

Georg Simmel

Reciprocal Nature – the Functions of Social Conflict

- **Hostility as Helpful • Group Binding • Group Preserving**
- Internal Cohesion
 - Achieves Internal Unity
 - Generates Energy, Effort, & Purpose
 - Creates Satisfaction
 - Binds Individuals to the Whole
 - Establishes Group Identity
- Defines Structure
 - Achieves Stability
 - Provides Baselines
 - Establishes Knowledge of Power
- Creates Associations & Coalitions
- Combines Antagonists against an Other
 - (“ An enemy of my enemy is my friend.”)
 - (“If Hitler invaded hell I would make at least a favorable reference to the devil in the House of Commons.”)
- Produces Enemies
- Produces Unity in the Other

What's at Issue in Conflict...?

- Differences in:
 - Material Goods
 - Social Services
 - Cultural Values
 - Social Esteem
 - Political Power
- Degree: Small or Great
- Degree: Peripheral or Central
- Degree: Rational or Emotional
- Real or Perceived Difference
(Absolute or Relative)
- Procedure or Purpose
(Process or Goal)

Are We Doomed...?

Freud: "The Narcissism of Minor Differences"
("The Other and the Almost the Same")