περίληψη**

Η παρούσα ανακοίνωση εξετάζει το ενδεχόμενο η έννοια της ‘κουλτούρας’ και αυτή της ‘οικονομίας’ να είναι δύσκολο να αποχωριστούν η μια την άλλη. Όχι μόνο σε ένα πρακτικό επίπεδο, αλλά πρωταρχικώς σε ένα θεωρητικό στάδιο. Επικεντρώνοντας σε τρία κείμενα που απηχούν διαφορετικής εμβέλειας αλλά εξίσου ενδιαφέρουσες απόψεις, το *Κεφάλαιο I* του Μαρξ, τα *Φαντάσματα του Μαρξ* του Ντεριντά, και την *Κριτική της Πολιτικής Οικονομίας του Σημείου* του Μπωντριγιάρ, το παρόν σημείωμα διακλαδίζεται αντιστοίχως σε τρία μέρη. Στο πρώτο εκτίθεται η προβληματική της πολιτικής οικονομίας όπως την επεξεργάστηκε ο Μαρξ κυρίως σε ότι αφορά τη θεωρία του για την αξία χρήσης και την αξία ανταλλαγής. Προτείνεται εδώ ότι ο χαρακτήρας αυτής της διάκρισης είναι βαθύτατα ιδεολογικός. Εν συνεχεία η παραπάνω διάκριση υπόκειται στη διεισδυτική ματιά του Ντεριντά που κάνει τα σαφή όρια μεταξύ κουλτούρας και οικονομίας, αγοράς και κοινωνίας περισσότερο θαμπά. Μέσα από μια τέτοια θεώρηση το κείμενο καταλήγει στο τρίτο μέρος, σε μια ριζική αναθεώρηση του τρόπου με τον οποίο κοινωνία και οικονομία σχετίζονται ιδίως όπως αποκαλύπτεται από την *Κριτική της Πολιτικής Οικονομίας του Σημείου* του Μπωντριγιάρ.

**Λέξεις κλειδιά:** Αξία\* ανταλλαγή\* χρήση\* εμπόρευμα\* φάσμα/φάντασμα

## **Abstract**

The present paper considers the fact that culture and economy are hard to separate; not only practically but first and foremost, theoretically. Focusing on three texts that exhibit and irradiate different kind but equally interesting views, Marx's *Capital I*, Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*, and Baudrillard's *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, the paper is further divided in three parts. In the first part, I expose the problematic of political economy basically as was inspired by Marx's conception of use-value and exchange-value, proposing that such a distinction is firmly based on pure ideological grounds. Such a conception is further subjected to the penetrating reading/writing of Derrida, whose theorization makes the distinction between culture and economy even more contestable and blurred. The paper concludes by taking up on Baudrillard's *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* retheorizing a radically different manner in which market and society respond to each other that is pertinent to the current mode of a highly-flexible consumer society.

**Key words:** Value\* exchange\* use\* commodity\* spirit/ghost

## **Introduction**

Society and market, use and exchange, culture and economy, refer to and are often taken as the conceptual unproblematical couples and theoretical/analytical tools that offer a point of departure for analyzing contemporary societies. It has been, moreover, assumed that in all these dualisms the first term constitutes the natural and qualitative element, whilst the latter comprises, on the other hand, the 'social', quantitative equivalent that allows the couple to hold sway. The Marxist model, in other words, of base and superstructure, is dominant in most similar cases; most likely, this should not be irrelevant to Derrida's (1976) claim that western metaphysics has always relied and depended on similar logocentric dualities. My take here will not try, necessarily, to challenge or simply undo such an argument, not at least in the usual way a critique is often meant to perform, but will instead focus on the prerequisites and conditions that made these points possible and even dominant in the western imaginary. In a sense, therefore, I will not be simply critical toward such a theorization and tradition, but will restrain myself in simply highlighting the misunderstandings (not an easy task to be sure), that in turn will allow a richer, and more fecund analysis of economy and culture, and market and society –in the course of the following presentation I will simply use these terms interchangeably, but only for methodological purposes, that is, without implying that one should not finally be able to separate one from another.

Karl Polanyi (1958) in his *Great Transformation* has already shown, very usefully I think, that economy should not be always equated to what the market represents and stands for, and that the latter's recent hegemony is a rather late turn of capitalism's development. Additionally, we know after Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* (initially), Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (especially) and even Habermas' (1984, 1987) *Theory of Communicative Reason* (more intensely), that the problem of commodity and exchange value tend to become not an issue strictly referring to or involving some harsh marketable economic elements and/or characteristics/matters, but has more crucially altered and turned upside down the way culture, ideas, politics and arts behave, and more recently, the way we think of them.

I shall be arguing, accordingly, that due to this implication and imbrication of commodity and culture, the once independent and separable social spheres of market and society appear nowadays more blurred and complicated than ever. The paper, inevitably thus, is divided in three parts. Firstly, I take up on Marx's theory of value trying to pursue the implicit and immanent ambivalence that haunts his analysis with respect to the clear-cut division he originally discerned between use value and exchange value; the latter being always the mobile, socialized condensed/congealed necessary time of labour, whilst the former being, on the contrary, the static, natural element; or what Baudrillard (1975) will later call 'an alibi of exchange value'. Secondly, I delve into Derrida's (1993) *Spectres of Marx* in order to unfold how utility is not the stable, permanent and qualitative entity that most mainstream and radical political economists took for granted (even Marx above), but a ghostly and 'vampiric' return that still haunts exchange value, problematizing ultimately not only the play between presence-absence but also that of use value-exchange value. Last but not least, I pick up on Baudrillard's (1981) *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, in order to push the above arguments to their logical conclusions (something left uncovered by classical political economy and Marxist political economy alike), starting imperceptibly and rather prematurely to draw and reflect on a fuller picture of the consumer society.

### **1. Marx's exchange-value and use-value**

One knows after Marx, of course, that the commodity form is the basic form that predominates in capitalist societies. I do not intend to offer a detailed approach to or (even worse) a sustained critique of Marx's political economy, not only because this is an issue which has been already exhausted (everyone has somehow opposed, confronted or commented on Marxian theory), but first and foremost, because Marx's theory exhibits various useful and substantial elements that one needs to be too careful in order not to throw away when taking up on such a critical task. My approach, thus, needs to be vigilant and modest at this point. Concurrently, I will simply try to highlight some of the ambiguities and ambivalences that stubbornly lie in Marx's own theorization of use-value and exchange-value, in order to explain later why even in his scrupulous theory, use-value should not be taken as the given,

natural, and static event susceptible to some qualitative nature, but should be considered instead as a highly and intensely flexible and socially constructed practice.

As any faithful and committed reader of Marx's well-known theory knows, "Every useful thing, as iron, paper, &c, may be looked at from the two points of view of quality and quantity [...] To discover the various uses of things is the work of history" (Marx, p.1). One lands here on an initial but inadequate (will come to that later as my argument progresses) statement on use-value, especially to the extent that utility seems appropriate to be studied only by history –it is a matter, in other words, of little interest for political economy. But note also a few lines later that "A commodity, such as iron, corn or a diamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, a use value, something useful" (Marx, pp. 1). That's a tricky one. Now it is the commodity that necessitates the original existence of utility; that is, that the commodity needs, in other words, to 'be a useful thing'; indeed, observe again: "A commodity such as iron is [...] a use value". Most importantly, "the exchange of commodities is evidently an act characterized by a total abstraction from use values. Then one use value is just as good as another, provided only it be present in sufficient quantity" (Marx, pp. 1). The latter appears even more contradictory with respect to Marx's analysis –be aware he stated at first that use-value should be conceived of as a natural, qualitative element. But, how is it possible for one thing to be part of history, whilst on the other hand "one use value is just as good as another"? –Or how is it possible for a statement such as "when commodities are exchanged, their exchange value manifests itself as something totally independent of their use value" (Marx, pp. 2)? to be true, if utility is treated, on the other hand, only "when we assume to be dealing with *definite quantities*, such as dozens of watches, yards of linen, or tons of iron" (Marx, pp. 1; emphasis mine). Definite or infinite, however, quantities it is.

There seem to be, therefore, unresolved issues with Marx's theorization of use value. Is it a matter that should concern only historians? Or is it something deeper going on in there that might slip our attention, once we insist on taking utility on firmly qualitatively grounds? Marx insists that "A thing can be a use value, without having value" (Marx, pp. 3), but just three lines after that he takes it back, plainly admitting that "nothing can have value, without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it; the labour does not count as labour and therefore

creates no value” (Marx, pp. 3). Surprisingly, then what was once natural and qualitative, appears to have a life of its own, and moreover, to be responsible for and count as the necessary prerequisite for any exchange value to hold sway. Utility and use value, accordingly, define, dominate and rule over what, how and in what ways the socially necessary labour makes actually things exchangeable. It is use value that, eventually, defines not only exchange values and commodities, but mostly the meaning and essence of value itself.

Typically, Marx’s goes on without reckoning with these contradictions that endlessly pop up in every step of his analysis. When he assumes, for example, that “Use values cannot confront each other as commodities, unless the useful labour embodied in them is qualitatively different in each of them” (Marx, pp. 4), he misses the fact that this ‘difference of quality’ is already a socially produced difference –he admits after all that “So far therefore as labour is a creator of use value, is useful labour” (Marx, pp. 4). Being a socially produced difference, use value therefore, has nothing to be jealous of exchange value. Both are socially produced and inseparable from each other; pure and simple, this is the meaning of ‘useful labour’. Use values, in other words, may not be able to confront each other by means of the congealed labour they embody, but they can perfectly confront each by means of their socially differentiated utility they exhibit (a car is more useful than a slice of bread –in case of course you need a lift!). This socially differentiated utility equals then the fetishism of commodities, defined by Marx as “the social character of men’s labour [which] appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relations of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour” (Marx, pp. 18).

Finally, Marx states, “Could commodities themselves speak, they would say: our use value may be a thing that interests men. It is no part of us as objects. What, however, does belong to us as objects, is our value. Our natural intercourse as commodities proves it. In the eyes of each other we are nothing but exchange values” (Marx, pp. 22). But this is not something that elaborately testify or prove the a-social, natural depiction of utility. Rather the opposite is the case. If commodities ignore or are not prone to use-values liability, so to speak, this is because there exists always already a

fetishism of utility, a system, in other words, a socially necessary congealed utility that goes far beyond what the objects could recognize or admit for themselves –or what needs and desires stand for.

## 2. Specters of Marx

A couple of things deserve to be mentioned now. If in Marx's theory a socially produced use-value is never too far from the socially produced fetishism of commodities, then there must another, any-other logic, at play regarding utility. We have to turn to Derrida, however, in order to clarify this point. A spectre, according to Derrida, can be unfolded in the following manner. "First of all mourning [for] One has to know. *One has to know it. One has to have knowledge* [...] Next, one cannot speak of generations of skulls or spirits [...] except on the condition of language [...] Finally [...] the thing *works* whether it transforms or it transforms it self, poses or decomposes it self: the spirit, 'the spirit of the spirit' is *work*" (Derrida, 1994: 9). Thus a spectre on the basis of the above three-fold reasoning refers to political economy on condition that "what has been uttered 'since Marx' can only promise or remind one to maintain together, in a speech that defers, deferring not what it affirms but deferring just *so as to affirm*, to affirm *justly*, so as to have the power (a power without power) to affirm the coming of the event, its future-to-come itself" (Derrida, 1994: 17). A spectre, and political economy by implication, should have a future, but only by means of a promise that is yet to come and which at present is 'out of joint'. This is why "there is tragedy, there is essence of the tragic only on the condition of this originarity, more precisely of this pre-originary and properly spectral anteriority of the crime –the crime of the other, a misdeed whose event and reality can never be *present themselves* in flesh and blood but can only allow themselves to be presumed, reconstructed, fantasized" (Derrida, 1994: 21).

Always already trapped in the contradictory depiction of a theorization that works by way of a double bind (either/or...both/and), a spectre, accordingly, consists a useful entry point in theorising how use-value works. The question, accordingly, is how 'just' (*dike* in Greek) is such a ghost? Is the statement 'the time is out of joint', relevant at all to this justice one needs to do to use value? Heidegger interprets *dike* as

“joining, adjoining, adjustment, articulation of accord or harmony” (Derrida, 1994: 23), while *adikia* “to the contrary [...] is at once what is disjoined, undone, twisted and out of line, in the wrong of the unjust, or even in the error of stupidity” (Derrida, 1994: 23). Utility, in other words, is obliged to reckon with this ‘said and unsaid’ of a *dike* which is always already beyond law and calculation “over and above the market, above market, bargaining, thanking, commerce, and commodity” (Derrida, 1994: 26). But it should also reckon with what is concealed in exchange value, but is still implicitly present in the sphere of utility as well, that is, the fetishism of commodities and the fact that any use-value does not really break with the way in which the system of exchange-value works. Utility is spectral, not in the sense of being unreal or untrue, therefore, but exactly because of being composed of fractals and fragments that haunt the assumption of a self-defining anthropomorphic satisfaction of needs in relation to consumption and desire. Utility should cope, therefore, with such a ghostly play of a justice which is open from the off to innumerable choreoethnographies and calculations.

Without taking into account and without reckoning with this spectre, any economy (capitalist or other) is already caught up in the trap of reactionary politics. Seen through the lens of a double bind, by contrast, utility avoids such a negativity once it is acknowledged that there is no way to appeal or count for anything *useful*, unless it is both a possible strategy of emancipation, and what restricts or prohibits its imminently revolutionary apprehension. It is in the light of this impossibility that Derrida (1994: 31) speaks of *differance* as the condition of thought that cannot be dissociated from alterity, singularity and the irreducibility of spacing. The latter involves as such “a matter of linking an *affirmation* (in particular a political one), *if there is any*, to the experience of the impossible, which can only be a radical experience of the *perhaps*” (Derrida, 1994: 35). If utility meant to be in any true or radical sense revolutionary, therefore, it should retain something of such an impossible double bind that does not hold onto a reserve but constitutes both a natural practice and what inadvertently supports capitalism. Being spectral, therefore, means, that “there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents, and especially, the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality or even the simulacrum in general, and so forth” (Derrida, 1994: 39).



Utility should thus be taken in accord to the event of such a spectre, which is “the impossible itself, and that this *condition of possibility* of the event is also its *condition of impossibility*” (Derrida, 1994: 65). Use value is neither a politico-economic revolutionary concept, nor an ineffective or convenient logic of capitalist societies (failed consumers). Rather it is a spirit which opens up a future that is yet to come, an intuition or “promise and decision, which is to say, responsibility” (Derrida, 1994: 75), compliant with the unbearable ambivalence of a type of society that is never fixed or solid.

Without reckoning with this spectre, use value will be always a pseudorevolutionary local anarchism that does not really take hold of or grasp the dynamic of space which is full of possibilities, rich potentials and fraught with corners, creases, cavities, and multiplications, that is, a surface without holes; for “There are no holes, only invaginations of surfaces” (Lyotard, 1993: 21). Such intensities that are neither good (use), nor bad (exchange), constitute decompressions that dissimulate, and differentiate delivering a difference within identity, a chance event and a passion within reason (Lyotard, 1993: 52). Use-value thus is less a necessity, than it is a fold of libidinal economy invested and taken up by desire.

As utility is now imperceptibly given over to the double bind and affirmative postponement of a spectre, it is worthwhile recalling with Derrida how Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism is associated with use-value, which “haunts the thing, its spectre is at work in use-value” (Derrida, 1994: 151). Utility, on the face of this, is already a form, a fetish, and a value, before it is an idea of ‘superstructural’ origin. Use-value is already spectral from the very beginning before a ‘thing’ becomes a commodity – e.g. to be the owner of a house in the Greek imaginary was and still is one of the most powerful ideas and most praised achievements one can accomplish; it is within the ideological domain that house-ownership is worthwhile, before the congealed necessary labour time is embodied in the material form of a house. The commodity-form thus sets in motion an already ghostly use-value and does not take over from a transparent use-value that allegedly satisfies certain unmediated residential needs. The commodity, according to Derrida’s reading of Marx, is a strange creature thus not only because of its exchange form/value; but also because it is neither alive nor dead but that which has a chance of a certain autonomy: “Facing

up to the others, before the others, its fellows, here then is the apparition of a strange creature: at the same time Life, Thing, Beast, Object, Commodity, Automaton – in a word, spectre” (Derrida, 1994: 152). Being spectral thus means to remain somehow, in a certain way, faithful to the commodity fetishism of Marx’s political economy (Derrida, 1994: 156). What commodities would say if they could speak as Marx has famously suggested after all – though he never pushed such a conception to its logical conclusion – is that “our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value [...] We relate to each other [...] merely as exchange values” (Derrida, 1994: 157).

One is tempted to ask, therefore, when exactly the commodity was not already capitalized and commodified, that is, when it was not already a ghostly, spectral and spiritual ‘thing’ that recites useful differences? How is it possible for any use-value to avoid spectrality? For if the neutrality of use-value “is not guaranteed, then one would have to say that the phantasmagoria began before the said exchange-value, at the threshold of the value of value in general, or that the commodity-form began before the commodity-form, itself before itself” (Derrida, 1994: 160).

### **3. The consumer Society**

I have already suggested that there is certain ambivalence in the way Marx theorizes value, and have also proposed that Derrida’s spectral analysis may highlight some of these contradictions between use value and exchange value. Imperceptibly, then, I have started to map how a certain fantasized utility maybe related to a full-blown consumer society. That consumption operates beyond the satisfaction of individual needs is what I want to propose now. It is Baudrillard, however, who has underlined, in the most emphatic way, the need to unfold and unpack the systemic nature of consumption, moving beyond political economy –even its Marxist incarnation. Political economy, Baudrillard argues, speaks of productive forces, productivity, development, growth, equality and economic exchange, when it is itself a product of the same commodity-fetishism it set out to demystify. This vicious circularity, Baudrillard notes, makes critical and Marxist theory more fetishistic than the fetishism it promises to unmask. It is not a critical metalanguage, therefore, that can adequately interpret the world, for by “Failing to conceive of a mode of social wealth other than that founded on labour and production, Marxism no longer furnishes in the

long run a real alternative to capitalism” (Baudrillard, 1975: 29). This is because consumption is, fundamentally, a *system* of objects –we saw that with respect to Derrida’s theorization of use-values. For “Strictly speaking the humans of the age of affluence are surrounded not so much by other human beings as they were in all previous ages, but by objects” (Baudrillard, 1998: 25). By implication then, objects neither correspond with a given need nor simply signify and stand for the prestige and status of their master. In the terms Baudrillard employs, “Today objects are with us before they are earned [...] *their consumption precedes their production*” (Baudrillard, 1996: 159, italics in original). The object in the Baudrillardian oeuvre, therefore, is a rational form spoken by a certain technological language (Baudrillard, 1996: 5). As objects constitute a *system*, which is no longer practically consumed or empirically experienced but instead, works as a language; what they “embody is no longer the secret of a unique relationship, but rather, differences, and moves in a game” (Baudrillard, 1996: 21). Objects, in short, should be understood in terms of a discourse that obeys a social logic “of a combination of signs, [which] is irreversible and limitless” (Baudrillard, 1996: 41).

Such a theorization is particularly useful in harnessing the limits, links and disjunctions, or ‘multiplicity of trajectories’ to recall Doreen Massey’s, [2005, *for space*, London: Sage,] favourite phrasing, in that it allows an appreciation of the significance of consumption as a collective practice that classifies human beings rather than satisfies individual needs – a thing which also hints toward the tenuous division between economy and society. As Baudrillard (1996: 47, italics in original) points out, “*this systematic connotation at the level of objects is what I am calling ATMOSPHERE*”. Objects, therefore, are subjected to a code, which transgresses any singular or ideological function that takes needs as singular or natural –and use value, it goes without saying. On the other hand, having the right to choose, if this is at stake in terms of consumption, does not make the system less oppressive. Rather the opposite is the case. “Choosing one car over another may perhaps personalize your choice, but the most important thing about the fact of choosing is that it assigns you a place in the overall economic order” (Baudrillard, 1996: 141). And thus “Consumption may indeed be deemed a defining mode of our industrial civilization” (Baudrillard, 1996: 199), but as long as it is conceived of as “*an activity consisting of the systematic manipulation of signs*” (Baudrillard, 1996: 200, italics in original). No

small wonder then that as Baudrillard (1996: 204) should boldly argue “THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO CONSUMPTION”.

For Baudrillard then “The industrial system, having socialized the masses as labour power, had much further to go to complete its own project and socialize them (that is control them) as consumption power” (Baudrillard, 1998: 82). To that extent “consumer man never comes face to face with his own needs any more than with the specific product of his labour; nor is he ever confronted with his own image: *he is immanent in the signs he arranges*” (Baudrillard, 1998: 192, italics in original). This is why consumption (utility, use-value and culture to be sure, from here) is a mode of domination, one that marks a transition from industrial capitalism and repressive modes of reproduction to a mode of domination largely stemming from mechanisms relying on seduction. Political economy for its part assigns to value and thus to labour, a two-fold meaning; the quantitative and abstract meaning of exchange-value and “the moment of use-value: concrete, differentiated and incommensurable” (Baudrillard, 1975: 26). This is why culture and market or the culture of market, is hard to be defeated. Labour, as the irreversible telos of man’s own existence, is never seriously questioned by Marx, who fails to understand that society is not only about production and labour – whether in its concrete or abstract form – but also about the prodigality, squandering and purposeless destruction of wealth –and here come consumption, a false approximation to be sure. Terms, for example, such as ‘dialectics’ and ‘history’ may be quite suitable to explain industrial society, but have nothing to do with the *modus operandi* of non-western societies, for example, primitive societies. Even if political economy gives priority to economy, rationality, science, production and labour thus, it does so only on condition that the critique launched against capitalism does not go beyond the mirror of production, progress, growth and so on. So-called primitive societies, however, are subversive of and have no meaning or understanding of what in productivist discourses is often associated with the entity of value – something also present in the ‘anthropology of gift and sacrifice’ of Mauss, Manilowski and Bataille among others.

At the heart of so-called primitive societies, anyhow, a different mode of exchange is dominant, that is, “the condition of symbolic exchange and circulation [and] not the socio-cultural realm that limits ‘potential’ production; instead, exchange itself is

based on non-production, eventual destruction, and a process of continuous *unlimited* reciprocity between *persons*, and inversely on a strict *limitation* of exchanged goods” (Baudrillard, 1975: 79–80). So-called primitive societies, therefore, are structured on the social logic of symbolic exchange, debt, reciprocity, and destruction that “sets up a relation of exchange in which the respective positions cannot be autonomized:

- neither the producer and his product;
- nor the producer and the user;
- nor the producer and his ‘concrete’ essence, his labour power;
- nor the user and his ‘concrete’ essence, his needs;
- nor the product and its ‘concrete’ finality, its utility” (Baudrillard, 1975: 102–103).

Such limitless and ambivalent symbolic exchange still haunt consumer societies, and as Baudrillard (1981: 31) has suggested drawing on Veblen’s notion of conspicuous consumption, “just as the slave is not fed in order that he eat, but in order that he work, so one does not dress a woman luxuriously in order that she be beautiful, but in order that her luxury testify to the legitimacy or the social privilege of her master”. Objects, therefore, will never exhaust themselves in the function they are often taken to serve, but will always designate the social rank of their master, “social pretension, and resignation of social mobility and inertia, of acculturation and enculturation of stratification and of social classification” (Baudrillard, 1981: 38). It is in the light of the above that symbolic exchange may be taken to haunt consumer societies, but to haunt alone, not to rule or govern; as a consequence therefore, there is no “vital anthropological minimum that would be the dimension of ‘primary needs’ – an irreducible zone where the individual chooses himself, since he knows what he wants: to eat, to drink, to sleep, to make love, to find shelter, etc” (Baudrillard, 1981: 80). This is why consumption should be understood “*not only structurally as a system of exchange and of signs, but strategically as a mechanism of power*” (Baudrillard, 1981: 85, italics in original).

Hence, and rather sadly, there are no limits to the culture (economy maybe?) of consumption. As Baudrillard (1998: 74), insightfully, sums it up “The truth is not that ‘needs are the fruits of consumption’ but that *the system of needs is the product of the system of production*” (italics in original). For “Even the most ‘rational needs’ (education, culture, health, transport, leisure), [when] cut off from their real collective

significance, are taken up, in the same way as the incidental needs deriving from growth, into the systematic future perspectives of that growth” (Baudrillard, 1998: 65). Needs, therefore, are neither true nor false, as a naturalist or anthropological intuition assumes –this is why nowadays it is hard to tell culture from market. Rather “The truth of consumption is that it is not a function of enjoyment, but a *function of production*, and hence, like all material production, not an individual function, but *an immediately and totally collective one*” (Baudrillard, 1998: 78, italics in original). In Baudrillard’s words once again, (1998: 81, italics in original), “It is difficult to grasp the extent to which the current training in systematic, organized culture of consumption is *the equivalent and extension, in the twentieth century, of the great nineteenth-century-long process of the training of rural populations for industrial work*”.

#### **4. Conclusion**

I have attempted so far to think of culture and economy in a way which will throw some light on the unresolved issues between use-value and exchange-value, on the back of Marx’s theory of value, Derrida’s ghosts and spectral analysis and Baudrillard’s consumer society. I never meant to assign or promote or even defend, a market of culture or a culture of market against the mainstream criticism that often tend to accuse Derrida and Baudrillard’s theories of being susceptible to some sort of neoliberal aspirations. The culture of consumption, I argued, however, is a mode of domination that rests heavily on marketable skills. This is not necessarily a pessimistic, uncritical approach that allows or permits or even surreptitiously supports that ‘everything goes’; it is rather a realistic, sensitive take that may pave the way towards an appreciation of the trembling and changing culture of market and the culture of consumption.

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