

SIMMEL and FASHION

For Simmel "... fashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation and change."

In each social relation there are two forces at work: one pushing us to bind ourselves to others through imitation, and another pushing us to unbind ourselves from others, to undo the social network, through distinction. But social life changes in so far as the balance between the socialising force and the de-socialising force is always unstable and provisional.

Fashion is an example of the way in which actual social life always includes in some way its own opposite, an asocial life.

"As soon as anything that was originally done only by few has really come to be practiced by all, we no longer speak of fashion. As fashion spreads it gradually goes to its doom."