

The Quality Theory of Consumption (QTC) developed so far is the result of a thought experiment: apart from the distinction between style leaders and followers, what would happen if in all other respects people were identical and had the same metapreference? What would happen if this universal metapreference manifested itself in two motivations; the preference for individuality within a group, and the preference for social distance from other groups? What would happen if people were able to jointly decide on belonging to a group by way of binary decisions about their goods type basket – “Yes to this, no to that!” – and thereby also could jointly form new groups? And in doing so, what would happen if consumption did not burden the household budget?

This thought experiment reflects – as I have argued – what is economically special about the postmodern present. With this perspective of the present, the thought experiment brings to the fore a cultural selection process with concomitant social evolution. From initial equality and uniformity, cultural selection and social evolution lead to the variegation of the world – into a visible diversity of individualities and elective affinities.

As a sublimation of the present, QTC pretends that only postmodernism remains in it, as if all remnants of modernism had already disappeared. Instead of defining the present as postmodern, as was done in the first two parts, the aim is now to follow the trail of postmodernism in a more complex present.