

**CHAPTER IV**  
**THE RELEVANCE OF JEAN BAUDRILLARD'S EXCHANGE**  
**PHILOSOPHY OF VALUE WITH CONSUMPTION ETHICS IN ISLAM**

**A. The Exchange Meaning of the Symbol in Jean Baudrillard's Theory of Consumer Society**

Baudrillard regards the system as objects of consumer and communication systems on the basis of advertising as the establishment of "a code of significance" that control objects and individuals in the community. The developing of capitalism, advance of science and technology, exploitation of media and advertising become supporting aspects of simulation. Environmental simulation is an environment of information and signs that are controlled by model, code, and virtual worlds that make up the tastes, preferences, and needs. Social values and behaviors are shackled by "reality" simulated by media.

Meanwhile, "Media as message" is McLuhan's formula in consumption that is used by Baudrillard as basic of consumption. Mass media has replaced various worlds to be homogeneous worlds that have relation with one to another mass media. Media, especially TV brings ideology including in sign system.<sup>1</sup> This makes separation between symbol and reality, signs and objects that affect to the culture of consumption in society because of realities of the new life simulation into a space where humans actualize their existence.

In consumer society, object becomes a sign and its value is determined by a rule of code<sup>2</sup>. In the logic of sign as like in logic of symbols, objects are no longer associated with function or with the real needs. Consumer society does not buy what it needs but what code to convey. Here, culture of consumption have meaning that value is determined through the exchange of symbolic meanings namely commodities which have sign values conferring prestige and signifying social values, status and power. A commodity does not simply an object with value of use but a commodity-sign. Signs are said to be able to 'free floating' from objects. Consequently, signs can be used in variety of associations (as illustrated every day in television advertising). As Featherstone suggest that "consumption must not be

---

<sup>1</sup>Jean Baudrillard, *Masyarakat Konsumsi*, (translated by Wahyunto), (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, 2004), p. 154

<sup>2</sup> George Ritzer, *Teori Sosial Postmodern*, (translated by Muhammad Taufik), (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, 2009), p. 137

understood as consuming of the use values, a material utility, but primarily as consuming signs” (1991:85).<sup>3</sup>

As the effect of consumer society controlled by codes, human relation is transformed into a relation with object, especially object of consumption. Baudrillard (in poster, 1988:29) explains that “*we live in period of objects*”. Those objects have no meaning anymore from the real relations among human. Object is always manipulated as a distinguishing sign of status between individual and others. The process of distinction status is fundamental processes which respectively recorded in the community; those are social stratification, competition status, and levels of prestige.<sup>4</sup>

Consumption process can be analyzed into basic perspective of two aspects.<sup>5</sup>

1. As significant process and communication that is based on the rule of code where practices of consumption come and take the meaning. Today's people tend to articulate identity and their self personality through goods they consume. The goods they consumed become their self sign. By goods -clothes, shoes, bags, and mobile phones- people express their selves and personality. People will wear clothes in line with sporty model, feminine, formal, casual or other models to represent their personalities. Here, consumption is system exchange and in accordance with language. Signs or codes tied into objects of consumption like symbol of communication that can be *encode* and *decode*. Consuming object means *encoding* sign or object code of consumer selves. The codes in the object then become label of subject of the consumer.
2. As the process of classification and social difference, in which at this time objects/signs are simulated as value that are agree with a hierarchy.

Consumption in the perspective of Baudrillard is also understood as a sign system based on the interpretation of social signs (symbols), such as social class distinction, gender, and race. Baudrillard calls the difference of class with a *distinction* in which the dominant class distinguish themselves through three intake structures, namely: a) food or beverage, b) culture, and c) appearance (Ritzer and Goodman, 2008: 529). Through the three structure of consumption, the distinction level of consumption between social classes from one another appears in the value or quality of an object of consumption although its primary function is similar. The distinction is the nature

---

<sup>3</sup> Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies, and Theory and Practice*, (SAGE Publications Los Angeles, 2012), *ibid*, p. 211

<sup>4</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *op.cit.*, p. 61

<sup>5</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *op.cit.*, p. 60

of consumption. Sign is defined as a vehicle of meaning. Words, sounds and so forth are signs used to tell the meaning. There are two types of signs; rational and artificial sign. Made sign is called “symbol”. Situation in which there is a sign implies for someone is called “situation-sense” or “situation-sign” (Kattsoff, 1986:165).<sup>6</sup>

In the consumption that is based on value of sign and image rather than value of utility, underlying logic is no longer to be logical necessity (need) but logic of desire. If the needs can be met -at least partially- through objects, desires and otherwise, there will never be fulfilled, therefore the only object that can satisfy desire is object of desire (sexual) appears unconsciously on an imaginary stage, and object of desire has been lost forever, and can only look for its substitution in the world of objects or symbols consumed as it is described by Lacan (Yasraf Amir Piliang, 2012: 143).

From that, the need never really becomes a need for a particular object, but “need” for differences, so it can be concluded that there may no such thing in achieving satisfaction, therefore there is no name of need definition,<sup>7</sup> the only is consumerism which closer to consumptive action, namely consuming goods or services in excess which is more than the desire to prioritize needs without priority or can also be interpreted as a luxury lifestyle.

Some examples of logic of tautology in consumption are; when people feel hungry, they will look for food to meet the needs. Logic of tautology has been turned that they had to eat in a fancy restaurant with aim to meet desires (prestige). Consumption as value of sign is a wealth and wealth reduction, because the act of consumption never just to buy, but to spend money, therefore shopping is a statement of wealth and also the destruction of wealth. Economic value is converted into the exchange of sign based on code.

Theoretically, people consume an object at first as a medium of exchange of benefits of an object, but then the exchange of goods is efficiently shifting meaning of objects consumed. Consumption of these objects also providing sign and symbol of consumption. Signs and symbols as sign of social class, power, pleasure, welfare, and so on. Then consumption is not oriented to the power of utility but to interpret the meaning of sign and symbols. Objects or goods consumed represent a specific

---

<sup>6</sup> Fadhillah, “*Relevansi Logika Sosial Konsumsi, dengan Budaya Konsumerisme dalam Perspektif Epistemologi Jean Baudrillard*” in the Kybernan’s journal, Vol.2, No. 1( Maret 2011), p. 15

<sup>7</sup>Retrieved on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from KONSUMSI SEBAGAI PENANDA KESEJAHTERAAN DAN STRATIFIKASI SOSIAL (In the Bingkai Pemikiran Jean Baudrillard) \_ the simplyshares.htm

meaning. To be consciously or not consumption is done more on style and trends that finally caught up on modes produced.

Commodity does not simply an object with value of use to exchange but also sign of commodity. For Baudrillard, postmodern culture is constituted through a continual flowing images as one dimensional and superficial. He argues that a series of modern distinctions including the real and unreal, public and private, art and reality have broken down leading to a culture of simulacrum and hyper reality.<sup>8</sup>

### **B. The relevance of Jean Baudrillard's exchange philosophy of value with consumption ethics in Islam**

Consumer culture emerged as a result of changes in consumption caused by symbol meaning conveyed by media through environmental simulation created by late capitalism. This is one of Baudrillard's critiques to consumer society. Not only consumer society in general that is influenced by popular culture, but today religion is also part of popular culture scheme. Way of thinking, ritual, symbol and lifestyles become popular. The development of popular imaginations have resulted the big changes in religious degree; principles, forms, strategies, and values of popular culture that are immanent blend even contaminate transcendental dimension. The contradiction arises when in the immanent principle of religious populism mixed with the transcendent then led to the cultural contradictions of religion; paradox between chastity/profanity, divinity/worldly, pleasure/piety<sup>9</sup>

Diversity of world is shaped by imagination and fantasy based on popular culture, whether in language level, action, appearance, form, and self-image those have previously been avoided even rejected, but now those become part of religious activity as construction of signs (sign systems) and sign exchange. The scholars even become a trend setter and model of appearance, so that it applies in social relations that copying model of popular culture, relationship between patron (stars and scholar) and (mass and religious community).<sup>10</sup>

In consumer society, consumption does not look at value of utility, but the logic of production and manipulation of signs. Consumerism appeared from the process of social change of sign in which there is a repetition of consumption. While, in Islam there are consumption ethics as rules of law and religious norms included in category

---

<sup>8</sup> Chris Barker, *op.cit.*, p. 212

<sup>9</sup> Yasraf Amir Piliang, *Bayang-bayang Tuhan: Agama dan Imajinasi*, (Jakarta: Mizan Publika, 2011), p. xI

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. xli

of deontological norms. Consumption ethics in Islam tries to have relevance with Baudrillard's critique of consumer society, and those relevancies included in:

### 1. The Principle of Sharia and Critique of Consumption Meaning

Need is a concept that is more valuable than desire (will). Will assigned is based on the concept of utility, but the need is based on *maslahah* concept. Concept of *maslahah* in consumption can be divided into two; (1) consumption devoted to worship and (2) consumption just to meet human needs/desires. However, main goal of Muslim consumption as a mean of recourse is to worship to God. Indeed, consuming something with intention to increase stamina in obedience devotion to God will make it getting reward.

Actually there is no prohibition to pleasure by obey his commandments and satisfy himself with the goods and the gifts that God created for mankind for the benefit of the people. But, all that is done in the world cannot be separated from the norm - the norm divinity, so in terms of consumption must follow the rules - the rules of divine.

This principle is different from ideology of capitalism in consumption which assumes that it is as a mechanism to enhance production and growth. More goods are produced because of demand increased. Here then arises extortion, oppression of workers always continue to work without knowing time limit in order to meet demand. On the contrary, Islam advocated a manner in proportional consumption. In essence, in Islam if consumption is directed in correct and proportional, so justice and equality for all can be created.<sup>11</sup>

Islamic teaching actually aims to remind mankind spending their money according to their ability. Expenditure should not exceed revenue that may result in a loss, and it should not be stressed that spending wealth too low that causing of stinginess. Human should be in moderate in spending wealth, so that it does not reduce circulation of wealth (treasure hoard) and does not weak the strength of local economic (by waste).<sup>12</sup>

Qur'an describes this principle in verse: QS. Al-Isra '(17): 29

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾

Translation:

<sup>11</sup> Syaparuddin, *Prinsip-prinsip Dasar al-Qur'an Tentang Perilaku Konsumsi*, Ulumuna Vol. XV Nomor 2 (Desember, 2011), p.365

<sup>12</sup> Afzalur Rahman, *Doktrin Ekonomi Islam Jilid II*, (Yogyakarta: PT. Dana Bhakti Wakaf, 1995), p. 60

“Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard’s) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute”.<sup>13</sup>

The meaning of “hands shackled to your neck” is the nature of miser spending their wealth, otherwise “too hands it to” show people redundant in fulfilling his wish.<sup>14</sup>

In the Qur'an, there is also a command to consume something that is lawful and good, not only in the form of food, but also in activity there are some rules. Not all auto حلال is good, because there are four kinds of حلال named;

واجب, سنة, مباح, مكروه

Related to the activity itself, there is an activity حلال but مكروه or hated by God. For example, foods or activities related to the physical and spiritual are often used devil to deceive men.<sup>15</sup>

The desire to consume that is influenced by devil in the consumer society is actualized in the object of sign. Desire will never be fulfilled because he always wants to be worshiped. That desire always produces itself through a mechanism as it is known by Guattari as desire machine. He always looks for new discharges, following the new culture. Desire always leads people into narcissism culture, while human always looks for popularity, publicity.<sup>16</sup>

In the discussion of consumer society, consumption desire is created by ideas through social process. For the example, Baudrillard views that structure of created value determines the coming of desire. This structure in consumer society, according to him, represents in code. Production does not create material as external object anymore, but creating material as codes that stimulous the needs or will as internal object consumption. Here, it appears a consumerism that is criticized by Jean Baudrillard. Consumerism culture as the lung of capitalism is a culture which includes various kinds of lie, halusination, dream, apparent, artificiality, commodity cover, through strategy of hypersemiotica and imagylogy that finally disconstruct socially by economic communication as the power of capitalism. Baudrillard criticizes consumer society and understands it as creating will combination that is bad and organized hysteria.

<sup>13</sup> Abdallah Yousuf Ali, *The Glorius Kur'an, Translation and Commentary*, (Beirut; Dar al-Fikr, t.th), p. 702

<sup>14</sup> Afzalur Rahman, *op.cit.*, p. 61

<sup>15</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al Misbah, Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian Al Qur'an*, (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), p. 457

<sup>16</sup> Yasraf Amir Piliang, *op.,cit*, p. 307

## 2. Simplicity, Prohibition of Luxuries and Social Stratification

No-luxuries and simplicity among wasteful and stingy is good consumption, as it is stated in QS. Al-Furqan: 67

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا ﴿٦٧﴾

*"Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes)."*<sup>17</sup>

The word (يسرف) *yusrifû* is derived from the word (سرف) *sarf* means beyond reasonable limits in accordance with the conditions given.

The word (يقتروا) *yaqturû* is the opposite of (يسرفوا) *yusrifû*. It is given less than what can be provided in accordance with the circumstances giving to receiver.

The word (قواما) *qawâman* means fair, moderate, and middle. Through these recommendations, God and Prophet bring human to be able to maintain his property, not to spend until exhausted, but in the same time does not help it at all, so that sacrificing personal interests, family, or anyone in need. Keep the good things including property that are always available and sustainable are religious order. Moderation and mid stance is normal and this is a common condition.

There is verse describing about simplicity principle that consumption should avoid excessive attitude (*ishraf*), because this attitude is so hated by God as the Word of God in QS. Al-Isra ': 27.

إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ ط وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا ﴿٢٧﴾

Translation:

*"Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the evil Ones; and the evil one is to his Lord (Himself) Ungrateful."*<sup>18</sup>

In consumption should avoid luxuries (*tarf*), *tarf* is consumer behavior that is far from values of Sharia, even an indicator of damage and convulsions community living arrangements.<sup>19</sup>

The effects of consumerism are described in Baudrillard's theory of consumer society deeply. Consumerism is not just about personal relations but also social

<sup>17</sup>In ordinary spending this is a wise rule. But even in charity, in which we give of our best, it is not expected that we should be extravagant, that we should either do it for show, to impress other people. See Abdallah Yousuf Ali, *op.cit.*, p. 942

<sup>18</sup>Spendthrifts are not merely fools, they are of the same family as the Evil Ones. And the chief of the Evil Ones (notice transition from the plural to the singular)-Satan himself-fell by his ingratitude to God. So those who misuse or squander God's gifts are also ungrateful to God. See Abdallah Yousuf Ali, *op.cit.*, p. 702.

<sup>19</sup>Lukman Hakim, *Prinsip-prinsip Ekonomi Islam*, (Penerbit Erlangga, 2012), p. 95

problems. Through the object, society is being stratified because consumer society has social logic about consumption. This logic is not individual adjustment about logic of the use value, but logic of production and manipulation of social sign.

Consumption process can be analyzed into basic perspective of two aspects:<sup>20</sup>

- 1) As significant process and communication that is based on the rule of code where practices of consumption come and take the meaning. Today's people tend to articulate identity and their self personality through goods they consumed.
- 2) As the process of classification and social distinction in which at this time objects/signs are simulated as value agree with a hierarchy.

Consumption as sign system based on the interpretation of social signs (symbols), such as social class distinction, gender, and race. The distinction level of consumption among social classes from one another appears in the value or quality of consumption object although its primary function is similar. The distinction is the nature of consumption.

The development of culture of commodity and popular culture in the consumer society has trapped various religious activities into profit-seeking motives. Religious activities are now packed with various signs, images and lifestyle like package of *iftar* (read: ending of fast) menu associated with social class, fashion as a symbol of piety, fashion shows package that promises freedom, carrying parcel widths purifying heart and many more. Those are example of how religious activity becomes the door of profit that finally creating consumerism and social stratification.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Copying and Imitating Consumption Culture

In economic jurisprudence Umar ibn Al Khattab Umar r.a what is meant by prohibition to follow and to imitate is a prohibition of Muslim to follow the pattern of bad consumption. Nowadays, there is a large expansion in the field of promotion and advertising, especially in the provision of consumer and its influence on his choice is to open a new range of consumer, diverse desires, and encouragement to follow and to imitate others.<sup>22</sup>

Baudrillard said that consumption function initially as a tool to meet the needs of individual, but today it becomes a social function, function of exchange, function of

---

<sup>20</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *op.,cit*, p. 60

<sup>21</sup> Yasraf Amir Piliang, *op.,cit*, p. 183

<sup>22</sup> The study was conducted by an American economist. see, DR. Muhammad Abdul Aziz 'Ajmiyah dan DR. Abdurrahman Yasri, *At-Tanmiyah Al-Iqtishadiyah*, p. 162-163. Taken by DR. Musa Adam Isa, in his book, *Atsar At-Taghayyurat fi Qimah An-Nuqud wa Kaifaiyatu Mu'alajatiha fi Al-Iqtishad Al-Islami*, p. 176-177, in the book Jaribah bin Ahmad Al-Haritsi, *Fiqih Ekonomi Umar bin Al-Khathab*, (translated by Asmuni Solihan Zamakhsyari), (Jakarta: Khalifa, 2006), p. 167.

communication, and distribution of value through the corpus of signs. Consumption is a system which runs a sequence of signs and unification group. Consumption also becomes a moral (an ideological value system) as a result they followed the social unconscious compulsion. Mass media has replaced various world become homogeneous worlds that have relation with one another mass media. Media, especially TV brings ideology includes in sign system.<sup>23</sup> By television, i.e. simulation world appears completely. This is the space that does not care anymore to the categories of real, unreal, right, wrong, reference, representation, fact, imagery, production, and reproduction in which all of them dissolve into one in a filthy sign. Meanwhile, consumption awareness does not separate from reality of media leaning to give imagery toward current model of consumption life style.

In the religious field there are also a construction signs (sign system) and the sign of exchange. The scholars even become trend setter and figures, so that it applies in social relations that follow the model of popular culture, the relationship between patron (stars, teachers, and clients (past or people)). So that became Baudrillard criticizes the role of mass media as being former of consumption pattern.

#### **4. The Physical Consumption or Prestige**

The physical consumption is consumption of goods that meet desires of personal pride. This means that the consumer obtained the fulfillment of these items do not be based on the utility, but from its ability to attract attention of others.<sup>24</sup> In consumer society which is controlled by code, human relationship is transformed in a relationship with object, especially object of consumption. Baudrillard (in poster, 1988:29) explains that “*we live in period of objects*”. Those objects have no meaning anymore of the real relationship among human. Object is signifier (it is value of sign) and consuming object of signs by using understood language. Commodity brings style of expression and sign, prestige, luxury, authority, and etc.<sup>25</sup>

People never consume the object itself (the point of value), but object is always manipulated as a distinguishing sign of status between one and others. The process of differentiation status is a fundamental process which respectively recorded in the community. This is the moral level of life, competition status, and level of prestige.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *op.cit.*, p. 154

<sup>24</sup> See, DR. Abdul Aziz Fahmi Haikal, *Mausu'ah Al Mushthalahat Al-Iqtishadiyah*, p. 157, dan DR. HUsen Umar, *Mausu'ah Al-Mushthalahat Al-Iqtishadiyah*, p. 29, in Jaribah bin Ahmad Al-Haritsi, *Fiqh Ekonomi Umar bin Al-Khatha*, p. 175

<sup>25</sup> George Ritzer, *loc.cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *op.cit.*, p. 61

Indeed, consumption of pride deviated from truth line, Islam prohibits consumptive behavior because it will stand out or appear distinction among others, prohibits any expenditure with the aim of pride, or reveal the greatness, and other things that cause germinating extent of the gap between the rich and the poor. Prophet Muhammad said in *Hadith*:

“Who is dressed (different from others) to be known, then God will wear clothes similar to her on doomsday, and then be burned by the fire of hell” (Abu Dawud (4029), Ibnu Majah (3607) dari Ibnu Umar, *Shāḥiḥ al-Jāmi’* (6526).<sup>27</sup>

Although there is no prohibition of God to enjoy the favor of God, but the Prophet taught to be simple in wearing clothes as the tool to keep clean clothes, body, and footwear, as well as wearing nice clothes and sandals are not prohibited actions.<sup>28</sup>

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- قَالَ « لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ مِنْ كِبَرٍ ». قَالَ رَجُلٌ إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ يُحِبُّ أَنْ يَكُونَ تَوْبُهُ حَسَنًا وَتَعْلُهُ حَسَنَةً. قَالَ « إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَمِيلٌ يُحِبُّ الْجَمَالَ الْكِبْرُ بَطْرٌ الْحَقُّ وَغَمَطُ النَّاسِ ». <sup>29</sup>

Translation:

"From Abdillah bin Mas'ud of the Prophet, said: It will not enter Paradise man in whose hearts there is vanity heavy dust grains. There was a man who asked, " Surely everyone likes (wear) clothes were beautiful, and good footwear, (does this include arrogant?). Prophet said: "Allah is beautiful and loves beauty, vanity it is rejecting the truth and despised others. [HR.Muslim, No. 91].

Sociology of consumption included in the process, not only as the fulfillment of physical and biological needs, but related to the socio-cultural aspects. Consumption related to the matter of taste, identity, or lifestyle. The sociologists looked appetizing as something that can change, focused on the symbolic quality of the goods and depended on the perception taste of others. Bourdieu said that distinctions of taste entail claims to authorize, authenticity and presumed inferiority of others. This argument is based on the concept of cultural capital, namely accumulated knowledge that confers power and status (Bourdieu: 1984).

<sup>27</sup>Abdul ‘Aziz bin Fathi as-Sayyid Nada, *Ensiklopedia Etika Islam*, (translated by Muhammad Isnaini, Dumyati), (Jakarta: Maghfirah Pustaka, 2006), p. 530-531.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> معاني بعض الكلمات :  
البطر : التكبر على الحق فلا يقبله  
الغمط : الاحتقار والاستهجان

Pierre Bourdieu, the sociologist of consumption, stated that consuming product is a symbol of status and social class. As Baudrillard's views said that the status of commodity and sign can be changed in the complex relationship between political economy, language, and ideology in the post-industrial society<sup>30</sup>. The phenomenon of fundamental change in the status of commodity, according to Baudrillard, is characterized by the expansion of total sign codes into commodity of bodies, and new status of commodity as a dispenser of plural power (happiness, health, security, and so on) through the system of capitalism.

---

<sup>30</sup> Yasraf Amir Piliang, *op.cit.*, p. 93