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ROMAN MEINHOLD

**FASHION
MYTHS**

A CULTURAL CRITIQUE

Roman Meinhold
Fashion Myths

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Fashion Myths

A Cultural Critique

(translated by John Irons)

[transcript]



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The essence of all science lies in
the philosophy of clothes.
THOMAS CARLYLE

The philosophy of clothes
is the philosophy of human nature.
GERARDUS VAN DER LEEUW

For Jantha,
Kaylah and
Lyneo.

A critical inquiry into fashion

Philosophy may, then take itself to have a natural antagonism to fashion, as well as perfect antipathy to any interest in clothes – those wrappings of the wrappings of the mind.¹

This cultural critique of fashion from philosophic-anthropological perspective is of special interest for researchers and students in the fields of Cultural Studies, Media Studies, Marketing, Advertising, Fashion, Cultural Critique, Philosophy, Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology, and for anyone interested in the ways in which fashion operates. Fashion is usually conceived as something superficial and ephemeral while a number of eminent philosophical accounts (e.g. Plato and Aristotle) tried to seek for an eternal truth behind the ever changing phenomena in our everyday life.² A critical inquiry into fashion reveals what can be found behind fashion: something about that being, which consumes, creates and criticises fashionable items and services. Fashion as a cultural phenomenon is a manifestation of human needs and artistic-entrepreneurial creativity.

Besides products and services multinational corporations sell also myths, values and other immaterial goods. Such ‘meta-goods’ (e.g. prestige, beauty, strength) are major selling points in the context of successful marketing and advertising. Fashion adverts draw on deeply rooted human values, ideals and desires such as values and symbols of social recognition,

1 HANSON 1990, 109

2 Cf. MEINHOLD 2013; MEINHOLD 2009; MEINHOLD 2007

beautification and rejuvenation. Although the reference to such meta-goods is obvious to some consumers, their rootedness in philosophical theories of human nature is less apparent, even for the marketers and advertisers themselves. While marketing for fashion is implicitly making use of philosophical concepts, this book is using a cultural critique of fashion as a stage for situating philosophical-anthropological accounts in a contemporary cultural context.

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FASHION AS A PHILOSOPHICAL TOPOS – A HISTORICAL PRELUDE

“*The true philosopher,*” according to PLATO³, will care nothing about and therefore despise “*costly raiment, or sandals, or other adornments of the body*”. ARISTOTLE admittedly wrote nothing philosophical about clothing but he “*used to indulge in very conspicuous dress*”⁴. There is no significant philosophical interest in portraying the ‘second skin’, the raiments which – from a Platonic point of view – merely represent ‘packagings’⁵ of the soul. Fashion is certainly not “*since time immemorial, a favourite theme of philosophers*”⁶, as René KÖNIG asserts.

Admittedly, philosophers have been interested in the historical genesis of fashion (Christian GARVE, Friedrich Theodor VISCHER, Friedrich KLEIN-

3 Plato: Phaedo, 64 d-e

4 Diogenes Laertius Book 5, Chap. 1, 1-2

5 “...those wrappings of the wrappings of the mind...” (Hanson 1990, 109)

6 KÖNIG 1959, 717; Cf MEINHOLD 2013, MEINHOLD 2009, MEINHOLD 2007

WÄCHTER, Heinrich SCHURTZ, Georg SIMMEL) and with criticism of it (Immanuel KANT, Karl MARX, VISCHER, Eugen FINK, Roland BARTHES, Jean BAUDRILLARD), but a cultural critique of fashion that deals with philosophical-anthropological implications is still lacking. Despite the daily topicality of fashion, dealing with it philosophically is a rare occurrence.

GARVE, Charles BAUDELAIRE, VISCHER, KLEINWÄCHTER, SCHURTZ, Thorstein Bunde VEBLEN and SIMMEL could be advanced as possible ancestral fathers of the critical analysis of fashion. They were the ones who, prior to the 20th century, supplied the first polemical, critical or theoretical statements about fashion that took up more than a few lines. As ‘classics’⁷ of fashion theory, i.e. authors very well known, VISCHER, SIMMEL, VEBLEN and Werner SOMBART could be mentioned. Before the 18th century, the phenomenon of fashion passed critical inquiry more or less unnoticed and – after having been noticed – was then despised.⁸

In his essay *On Fashion* (1792) Christian GARVE⁹ was the first to touch on certain implications of fashion that were later to be analysed in greater depth by subsequent writers. Many of GARVE’s descriptions are superficial, although they provide a *panoptikon* of the phenomenon. As reason for the change of fashions and the striving to be fashionable he mentions among other things the human desire for change – which he considers to be a fundamental anthropological feature – the desire to possess and the usual motives such as an imitation of the trends of the masses and the freedom thereby gained at other levels¹⁰ such as the imitation of models, to which the “rich” in particular belong, conviviality, demonstrative consumption, distinctiveness and aesthetics¹¹. He repeatedly returns to the phenomenon of change: humans seek variation, even when it results in a worsening of their position¹². According to GARVE, the phenomenon of fashion itself is virtually immortal: “*At least I believe that the age in which everlasting and non-changing fashions are invented will come to pass much later than that*

7 Cf. BOVENSCHEN 1986, 8

8 KANT 1998, 185; VISCHER 1859 and 1879; Cf. PITTRUF 1987, 179

9 Christian GARVE applied himself to this then despised subdiscipline of Enlightenment philosophy, described at the time as ‘popular philosophy’.

10 Cf. GARVE 1987, 94

11 Cf. GARVE 1987, 22, 64, 97, 100; Cf. MEINHOLD 2011

12 Cf. GARVE 1987, e.g. 57, 75, 105, 196

in which philosophers can agree on universally viable and unchanging principles of metaphysics and morals."¹³

KANT was the first well-known philosopher to express himself on the subject of fashion. According to him, fashion is a law of imitation according to which "*the human being has a natural tendency to compare his behaviour to that of a more important person (the child with adults, the lower-ranking person with those of higher rank) in order to imitate the other persons' ways.*"¹⁴

As a fundamental anthropological assumption, this hypothesis forms one of the three pillars of the anthropological-philosophical basis of fashion examined in this work. A positive-critical analysis of fashion from a literary-aesthetical angle came with BAUDELAIRE, who recognised in fashion a possible source of quenching an aesthetic thirst.¹⁵ "*The immortal longing for beauty [has] always found its satisfaction*" in fashion, though not exclusively so.¹⁶ The human desire for aestheticisation or, more generally, melioration¹⁷ – in a 'holistic' sense – forms the second pillar of my investigation. This desire for melioration is assumed to be a fundamental anthropological feature, particularly in the sense that the individual almost constantly strives to improve certain aspects of his self (physical, mental or spiritual), e.g. his life-situation or his surroundings.

Friedrich Theodor VISCHER, known for his *Aesthetics, or the science of the beautiful*¹⁸ (which draws heavily on HEGEL) and 'notorious' for his *Faust*¹⁹ and the novel *Auch Einer*, indulges in less profound but all the more cynical detailed observations on fashion. A few hypotheses that seem to anticipate VEBLEN and SIMMEL to some extent appear in 1880 in the es-

13 Cf. GARVE 1987, 161

14 KANT 1998, 184. (Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, CUP 2006, p. 142).

15 In 1969, Eugen FINK ventured a further positive-critical "*finely shaded consideration of anthropological phenomena*" that included the phenomenon of fashion.

16 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 9

17 Lat. *meliorare*: to improve

18 VISCHER 1994

19 *Der Tragödie Dritter Theil. Treu im Geiste des zweiten Theils des Götheschen Faust gedichtet von Deutobold Symbolizetti Allegoriowitsch Mystifizinsky*

say *Concerning a Philosophy of Fashion*, by Friedrich KLEINWÄCHTER, which is admittedly more of a psychological-sociological and anthropological nature than a philosophical one.

SCHURTZ's *Essentials of a Philosophy of Dress* offers nothing new regarding this theme that had not already been formulated by GARVE and VISCHER and later and more distinctly by VEBLEN; although in a certain sense he anticipates a central thought found in Roland BARTHES' *The Language of Fashion*: "It is far more difficult to understand the language that speaks to us from the clothing and decoration of a people."²⁰

Relatively well known are one or the other of the four essays on fashion written by SIMMEL²¹ which offer in particular a social scientific approach to the phenomenon, although we are in fact dealing with three modified versions of the essay *Die Mode*, which appeared in the *Die Wiener Zeit* on 12 October 1895.

Early on KANT recognises behind the "popularity" of fashion its "novelty"²². VISCHER mentions the "search for innovation"²³ as an underlying characteristic of fashion, and KLEINWÄCHTER describes the "witch hunt for that which is constantly new"²⁴ as its motivating quality. The sociologist and economist Thorstein Bunde VEBLEN also defines neophilia, i.e. "the predilection of all humans for the ever new"²⁵ as one of the driving forces of fashion. SIMMEL recognises the strong focus on the present that fashion

20 SCHURTZ 1891, 3

21 SIMMEL [1895] *Zur Psychologie der Mode*; [1905] *Philosophie der Mode*; [1905] *Die Mode*; [1908] *Die Frau und die Mode*

22 KANT 1998, 185

23 VISCHER 1879, 30

24 KLEINWÄCHTER 1880, 39

25 VEBLEN 1997, 173. VEBLEN was the first to write in detail about the so-called trickle-down effect, the phenomenon of striving for belonging and for demarcation, demonstrative consumption and demonstrative idleness – and thus implicitly a kind of theatre of consumption. Here he anticipates GOFFMAN's theory of the presentation of self. Cf. Also BOURDIEU 1987, 376: "*Fashion apparently supplies the best arguments for an explanatory model such as the trickle-down effect, which makes a conscious striving for distinction the driving force of change in dress habits.*"

has and the sense of the present that results from this.²⁶ This aspect of fashion is also to be found in BARTHES: “*Fashion sees itself [...] as the natural law of the present*”.²⁷ Anthropological implications, linked to the *present*, the *youthful*²⁸ and the *new*, are constituents of the third pillar of this cultural critique of fashion to be explicated. Key concepts related to these anthropological implications are *present-orientation*, *present-preference*, *myopia*²⁹, *neophilia*, the search for (*eternal*) *youth*, *immortality* and the hope of *reincarnation*.

KEY QUESTION, METHOD AND STRUCTURE

The central question of this investigation is: Which of the specifically human characteristics and motivations – philosophical-anthropological implications of fashion and fashion advertising respectively – are responsible for the change of styles and thereby the constancy³⁰ – the “*psychological shimmer of duration*”³¹ – of the phenomenon of fashion which no longer disappears from the historical stage? In a word: What makes fashions into fashion?

Regarding the philosophical-anthropological implications³² of fashion, the focus is on human characteristics or fundamental anthropological conditions that are responsible for certain appearances, phenomena or manifestations of fashion. These implications are hidden, involved or interwoven in the external appearances of fashion; metaphorically speaking, something human is hidden in the pleats of fashionwear or the fashionable material

26 SIMMEL 2000, 17-18; 1996a, 197-198

27 BARTHES 1985, 279

28 In advertising fashionable consumer products, youthfulness is a key value.

29 The medical term *myopia*, i.e. ‘short-sightedness’ is used also metaphorically to signify ‘short-sighted’ attitudes and ways of behaving and acting.

30 The constancy of the phenomenon of fashion substantiates itself by the change of styles.

31 SIMMEL 2000, 34

32 (lat. *implicatio*) The term ‘implication’, because of its etymological relatedness to a pleat in material, to a surface of fabric and to the ‘fabric’ or ‘material’ itself is preferred to other concepts such as ‘background’.

which is to be unravelled and ‘dis-covered’. If one considers fashion and its manifestations and wishes to know what is concealed behind these phenomena, one has to draw aside the fabrics, spread them out, smooth them out and take a look at what has ‘concealed’ itself in and behind these pleats.

Fundamental anthropological conditions are conditions found in the very grounding of a human being, those conditions which, so to speak, constitute our foundation. The concept characteristics expresses this adequately: the traits of a human being that make up personal character. Whether or not it is possible to speak of anthropological constants – ones that are *independent* of time and space (concrete: e.g. history, politics, culture, geography, climate, etc.) must be determined from one case to the next. The striving to imitate is certainly such an anthropological constant. The aversion towards death found in many cultures is not, however, found in all people at all times and in all cultural contexts.

In the present work, the understanding of the historical or economic-historical emergence of fashion will not be the prime concern, rather the search for those anthropogenic fashion motivators that cause or favour the consumption of fashion. A selection and limitation of the implication to be examined now follows, from both a quantitative and qualitative point of view: Quantitative aspect: Fashion advertising makes use of these implications not only once, as an exception or singly but repeatedly.³³ Qualitative aspect: The philosophical-anthropological implications that are active in advertising were chosen because of their claim to make contributions to the art of living. This does not imply that fashion advertising makes any existential contributions to the art of living, rather that by the use of such terms as ‘lifestyle’, ‘aesthetics for body, soul and mind’ it makes the claim to be able to make contributions to a philosophy of life. A further selection criterion is the deficient treatment until now of the implications of fashion examined in this work from a philosophical point of view.

33 The author sifted through these implications in various European and non-European national and internationally published fashion magazines for various target groups. The statistical recording of frequencies corresponding to the implications has to be left in the hands of professional empiricists who are able to measure the frequency of motifs used in fashion advertising.

If one focuses the concept of fashion on *the democratisation of luxury in fashionwear*,³⁴ it is obvious that this emerged at a particular point in history and that it has not disappeared since. Behind its appearance are anthropological implications about which it has to be assumed that they must already have existed before fashion (and fashion advertising) entered history.

The three philosophical-anthropological assumptions on which this examination is to be based – which are supported and canalised by fashion – are the following:

1. Man as *politikón zôon* seeks to gain recognition from (certain) other humans³⁵ and, in order to achieve this end, makes use of self-staging, among other things.³⁶ In the staging of the self an *ideal* is *imitated* that either exists in reality or as a simulation or simply in the imagination. Fashion – in the form of guise as disguise – enables the imitation of (ideal) models and thereby a staging within the social theatre. It is argued in favour of the thesis that fashion is staging and, in addition, a pseudo-tragedy that contains pseudo-cathartic elements: with the aid of the anthropological assumption of KANT – man likes to compare himself with one of higher rank – linked to ARISTOTLE’S theory of tragedy – tragedy seeks to imitate better human beings, such an attempt will be ventured.

2. Man as an aesthetically oriented being makes an effort to *improve* and to *beautify* (to ameliorate) himself and his life to a greater or lesser extent in various fields – ideally, in a holistic way: ‘environment’, ‘outfit’, body, soul and mind. In order to be able to examine implications of clothing fashion – beyond just the classical motifs of clothing (jewellery, modesty, protection) – clothing has to be related to the human image and world view of the wearer as well as this person’s social environment. – Clothes are physically closer to the human body for the longest periods of life than ‘one’s neighbour’, and this neighbour also uses clothes when trying to orientate himself in relation to others. In this context, the conceptual Aristotelian division into three (body – soul – mind), the totality of which is as-

34 The democratisation of luxury is the spreading of former luxury goods into mass-produced commodities. This process occurs at different historical points in time from one consumer item to the next. For clothing, the process started after electrification, while for computers it started in the 1990s.

35 Cf. HEGEL 1973, IV A

36 Cf. GOFFMAN 2001

sumed by me to be a continuum, can be extended. The discontinuity between clothing and body is clearly recognisable, as opposed to that thematised in the psycho-physical problem. We will see later that marketing and advertising for fashion consumer items constructs or simulates for strategic reasons a holistic unity of ‘fashion consumer item – body – soul – mind’ in order to be able to ascribe product qualities to their consumers. Fashion-wear is an attempt at aestheticisation – more generally ‘melioration’ – of the body and beyond that the soul and the mind, as well as the immediate environment. Fashion advertising propagates melioration at a holistic level – it appears to be the improvement of the self. In doing so, fashion impacts not only on clothing as the packaging of the body but the body itself.

3. It can be said about people from all cultural spheres that humans are beings who are preoccupied with metaphysics and seek transcendence. A person from a cultural circle that is strongly influenced by Christian and economic values,³⁷ prefers on the whole a life to no (more) life, being younger to being old (at least seen retrospectively, from a certain point in life onwards) and being reborn to eternal death. People – not only religious people – strive in many ways for eternal life (e.g. by producing works or progeny that are to outlast their own lives)³⁸, but do not, however, seem able *de facto* to attain this. Some people strive for eternal youth or to *appear* as young as possible; so far this is doomed to fail sooner or later. Only when experiencing the inevitability of the ageing process and or personal decline do some people – their fearful or hopeful gaze fixed on death – hope for reincarnation. A new fashion is, seen metaphorically, the ‘birth’ of

37 The ordering, valuing and thinking undertaken under Christian influence is at times so obvious that it is no longer perceived. Cf. ELIADE 1988, 229: “*Whether he wants to or not, the non-religious person of modern times continues the ways of behaviour, religious ideas and language of the homo religiosus even when he profanes them and divests them of their original meaning.*”

38 Cf. PLATON *Symposium* 206c-209b and OVID *Metamorphoses*, 871-end. “*And now, I have completed a great work, which not [...] consuming time can sweep away. Whenever it will, let the day come, which has dominion only over this mortal frame, and end for me the uncertain course of life. Yet in my better part I shall be borne immortal, far above the stars on high, and mine shall be a name indelible [...] and through all the coming years of future ages, I shall live in fame.*” <http://www.theoi.com/Text/OvidMetamorphoses15.html>

a new style of dress, with the aid of which the wearer can appear younger to himself or herself and to others. Fashion satisfies symbolically the striving for eternal youth, reincarnation and immortality.

These three assumptions now have to be justified and substantiated. The use of them must also be demonstrated and analysed in fashion advertising. The division into three – staging, aestheticisation, the stigmatisation of death – will be used throughout the entire investigation.

So as to show the relation of anthropological implications and underlying causes of fashion, these assumptions will be demonstrated in a figure that has to be seen as an ideal-typical incarnation of fashion – the dandy. He incorporates the anthropological implications that are concealed behind fashion in a way no other ideal-typical figure does. For this reason, the mentioned implications can be seen in him and illustrated by him particularly well and distinctly. For

“suppose that a short-sighted person had been asked by some one to read small letters from a distance; and it occurred to some one else that they might be found in another place which was larger and in which the letters were larger – if they were the same and he could read the larger letters first, and then proceed to the lesser – this would have been thought a rare piece of good fortune.”³⁹

To elucidate the first assumption (imitation and staging) by means of dandysm⁴⁰ AUREVILLY’S perspectives on G. BRUMMELL will, among other things, be enlisted. The second assumption (aesthetisation) will seek support from BAUDELAIRE’S ideal of the dandy as well as HUYSMANS’ *des Esseintes*. The third assumption (striving for immortality, reincarnation, youthfulness) can find no more suitable sources than Oscar WILDE’S literary figures *Dorian Gray* and Lord HENRY.

The final chapter will pose the question to what extent anthropological implications discovered within the realm of fashion can be profitably applied outside fashion, i.e. in the art of living, so that lifestyle (which is actually a style of consumption) cannot be recognised, comprehended and practised as an art of living (as propagated in fashion advertisements) but art of living as a possibility of lifestyle. The mentioned implications seem to be

39 PLATO: *The Republic* 368 d (<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.3.ii.html>)

40 Cf. the respective chapter in this book for the various spellings of Dandysm.

particularly interesting precisely for these deliberations concerning practical transposition, as they represent essential and existential conditions of life that has turned out well.

Imitation, which is connected to life-fulfilment, self-realisation and meaning, could not succeed solely by means of external ideal images – as is particularly true in the case of fashion. It must also have internal ideal models. It must be clarified in this context to what extent ARISTOTLE's concept of *entelechy*⁴¹ can be of importance here. It is ultimately conceivable that a person can complete the plans for life that she has within herself as a disposition.

The aestheticisation of the self at the level of fashionwear primarily serves the exterior, in particular the “*wrappings of the wrappings of the mind*”⁴². However, fashion advertising professes not only to serve these “wrappings of the wrappings” but in a holistic way the body, the soul and the mind. So the question is just how a holistic melioration beyond fashion – i.e. in the realm of life as a work of art, can be achieved.

Especially in western societies – determined by Christian and economic values – being young, e.g. with the aid of cosmetics and fashion, is glorified and celebrated, it has to be ascertained to what extent and in what way a de-stigmatisation and problematisation of the *topoi* age(ing), decline and death could be meaningful for the individual and for society.

THE FASHION CONCEPT OF PROLETARIZED LUXURY CLOTHING

The concept *fashion* has only existed since the 17th century, first in the expression *à la mode*, which in French roughly means *according to the presently preferred manner and fashion*, i.e. *modern* in the sense of ‘according to the times’, ‘topical’. The German word *Mode* derives from the Latin term *modus*, which means *measure, size, moderation, regulation, rule* as

41 Greek: *entelecheia*: ‘en telos echein’: that which the soul has in itself – is the ‘completion’ of potential, the form that is realised in the material world.

42 HANSON 1990, 109. The body as *a temporary host of the soul*: a Platonic image of the body as the temporary (mortal) host of a(n immortal) soul. The body is the wrapping of the soul, clothes the wrappings of the wrapping of the soul.

well as *manner in which a thing is done*, but also *measure, rhythm, song, manner*.

According to how broadly or narrowly the concept is defined, fashion as a phenomenon always existed or was first conceived and born as a child of industrialisation, commercialisation and the democratisation of consumption and luxury. The observation comes from consumer critics that goods have become mass commodities which originally were thought of as luxury items, which is why Günter WISWEDE and Hans FREYER talk about a democratisation or proletarianisation of consumption and luxury respectively.⁴³ Roland BARTHES assumes that “*fashion [...] in our civilisation probably arose with the birth of capitalism.*”⁴⁴

According to a very widely held concept of fashion, as represented for example by BAUDRILLARD, everything can become fashion, everything can theoretically be subsumed under fashion – as the highest expression of commercialism.⁴⁵ If every ‘trend’ and every ‘tendency’ is defined as fashion, fashion must exist ever since tendencies did – i.e. in and before Antiquity. Allowing oneself to be embalmed and interred in pyramids would have been *fashion* for the Egyptian pharaohs according to this broad interpretation of the concept. But if one primarily equates fashion with *democratised luxury fashion* (VISCHER; KLEINWÄCHTER), one arrives at a narrower definition of fashion: “*that positive witch-hunt for the ever-new [...] which we today refer to as ‘fashion’ in the narrow sense*”⁴⁶.

Because of the disparate, extended use of the concept of fashion, it is necessary to pinpoint different meanings of the term and to differentiate between various fashion concepts: the broadest (GARVE or BAUDRILLARD), fairly broad (SIMMEL), fairly narrow (SCHURTZ) and narrowest (VISCHER). In the following, an ideal-typical classification of fashion concepts will be

43 Cf. WISWEDE 1972, 283 and FREYER 1958, 91

44 BARTHES 1995, 309-310.

45 “*But one has to ask oneself if science and culture in the ‘originality’ of their modes of action do not themselves belong to a fashionable ‘structure’.* BAUDRILLARD 1991, 139. This thesis of fashion theory taken to the baudrillardesque extreme, sounds like *fashion is everything and everything is fashion*. Concerning fashion in philosophy, Cf. PATON 1937, 4: “*There are fashions in philosophy as there are in everything else.*”

46 KLEINWÄCHTER 1880, 39

undertaken that, apart from providing an overall view of the field, should help clarify what the fashion concept has so far sponsored; it will seek to broadly demarcate the concept that will subsequently simply be referred to as 'fashion'.

The concepts of fashion that thus take their leave will not be completely excluded, but the focus will be as sharply as possible on the chosen concept, so prevent fashion becoming everything and everything becoming fashion...

The concept of fashion in the *broadest* sense [IV] is used by certain authors⁴⁷ for trends and tendencies in human actions and their results since the *Paleolithic Age*,⁴⁸ e.g. a stylistic element in architecture used in certain periods in history, such as *triglyphs* and *metopes* in the entablature of Greek temples, a particular construction method of temples or pyramids, mass-produced oil lamps made of clay, etc.

Fashion in a *broader* sense [III] is used for trends and tendencies in human actions and their results to the extent that these are strengthened and hastened by the democratisation of consumption (currently for instance, the purchase and use of smart phones or tablet computers⁴⁹).

Fashion in the *narrower* sense [II] is used as a term for styles of clothing since the Paleolithic Age that are widespread within certain social groups. For instance, the wearing of particular types of clasp. If such a clasp, however, served as an insignia of a particular rank and did not also represent accessory that was within the means of members of lesser ranks,

47 BAUDRILLARD 1982, 133-152; GARVE 1987, 11

48 Old Stone Age: approx. 2 to 3 million until 18,000 BC.; Cf. KNUSSMANN 1996, 255

49 While the purchase and use of smartphones is still at the peak of a topical fashion tendency, the printed book already has this absolute 'fashion peak' behind it. The relativity and finite nature of apparently never-ending 'fashion' trends becomes even clearer in the media and forms of data carrying (e.g. gramophone records), although it ought to be noted that the trend that catches on does not only depend on the quality of the product but is also influenced by the marketing strategies, which means that it is mainly subject not to qualitative but 'fashion' criteria. This is evident from the commercial success of storage media and computer software on the market the industrial quality of which has been categorised as inferior by professional users (Cf. Meinhold 2009).

it would – apart from being fashion in the narrower sense – also be part of an official costume. As every costume and uniform can be subsumed under this notion, using the given restriction of fashion in the narrower sense, if one selects a particular historical period and a particular social environment as point of reference. The wearing of togas by a particular stratum of Roman Antiquity can in that period, in that cultural space, be called fashion in the narrower sense.

Fashion in the *narrowest* sense [I] is finally the periodically changing commercialised, present-day-oriented style of democratised luxury clothing.

The following comments must be added to this differentiation: The differentiation is analytical, and the individual fashion concepts cannot therefore be distinguished absolutely clearly from each other and the content of the boundary areas overlaps to a certain extent. It must be noted that the fashion concept was broadened to cover highly diverse trends and tendencies.⁵⁰ For that reason, it was necessary to give a brief outline of the boundaries of the use of the fashion concept so that the phenomena of the fashion concept selected [I] can now be investigated for its implications.

Historically speaking, fashion is a phenomenon that can be dated to the time immediately prior to the *first industrial revolution*.⁵¹ Whether or not these phenomena, which existed historically *before* the concept of fashion, can be included in the fashion concept to be used here depends on the definition of the fashion concept. Since the definition of fashion in the narrowest sense restricts its definition sphere to fashion in *clothing* and also phe-

50 In his Nicomachean Ethics ARISTOTLE deals with three types of friendship. Of these only one would he describe as “*perfect*” (1157 b 6). “*Since people also call [...those of the two other forms] friends [...] perhaps we too must also call them such*” (1157 b 25-29). With the various concepts of fashion something similar applies.

51 The concept *fashion* has only been used in the sense *à la mode* since the 17th century (Cf. KLUGE 1999, key word *Mode*); the industrial revolutions are as follows: *first industrial revolution*: in the 17th century (Since 1787 the steam engine is used as a source of power in the textile industry, thereby ushering in the first industrial revolution), *second industrial revolution*: transition from 19th to 20th century (electrification), *third industrial revolution*: 20th century (computerisation).

nomena since the *democratisation of luxury* in fashionable clothing, all the other three fashion concepts – with certain exceptions that will not be gone into here – lie basically outside the definition sphere of the narrowest fashion concept. That the *phenomena* of fashion (in the narrowest sense) to be described appear even so within the definition sphere of the other fashion concepts is due to the fact that certain manifestations are *particularly* though not exclusively reflected in fashion in the narrowest sense and are at their most distinct there. For example, a brand-new model smartphone or a fashionable perfume (which can be subsumed in fashion concept III) have a strong present orientation (anthropological implication concerning the phenomenon of the stigmatisation of death and age[ing]); an ‘old-fashioned’ antique pocket watch (fashion concept IV) serves the subjectively experienced beautification of the overall appearance of a person (phenomenon of melioration), or a grandfather’s top-hat (fashion concept II) guarantees the element of appearance on the stage of social everyday life (phenomenon of putting-on-stage, staging).

The phenomena that cluster round the *narrowest* fashion concept are those that should be investigated in the first instance. If the concept *fashion* is used unqualified, fashion concept [I] in the *narrowest* sense is what is meant. If other fashion concepts, trends or tendencies are being referred to, this will be expressly indicated. Were one to talk about fashion with regard to tendencies in the architecture of Antiquity, it would be using the term in its broadest [IV] sense. The trends of (bargain-priced) furnishings belong to the broader definition [III]. A costume or uniform – from any period whatsoever – would, according to the present classification of concepts, be fashion in the narrower sense [II] though not in the narrowest sense [I].

Thus fashion in the narrowest sense is limited by three factors:

A) The fashion of *clothing* is in the foreground – ‘the second skin’ represents the most direct wrapping of the body, even though it does not directly belong to the individual. Clothing as a fashionable consumer product of human creativity has the closest ‘contact’ with the human body, and almost always finds itself between persons. From this point of view, clothing is ‘inter-personal’.

B) The fashion of clothing is restricted to the time of the *democratisation or proletarianisation of luxury*, since the specifically philosophical-anthropological backgrounds of a phenomenon have to be discovered, the vehement acceleration and spiralling of which were triggered by industri-

alisation and the democratisation of consumption and luxury. These processes have never left the social stage since that time and, as far as can be judged, it will not happen within the foreseeable future.

C) The third limiting factor is the strong orientation towards the present exhibited by fashion, one that in particular – if not exclusively – is to be found in fashionwear. And fashion has made its entrance into most social environments in groups with a high standard of consumption as a result of the democratisation of luxury.

The narrower fashion concepts, as used by most philosophers until now, refer exclusively to clothing, since the concept of *fashion* only came into existence with the *fashion of clothes* and is primarily used in relation to clothing. Nevertheless, by way of illustration, fishing will occasionally take place in foreign waters, i.e. in the spheres of fashion concepts II-IV, in order to elucidate those anthropological implications that admittedly exist and are marketed in fashionwear but that at times appear even more distinctly in other product sections, as for instance *the striving for a young appearance* in advertising for cosmetic products.

Once the sphere to be examined *within* what from now on will simply be referred to as fashion has been clarified, we must turn to fashion-like manifestations *outside* fashion in order to categorise them as cyclical manifestations in a framework dealing with similar phenomena.

ANCESTORS OF FASHION: NATURAL RHYTHMS, TRENDS, COSTUMES

Outside the social sphere, in nature and the cosmos, there are phases, rhythms and cycles that can be seen as non-anthropogenic precursors of anthropogenic trends and tendencies – such as the orbital cycles of satellites and planets and the tides, seasons, days and nights. Alongside many other parameters, present-day fashion also adapts to the seasons.⁵² To that extent, fashion – especially seasonal fashion – displays an amalgam of non-anthropogenic and anthropogenic causes. A further example of natural rhythms are hormonal cycles such as menstruation. In humans these cycles

52 Gloves, for example, are seldom in fashion during the summer. For the social component of cycles Cf. SCHMIED 2002, 5

also partially affect the choice of clothing – according to investigations of physical anthropology, women dress more ‘provokingly’ at the time of their ovulation.⁵³ Investigations of men to ascertain correlations between hormone levels and clothing have still to be undertaken. Biological, geological, meteorological, astronomical phases, rhythms, cycles can, in accordance with these examples, be considered as *natural ancestors of fashion(s)*.

It is possible to show in human history – prior to the democratisation of luxury in clothing – trends and tendencies in the form of phases as far back as the Paleolithic Age (Old Stone Age). At that stage of culture, the making and using of simple implements made of stone, wood and bone can be conceived as a ‘trend’ or ‘tendency’ in the broader sense and thus as fashion in the broadest sense (fashion concept IV).⁵⁴ The trend and the tendency, but also custom are *historical* precursors of fashion.

A *vestimentary* precursor of fashion is the costume. In Germanic languages the word is ‘Tracht’ (German), ‘dracht’ (Dutch), ‘dragt’ (Danish), ‘dräkt’ (Swedish), ‘drakt’ (Norwegian). All forms are verbal abstracts of the verb for ‘to carry, wear’ (German: *tragen*), and the original meaning is ‘that which is worn at a special time’, e.g. at table, and then – more generally – ‘that which is worn’.⁵⁵ The costume indicates a relation to a tradition. From the present-day point of view, it refers to the past. Fashion – despite occasional borrowings from the past – refers to the present⁵⁶ and the future: “*Fashion sees itself [...] as the natural law of the present*”.⁵⁷

Admittedly, the concept of fashion – for changing styles of dress – has only existed since the 17th century, but costumes already changed and stylistic elements varied before the appearance in history of changing fashions in clothes, a development that accelerated as a result of the democratisation of luxury. “*Fashion is merely the younger, more relaxed, mercurial, boundlessly vain sister of the costume – a sister who imperiously lumps all ranks and nations together yet who is hounded by all the dogs sniffing for*

53 Possibly because of a subjectively registered increase in body temperature.

54 Cf. KNUSSMANN 1996, 251

55 The German word ‘Tracht’ can be traced back to the 9th century, Cf. KLUGE 1999, Headword: ‘Tracht’.

56 Cf. SIMMEL 2000, 17

57 BARTHES 1985, 279

novelty."⁵⁸ Fashion and costume exert a mutual influence on each other: not only does fashion arise out of costume (e.g. 'costume fashion') but also costume out of fashion: "*So fashion plays and plays, sometimes throwing an accidentally right, often a distinctly wrong part of its sophisticatedly capricious inventions over the city wall onto the fields, where it is seized on by the country people and gradually becomes an ancient inheritance, i.e. a costume.*"⁵⁹

To that extent, the costume would be a more constant form of fashion and fashion a more quickly changing form of costume. Costume can be subsumed in the narrower though not in the narrowest fashion concept (unless we are dealing with costume fashion), as costume can be considered as a *fashion of clothing since the Paleolithic Age*. Costume and fashion differ to the extent that fashion cannot be explained in the narrowest sense by costume nor costume by fashion. This has to do with the present-orientation of fashion: in a costume a person can admittedly indulge in staging and beautifying just as well as in a fashionable garment, but by means of the costume (s)he does not normally appear to be younger, since the costume is *not in opposition* to that which is old – indeed, it partially conserves it, displays traditional references and as such tends to defend itself against the new, as it does not completely change but, over time, gradually absorbs new tendencies. Fashion is always in search of the new, even though it often employs recursive elements to do this. To build further on VISCHER's allegory: costume is the sprightly grandmother and fashion her grandchild in ever new reincarnations, a child that never gets beyond the infant stage.

Even exclusively judged by the criterion on present-orientedness, however, costume and fashion are not complete vestimentary opposites. Admittedly, despite frequent forays into the past, fashion creates a radical present-orientedness, whereas costume (where the orientation is towards tradition rather than the present) is worn by someone who in doing so creates a link to tradition and the past. However, this very tradition-orientedness means that the costume-wearer is also a *carpe diem* figure. Just think of the traditional Sunday costume worn by farmers, or of *traditional* Shrove Tuesday costumes that originate from a particular time in the past, are reminders of that past and are worn on a particular day of the year which also refers to a

58 VISCHER 1879, 29

59 VISCHER 1879, 30

tradition. Because of the costume the wearer feels himself even so in the here and now, even though this feeling can be connected with indulging in the past. When formerly fashionable clothing can no longer show any present-orientedness, it is considered past fashion – or as costume when it is felt to be traditional. So this fashion is now *out of fashion* and no longer *fashionable*.

A further vestimentary dimension is opened up by an item that is timelessly ‘classical’, e.g. jeans. The timelessly classical apparently exists beyond fashion, since it is not subject to changes of style and must even so be declared to be *in fashion*, since from an economic point of view is highly marketable because of a relatively constant demand and being worn by many people represents an orientation towards the present.

Fashion is *not* exclusively recursive, as BAUDRILLARD asserts⁶⁰; it contains elements from the past *and* the present – or future. That is what makes it present fashion. If fashion were entirely recursive, it would be to a certain extent costume, since it would only create an orientation towards the past and not the present. Even so, this would be *called* fashion if it at that particular moment was ‘up to date’ and thereby had a present-orientedness by the simple fact of its existence in the present, i.e. it had topicality. For this reason, a costume can under certain circumstances and as an exception even be declared fashion (in the narrowest sense) – a possible example would be the so-called costume-fashion of the topical season X.

From the point of view of the present, the costume represents a vestimentary fringe phenomenon that displays strong rural, traditional, native area and regional features and is restricted to particular social groups. This form of clothing is actually increasingly moving into the background, but appears in virtual and simulated form in the foreground, when, for example, advertising a product calls for a link to be made with tradition.⁶¹

60 BAUDRILLARD 1991, 134: “*Fashion always ‘retro’*” [recursive]. This assertion is just as right as PLATO’s *anamnesis* theory ‘*All learning is recollection*’. Of course, the extreme standpoint is basically possible that the present can only be constituted out of the past; on the other hand, it can be proved historically in many cases that ‘object’ X appeared in history for the first time at point T₁.

61 ‘*Vrouw Antje brings cheese from Holland*’ etc. The costume of the ‘Black Forest Maiden’ represents high regional quality and a long tradition – no matter whether these ‘meta-goods’ (high quality, tradition, link to local region) are

PSEUDO-REINCARNATION VIA RE-WRAPPING: 'RE-IN-VESTI-NATION'

Fashion is not only bought due to the classical dress motives: protection, propriety, adornment, but also to symbolise attitudes, intentions, social affiliation and/or non-affiliation, etc. It can be assumed that a person influenced by fashion advertising normally⁶² feels somewhat younger – or 'newer', like the item of clothing itself. The consumer buys new clothes and wishes not only to look 'not bad' but also not old. An exception is young people who wear a particular article of clothing in order to look older. Furthermore, by wearing clothes "*it is known that something of us is transferred into the items of clothing that lends them – before they become really threadbare – something everyday and well-worn.*"⁶³ Worn items of clothing can appear as new and yet have for their former wearer something – not objectively visible – well-worn about them that has to do with the personal 'relation' of the person to the item of clothing. On the other hand, clothing that really looks worn out (as a 'second-hand' or 'antique finish' item) can convey the subjective feeling of newness for the respective consumer. "*That one considers the prevalent fashion of the time to be beautiful is partly due to the relief felt when the old fashion is at last replaced by another one [...].*"⁶⁴

According to BAUDRILLARD, "*because of the abolition of the past*" fashion comprises "*death and the ghostlike resurrection of forms.*"⁶⁵ BENJAMIN, on the other hand, believes that "*fashion mocks death*", which boils down to "*eliminating all breaking off, all sudden ending [...].*"⁶⁶ By means of its ever-new colours, silhouettes and themes fashion comprises both the elements of death as those of birth or rebirth. On the one hand, fashion as historically superior phenomenon opposes death, for the phe-

linked with such consumer items as Black Forest ham, cherry gâteau or precision machine parts.

62 I.e. considered retrospectively and with increasing age.

63 SCHMITZ 1911, 89

64 VELEEN 1997, 173

65 BAUDRILLARD 1991, 134

66 BENJAMIN 1989, B 2,4

nomenon fashion remains constant insofar as there is always a latest fashion. On the other hand, the contents of the next-to-latest fashion die with the appearance of the latest. The old fashion goes, or ‘dies’, the new one comes, or ‘is born’.

If one considers fashion from the points of view mentioned – the revolt against decline, age(ing) and death on the one hand, and the symbolic ‘itself becoming new once more’ or even constantly ‘returning to clothes and being reborn’ on the other, one could possibly speak of fashion as pseudo-reincarnation or, more precisely, ‘re-in-vesti-nation’.⁶⁷ Re-in-vesti-nation, then, meaning: *pseudo-reincarnation by means of fashion that is consumed again and again*; it is these aspects that will be examined more closely in the subchapters further down.

FASHION MYTHS – META-GOODS IN MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

Myth (mythos) originally means not only *word, speech, narration, conversation* but also *fabrication* or *rumour*.⁶⁸ Present-day use of the term preserves both meanings: *Handed-down fiction, saga, tale* on the one hand, and *person, thing, event that is glorified*. In the *Republic*, PLATO remarks in relation to creative writing and its claim to truth in myth “*we begin by telling children stories which, though not wholly destitute of truth, are in the main fictitious [...] and these are, to describe them generally, false, although they also contain truth.*” PLATO admittedly describes all poetical imitations as “*ruinous to the understanding of the hearers*”⁶⁹, because, they do not deal with the truth⁷⁰ but only imitate it. Even so, he uses it himself in

67 Re-in-car-nation: = to be born back into the flesh; re-in-vesti-nation = to be born back into the clothes. This is a reference to KARDEC’s concept of reincarnation – “*retour de l’Esprit à la vie corporelle*”. He was the first to use it in detail in connection with the mystical teaching of ancient Egypt and antique Pythagorism (KARDEC 1858, 40). To what extent re-in-vesti-nation serves to purify the soul (that would be certainly a further marketing strategy) must be clarified below.

68 GEMOLL 1991, Key word: mythos

69 Both quotes PLATO *Republic* 377a-b and 595 b-c

70 PLATON *Republic* 595 b-c (<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext99/grgis10.txt>)

some of the dialogues – e.g. at the end of *Gorgias*, *Phaedo* und *Republic* – as a poetical-philosophical stylistic device for the pictorial representation of truths. “Listen, then, as story-tellers say, to a very pretty tale, which I dare say that you may be disposed to regard as a fable only, but which, as I believe, is a true tale, for I mean to speak the truth.”⁷¹

The myth of fashion is close to the meaning of myth as an ‘untrue tale’, but one that at least stands in a certain relation to the truth, even if only pretending to be true. As KERÉNYI sees it, however, the myth of fashion would be no ‘genuine’ myth – he retains this term for the myths of the history of religion, distinguishing between them and the ‘non-genuine’ myths, which are instruments of political movements.⁷² The myth of fashion is an instrument of advertising marketing strategists and thereby – in KERÉNYI’s terms of definition – non-genuine.

Applying BARTHES’ terminology, fashion myths are myths of the everyday. The ‘objectionable thing’ about such an everyday myth, which is read as a system of facts while only representing a semiological system, is its flight into a false nature.⁷³ The myth of the everyday is a statement that does not absolutely have to correspond to the truth, but that comes to us, cloaked in truth, and pretends to be the truth. The true myth comes cloaked in the form of a ‘small tale’⁷⁴, yet actually contains a core of truth.⁷⁵ This means that the myth of the everyday is a transfiguring tale, really a deception, a linguistic deception, with the aid of which an attempt is made to turn the potential buyer into an actual one.

According to Gail FAURSCHOU, the symbolic content of the myth is ‘imported’ into the commodity (or fashion), into the economic process, since it is not to be found there *a priori*. It is ultimately a question of financial quantities in this process, i.e. maximising profits. Therefore, advertis-

71 PLATON *Gorgias* 523 a

72 MANN/KERÉNYI 1967, 95 and 104ff [22 to VI/2]

73 Cf. BARTHES 1964, 108-109

74 Cf. a passage in the introduction to LESSING’s ‘Parable of the Ring’ in Nathan the Wise: NATHAN: [...] *Would you allow me to tell you a small tale?*

SALADIN: *Why not? I have always been a friend of small tales, when well told.*

LESSING 1994, 70 (III, 7);

75 We know of these stories from The Arabian Nights, via the Brothers GRIMM to LESSING’s parable of the ring.

ing strategists have to “*recycle*” or “*steal*” parts of history.⁷⁶ The myth of the everyday is – according to BARTHES – a “*stolen and returned statement*”⁷⁷; only the returned statement is no longer identical with the one that has been purloined: when returning it, it is not restored to exactly its proper place. The ‘stolen’ symbol is re-introduced by the advertising strategist into the marketing process as a sign – e.g. a chocolate candy that is apparently a symbol of love. If the symbol is emptied of its significance, only the sign remains: a candy made of chocolate, an economic item the significance of which – love – cannot be passed on via this economic candy-transaction. A candy from the beloved person, on the other hand, is a symbol that retains significance (love) as well as sign (candy). The love candy praised in advertising – which the lonely person buys for personal consumption – is a symbol emptied of significance: a sign (but without significance): a candy, nothing more. That this candy should be a symbol of love is a ‘myth’ used in advertising, with the intention of tempting the potential buyer to become an actual buyer. Even so, this candy is a sign without significance: a filled chocolate with a sweet content, but devoid of love...

“the sign can become the true object of consumption, that is to say a commodity – available to anyone (for a price), infinitely substitutable and, of course, ultimately disposable. [...] unlike the symbolic object [...] the sign object, it is hoped by those who produce it, will find its power quickly evaporate, become properly consumed, so that another, and yet another, will be required to replace it.”⁷⁸

It is not to be disputed that a candy can be a symbol of love – but it is not always or inevitably so. The deception practised in advertising consists of the demonstrated self-evidence of the *constant* functioning, as has been made clear elsewhere.⁷⁹

76 Cf. FAURSCHOU 1990, 239: The thoughts developed by FAURSCHOU are based on BAUDRILLARD, who is actually named as her source, but who in turn has taken over terminological material from BARTHES without explicitly acknowledging his sources.

77 BARTHES 1964, 107

78 FAURSCHOU 1990, 240; Cf. MEINHOLD (2013a, 44-7)

79 Cf. MEINHOLD 2001, 56-57

The use of a sequence from a piece of classical music in an advertising jingle ‘steals’ from the composition or the composer – not in the sense that after this extract has been used in advertising there now is a hole in the composition, but that all those who have heard the jingle will never (unbiased or uninfluenced) be able to hear the sequence again as they could before it had been used in a jingle, since a section of the composition has now been linked to the product. So something like a limited theft has taken place here, where what is returned has, from the perspective of the person listening to the music, been changed, since the section of music has been ‘linked’ to a consumer item as an ‘appetiser’. BARTHES makes this even clearer when, in *The Fashion System*, he states:

“If the producers and buyers of clothes had an identical consciousness, clothes could only be sold (and manufactured) at the pace at which they wore out, i.e. very slowly. [...] In order to deceive the calculating consciousness of the buyer, it is necessary to spread out in front of the object a veil of images, motifs and significances, to dip it in a medium that belongs to the class of appetisers. In short, it is necessary to create an illusion of the real object that replaces the slow-moving time needed to wear out the object by a sovereign time where the object has the freedom to destroy itself in a potlatch that takes place annually.”⁸⁰

The term appetiser, as used by Roland Barthes, expresses roughly the same as the concept ‘meta-goods’⁸¹ introduced in the following. As an immaterial counterpart to consumer goods (products and services) the concept ‘meta-goods’ is defined as follows: meta-goods are symbols of existential, psychological, aesthetic, emotional, social, spiritual or sacral values that lie ‘behind’ the consumer goods, which are linked with them by advertising strategies and which transcend the material or economic value of the consumer goods. Advertising strategists implant meta-goods in advertising for consumer products, so that consumer goods and meta-goods appear to be a purchasable unity. The meta-goods, like the consumer product, appear to be

80 BARTHES 1995, 10

81 Nobody would ever buy a dish on the basis of a flavour enhancer alone, but on the basis of a combination of enhancer and dish. When dealing with consumer goods, where meta-goods are employed in a similar way, the possibility exists that they are purchased solely on account of the meta-goods.

transferred into the possession of the consumer, or into the consumer himself. In illustrated advertising the meta-goods scenario is normally spread out over the entire background of the image surface, indicating a consumer product depicted on a smaller scale in the foreground.

For didactic reasons, advertising prefers to tell myths, instead of limiting itself to facts. Facts only interest the consumer regarding certain products. The more the product is subject to fashion trends, the more meta-goods and myths are brought to bear. Myths are, pedagogically speaking, valuable: something that coheres – especially in an affective-laden context – is easier to recall than a loose collection of facts. The listener recalls a fairytale more easily than the pincode of his credit card, even though this only consists of four or five digits but lacks any meaningful context. So with such products as fashionwear, myth is preferred to logic because it transports easily memorable content. To that extent, a reverse step takes place: While pre-Socratic philosophy had untied the knots of myth in order to get at the truth behind it, advertising ‘ties’ new myths for certain fashion consumer goods in order to escape from the truth, i.e. from the objectively concrete publication of all the properties of a product, since – unlike product mythology – these do not usually lead to an increase in sales. To this extent, the myth of Antiquity differs from the modern fashion myth. Both lay claim to truth; classical myth sketches truth by telling an ‘untrue’ fiction.⁸² Fashion myth disguises the truth by placing itself as disguised truth in front of the truth, i.e. by disguising concrete-objective properties by meta-goods or by linking product qualities with meta-goods.

Fashion myths are the deceiving narrative of fashion advertising, such a myth wants to make people believe that the supplier of fashion is selling meta-goods along with the goods, e.g. candies with ‘love-filling’ or jeans with youthfulness. Lifestyle is marketed as the ‘art of living’. Lifestyle – in advertising jargon – must not be equated with a ‘style of living’; it is merely a ‘style of consumption’⁸³ that does not represent any condition required for the art of living.⁸⁴

82 A more detailed “*Philosophy of myth*” is to be found in AHNGERN (1996).

83 For the distinction between ‘lifestyle’ and ‘style of living’ Cf. MEINHOLD 2001, 26-27

84 The term ‘art of living’ is used here in the sense of SCHMID (2000), in the sense of a “*realisation of life as a work of art*” (75): “*The indissoluble amalgam of*

A style of living is a particular way of conducting one's life, one that covers a middle-term to long-term span of time and gets its bearings from individual as well as social, aesthetic and ideal (though also material) values, and that tries to fulfil the functions of mediation of identity, affiliation, delimitation and management of everyday life.

“Lifestyle can be defined as follows: Lifestyle implies self-realisation and is a (superficial) material-demonstrative style of consumption – a ‘styling’ or a fashioning of certain moments, situations or phases of life; lifestyle has the same functions as a style of living and is oriented towards the same values, although it must be characterised by a greater affinity with consumption than the latter.”⁸⁵

Myths – also those of advertising – never fail, except for those where the whole effect depends on their failing. Advertising tells the tale of a life that is ever-successful, one that is guaranteed by its lifestyle (i.e. consumption of the acquired goods in the style presented by the advertising). If the consumer housewife chooses the ‘right’ washing-up liquid, she will no longer choose the wrong partner – this is at any rate what an advertisement for washing-up liquid suggests.

The three *fashion myths* that are ‘narrated’ by advertising employing meta-goods, are the following:

Constantly new, topical, fashionable clothing (fashion)

- (1) guarantees the perfect staging and recognition of its wearer on the stage of the social theatre
- (2) leads to a holistic beautification, or melioration, of the life of the wearer: this includes social, vestimentary, physical, mental, existential and spiritual beautification, and
- (3) makes the wearer ‘young forever’, almost immortal or reincarnates her/him; at least, conveys a breath of eternal youth, or immortality and re-incarnation (by means of re-in-vesti-nation).

In order to tell the fashion myth, advertising makes use of the following essential elements of (classical) myth:

act and ever-changing result represents a ‘work in progress’ which, in the case of the art of living, requires a whole life and which can only be fragmentary even when that life has come to an end.” (73) loc. cit.

85 MEINHOLD 2001, 26-27

- A *claim* to (not logically demonstrable) *truth*: “With this handy guide to eternal youth, you can be young, beautiful and sexy forever.”⁸⁶
- *Cleanness or vividness*:⁸⁷ Fashion advertising is admittedly ingenious from time to time, but as a rule not unclear (uncleanness would risk the sales of the supplier, something that s/he – as *homo oeconomicus*⁸⁸ – cannot permit himself to be, seeing the high cost of advertising).
- *Idealisation*: With fashionable clothes of this brand you not only look younger, more beautiful and sexier but “you can be young, beautiful and sexy forever”.⁸⁹ Idealisation and beautification are not only to be found in the language of written fashion advertising but also in images and sound.
- *Beautification*: Established globally available brands of transnational corporations can afford high-quality advertising; such high-quality, perfected and beautified advertising sometimes borders on art, or is not infrequently art.
- *Repetition*:⁹⁰ Fashion advertising – like practically all forms of marketing – is based on repetition: on the one hand it is *reproduced* in vast numbers (advertisements in fashion magazines, other periodicals and newspapers with high circulations), also *repeated*, the aim being for it to be repeatedly brought to the consciousnesses of potential consumers. Fashions themselves, via their cycles, are also constantly repeated.
- *Claim to exemplary status*:⁹¹ The model or the posing ‘star’ represents the exemplary model for the consumer “Experience the exciting lifestyle of society, experience people for whom style is fun – and be inspired by them!”⁹²

86 Advertising brochure for the *Diesel* brand, 2001/2002

87 Cf. NESTLE 1940, 17ff

88 When mention is made in this work of *homo oeconomicus*, what is meant is the rational, calculating side of a person, used in economics as the *ideal type* for model formation.

89 Advertising brochure for the *Diesel* brand, 2001/2002

90 Cf. LEEUW 1956, 468 ff

91 Cf. LEEUW 1956, 468 ff

92 WALBERER, Jörg: *Editorial*. In: *Life&Style*, No. 3, Hamburg, October 1999, p. 3. The reader of the magazine and potential consumer of the extolled lifestyle

- *Imitation*:⁹³ Scenes from fashion advertising are to be imitated (repeated) and staged by the consumer.
- *Uniqueness or originality*: With the exclamation of the uniqueness of a consumer item comes a demarcation of the product and thus a demarcation of the consumer from others with the aid of the consumer item. This implies a surplus value.

Having looked at some basic considerations, the focus will now turn to three groups of anthropological implications. In the following three sections, fashion will be presented as pseudo-tragedy, melioration and ‘re-investi-nation’.

products and fashion articles is encouraged to imitate (*be inspired by*) the indicated model (*society*).

93 Cf. ELIADE 1961, 19 ff and 1957, 40 ff

Philosophic-anthropological implications of fashion

PSEUDO-TRAGEDY

Unlike animals, man is a self-staging and self-reflecting being that is seeking for recognition. Fashionable clothes serve here as a requisite, since they support the staging of a person on the stage of everyday life and influence how a person is perceived by others ('spectators'). For people – especially at a first meeting – are governed by outward appearances, as KANT notes:

“The saying ‘clothes make the man’ holds to a certain extent even for intelligent people. To be sure, the Russian proverb says: ‘One receives the guest according to his clothes, and sees him to the door according to his understanding’. But understanding still cannot prevent the impression that a well-dressed person makes.”¹

An anthropological assumption of KANT is that a person likes to imitate his superiors and that fashion is a manifestation of this imitation: From his subjective-individual perspective man imitates ‘better’ people – role models – with the aid of fashion. In his poetics, ARISTOTLE assumes that tragedy seeks to imitate better people and that by sharing in the experience of the tragedy the spectator is granted *catharsis*.

In the following subchapters, man will be examined as a being that strives for recognition, that, in order to gain recognition, makes use of (imitative) staging and for this purpose gains assistance from fashionable clothing. Staging elements are suitable for human movements on the stage of so-

1 KANT 1988, 49 [AA 136-137] 2006, pp. 25–26

cial everyday life, with consumption activated for this self-dramatisation as well as the wearing of fashionable clothing being experienced as pleasant and self-enhancing by certain consumers. So the quintessential question is raised as to whether staging via fashion constitutes a *tragedy* and brings about a kind of *catharsis*. For – according to GOFFMAN – the “*issues that drama and stage technique deal with are often trivial, but they are universal – they obviously appear everywhere in social life.*”²

The striving for recognition on the everyday stage

It would appear that man cannot permanently be a ‘solivagus’³ but needs his fellow humans in an essential and existential way. He moves primarily within groups, which means that human reality is constantly social.⁴ Without a human counterpart, man can only feel an affiliation with nature and a belief. According to Eugen Fink “*Man [is] the greatest stimulus for his fellow-man. [...] He is stimulated by his fellow-man – more than anything else. [...] he essentially lives in co-existence with his fellow-men.*”⁵ Apart from the need for belonging, MASLOW also mentions the need for intimacy and love.⁶ The evidence of this ‘anthropological constant’ (to love and be loved) is constantly confirmed not only since the beginnings of literature and poetry but also in the personal feelings of every individual.

Corporations supplying consumer items also advertise for products (e.g. chocolate or cat food) by means of which the consumer – along with the products – can acquire, give and consume love almost instantaneously as meta-goods. Man does not only need company and the love of particular

2 GOFFMAN 2001, 18

3 solivagus = wandering around alone, isolated

4 Cf. KOJÈVE 1996, 23

5 FINK 1969, 63-64,

6 Cf. MASLOW 1999 and KLEBER 1996, 4-6. It should be noted that MASLOW – whose theory of the structure of needs is often regarded as being too rigid – immediately after explaining the hierarchy of human needs immediately relativises it: “*Up to this point, it would seem in our descriptions as if the hierarchy of basic needs was a fixed order – it is, however, not nearly as rigid as we have implied.*” MASLOW 1997, 79

people, however,⁷ but wants in addition to be *important* for these people, or to be recognised by them – for (certain) other people he wants to *play a role*, and in the truest sense of the word. MASLOW describes this anthropological implication in *motivation* and *personality* as the need for *recognition and self-esteem*.⁸ For recognition, being seen by other people is a necessary condition (which, trivially enough, cannot be realised without a counterpart); enjoying prestige is one of the sources of personal self-esteem.⁹ According to HEGEL (KOJÈVE), “*the real and true human being is the result of its interaction with others*”.¹⁰

According to KOJÈVE’s interpretation of HEGEL’s *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, the desire of one person desires the *desire* of the other, and not only the other person *without* his desire. He also wants to be desired and thereby recognised by the other person; “*every human, anthropogenic desire that produces self-consciousness, human reality is ultimately a function of the desire for recognition. [...] Being a human being is actually only a dependent function of a desire directed towards another desire, i.e. – ultimately – a desire for recognition.*”¹¹ This recognition¹² is a *conditio sine qua non* for being a human being:

“A human being is only really human as one that is ‘recognised’ by another human being, by other persons and – ultimately – all other persons: for itself just as well as for the others. So a human being, in order to be really and truly a ‘human’ and to

7 Temporarily or in phases, at least. [The German term used is ‘Ansehen’ (= how one is seen by others). Much use is made in the original of the verb ‘to see’. This can unfortunately not be retained in the English translation. Translator’s note]

8 Cf. MASLOW 1999, 62-87

9 Being recognised is to be understood in a metaphorical sense. BEETHOVEN, via his auditive perceived music still enjoys considerable recognition, even when one does not have him or the concert musicians ‘before one’s eyes’. Blind people ‘see’ their counterpart with their remaining four senses.

10 KOJÈVE 1996, 33

11 Cf. KOJÈVE 1996, 23

12 KOJÈVE 1996, 24-25

know itself as such, must impose the idea it has of itself on others: it must be granted recognition by others (in the ideal borderline case from all others).”¹³

It is easy to see the extent to which such human motivators as prestige, recognition and self-esteem are seized on by the advertising industry. The advertising slogan used for many years by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: “*Behind this newspaper there’s always a clever head*” not only indicates that this advertisement is aiming at the need for prestige, recognition and a feeling of self-esteem in the reader (oneself as a clever head behind a newspaper produced by and for clever heads) but also that it is assumed from the pages of the newspaper that even intellectuals – or people that would like to be such – are impressed by this assertion.¹⁴ Whoever holds this newspaper in front of him – including an idiot – is by definition now a clever head. The motivators prestige, recognition, self-esteem and affiliation, love are responsible for a not inconsiderable part of human attitudes and actions – also for consumer goods, which make use in their advertising of the motivators mentioned as meta-goods. Empirical evidence for the motivators mentioned is plentiful.¹⁵ A person gains prestige and a feeling of belonging by imitating models and by staging. This is the theme of the following section.

Staging and *imitatio prominentis*

I love acting. It is so much more real than life.¹⁶

By and large, the more civilised people are, the more they are actors.¹⁷

In order to improve their prestige in the eyes of others, people stage themselves. Self-dramatisation is a necessary anthropological element of social

13 KOJÈVE 1996, 27 u. 29

14 Cf. MEINHOLD 2001, 60

15 Cf. DEUTSCHE SHELL 2000, 65

16 Lord HENRY in: WILDE: *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, chap. 6.

17 KANT 1998, 67 (I, 1, § 14; AA 7, 151)

life.¹⁸ With their stimuli “*people act ‘society’ with each other and for each other*”.¹⁹ In this connection, fashion functions as more than just a useful ‘requisite’:

“A person’s self-presentation in society, his self-assertion – internal as well as external – but also his ordering in terms of rank and his competitive desire to stand apart from his neighbour are – ever since people have lived in societies, i.e. from time immemorial – to an astonishing extent dependent on the mysterious power that we give the simple name of fashion.”²⁰

Self-dramatisation with the aid of fashion gets its orientation from models and seeks to find an image that the performer wishes to present to fellow human beings. “*So the glass [the mirror] does not even reflect what he himself wants but how he is wanted by others*”²¹ – according to BLOCH. PLESSNER also assumes “*that the ‘self-control’ which the daily life of a human being calls for, the control of the role which he plays in it, the ability to transform and to pretend which social contact and profession more or less impose on one, are directed by the presenter towards the image he wishes to have for the onlooker.*”²²

Consequently, a person seeks to establish the role that he has to fill in the eyes of those from whom he would like to gain recognition. He acts a part for others and for himself that does not completely agree with his own individual nature but which presents a staged version of himself or of his human nature.²³ And since a person – “*by nature an actor [...] and a friend of appearances*”²⁴ – desires to be recognised by the other person, he makes use of methods such as the clothing or disguising of his outer appearance, in order to present himself as desirable.

For KANT the playing of roles, the staged self-presentation of a person in life, amounts to a cultural achievement that makes its contribution to the

18 Cf. DAHRENDORF 1969, VII-VIII und PLESSNER 1984, especially 411-412

19 FINK 1969, 65

20 KÖNIG 1971, 18

21 BLOCH 1998, 396

22 PLESSNER 1982, 407

23 dealt with in detail in PLESSNER 1985; see below.

24 FINK 1969, 99;

amelioration of the morality of the role-player: “*For by people playing these roles will gradually really awaken the virtues that they have artificially presented for a considerable time, and these will become part of their disposition.*”²⁵

Does appearance determine being, or being appearance? The Parisian fashion designer Maggy ROUFF opined that the soul influences the outer ‘wrapping’.²⁶ In everyday life it is certainly to assume that there is basically a mutual interaction between being and appearance, one that is presented by BAUDRILLARD in his *simulacra* theory as ‘hyperreality’.²⁷ According to this, everyday human actions – which constantly move between the poles of being and appearance – are already a form of hyperreality, since a person’s real being always fuses or merges with his presented being. This is also postulated by PLESSNER, who assumes a constant disparity between human nature and (more or less staged) social role.

As can be deduced from this, the virtuous orientation of attitude and action in stoic philosophy must lead, in a consistent or even compulsive form, to the complete acceptance of the social role. And this will involve the excision of the own self – something that would have been seen as pathological, seen from Cynical, Cyraenian and Epicurean positions. For from the first-mentioned perspective *being* has to become what being *ought* to become. According to the Stoic virtue ethic, the social role ought not to be appearance, but being must fill out this role as perfectly as possible and even do so with conviction – *appearance should become being*.

MONTAIGNE examines this disparity between being and appearance, between social role and individual human nature, finding a possible solution in the self-observation of the individual as a spectator: the soul is not to play its role for the purpose of display but for the acting person himself, who is also capable of assuming the perspective of observer towards him-

25 KANT 1998, 67 (I, 1, § 14; AA 7, 151)

26 ROUFF 1942, 175

27 BAUDRILLARD 1982, 119. BAUDRILLARD intention was to radicalise prominent theses and to use them against themselves. Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1984, 12 and 315

self.²⁸ ROUSSEAU also criticises the person who plays various roles and the ‘dual nature’ that results from this.²⁹

PLESSNER in his essay *Social Role and Human Nature* (1960) deals with the disparity and the area of tension between social roles and human nature; he describes the

“relationship between human nature and its social existence” [is] “a structure of doubles, in which the role-bearer and role-figure are interconnected”. “Via the role which he plays above all as the bearer of a rank in office and profession, modern man has his status, represents something. [...] next to a more or less nebulous private existence, everyone cuts – as well as he is able – a public figure [or] several [...]”.³⁰

PLESSNER’s anthropological concept of the role has in mind the “*relationship between the role-bearer and his role*” and it notes “*the dual nature of the private and public individual*”³¹ as an inalienable, inevitable fact. He thus distinguishes himself from MARX, according to whom

“a person must become identical with himself, because he has once been so and with this basic figure of coincidence between inner and outer possesses the prerequisite of a spiritual-moral freedom. [...] It is a question of capturing and humanising this concrete force – a second, as yet uncontrolled nature – which, because of its industrial reorganisation, alienates the person from himself and robs him of his self-esteem by exposing him to ever new threats to his inherited way of life.”³²

Against this conception PLESSNER sets man in his dual nature: for him, externalisation does not involve “*any alienation of the self but – under the present-day conditions of a highly differentiated working world, for example, which the sociological functional analysis of a society more or less corresponds to – the chance of being completely himself.*”³³ But the chance to

28 Cf. MONTAIGNE 1988, II, 17, 2, 647 and II, 16, 2, 623f

29 ROUSSEAU 1962, 186f and 1761. The term ‘dual nature’ is an expression of PLESSNER’s, see below.

30 all quotes PLESSNER 1985, 231, 234, 235

31 Both quotations are from PLESSNER 1985, 232

32 PLESSNER 1985, 236

33 PLESSNER 1985, 237

completely become oneself via externalisation would seem to be an ideal-typical conception compared with the real life-challenges that man is faced with among the conditions mentioned by PLESSNER. For this chance cannot fully be exploited in many instances of everyday life: a person is rarely completely himself in the course of his strongly monetary-oriented career but is frequently used as the means to an end by other people; that is why MARX is not completely wrong.

According to PLESSNER, “*man first [becomes] himself in his duality as a role figure that can be experienced by himself.*”³⁴ This statement mentions an anthropological constant: Only in playing roles that display a disparity with his individual human nature does man first truly exist: only through this disparity does a human being become a human being.³⁵

According to the Stoics, a human has entirely to be a social role; according to MARX the being of a human is concealed *behind* the person he pretends to be. This essential quality displays itself when he abandons this acted role and takes off its mask: that which is behind the role and the mask is the true man, that is the essence of the man, this is where he must go if he is to realise himself. PLESSNER’s synthesis, on the other hand, argues that duality and disparity form an inseparable unity is the actual essence of the human being.

But human nature is faced not only by *one* role, PLESSNER mentions in passing – every individual plays a multiplicity of roles and not infrequently finds himself in conflicting roles.³⁶ Often enough, the acted role collides with personal expectations (intra-role conflict), or with other real roles of a person (inter-role conflict). Switching from one role into another one can – according to the nature of the role – cause human nature to lose balance. Here it is necessary to transfer the Aristotelian virtue theory of the individual ‘golden’ mean – according to which every person has to find *his own* individually mediated mean between extremes – to the *mediation* of the re-

34 PLESSNER 1985, 238

35 This view of PLESSNER’s, however, is not unproblematic: On the basis of this *anthropological* role concept the question could be asked whether, for example, mentally retarded or babies (are able to) ‘play a role’ or whether they *are* wholly human nature and thus – if one pursues this plessneresque view to its radical, logical conclusion – are not human beings at all?

36 Cf. MERTON 1957

quirements of the roles. The individual as owner of various roles and his own nature can get to know his own golden mean between these extremes, so that taking over a role for a certain length of time does not represent acting a different character but simply an accentuation of his own mean or nature – his nature is not ‘violated’.³⁷ This own golden mean between the extremes of individual nature and diverse roles is variable and never an ideal position in which a person ought to feel at ease and one that does not fundamentally contravene role content.

SIMMEL deals with this issue of the discrepancy between the acting role and the artistic temperament in his essay *On the Philosophy of the Actor* (1908):

“how an actor is to perceive a role does not arise – not even as an ideal requirement – from the role itself but from the relationship of his artistic temperament to the role. [...] There is not simply on the one hand an objective assignment laid down by the author and on the other a real, acting subjectivity, so that it is merely a question of shaping the latter to fit the former; above both of these things there is a third: the requirement that this role makes of the actor, the particular law that comes to the acting personality from this role.”³⁸

The conception of the role of the actor – which at first glance would seem to contravene the stoic ethic of virtue and the Kantian categorical imperative³⁹ – can be transferred to the social role: A general law (or a custom) that defines roles experiences different forms according to the individual: the acceptance and care of her own child is expected of every mother, just as a corresponding acceptance and good shaping of the role is expected of the actor; but just *how* mothers and actors shape their roles depends on the actual person playing the role and it can be judged as dramatically brilliant (in the case of the actor) or ethically and pedagogically valuable (in the case of the mother) despite being shaped in different ways.

The practical conversion of the synthesis of social roles and individual human nature remains problematic, and it cannot even theoretically be ide-

37 A further problem area of this topos probably lies in the various *definitions* of man’s essential *being* and in the resulting conceptions of the human *telos*.

38 SIMMEL 1997, 424-425

39 Cf. also Georg SIMMEL (1968) *Das individuelle Gesetz* (174-230)

ally resolved. Seeking one's golden mean between named extremes is similar to juggling with balls corresponding to the number of roles plus one ball – to push the image even further – that can never leave one's hands: one's own human nature.

The aim of the previous passage was to ground the playing of roles in the social theatre as an anthropological fact and to uncover the linked problem of the disparity between social roles and human nature. Obviously, fashionable consumer products – especially clothes – make a significant contribution to the shaping of social roles and are thus inevitably involved in this 'anthropological' dilemma.

The *presentation* and *staging* of people with the aid of *consumer items* is regarded by critics of consumption – from an individual-ethical perspective – as particularly criticisable, since the fear is that the exhibition value of life could possibly take the place of essential elements of life itself.⁴⁰ Self-awareness could give way to market-awareness, with the motto: "*Facade has replaced the soul*".⁴¹ Due to lifestyles which are closely related to consumption, it is fearfully assumed that young people's immaterial values in particular might be suppressed by material ones and feelings of self-esteem be replaced by brand-esteem.⁴² Clothing is a kind of rhetoric of the body; how one is perceived by others exerts an influence or even 'corrective effect' on a person (and this thesis can be applied to consumer products in general).

In the following, an option of behaviour will be singled out for closer examination that is very much in the foreground regarding staging: imitation.

40 Cf. FAURSCHOU 1990, 257f

41 POSCHARDT 2001, 4

42 Cf. MEINHOLD 2001, 60; REISCH 2001, 11

Man as an imitative being – Fashion as staged imitation

The human being has a natural tendency to compare his behaviour to that of a more important person (the child with adults, the lower-ranking person with those of higher rank) in order to imitate the other persons' ways.⁴³

*“An imitative creature is man”*⁴⁴ The ‘inclination to imitate’ is an anthropological constant that cannot be removed from man. In ARISTOTLE’s opinion, imitation (mimesis) is *“innate in man”*, for man is *“capable of imitation to an exceptional extent”* and he acquires *“his first knowledge through imitation”*. A further incentive for imitation is *“the joy that everyone obtains from imitation”*.⁴⁵ Anyone watching young children grow up will be able to confirm the obviousness of this assumption.

The ‘urge to imitate’ is assumed by some to be the anthropological datum that is responsible for the emergence and maintenance of fashion:⁴⁶

*“The original urge to imitate, which also biologically governs the human herd, although it can be sublimated and varied by means of human freedom, is the element of ‘fashion’.”*⁴⁷ We intend only to deal with imitation to the extent that it can be seen as a constituent of staging in everyday life – especially with the aid of fashionable clothes.

Within staging via fashion both conscious, intentionally forced imitation and unconscious, partially even undesired imitation play a role. The conscious buying and wearing of certain articles of clothing for a particular occasion is the desired imitation of a socially established pattern of atti-

43 KANT 1998, 184 (Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, CUP 2006, p. 142).

44 SCHILLER 1983, 178 (Statement by WALLENSTEIN, III, 4, line 1,434)

45 All quotations from ARISTOTLE: *Poetics* 1448 b 4-9; According to ARISTOTLE imitation is responsible for the emergence of creative writing.

46 Implicitly, the need to imitate is, for example, concealed behind the wish to consume the same or similar consumer goods or brands as friends and acquaintances.

47 FINK 1969, 46

tudes and actions that the person classifies as meaningful. Behind the buying and wearing of certain articles of clothing for not apparently rational reasons on the other hand, unconscious and perhaps undesired imitation may be concealed that can be motivated for various, e.g. compensatory reasons, such as wishes for social contact, increased self-esteem, self-realisation – or in general the wish to cope with failure.⁴⁸

Research in comparative religion and history of religion by Mircea ELIADE verify manifestations of imitation in the realm of the sacred. In the religious form of imitation, the individual, by means of periodically recurring rituals, experiences time cyclically, satisfying an ontological longing for the perfection of man and the beginning of human history.⁴⁹ Via the imitation of mythical figures, especially the gods: “*imitatio dei*”⁵⁰, in sacral rituals, man participates in the transcendental. Similarly, the purchasing of certain consumer items, which are marketed with the aid of prominent persons, allows the consumer to participate in the lifestyle of such people. The mythical imitation not only gives the religious person a hold on his everyday life but also places this life in a cosmological context.⁵¹ Even the imitation of non-mythical or perhaps ‘everyday mythical’ figures (prominent people such as models, pop stars and film stars) apparently gives a person a hold on his everyday life – fashion, too, recurs cyclically like sacred rituals in a modified form. Some suppliers of fashionable consumer items have noted a religious deficit and marketed their products accordingly.⁵² “*The profanation of the sacred and the symbolisation of the profane characterise modern everyday life.*”⁵³

Via a similar sacred shaping the appearance of prominent figures in advertising becomes a pseudo-theophany: the earthly appearance of a godhead that serves as a model which is to be imitated via the displayed consumer products. Prominent persons are, for example, clad in white or black clothes that resemble liturgical garments and photographed in contemplative, meditative, statuesque or ecstatic attitudes or positions in front of cor-

48 Cf. MEINHOLD 2001, 78

49 Cf. ELIADE 1957, 54-55; 62-63

50 ELIADE 1957, 59 (imitation of the gods and their actions)

51 Cf. ELIADE 1957, 50-53

52 Cf. SELLMANN/ISENBERG 2000, 7-12

53 GRÄTZEL 1997, 105

responding backgrounds (mist, crystals, religious-looking buildings).⁵⁴ The sacred becomes a meta-good. By linking a consumer item (e.g. perfume) with its meta-goods, the quasi-divine appearance (prominence) and the brand name (symbol, signature, etc.) the ephemeral (fleeting) appearance of the divine, the (pseudo-)theophany becomes a hierophany: the constant experience of the sacred in the symbol. In such advertising, the brand name moves into the foreground as a symbol of a quasi-divine appearance. The brand name and the meta-goods connected with it are linked to the consumer item and can apparently be acquired when buying it. This *imitatio prominentis*⁵⁵ on the part of the consumer, i.e. the *imitation of the one who stands out from the crowd*, the prominent figure, offers a potential satisfaction of the overall needs mentioned by MASLOW (Self-realisation, prestige, increase in self-esteem, affiliation, love, security); by means of the *imitatio prominentis*, a lifestyle – a style of consumption – is apparently transformed into a style of living: the consumer consumes according to his model and believes that he thereby gives his life style.

When considering imitation with the aid of fashion, three variants that motivate staging are of interest for our inquiry. The imitation occurs both consciously and unconsciously:⁵⁶

(1) GARVE and SIMMEL talk of the fleeing of human individuality into the “*disguising levelling of fashion*”⁵⁷. Individuality is to be preserved precisely in a changing surface that gets increasingly adapted to the prevailing fashion. Imitation via clothing merely serves as camouflage, or more exactly: as a chameleon-like protective shield in order to preserve the inner, individual nature and in this case actually only refers to the ‘wrappings’ and not to ‘that which is enveloped’, which ought to ‘de-velop’ unhampered, independently of and with the aid of the protective wrapping.⁵⁸

54 Wolfgang JOOP, clad in white, ‘stands’ statuesquely in contrapposto position on the surface of the water in a swimming pool: Cf. max 23/2001

55 The concept has been borrowed from the technical term from religious studies ‘*imitatio dei*’, approximately as used e.g. by Mircea ELIADE.

56 A precise investigation and differentiation must be left to empirical psychology or motivational research of consumption.

57 SIMMEL 2000, 26

58 GARVE was the first to name this phenomenon: Cf. GARVE 1987, 94

(2) A second variant is the more or less conscious ‘copy’ of a fashionably exemplary ‘outfit’, a pattern of attitudes and actions that is perceived as being worth imitating, because one promises oneself a particular usefulness from it: *“Many people endeavour to resemble someone whom they feel is excellent, because they hope thereby to increase their own worth.”*⁵⁹ Historically speaking, this begins with the imitation of the costume or fashion of the upper classes, who are copied as far as possible by the lower classes and it does not end with adults who by means of youthful outfits seem to imitate representatives of younger generations. They are *“imitative adaptations informative of a particular style of living, [...] under the sign of an emulation of a model [...] Here the individual gains direction and form from a model. He models himself on him.”*⁶⁰ This second, relatively popular motif of imitation is mentioned from GARVE and KANT via VISCHER up to BAUDRILLARD – all of whom are interested in fashion from a philosophical point of view. This form of imitation possibly serves self-realisation, but above all gives the imitator (self-)assuredness, because he looks like the person who is more ‘successful’, ‘distinguished’, ‘beautiful’ or ‘young’; it creates (apparent) affiliation and raises prestige.

(3) In particular, self-realisation – followed by the other general motifs mentioned by MASLOW – is reflected in a third, artistic-creative variant of fashionable new creation via imitation. This form of imitation is often found in haute couture designs. Here elements are often imitated that come from outside the realms of fashion and then can subsequently become fashion. Examples of this are designs by artists (like Bazon BROCK), as well as the representatives of haute couture or queer figures that artistically stage their own appearance. The patterns of a football, cowhide or tree-bark etc. serve as design patterns for handbags, headwear or fabrics. This phenomenon – imitation of models that exist outside fashion inside fashion – is even partially recognisable from the named used: tulip skirt, melon, as well as in the name that is used for fashionable colouring of clothes – from ivory white via apricot, petrol, sand and slate to nighttime black.

Since fashion is mainly being regarded here as a mass phenomenon, the second aspect of staging imitation is of primary interest. In the following, this aspect will be singled out, analysed more closely and connected with

59 GARVE 1987, 9

60 PLESSNER 1982, 416

the Aristotelian theory of tragedy and the catharsis that results from it. At the same time, it will be checked in the following three sections whether the fashion of the masses contains tragedy-like elements and whether its consumption can bring about a kind of catharsis.

Fashion as pseudo-tragedy

[...] via fashion, this play-acting without content, people alternately reciprocally display their power to cause the insignificant to be significant; in this way it seems to be the classic case of the act of signifying [...]. In that way it became the sign of what 'really' constitutes a human being.⁶¹

If fashion is a kind of tragedy, the possibility exists that – like classical tragedy – it has cathartic properties, which in turn would help explain its popularity. In this section, fashion is interpreted as a pseudo-tragedy.

It certainly ought to be easier to show that the third variant of imitative staging – that of artistic innovation and the presentation of fashion – is a tragedy, since parallels can be drawn here without any great difficulty: the catwalk of the fashion show is similar to the stage of the theatre; the newly presented and staged fashion styles can not only be compared with the costumes out of the theatre props but also with the characters played by the protagonists – for it is not the presenter of the new fashion (the model) who has the important role in the staging on the catwalk of the fashion show but the main roles belong to the fashionable clothes staged by the models. In clothes worn for display purposes models are staging an elevated social environment – that of *haute couture*. It is from here the ultra-rich gain inspiration and occasionally also buy. Those who belong to this elevated environment, for their part, imitate the young, beautiful models on show by wearing the clothes of these models and enacting the presentation of beauty and youth that supports or accompanies their elevation. As with the dandy a mutual, alternating influencing of (apparently) elevated subject and society takes place; both parties observe, influence and presuppose each other.

61 BARTHES 1995, 294

Those watching fashion shows are similar to the theatre audience, and a combination of new fashionable clothing with its wearer is similar to the role and its actor. Just as the models of the actors are (real) persons from history or literature and mythology, the fashion models have elevated society as their model. In both instances, the imitation – as described above – is reversed: (real) persons from society imitate their models, whether it be prominent people such as fashion models, actors, sports folk, politicians or less well-known personal models.

Even artistic aspects link the putting on ‘stage’ in both worlds. On the stage of the theatre there are many artistic elements (action, stage image, contributions to do with costumes, masks, music, acting, etc). In the fashion show there are identical and similar elements to be found. Music as a Dionysian and fashion design as an Apollonian element merge during the fashion show – staging without music is unthinkable here. Thus, a fashion show alloys two important elements of tragedy – in the sense of Friedrich NIETZSCHE’s conception of tragedy – just as Attic tragedy arose from the synthesis between the Apollonian and the Dionysian.⁶²

The tragic element is not immediately apparent, in either *haute couture*, *prêt-à-porter* or mass fashion. Before seeking it, we need to undertake a comparison between the appearance of mass fashion on the one hand and of tragedy on the other. The following is now postulated: The fashion of the masses is (also) a pseudo-tragedy. Mass fashion creates *apparent* catharsis (and, indeed, without this having been expressly wished for or consciously perceived by anyone).

Before fashion reached the masses, vertical social migration was less possible and frequent than in the 20th and 21st centuries. Bound up with social status was the firmly regulated use of costumes to indicate rank. Everyone played out her social role in the clothes that corresponded to that role. Nowadays, the

“major forms of social intercourse [...] with their ‘receptions’ and their ‘parties’ always [have] a more or less a ‘masked ball’ touch to them, with ‘appearances’, ‘stagings’, great poses, self-presentations, a ‘theatre of passions and vanities’ [...]. Fash-

62 Cf. NIETZSCHE 1976, 383

ion has preferred locations for its appearances within the framework of 'social intercourse', at large 'social functions' – very much within the sphere of leisure."⁶³

If one observes a fashion customer during the act of buying, this staging for an audience or for a mirror, as a replacement of an audience, can already be seen in the first stages of fashion consumption. The consumer stages an everyday situation by passing or approaching a mirror while trying out a potential new item of clothing, or asking for approval and advice from a acquaintance person. The consumer is the performer in this short 'act'. Those accompanying the consumer, the sales staff and the consumer herself – via the mirror – represent the audience – the department store functions as the stage. Once the consumer leaves the store wearing the new item of clothing, the street becomes the stage, the passers-by become more or less interested spectators – and the consumer becomes his/her own spectator in the reflection of the display windows: should the consumer not feel sufficiently admired, self-admiration is always possible. Just as the most important reward an enthusiastic actor can have is applause, the consumer also secretly longs for applause, i.e. the kindly approval of the new item of clothing by other people, especially those on whom a personal high value is placed. The consumer is seldom pleased with the new item personally if it is not considered to be 'lovely' by others. A vivid example of such behaviour is to be found in ANDERSEN's *The Emperor's New Clothes* (19th century): The emperor, presenting and staging himself before his people in his 'new garments', does not dare say – just like everyone else – that he cannot see the 'clothes' at all – for, according to the assertion of the tailor, "*clothes made of this cloth had a wonderful way of becoming invisible to anyone who was unfit for his office, or who was unusually stupid.*"⁶⁴ The emperor therefore finds his clothes magnificent, because on the one hand he hopes that he is not unfit for his office or will at least be able to disguise the fact from his subjects via his staging. On the other hand, these clothes are also said to be wonderful by others who as well suspect that they might be unfit for their offices. When a small child suddenly cries: "*But he hasn't got any-*

63 FINK 1969, 85-86;

64 http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/TheEmperorsNewClothes_e.html

thing on!”⁶⁵, the emperor in his new putatively magnificent garments (but actually only clad in air) feels distinctly uneasy.

Eugen FINK expresses “*understanding for the help people gain from the fashion industry to portray ‘themselves’, to ‘objectivise’ their personalities and to ‘present’ themselves in an attractive manner to others.*”⁶⁶ Self-presentation and self-staging are possible with the aid of fashion. With clothing that corresponds, a person can feel better able to present himself or herself to others as an object. At the same time, though, clothing is always also a *disguise* by means of which the subject can feign something apparently objective: “*but the intellect is unable to prevent the impression of dark ideas of a certain importance that a well-dressed person makes, but can only at most firmly intend to correct afterwards the provisional judgment passed.*”⁶⁷

I would, however, question whether the individual is able to objectivise his personality by means of particular clothes. FINK sees in fashion the chance of “*paths and forms of individual expression and of a personal self-presentation also on the basis of an already ‘created’ fashion.*” The personal movement and contribution would then lie “*in placing the emphasizing accent in contemporary fashion and taste in an unmistakable way*”. According to him, wearing fashionable clothing is a “*sign of a personality culture that [testifies to] a spiritual individuality*”.⁶⁸ FINK is not completely wrong: wearing fashionable clothing *can* be a sign of a personality culture – but this does not necessarily have to be the case. Think, for example, of the person who uses fashionable clothing as a chameleon-like camouflage of his spiritual individuality. The question is to what extent FINK is speaking in the sense of his friend the textile manufacturer and financing publisher Walter SPENGLER. Roland BARTHES remains more critical: “*The woman of fashion is a collection of individual characteristics, which are distinguished apparently similarly to the ‘role compartments’ of classical drama. The analogy is not even repeated all that much, as the woman of fashion is ‘staged’ to such an extent [...].*”⁶⁹

65 Ibid.

66 FINK 1969, 88

67 KANT 1998, 49 [AA 136-137]

68 All quotations: FINK 1969, 89

69 BARTHES 1995, 260

Attributes that fashion lends its wearer seem to BARTHES to be assembled and put on. Advertising for consumer items makes use of the opportunity to richly provide products and product stagings with attributes – those I have referred to as ‘meta-goods’: “*Advertising strategists [...] link their objects with stimuli that, it has been empirically demonstrated, evoke a positive emotional reaction [...]. Insurances prefer images that convey warmth and security; breweries show cheerful and content young people.*”⁷⁰

This leads as far as to the stimulation of events, actions and characteristics that lie beyond reality in the sphere of ‘everyday mythology’. Attributes can be freely chosen and simulate utopian *Elysiums*; fashion advertising in particular promises

“the illusion of a quasi unending richness of the person [...]. Personality here is a composite one, although in no way complex; individualisation of the person in fashion is dependent on the number of elements brought into play and in addition on their apparently contrasting nature (wherever this is possible). Soft and proud, strict and gentle, correct and casual [...]”⁷¹

Behind such simulated patchwork personalities a personality-variability-option is concealed that could actually be considered to be multiple schizophrenia. “[...] *the woman in fashion is seen at one and the same time dreaming of being herself and someone else [...]*”⁷², namely: individual human nature *and* social role(s) seamlessly synthesised in one and the same person. The (dis)guise becomes the guarantee of the harmonious blending of social roles and human nature – something which is impossible in reality (see above), but which represents a simulation of advertising: the birth of a “*personality that is rich enough to multiply itself, and stable enough not to lose itself in the process.*”⁷³ That is why the profile of the fashion-wearing person agrees “*roughly with all famous figures, about which mass culture ‘narrates’ day by day [...].*”⁷⁴

70 SPITZER-EWERSMANN 2002, 34

71 BARTHES 1995, 260-261

72 BARTHES 1995, 262

73 BARTHES 1995, 263

74 BARTHES 1995, 267

By imitating the (for the fashion consumer) ‘lovelier’, ‘richer’, more successful’, ‘younger’ – *summa summarum*: simply apparently ‘better’ – models from fashion advertising, consumers *feel better*. A great deal of fashion advertising transports, stages and presents such characteristics and values in precisely this form. Psychologically speaking, this ‘feel-better-factor’ can be explained in many different ways, as was outlined above in, for example, the Maslowian psychology of needs and motivation. The dramaturgy within fashion staging is in this case the means to an end – to satisfy the addressed needs.

Just as painting – according to ARISTOTLE – imitates reality by means of colour and form, and writing by words, fashion imitates by means of clothes, or, more precisely: the fashionably dressed person imitates a model from reality or advertising simulation that is considered to be ‘better’: “*the imitators imitate people in action.*”⁷⁵ ARISTOTLE is interested in the concept of action: in tragedy not only people are imitated but people *in action*.

If the imitation of one’s betters is an anthropological constant, if fashion – according to KANT – is “*a law of this imitation*”⁷⁶ and tragedy – according to ARISTOTLE – seeks to imitate *better* people,⁷⁷ then staging with the aid of fashion – insofar as it seems to imitate better people – can be seen as a tragedy or a pseudo-tragedy. “*Comedy seeks to imitate worse – and tragedy better – people than those who exist in reality.*”⁷⁸

“*Tragedy is imitation of a good and self-enclosed action of a certain magnitude in attractively formed language [...].*”⁷⁹ The attractively formed language of fashion is the fashionable style of clothing in a staging related to the social context (e.g. by imitation) within the social theatre by its wearer; fashionable clothing functions as the wearer’s ‘rhetoric’ in the form of expression.

75 ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1448 a 1

76 KANT 1988, 184 [AA 244-245]

77 Cf. ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1448 a 15-19: “*for Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life. [...] the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood [...] and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated.*” [1448 a-b]

78 ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1448 a 15-19

79 ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1449 b-1450

Admittedly, certain elements⁸⁰ of (Aristotelian-)classical tragedy are lacking – e.g. capacity for knowledge and melodics. Nor is the tragic element immediately apparent. So it is advisable to speak of pseudo-tragedy, a form that still contains the following elements of Aristotelian tragedy: myth, characters, language and staging.

By myth ARISTOTLE means a particular arrangement of events, the structure of the action, the fable, the plot. “*Myth is the imitation of action. By myth I understand here the composition of events*”.⁸¹ The fashion-myth is the *transfiguring narrative of fashion advertising*, which attempts to transform the potential buyer into the real buyer. Now and again, myth is admittedly only deficiently present⁸² – or not at all – as plot (the most important element of tragedy)⁸³, for example when fashion appears without a wearer – either real, or simulated as in a dummy – and without any social relevance, as is the case in display windows or certain fashion catalogues. So it is no longer possible to speak of tragedy (the *action* is only simulated) and only with reservations of staging, even when products without human connections are transposed into staging, e.g. a T-shirt between seashells in the sand as a decoration in a shop-window display.

The group of dummies or an arrangement of objects in a shop-window display thus *simulate* and imply actions. The ‘shop-display stages’ with their scenarios and ‘models’ represent a more open space for action than is the case when prominent figures are used as pretended models, since this show-window models are to be seen as general wildcard characters that permit a more open projection by the onlooker. The onlooker completes persons, scenarios and actions in his mental picture. These variants of presentation of consumer items offers the imagination of many onlookers a greater freedom of action. The staging via prominent figures, on the other hand, appeals to a narrower range of potential consumers and binds their train of thought more strongly because of the fictive scenarios.

80 These are: “*Myth, characters, language, capacity for knowledge, staging and melodics.*” (ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1450 a 10)

81 ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1450 a 3-4

82 “*For tragedy is not the imitation of men but of actions and life-reality [...] and via this also mainly the imitation of men in action.*” ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1450 a 16-18 and b 3-4

83 Cf. ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1450 a 16

If, however, a famous person is *copied* by the consumer not only in his or her clothing but also in terms of the ‘lifestyle’ propagated by the media and advertising – which the consumer, because of the advertising staging interprets as ‘style of living’ – we are dealing with an imitation of *actions* where the element ‘myth as plot’ is present. The fashion myth as a transfiguring narrative of fashion advertising thus also contains as a ‘narrative’ in some sign system or other (image, writing, etc.) myth as plot.

Staging – according to ARISTOTLE – does not represent any necessary element of tragedy. For “*the realisation of staging the art of the costume designer [is] more important than that of the writer.*”⁸⁴ So in *staging* itself it is not the literary content but the outer form that is in the foreground. For the fashion tragedy we find something that substantiates the comparison between fashion and tragedy in Gottlieb Wilhelm RABENER’s *Kleider machen Leute [Fine feathers make fine birds]* (1755), which corresponds to Oscar Wilde attitude towards the dandy in the character of Lord HENRY:

“Clothes, blissful invention! Only clothes can perform what virtue and merit, honesty and patriotism essay in vain. Nothing seems so ridiculous to me now as an honest man in a bad suit; [...] Timorous exertion [...] for thirty years does not bring him the respect that he can gain in the space of twenty-four hours by means of a magnificent garment.”⁸⁵

Dandies as virtuosos of grandiose staging via aesthetically perfect and high-quality clothing are the best example of swift social advancement (and fall) that can be contrived with the aid of fashionable clothing.

The question whether fashion can also be a (pseudo-)comedy might be answered after the previous discussion: to the extent that fashion seeks to imitate those “worse”⁸⁶ than oneself, it becomes comedy. This certainly does not occur frequently, but it is occasionally found in carnival costumes when people choose to dress up as robbers, prostitutes, clowns or tramps. It is, however, worth asking in this connection if the models mentioned appear to the person in disguise to be ‘better’ from a certain perspective –

84 ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1450 b 20

85 RABENER 1982, 195

86 “*for Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life*” ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1448 a 15-19

why else would such disguises be chosen?⁸⁷ For within the respective social context and within the ‘rationality’ of the individual calculation regarding it, “worse than oneself” can appear to be “better than oneself”.⁸⁸

The tragic element in fashion

The tragic element in tragedy – which, by the way, is nowhere explicitly demanded by ARISTOTLE as a *sine qua non*⁸⁹ – can be defined as an aporia (= irresolvable internal contradiction) because of ethical antinomies, or, more weakly formulated, as the dilemma of two *per se* comprehensible though mutually exclusive moral attitudes or modes of action that lead to an aporia.⁹⁰ “Tragedy is where the powers that collide are both in themselves true.”⁹¹ It is not possible to immediately detect such a tragic element in fashion and its ‘show’. Tragic-ethical dilemmas exist in relation to fashion when one considers aspects that lie outside fashion itself. One could think of aporias between ecological, social and economic events in countries where the clothes are manufactured and of social norms in the country in which, because of social obligations, the clothes cannot be worn any more in the professional sphere because they are now ‘out of fashion’, despite the fact that they still have a great deal of wear in them. Here there would seem to be a certain social and ecological tragedy involved, but one that can hardly be compared with classical tragedy.

Within the historical manifestation of fashion as a generic, constant form, it is possible to detect a tragic element in the zenith of a fashion trend, when the old trend is replaced by a new one. To do this, fashion has to be split analytically into two parts, and this differentiation is essential for further discussion: on the one hand, fashion as a lasting form of a constant phenomenon in history and, on the other hand, a seasonal change of cloth-

87 Underlying the disguise is possibly the wish to dive into other roles for a certain time and to and to tear down boundaries of one’s own role.

88 A punker who dresses in a particularly ‘repulsive’ way seems, from the outside perspective, to be ‘ugly’. Within his own social environment he is a ‘better man’, because his clothing is more extreme than the others’.

89 Cf. SCHADEWALDT 1991, 31

90 For more detail: Cf. SCHELER 1964, 70

91 JASPERS 1991, 934

ing styles, i.e. as a change of content, of material, of its very fabric, in the truest sense of the word.⁹²

It was SIMMEL who noted that fashion is constant as a formal supra-historical manifestation – as a “*psychological shimmer of duration*”⁹³ – while its contents, the styles, change with the seasons. If one compares this theoretical analysis of fashion to the Platonic dualism of soul and body, the constant historical phenomena is comparable with the immortal soul and its changing contents (i.e. styles that change according to the season) with the body.

The formal element of fashion is possibly suspected by the average consumer especially when s/he is faced with other forms of clothing, such as liturgical robes, which are scarcely subject to fashion cycles. This average consumer is mainly aware of the seasonal change of fashion’s content, the change of styles. This constant change of styles conceals the disappearance of the old fashion and the emergence of the new. Accordingly, from a Platonic point of view just as the body experiences death and birth, but not the soul, which is immortal. Applied to fashion, a fashion style ‘dies’ when a new one is born. “*Fashion is dead, long live fashion?*”⁹⁴ is the heading of a chapter that examines fashion in the postmodern world. The designer, as the one giving birth, is responsible for the creation of the new fashion and thus indirectly like an executioner for the death of the old one. The new fashion ousts and ‘kills’ the old one because of its increasing presence. The ‘murder’ of the old fashion by the new one is inevitable, for the cycles of fashion and their alternation have assumed an autopoietical nature.⁹⁵ This autopoietical nature of the fashion cycles is the immortal formal constituent element of fashion.⁹⁶ Neither the designer nor the individual consumers are in a position to halt the cycles of fashion. Stopping the cycles of fashion

92 The Aristotelian doctrine of form and substance (i.e. material or content) is being essayed here. Care should be taken not to confuse the philosophical concept of form with the new forms of clothing that are subject to fashion.

93 SIMMEL 1996b, 34

94 SOMMER, WIND 1988, 191

95 Cf. LUHMANN 1984

96 BAUDRILLARD (1982, 133) calls fashion the “*highest realisation of political economy*”.

could at best be achieved via economic or governmental control mechanisms.

This constellation conceals a tragic aspect, in both an ethical and aesthetic respect: If a fashion has established itself, its aesthetics could assert itself in such a way that it is at least tolerated and accepted by most consumers. This does not mean that the fashion which is topical at any given time has to be seen as 'beautiful', but it will be *perceived* as a social-aesthetic authority, accepted by the wearer. This fashion, despite its success, will nevertheless be superseded every season by a fashion that displays a similar topical success. It is not the stronger, better, more handsome hero that wins the battle for the favour of the mass public but the newer or the younger one.

The fashion imperative: *Wear the clothes that will generally be worn!* or, more briefly: *Wear fashionable clothes!*, implies an ethical, or rather socio-ecological problem. The socio-ecological tragic aspect lies in the fact that fashionable clothes cannot be used for several seasons. Their use is over, as soon as a new fashion appears on the social stage of everyday life. The old fashion has to 'die', because the new one has arrived. Anyone still adhering to the old fashion runs the danger of not being accepted in certain social contexts. "*A final perspective on fashion can only result from the consideration of how each generation sees the one that has just passed as being the most effective anti-aphrodisiac that can possibly be conceived.*"⁹⁷ So the old fashion is disposed of, disappears from the public stage of everyday life, without actually being unusable from a material perspective. It is only 'unwearable' because it is unfashionable, or 'yesterday's clothing'.

So the tragic element of fashion is where the old fashion loses presence in society and the new fashion triumphs over the old one. In this peripeteia of the fashion tragedy, fashion kills itself; or the old fashion is killed by the new one:

"For fashion was never anything else than the parody of the dressed-up corpse, a provocation of death [...] and among shrill memorised laughter a bitterly whispered conversation with decay. That is what fashion is. That is why it changes so rapidly;

97 BENJAMIN 1989, B 1a,4

tickles the dead person and has already become another, new one when he turns round to look for her and to strike her down.”⁹⁸

Like SIMMEL, BENJAMIN sees fashion as a phenomenon that transforms itself but that is constantly present, as something that challenges death since it transforms itself before death can catch up with it. The phenomenon of fashion as form remains constant and no longer disappears from the stage of public everyday life. But the contents, the individual fashion styles, come and go, die and are reborn in the constant presence and durability of an overall formal phenomenon that changes but never dies.

This tragic point of death of the old fashion – often hard to localise in everyday life – corresponds to the peripeteia of the fashion tragedy: the formerly new fashion becomes old-fashioned, the former heroine that was once venerated and appreciated by all dies or slowly perishes, although she is only one season old. She dies because a newer fashion triumphs over her and delivers the death-blow simple because she is younger. The old fashion is banned from society. This is what distinguishes fashion consumer goods from other goods.

Catharsis

Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude [...] that excites misery and horror and thereby effects a purgation of such emotional states.⁹⁹

It is not the intention to perform an ‘autopsy’ on the often quoted definition of tragedy in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, which has not infrequently been interpreted to suit the purposes of particular interests. LESSING’s frequently constrained interpretation of *eleos* and *phobos* (pity and fear) was useful for his pedagogical intention, but it is untenable in the light of philological considerations, as the concepts have been used since Homer in the sense of “*elementary affects*” namely *deep emotion, being moved and dread, being*

98 BENJAMIN 1989, B1,4

99 ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1449 b-1450

*frightened and terror*¹⁰⁰. ARISTOTELES relating of *eleos* and *phobos* to *catharsis* (purgation) would suggest a medical reference rather than a moral or pedagogical one. In GORGIAS the cultivation of *eleos* and *phobos* was a means of rhetoric. ARISTOTELES was the first to link such affects to a cathartic effect: (Over-)consumption of something leads – if properly done – to the excretion of waste products that have formed in the body.¹⁰¹ ARISTOTLE ascribes a cathartic and healing effect to certain particular forms of music (e.g. flute music during the celebration of orgies)¹⁰² that purges the listener from misery, horror and similar affects. Through the “*purifying songs*” the listener experiences a “*certain purification*” and feels a “*pleasant relief*” and “*harmless joy*”.¹⁰³ Catharsis – in ARISTOTLE at least – is a pleasure or a joy: The writer of tragedies brings about a joy that, by the imitation of actions, excites misery and horror and thereby purges the spectator from such affects.

The roots of Greek tragedy are not only to be found in the Dionysian cult.¹⁰⁴ If this religious cult with its cyclical recurrence handed down cathartic elements of cosmogonic myths, it would be of interest to know to what extent it excited such affects as strong emotion and fright and whether this cult really did have cathartic and therapeutic effects. ARISTOTLE at any rate ascribes a purifying effect to it. And this can perhaps explain the general popularity of cinema and television. Strong emotion and fright (*eleos and phobos*) can also be found in present-day film dramas – the cathartic result of these could be assessed. It is certainly possible to speak of catharsis in this area, i.e. where actions are emotionally registered by the onlooker and by being moved by the content of the action this onlooker experiences

100 Cf. SCHADEWALDT 1991, 15-18; Cf. MEINHOLD 2013a, 44-47

101 This form of catharsis can, in the shape of an obsession, also assume pathological forms – just think of bulimia, for example.

102 ARISTOTLE *Politics* 1341 a 23-24

103 Cf. ARISTOTELES *Politics* 1342 a 10-17

104 The Greek *tragodia* is derived from *tragos* (male goat) and *odae* (song), the singer of the dithyramb was disguised as a goat during the Dionysian ceremonies. An ‘imitatio dei’ is taking place in the Dionysian cult: the god Dionysos is imitated during the ceremonies. The sole origin of tragedy from the Dionysian cult is, however, disputed. (Cf. SCHADEWALDT 1991).

an impetus for his own action, which in turn leads to an improvement of his present situation.

It is also conceivable that during rites of passage and, in particular, initiation rites, the neophyte¹⁰⁵ experiences – within the framework of a symbolic death – strong emotion and fright. Through the initiation, the neophyte changes his ontological and social status and is symbolically reborn.¹⁰⁶ The neophyte's existence changes because he is initiated into the mysteries and as a new person becomes part of a new world. Strong emotion and fear do not occur directly but indirectly, however, within the imitation (the *imitatio dei*) through the proximity of death and his symbolic death.¹⁰⁷ Purification follows through the symbolic rebirth. Such religious rituals purify the individual, since via the 'imitatio dei' he becomes a "*contemporary*" of a world-creating god; the periodic return to rituals relating to the creation of the world saves human existence from death and the void.¹⁰⁸ The sick person experiences purgation – he regains his health because via participating in the rite it is as his life begins afresh with new resources.¹⁰⁹ The sacred rite is rooted in the myth of creation or the origin of the world. Taking part in the myth of cosmogony via the rite is similar to a reincarnating therapy: through the recitation of the myth of the origin of the world the sick person is reborn.

To sum up, it can be said of catharsis that it represents a technical term borrowed from medicine which describes purgation, restoration or discharging of such mental affects as strong emotion, fright and similarly stored "*such states of arousal*".¹¹⁰ These affects are admittedly *called forth* or 'completed' by tragedy, but are already at least latently present: "[...] *this affect is present in all souls, the difference only being one of degree*

105 The Greek word *neophytos* actually means 'newly planted', newcomer, from *phyton*: vegetation, plant, tree. ELIADE calls the persons neophytes who, through sacral rites, enter the world of adults.

106 Cf. ELIADE 1988, 15

107 Cf. ELIADE 1957, 111-112. The extraction of teeth, amputation of limbs, tattooing, circumcision and the like would, at any rate, certainly encourage strong emotion and fright in the neophyte.

108 Cf. ELIADE 1957, 63

109 Cf. ELIADE 1957, 62

110 Cf. ARISTOTELES *Poe* 1449 b-1450

[...].”¹¹¹ This means that tragedy brings these latently present affects to *light*. The catharsis probably takes place because of the identification of the onlookers with the characters acting out the tragedy – although ARISTOTLE does not completely clarify this – at least not in the first part of the *Poetics* (or in the otherwise preserved fragments of his *akroamatic* writings). Perhaps they were discussed in detail in the second, lost part of the *Poetics*, the discourse on comedy.

Catharsis is to be defined here as a therapeutic effect which, as a result of a *dis-charge* or *purgation* of strong emotions, follows states of arousal, e.g. emotionally registered actions, and which expresses itself in a joylike, lasting feeling of ‘wellbeing’. Fashion as (pseudo-)tragedy and staging via new fashion provide apparent catharsis: the identification of the fashion consumer with possible idols from the world of models, stars and other such (partly simulated) idols with the aid of ‘lifestyle’ (i.e. consumption, especially fashion consumption) follows as a compensatory surrogate action, since there is a lack of intrinsic ‘models’ and frameworks for the organising of one’s own life, or because they are not recognisable to, or have been repressed by, the imitator. In strongly religious societies, myth supplies the example for human action. In modern societies, the marketers of consumer items fill the now vacant ‘meaning gaps’ with meta-goods. Consumer-related, compensatory surrogate actions, though, only provide *apparent* catharsis, because they do not offer lasting purgation from affects but overlie them. The pseudo-catharsis of consumption combats symptoms but offers no therapy. A person with a weak self-awareness is only temporarily strengthened by exclusive consumer products. A catharsis – here: a lasting purgation or dis-charge, e.g. from the fear of inferiority – must pervade the mental depths of an individual, since, as Lord HENRY asserts, one cannot “*heal the soul with the senses*”¹¹², at least not alone with the senses.

The apparent catharsis or pseudo-catharsis manifests itself in short periods of ‘wellness’, e.g. in a feeling of joy or pleasure because one has imitated ‘better’, or, more precisely, ‘more successful, rich, beautiful or younger’ people, as the result of lacking a style of life that one has drawn up oneself. The consumer makes do with ‘lifestyle’, instead of developing a personal style of life. Figuratively speaking, he fills the empty husk of a

111 ARISTOTLE *Pol* 1342 a 6-7

112 WILDE 1985, 181

schematic, nebulous model-life concept with consumer items that cause him to believe that he has thereby instantaneously acquired meta-goods that import the *'lifestyle of society'*¹¹³ The pseudo-catharsis is a feeling of 'wellbeing', of pleasure or of joy resulting from a 'lifestyle' via imitative staging with the aid of fashion and consumer products that promise meta-goods. The fashion myth, the deceiving narrative of fashion advertising, makes consumers believe that they can acquire a style of life or even an art of living via consumption or lifestyle. Fashion advertising and marketing employ myths. They 'narrate' via a lifestyle something as being an art of living which is nothing more than a simulation. The actual serious intention of fashion advertising is maximising the profit of sellers and marketers; the content of the actual advertising is, however, simulation and, not infrequently, deception. The deception practised by advertising lies in the absolutist claims as to the effectiveness of the meta-goods. Making contact is *always* successful with the aid of a particular cigarette brand, there is always a clever head behind the newspaper – the deception lies in the promise of 'always'. Marketing strategists actually assume that the consumer does not take the statements of the advertisement seriously, but that subconsciously when considering a reader of a newspaper we nevertheless begin to suspect that a clever head has to be behind it even so. Hardly anybody 'believes' advertising statements; nevertheless, they presumably make a subconscious impact. The correlation between advertising intensity/quality and product sales cannot be empirically documented without further ado. Immense sums are involved in the marketing of fashionable consumer goods; so one can at least assume that hopes are extremely high that advertising must have an enhancing effect on sales.

A further method used by fashion advertising is the claim of the improvement (melioration) of the whole person via consumer items and their meta-goods.

113 "We have attempted to perform a couple of miracles for you. Experience the exhilarating *Lifestyle of Society*, experience people whose style turns you on – and let yourself be inspired by them!" WALBERER, Jörg: *Editorial*. In: *Life&Style*, No. 3, Hamburg, October 1999, p. 3.

MELIORATION

The philosophy of clothes is the philosophy of human nature. All of anthropology is contained in clothes. Admittedly, clothes are not primarily to cover one's shame, but they are corrections to the human ego. When persons dress, they make themselves into a piece of world. The act of dressing means a turning away from the self, a self-disguise-as-world.¹¹⁴

Melioration represents here human striving for what is better, especially for the better life.¹¹⁵ The author is here making use of a concept that – like the term sustainability – comes from the sphere of forestry and agriculture, where it refers to the management of naturally sparse resources. Melioration refers to cultural (i.e. humanly devised) measures to improve the quality of the soil. Analogously, humans can be considered as a (nature-given) resource which, like arable land, is not removed from cultural influences but which – unlike arable land – is also able to 'cultivate' itself.

The concept of melioration can then be described as the constant striving of humanity for enhancement or improvement that can be observed since the Palaeolithic Age within all cultural spheres. Enhancement is to be seen as a subcategory of improvement. Already in the Old Stone Age, people sought to improve their surroundings in order to 'live better' – whether by using primitive tools or building dwellings. All world religions feature the improvement of virtues. All practising of art – regardless of the artistic outcome – is a melioration of the artist. Fashion is a manifestation of the human striving for the beautiful and the better in the vestimentary domain. Although clothes almost become a part of the body when worn, they are more easily formable and more quickly 'replaceable' than body parts.¹¹⁶

114 LEEUW 1941, 23

115 Lat. *melior* 'better', comparative of *bonus* 'good'

116 Consider organ implants or transplants ('donated' or purchased kidneys or livers) which combine with the body to form an ameliorated unit – as long as they are not rejected.

That the human body – like clothing – is nevertheless subject to fashion ‘dogmas’ when it comes to form, colour and nature is not always obvious. The arrival of gene technology ushers in a new era of removing deficiencies and of self-improvement, i.e. the melioration of human beings in general. In the following, it will be demonstrated that melioration via technology that humanity uses on itself (*anthropotechnology*, or human factors technology) is also subject to fashion – fashion here in the broadest sense of the term [IV] – that changes here are always similar to the taste of the period, as are fashions in clothing. So by the term melioration the human intention to improve oneself and one’s life is meant, and by human factors technology the technology used by human beings to ameliorate their own bodies or those of others.¹¹⁷ Because of the highly controversial nature of the *topos* anthropo-technological melioration within the field of genetics, anthropotechnology as a manifestation of fashion in the broadest sense will also be dealt with in this chapter.

Next, it should be remembered that the striving for the more beautiful and the better represents an anthropological constant that not only manifests itself within the typical spheres of the arts, architecture and design (e.g. utensils) but also in the ‘more direct covering’ of human beings: in changes to the periphery of the body, as, for example, the introduction of something foreign to or into the body. Changes subject to fashion both to and within the body range from anthropotechnology in general to genetic ‘design’ in particular.

Melioration of the entire human being

Varieties of past or strange fashions reminiscent of the Procrustean bed – like the body-(de)forming corset of Spanish court fashion or the neck rings that gradually stretch the neck found in certain tribes in Africa or northern

117 Cf. WEIL 2002, 16. Peter SLOTERDIJK understands by anthropotechnology the taming and cultivation of humans via their own species in humanity parks (SLOTERDIJK 1999, 39-56). Anthropotechnology is particularly interested in the physical body, while the concept of *self-technology* in Michel FOUCAULT refers to a use of norms that is applied by humans to their thinking, behaviour and action. Josef RAUSCHER calls man in the actual portrayal *homo faber fabricatus*, “his own fabrication in the technical sense”. RAUSCHER 2000, 17

Thailand – would now seem suspect, at least from a medical point of view. Even so, there are, for example, shoes that are still worn whose form does not accord with the shape of the human foot. Clothes and their accessories can make the shape of the human body seem different from what it actually is, or even *de facto* alter it – at times irreversibly. It is regarded as normal in northern Europe to tan one's skin in solariums. In contemporary African and South East Asian cultures it is not unusual to use skin products that whiten the skin.

In the following, the beautifying and improving aspect of fashion – based on clothing – *for the actual human being* will now be focused on. For humans do not only use aesthetic norms outside themselves that are subject to fashion – in art and architecture, for example – but also use them *on themselves*. Humans consider themselves to be malleable, or rather 'material' that can be made more beautiful or better. The form of clothing is only a variant of the manifestations of the aestheticisation and melioration of humans that can be subject to fashion. Human striving for improvement, beauty and a beautiful life – or for a life 'in beauty' – is, however, clearly expressed in fashion and in fashion advertising. The latter not only deals with the aesthetics of clothing but also promises a *holistic* aesthetics, namely the aestheticisation and melioration of the entire human being and his or her life. For marketing-strategic reasons the totality of an individual is expanded beyond the biological body to include purchased consumer goods and their meta-goods. The totality of the human being is his or her individual continuity. Advertising for fashion consumer items expands this 'original' totality of the human being for strategic reasons to do with consumer goods and their meta-goods: It is only via the consumer goods and its properties that the person depicted in the advertisement becomes a complete human being. Expressed negatively: without the corresponding consumer goods and meta-goods the human being, according to the depiction of the advertisement, remains incomplete. These culturally predetermined incompleteness – i.e. deficiency – in the individual is particularly visible when it comes to clothes, when a person is not or not suitably dressed. An 'unsuitably' or unclothed person is perceived in the corresponding social context as an 'incomplete aesthetic manifestation'. Advertising promises to make the incomplete individual a totality. Consumer items are to even out individual personal deficiencies, or complete individuality regarding a particular quality that, along with the consumer item, can be purchased as

meta-goods. This evening out of deficiencies and completion of individuality found in the advertising of fashion consumer items often speaks in the comparative: more beautiful, more successful, younger – in short, the consumer becomes ‘better’ with the aid of the (meta-)goods extolled in advertising. In the following, this ‘comparative’ towards which melioration is oriented will be dealt with in more detail.

Life as comparative

Edgar Allen POE allows a certain Mr. ELLISON in *The Landscape Garden* to postulate that “*the true character, the august aims, the supreme majesty and dignity of the poetic sentiment [...] lie in the creation of novel forms of Beauty*”.¹¹⁸ The human being constantly endeavoured, in some form or other, to beautify or ameliorate his surroundings: The “*immortal yearning for beauty [has] always found its satisfaction*.”¹¹⁹

Arnold GEHLEN justified the special position of man in nature because of his being deficiently “*equipped with organic weapons or organic means of protection*”¹²⁰ such as doubtful or degenerate instincts and modest sensory capacity. He expressed this deficient anthropological constitution of man by the term *creature of deficiencies* (Mängelwesen), a term taken from Johann Gottfried von HERDER. Because of this deficient nature of his constitution, man is obliged “*to alter nature, no matter how it is constituted, in such a way that it is expedient to his life*.”¹²¹ If one thinks of such examples as telescopes, night-sight apparatus, diving rafts, etc., it is obvious that by ‘nature’ the nature of man may also be meant. Because of its deficits compared with other living creatures that have specialised within a particular environment, it has to try to change or improve it.

Although one can only partially accept the hypothesis of GEHLEN regarding man as a creature of deficiencies, since human beings can find themselves both at a disadvantage and at an advantage – according to the basis for comparison – when it comes to a comparison of organs and instincts, it must nevertheless be maintained that they cannot avoid changing

118 POE 1841, 160; <http://pinkmonkey.com/dl/library1/land.pdf>

119 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 9

120 GEHLEN 1993, 17

121 GEHLEN 1993, 18

nature, or 'improving' it for their own ends.¹²² According to GEHLEN, the deficient nature of humanity is the fundament of culture.

Man is a being that seeks to improve his environment and himself: A being that meliorates his life.¹²³ Even so, man does not really strive for the 'good life' – for in human life the good has something of a 'half-life' about it, depending on the extent to which the good been striven for is actually achieved – but rather for the 'better life'.¹²⁴

On the one hand BAUDELAIRE is right when he says that "*fashion must be regarded as a symptom of the striving for the ideal*"¹²⁵, for man has an ideal – like a Platonic idea – as his objective, something he strives for but never attains. Should he even so attain an 'ideal', which in our world as a cave¹²⁶ only represents a *supposed* ideal, the deficiency ideality of this ideal will soon be revealed and a 'better ideal' will emerge that by definition deprives the old ideal of its ideal status. In all his daily exertions, man does not ultimately strive for the superlative, for the 'best', – since this represents an ideal construction that will have to be revised or optimised, i.e. improved on, as more experience is gained – but for the 'better'. Thus the ideal of 'the best life' is utopian in orientation, something that will never be achieved but that can serve as a point of reference that governs melioration. In practice, however, man basically strives for what is better. What is 'better' is measured comparatively with the state arrived at so far.¹²⁷

122 Cf. also GRÄTZEL 1997, 24

123 Within linguistics, *meliorativum* refers to terms that have undergone a positive change in meaning, rather like a term such as *marshall*, which now designates a high military rank but whose original meaning is groom. In musicology, *melismatics* is the art of melodic ornamentation.

124 This anthropological constant is also related to myopia and the phenomenon of diminishing marginal utility.

125 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 38

126 An allusion to PLATO's representation of human existence in a cave in the so-called allegory of the cave in the *Politeia*.

127 According to empirical investigations, the majority of people prefer, for example, a lesser income if the person asked can be sure that no one else will earn more than he or she does. This nominal reduction of income would correspond to a relative increase of income and to a real economic elevation of status.

This striving for the ‘better life’ varies according to the person involved and the individual intention. The exertions made for self-improvement are reflected in the translations of *melior* and its positive form *bonus* (e.g. ‘beautiful’, ‘virtuous’, ‘healthy’). According to the form of life desired, man aims at improvements within different spheres.¹²⁸ In the reality of everyday life, the most diverse of intentional improvements coexist, coincide and collide – those relating, for example, to manifestation, mode of work, social relations, formation of identity, self-realisation, etc. To express it in a negative way: Little is to be found in daily life that cannot be directly subsumed under melioration. Indirectly, every attitude and action contributes to a melioration of life, which is why the *intention* and *striving* to improve plays a crucial role in fashion marketing and advertising. So melioration – man’s striving for a better life – can be assumed to be an anthropological constant that manifests itself in some form or other in all cultural spheres and in every epoch of history.

SIMMEL describes the essence of human life by the concepts “more-life” and “more-than-life”, where life constantly thinks of itself and relates to itself in the comparative: life transcends itself, it is “*to be understood as something that constantly transcends the boundary of its own ‘beyond’ and has its own being in this transcendence [...]. Life finds its nature, its process in being more-life and more-than-life, and as such its positive is already its comparative.*”¹²⁹ The ‘self-transcendence of life’¹³⁰ expresses itself in these two complementary forms: more-life as the generation of the living in the sense of the transcending of one’s own life by the generation of new life, and more-than-life, the transcendence of the boundary of individual life at the level of the mind via creative power. “*Life can only exist if it is more-life; as long as life exists at all, it generates what is living, since even physiological self-maintenance involves constant reproduction: that is not a*

128 The ideal-typical examples can be mentioned by way of illustration: the dandy strives for a more beautiful aesthetic appearance, the monk would like to be more virtuous, the eater of raw fruit and vegetables wants to be healthier, etc. One and the same intention to improve can be seen in all these ideal types.

129 SIMMEL 1999, 234; Cf. also: SOLIES 1998, 35-62. For a criticism of the logical contradiction of the conception of SIMMEL’s more-life and more-than-life, cf. RICKERT 1920, 69.

130 SIMMEL 1999, 229

function it carries out alongside others; in actually doing it, it is precisely life."¹³¹ When life transcends more-life – "*this is the case when we call ourselves creative*"¹³², SIMMEL speaks of more-than-life, which is "*the nature of mental life itself*"¹³³. Both comparative forms of life together constitute human life as such. The affinity of this concept to the Platonic conception of love as generation in the Beautiful is obvious: "*And just as the generation of this autonomous being (subsequently independent of its generator) is immanent in physiological life and precisely characterises life as such, so is the generation of an autonomously meaningful content immanent at the level of the mind.*"¹³⁴ Life with a view of its comparative – "*life transcending its own boundaries, is not something that comes to it from the outside. It is its own immediate being itself*"¹³⁵. So human striving for improvement and comparatives is not an accident but an essential basic condition of man. Fashion is always a historical manifestation of the present trends of melioration, from the painting of the cave (fashion concept IV) to the silk dress of Saison XY (fashion concept I).

Marketing seizes on the intentional human desire for improvement and implants it as meta-goods in advertising consumer products: skin creams make you younger, cigarettes more emancipated, newspapers cleverer, dresses more beautiful, steel watches tougher, sports cars better performing and deodorants olfactory and thus generally more socially acceptable. The advertising of fashion consumer items conveys the order of comparative improvement to the potential consumer. It exclaims the *imperative of comparative melioration*: 'Improve yourself!', 'either better than you already are or better than others!' Such exclamations are above all found where advertising strategists believe that the consumer involved suspects a personal lack – in the areas of beauty, youth, health and mental energy and power – and also intelligence, i.e. in the realms of 'spiritual' beauty, health and power.

The most large-scale attempt to ameliorate man is found in state utopias. Here an ideal social system is drawn up with the aim of improving the

131 SIMMEL 1999, 229

132 SIMMEL 1999, 232

133 SIMMEL 1999, 232

134 SIMMEL 1999, 232

135 SIMMEL 1999, 295

entire world image and human image. In such utopias it is not ultimately a question of how man is to be constituted or ‘adapted’ so that the ideal state system can be created or maintained. The issue of the melioration of life of all men quickly becomes an issue of the melioration of the individual. In PLATO’s *Politeia*, *Nomoi* and the *Politikos*, but also in modern social-ecological utopias – Aldous HUXLEY’s *Island*, Ursula LEGUIN’s *The Dispossessed* and Ernest CALLENBACH’s *Ecotopia*¹³⁶ – the conception of the ideal state calls for the conception of man: the question is raised as to how man is to improve for the state system to be able to improve, and vice versa.

SLOTERDIJK speaks ironically, even cynically, in this connection – looking back at the Platonic state utopia *Politikos* and forward to biotechnological possibilities – of “*human enhancement*” via “*taming*” and “*breeding*” in the “*human zoo*”.¹³⁷ The content of this utopia is to adapt the virtues and customs of a society via education as well as human selection. SLOTERDIJK urges us, because of the new anthropotechnological possibilities for improvement, or progress, to “*formulate a codex of anthropotechnology*”.¹³⁸ Not only does individual melioration gain new dimensions through biotechnological progress but the entire human species will be affected by these innovations. Man and his being were admittedly always conceived of in the comparative: in art, medicine, ethics and utopia. Today, however, three particular events coincide that are intimately interconnected and that profoundly influence the prevailing image of humanity and its options for improvement:

In the age of biotechnology we are faced with the problem of having the possibility of taking genetic measures to bring about the biological melioration – or assumed melioration – of human beings that could affect future generations, according to the nature of the intervention. It is at present not possible to say about these technologies what the long-term ethical consequences may be. This point represents a historical novelty.

The prevalent view of humanity, especially in the bio-sciences, is a mechanical one, or at least one that is strongly influenced by physics. This had led to a one-sided concentration on the body, which it is easier to explain

136 Cf. MEINHOLD 2013c; MEINHOLD 2011c

137 Cf. SLOTERDIJK 1999, 35-55

138 SLOTERDIJK 1999, 45

via physical revelations than the phenomenon of the mind, which in this monistic view of man is often regarded as a ‘precipitate’ of the body and that can ultimately be explained and treated according to physical rules.

It follows from these two points that medico-therapeutic melioration of man mainly focuses on his physical nature and that his mental constitution is only treated as a second instance. Marketers, as more holistic ‘therapists’, have recognised this lack, which is why possibilities of mental improvement via meta-goods are included in advertising strategies. To speak cynically, it is possible to discern a ‘therapeutic labour division’ in commercialized societies: While classical school medicine firstly deals with treating the body and places the psyche second, advertising has recognised the market lacuna ‘melioration of the psyche’ and filled it with meta-goods.

In the following excursive section the focus is on melioration of the body via *anthropotechnology*. This will widen the focus to the broad concept of fashion [IV], so that man himself can be considered as a phenomenon included in fashion.

The body as the medium of fashion

Not only clothing but also the body that wears it has been subject to fashion ideals for thousands of years. We are familiar with the beauty ideals of past centuries: the idealised statues of the Egyptians or of Greek Antiquity as well as RUBENS’ oil paintings bear witness to them.¹³⁹

139 In passing, it is worth mentioning Fr. Cyprian OHNHÄUSER’s *Über Hälse und Waden. Ein Beytrag zur Philosophie der Mode* (1799): In this essay the form of necks and (male) calves are shown to be dependent on fashion (Fashion concept IV): In the period between Spanish court fashion (16th century) and the French Revolution – during which particularly strong calves were in fashion among males and a ‘deficiency’ within this area led to attempts being made to disguise the fact by using ‘attachable calf enhancers’ – a countess seeks a husband for her daughter by assessing his calves, but, finding no fine calves among the aristocracy, chooses a farmer’s son instead. OHNHÄUSER attempts in this ‘philosophical’ contribution to justify the reason for the ‘calf fashion’ of this age: “Male calves are the true thermometer of men’s practical affection, the real barometer of their physical strength, the money tray of their amorous hours of instruction, the ledger of their female expenditure; believe

A long history of anthropotechnology can be traced through history. In certain cases it served the ‘beautification’, i.e. the aesthetic improvement of the body or the whole person, and in many cases this melioration was subject to the culture-dependent ‘taste’ of the age in question. The sharpening of teeth in Mexico, the deformation of the feet in ancient China, the elongation of the neck in certain African countries or in some Hill Tribes in Thailand – but also tattoos and decorative scars are examples of anthropotechnological melioration from standpoints that were influenced by the ‘fashion’ of the time and the culture (Fashion concept IV). This involved intervention on and to the body, the results of which last a longer period of time than the seasons of fashionable dress do and which the persons in question may or must have for the rest of their lives. Such ritualised and heavily symbolic intervention did not originally have anything to do with fashion in the narrowest sense [I], but it has now established itself in Western societies as fashion trends, such as non-permanent henna-dyeing of extremities, piercings and tattoos that cannot simply be removed.

Ideals of beauty presented by prominent figures in the media can be imitated and reproduced by using anthropotechnological interventions. Particular physical forms or forms of ‘physical details’ acquire attention and labelling via the media, and plastic surgery makes such kind of imitation possible. These ideals of beauty are completely dependent on fashion. The repeated exposure of prominent figures in relevant magazines frequently establishes ideals of beauty that lead to *imitatio prominentis*.

Fashion can include all realms of the human.¹⁴⁰ Man, who ‘makes’ fashion, is himself the material of fashion. As a “*finite creator [...] he is himself inevitable material of his own sense-creating act.*”¹⁴¹ In short, man changes himself *via* fashion. Fashion can bring about corrections of the human

me, worthy gentlemen comrades, women are the greatest connoisseurs of calves...” (20–21). “Ah!” the countess said, when the young marriage partner had provided the strongest of evidence as to how exactly his calves matched his other talents: Love precedes honour, and good calves old papers.” (29)

140 Even philosophy and ethics are subject to ‘fashion’ trends (Cf. in this connection: PATON, Herbert James (1937) *Fashion and Philosophy* and ADENSAMER, Michael (1999) *Ethik als Mode?*)

141 FINK 1969, 23

ego.¹⁴² The reversal of the saying “People make clothes – clothes make people” can just as well be applied to fashion: “People make fashions – fashions make people.”

In the wake of revolutionary advances in genetic technology the possibility not only exists of the outer physical appearance being included in fashion trends but also its ‘components’, even the smallest. The anthropotechnological possibilities – combined with the aesthetic demand of people for a selectable, or at least manipulable, genetic ‘design’ of themselves, that of their descendants or a part of the species – confront ethics, politics and the humanities with a previously unknown problem. Via these gene-technological possibilities, the perspective is fast approaching where people will allow the colour of their skin and shape of their body to be meliorated using gene technology. This will raise problems of a socio-ethical nature in situations where “*a genetic change is brought about that in turn is inheritable*”. In such cases “*the improving or curative intervention into genetic potential acquires a completely new quality.*”¹⁴³ Dystopias¹⁴⁴ such as *Gattaca*¹⁴⁵ and *The Matrix*¹⁴⁶ point to socio-ethical disasters arising from the selection and manipulation of humans and their genetic basis. Behind the construction of such ethical horror scenarios, however, there is more than just the wish to improve mankind. What is depicted in such utopias, dystopias and science fiction is the vision of eternal youth and immortality, coupled with the fear of the amoral instrumentalisation of anthropotechnology. Here, science fiction is taken just as critically and seriously as science.

The striving for eternal youth and immortality in its various facets is the theme of the next chapter, in which we return once more to the narrowest concept of fashion.

142 Cf. LEEUW 1941, 23

143 Both quotations are from RAUSCHER 2000, 15

144 Dystopia: Technical term for an ‘anti-’ or ‘negative’ utopia. Classic dystopias are: Aldous HUXLEY’s *Brave New World* (1932) and George ORWELL’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).

145 NICCOL, Andrew (1997) *Gattaca* [cinematic film]

146 The WACHOWSKIS (1999) *The Matrix* [cinematic film]; Cf. MEINHOLD 2009

REINVESTINATION

People live in the present, seek to orientate themselves towards it and prefer positive goods in it.¹⁴⁷ Alongside traditional and lasting phenomena, they are fond of what is new and from a certain age onwards they tend to prefer what is younger to what is older. The young (person, animal or plant) represents a symbol of life, freshness and vigour. Humans take pleasure in phenomena that have to do with renewal, such as signs of spring in nature or small children. But a person cannot remain eternally young. As a human being a person cannot avoid dealing with transcendence and metaphysical issues because of this very humanity, and *topoi* such as immortality and reincarnation are essential thoughts in religion.

Fashion makes a contribution to constancy and immortality but also to novelty and the present. It is extremely marketable because of human shortsightedness and certain consumption motives that are aimed at such anthropological ‘constants’ as neophilia and preference for the present, or culturally determined phenomena such as the tabooing of old age, ageing, dying and death.

In the following subsections man’s present-orientation and his preference for it will be related to fashion. His pleasure in the new and the young as well as his striving for the constant will be shown to be anthropological facts that manifest themselves in fashion. The distanced and at times taboo-laden dealings our society has with the phenomena of old age, ageing, dying and death make their hidden contribution to the consumption of fashion. This is evident from the fact that advertisements for fashionable products link the desire for *immortality* or *reincarnation* – as meta-goods – with consumption goods. For that reason, these phenomena will be analysed in the last two subsections of this chapter. We will first consider human existence in the present and continue with an investigation of the wish for an existence in eternity. The following subchapters will focus on presence, neophilia, myopia, youth, immortality and reincarnation all of which are *topoi* fashion marketing exploits by linking such *topoi* as meta-goods to products.

147 In micro-economics, alongside positive and neutral goods there is also talk of *negative* goods, or of a ‘bad’ (Cf. VARIAN, 1995, 39).

Present-orientation and temporal structure of fashion

Clothing is only really fashionable if offered and worn in the present. Fashion ‘proves’ the present to man. According to SIMMEL, “*present fashion is always at the watershed between past and future*”¹⁴⁸; it “*increasingly concentrates consciousness on the present*”¹⁴⁹, which leads to it being perceived as a manifestation of the present. In *Sartor Resartus* Thomas CARLYLE lets his protagonist Diogenes TEUFELSDRÖCK define the present as an insignificant membrane between the past and the future.¹⁵⁰ The present tense can thus be conceived of as a point – i.e. without extension – that marks the boundary between past time and future time. Despite this, the present, as subjectively experienced by man, is perceived more as a *period* of time than a *point* in time, because the former subsumes *immediately past* moments as just as much part of his subjectively *experienced* present as *immediately imminent* moments. Positively experienced moments can be perceived as passing in a flash, and negatively experienced ones might be lasting almost interminably. Reciprocal to subjective *perception* is the *wish* to *feel fully* subjectively experienced periods of time: one wants beautiful moments to linger, while that which is felt to be negative one would like to be over and done with quickly.¹⁵¹ So man wants an intense present-orientation when the present promises something pleasant; but if something unpleasant is threatened, he prefers – insofar as it is possible – a direct transition from the past into the future, without having to pass through the present – or he wishes for a *different* present.

Since man always *de facto* lives in, with or instantaneously parallel to the present, he is – existentially speaking – dependent on it. For if he does not live in the present, he does not yet exist or no longer exists. To the extent that man loves his existence, he must also love the present, because it justifies his existence and “*life only has reality in the moment of the pre-*

148 SIMMEL 1996a, 197

149 SIMMEL 1996a, 197

150 CARLYLE 1991, 334

151 Cf. GOETHE'S *Faust I* 1991, 48, Verses 1699-1702

When thus I hail the Moment flying:

“*Ah, still delay--thou art so fair!*”

Then bind me in thy bonds undying,...

sent”¹⁵². Man’s being fettered to the present can also be perceived as an existential fatality. He has no other chance – apart from those listed below – of being instantaneous with the present. Neither a real leap into the past nor into the future is possible. The experiencing of the present means existence. If man wishes to exist, he normally wishes to do so in the present. Complete (subjective) stagnation of man in the present would allow the past (which is constantly ‘growing’ as regards the period of time it covers) to acquire subjectively fixed value, because the past (subjective) would not be continued any more; and, in the event of stagnation in the present, the future would no longer be available. If the present were *de facto* to last for ever for a person – as a thought experiment – the past would become a past that no longer grew, that no longer increased in its past, i.e. stagnated; the future, on the other hand, would be one that never began and would thus be void.

Such moments of an apparently lasting present can only be subjectively experienced via contemplation, meditation, (religious) rituals, hallucinatory drugs, absorption in intellectual, artistic or technical activities and in other practices that displace consciousness. Fashion consumer products can also procure an intensified experience of the present for the consumer. Fashion “as long as it is up-to-date, gives us [...] a stronger feeling of the present than any other phenomenon.”¹⁵³ If previously fashionable clothing is no longer worn by certain environments, it is no longer fashionable and thus no longer a topical fashion but a past one. The previous present-orientation of the fashion is now lost to the present and lies in the past. The fashion-conscious consumer no longer feels present but old-fashioned. He appears ‘past’ to himself. As obsolete fashion, fashion constantly undermines present-orientation, while the latest fashion always re-establishes it. New fashionable clothing thus apparently ‘ensures’ eternal presence in the present.

The religious person also seeks, via the *imitatio dei*, to gain participation in a never-ending present: During religious festivities¹⁵⁴ such a person steps out of linear, historical time into a holy mythical and cyclical time which takes part in eternity, “because it consists of an infinitely frequently

152 SIMMEL 1968, 207

153 SIMMEL 1996a, 197

154 BAUDRILLARD calls fashion and advertising a “feasts of consummation”. (1982, 143-144)

attainable eternal present”¹⁵⁵ To repeat rituals of myths means to be close to the gods and to the origin of time.¹⁵⁶ In an analogous way, the imitation of the lifestyles of prominent people aims at achieving proximity to these models. The *imitatio dei* becomes, in fashion, transformed and instrumentalised into the *imitatio prominentis*. Both intensify the feeling of the present. The imitator, by the act of imitation of the model, takes part in the model and his/her attributes. If a model makes use of new consumer goods (e.g. fashionwear) or changes a particular ‘lifestyle’, the imitator is forced to make a move if he or she wishes to continue to take part in the consumption and lifestyle of the model.¹⁵⁷

Before the democratisation of luxury, fashions changed via the social effects of imitation and delimitation; today, the cycles of fashion are established in seasons. Fashion has acquired the status of an *autopoietic phenomenon*. Any new fashion— according to Roland BARTHES — is defined in terms of the fashion of the previous year:

“Fashion experiences itself as a natural right of the present over the past. [...] In that absolute, dogmatic, vindictive present, in which fashion speaks, the rhetorical system has reasons at its disposal that seem once more to connect fashion with a less rigid and more long-term time – reasons that politely or with regret ignore the murder that fashion has perpetrated on its own past; as if it could hear from afar the possessive voice of the dead year that says to it: *Yesterday I was what you are now; tomorrow you will be what I am.*”¹⁵⁸

Fashion worn in the present claims to be the new or the newest fashion and yet it is a child of the past, because its creative process – seen from the period of time of its presentation or marketing – lies in the past. For this reason, fashion, which was created in the past, only takes part in the present or even the future for the consumer who is wooed with the aid of meta-goods.

155 ELIADE 1957, 53

156 Cf. ELIADE 1957, 53

157 The phenomena of imitation, symbolisation of affiliation and delimitation as the cause of changing fashions is discussed in detail in VEBLEN. Cf. VEBLEN 1997, 164–177 (Chap. VII)

158 BARTHES 1995, 279. The last sentence refers to the inscription on a gravestone.

Because of this, the present nature of fashion is based to a great extent on the presence of the commercial offer and the general wearing behaviour of certain environments, not in that of its creation – unlike an experimental artistic performance, where neither the observer nor the creator know what will emerge as a product. Apart from this, a person *feels* part of the present in the latest fashion because everyone else with such a point of view is consuming (buying and, if so, also wearing) this present fashion. In short, for the present nature of fashion – especially mass fashion – the actual wearing behaviour and not the procuring of it is the decisive factor. People – and here the aspects of theatricality and the present merge – ‘act’ the present with each other, for each other and for themselves with fashionable clothing that was created in the past. A fashion that has been created in the past kills a fashion that is just now and already no longer topical fashion, the creation of which lies even further back in the past. BARTHES notes: “*the present is constantly being ‘consumed’ by future fashion.*”¹⁵⁹ Fashion is “*an amnesic substitution of the past by the present.*”¹⁶⁰

Fashion is thus a manifestation of actual time and a structuring entity of time in general. It participates in the cyclic and the linear – as does time itself. On the one hand, fashion has a linear nature, because it constantly changes in lasting presence yet never returns to exactly the same point as it has once been, since its adopting new variations constantly permits changed nuances. On the other hand, fashion has a cyclic nature, because there is practically never something that is totally new in it and it is thus forced to contain recurring elements. Like human life, fashion seems in the long term to run in unpredictable courses, as neither humans or fashion ever return to precisely the same place at precisely the same time, since everything changes and flows – as HERACLITUS was already aware of.

Neither the cyclic, the linear nor the spiral aspects offer precise explanatory models of the course of fashion and human life. From a geometrical perspective, the spiral forms a line from a distant side view, but forms a circle from a ‘plan view’. So the spiral contains both the linear and cyclic aspects but does not transcend them, since it is held by both principles – the cyclic and the linear are equally immanent. Fashion evades both the strictly cyclic (since its styles seldom recur exactly as they were before) and the

159 BARTHES 1995, 349

160 BARTHES 1995, 296

linear (since fashion nearly always contains recurring elements) as well as the spiral, because it does not strictly observe these laws – otherwise it would be predictable, calculable and better marketable. This ‘chaotic’ nature – a long-term unpredictable *varatio* – makes fashion seem sympathetic to most of those dealing with it, as it contains something of the ‘non-fixed’ existence of human beings. And this makes it a constant novelty for man, who is a neophilic being.

Necrophobia and Neophilia – the new as a sign of life

“*Everything is in a state of flux,*” HERACLITUS says – man is a changing being in a changing world, so he must learn to love the changes if he is not to founder on them, whether it be changes in nature (weather, seasons, etc.) or in the ‘cosmos’¹⁶¹, in his social and professional surroundings, or changes that have to do with his advancing years or that are associated with changes of personality. Although man also appreciates constancy, after a certain time he grows “*weary even of the good and the convenient*”¹⁶² and strives to experience change, even if this can mean a worsening of his position.¹⁶³ Man’s striving for what is new at any one time is called neophilia: the *love of or friendly attitude towards the new*. Neophilia is the opposite of the love of preservation, loyalty, custom and tradition.

Costume is a sign of tradition, fashion a sign of the new. VISCHER puts this more polemically: “*Fashion is merely the sister of costume egged on by all the dogs of reform-madness.*”¹⁶⁴ As early as 1527 – according to Ulf POSCHARDT¹⁶⁵ – the reformer Philipp MELANCTON is said to have given a speech against the craving for fashion, which, like a poison of the new, causes customs, state and society to fall into ruin. In human nature, neophilia and the love of preservation constitute antagonistic motivators, the synthesis of which is seldom successful. Roland BARTHES recognises in

161 In both senses: *kosmos* understood as order within human life and as a world order.

162 GARVE 1987, 75

163 Cf. GARVE 1987, 57, 75 and 105

164 VISCHER 1979, 29

165 Cf. POSCHARDT 2001, 3

fashion a certain dialectic or synthesis between the chaotically new and a conservative, observable order:

“The new is thoroughly institutionalised, a purchasable value. In our society, however, it would seem that an anthropological function is assigned to a fashionable novelty, which despite all its ambiguity is well-defined: since it is unpredictable and systematic, regular and unknown, random and structured at one and the same time, it connects in a fantastic way the intelligible, without which man could not exist, with unpredictability, which one ascribes to the myth of life.”¹⁶⁶

The future content of fashion is unpredictable, unknown and random as long as no design exists, but the cycles of fashion and the design processes and advertising and marketing measures connected with it are systematic, regular and structured. The regular elements of fashion reflect their constant ‘form’ as a suprahistorical phenomenon and a psychological shimmer of duration, as SIMMEL refers to the lasting element of fashion.¹⁶⁷ The irregular elements of fashion are its changing contents. In connection with the changing contents of fashion, BARTHES talks of “*neurotic*” strivings of loyalty and disloyalty:

“As stated, fashion is systematically disloyal. Admittedly, loyalty (as sticking to the past) and disloyalty (as a destruction of this past) are equally neurotic, as soon as the former assumes the form of a compulsive or religious duty (of the Erynis kind) and the latter the form of a natural right to ‘life’.”¹⁶⁸

Fashion is a *sign* of ‘life’: For some consumers, for example, newly acquired clothing brings about a feeling of being restored; in many cases adverts talk about a feeling of being rejuvenated via new consumer products. The ‘disloyalty’ of fashion towards its previous content is acquired by the fashion phenomenon as a ‘form’ of the changing ‘materials’ in life. Fashion changes and moves like something that is alive. That which is alive basically changes and is in motion, while that which is not alive is not basically

166 BARTHES 1995, 310

167 SIMMEL 1996b, 34

168 BARTHES 1995, 349. By natural right BARTHES means a right that has so to speak become second nature.

in motion. According to ARISTOTLE, motion – kinetic, emotional and (in humans) intellectual – is one of the properties of the soul, which is the principle of life.¹⁶⁹ Via change, every motion basically includes something new. A love of life is often associated with a love of the new (although this does not exclude a love of preservation and even neophobia). Since the new is a sign of life and fashion always involves the new, fashion becomes associated with life. From a semiological point of view: Fashion is a signifier of the significatum ‘new’; signifier and significatum, fashion and the new, represent the sign ‘life’.¹⁷⁰

Neophilia is seen by some authors as an important cause of fashion and consumption. KANT relates the popularity of fashion to its novelty.¹⁷¹ And VEBLEN sees the “*preference of all humans for what is new at any given time*” as being responsible for the emergence of fashion.¹⁷² From a sociological point of view, the new in fashion consumer products is striven for because either a highly rated model (person or environment) is wearing the new feature or because unloved imitators have also acquired identical or similar products.¹⁷³ The phenomena of demarcation and the symbolisation of affiliation with the aid of fashionwear was already described by VISCHER prior to VEBLEN and they are thematised in economics by the cue-words *snob effect* and *hanger-on effect*. “[...] and so so-called fine society is constantly trying to think up new forms of clothing, ones that immediately have to be abandoned once more as soon as they are imitated by others, and this has led to a veritable witch-hunt for what is constantly new – which we now refer to as ‘fashion’ in the narrowest sense.”¹⁷⁴ For precisely these reasons, the dandy paradigmatically seeks for the new. Even so there is also a basic human disposition that approves of the new beyond its social effects. From a love of the new there is only a short way to a love of what is young. Because a young person has newer and fresher ‘resources’ at his or her dis-

169 The soul is the principle of life: the principle of motion, the capacity to nurture, to sense and (only in humans) to think. Cf. ARISTOTLE *PP* 411a-412a and 415a-416a.

170 I am here referring to the semiology of Roland BARTHES (1964, 93).

171 Cf. KANT 1988, 158 [AA 245-246]

172 Cf. VEBLEN 1986, 174

173 Described in detail in VEBLEN (1986, 164-183)

174 VISCHER 1879, 39

posal, compared with an elder person. Not only religious rituals can ‘renew’ the individual (e.g. confession); advertising for consumer products does so too: “*The new is thoroughly institutionalised, a purchasable value.*”¹⁷⁵

Before we begin to look at the paradigm of youthfulness, however, two further anthropological phenomena are to be related to fashion that especially play a role in economic calculations: preference for the present and myopia.

Preference for the present

HORACE’S “*carpe diem*” or “*praesens frui*” exhorts us to live completely in the present and to subordinate reflections concerning past and future to an enjoyment of the present.

Man has a preference for positive things that occur to him in the *present*. In the present, however, he does not profit from all the positive events of the past; were the positive event to happen to him in the future, it would be uncertain whether the positive occurrence really took place, since the future by definition is uncertain from the point of view of the individual. In economics, this phenomenon is referred to as *preference for the present*.¹⁷⁶ “*According to the law of preference for the present, a batch of goods in the present will be preferred to a batch of goods in the future.*”¹⁷⁷ A bar of chocolate that an individual received in the past or may receive in the future has, from the point of view of the present-centred individual, less value than one received in the present. If he had received the chocolate in the past, the whereabouts of the bar would be uncertain. Preferring the consumption of a bar of chocolate in the present to that in the past or the future corresponds to the rational calculation of *homo oeconomicus*.

Although economic thought, behaviour and action are components of the human, they are not the only action-guiding principle, as would seem to be implied by many reduced assumptions of neo-classical economics. *Homo oeconomicus* is an ideal type, a model. A *homo oeconomicus* would spread out the consumption of the bar of chocolate over time (we are as-

175 BARTHES 1995, 310

176 Cf. BARTMANN 1996, 227

177 SIEBERT 1978, 150

suming that this bar is imperishable) so that he could derive a maximum duration of lasting enjoyment from it. “*In the event of complete information concerning the future and a resource that neither grows nor perishes, a rational subject would arrange things in such a way that the marginal utility was equal at all times.*”¹⁷⁸ The marginal utility of a resource (e.g. chocolate) is the utility increase that occurs via an continued consumption of one after the other unit of this resource. This utility increase diminishes when the total consumption of the resource gets larger (Gossen’s first law¹⁷⁹). The first piece of chocolate grants a greater use increase than the tenth (like all such economic assumptions this is also ideal-typical, what usually occurs, although there are also numerous exceptions).

The bar of chocolate received in the future is, according to the law of preference for the present, less valuable than that received in the present. Because of this, a value equivalent of a goods in the future is included in economic calculations, which compare time-overlapping values with each other, that corresponds to its worth equivalent in the present. The method that helps ascertain the equivalent present amount of a future expenditure (income) is referred to as *discounting*.¹⁸⁰ By using discounting it is possible to compare batches of goods, amounts of money or utilities from different time periods with each other.¹⁸¹ From the point of view of ecological economics, as a result of the usual economic practice of discounting, an ethical problem arises concerning intergenerative justice which must be referred to here, although it cannot be dealt with in detail within the framework of the present investigation. It should, however, be noted that fashion consumer products, because of their swift periodical change, call for a considerable consumption of resources. From intergenerative justice perspective, which takes into account rights to resources of future generations, extensive consumption can only be represented as justifiable on the basis of the common practice of discounting used in standard economics.

In the following, a number of examples will be provided that would seem to argue in favour of including a preference for the present under *ra-*

178 HAMPICKE 1991, 198

179 Based on Hermann Heinrich GOSSEN (1810-1858)

180 Cf. CANSIER 1996, 119

181 Cf. STRÖBELE 1991, 151

tional calculation: productive investment of capital, diminishing marginal utility, uncertainty and risk of mortality.

In economic calculation, the productive investment of capital plays a decisive role in relation to a preference for the present: one Euro (€) *today* corresponds in the *future* to one € plus (compound) interest. For example, a present-day amount of €100, at a rate of return on investment of 10% p.a. corresponds to an amount of €110 in a year's time, i.e. instead of consuming €100 today, an 'economic subject' – via the 'productive investment' of capital – can consume for €110 in a year's time. Or conversely: If one can consume in the future for €110, this is equivalent to a discounted amount of €100 for present-day consumption.¹⁸²

A further rational reason for preferring goods in the present is diminishing marginal utility.¹⁸³ Someone who is interested in changing his workplace in the near future and who wishes to have a higher salary as a result of this new workplace, buys a new computer for himself, preferably on credit, when his old one cannot be used any more. By doing so, he redeploys to a higher level of consumption in the present, one that would not be justified until he first gets a higher salary in the future. Thereby he obtains a higher increase in utility by buying the new computer than if he had bought it in the future, where he would have found it easier to finance the purchase. For the marginal utility of the salary – the increase in utility that comes from an additional unit of income – diminishes when the salary increases.¹⁸⁴

An *existential* argument in favour of a preference for the present is uncertainty and one of its 'extremata': individual death. EPICURUS reminds us that the wise man lives in the present, he is not "*a master of what tomorrow may bring*". Since we need to "*remember that the future is neither ours nor wholly not ours: so that we cannot completely expect it as existing nor despair of it completely as not existing.*"¹⁸⁵ Death as an ultimatum is what first makes life capable of being enjoyed, for only in the finitude of existence is the worth of this existence recognised.¹⁸⁶ If life were to last for

182 Cf. CANSIER 1996, 119

183 Cf. STRÖBELE 1991, 151

184 In economics this situation is termed *the Gossen's first law* (after Hermann Heinrich GOSSEN (1810-1858)).

185 Both quotes: EPICURUS 1985, 45 and 83

186 Cf. EPICURUS 1985, 45

ever, the value of life would have to be portioned out in this endless period of time and the value of a single day in such a life would thus converge on 'nil'; the logical converse of this argument is that the value of a single day in life is greater the shorter life is. "*The anticipation of one's end permeates the depths of one's life. [...] The mere infinity of a temporal living-for-ever would destroy this experience. Everything that takes place would be meaningless, because it would lose its preciousness.*"¹⁸⁷ The finitude of existence and the assumption of less value of single days in a life that lasts forever have an implicit effect in practical choices made as to how one's life is to be organised, and they especially play a role when, for example, something like a 'deadline' or 'expiry date' is imposed on life because of an incurable disease, where the person affected places greater value on the time left to him and acts more consciously than previously in his life. Even when such a person, though not directly 'moribund', is aware of this *memento mori*, the value of life appears to be greatest in the present, since although death is certain, the time at which it will come is uncertain and death can overtake anyone as early as now or tomorrow. The finitude of individual human life is a possible explanation of how humans behave in the present. When an individual in his totality no longer finds himself in the present, he is dead. In terms of his physicality, a human being is chained to the present, in which he can live until the point where death puts an end to him and his present. Although a person does not consciously experience his own birth and, under certain circumstances, his own death, these two boundary situations¹⁸⁸ mark the temporal framework of his life, imposing a limit on the historical horizon that an individual can live through. In terms of thought

187 SPAEMANN 1996, 131

188 Karl JASPERS calls life situations that one cannot ultimately avoid 'boundary situations'. Such situations are, for example, death, suffering, struggle – but also ageing. "[...] *there are situations whose nature remains unaltered, even though their immediate appearance changes and their overwhelming power is concealed: I have to die, I have to suffer, I have to struggle, I am subject to chance, I inevitably become entangled in guilt. This basic situations of our existence we call boundary situations, i.e. situations that we cannot escape from, that we cannot change. Becoming aware of these boundary situations is, after the astonishment and the doubt, the profound origin of philosophy.*" JASPERS 1991a, 18; Cf. also JASPERS 1994, II, 204.

and emotions, a human being is indeed able to transcend the present and conceptually and emotionally to be involved in the past and the future, but the body is even so locked in the present, even though it would seem possible via cosmetic or anthropotechnical means to seemingly be returned to a past when that person was younger. Clothes can lead a person back into the past (via costume) or forward into the future (via futuristic garments) and thereby enable one to live being in the present especially intensely: a costume, for example, leads to an outer appearance and a partial recapturing of emotions and thoughts in the past whereby an individual can experience the here and now with special intensity. By using a combination of vestimentary, emotional and conceptual measures he can step out of the present into a past that can even lie outside the boundaries of his own life-span, the perception of actual historical time can be brought to a standstill.

In a contemplative, meditative, drugs-influenced state, or possibly one of mental derangement or at the moment of death, man looks as it were from a mountain top – that of the present – out into the vast surroundings – the past and future – of this mountain, without perceiving the mountain summit itself, intoxicated by the vastness of what surrounds it. Through contemplative experiencing and the coincidence of past and future, the present becomes particularly intense, but it is not perceived as a historical present, since it is seemingly standing still and amalgamated emotionally with *experienced* points or periods of time in past and future. Since this experience of past and present – or the experiencing of the fusing of all points and periods of time – are exceptional contemplative states, man usually simply perceives the momentarily experienced present and to a certain extent adapts to living in it. Admittedly, he does now and then look into the past and future, but such looks are more *side-glances* from the perspective of the present.¹⁸⁹

In order to adapt to living in the present, it is necessary now and then to look into the future and the past. Man looks into the past in order to process it, to reflect and to round things off – and in order to envisage consequences for the present and the future. Man has to look into the future so as not to be steamrollered by the present. When walking, a person is only ever able – in the moment of his existence – to touch the point of the road over which he

189 Apart from pathological forms that compel the person constantly to look back into the past.

at that moment finds himself. Even so, he occasionally looks back, recapitulates the part of the road already covered and from his actual position he nearly always looks ahead, to see what lies in front of him, the nature of the surface he is going to tread on in a moment's time, and what the road further ahead of him looks like.

From an individual point of view, the preference for the present – which is expressed in economics by the discounting rate – can be linked to the risk premium: a rate that policy holder would pay for the transfer of his risk on an insurance market.¹⁹⁰ Present benefits are here fundamentally valued as higher than future ones (e.g. because of possible risks). An uncertain benefit in the future corresponds to a *lesser* but *more certain* yield in the present. In an extreme case, the unforeseen death of the individual may occur (mortality risk), and he is unable any more to enjoy the benefits.¹⁹¹ When, for example, someone wishes to fulfil the dream of a lengthy, costly and adventurous journey and therefore – to carry out this journey – borrows money, by preferring the point in time of his journey he minimises the uncertainty of not perhaps being able to carry out this journey later because of advanced age or for occupational reasons. If he does not regret the journey and the money borrowed in that connection, then his decision – even considered *ex post* – was a rational one. For the usefulness that could have been derived from a later journey might be *less* (e.g. because of shorter leave from his work or physical infirmity) or even *zero* (if the journey was unable to be carried out in the planned manner), it is meaningful for the individual to assess the future usefulness as being less than the present one and therefore to undertake the journey now on credit. The interest on the credit corresponds to the premium that is paid for the minimising of the risk (the non-materialisation of the journey).

To sum up, it can be said that in general man prefers his existence and goods in the present (which does not exclude him, in exceptional situations, from wanting to be in the past or the future, and occasionally preferring to have goods and events in the past or the future, especially when these are of a negative nature). Fashion is a phenomenon of the present and of presence and it confirms the existence of the wearer in the here and now.

190 Cf. BRANDES 1997, 483-484

191 Cf. CANSIER 1996, 120

A problem that accompanies the theme of preferring the present is the paradigm of youthfulness, especially in Western societies, where age(ing) is undervalued and juvenility overvalued. Some members of Western societies – particularly elderly one – would prefer an existence in the past – in which they were younger than they are today – to one in the present. This phenomenon will be examined in more detail below. A problem immediately connected to preferring the present, however, is myopia, since it is a reason why fashionable items are repeatedly bought.

The economic paradox of myopia

Myopia (from the Greek *myōpos* = short-sighted) is the medical term for short-sightedness and metaphorically it also means ‘short-sighted’ thinking, behaviour and action that *ex post* is classified as irrational, especially in an economic context.¹⁹² Myopic thinking, behaviour and action is usually represented as an irrational factor in the economic process. From a profit-maximising perspective myopia is classified as positive – when it results in consumption. This form of consumption is often found among fashionable consumer products, especially fashionwear, whose path at times goes from the department store via the wardrobe to the old clothes collection, without once or regularly having been worn by the consumer.

A person who spends his entire month’s salary during the first week of the month and therefore has to limit himself for the remaining three weeks can just as well be categorised as myopic as the walker who has already consumed his entire week’s rations after three days and therefore has to ‘starve’ for the remaining four. In both these examples, the economic subjects in question consume their provisions ‘too early’ as a result of impatience and myopia. The walker and the wage earner *discount* the *future* use, because they place a higher value on the *momentary* in the *present*.

A necessary but insufficient condition for myopic behaviour is that it is regretted after the event.¹⁹³ When a myopic decision is taken, the longer-term future perspective is blocked out. When an act of consumption is regretted in hindsight, the obvious assumption is that we are dealing with *my-*

192 Cf. BARTMANN 1996, 66

193 For even behaviour that was considered to be rational in the prevailing context can be regretted after the event.

opic consumption.¹⁹⁴ The so-called ‘frustration buy’ and every form of compensatory consumption may be considered as myopic consumption. Compensatory consumption is that kind of consumption where an attempt is made to compensate for negative sensitivities – consciously or subconsciously – via consumption. Just as the clinically myopic patient sees distant objects unclearly (without glasses), the myopic consumer *overlooks* the perspective in the future as well as the hypothetical perspective back from the future to the act of purchasing. Myopia is an extreme variant of the preference for the present and a phenomenon that is opposed to sustainability. Myopia blocks out the rational perspective on the future and hypothetically back from the future onto the present in individual calculations. But myopic behaviour is an empirical fact, for it can be observed in everyone’s everyday life. To return to the two earlier examples: the wage earner normally regrets – at the latest during the last three weeks of the month – that he no longer has any money at his disposal during these weeks, and the walker is annoyed during the last four days of the week at his unrestrained appetite at the beginning of the week. Both wish, with the advantage of hindsight, that they had not behaved in such a myopic manner. For the myopic person regrets his conduct, since he actually always wants to have ‘a lot’ and only ‘momentarily’ accepts having less in the future.¹⁹⁵ Myopia in such contexts must not only be viewed as being irrational but also as being self-injurious and thus cannot be considered to be a economically meaningful way of behaving.¹⁹⁶

On the other hand, the idea of short-sighted pleasure exerts an almost subversive fascination which represents the epitome of a philosophy of myopic hedonism, as makes its appearance in such decadent figures and dandies as the WILDE character of Lord HENRY: “*Moderation is a fatal thing. Enough is as bad as a meal. More than enough is as good as a feast.*”¹⁹⁷ ARISTIPPOS’ dictum of reflective hedonism, “*Master of desire is not the one who avoids it but the one who knows how to make use of it without allowing himself to be carried away by it*”¹⁹⁸, is turned into its opposite in the light of

194 Cf. MEINHOLD 2001, 30

195 Cf. HAMPICKE 1991, 129

196 Cf. HAMPICKE 1991, 128

197 WILDE 1985, 177

198 HOSSENFELDER 1996, 50

myopic hedonism: *Master of desire is the one who has the courage to let himself be carried away by it: Only the person who is prepared to relinquish control over himself – and this trait is no longer that of the dandy – displays, according to the conviction of myopic hedonism – true steadfastness in the enjoyment of life. The highest form of pleasure, according to this view, occurs when one blocks out rational calculation, since sensuality determines the pleasures and rationality represents the Procrustian bed of pleasures experienced via the senses. Morality has no part to play in myopic hedonism – it prevents pleasure: “Nowadays most people die of a sort of creeping common sense, and discover when it is too late that the only things one never regrets are one’s mistakes.”*¹⁹⁹ Morality is not seen here as being a condition for bliss, as in the philosophy of ARISTOTLE or the Stoics – no search for happiness is actually undertaken. Nor is happiness, as in the philosophy of ARISTIPPOS the means to pleasure, but irrelevant: “*I have never searched for happiness. Who wants happiness? I have searched for pleasure.*”²⁰⁰ The myopic hedonist Lord HENRY convinces his ‘disciple’ Dorian GRAY of the power of sensual pleasure and the spiritualisation of the senses, as already consciously experienced by BARBEY D’AUREVILLY’s character DES ESSEINTES;²⁰¹ a new hedonism “*was to teach man to concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is itself but a moment.*”²⁰² Since human life, seen from the perspective of eternity, only lasts a moment, thought, behaviour and action restricted to the moment are what lie for the myopic hedonist within his ‘rational’ art of living. Looking into the future is for such a person not rational, clever or wise but cowardly. “*Thin-lipped wisdom [...] hinted at prudence, quoted from that book of cowardice whose author apes the name of common sense.*”²⁰³

While the homo oeconomicus of standard economic shakes his head when looking at the myopic person, advertising sees in myopia an element of seduction. While a part of economics, basing itself on an examination of homo oeconomicus as its model, excludes myopia from standard economics and brands it as irrational – since in such economics *rational* economising

199 WILDE 1985, 44

200 WILDE 1985, 194

201 HUYSMANS, Joris-Karl (1978) *Against the Grain*.

202 WILDE 1985, 130

203 WILDE 1985, 64

of meagre resources is assumed in advance – advertising strategists as more holistic anthropologists include myopic hedonism as a component of human totality and the epitome of pleasurable consumption in their marketing concepts, which link ‘sinful’ meta-goods to economic goods: the consumer goods gains an ‘appetiser effect’ via a pinch of sin. The model of an advertisement for low-calory pudding announces: “*I’m a girl that simply can’t say no.*”²⁰⁴ Behind the irrationality of the consumer’s myopia lurks the seduction of the economic marketer.

According to BAUDRILLARD, the seduction oscillates between the poles of rationality and irrationality, between strategy and animality.²⁰⁵ This oscillation can be apprehended more sharply and collated with the economic subjects: Advertising strategists for fashion consumer items operate as homines oeconomici with human myopia as calculable anthropological constants, including them in the auxiliary conditions of their equations for maximising profit. On the supplier side, the rational subjugates the irrational as a means of maximising profit; on the consumer side, on the other hand, rationality is conquered by irrationality if the strategy of those who have subjected the irrational to the rational is successful. Particularly as regards fashion consumer items – the mental shelf life of which is longer than their fashionable topicality – it is necessary for the marketer to defeat homo oeconomicus with homo myopicus:

“[...] if the producers and buyers of clothing had an identical consciousness, it would only be able to be sold (and manufactured) to the extent it wore out, i.e. extremely slowly. [...] In order to dull the consciousness of the buyer it is necessary to spread out a veil of images, motifs and significances in front of the object, to dip it in a medium that belongs to the class of appetisers”.²⁰⁶

204 QUINN 2002, 86

205 BAUDRILLARD 1992, 123

206 BARTHES 1995, 10

The apotheosis of youth insignias

Youth is the only thing worth having.²⁰⁷

Myopic ways of thinking, behaving and acting – which occur among people of all ages, since they are a part of what is ‘human, all too human’ – are often negatively associated with a certain lack of life maturity. Statistically, the allegation ‘the younger the more myopic’ can probably be verified with a high degree of probability as a person only learns in the course of socialisation and on the basis of personal experience to integrate sustainable²⁰⁸ perspectives in his thinking, behaviour and actions.²⁰⁹ For precisely that reason, myopia is a sign of juvenility – “*To get back one’s youth one has merely to repeat one’s follies*”²¹⁰ – and juvenility and its signs have become a paradigm of advertising for fashion consumer items. What is fashionable is by definition topical and usually new, or, to express it in physical terms: ‘young’ – because a ‘new’ person is a young person. The consumer of a consumer product marketed in this way – the advertisement suggests – “feels as if reborn” or “youthfully fresh”.

A new consumer product is a sign of the new. A Platonist would say that new consumer goods participate in the Idea of the new. The new consumer product and indirectly also its consumer participate in this newness, just as the triangle drawn in the sand participates in the (Platonic) Idea of the triangle. What is old or worn, on the other hand, symbolises decay. Much-used clothing is then mainly worn in developed countries when it is fashionable. As a rule, clothing is put aside, however, before it is looks worn. “*By wearing [clothes] it is well known that something of ourselves is transferred into the items of clothing which, before they appear to be really defective, gives them a certain everyday, worn quality.*”²¹¹

207 WILDE 1985, 26-27

208 The concept of sustainability is not being used in its ethical-ecological sense here but in a broader sense.

209 If one ignores people who are not or no longer able to observe the aspect of sustainability, such as senile or mentally retarded individuals.

210 WILDE 1985, 44

211 SCHMITZ 1911, 89

Unlike green plants, whose brown leaves are removed for aesthetic or allegedly botanical reasons, clothing is normally disposed of before it shows the first signs of age. In fruit still lifes, fruit is seldom depicted as decayed, shrivelled up or dried out but normally as *fresh*, sometimes even provided with drops of moisture which, as a sign of freshness like the drops of dew of a new morning, slide down the ripe but not over-ripe fruit.

For people in modern societies the subject of death is taboo. What they prefer in life is its youth and freshness, not what is wrinkled and old: “*everything that has to do with age, disease, death, with insufficiencies and the deterioration of the body, with excretions and secretions*”²¹² is also avoided in advertising. Advertising makes a fetish out of youth, the attributes of which are made into ‘insignias’²¹³ of lifestyle, something which the cosmetics industry finally uses for the implantation of meta-goods in product advertising: unwrinkled, smooth skin, purity and cleanness. “*This porous skin with its holes and orifices [...] is negated in favour of a second skin that is non-porous, that has no emanations and excretions*”.²¹⁴ BAUDRILLARD relates the term ‘second skin’ to all possible concealments of human and non-human bodies, from make-up to skin-hugging clothing (e.g. body stockings) and protective coverings of synthetic materials and wax that elevate the body to a phallic fetish.²¹⁵ One does not have to agree with this interpretation along Freudian lines, but even so one cannot deny the practice of the flawless ‘packaging’ of physical and non-physical bodies with ‘cavity’-retouching ‘packagings’ in fashion, ranging from make-up that conceals pores and wrinkles via stockings and gloves that cover up signs of age to shrink-wrapped salads and cucumbers and even ‘non-food’ articles.

“This glazing of nakedness is similar to the obsession with which objects are provided with protective coverings of wax, plastic, etc., or with the brushing down, the cleansing that is meant to return them to a state of purity, of flawless abstraction –

212 KARAMASIN 1998, 292

213 E.g. Skin that is smooth and free of wrinkles, vigorous growth of hair in the ‘right’ places, no growth of hair in the ‘wrong places, juvenile physical figurativeness, freshness, power, potency, etc.

214 BAUDRILLARD 1982, 164

215 BAUDRILLARD 1982, 163-164

and that is thereby supposed to prevent their deterioration, so as to preserve them in a kind of abstract immortality.”²¹⁶

Cosmetic products ‘package’ the body’s skin even more immediately than clothing. Unlike the latter (the ‘second skin’), cosmetic products symbolically become new skin, or at least integrated physically into it. The skin experiences a rejuvenation via substances that are invigorating’, ‘refreshing’ (supposedly) hindering the ageing process, or even stopping or reversing it. Cosmetics lives off the human fear of age(ing), dying, death and their taboos. While age(ing), dying and death are made taboo, there is as it were, as a repressive effect, an apotheosis of youthfulness and its insignias. Women – according to WILDE’s character Lord HENRY – “*paint in order [...] look young. [...] As long as a woman can look ten years younger than her own daughter, she is perfectly satisfied.*”²¹⁷ The wish to appear younger is, however, no longer something specific to a particular gender – not, at least, in Western societies. Today, both sexes have approached each other under the verdict of beauty and youth. The sexes retire behind the synthesis of beauty and youth, which are proffered by advertising as paradigms to be imitated.

BAUDELAIRE opposes the Aristotelian view according to which art is (also) an imitation of nature²¹⁸: “*Who would dare to assign to art the fruitless task of imitating nature?*”²¹⁹ And thereby he also criticises the imitation of youth by people who are older: “*So one ought not – if one understands me aright – paint the face in the common, inadmissible intention of imitating nature and competing with youth.*”²²⁰ BAUDELAIRE instead, in anti-naturalistic style, proposed a “*praise of make-up*”²²¹ as he equates nature in an analogy with barbarism, cruelty and insufficiency, and culture with virtue, supernaturalness and artificiality.²²² To pursue this argument

216 BAUDRILLARD 1982, 164

217 WILDE 1985, 51. An exception is when young people use make-up in order to appear older.

218 Cf. ARISTOTLE *Poetics* 1448b 10-12

219 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 40

220 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 40

221 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 35-40

222 Cf. BAUDELAIRE 1988, 36-37

logically further: (aesthetic) natural insufficiencies of the body are to be “consolidated” and “made divine” via fashion and “the art of make-up”.²²³

“Woman is well within her rights, we may even say she carries out a kind of duty, in devoting herself to the task of fostering a magic and supernatural aura about her appearance; she must create a sense of surprise, she must fascinate; idol that she is, she must adorn herself, to be adored. So she must borrow from all arts the means of lifting herself up above nature [...]. In these considerations, the philosophical artist will easily find the justification of all those practices that have always been used by women to consolidate and, as it were, to make divine their fragile beauty.”²²⁴

BAUDELAIRE turns against pure naturalness, because “*nature can only advise crime*”²²⁵, as described all too clearly by DE SADE – who is revered by some, especially French, men of letter for his ‘honesty’ and his courage in presenting what is taboo. Alongside the beautiful, pure and young, DE SADE raises the revolting, dirty, impure, old and dead to the level of fetish and removes the taboo from themes labelled as such. In advertising these themes are furthermore not included, because advertising wishes to reflect the needs of the recipient. An advertisement by the cosmetics manufacturer Nivea which allowed the observer to associate the back of an elephant with her own un-creamed skin and made visible what uncared-for skin looks like did not catch on much with consumers. The advertisement offered in more recent relevant magazines by this manufacturer once more makes use of young, rosy skin, free of wrinkles and impurities as a sign of youth: “*the paradigm young/old is neutralised here in an immortal youth of simulation*”²²⁶. Cosmetic products refer yet more incessantly to the insignias of youth, which appear as meta-goods in the ads, than other fashionable consumer items. Fashion and fashion products are a sign of lifestyle and of life. Although ‘lifestyle’ – as used in present-day fashion magazines – has to be

223 Cf. BAUDELAIRE 1988, 39-40. Compare in this connection the precedence of the ‘artistically beautiful’ over the ‘naturally beautiful’ in HEGEL, which he justifies in Platonic fashion with the mind that is superior to nature and which gives birth to the artistically beautiful. Cf. HEGEL 1984, 14

224 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 38-39

225 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 36

226 BAUDRILLARD 1982, 64

translated as a *style of consumption*²²⁷, the concept ‘life’ implies and conceals a value-cosmos of meta-goods (or rather a ‘value-chaos’, for there is no *ordering* of values involved at any rate) which the consumer can apparently purchase by means of the consumer products. Youthfulness, or participation in youth, is only one of these meta-goods: “*And yet, who, that knew anything about life, would surrender the chance of remaining always young, however fantastic that chance might be, or with what fateful consequences it might be fraught? [...] And when winter came upon it, he would still be standing where spring trembles on the verge of summer.*”²²⁸ BARTHES sees in youth a counter-concept to gender, or a synthesis of gender: “*an ideal age which acquires ever greater importance in fashion literature: adolescence. Structurally speaking, it represents a complex term of the opposition between male and female, tending towards the androgynous [...] age, not sex, is the decisive thing.*”²²⁹ From an anthropological point of view, secondary sexual characteristics only emerge in adolescence, so that, on the one hand, it is only possible to speak of a differentiation and increase in physical deviation of the sexes after puberty. On the other hand, however, there is a conscious preference for the use of youthful, androgynous models in advertising certain products – certain perfumes and accessories, for example, but also products to do with insurances and banks: “*both sexes unite tendentially under a single sign, namely that [...] of youth.*”²³⁰

The reasons for the apotheosis of youth insignias in advertising are of a qualitative and quantitative nature: from an empirical-statistical point of view, the older person has less living time left than the younger. This longer time left at the individual’s disposal is viewed at least as a quantitative advantage. The younger person has, statistically speaking, a quantitative advantage over the older person when it comes to life-years. Qualitatively speaking, the younger person normally has newer physical resources than the older person at his or her disposal. In both respects – qualitative and quantitative – the younger person represents a model for the older person, one to be imitated. One method of imitation is via the consumption of goods that have connotations with youth insignias.

227 Cf. MEINHOLD 2001, 24-27

228 WILDE 1985, 106

229 BARTHES 1995, 264

230 BARTHES 1995, 346

“On the one hand, the youth of the model is constantly affirmed, one could say: defended, since it is being threatened by time [...] and therefore it has repeatedly to be stressed that all indications of time are measured by the yardstick of youth (still young/ever young). It is precisely this transience that lends youth prestige. [...] For that reason it is youth that is invested with prestige and seductive magic.”²³¹

Nothing is said in advertising geared to promoting youthfulness – especially advertising for cosmetic products – about the advantages of maturity (e.g. the developing of a wealth of experience and various competences), since such advertisements, in an anti-Platonic manner, are primarily directed towards the body. It is, however, usually the body whose beauty tends to decrease and the mind whose maturity tends to increase – at least until the individual’s final decline.

Immortal form – mortal content

Throughout life, the individual finds himself in the present and is unable to depart from this perception without anxiety. It is hard for him to comprehend no longer being in the present which, from his point of view, is always a part of him; to a much greater extent he has the feeling of ‘always’ being able to be in the present.

As a mortal being he not only strives for change (neophilia, cf. Chap. 2.3.2) but also for preservation and constancy, which pits an element of intransience against his own transience. A golden mean between efforts towards something always new and the preservation of what exists up to now does not take place without compromises and concessions, either in the life of the individual nor in families, environments, national, religious or cultural communities and societies. In the process of globalisation, the conflict between preserving and revolutionising energies is apparent at least at the local level,²³² when, for example, ‘new’ ‘Western’ styles of consumption clash with traditional non-Western values. A transition that takes place within a society can release the conflict between preserving and renewing conceptions of values in the individual. But even outside societal change the individual always stands between renewal and preservation – this starts

231 BARTHES 1995, 264

232 Cf. BOHLKEN 2003, 406-426

with daily considerations to do with dealing with such consumer goods as fashionwear – and does not end with attitudes of mind. Many people in Western societies wish at a certain age for their body to remain as it is now and not to be exposed to the ageing process, rather like the young DORIAN GRAY, who expresses the wish that his portrait may age instead of him. Literature and art are full of youth-fountain portrayals, and religion contains myths of reincarnation and immortality. Man feels the urge to reproduce and conserve himself, his values and his works in number, space and time.

In PLATO'S Symposium DIOTIMA instructs SOCRATES in this human urge towards the eternal: "*conception and generation are an immortal principle in the mortal creature.*"²³³ Human beings "*are pregnant both in the body and in the mind*"²³⁴, and it is in their nature from a certain age to (re-)generate. Love aims at "*generation and birth in beauty*"²³⁵, indeed – and this is why the popular use of the term Platonic love is erroneous – "*both in the body and in the mind*"²³⁶. Generation is an eternal moment, a statement of the immortal within the sphere of the mortal.²³⁷ And so love also aims at immortality.²³⁸

According to the Platonic view of humanity, the mind is immortal, whereas the body dies. "*a man is called the same, and yet in the short interval which elapses between youth and age [...] he is undergoing a perpetual process of loss and reparation – hair, flesh, bones, blood, and the whole body are always changing. Which is true not only of the body, but also of the mind, whose habits, tempers, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears*".²³⁹ Because of this decline or change – for the old is replaced by the new – "*mortal nature is seeking as far as is possible to be everlasting and immortal.*"²⁴⁰ For PLATO, love, which aims at generation and birth in the beautiful (for it does not strive for the ugly, but its opposite) is the basis of

233 PLATO *Symposium* 206 c

234 PLATO *Symposium* 206 c

235 PLATO *Symposium* 206 e. BAUDELAIRE calls the actual "*longing for beauty*" itself immortal (1988, 9).

236 PLATO *Symposium* 206 b

237 Cf. PLATO *Symposium* 206 e

238 Cf. PLATO *Symposium* 207 a

239 PLATO *Symposium* 207 e

240 PLATO *Symposium* 207 d

human striving for immortality: “*For that universal love and interest is for the sake of immortality.*”²⁴¹

The striving for immortality expresses itself, then, in two forms, depending on the person doing the striving. Present-day sociologists would say that the nature and aim of the striving are milieu-specific. Analogous to the Platonic dualism between the body and the mind, there exists a dualism when it comes to the source and goal of procreation. Both the body and the mind are capable of procreation. The simple person – according to PLATO – produces children, by means of which he or she participates in immortality, whereas the more ambitious person produces works, by means of which he or she becomes immortal for posterity. There is no doubt as to which type of procreation PLATO, as the creator of the theory of forms, prefers. Corresponding to his higher assessment of the mind as the better, intransient and immortal part of the human being, he also values products of the mind higher than those of the body: “*Who, when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod and other great poets, would not rather have their children than ordinary human ones?*”²⁴² Perhaps OVID was mindful of this idea when he wrote:

“And now the work is done, that [...] the gnawing tooth of time cannot erase. Let that day, that only has power over my body, end, when it will, my uncertain span of years: yet the best part of me will be borne, immortal, beyond the distant stars. Wherever Rome’s influence extends, over the lands it has civilised, I will be spoken, on people’s lips: and, famous through all the ages.”²⁴³

The works of fashion and of fashion creators and designers have achieved lasting fame in broad sections of society. Certain designers are themselves presented to a certain extent as timeless, time-independent, eternally young or semi-divine personages. Their works are not infrequently accorded the status of works of art that display an unchanging nature as articles of daily use. This ‘immortality’ or ‘longevity’ does not, however, gain a prominent role for fashion or the person wearing it, since many phenomena display such a longevity, from such natural phenomena as that of – from an anthro-

241 PLATO *Symposium* 208 b. Concerning the argument for immortality Cf. PLATO’s Dialogue *Phaido* 65b-105d

242 PLATO *Symposium* 209 c

243 OVID Naso: *Metamorphoses*, 871-Envoi.

pocentric view – eternity of the cosmos to the ‘immortality’ of human works.

By means of its constant occurrence as a social form of dress, one that has emerged in the course of history and not subsequently disappeared once more, fashion mediates this “*psychological shimmer of duration*”,²⁴⁴ that causes the onlooker to assume that the phenomenon is immortal.²⁴⁵ Although it is perfectly possible that fashion will disappear once more in sections of society in the course of history in favour of ecologically longer-lasting, recyclable, more or less standardised ‘uniforms’. Think, for example, of the forms of clothing that at first glance make it difficult to determine the societal status of their wearers because of their uniformity – such as men’s suits or school uniforms as worn, for example, in England, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

Fashion lends its wearers a touch of immortality, since it enables them, via its periodical change, to partake in its ‘shimmer of duration’. By wearing new, fashionable clothing a person feels ‘newer’ or younger. Fashion appears to be an ideal synthesis of change and conservation. Via the changing of style (content) the form – fashion – is kept alive as a suprahistorical constant phenomenon. The change of fashion styles gives the fashion consumer the feeling of being constantly new and lulls him into believing in his own durability. Via periodic renewals it also conveys something which has the appearance of being cathartic. In this way, fashion apparently preserves youth, since it periodically surrounds the wearer with a new aura, by means of which he gains the impression of ‘being made new’ over and over again – an outward form of reinvestigation.

Catharsis by reinvestigation?

In the following an answer will be given to the question whether via reinvestigation a catharsis can take place that expresses itself in a pleasurable, long-lasting ‘feel-better feeling’. A ‘repeated renewal’ feeling via new fashionwear would seem to suggest a therapeutic or quasi-therapeutic effect.

244 SIMMEL 2000, 34

245 Cf. also GARVE (1987, 107): He notes the “*unstoppable and never failing current of fashion.*”

In an analogy to the mind in the Platonic body-mind dualism, the *form* of fashion remains constant as a suprahistorical quasi immortal phenomenon, while its content changes with the seasons. The form – with fashion as a suprahistorical phenomenon – is as it were ‘immortal’, while the new content of fashion (designs, shades, materials) oust the old content with their appearance on the everyday social scene. Fashion ‘leaps’ – metaphorically speaking – revitalised ever again out of its coffin before death can nail down the lid. It is only able to do this because its content changes and it thereby becomes a new fashion. It “*titillates death and is once more a different, new phenomenon each time death looks about it in order to slay it.*”²⁴⁶

If one pursues further the analogy with the Platonic body-mind dualism, it is possible to observe in fashion a renewal of the content which is responsible for its constant form. The more constant phenomenon – in fashion the lasting form, and in PLATO’s anthropology the mind – is in fashion, as opposed to Platonic dualism, *dependent* on the changing and shorter-lasting aspect of fashion. Yet even seen from a Platonic perspective, an individual can only exist in the here and now *with* and *because of* his lesser ‘other half’. For that reason, an individual as a physical living creature, even from a strict Platonic point of view, is dependent on the body. The “*true philosopher*” according to PLATO – will despise “*beautiful clothes and shoes*” and will not turn to the body, the wrappings of the mind, but to the mind itself, and certainly not to clothes, which are the wrappings of the wrappings.²⁴⁷ A Platonist, one who adheres to the Platonic tenets not only in philosophy but in his life, would accordingly have to wear simple lasting clothes, or wear *out* such clothes and, as THOREAU says, we “*will never procure a new suit, however ragged and dirty the old – until we have so conducted that we feel like new men in the old.*”²⁴⁸

A “feeling new” – a form of catharsis – can, according to such views, not result from a renewal of the exterior, and yet this is precisely the aim of the fashion and body cult of Western societies. “*One of the main characteristics of lifestyle [...] would seem to be the preoccupation with the body.*”²⁴⁹

246 BENJAMIN 1989, B 1,4

247 Cf. PLATO *Symposium* 64d-65a

248 THOREAU 1979, 35

249 AMMICHT QUINN 2002, 83; Cf. also: MATTENKLOTT 1988, 231-252

Behind the (over-)emphasis on the body there is a certain anti-Platonism which, by turning to the body, seeks to purify the mind through the body. Lord HENRY's allopathic therapy maxim is: "*to cure the soul by means of the senses and the senses by means of the soul.*"²⁵⁰

Fashionwear as a second skin and wrapping²⁵¹, or cosmetics, are considered for strategic reasons along with the body as a unity and a totality. The body regenerates, renews or rejuvenates itself by means of new clothes, or some cosmetic substance. In product advertising the outer new wrapping (clothes, cosmetic product) is synthesised with the 'inner' ageing wrapping (skin, nails, teeth and hair, i.e. the first periphery of the body). The resulting synthesis profits from the newness of the 'second' skin. Advertising for fashion consumer products thus represents the individual as more of a whole than physical and mental allopathic medicine is able to treat him with. In doing so, advertising makes use of the stratagem of aligning the consumer product and its properties as closely as possible with human beings and establishing a connection. For example, a packet of detergent, which is meant to fulfil its functional task within the washing machine, is always kept close to the face of the 'showpiece female consumer' – the actress or the model used in the advertising. The person used in the ad/commercial shows her face along with the consumer product. This charges the detergent with meta-goods that, for example, also include human virtues and that merge the product with the consumer. The wash is not only clean but as pure as it is clean. This amazing degree of cleanliness is associated with the wash, the washer and the wearer. No detergent consumer demands virtuous purity from his wash, only cleanliness, although ethical 'purity' is not something humans despise. Consumer goods are thus linked with meta-goods, e.g. human qualities, especially virtue: cleanliness as purity, reliability, power, strength, potency, intelligence, beauty, health, freshness, newness as a symbol of youth, wit, humour, etc.

Advertising for consumer products defines the individual as a totality and continuum of spirit, mind, body *and consumer product*. The holistic principle – known from humanist psychology – is extended to include the

250 WILDE 1985, 181

251 "*Clothes are only our outer skin.*" THOREAU 1979, 35

consumer product that finds itself in the proximity of the individual.²⁵² The wrappings of the mind, the body according to PLATO, is merged with the second wrappings, clothes, with the cosmetic product and with consumer products in general to form a holistic but improved (meliorated) unity. The holistic principle of advertising amplifies the individual by a *second periphery* which does not merely represent a ‘repackaging’ but which becomes one with the *first periphery* (the outer visible dimension of the body: skin, hair, nails, teeth) and thereby with the individual as a whole. The characteristics of the consumer product apparently diffuse in the body that assimilates them: nutritional supplements strengthen one’s health and rejuvenate the body internally as well as externally – new hi-tech cosmetic products penetrate as a second periphery the first human periphery and regenerate, renew and rejuvenate it. New fashionable clothing as a second periphery renews, rejuvenates the first wrappings of the mind and of the individual as a holistic whole.

In certain (indigenous) societies a ritual oral intake of substances occurs that are thought to have a therapeutic, cathartic or invigorating effect, such as minerals, plants, parts of animals or humans (cannibalism), which are employed as magical, potency-enhancing means that strengthen both mind and body.²⁵³

Light can be shed on such practices as the eating of roots or the absurd, macabre consumption of parts of the human body – which, from a Western point of view, seems naive – by considering practices (just as naive, if not more so) that are common in our own modern society. Precisely in Western societies great numbers of therapeutic agents or ‘quack remedies’ are on offer, either at chemists’, organic food shops or from esoterics consigners which claim to have an invigorating, beautifying and rejuvenating effect. There is only a short step from the offering of such substances, the effect of which is controversial from a nutritional and medicinal point of view,²⁵⁴ to

252 SIMMEL too talks of the “*unity and totality*” of the individual (SIMMEL 1968, 191; Cf. further concerning the concept of the individual as a totality: *ibid.* 1968, 189-193, 202, 206-209, 212, 232).

253 The ginseng root, for example, is considered an aphrodisiac and life-lengthening supplement in China: *jênshên*: man(like) root; the Chinese ideogram is the same as that for virility.

254 Cf. WOLTERS/HAHN 2001, 367-375

creams, colours and sun-glasses that aesthetically enhance the face by means of emphasising the shape of the body (high heels, shoulder and bra pads) and retouching fashion articles (scarves, stockings, sun-glasses, etc.) which, along with an improvement of one's exterior are also meant to bring about a holistic melioration – to diminish mental drawbacks, for example. It is possible that height increase by means of high heels can also lead to an increase in self-confidence. Self-confidence can also be enhanced by wrinkle-concealing stockings and shawls, broadening and shaping pads at all conceivable locations of the body as well as by 'cool' sun-glasses or other fashionable accessories. Consumer products that enhance one's self-confidence even extend to 'potency enhancing' wide-base tyres and exhausts, which are normally presented by 'summer'-clad models in relevant car accessories catalogues. The influence of new consumer goods on living conditions should therefore not be underestimated.

If one takes the analogy of the Platonic body-mind dualism presented earlier in this chapter to its conclusion, the interior of the first periphery is surrounded by a renewed exterior, namely with the synthesis of the first and second peripheries. This process is like a reincarnation, because a relatively constant interior is transferred into a renewed exterior, or because a renewed exterior clothes a constant interior. Just as in reincarnation an immortal soul is reborn into a new physical and mortal body, an individual in reinvestigation transfers himself into new clothing. *"The new shirt lies spread out anyway like the new day, a new coat covers [...] everything. [...] Even women put on a new part of themselves when they put on a garment. She is someone else in another dress [...]. Others immediately feel they are wrinkle-free when their stocking is."*²⁵⁵ In a metaphorical, figurative sense the individual is reborn in a new vestment, the newness of which diffuses as a new part of the 'whole' person and is assimilated by him. The individual as a 'holistic whole' has become a new person, or at least a renewed one. He has 'reinvested' or pseudo-reincarnated himself.

In the following, we will return to catharsis and raise the question of the extent to which reinvestigation involves a 'feeling new' aspect, i.e. a kind of purification or catharsis. But this procedure, resulting from the apparent synthesis of the second human periphery (clothes) with the first one (skin) – and the assimilation of the new into the individual as a holistic entity –

merely represents a simulation, however, since the merging of the first and second periphery is itself only a simulation, as an individual and consumer item are unable to form a holistic entity in the sense of a continuity. As a result of reinvestigation there merely follows a pseudo-catharsis: the renewal of the second periphery involves an *apparent* renewal and purgation of the first periphery (or the whole person), as a result of the synthesis of the first and second periphery. The pseudo-catharsis is strengthened when the fashionable consumer product that is to be acquired is represented by a model which the consumer in the course of an *imitatio prominentis* imitates via his new consumer product.

Fashion thus opposes the natural death of the individual, as advertising links it with meta-goods that for example symbolise rejuvenation, occasionally (implicit) immortality and, in extreme cases, reincarnation. The advertising of cosmetic products in particular often creates the impression of being able to ‘rejuvenate’ the consumer; the consistent use of the product must be able – if one logically pursues the message of the advertising – at some point to reincarnate the consumer. Goods that prevent the process of ageing would, if used consistently and frequently, lead to an end of decline and thus – if taken to the logical extreme – to immortality.

Because of fashion’s relation to the present, but also because of the apotheosis used in advertising of youth insignias as a sign of the fresh, new and young, and finally not least because it reflects myopic consumption, it also has to be divested of a form of repression and tabooing of decline, ageing, dying and death. Walter BENJAMIN writes that “*this age does not want to know of death*”²⁵⁶ and “*fashion mocks death*”²⁵⁷. Death is portrayed in fashion as if it had been “*abolished*”²⁵⁸. In the pseudo-tragedy of fashion, death plays a subordinate and resurrection the predominant role, since the newly rising fashion always kills the old one and thus “triumphs”. Fashion means living in the present, it eliminates ageing. It only allows death in the elimination of old-fashioned content – as an element of reinvestigation. Seen from the perspective of dramatic tragedy, it only employs death to eradicate its old content in order to remain alive as form via new content.

256 BENJAMIN 1989, B 2,4

257 BENJAMIN 1989, B 2,4

258 BENJAMIN 1989, B 9,2

In the use of synthetic fibres fashion reaches its material zenith: fashionable clothes made from synthetic fibres, because of its material it symbolises both immortality and re-birth: a textile surface made of robust synthetic fibres potentially outlives the buyer, who is made of decomposing material; from the buyer's perspective it is 'not mortal'. The article of clothing will, however – because of a change of the aesthetic paradigm in fashion – be disposed of *before* it is worn out, and if correspondingly treated and designated will finally be recycled. Recycling is a re-birth of the material in the form of a new consumer product. Thus fashion, since the invention of synthetic fibres, also opposes death at the material level – twice over.

Fashion marketing follow apotheoses of youth insignias, of prominent figures and, with their help, of the staging of brands. Just as the *imitateo dei* leads to the eternal return to the sources of the sacred models and saves human existence from death and the void, so does the *imitatio prominentis* appear to safeguard the fashion consumer from meaninglessness, as the advertising of fashionable consumer products links the lifestyle of the prominent figures as meta-goods with consumer goods, causing the consumer to believe that via the imitation of one's "betters" one is able to partake in the better "as such" and thereby improve oneself and one's life. And yet neither the simulated renewal of the individual through fashion and the new fashionable consumer products nor the imitation of one's betters leads to a lasting "feel-better feeling" in the individual: A healing catharsis via fashion alone is out of the question.

The ideal-typical incarnation of fashion: The Dandy as ...

Dress a scarecrow in your last shift, you standing shiftless by, who would not soonest salute the scarecrow?¹

The saying 'clothes make the man' holds to a certain extent even for intelligent people. To be sure, the Russian proverb says: "One receives the guest according to his clothes, and sees him to the door according to his understanding". But understanding still cannot prevent the impression that a well-dressed person makes of obscure representations of a certain importance. Rather, at best it can only have the resolution afterwards to correct the pleasing, preliminary judgment.²

What is philosophically interesting about the ideal-typical dandy is the obvious prominence of the above-examined philosophical-anthropological implications and the ethical-aesthetical intentions of the authors that idealise him. "*If such representative artists really exist, they must certainly form a highly appropriate group for examining the skills by means of which activity becomes ostentation.*"³ Clothing, fashion, a youthful, aesthetically pleasing outer appearance and staging are of existential significance for the dandy. This is why the dandy is an ideal-typical incarnation of fashion. It is

1 THOREAU 1979, 34

2 KANT 1998, 49 [AA 136-137]

3 GOFFMAN 1959, 34

easier to read the three mentioned complexes of philosophical-anthropological implications of fashion from the dandy than from any other type of figure. The dandy not only loves fashion but he transposes, meliorises and refines its styles; he not only *follows* fashion, he precedes it...

For a pedagogical utilisation of the insights into dandyism the transference of the philosophical-anthropological implications onto the stars of music, film and advertising in our present-day media is of importance. Such stars serve as models for young people, also when it comes to influencing their values, but they have not as yet been thoroughly viewed from a philosophical point of view. The use of dandyism as a topos in the realm of education is something that would be well worth a separate investigation.

Sources disagree about the origins and meaning of the word “dandy”, but the following etymological definitions are worth noting:

- The Indian word “dandi” is the term used for “someone who carries a stick”, i.e. a higher official in the Indian Civil Service⁴.
- Dandy is possibly a modified (perhaps coquettish) form of Andy: a shorten or diminutive form of Andrew from the Greek *andreaia* (manfulness, bravery, courage) – if one speculates further, the concept could be a caricature of manfulness.
- The word could also be derived from the English word “dandle” (Scottish “dandill”, German “tändeln”, Middle High German “tant”), a word that in the early 19th century in English roughly meant “refinement” or “gentility”.⁵
- It is also conceivable that the origins can be dated back to the English popular rhyme “Jack-a-Dandy” from 1659, which derives from “to dandle” (to dally, fondle).⁶
- Dandy could further be the name of a historical and now unknown person.

Dandyism can be defined according to the standpoint of the observer as an aesthetic (BAUDELAIRE’s concept of the dandy), aestheticising (WILDE’s *Dorian Gray*) or psycho-pathological (BARBEY D’AUREVILLY’s *Des*

4 Brockhaus, Wiesbaden 1968, Vol. 4

5 The Oxford English Dictionary. Sec. Edition, Volume IV., Oxford 1989, 238

6 The Oxford English Dictionary. Sec. Edition, Volume IV., Oxford 1989, 238

Esseintes) lifestyle. Dandyism is sometimes referred to as a “sect”⁷ and speculations are made as to which modern or postmodern life-forms – Camps, Mods, New Waver, Yuppies, Bobos etc. can be compared with dandies.⁸ In literature one also finds the view that these life-forms are dandyistic, or are descendants of dandyism.

To claim that dandyism is stoicism is too broad, although the former does admittedly seek to combine virtues of the latter in itself, such as calmness of soul, imperturbability, self-discipline and self-perfection. But dandyism does not share the Stoic’s ethical ideal of community participation. The dandy hates political engagement and conventions, which he rather seeks to break and to re-define. The following assumption must be made: the ideal-typical dandies – such as those that were described in idealised form or conceived by Jules Amédée BARBEY D’AUREVILLY, Charles BAUDELAIRE and Oscar WILDE – existed just as little in history as did PLATO’s Ideas within our “cave of reality”. Admittedly, all the authors had real or partially imaginary models for their figures, but as writers, artists, aesthetes they were more interested in perfecting of a figure than in their historical template. If a historical dandy ever existed that approaches the boundaries of the portrayals, it was probably George Bryan BRUMMELL (1778-1840),⁹ who is unanimously designated the prototype and ‘king’ of dandies. To declare ALKIBIADES to be the archetype of the dandies¹⁰ can only be justified if one broadens the definition of the term, ignoring among other things the dandy-like non-existence of a (‘proper’) profession as well as the historical context. But “*Alkibiades was admittedly very handsome, but a good general as well.*”¹¹ For dandyism was first of all an English phenomenon of the 18th and 19th centuries. A dandy has no other occupa-

7 BALZAC 1980, 85

8 SCHICKEDANZ 1980, 26-28

9 BRUMMELL’s heyday: 1799-1814

10 As roughly SCHICKEDANZ 1980, 8-9, who is surely referring to BAUDELAIRE (1988, 28); the latter, however, does not unambiguously refer to ALKIBIADES, CAESAR and CATILINA as dandies but as their pattern, i.e. their template.

11 BARBEY D’AUREVILLY 1987, 69

tion than dandyism, “*a dandy does nothing*”¹², and for that reason there seem to be no dandies left in the world. Even more seldom are those who would term themselves dandies since “*the majority only obtain the title of dandyism through the opinion of others.*”¹³

STAGING ARTIST

A Dandy should seek to be sublime without interruption; he should live and sleep in front of a mirror.¹⁴

Staging exists as an anthropological constant in all humanity in a more or less pronounced form. GOFFMAN attempts to prove that self-presentation is a necessary aspect of human life.¹⁵ The individual wants others to “*think the world of him, or to believe that he thinks the world of them*”¹⁶. Dandies, however, are the masters of the discipline of social self-presentation and self-staging.

The Dandy – according to CAMUS – always finds himself in a stage of opposition and challenge, either when faced with society or with the mirror; he requires an audience; the others are that mirror.¹⁷ Society is his mirror and the mirror is his society. The dandy’s commandment when it comes to aesthetic self-dramatisation must be: *My neighbours are to admire me as I admire myself*. The mirror is the touchstone, the ‘super ego’ of the hyper-critical, idiosyncratic dandy. If his mirror image intoxicates himself, he is ready to intoxicate society with his person, with the aesthetic apparition that is his work. “*Our works are like mirrors*”¹⁸, according to CARLYLE. Or

12 BAUDELAIRE 1946, 48. BALZAC divides humanity into three lifestyles: working, thinking and those who do nothing. The dandies belong to the last group. Cf. BALZAC 1990, 47-48

13 CARASSUS 1990, 25

14 BAUDELAIRE 1946, 41

15 Cf. DAHRENDORF 1969, VIII

16 GOFFMAN 2001, 7

17 Cf. CAMUS 1974, 45

18 CARLYLE 1991, 223

KEMP: “*The dandy is his own mirror, his own work of art*”¹⁹ The dandy’s work, his self-aestheticisation and self-staging are the reflection of himself; this work – which also is a mirror – he studies in turn in the mirror; a mirror that mirrors a mirror. In this narcissistic intoxication the dandy glimpses his self (in the mirror) or his being in the nothingness of infinity.²⁰

“for the dandy only the mirror is there, in which he only ever meets himself almost ad nauseam and to the point of self-abolition, and his final experience might well be that he comprehends this identity with himself as the void.”²¹

“The facade-like nature of his own existence increases the narcissism, while his own apparition as a cascade of reflections must appear increasingly more alien to the ego.”²²

The dandy’s self-reflection in the glass and societal mirrors is both a reflection and a repetition: the mirroring not only results in a counter-image but also in a constantly repeated mirroring. The dandy never leaves his mirror image – “*he should live and sleep in front of a mirror.*”²³ If he leaves his own opposite in the glass mirror, society becomes a mirror whose image is once more reflected in himself: society is not only a social mirror of the dandy; society also mirrors itself in the dandy. The dandy, whose touchstone is his mirror, becomes the touchstone of society, which considers him a mirror in which it examines itself:

“a word from Georges Brummell decided everything at that time. Everything depended on his opinion [...]. In England, even a woman who was madly in love would, when it was a question of affixing a flower or a piece of jewellery, think

19 KEMP 1946, XXVI

20 A pale impression of the dandy’s intoxication in the mirror is perhaps that gaze afforded by two mirrors opposite each other that are virtually parallel as is offered in luxury lifts in likewise hotels. The observer mirrors himself – intoxicated by a panopticon of the thousandfold reduplication of himself – into an infinite nothingness.

21 KEMP 1946, XXVI

22 POSCHARDT 2001, 4

23 BAUDELAIRE 1946, 41

more of what Brummell would say about it than what sort of a face her lover would make when he saw it.”²⁴

The dandy examines society. Society allows itself to be examined by him and imitates the dandy. Before he becomes the mirror of society, the dandy is the model that it imitates. Wilde writes in his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

“His mode of dressing, and the particular styles that from time to time he affected, had their marked influence on the young exquisites of the Mayfair balls and Pall Mall club windows, who copied him in everything that he did, and tried to reproduce the accidental charm of his graceful, though to him only half-serious, fopperies.”²⁵

Initially, society reflects the dandy, but when he stages himself in it as in front of a mirror, the dandy himself becomes a mirror, as society examines itself in the dandy as if in a mirror and imitates him as a model. People seek models – the dandy serves as an aesthetic model. BRUMMELL is the model of the dandy, of dandyist literature and of many people who want(ed) to be dandies – he is the model of the ideal-typical depiction by BARBEY D’AUREVILLY. DES ESSEINTES and Lord HENRY are models for DORIAN GRAY and for their author, Constantin GUYS for the Baudelarian idealisation of the dandy, etc. SCHURTZ mentions in his *Essentials of a philosophy of dress*: “In actual fact, the vast majority of people are not independent and look for models not only in practical matters but even in those that really are completely subordinate to subjective judgment.”²⁶ Motives for imitating models are, however, more complex and more broad-ranging, extending from a dependence and uncertainty via pragmatic holistic economics to aestheticising attempts at perfectionism: They are “revealing concerning imitative adjustments to a particular lifestyle which is required by followers when emulating a model. [...] Here, the individual gains direction and form from a model. He moulds himself on this model. Via the other person he becomes himself.”²⁷ Since the individual attempts to imitate

24 BARBEY D’AUREVILLY 1987, 67

25 WILDE 1985, 129

26 SCHURTZ 1891, 93

27 PLESSNER 1982, 416

someone of higher rank, as KANT writes in his 'Anthropology' and the person of higher ranks feels obliged once more to demarcate himself, as KANT, VEBLEN and SIMMEL have all stated, the snob, the person of higher rank or the dandy must resort to an unconventional item of clothing or consumer goods. This demarcation from the masses and the break with convention that is often linked to it – be they linked to clothing or possibly to morals – are further specialities of the dandy type. The dandy breaks with conventions and in doing so often creates new ones: BARBEY D'AUREVILLY assumes that the dandy moves along the tangents of conventions.²⁸ Since the dandy moves from the point on the tangent where this still touches the circle of convention along the tangent and away from the circle, he creates new conventions, provided that his further development is imitated. To that extent, the dandy is someone who never merely 'follows fashion' – as does the fool of fashion – but is even a step 'ahead' of fashion, which instead possibly follows him; seen from this point of view, the dandy is more a creator than a consumer: His aesthetical imperative is: *Only act according to the maxim that it is not yet a common law!*

The breaking with conventions lends the dandy his subversive status. If he goes too far, he loses his balance; and the social balance of the dandy, who is loved and hated by society at one and the same time, can only be lost once, just as a deadly-poisonous mushroom can only be eaten once. There is no such thing as regained balance for the dandy – that is a further characteristic of this type. The first time the dandy founders is his last. And all of them have foundered; even the final foundering of a dandy's career is part and parcel of being a dandy.

28 Cf. BARBEY D'AUREVILLY 1844, 56

AESTHETE

Contrary to what a lot of thoughtless people seem to believe, dandyism is not even an excessive delight in clothes and material elegance. For the perfect dandy, these things are no more than the symbol of the aristocratic superiority of his mind.²⁹

If one takes BAUDELAIRE at his word, the aesthetic-aristocratic appearance of the dandy simply mirrors his attitude of mind and is in no way merely a Potemkin-like village, behind whose facade there is a gaping emptiness. For BAUDELAIRE the dandy is an integrated intellectual aristocratic genius, the outward appearance of whom must perforce correlate with his inner attitude of mind, with his consciousness and his perception of human beings and the world. Although – or perhaps precisely because – BAUDELAIRE when describing his dandy has the revered painter and illustrator Constantin GUYS – a contemporary – in his mind’s eye, he does not spare his words of praise in extolling and idealising the attributes of his ‘ideal dandy’: “*I would be happy to call a dandy [...]*”³⁰ – “*a man who has recognised the world and the secret legitimate causes of all of its customs [...] who is interested in the entire world [...]*”³¹, “[...] *who at every minute possesses the genius of childhood, i.e. a genius that has never been blunted to any view of life.*”³² For BAUDELAIRE, dandyism borders on stoicism and spiritualism.³³ In a noble form, it unites the virtues of self-discipline, self-assurance and self-awareness at all levels with coolness, composure, imperturbability and audacity. Over-fine elegance does not seek to attract attention via extreme elegance. “*To be well-dressed does not mean to attract attention*”³⁴ was BRUMMELL’s dressing axiom, one that BARBEY D’AUREVILLY may possibly have borrowed from BALZAC’s *Traité de la vie élégante*: “*The man of taste*

29 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 29 (http://www.dandyism.net/?page_id=178)

30 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 16 (‘him’ = Constantin GUYS)

31 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 13

32 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 16

33 Cf. BAUDELAIRE 1988, 30

34 BARBEY D’AUREVILLY 1987, 72

must understand how always to reduce his needs to the point of simplicity. [...] Many colours are always a sign of bad taste."³⁵

BAUDELAIRE's dandy is himself unshockable, but if he should shock society, he does so via his genius, not via mere provocation, as does perhaps WILDE's Lord HENRY, for whom "*there is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.*"³⁶ This distinguishes the Baudelairian dandy from the usual conceptions of the dandy. If BAUDELAIRE's dandy-genius exceeds conventions, they are aesthetic ones, in fact those of art: Constantin GUYS, when drawing, sometimes makes use of the stylistic means of "*exaggeration, which is useful for human memory.*" The beautiful in art, according to BAUDELAIRE – and here one could logically also include the art of living, especially when dealing with the dandy – must

"inevitably have a double composition [...] The beautiful consists of an eternal element, which is invariable, the quantity of which it is exceedingly difficult to determine, and a relative element, which is circumstantial, which will be, if one wishes, sequential or all at once – the period, fashion, morality, passion. Without this second element, which is like the amusing covering – titillating, stimulating – of a divine cake, the first element would be indigestible, unappreciable, unadapted and inappropriate to human nature. I defy anyone to find any example of beauty that does not contain these two elements. [...] This duality of art is an inevitable consequence of the duality of man. Consider, if you will, the part that exists eternally as the soul of art, and the variable element as the body."³⁷

In writing this, BAUDELAIRE is in a certain sense acknowledging Platonism, which sees the soul as being an eternal, unchanging Idea. Whereas one could reproach philosophy based on PLATO of being opposed to the body, and even more to clothing: the true philosopher will despise fine clothes and shoes, "*those wrappings of the wrappings of mind*".³⁸ The ideal dandy,

35 BALZAC 1830, 84

36 WILDE 1985, 8

37 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 10-11

38 HANSON 1990, 109; Cf. in this connection, e.g. PLATO's Dialogue *Phaidon*: (Sokrates – Simmias) "*And will he think much of the other ways of indulging the body – for example, the acquisition of costly raiment, or sandals, or other*

especially BAUDELAIRE's genius-dandy, must combine both in his work and in himself – insofar as he views his self as a work (of art) – both elements of the beautiful. Only the true dandy – this must be the logical continuation of BAUDELAIRE's line of argument – takes into consideration the eternal, unchanging element of the beautiful not only in his outer appearance but also in his attitude of mind. Fashion – if it is to be beautiful according to such a definition – must contain this “mental” element of art. For the fashion-fool, on the other hand, all that counts is the “gleaming covering”³⁹, i.e. fashion as it is at precisely this moment, which he then imposes on himself, without paying any attention to the correlation between the inner and outer aspects of his personality and attitude of mind. BAUDELAIRE's genius-dandy is by definition able to recognise the eternity of the beautiful in that which has to do with clothes, the body and the mental-spiritual spheres; fools of fashion do not inevitably have such capacities of awareness. The aestheticisation of the human being that BAUDELAIRE strove for, culminating in the genius-dandy, is thus an *integrated aestheticisation* of the self and its “wrappings”, one that does not omit either the eternal or the changing element of the beautiful.

Oscar WILDE also takes up the dandy's aestheticisation of life as a work of art and a masterpiece: according to the view which he has placed in the mouth of Lord HENRY, the dandy's sole task is to create himself as a work of art. The artistic energy of the dandy is concentrated on his self and not dissipated on objects outside himself: For: “*The aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly – that is what each of us is here for.*”⁴⁰ Lord HENRY to Dorian GRAY: “*At present you are a perfect type. Don't make yourself incomplete. You are quite flawless now. [...] I am so glad that you have never done anything, never carved a statue, or painted a*

adornments of the body? Instead of caring about them, does he not rather despise anything more than nature needs? What do you say? I should say the true philosopher would despise them. Would you not say that he is entirely concerned with the soul and not with the body? He would like, as far as he can, to be quit of the body and turn to the soul.” 64e

(<http://infomotions.com/etexts/philosophy/400BC-301BC/plato-phaedo-350.htm>)

39 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 10

40 WILDE 1985, 26; Wilde is speaking in the Aristotlian tradition.

picture, or produced anything outside of yourself! Life has been your art. You have set yourself to music. Your days are your sonnets."⁴¹ Within the novel, Lord HENRY – who bears traits of the subversive image of the devil in the role of a dandy – has misused the young Dorian as raw material, in order to make an 'artwork' of short-sighted hedonism out of him. At a metaphorical level, WILDE himself in his work *Dorian Gray* has created three characters as works of art whose views of mankind and the world cannot be reconciled with each other, and yet all three of them represented something like idealised, differentiated traits of his own personality. WILDE himself is said to have remarked: "*Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be—in other ages, perhaps.*"⁴² Especially men of letters who dedicated themselves to dandyism not only conceived their writing but also their life as a work of art, one that they had to aestheticise until the end of their lives – and beyond:

"And, certainly, to him life itself was the first, the greatest, of the arts, and for it all the other arts seemed to be but a preparation. Fashion, by which what is really fantastic becomes for a moment universal, and dandyism, which, in its own way, is an attempt to assert the absolute modernity of beauty, had, of course, their fascination for him."⁴³

BAUDELAIRE's ideal-typical dandy represents an integrated, holistic aesthetic phenomenon both for himself and for others. He strives for noble originality in his work, without exaggerated eccentricity. The ideal-typical dandy pursues no profession to guarantee his financial situation, "*the dandy does not aspire to money as something essential; indefinite credit would be able to suffice him.*"⁴⁴ If one follows the observations of BARBEY D'AUREVILLE, BAUDELAIRE and WILDE, the dandy is a witty, elegant, cultured person when it comes to the aesthetics of dress, life and being – although he is not always an aesthete of dying. The dandy – according to Roland BARTHES

41 Lord HENRY in: WILDE 1985, 211-212

42 Quoted from: OEHLISCHLÄGEL (*Epilogue*) in: WILDE 1985, 219. Also quoted at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Picture_of_Dorian_Gray

43 WILDE 1985, 129

44 BAUDELAIRE 1988, 29

– radicalises the wardrobe of the refined man and markedly increases his refinement.⁴⁵ It is well-known that BRUMMELL simplified the cuts of his suits and subdued their shades.⁴⁶ But BARTHES also knows that the dandy not only selectively but also creatively seeks to beautify all levels of his life; that is why for him dandyism represents ethics on the one hand, and technique on the other.⁴⁷

BARTHES sees the destruction of dandyism as stemming from industrial manufacturing of clothes, since the dandy is thereby deprived of the scope for variation which he had by having been able prior to industrialisation to vary the details of his suits at his custom or workman tailor's: "*As a form becomes standardised, even in the case of a luxury article, it always loses its uniqueness. Manufacture is thus the first fatal blow inflicted on dandyism.*"⁴⁸ This phenomenon of the destroyed 'aura' of a work (of art) via its reproduction was a theme already dealt with by BENJAMIN. This phenomenon is accentuated by digital reproduction on the one hand and the possibility of cloning on the other (not only in an aesthetical but also ethical respect): "*One can subsume this in the concept of aura and say that what wastes away in the age of technological reproducibility of the work of art is its aura.*"⁴⁹ If this thesis is applied to forms of clothing, the hand-cut mass suit would have something like an aura, whereas the 'off-the-peg' suit would be sold without any aura; this lack of aura in mass-produced items is not infrequently re-introduced via corresponding advertising, with the advertising texts for consumer products containing such attributes as 'unique', etc. BARTHES, however – as he has shown in *The Language of Fashion* – only has limited insight into the sciences, industries and crafting of textiles and clothing, for even in mass-produced clothing it is possible to achieve variations on a convention; as by the wearing of 'wrong' sizes,⁵⁰ different wearing styles (caps back-to-front), the use of certain clothing for other

45 Cf. BARTHES 1972, 304

46 Cf. BARBEY D'AUREVILLE 1987, 74

47 Cf. BARTHES 1972, 304

48 BARTHES 1972, 305

49 BENJAMIN 1974, 477

50 An item of clothing that fits (too) tightly seems 'more transparent' than a perfect fit. Minimally 'oversized' can, according to the style, seem to be more casual, protective, present, etc.

purposes than those foreseen, having alterations made by a tailor, etc. BARTHES himself states: “*Dandyism, though, was basically a creative invention. The dandy conceived his presentation precisely as a modern artist does with his composition based on the materials that are available (e.g. adhesive paper), i.e. that the dandy was finally unable to buy his clothes.*”⁵¹ BARTHES further argues that dandyism inevitably had to die out, because its creativity was smothered by clothes only still being available as manufactured articles, and that his only option was to buy such clothing. This assumption, however, is false, since for the dandy it is also a matter of how an item of clothing is worn, as BARBEY D’AREVILLY describes: “*Dandyism is a whole way of being, and one is not a dandy only as regards what is outwardly and physically visible. [...] It is not a suit that goes walking on its own, on the contrary: it is a particularly way of wearing it that determines dandyism. One can be a dandy with a suit that is nothing less than meticulous.*”⁵² Furthermore, industrialisation did not lead to the professional tailor disappearing completely from towns – they still exist today, but few know them and even less makes use of their services? – nor would a dandy of the ‘Brummel’ type allow creativity and aesthetic intuition to be driven out by mass-produced products. There are sure to be dandies even today, but who is in a position to recognise a skilfully deviating variant of fashion and the dandy-like figure to be found within? Only a connoisseur of the style of good clothing and living. Whether behind this style of clothing a corresponding style of living is to be found or not is, at least *ad hoc*, not discernible. Perhaps it is only still possible today for a dandy to recognise one of his own kind. In the diversity of present-day styles of living there exist certain individuals whose presence is characterised by elegant, super-correct clothing and a certain contrived ‘cool’ appearance, but the fewest of them are dandies, for they pursue a profession that either calls for this elegant clothing or, conversely, does usually not allow it, which is why it is displayed when they are not at work.

Another important characteristic of the dandy is the artificiality. WILDE’s dictum is: “*The first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible. What the second duty is no one has yet discovered.*” This cult of artificiality was earlier celebrated in HUYSMANS’ *A rebours* (Against the Grain). As a

51 BARTHES 1982, 306

52 BARBEY D’AUREVILLY 1987, 48

representative of symbolism and sharp critic of naturalism, HUYSMANS in DES ESSEINTES created a neurotic hero of artificiality:⁵³

“There is not one of her inventions, no matter how subtle or imposing it may be, which human genius cannot create; no Fontainebleau forest, no moonlight which a scenic setting flooded with electricity cannot produce; no waterfall which hydraulics cannot imitate to perfection; no rock which pasteboard cannot be made to resemble; no flower which taffetas and delicately painted papers cannot simulate.”⁵⁴

DES ESSEINTES serves as a model for the character of Dorian GRAY.⁵⁵ And yet DES ESSEINTES is an unrivalled pathological ideal who has transcended dandyism in his decadent excess of the artificial.

“But he was done with those extravagances in which he had once gloried. Today, he was filled with contempt for those juvenile displays, the singular apparel, the appointments of his bizarre chambers. He contented himself with planning, for his own pleasure, and no longer for the astonishment of others, an interior that should be comfortable although embellished in a rare style; with building a curious, calm retreat to serve the needs of his future solitude.”⁵⁶

Incarcerated in his aestheticised and self-constructed prison, only living at night, he has completely broken all forms of contact with the outside world – except with suppliers who take care of professionally tailored wonderful works of art for his aesthetic sustenance and with two old servants: “*His contempt for humanity deepened. He reached the conclusion that the world, for the most part, was composed of scoundrels and imbeciles.*”⁵⁷

53 HUYSMANS, writing thus against naturalism, is also opposing his teacher, Zola.

54 HUYSMANS 1978, 30 (<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/12341>)

55 GRAY is given the book as a present by Lord HENRY, after the latter had asked the former for something to read and he has a number of copies of this book, which from then on is to guide his view of life and lifestyle, bound in various colours that are to correspond to particular states of mind. Cf. WILDE, 1985 123-127

56 HUYSMANS 1978, 18

57 HUYSMANS 1978, 11

“[He was] seized with the need of self-communion and with a desire to have nothing in common with the profane who were, for him, the utilitarian and the imbecile. [...] he felt a genuine sympathy for those souls immured in monasteries, persecuted by a vengeful society which can forgive neither the merited scorn with which it inspires them, nor the desire to expiate, to atone by long silences, for the ever growing shamelessness of its ridiculous or trifling gossipings.”⁵⁸

DES ESSEINTES cannot, however, strictly speaking be considered a dandy – he is less and more than one. In his life-world everything was without exception submitted to an aestheticisation. This aestheticised world is an artificial paradise of simulations that end up by making him ill, since he avoids every contact that lies outside his artificial paradise. In his world no society exists in which he stages himself and which represents a mirror for him, and for which he could be a mirror. In this artificial situation of a world there are only mirrors of glass, no human ones. For his abhorrence of humanity steadily increased before his withdrawal: “*The very sight of certain faces made him suffer*”.⁵⁹ Even so, DES ESSEINTES epitomises ideal-typical dandyism all the more as regards the lack of occupation: his vocation is the aestheticisation of a complete simulation of an artificial ideal-reality, of a hyper-reality in a BAUDRILLARD sense of the term. DES ESSEINTES, however, founders both in and on this simulation and its lack of humanity. Absolute aestheticisation and the desire he expends on it are unable to make him happy.

58 HUYSMANS 1978, 78

59 HUYSMANS 1978, 33

ENEMY OF OLD AGE

The flight into death

When I find that I am growing old,
I will kill myself.⁶⁰
He who dares to kill himself,
that person is God.⁶¹

The dandy displays a particular – perhaps schizoid – interest in death and signs of its approach. Part of his personality loves death, while another part hates it. Two souls reside within the dandy’s breast, whose striving can be followed further via his dandyish-aesthetic inclinations: from a Platonic point of view, the dandy strives for the aesthetic absolute that would have to end with his aesthetically staged death, just as – according to PLATO – the true philosopher is only granted absolute knowledge in (the) death (of the body). Put more trenchantly, the symbolistic or anti-naturalistic dictum “*the more artificial, the more beautiful*” could from this point of view be augmented to “the more dead, the more beautiful”: a *living creature* can admittedly be beautiful, at times more so than a dead object – a diamond, a sphinx, LEONARDO’s *Mona Lisa*, HOMER’s *Odysseus*, photos of James DEAN or Marilyn MONROE – are temporarily infinitely beautiful; at least when seen from outside the time context of the individual observer. Objects of that kind will outlast the ‘moribund’ observer when it comes to constant beauty. The beauty of living beings is definitively limited as regards time, whereas HOMER’s *Odyssey* is temporarily-infininitely beautiful from both a recent observer position and also when viewed retrospectively. The dandy is “*jealous of everything whose beauty does not die*”.⁶² A life led according to purely aesthetic points of view would have to be terminated at its zenith in aesthetic fashion, according to the logic of the dandy. The most consistent finale of the dandy’s ethical-aesthetical attitude towards life is the aesthetically staged suicide: “*He who dares to kill himself, that person is*

60 WILDE 1985, 30

61 KIRILLOW (from HEYDEN-RYNSCH 1987, 7); ‘to take life’, just as ‘to give life’ can be understood as *imitatio dei*.

62 WILDE 1985, 30

God".⁶³ In many cultures, however, one is not free to commit suicide; the person committing suicide offends against the law of society and religion – via his suicide he takes law into his own hands.⁶⁴ Suicide is rejected as far back as PLATO as being “*ill-advised*”;⁶⁵ it can be assessed as a stoical element of dandyism, but exceeding the law is unstoical. “*Stoicism, religion that has but one sacrament: suicide!*”⁶⁶ Concealed behind the aesthetically staged suicide – which represents a marginal phenomenon of death, just as the dandy is a rare phenomenon among humans – is the wish for an eternal existence in beauty. The aesthetic staging of this rare form of suicide acquires the nature of a work of art made outside life, where the temporality of the actual moment is to be transformed into infinite being.⁶⁷ “*Live intensely, die young and you will be a beautiful corpse.*”⁶⁸ From such figures as Sergej JESSIN⁶⁹ or James DEAN one can see how the temporal life of a person is frozen by means of death at the aesthetic climax of existence, and is transferred into a timeless – seen from a recent point of view – immortal myth.

As a human being, the dandy is not unmoving as regards death, which approaches him with certain, slow steps, no matter whether he rushes towards death and into it or takes flight out of aversion. WILDE’s Dorian GRAY flees death, which he has given over to his portrait, until it is so close that his disgust at his own moral reflection (the painting) takes possession of his “aesthetic conscience”, so no flight is any longer possible except that forwards into death; and he kills his disgust-provoking portrait, his moral reflection and thereby kills his reprehensible work and himself. GRAY has separated ethics and aesthetics in his life: he himself lives the lifestyle of

63 KIRILLOW (HEYDEN-RYNSCH 1987, 7)

64 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 276-8

65 Cf. PLATO *Phaido* 61e-62d

66 BAUDELAIRE, quoted by HYDEN-RYNSCH (1982, 227)

67 The author is thinking of a photo that is both repulsive and fascinating: “*Sergeij Jessin, just before his suicide in 1925* (HEYDEN-RYNSCH 1987, 324).

68 Statement about James DEAN, from POSCHARDT 1998, 234. “*Dean thus saved his body from old age.*” *Ebd.*

69 Sergej Aleksandrowitsch JESSENIN, also written JESENIN or ESENIN: Russian poet 1895-1925 (suicide), closely connected with symbolism, later imagism, who strove for a world-revolution of the spirit.

the aestheticist, while his portrait successively assumes the signs of the moral reprehensibility that is connected with it. When he slashes the portrait, and tries to destroy it out of disgust at his moral *faux pas*, he also destroys himself. Aesthetics and ethics are suddenly rejoined: He himself – lying on the ground – wears in death the (un)aesthetical signs of his (im)moral lifestyle, while his picture stands opposite him untouched in eternal beauty.

The flight from death

“How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June [...]. If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that – for that – I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!”⁷⁰

The second variant of the attitude of the dandy towards age, dying and death is the flight *from* this phenomenon; for the signs that accompany this as a rule increasingly diverge from the aesthetic perfectionist dogma of the dandy after the aesthetic zenith of his life. Here the wish to live or to survive and the wish to aestheticise result – not only for the dandy – in a visible, unambiguous conflict.

Dorian GRAY suppresses the signs of death and ageing and only confronts himself with these in the harrowing contemplation of this own image. After Lord HENRY has implanted the paradigm of youthfulness in Dorian’s view of life, “*Youth is the only thing worth having.*” [...] “*There is nothing in the world as youth!*”⁷¹, Dorian expressed the wish that his image might age instead of him, no matter the cost – even if it cost his soul... WILDE states: “*And yet, who, that knew anything about life, would surrender the chance of remaining always young, however fantastic that chance might be, or with what fateful consequences it might be fraught? [...] And when winter came upon it, he would still be standing where spring trembles on the*

70 WILDE 1985, 30

71 WILDE 1985, 26 and 27

verge of summer."⁷² A separation between ethics and aesthetics was completed with Dorian's wish – that the image might age instead of him – one that is first revoked by Dorian's 'suicide' at the end of the novel: in which the apparent suicide is really a destruction of the image that represents an attempt of the *aesthetical* efforts of Dorian to gain absolute control over morality; this attempt – like a deadly boomerang – turns into the murder of his own self. Beauty and innocence are once more reunited in the painting; the signs of ethical and aesthetical decay added by psychokinesis or telekinesis to the painting reappear as signs of guilt, ugliness, loathing and sin in Dorian's body.

Lord HENRY had made Dorian his own work, for which he himself served as the model. The signs of the morally reprehensible aestheticisation of Dorian's lifestyle, however, are borne by his ageing image although at the final moment of death by his own face. HENRY, though, grows older within the story. He detests old age, the death that will follow, and praises youth.

"To get back my youth I would do anything in the world [...]. Youth! There is nothing like it. It's absurd to talk of the ignorance of youth. The only people to whose opinions I listen now with any respect are people much younger than myself. They seem in front of me."⁷³ "Death is the only thing that ever terrifies me. I hate it. [...] Because one can survive everything nowadays except that."⁷⁴

The dandy despises death as he does old age – which is also ideal-typical and exemplary for a society characterised mainly by economic values. For BATAILLE, death is already in itself a waste and thus uneconomic. For economic calculations regarding society, old people represent a cost factor (although advertising has still not fully recognised a future main target group – that will, however, soon change for demographic reasons).

Every form of active human productivity ends with death. The economic sector, which has to do with burials, profits directly from death. Indirectly, insurances make money out of people's fear of death. And naturally

72 WILDE 1985, 106. Dorian's ageing process can be read from the actual seasons of the year and their symbolic value. These are played on as if incidentally.

73 WILDE 1985, 212

74 WILDE 1985, 207

the fashion industry makes money out of it, as people think they can hold back ageing and death by wearing new fashions: “the more fashionably (you dress), the younger (you appear to be)” is the juvenile adage of fashion advertising – to that extent, society lives (indirectly) off death and the fear of it. However, death and dying cannot be marketed too openly in a society that is oriented towards youth values, which is why a particular type of insurance is euphemistically referred to as ‘life insurance’ and not ‘death insurance’. But the consumer is in fact offered no security against either life and its dangers or its last hazard, death. The only thing that is entirely certain is the payment of a certain financial contribution.

On the one hand, not many religions straightforwardly embrace death: although, in Christian context, for example, people say that “*God has taken his own unto Himself*”, the image of the one who fetches people from this earth is not God himself but the man with the scythe, who is more closely associated with the dark than with the divine. On the other hand, actual death is also rejected: at a funeral service there is not rejoicing, as in other cultures, but mourning. One does not rejoice for the person who has died and the promising future that awaits in a better world. The underlying reason for this is the *memento mori* idea and the fear of death. According to BAUDRILLARD, the Church – just like the economic system – extracts capital out of death, for the values of religion refer to the destiny of life after death, which constitutes the power of religion. Church and the economic system, therefore, do not completely reject death, as might appear at first glance, but implant the negativity of death – the fear of ‘the grim reaper’ – sublimely into the value conceptions of society, where they are socio-culturally passed on and deposited. The dandy is the cross on the summit of a mountain that has risen up above the valley of death, only at some point in time, impelled by fate, to have to crash down into that valley.

Since, however, the dandy seldom approaches death voluntarily, death comes to the dandy instead, as it does to everyone sooner or later who does not take his or her own life. BAUDRILLARD outlines this trivial phenomenon by reference to the story of death in Samarkand: “*everyone person seeks his own death*”:⁷⁵ A soldier meets death and believes he sees the latter pointing at him. Because of this gesture, the soldier flees in fear, to Samarkand, which lies far, far away. And death wonders about the flight of the soldier,

75 BAUDRILLARD 1992, 102

for his gesture – pointing at the soldier – was merely one of surprise at chancing to meet him here, since the following day he had ‘an appointment’ with him in Samarkand⁷⁶ “*precisely by attempting to avoid one’s fate, one moves towards it even more surely.*”⁷⁷

The dandy not only flees from death but also from the signs of ageing; the combination of the characters of Lord HENRY and Dorian GRAY is the ideal-typical example of this phenomenon. Dorian GRAY is equipped with the characteristics that the advertising strategists for fashionwear and cosmetics implant in the images and words of the advertising material: almost immortal beauty and youth. Lord HENRY is the acclaimer and strategist of this paradigm. According to HENRY, women “*paint in order to try and look young. Our grandmothers painted in order to try and talk brilliantly. Rouge and esprit used to go together. That is all over now. As long as a woman can look ten years younger than her own daughter, she is perfectly satisfied.*”⁷⁸ If one looks at the depictions of dandies, they seldom show men that are under seventeen or over fifty years old – the ideal age of the dandy as depicted in literature and icons lies somewhere between seventeen and thirty-five. The paradigm of youth is reflected in the momentarily topical advertising of almost any product fields. It does not only imply a ‘freshness of appearance’ but also a ‘freshness of powers’, and this – for certain product fields (ice cream, lifestyle beverages, youth fashionwear) – sometimes quite definitely means sexual potency or potency in general, depending on the influence on the product strategist of either FREUD or JUNG.⁷⁹ Dressmen and models are nearly always young; if they are no longer young, they appear to be young; if the appearance of youth has also wilted, it is assisted by means of retouching techniques (lifting, colouring, etc.) – and where these no longer can have the desired effect, the person wears at least the insignias of youth (broadly speaking, clothes where one assumes that they would be worn by those who are as young as one would like to be oneself). This marks a continuation of the so-called VEBLEN effect: as far as fashionable consumer products are concerned – as GARVE and KANT have already stated – the lower-ranking person will not only imitate the higher-

76 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1992, 101-102

77 BAUDRILLARD 1992, 102

78 WILDE 1985, 51

79 FREUDE 2002

ranking person but the older person will also imitate the younger.⁸⁰ The dandy and, to a certain extent, the media star does not, however, make do with optically visible physical insignias of youth:

“Ah! Lord Henry, I wish you would tell me how to become young again.”

He thought for a moment. “Can you remember any great error that you committed in your early days, Duchess?” he asked, looking at her across the table.

“A great many, I fear,” she cried.

“Then commit them over again,” he said gravely. “To get back one’s youth, one has merely to repeat one’s follies. [...] Nowadays most people die of a sort of creeping common sense, and discover when it is too late that the only things one never regrets are one’s mistakes.”⁸¹

The marketability of such tenets is demonstrated by consumer products (their slogans and brand names): from perfume (*‘Escapade’*) to milk chocolate (*‘gentlest temptation’*). Temptation, indiscretion and sin – admired and reviled in the dandy and the media star – become, interestingly enough, socially acceptable, consumable and disposable via consumer products and their meta-goods. So ultimately, neither the monk nor the vicar – even in public – need shrink from ‘gentle temptation’ or ‘escapades’. If Oscar WILDE admiringly describes *A Rebours* by Joris-Karl HUYSMANS in *Dorian Gray* as a poisonous book⁸², no one would even so get the idea of attaching similar attributes to advertisements for consumer products; despite their proclamation of decadent lifestyles and such product names as *‘SatAn’*, *‘Opium’* und *‘Poison’*.⁸³

80 Cf. MEINHOLD 2001, 12-19

81 WILDE 1985, 44

82 WILDE 1985, 123-127

83 Product names for dish satellites and perfumes.

Implications of fashion: *desiderata* of life as an artwork

The true thread that runs through the garment of the fashion myth has been spun out of the fibres that restore the reference back to anthropological basic conditions and refer to human life as a work of art. It is alarming, however, that advertising for fashionable consumer products speaks to the individual in his totality, while certain sub-disciplines of knowledge seek to reduce the individual to one or a few phenomena. While reductionist tendencies of biology reduce the individual, for example, to a genetic basis and derive all further human thought, attitudes and actions from this, advertising (apparently) fulfils a human wish for entirety. The fatal thing about this is the (apparent) disregard of human entirety by certain disciplines of science which as truth-seeking and knowledge-creating entities might perhaps grasp the individual in his or her entirety, whereas advertising ostensibly – and indeed for marketing-strategic reasons – aims at an entirety and presents itself in such a way as if it was intending an improvement of the entire individual, while in fact it is only trying to improve one thing: the sale of consumer items.

Even so, it has to be noted: Fashion advertising at the same time also sheds light on various human domains the importance of which should not be underestimated for the individual as a being which is unconfirmed (NIETZSCHE), open to the openness of Being (HEIDEGGER), ‘thrown’ into Being (CAMUS), eccentrically positioned (PLESSNER), aware of his death (WEIZSÄCKER), *kritisch-krisisch* (WISSER), and utopian-ecstatic (GRÄTZEL). Consumption as a form of pseudo-therapy offers the individual in partial domains of his being answers to his questions regarding how to conduct his

life, since advertising, via the implanting of meta-goods in consumer goods, offers the individual a back-reference to philosophical-anthropological basic human conditions.

Thematising ways of dealing with the issues that arise from these basic human conditions is the task of philosophy, especially philosophical anthropology, ethics and philosophy that deals with the fundamental issues of human existence. No matter what one may call this philosophical discipline, it refers to a tradition that has existed since Antiquity and that has a new version under such titles as *Aesthetics of Existence*,¹ *Philosophy of Life*,² *Experiencing the Philosophy of the Art of Living*.³ In parts of academic philosophy this discipline has a legitimacy problem, because the ‘philosophy of life’ – in some instances not unjustifiably – has been condemned as popular philosophy or fashion philosophy.⁴ A renaissance of an academic philosophy of existential problems of human existence, however, is essential.⁵ For the existential *lacunae* that are left behind as believing religious communities and extended family structures lose their significance are not first filled by those with the *best* solution but by those with the *quickest*.⁶ If one admits that consumer goods are also bought because of the attractiveness of certain meta-goods, one can assume that other strategies – e.g. pedagogical ones can have equal success if they serve the contents of these meta-goods. Michel FOUCAULT speaks in this context of a philosophy that focuses on the practical lifestyle which he refers to as the “*art[s] of existence*”⁷. “*By this is meant conscious, willed practices through which people not only determine their rules of behaviour but also seek to transform*

1 Cf. FOUCAULT 1984, 18-21 and 313-319 as well as FRÜCHTL 1998, 124-148

2 Cf., e.g. SIMMEL 2000, 209-425

3 Cf. SCHMID 2000

4 Cf. RICKERT, 1920 Cf. SOLIES 1998, 12-22

5 What is called for here is not a one-sided concentration of academic philosophy on a philosophy of existential issues of human existence but a relegitimation and constantly renewed questioning of these fields of philosophy with which it once had its beginning.

6 Since such *lacunae* in human existence are constantly being inundated in an ‘information overflow’, there is no need to ask why pedagogically mediated contents do not penetrate deep enough.

7 FOUCAULT 1984, 18

themselves, to modify themselves in their particular existence and to make their lives into a work of art that enshrines certain aesthetic values and corresponds to certain stylistic criteria."⁸ These 'arts of existence' or 'self-techniques' as FOUCAULT refers to them have lost importance since Antiquity. FOUCAULT views his investigations of sexuality as a first contribution to an aesthetics of existence and of self-technologies.

With the *Philosophy of the Art of Living* an attempt was made to call this neglected discipline back into play. The question of the art of living "*tends to be raised where traditions, conventions and norms [...] are no longer convincing and individuals start to worry about themselves.*"⁹ Wilhelm SCHMID understands by the philosophy of the art of living "*the theoretical reflection of life as it could be lived consciously*".¹⁰ Here, life is to be conceived as a work of art, the last brushstroke of which is only completed by death and that can only be finally evaluated as seen as a complete whole after the death of the individual.¹¹ Life, like the work of art, can be evaluated both according to objective and subjective criteria.¹² Both from the perspective of the observer as from that of the creator of the work of art, the work can appear to be unfinished or complete, successful or a failure. The *material* of the art of living is life as it is lived.¹³ Since the work of art of life will only be completed at the end of life, during life it is always "*work in progress*"¹⁴.

Advertising implants meta-goods into fashion consumer items that have *topoi* of the art of living as their content and thereby establishes the link to basic human conditions. If one assumes that fashion consumer products are also bought because of the attractiveness of the meta-goods that are attached to them, the question is what role these contents play in a human life that is to be formed as a work of art. A philosophy of the existential issues of human existence can have many *topoi* as its content. In the context of

8 FOUCAULT 1984, 18

9 SCHMID 2000, 9

10 SCHMID 2000, 10

11 Cf. SCHMID 2000, 353

12 SCHMID on the other hand assumes that life has to be compared with the modern work of art, which evades objective assessment criteria. Cf. SCHMID 2000, 79

13 Cf. SCHMID 2000, 71

14 SCHMID 2000, 73

this investigation, three of these would seem to be of pre-eminent importance and could possibly serve, in the following outline, as a point of departure for further research towards a philosophy of existential questions of human existence:

1. The ‘staging’ of a personal life-plan that constantly has to be corrected and the mediation of this between an individual human nature and social requirements.
2. Melioration via ascesis: This refers to the selection of life-improving options as well as the concentration on selected options and their practising.
3. The removal of taboos, thematising and problematising of the phenomena age(ing), dying and death.

In those instances where a philosophy of life takes account of actual individual problems of human existence, it transforms itself into life-counselling that can only be meaningfully conducted in an individual conversation. Where it remains completely theoretical and abstract, it offers no individual assistance. That which lies in-between is the reflecting on existential issues that affect all individuals (human existence as such) at some point and in some form or other. Within this framework, the three existential problem areas of human existence mentioned above – used by advertising to market fashion consumer items – will be examined further in relation to certain aspects of their potential manifestation in the actual life of the individual outside of fashion. The following three subsections aim to motivate a continued and intensified examination of these *topoi* once more within a scholarly context and hopefully provide a contiguous contribution to a philosophy of the existential problems of human existence.

INDIVIDUAL EXISTENCE AS ENTELECHY IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

The individual seeks recognition in the social context and to that end, among other things, employs imitative staging with the aid of fashionable clothing. The human mind cannot be conceived without this staging, this *mise-en-scène*. “*Performing would thereby be a comestible without which*

humans could not survive."¹⁵ The "stage" is the human's immediate surroundings, in particular the social surroundings, where the individual gains approval via an appropriate 'redeployment onto this stage'. For the 'mise-en-scène' in a social context, that fundamental anthropological condition is a *sine qua non* where the individual is constantly and repeatedly 'damned' to relinquish his actual position in space, time, social context and his momentary individual attitude in order to adopt a new one. We are dealing with an "*excentric positionality*"¹⁶ or a "*utopian-ecstatic*"¹⁷ basic human condition. Referring back to the disparity noted by PLESSNER between individual human nature and social role, an attempt will be made here to mediate between the disparate extremes.

It must be assumed that the individual is unable to be completely absorbed in either his own personal nature or in a "role". Because of this, a human being constantly oscillates between individual human nature and demands made by the social context. Since the individual in his existence as a human being needs the social framework or, more generally, the "other", he is unable to leave the other out of account in the structuring of his own life. On the other hand, the individual is unable to 'leave' his personal human nature, his 'existence', for any length of time in favour of a particular role, because he is always obliged to 'take with him' his own individual nature, wherever he goes – even to his own death. He is incapable of fleeing from this innermost self.¹⁸ He has to realise "*that nothing can save him from himself.*"¹⁹ The individual is just as unable to avoid for any length of time his personal human nature or his existence as his social context, which is why he has to mediate this disparity. This mediation results in a structuring of individual existence in the social context. The human self is made up from the mediation between individual nature and models from the social context. Advertising for consumer items frequently allows goods

15 GRÄTZEL 2003, 1

16 PLESSNER 1982, 9; Cf. 10-15

17 GRÄTZEL 1997, 13

18 The lonely traveller, who moves on every few days from one place to the next, is regularly 'caught up with' by his existence. He will then only become conscious of it at the latest when he has processed the new impressions from a new environment.

19 SARTRE 2000, 176

and their meta-goods to appear as founders of models that tend to make thinking about individual human nature superfluous, because a sufficient foothold on the social stage of everyday life is ensured via the model: *You are completely yourself if you wear this or that brand.*

The existence of a person or his individual human nature is just as unique as the patterns of whorls on his fingertips or his genetic fingerprints, but it is influenced by factors outside himself. So it is only possible to speak theoretically of such an individual nature in the sense of ‘originality’, because it is influenced by many external factors, so that its ‘original form’ is no longer recognisable. Similarly, the social environment – especially the immediate environment – is influenced by the existence of the individual. Also in the case of the environment, i.e. that of other individuals, it is no longer possible after a certain length of time to determine without further ado who has influenced what. Both human nature and social environment are subject to reciprocal influence and constant interaction. In the individual’s self-design draws from two sources: one based on models outside himself, e.g. his social milieu (or possibly models from the past, especially history, myth and literature), or he makes use of what he finds *within himself* (which, as mentioned, is not uninfluenced by external influences). A simple and certain variant of human self-design – at least at first glance – consists in the imitation of ‘successful’ models, as this imitation can follow guidelines and its result is assessable. If, however, the individual remains caught in this imitative variant of self-design, he will at some point have to go off in search of his own personal nature, because he feels a lack of authenticity. Quite often, such phases of ‘seeking for identity’ come after leaving a profession or when the imitation of a model or the almost complete adoption of a role has broken down.

As a rule, the individual is a ‘practical eclecticist’ that amalgamates his self-design out of various external models and intentions of his own personal nature. The individual must therefore realise his existence by means of a constantly renewed act of self-design in the social context, because realisation is only conceivable within this context and because the individual needs the recognition of others. The self has to be redesigned *over and over again*, because the social context, the outside world as a whole – as well as the existence of the individual – are constantly changing. Even so, he must never forget or repress the originality of existence in this act of self-design,

since this originality of existence is the very condition of human life-design, which, if he neglects it, will lead him astray.²⁰

An extreme variant of self-concentration while neglecting the social context would be the hermitism, such as NIETZSCHE ascribes, for example, to a phase of ZARATHUSTRA'S life: ZARATHUSTRA spent ten years of contemplative solitude in a mountain cave 'without tiring of it'²¹, before he grew weary of his wisdom. ARISTOTLE also assumes that the contemplative form of life, which he describes as being the best, since it is "the most venerable" according to human nature,²² does not represent an autonomous form of life. For the contemplator also needs the virtues of the second-best form of life,²³ which locates him as a *politikon zoon* in the social context. For the individual to be embedded in the social context, he therefore needs both individual-ethical and social-ethical virtues.

If one compares the influence of the individual on his life in the social context with the soul as the entelechy of the body in the Aristotelian definition of the soul, one gets a model that explains the 'mis-en-scène' of the individual: Each individual existence is a 'realising' element of the social fabric. The single individuals form the nature of the community; they are – as the soul for the body – its constituent elements. The individual must thus design himself in such a way that his personal nature represents the 'realising' of his social role(s): *Individual existence is the entelechy of the individual as part of the social whole*. The individual has constantly to redesign himself into the social context in accordance with what he finds within himself in ever-changing form. He must amalgamate his social role with

20 On the one hand, the individual loses his direction in forgetting his originality of existence throughout his life, because to orientate himself both mentioned threads are necessary to a certain extent: social context and individual nature. On the other hand, he will go proverbially 'round the bend', because he has lost sight of his individual nature and his existence. Just think, for example, of the monk MEDARSUS in E.T.A. HOFFMANN'S *Elixiere des Teufels* [The Devil's Elixir], whose multiplication of identity drives him insane and leads him to lose authenticity. He first has to take the cruel road of guilt to atonement and is able via research into his own family history to gain an awareness of himself.

21 (from his thirtieth to his fortieth year) NIETZSCHE 1988, 5

22 ARISTOTLE *EN*, 1141 b 3-4

23 Cf. ARISTOTLE *EN*, 1178 a 24-26 and 1099 a 31– b 1

and outside his own personal existence in designing himself in obeisance to an ‘*individual law*’²⁴, according to which this individuality raises a particular role beyond the mere fulfilling of a role.²⁵

Only a few specific qualities of an individual which might serve as guidelines for an authentic designing of his life can be quantified such as absolute pitch or a particularly sensitive sense of smell and taste. Apart from qualities that can be traced back to genetic aptitudes in a person, there are also socio-cultural qualities – such as acquired knowledge about the theory of sound formation or specialist expertise in oenology, for example – the acquisition and use of which are not, however, dependent on genetic aptitudes. Lastly, there are qualities that an individual has acquired *en passant* and unconsciously, such as qualities and interests that the individual discovers by chance and at some point in his life.

It is a question of discovering, selecting, mediating and cultivating as large a number of these qualities as possible and of including them within the framework of self-design. This finding of qualities – a step in the direction of ideal conception of self-discovery – changes by means of the selection, synthesis and cultivation into self-discovery. The theme of self-discovery, taking account of individual qualities and life possibilities focuses one’s gaze on the question as to how one ought to deal with these qualities and life-options, wherever they may come from, so that the individual is able, according to his aptitudes, to change things *for the better*.

24 Cf. SIMMEL 1968. Since a general law, such as the human categorical imperative, does not grasp the individual in his unity and totality (cf. 191), its activity is limited in concrete action. For this reason, an individual, objective behavioural principle has to be chosen that is always dependent on the whole human being as a unity and on the context for the action, an ‘*individual law*’ that cannot be fixed conceptually (cf. 229).

25 This constellation of role and individual existence can be compared with SIMMEL’s conception of how the actor has to enter into a role: “*how an actor is to conceive a role does not arise – not even as an ideal requirement – from the role itself but out of the relation of his artistic disposition to the role*” (SIMMEL 1997, 424).

MELIORATION BY MEANS OF ASCESIS

Lifestyle, which, according to its usage in advertising, is actually a style of consumption, occurs via the linking to meta-goods as being a way of living. Advertising explains how people can give their life style and enhance it. To over-simplify, one could claim with KAZANTZAKIS that: “*the greatest sin is contentment.*”²⁶ Seen from a more general point of view, behind every stylisation or aestheticisation there lies a wish for improvement: melioration. Humans constantly think and act in the comparative.

Life can be conceived as a work of art that is first completed in death, a work of art which in turn is part of a ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’, collectively processed by many other people throughout their lives, with the intention of improving it. In this work of art – as in the portrait of Dorian GRAY – the modes of human thought, behaviour and action are reflected. “*Our works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments, Hence, too, the folly of that impossible precept, Know thyself; till it be translated into this partially possible one, know what thou canst work at.*”²⁷ Complete self-awareness or self-discovery, because of the human lack of self-knowledge and constant self-metamorphosis, is strictly speaking impossible. “*Socrates’ ‘Know thyself’ has as much value as the ‘be virtuous’ of our confessionals. They reveal a nostalgia at the same time as an ignorance. They are sterile exercises on great subjects.*”²⁸

NIETZSCHE’s *homesickness without a home* reveals that the self cannot be discovered, since human existence is determined by the *nowhere and in vain*.²⁹ Therefore it is a question of constantly re-constructing the self, using what is available or what becomes available via deep ‘delving’ into one’s own individuality and in the social context. As humans we must always

26 KAZANTZAKIS 1973, 37

27 CARLYLE 1991, 223; Cf. MEINHOLD 2013b; MEINHOLD 2011

28 CAMUS 1999, 26. CAMUS means THALES rather than SOCRATES. Cf. DIOGENES LAERTIOS 1990, I, 1, I [Thales], 40: “*From him [Thales] comes the ‘Know thyself’, which Antisthenes attributes to Phemonoe in his ‘Diadochae’; from her, Chilon has made it his own.*”

(<http://lastchanceforcommonsense.blogspot.com/2009/05/albert-camus-mith-of-sisyphus.html>)

29 Cf. GRÄTZEL 1997, 13

dare to undertake this self-construction or self-discovery, constantly aware of the fact that we are “*actors in an unknown play*”.³⁰ The first means of self-discovery lies in working out what one’s real wishes consist in and where those fields lie in which an individual can actively seek to find out where it is worth expending effort. For this, something threefold is needed, the individual stages of which have to be repeated in an alternating, often incalculable sequence and which even so, like SISYPHUS’ rolling of the rock, have a deeper meaning that the individual has to carve out for himself anew every day. We are dealing with an ascetics that, theoretically speaking, can be divided into three stages: selection, concentration and practice.

By asceticism one generally means something like austerity, or an austere way of life. Recently, slogans of the type “*cheap is good*” have also become virulent in the media, where by ‘avarice’ ‘monetary asceticism’ is meant. Considering asceticism under the primacy of austerity does not, however, capture the broad dimension of the original concept (gr. *askēsis*), which roughly means *practice, occupation and profession*. The verb *askeo* brings us yet closer to the true meaning of the term asceticism: *askeo* means *to manufacture, produce and process* in a *technical or artistic* way, but it also means *to exercise, practise, adapt oneself to something, decorate and adorn or embellish*. Asceticism further refers to schooling or disciplining the mind, and for the Stoics the element of austerity comes to the fore as control over one’s thoughts and urges. To adopt the popular conception of asceticism for a life as a work of art, the term *ascetics* – which refers to the above-mentioned original meaning of *askeo* – has to be strengthened. By ascetics, the triad of *selection, concentration and practice* is referred to, the concrete content of which has to be attuned, repeated and re-defined in the practical conduct of life. “*For Anthropology on the other hand, it [ascetics] must count as belonging to the really high categories. It is even possible [...] to conceive it as being a continuation of the process of becoming a human being.*”³¹

Especially in Western societies the *selection* of options – because of *multioptionality* (the almost inexhaustible possibilities of conduct of life) and because of an ‘information overflow’ – the inundation of the individual by useful information (or useless information: what Harry G. Frankfurt

30 GRÄTZEL 1997, 19

31 GEHLEN 1993, 66

calls *bullshit*)³² – plays a first important role in the forming, stylising or aestheticising of life. For the selection of options a person must on the one hand ‘invest’ time – an investment that as with economic goods can later bear fruit – and acquire a corresponding know-how in order to liberate himself or herself from a “*self-incurred immaturity*”³³. For the selection of options on the other hand enlightenment regarding these options and their scope is necessary. As with the production of a work of art, it is a question of selecting when dealing with the aestheticisation or melioration of life’s materials and motives.

The selection of options is followed by a *concentration* on selected materials, intentions and models. Here too the influences from ‘inside’ (e.g. intentions) and ‘outside’ (models) as well as that which contains both aspects manifest themselves – influences that can be attuned in a mediation according to the principle of entelechy. In day-to-day living, this concentration is the convergence on a centre that is never completely reached, since the person concentrating and that which is to be concentrated on are always in transition. Metaphorically speaking, this concentration in life is similar to pouring of water out of a large bucket into a bottle with a narrow neck on board a ship on high seas.³⁴ When dealing with life as a work of art, concentration is thus a matter of mediating between the selected materials and including them in the work.

What emerges in the approximation towards an ever-fresh re-determinable centre then has to be practised. This practising involves an expenditure of time and work, effort and struggle – especially with oneself.³⁵ In the processing of a work of art, this practice expresses itself in a constantly renewed attempt to bring the work to relative completion and perhaps inimitability as well. Renewed selection will constantly be necessary in order to lay aside the previously used materials and motives and to add new ones, to

32 FRANKFURT 2005; Cf. MEINHOLD 2009a

33 KANT 1999, 26

34 The process of *Education* can also be clarified by the use of this ‘pouring out’ example; as age increases, the opening of the neck of the bottle admittedly becomes narrower, but the proficiency of the mind doing the pouring becomes greater.

35 This also by the way corresponds to the basic meaning of *Djihad* (*Dschihad*: Arabic = ‘effort’).

concentrate on these and their connections with what has been used up to this point and to practise their use. These three stages of ascetics, by means of the cited reference of HORKHEIMER and ADORNO can be related to HOMER's ODYSSEUS. When passing the sirens, ODYSSEUS has to decide (selection) whether he is to attempt to defy or give in to the "*irresistible promise of pleasure as that experienced from their singing*"³⁶. He has two options to choose from. Warned by CIRCE, a deity, he knows the consequences of his choice in this situation: pleasure and death, or austerity and life. He decides on the latter. In the *concentration* on his decision to resist the sirens, he fills the ears of his companions with wax and orders them to row for their lives, after he has had them lash himself to the mast. *Practice* is shown in his order to have himself lashed yet tighter to the mast should the temptation arising from the song of the sirens increase.³⁷

The central point of ascetics is practising and exercising, for via this a work of art or life as a work of art can be brought to (relative) completion. A problem of Western societies is their profusion of options and the lack of competence when it comes to selection. If bliss – as Edgar Allen POE postulates – corresponds to the intensity of spiritualisation in an object or the dedication to a task,³⁸ the discomfort of many people in Western societies stems from the concentration on too many objects. When there is weak selection, which retains too many objects from the options for concentration and practising, concentration and practising become less intensive than if the selection had been based on less objects. Multi-optionality and the pressure of an economy that is only prepared to recognise growth (especially monetary), but not stationary status (and thus produces an ever-increasing number of options) result in a shift of priorities in the direction of a use of the multiplicity of diverse options at the expense of a competence of selection that has been unable to keep pace with the increase in optionality. This occurs when there is a simultaneous deployment of individual resources on the concentration and practising of an increased number of objects. One ought not at this point to speak of a further division of labour, when reference is made to a concentration on a lesser number of objects, but rather to call upon the individual to make use of competences for selection.

36 HORKHEIMER/ADORNO 1971, 33

37 Cf. HORKHEIMER/ADORNO 1971, 32-35

38 Cf. POE 1841, 175

The increase in the quantity of the options, which results in an increase in the number of objects to be processed, is reflected in the extension of the average life-time with too little attention being paid to the holistic quality of the extra life-time that has been ‘won’. The neglect of the quality of this ‘additional’ life-time leads us to the *topos* of the repression from life of age(ing), dying and death.

PHILOSOPHY OF DEATH AND THE ART OF DYING

Fashion is a pseudo-reincarnation or *reinvestination*, the fashion consumer is ‘reborn into one’s apparel’. On the one hand, the consumer when buying an item of new fashionable clothing migrates (again) into a new apparel, something similar to the Pythagorean idea of the metempsychosis of the soul, which, after the death of the former body, migrates time and time again into a new body. On the other hand, the almost immortal, suprahistorical phenomenon of fashion is born into constantly new fashionable styles, or, to put it another way, the suprahistorical phenomenon of fashion constitutes itself through the changing styles of the prevailing fashions.

With *reinvestination* fashion corresponds to the *Zeitgeist* of contemporary consumer cultures, which are unwilling to acknowledge age(ing), dying and death and therefore repress any evidence of such issues and their signs. Nowadays, elderly and dying people do not usually expect death in the familiar social context, in society, but isolated in homes or hospitals. Death, but birth too, are cases for the hospital – they almost seem pathological to us. Since death symbolically “lurks” in bacteria, viruses and dirt, a culture of hygiene developed on the basis of a fear of death – one where one disinfects, applies make-up and designs both the living and the dead.³⁹ Death is persecuted like a disease that has to be eradicated. The underlying cause for this persecution of death and signs of death lies in the fear of one’s own decay and dissolution.⁴⁰ BAUDRILLARD speaks of a ghettoisation of elderly people and death. One manifestation of this is the locating of new cemeteries outside the towns and, in particular, the segregation of old people in nursing homes. The third stage of life becomes a kind of third world

39 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 286

40 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 286

and an asocial ghetto. So in Western societies, “social death” befalls people before physical death does.⁴¹ Man is afraid of death and is therefore also scared of signs of death. “*Death is the only thing that ever terrifies me. I hate it. [...] Because one can survive everything nowadays, except death.*”⁴²

Western culture separates life and death from each other as positivity and negativity, thereby demarcating life as good from death as evil. In other cultures, however, life and death are viewed as one totality.⁴³ Through the strict separation of life and death and the negative connotations given death, an artificial extra value is ascribed to life at the expense of death. Life thereby becomes the repression of death and is degraded to survival;⁴⁴ “*nowadays, being dead isn’t normal*”⁴⁵, nor having to die. The modern conception of life and death is defined by the image of the machine that either functions or is broken.⁴⁶ An incorrectly functioning machine is either repaired or shut down. Since it is not allowed to kill a person as one can switch off a machine, and by definition man viewed from modern medical perspective is never completely healthy, it is a question of constantly checking him medically, of waiting and keeping him alive. The killing/suicide of an individual when desired as a result of intolerable and irreparable suffering is only legally permitted in very few states.

Life is considered as something good or as a consumer product, while death is seen as something evil and as a deficiency.⁴⁷ Since death is something evil and life something good, life is *per se* considered to be better than death. That leads from the moribund person being compelled to live on and survive to the “prohibition to die”. “*Thou shalt not kill*” becomes “*Thou shalt not perish*”.⁴⁸ Suicide is therefore aimed subversively against society, which exerts all its energy on maintaining life and preventing death. The equivalence laws of a democracy are transferred to the phe-

41 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 257

42 WILDE, *Picture of Dorian Gray*, chapter 19

43 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 232

44 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 200

45 BAUDRILLARD 1982, 198; italics in the original

46 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 251; Cf. MEINHOLD 2011

47 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 272-274

48 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 277

nomenon of death:⁴⁹ The death of an individual in our society is to be just (dying from a illness or an accident is viewed as unjust); only a natural death at a ripe old age – after a just life-span – is just about considered to be acceptable, and the first steps towards its elimination or delay are attempted with the aid of genetic engineering.

A god can give and take life as a supreme authority: he sits on the threshold between life and death. BAUDRILLARD writes in *Impossible Exchange*, with NIETZSCHE in mind, that a cunning god by ‘exchanging’ the life of his son with the sins of humanity has placed the latter in the awkward position of not being able to offer any adequate counter-exchange, which fixes him in a lasting inferior position.⁵⁰ Medicine and legislation can not only promote life but also eliminate it (e.g. by switching off life-prolonging medical apparatus or by introducing the death penalty) or at least restrict it (incarceration). Medicine and legislation thus occupy the “divine” barrier between life and death.⁵¹

Because of his human nature, man must concern himself with death and is not permitted to completely professionalise this issue and relocate it outside the personal sphere. He is the creature that in the course of his biographical socialisation becomes aware of his own future death and therefore is compelled to address the question of the Before and Afterwards of death. “*We come out of a dark abyss; we end up in a dark abyss: the bright space between the two we call life. – Immediately after our birth the return already starts; Beginning and End at one and the same time; every moment we are dying.*”⁵² With these words Nikos KAZANTZAKIS’ begins his book *Ascetic*; he writes further: “*For that reason, many people have announced: The aim of life is death.*”⁵³ Seen from this ultimate position, human life could be called the entelechy of death. For life carries within it this final goal. Since death contributes to the structuring of human life, it is however not only a goal in the sense of a final arrival of human life in the continuity

49 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 256-257

50 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 2000, 14-15

51 Cf. BAUDRILLARD 1982, 204

52 KAZANTZAKIS 1973, 7

53 KAZANTZAKIS 1973, 7

of the cosmos⁵⁴ but also a central instance of life that co-determines its content. Man would live his life differently if he was not mortal.

The preoccupation with death is becoming increasingly institutionalised in Western societies and, as part of a division of labour or because of the increasing discrepancy between subjective and objective culture, is being taken away from the individual. While the person who deals professionally and commercially with ageing and death, runs the risk of treating it like a commodity (e.g. the care of the elderly). Dealing with death is thereby relocated from everyday life into the professional sphere and the confrontation with it causes the individual – because he has been weaned from having any dealings with death – to become petrified with fear, since he mainly knows about it from the simulated framework of the media. Death disappears – pointedly turned – from life and is diffused into the commercial sphere, into the media and the commercial framework of professional dealings with the phenomena of ageing, dying and death. Since death is no longer something from our everyday context or at least it is not something real, man is afraid of “shadows”: the signs of dying and death. *“Whoever can look death in the eye is not afraid of shadows.”*⁵⁵

A philosophy of life or art of living that wishes to concern itself with the existential problems of human existence must, then, also be a philosophy of death or art of dying. *“The art of living goes hand in hand with the art of dying.”*⁵⁶ For the content of philosophy is not only to problematise human existence in its thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) between the “dark abysses” but also to embrace the first and, in particular, last thrownness of human existence: birth and death as well as their connections with living.

Life is a constant “throwing” (drafting), and the individual can try to make this throwing a self-throwing as often as possible. Analytically speaking, life can be divided into three distinctive phases of throwings: birth, life, death. Birth is a “throwing” from the womb of the mother, to which the foetus is only involved to a small extent or at least only instinctively. This is

54 For death as the instance that re-establishes continuity, Cf. BATAILLE (1994, 15-27).

55 EURIPIDES

56 SCHMID 2000, 352

also implied by the passive construction: *to be born*.⁵⁷ If one ignores the theory of karma, the self is not responsible for this first throw. The self-throwing is limited to the first phase of life, where the individual has a consciousness at his disposal.⁵⁸ That the self is to throw or redraft itself during life is the content of the philosophy of the art of living. The self's last throwing, represented by the throw out of life, can at times also be formed or co-formed by the self. At this juncture, something should be said about the stoic philosophy of suicide: If in certain cases this final form of self-redrafting rationally represents a solution for the suffering individual, whose physical state in all probability cannot be improved, then suicide ought not to be rejected.

The throw out of life is however not an art that is solely limited to dying or suicide. In physical and biological terms, the human being already starts to die in instalments from birth onwards, without causing everyone lasting existential problems during the whole of life. Perhaps the individual ought during life to set out emotionally and mentally on the path towards death. Since he knows that he will die sooner or later, it would be wise to deal with this approaching border situation in some way. Yet such practising of ageing, dying and death must not end in exclusively concentrating on this. Death is the most extreme form of being able to let go. So it is a question of practising "being able to let oneself fall", followed by a powerful rising to one's feet once more. Opposed to "Every day thou shalt die"⁵⁹ there is an "Every day thou shalt be born"⁶⁰. Certain steps in life would thereby be potential steps out of life or into a new one. What ensues in the course of initiation rites can take place in a similar form as an iterative meliorating exercise that entails a cathartic effect.

One has to ask oneself to what extent an approach to such an exercise exists in dealing with a subject that claims an individual's totality. In such exercises, the individual can become so involved that he possibly com-

57 From a medical-biological point of view, the foetus is however actively involved in the prelude to and course of birth.

58 From a purely linguistic point of view, one can only speak of an 'in-dividual' after the cutting of the umbilical cord. In the debate about the concept of the person, one only speaks of an individual when twins can occur no more.

59 KAZANTZAKIS 1973, 95

60 KAZANTZAKIS 1973, 95

pletely forgets and overexerts himself, although not to the point of self-extinction but to arriving once more at his own basis, out of which he can recharge himself. We find such exercising taking place in meditation, in total absorption in work that one loves or in being together with people we appreciate or love. Dealings with objects and persons that careful consideration has judged to be good and that challenge and even overexert the individual as a totality, are similar in approach to practising dying and being re-born, which give rise to a catharsis, a lasting therapeutic ‘feel better’ situation. In order to experience these states as a kind of prelude to death and “virtual rebirth”, however, it is necessary at the moment of exhaustion for death to be made conscious as well as rising again with renewed strength also to be made conscious.

Wilhelm SCHMID recommends as an actual exercise, one which is an asset both for dying persons and for those “accompanying” such a person, what he calls “*dying with others*”⁶¹.

“*Dying with others* is more than merely ‘accompanying’ them, for it is the experiencing of death as if it were one’s own. All preconceptions of death are without effect as long as the self does not experience their seriousness itself, sees this in front of it and empathises with it. This experience fundamentally changes one’s perspective on life. [...] Experiencing the death of the other person as if it were one’s own: There is no more lasting practising of death. [...] Whoever has died another person’s death does not return to life as the same person. [...] Seeing life from now on with the *gaze of the dying person*, testing one’s own life and perhaps changing it.”⁶²

In SCHMID’s opinion, the dead live on in the living person. The individual must allow the dead to dwell within him and give the dead person a place in his own life. Such views (very pertinent, for example, in African traditional thought), however, challenge the borders of philosophy as a science, and beyond this borders there lies an unascertainable realm of the metaphysical and transcendental.

If one looks back from the perspective of what has been said up to now at advertising for fashion and fashion consumer products that fill the gaps of the metaphysical and transcendental with meta-goods, then the consum-

61 SCHMID 2000, 352 [italics in the original]

62 SCHMID 2000, 352-353

ing individual gains power over himself and exercises a certain power over concerns that refuse to allow the consumption of such products, such as – in HEGEL’s master—servant dialectic – the servant does with work for his master. The servant kills himself, thereby disempowering his master. Anyone who has recognised the meta-goods praised by advertising, has seen in them the mirror of his own wishes, but who then addresses existential problems of his own being from the ground up instead of resorting to pure compensation goods, metaphorically kills his own desire for consumption and disempowers the supplier. The power of the consumer lies in conscious renunciation and in resorting to alternatives to consumption that do not seek to implant any, or only a few, meta-goods in consumer products – or that are morally justifiable, as products at least.⁶³ By doing so, he gains sovereignty over himself and exerts a pressure on the marketer that, as a result of amassed influence, forces him at least to alter his strategies.

63 Roughly speaking, products that commit themselves to durability, holism and fair trade. Although such products have also become increasingly loaded with meta-goods since the 1990s.

Conclusion

Advertising ‘tells’ its recipients narratives, or myths, in order to transform potential buyers into actual ones. While classical myth – metaphorically speaking – approached its recipients in the guise of a story and essentially claims to be true, the myth of advertising approaches the recipient in the guise of truth and yet essentially its statement only contains a story: The myths of fashion advertising – the fashion myths – attempt pointedly to tell the consumer: Lifestyle is the art of living. Lifestyle, in fashion terminology, does not, however, mean ‘style of *life*’ but ‘style of *consumption*’, because life is only a *good* life with these or those particular consumer goods. However, there is little reference in advertising to goods or services, but to symbols of values, needs, competences and virtues that exist beyond or, to a certain extent, *behind* the goods themselves. That is why I speak of *meta-goods*.

Three categories of meta-goods keep on recurring in advertising for fashion and fashionable consumer products that imply elements of the art of living: *staging*, *melioration* and *youthfulness*. To put it another way: Fashion myths tell three narratives: With the aid of fashion (1) the individual ensures perfect staging on the social stage of life; (2) improves himself and his life in a holistic way; and (3) renews himself. These three fashion myths imply three philosophical-anthropological assumptions:

(1) Man is a social being and seeks recognition from his fellow human beings. In order to acquire this recognition, he makes use of staging. (2) Man lives with the constant intention of improving his life in some form or other. Because of this, he considers the actual situation and his options in the *comparative*. (3) As a being that is preoccupied with metaphysics and seeks transcendence, man is also interested in the transcendence of life and

is aware of its finitude. For that reason, man appreciates those symbols that stand for the present, for freshness and youth.

Three phenomena stand out particularly among these anthropological assumptions that are important philosophical-anthropological implications of fashion(advertising) that are worth emphasising and collating once more in conclusion:

1. *imitatio prominentis* (imitation of prominent persons)
2. *holistic melioration* (improvement), that gets its bearing from the comparative nature of human life
3. *reinvestination* (pseudo-reincarnation by means of reinvestination)

1. *imitatio prominentis*

Mircea ELIADE in his comparative studies of religion elaborates on *imitatio dei* (imitation of God), which is a subcategory of *imitatio prominentis*: In the sacred ritual, the individual partakes via ritual acts – during which he imitates gods – in the transcendental, thereby experiencing a symbolical improvement of his constitution (purgation of effects, healing of illnesses, etc.). Via the imitation of what is better, more outstanding or prominent, the consumer – with the aid of consumer products that are presented in advertising as having to do with what is prominent, more beautiful, or standing out from the crowd – participates in their consumer style (i.e. in their lifestyle), and thereby apparently experiences an *ennoblement* of himself.

2. *Imperative of comparative melioration*

Advertising follows two strategies in this connection: (1) It communicates to the consumer the command to make comparative improvements: ‘Make yourself better... either better than you are at the moment... or better than the person next to you!’ (2) It holistically broadens the picture of the individual regarding clothing and consumer goods. On the one hand, fashion advertising harnesses the anthropological intention for melioration; on the other, it undertakes a ‘strategic’ broadening of the individual regarding clothing and other consumer goods. In advertising for fashion consumer goods and services the advertised products, however, are nearly always linked to *meta-goods*. The item to be acquired by the consumer has thus an additional value, a satisfying of a need, competence or virtue that improves the individual as a unity of mind-soul-body – and not only at the level of

consumer goods. The lady's tights of a particular brand are not only of an excellent quality in themselves but also supply beauty for body and mind at the same time.

3. *Reinvestination*

This phenomenon is most clearly seen in advertising for cosmetic products. The decline of outward appearance can apparently be stopped or even reversed by the ennoblement of the individual with the aid of cosmetic products. Purchasable *rejuvenating* substances are assimilated by the body, which too will become younger and more beautiful (in the event of consistent and intensive use of rejuvenating cosmetic products, the consumer would be re-incarnated at some stage as a baby or in a previous life). By seasonally renewing consumption of fashionable clothing, the individual takes part in the new at a personal level. New, fashionable items of clothing and their meta-goods are integrated into the totality and unity of 'mind-soul-body-clothing', thereby renewing this totality and unity. By the seasonal repetition of this, the individual is constantly 'reinvestinated', metaphorically speaking, as when the soul is born into a new body in the concept of reincarnation. Since, however, the holistic concept of the individual and the consumer product in advertising itself represents a simulation, because body and clothing do not form such a unity, the renewal of the whole person also represents a simulation.

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