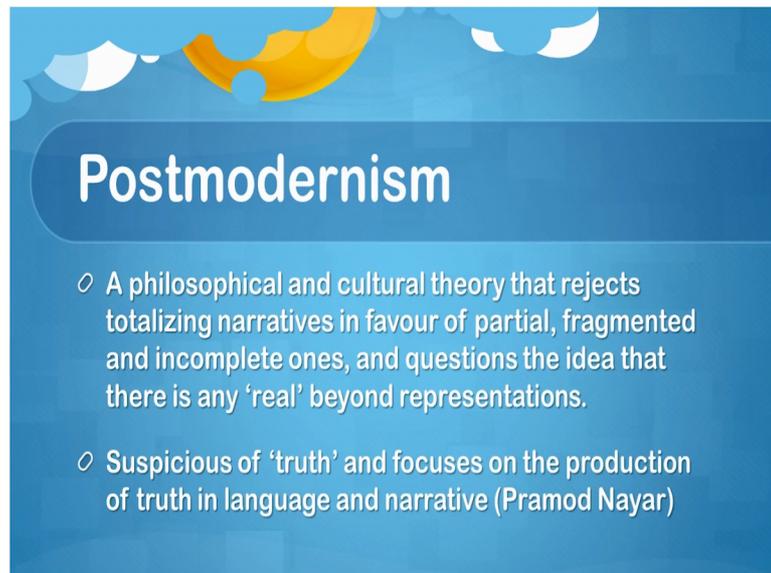


**Postmodernism in Literature**  
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**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Lecture - 7**  
**Baudrillard, Hyperreality and Postmodern representations**

Hello and welcome to today's session of the NPTEL course postmodernism in literature.

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We have been taking a look at the various aspects of postmodernism, particularly the ways in which post modernism is defined as a philosophical and cultural theory that rejects totalizing narratives in favour of partial fragmented and incomplete ones. I mean, today's session, we shall also be focusing on how the idea of the postmodern challenges and questions the very idea of the aspect of reality behind and beyond representations.

And in the various facets in which postmodernism is being represented, we should also be and further analysing how the general idea the general condition of postmodernism is suspicious of truth and focuses on the production of truth in language and narrative. And this is again something that we will be taken a look at in our previous discussions, ranging from paths identity order.

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## Poststructuralist

- A strong poststructuralist stance – Lyotard, Deleuze, Baudrillard – a distrust of finalizable meaning
- Extended the concerns of poststructuralism about signs, meaning and contexts of meaning-production

And we also noticed a very strong poststructuralist and specially in the early stages of defining and of framing postmodernism. And this is particularly evident in the works of Lyotard Deleuze and Baudrillard. And others also general distrust of finalize able meaning that we can find and their approaches towards postmodernism. And something that we could identify as being common to all of these theorists is a fact that they have all extended the concerns of post structuralism about science meaning and context of meaning production in order to make sense of what postmodernism is, and in order to make sense of the various postmodern representations regardless of genre media and at the context.

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## Baudrillard and hyperreality

- A theory of representation – nothing exists outside representation
- Hyperreal – the world of simulations and excessive signs – the only real world we will ever know
- “There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared”

The objective of today's lecture is particularly take a look at Baudrillard, and his work on hyper reality, and how that has come to define the various aspects of contemporary postmodern representations. If we need try to approach Baudrillard in a rather simplified manner, it would not be wrong to say that Baudrillard had compiled a theory of representation arguing that nothing exists outside representation.

And according to him hyperrealism world of simulations and excessive science, and it is also the only real world according to him that we will ever know, because the postmodern condition the postmodern representations, make it rather impossible for us to know the real for real we only have certain simulations, which are accessible to us in the form of not reality, but hyper reality. In a Baudrillard own words there is an escalation of the truth of the lived experience a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared.

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## Jean Baudrillard

- Classified as a Postmodern theorist (Raman Selden)
- Questioned the tenets of both Marxism and Structuralism
- Turned to a critique of technology in the era of media reproduction
- 'provocative' and 'apocalyptic' writings – cult status
- A critical observer – does not provide solutions

When we begin to talk about Jean Baudrillard, one of the first and foremost things that comes to our mind is that he is a French post structuralist, think a and interestingly he is also classified as a postmodern theorists by a Raman Selden. And a here is someone who questioned the tenets of both Marxism and structuralism in that sense we can find a number of common traits across, these poststructuralist thinkers who are also being identified as postmodern thinkers.

We saw a similar characteristic being reflected in the writings and in the ideologies are put forward by Lyotard as well. And we find that Baudrillard at let us street turning to a critique of technology in the era of media reproduction, and again we also realize that just like Lyotard talks about the postmodern societies as advanced computerized societies, we find Baudrillard talking about the advanced society as a contemporary postmodern society as a society dominated by the technology of media reproduction. A number of Baudrillard writings have been identified as provocative and apocalyptic and that since he has also enjoyed an intellectual cult state as in the postmodern theory.

At the same time when we analyse the writings of Baudrillard. It is also important to note that he is he does not provide solutions through his discussions. Rather he remains as a critical observer of the contemporary of the postmodern condition, and also analysed and critiques how the technology and the media of the postmodern period has affected human lives a culture and the notion of reality and history in general.

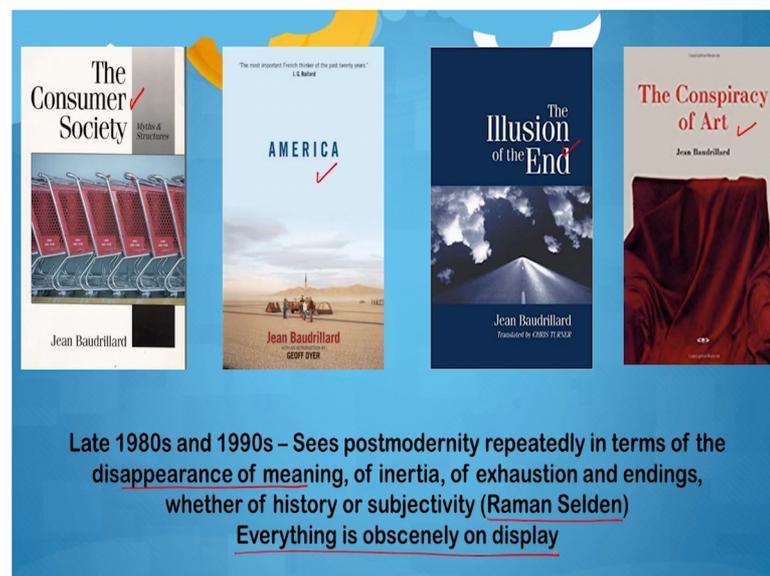
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Perhaps some most significant work of Baudrillard is simulacra and simulation published in 1981; this is also considered as the first influential work written by him. And in this work, he talks about the deathless world of unreflecting images, and also about the image creating postmodern communication technologies, particularly he talks about television, and the various self-generating images across the pro postmodern surface. And according to Baudrillard at the television is a strategic site gigantic simulator. And much of a

Baudrillard work concerns, the ways in which technology and particularly media and television, how they act as an interface to present reality to the contemporary audience, and also how they mediate the reality in such a way that it becomes almost impossible to know the difference between the media projected reality. And reality as it has experienced every day. And what Baudrillard finds interesting and rather alarming is also the fact that, after a point it becomes almost impossible to experience reality without this mediation by these technology dominated sites.

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The other important works of Baudrillard were published in the late 1980s and 1990s. And in the title the consumer society myths and structures America in the illusion of the end, and the conspiracy of art there are a number of other works also that Baudrillard composed and there are also a number of critical commentaries available from the 1990s onward. And interestingly, all of these works were originally written in French and they were translated into English at a later point.

And across these works, we find that Baudrillard is postmodernity repeatedly in terms of the disappearance of meaning of inertia of exhaustion and endings whether of history or subjectivity. And this is how Raman Selden talks about the contributions of Baudrillard to the to the ideas of postmodernity. And according to Baudrillard, in the contemporary, in the postmodern period everything is obscenely on display.

So, much of his work in that sense continues to engage with the various aspects of reality as it is being represented, as it is being made available to the to the public.

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Quite interestingly many of Baudrillard's observations were also considered quite controversial in the contemporary, especially, this article titled the gulf war did not take place had also drawn a lot of flak from a number of critics. Nevertheless, this work needs to be located as a significant of work in analysing, the gulf war situation against the postmodern condition. And this work in this essay is. In fact, a part of a series of 3 articles that he published between Jan and between January and March 1991, the original it was published both in French and English, in a French newspaper titled liberation and in the British guardian. the first the first in this series was titled in the gulf war will not take place, the second one the gulf war is not really taking place, and the third one the gulf war did not take place.

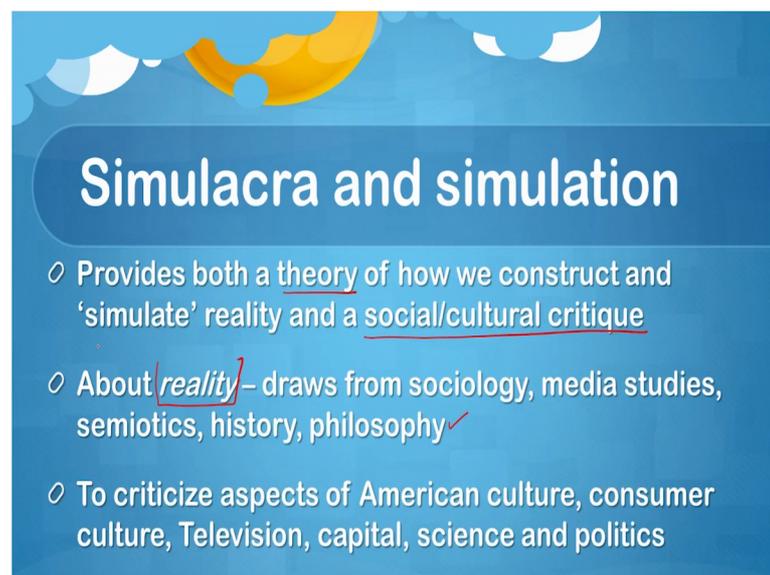
And here we find Baudrillard not limiting himself to certain abstract critical of theoretical figurations, but he moves on to a different level altogether critiquing the contemporary media culture and notions of history and reality. And he also engages in a rather political discourse by using the theoretical and intellectual frameworks of post modernity; particularly, the aspects of simulation simulacra and hyper reality that key point. About the gulf war, Baudrillard made this a rather provocative statement it is an unreal war without the symptoms of war. And in his, own analysis the war was

conducted as a media spectacle, and he also argued that the real violence was thoroughly overwritten by the electronic and narrative by simulation. And he also argued in the context of the gulf war that the media has said the agenda of the narrative of the war, and which was also made possible through a number of propaganda imagery.

And this is not to say that Baudrillard denied the happenings of the war or contested whether the war actually happened or not. On the other hand, what he was trying to critique was the aspect that, the entire scenario was an atrocity which was masqueraded as war, and this was being made possible only because of the media intervention, because according to him this was a carefully scripted media. In reality it was a virtual war, because the details of the war were always appropriated we are always we are we are always given to the public, through the eyes of the west through the v point of the west.

There was no way and through which one could know what really happened on the know why and the waterfront except through these mediated narratives which were presented to us through the electronic media and this; obviously, had invited a number of fair critiques from various at the political theorists and also from other critical theorists. Nevertheless, this continues to be seen as a very prominent example that in Baudrillard talks about the various interventions being made in the aspect of reality through the various postmodern devices.

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## Simulacra and simulation

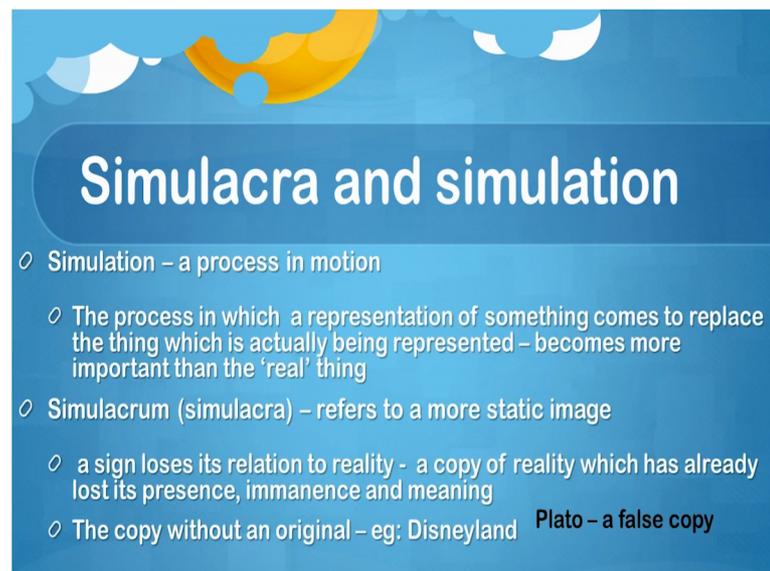
- Provides both a theory of how we construct and 'simulate' reality and a social/cultural critique
- About reality – draws from sociology, media studies, semiotics, history, philosophy ✓
- To criticize aspects of American culture, consumer culture, Television, capital, science and politics

And here it becomes important to talk about these 2 notions that Baudrillard introduces and has a work, simulacra and simulation. And I need some level it would be possible to say that Baudrillard actually provides us with both a theory of how we construct and simulate reality, and also offers the social and cultural critique of the contemporary. And this is evident in the way he talks about the gulf war situation, and when he talks about reality, and it was not at a metaphysical level.

On the other hand, he draws from sociology media studies semiotics history and philosophy in that since it is an interdisciplinary rather a multidisciplinary approach that he takes in his critique of a reality we talked. About the pragmatic political aspects of their work related to simulacra and simulation that we can also say that Baudrillard uses this a framework to criticize a various aspects of American culture, the consumer culture the intervention of television into the contemporary about capital about science and about politics in general.

So, this I the idea of a simulacra simulation and hyper reality could be seen at 2 levels, as a mural as merely as a theory as an intellectual framework, and also as a framework to critique contemporary social cultural scenario.

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**Simulacra and simulation**

- Simulation – a process in motion
  - The process in which a representation of something comes to replace the thing which is actually being represented – becomes more important than the ‘real’ thing
- Simulacrum (simulacra) – refers to a more static image
  - a sign loses its relation to reality - a copy of reality which has already lost its presence, immanence and meaning
  - The copy without an original – eg: Disneyland **Plato – a false copy**

And if we try to differentiate between these 2 terms simulacra and simulation, simulation is a process in motion, it is a process in which a representation of something comes to

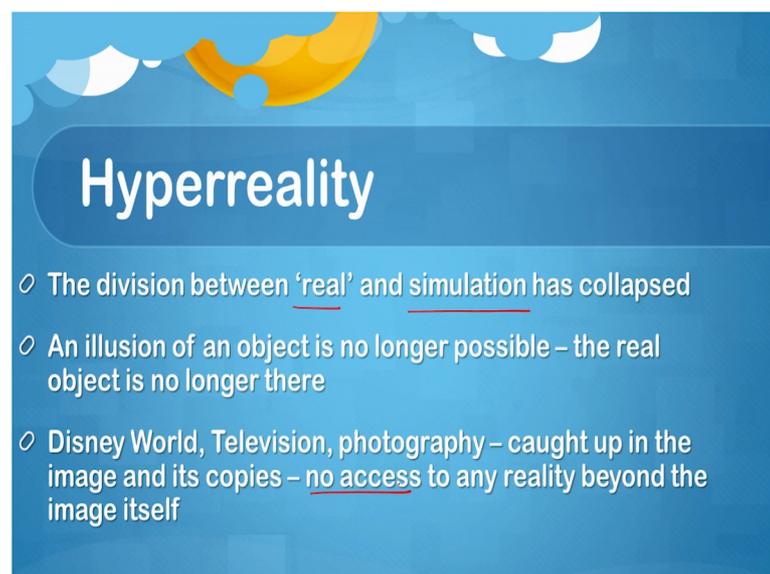
replace the thing which is actually being represented to such an extent that, the thing which is being represented becomes more real than the real thing.

So, here we also enter into a confusion as to which object is the real one whether they represented object, or the object which is being represented through various medium. And only are they hanging simulacra or plural being simulacra, refers to a more static image in comparison with simulation which is a process, and here we find that the sign loses its relation to reality. And the simulacra becomes a copy of reality which has already lost its presence, eminence and meaning.

And this there is also the possibility of the existence of a copy without an original the most popular example being one of Disneyland. Here you also note that this term simulacra was originally used by Plato to talk about a false copy of an art form. And when we talk about simulacra, and when we give the example of Disneyland there is also, a challenge which is being posed to various notions of reality.

Because earlier there was this notion art being something that reflected reality, but here in the postmodern period with the intervention of technology with the intervention of media, we have reached a condition where it becomes impossible to differentiate the real from the copy. And we also reach the next stage which is being projected in the example of Disneyland; where we also have a copy without an original. The copy itself becomes a meaning rather than a representation of something else which originally had a meaning.

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## Hyperreality

- The division between 'real' and simulation has collapsed
- An illusion of an object is no longer possible – the real object is no longer there
- Disney World, Television, photography – caught up in the image and its copies – no access to any reality beyond the image itself

And this leads us to the term hyper reality, which Baudrillard used it truth to talk about the division between the viewer and the simulated object. And hyper reality becomes a reality when the distinction or the division between the real and the simulation has collapsed. Because an illusion of an object is no longer possible, and the real object is no longer there as we have already noted in this in the case of Disneyland.

And also he gives the example television and photography to talk about how there is no way to access to any reality beyond the image itself, because we are caught up in the world of image and it is of copies and that is no longer possible to distinguish the real from the copy. And this crisis and this confusion of the contemporary is designated as a hyper real situation.

We can see this process getting manifested in a number of contemporary events including a number of movies such as metrics and inception, but also in various other contexts which are being dominated by the electronic digital media. This interestingly though is the reality of the contemporary there is a way in which we can until we can trace it is intellectual tradition.

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#### On Exactitude in Science

1935

Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, translated by Andrew Hurley.

...In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.

—Suarez Miranda, *Viajes de varones prudentes*, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lerida, 1658

And it is quite fascinating to know that Baudrillard himself of Coates in his work from Borges work 1935 short story which is in fact, just a paragraph a story that has that Borges had written about on a in exactitude in science.

So, let us read out this a short story all together. In that empire the art of cartography attains such perfection that the map of a single province occupied the entirety of a city, and the map of the empire the entirety of a province. In time those unconscionable maps no longer satisfied, and the cartographers guilds struck a map of the empire, whose size was that of the empire. And which coincided point of a point with it the following generations who were not so fond of the study of cartography as their forebears had been.

So, that the vast map was useless. And not without some pitilessness was it that. They delivered it up to the inclemencies of sun and winters, in the deserts of the west still today. There are tattered ruins of that map inhabited by animals and beggars in all the land there is no other relic of the disciplines of geography. Here Borges tells a story about an empire for which a map was built which also occupied the province in an entirety.

And as and when the empire decayed, we also lose that the map was also found in ruins and in tactus, and here involve a story it becomes rather impossible to see whether the map is a copy on an original of the empire. Because there is away in which the map and the empire collapses into one and it becomes almost indistinguishable from one another. Baudrillard I uses this idea from bore has talked about the various aspect of simulacra and simulation, and interestingly this is something that we continue to see in the contemporary.

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For instance we see a number of images in which the copy becomes the original, whether it is a painting by raja Ravi Varma which adorns a calendar ah, or it is the image of Che Guevara which is which is portrayed in the t shirt, or even a nike swoosh which is reproduced in a locally manufactured product. We find that it becomes difficult to see say whether these images are being cloned or copied from an earlier copy, or whether these images by themselves are originals.

And the postmodern factor becomes a characterized by this endless circulation of the copies as Pramod Nayar puts it. And we also find that it is a rather difficult task to delineate the copy from the original, and eventually the copy itself becomes a original. Because it becomes a rather futile task to go on a pursuit to identify the original from these endless circulation of the copies, and it really does not make any difference in the meaning making process either.

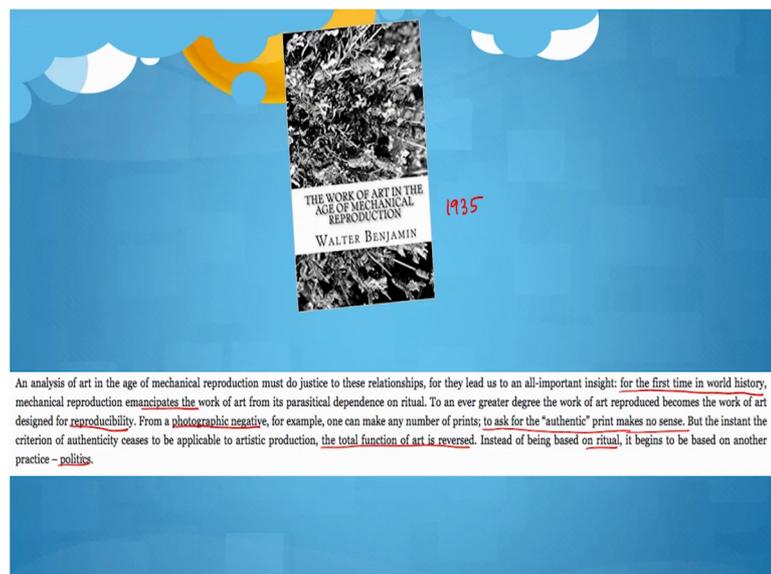
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## Borges' maps in the Pomo age

- Maps of reality TV and film – more real than our real lives
- The television characters more alive than the real person
- The death of the 'real' – condition of 'hyperreality'

And if we extend the analogy of bar has a maps in the postmodern age, we find that the maps of reality television and film becoming more real than our real lives itself. And we also have seen a number of occasions where the television characters emergence being more alive in the real, person who is playing the character. And this all eventually leads to the death of the real, and the condition of hyper reality which Baudrillard began to lament illness works, but we also see that there is no escape from this condition of hyper reality from this death of reality as we have been seeing in the postmodern age.

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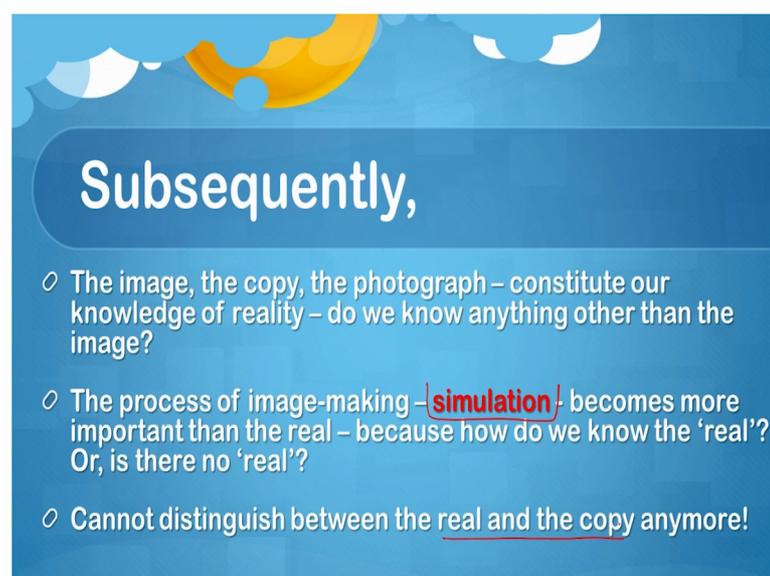
In connection to the it is also useful to recall a work by Walter Benjamin published in 1935, an article in titled the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, and here

Benjamin engages with a series of changes that had come about in the age of mechanical reproduction; particularly, in the aspects related to art and the way in which art is being engaged with and the art is being analysed and judged. And to quote his own words, for the first time in world history mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever-greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative for example, one can make any number of prints. To ask for the authentic print makes no sense. But instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed instead of being based on ritual it begins to be based on another practice politics.

So, it will be a useful exercise to read all of these text together in order to see how there is an inherent connection and the intellectual traditions which are emerging, and how the contemporary society the changing nature of technology effects the ways in which art is being conceived and also how the ideas of authenticity and as we saw in the previous lecture how the ideas of legitimation also undergoes a radical change with this innovative technological practices.

The example that Walter Benjamin gives about photograph about the inability to identify the authentic print. And how it is a futile and a useless exercise is also related to the various things about reality hyper reality simulation simulacra that Baudrillard programs.

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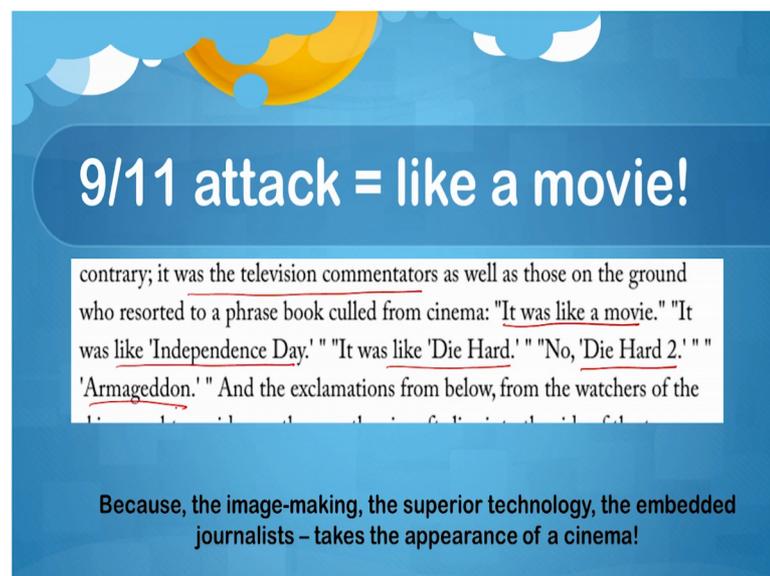
**Subsequently,**

- The image, the copy, the photograph – constitute our knowledge of reality – do we know anything other than the image?
- The process of image-making – **simulation** – becomes more important than the real – because how do we know the ‘real’? Or, is there no ‘real’?
- Cannot distinguish between the real and the copy anymore!

And subsequently we are also left with an impossibility to know the reality, apart from this image the copy or the photograph which is being made available to us. The endless circulations of copies eventually become not just one of the big ways, but the only way through which we can access a reality. Because we are also at a loss to figure out what constitutes our knowledge of reality.

And also, it leads us to this question whether we know anything other than the image or the copy which is being made available to us. And this process of image making, which Baudrillard also terms as simulation, becomes more important than the real because how do we know the real or is there no real to we have only copies of what we deem as the real. Maybe an inevitable banality of this are processes that we cannot any longer distinguish between the real, and the copy that becomes rather impossible or futile task because the real has already been overwritten by the hyper real through the interventions through the mediations of the technology and the various forms of new advancements.

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**9/11 attack = like a movie!**

contrary; it was the television commentators as well as those on the ground who resorted to a phrase book culled from cinema: "It was like a movie." "It was like 'Independence Day.' " "It was like 'Die Hard.' " "No, 'Die Hard 2.' " "'Armageddon.'" And the exclamations from below, from the watchers of the

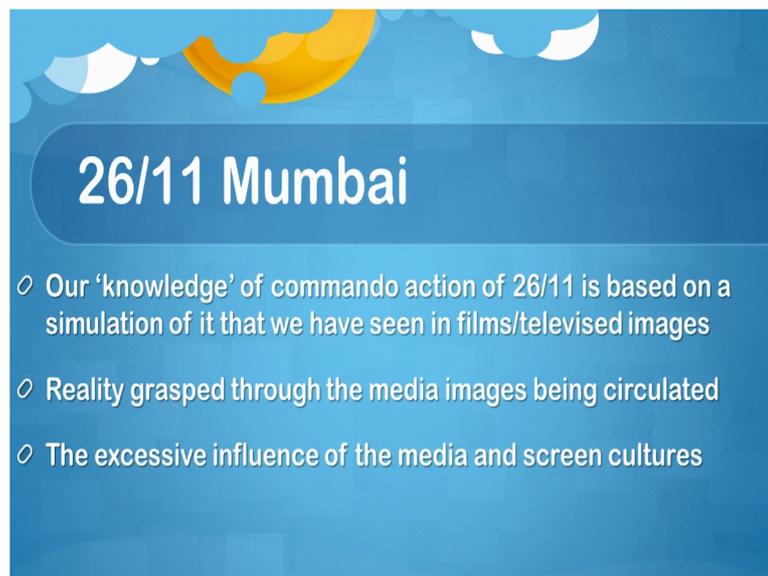
**Because, the image-making, the superior technology, the embedded journalists – takes the appearance of a cinema!**

In perhaps use a number of examples from the contemporary to show how the aspect of a hyper reality gets manifested in our everyday life. For example, a number of commentators a number of journalists have referred have refer to the 9 11 attack, like a movie to quote from a news report. It was the television commentators as well as those on the ground who resorted to a phrase book culled from cinema. It was like a movie, it

was like Independence Day the Hollywood movie, it was like die hard no die hard 2, Armageddon.

So, here we find that the one of the most horrifying events of the twentieth century is being compared to a movie like situation; because the knowledge of horror, the knowledge of certain horrifying and terrifying offense is also based on our knowledge of particular movies, and the images that have been in circulation. Because even in the reportage of this horrifying event the 9 11 attack, the image making the superior technology the embittered journalist, all of this takes the appearance of a cinema. And this is something that are we need to engage with because there is no is there is no way in which one could escape from these ways through which reality is being overwritten by hyper real images.

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And similarly, at the home front we also saw how the 26 11 Mumbai attacks, we are also being framed in a similar way, because our knowledge of commando action of 26 11 is based on a simulation of it, that we have seen in films or in televised images. And here the reality that we grasp is also circulated through the media images which are being made accessible to us; it could be real images or even the images which were in circulation through various other recorded televised means.

And mainly these instances could be used to talk about the excessive influence of the media and screen cultures, and the ways in which they have begun to mediate our access to reality and also our knowledge of reality.

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## Capitalist links

- Urban capitalism – concealing the inequalities of society behind images of production, prosperity and efficiency
- We know only the finished product ~~REAL~~
- Eg: a mango drink – our ‘knowledge’ of the mango, mango tree or mango plantation is through the ‘sign’ or ‘representation’ of the mango on the bottle
- Do not and cannot attach a history, culture or specific practice to that product

To a very great to very large extent I coming back to our discussion on Baudrillard and his notions of and his notion of hyper reality. he also identifies a capitalist link an urban capitalist link to this entire act of mediation. Because urban capitalism has Baudrillard puts. It has been successful in concealing the inequalities of society behind images of production prosperity and efficiency.

And in that sense, we are left with such a situation that we know only the finished product. We do not know what is behind it. We do not know what is real behind the finished product. For example, in the in the modern capitalist sense if we talk about a mango drink or the advertisements the various aspects of it is production which are being fore grounded.

We know that our knowledge of the mango the mango drink or even the mango plantation is through the sign or the representation of the mango on the bottle. It has got nothing to do with the real as we know is behind the representation. Because we do not and cannot attach our history or culture or a specific practice to that product which is being mediated through various technology, various representations, and various forms of technological enhancements.

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And in that sense, we could also I talk about the example of a Christmas Tree, a decorated Christmas Tree in a living room, in which we are taking something real with an original and a natural quality, and then exaggerating it into a perfection because one does not aspire to have a real pine tree. In place of this decorated Christmas tree which is only a copy of the real pine tree from the forest weathre over the years.

And this aspiration for the exaggerated perfect image is also something which the postmodern mediation of technology thus to our ideas of reality, and our ideas of engaging with the real which is out in the world having said that it is again important to reiterate the fact that the idea of hyper reality the notion of similar simulation and simulacra, they do not exist merely as a theoretical and as intellectual framework.

But they do have a bearing on the way this society is being mediated in the contemporary in the postmodern period. So, in the next session, we shall be taking a look at the various other aspects in which hyper reality is being talked about the other critics and the other artists who also found this as a useful term to engage with to talk about contemporary reality so, on that note which will also be winding up today's lecture. Thank you for listening, and we look forward to seeing you in the next session.