

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 section, 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 VELEN 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 been 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
- *Clearness or vividness*:⁸⁷ Fashion advertising is admittedly ingenious from time to time, but as a rule not unclear (unclearness 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 life-style 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