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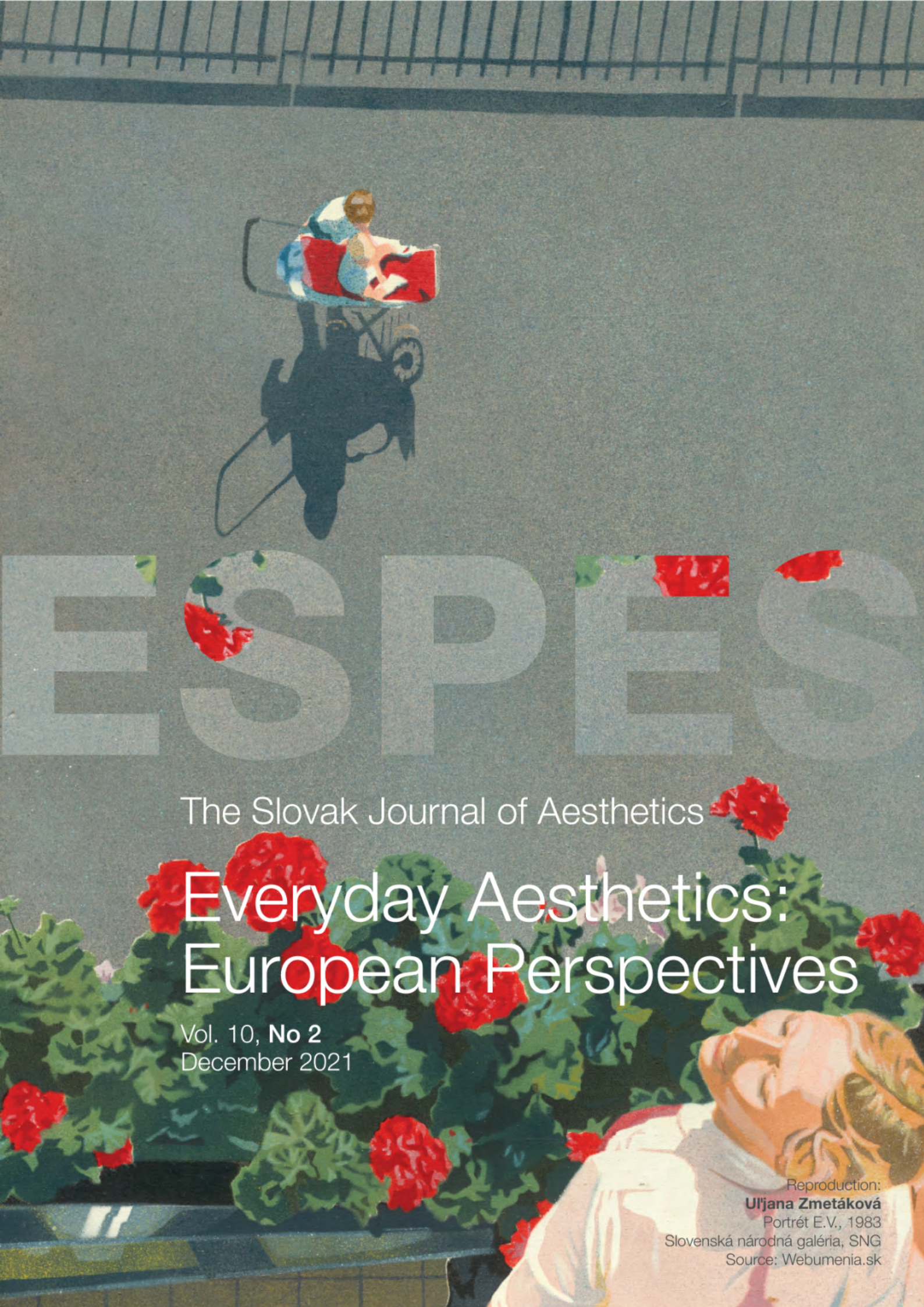

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

It would be tempting to start this editorial by bringing attention once again to the effects of the pandemics. The impact of Covid19 on scholarly life is nowadays the leitmotif of most academic publications. In fact, in the last issue, I also made a point of saying that our life would gradually be getting back on track. In retrospect, this was a snap judgement. Looking around us, we can see that the situation is still too uncertain to make any kind of predictions. At ESPES, we have full respect for those who are devotedly trying to make sense of the present time. Yet, as an editorial team, we choose to commit to the future.

In this spirit, as many of you might have noticed, we have recently released a number of calls for papers for upcoming issues of the journal. While we consider Thematic Symposia an especially useful format to address a topic in its complexity and diversity, in the future we aim to focus more on the publication of Special Issues. The support of a variety of committed guest scholars will thus continue to be crucial and I trust the journal will benefit again from such support, as it luckily has so far. To further satisfy our readers, we also have a plan to renew the journal website and make it more user-friendly and easily accessible.

Recently, our efforts as editors have been rewarded by the journal's acceptance in the lists of recognised scientific journals in both Italy and Finland. These acknowledgements encourage us to look even further ahead. In this regard, we are striving to do our best to ensure that the journal may soon be approved for inclusion into the Scopus and Web of Science indexation services.

These days, however, have also brought some very sad news to the editorial team of this journal. We were struck by the unexpected passing of Jana Sošková, the founder of ESPES and long-time Editor-in-chief. Only six months ago we celebrated her seventieth birthday with the publication of an interview and a translation of one of her most fascinating studies. Today, Prof. Sošková is unfortunately no longer with us. We will always remember her involvement in and contribution to a wide range of topics in contemporary aesthetics, both theoretical and historical, as well as her many presentations and public discussions. She was an important member of the Institute that was and is behind this journal and was involved in many of the often complicated decisions the editors had to deal with in the past. Now she is gone, but her memory lives on in each new issue we publish.

On a brighter note, let me now introduce you to the present issue of ESPES: Everyday Aesthetics: European Perspectives. The idea of dedicating a thematic issue to Everyday Aesthetics originated during the congress of the International Association for Aesthetics that was held in Belgrade, Serbia, in the summer of 2019. The collaboration with Guest Editors Elisabetta

Di Stefano and Sanna Lehtinen resulted in the idea of focusing on contemporary interpretations of Everyday Aesthetics that identify its different roots in the history of continental aesthetics. I am grateful to both of them for the numerous discussions we had and for their dedication and attention in evaluating the submissions. I am very pleased with the outcome of this cooperation. Surely the time invested in preparing this issue was well spent and I am confident that the variety of topics included therein will be of interest to the readers of this journal.

I want to conclude by thanking those who have assisted me in the publication of Vol.10 of ESPES. I acknowledge and thank Jana Migašová and Tomáš Timko for their graphic help in designing captivating covers for this year's issues of the journal. I am especially grateful to the members of the Editorial Board for their various support. Finally, my thanks go to the many anonymous peer-reviewers of the journal who contributed with their time and dedication to improving the quality of the works we publish.

I wish you all a pleasant reading!

Adrián Kvokačka

EVERYDAY AESTHETICS
EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

Guest editors
Elisabetta Di Stefano and Sanna Lehtinen

Everyday Aesthetics: European Perspectives. Introduction

Elisabetta Di Stefano – Sanna Lehtinen

This introduction presents the main motivations behind the special issue on Everyday Aesthetics: European Perspectives. The idea has been to invite authors to reflect how European and Europe-inspired thinking has affected and developed further the field of Everyday Aesthetics. The articles of the special issue are presented through their main themes and how they contribute to the contemporary discussions of the field. | Keywords: *Everyday, Aesthetics, Everyday Aesthetics, Philosophical Aesthetics, Europe*

Everyday Aesthetics was born in the 21st Century as a sub-discipline of Anglo-American Aesthetics focusing on art and it has distinguished itself for its shift towards practices and objects of everyday life. Originally, Everyday Aesthetics was concerned in defining the everyday and its fields by renowned authors like Yuriko Saito (2007; 2017), Katya Mandoki (2007), Thomas Leddy (2012), Kevin Melchionne (2013; 2014), and Ossi Naukkarinen (2013; 2014; 2017). Later, it began to spread widely throughout Europe and it has extended to different topics (environment, city, design) and perspectives, intertwining the Anglo-American and European approach (Arto Haapala, 2005; 2017; Giovanni Matteucci, 2015, 2016; Barbara Formis, 2010; Dan-Eugen Ratiu, 2013; 2017; Elisabetta Di Stefano, 2017, 2020; Gioia Laura Iannilli, 2019; Sanna Lehtinen, 2020; 2021).

Today Everyday Aesthetics is no longer a sub-discipline of Anglo-American aesthetics but rather a philosophical trend that has been strongly developed in several directions. However, scholars representing Europe-originating approaches to the study of daily life are not enough taken into account in contemporary debates. For this reason, our thematic issue seeks to highlight a turning point in the progression of Everyday Aesthetics, demonstrating how European and Europe-based thinkers belonging to different philosophical traditions have given a contribution to the reflection on everyday life. For chronological reasons these scholars cannot be linked to Everyday

Aesthetics, however their thoughts can enhance this philosophical trend and guide it towards new paths.

In this special issue, young researchers and experienced scholars have taken up the challenge. Their articles draw a scenario that sheds new light on Everyday Aesthetics both by identifying new interpretative keys and by deepening some fields of research. Some authors have highlighted the importance of historical investigations. This is particularly clear in the opening contribution by María Jesús Godoy, who discusses David Hume's "functionalist aesthetics" and the role that the notion of sympathy plays therein in enabling our aesthetic appreciation of everyday objects. This approach is present also in Elisabetta Di Stefano's essay focusing on the concept of *decorum* as a paradigmatic example to track the history of everyday aesthetics. In their joint contribution, Giovanni Matteucci and Gioia Laura Iannilli investigate the continental philosophical roots of the notion of 'experience' through reference to the concepts of *Erlebnis, Erfahrung,* and *Lebenswelt*. The historical inquiry is a field for which Anglo-American aesthetics has traditionally had little interest, as it does not match its mainly analytical approach. It is nevertheless very productive when investigated through the lens of Everyday Aesthetics.

Other authors in this issue have focused on new understandings of European philosophical culture, highlighting links with Everyday Aesthetics. In his essay, Carsten Friberg applies an approach drawn from Gadamer's hermeneutics to rethink some central questions in the debate about Everyday Aesthetics. However, it is the Heideggerian tradition that gets the lion's share of the credit, sometimes interpreted in the light of other thinkers in some way connected to it. The more thoroughly reflected authors include Emmanuel Lévinas in Alfonso Hoyos Morales' article, which sets to study the phenomenological and ontological dimension of everyday aesthetics through the notion of 'enjoyment'. The philosophy and aesthetics of the recently passed away Jean-Luc Nancy are considered in Natasha Luna Malaga's essay, which discusses Nancy's conception of Being with respect to the theoretical value and specificity of Everyday Aesthetics. Also in this tradition, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht proves an indispensable mirror to reflect Martin Heidegger's legacy in Thomas Leddy's article, which elaborates on Gumbrecht's distinction between "presence cultures" and "interpretation cultures" through the example of the everyday experience of taking a walk.

Along with this historical and theoretical concern, a great deal of contemporary research in the field of Everyday Aesthetics addresses its applicability to real life cases of philosophical and pragmatic interest. In the present issue, this is evidenced by the number of authors who have preferred to focus their efforts on specific fields or case-studies, thereby testifying to the versatility of European-originating Everyday Aesthetics. As a topic, statuary is presented in Barbara Formis' paper with respect to an ancient work of sculpture, the *Squatting Aphrodite*, which serves as a focal point for reflecting the emergence of everyday aesthetic sensibilities. In Madalina Diaconu's contribution, art collecting takes on new meanings and offers a chance to ponder on aesthetic practices and everyday behaviour.

Themes of great relevance in the contemporary debate such as environmental issues are more broadly present in Noora-Helena Korpelainen's article, which charts the development of aesthetic sensibility in the light of the matter of sustainability affecting the realm of the everyday. On a similar note, Dan-Eugen Ratiu's contribution addresses the relations between art and everyday life in the city from the viewpoint of a recent subfield in urban aesthetics, which is developing at the intersection between everyday and environmental aesthetics. The notions presented in this part of the issue, such as the 'aesthetics of sustainability' and 'creative' cities, find useful interpretative keys in Everyday Aesthetics which interweave with contemporary European culture and traditions. In this regard, Ossi Naukkarinen's essay demonstrates that philosophical and applied aesthetics, and Everyday Aesthetics in particular, can have practical application and provide theoretical tools for solving broad and acute social problems, spanning from poverty to hunger, racism, and data security. Laura Rossi closes the issue with an interview with the photographer Nino Migliori. In this interview, the photographer's work is studied as an example of Everyday Aesthetic thinking in the context of artistic practice.

From these essays we can understand that Everyday Aesthetics continues to be a line of thought rich in developments, especially in the dialogue with European and Europe-originating philosophical traditions. The crucial role of Everyday Aesthetics in the contemporary debate is confirmed by some very recent publications, such as the edited volumes *Paths from the Philosophy of Art to Everyday Aesthetics* (2019), *Everydayness. Contemporary Aesthetic Approaches* (2021) and the special issue of the journal *Popular Inquiry* (2021), titled *Forgotten Everydays: Expanding Everyday Aesthetics*.

In conclusion, as a philosophical trend, Everyday Aesthetics appears today to be open to new interpretations and applications that cross and overcome its original thematic boundaries. It has, however, managed to preserve the social and practical focus that lies at the core of its pragmatist foundation.

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No Tension. David Hume's Solution to Everyday Aesthetics

María Jesús Godoy

This study looks at the emerging branch of everyday aesthetics from the perspective of the fracture which exists in its core, as a result of the double reading of the everyday: the first, which elevates it to the realm of the extraordinary and the second, in which it remains strictly ordinary. Our purpose here is to repair this fracture by turning to David Hume's functionalist aesthetics, where disinterest and utility are reconciled through sympathy and the affective experience of otherness that it provides. Once transferred to the everyday sphere, sympathy facilitates understanding between these two versions, since the aesthetic appreciation of everyday objects or common activities requires, like the second version, that they remain in the practical environment and, like the first, to see something special in them, which is the possibility of one's own or another's well-being. | Keywords: *Everyday Aesthetics, Functional Beauty, Hume, Saito, Leddy*

1. Introduction

In current aesthetic thought, the aesthetics of everyday life has emerged as a new field of study which has expanded the narrow focus of the aesthetic discipline established in the 18th century. Revisiting these old assumptions has led to calls for theoretical reflection on utilitarian objects and everyday activities which, although having a considerable presence in our lives, were aesthetically ignored due to their practical nature. Such useful items as lamps and actions like cooking, which take up a large portion of our time and are therefore quite prosaic and ordinary, had no place in modern aesthetics, which was devoted to far nobler – and less common – artifacts and experiences; such was the case of the artistic object as an autonomous object and the aesthetic experience as a contemplative and disinterested experience.[1] By demanding a new status and treatment for these other aesthetic realities within philosophical aesthetics, the aesthetics of the everyday represents both an update of traditional aesthetic postulates and

[1] As initially established by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and further refined by Kant, within the theoretical development of the 18th century, which laid the foundations of the aesthetic experience for posterity.

the recovery of the original aesthetic spirit.[2]

Now, despite having a well-defined objective, this branch of aesthetics is far from being a homogeneous movement. It is, in fact, a fractured movement as can be seen by its two different variants: the "weak" and the "strong" (Dowling, 2010), or as they are also known, the "expansive" and the "restrictive" (Leddy, 2015). The interesting thing here is that the first variant, more accommodating and, therefore, less transgressive, uses traditional, artistically inspired aesthetic concepts to characterise ordinary objects and processes which, thus detached from their functionality, are subject to the same parameters that have regulated art throughout the last two centuries; those which eventually made it something different, strange and unusual. This "weak" or "expansive" variant closely follows the indications of modern aesthetic discourse, helping it to perpetuate itself over time – to 'expand', as the name suggests – by now extrapolating it to a new genre of gadgets and situations. The "strong" or "restrictive" variant, on the other hand, more heterodox and disruptive, advocates seeing common objects and activities as they really are, objects and activities that are not at all special, with nothing to do with art and the privileged experience it entails. It thus tends to elude the influence of modern aesthetic discourse – to 'restrict' its focus – which, guided by the artistic paradigm, has sought to preserve the uniqueness of both the artistic piece and the aesthetic experience. In this variant, the aesthetic condition must be able to combine with the spontaneity and functionalism of everyday life. Moreover, it must be brought about by this spontaneity and functionalism and not by external factors that interfere illegitimately and try to override them.

Thus, the profound clash between normality and exceptionality within the limits of everyday aesthetics is obvious; a tension, in the words of its main proponent, Thomas Leddy (2005), or a paradox, in those of his colleague Yuriko Saito (2007, p. 50). This situation has led Jane Forsey (2014) to encourage a rapprochement of positions, given the important underlying component that unites them, such as the aesthetic revaluation of our most mundane existence. However, while Forsey crystallises this need for agreement in an aesthetic theory of design of Kantian traits,[3] here it refers to the aesthetic ideas of David Hume, to the concept of functional beauty that sustains them and in which they meet dialectically (López Lloret, 2003), in a superb balancing act, the two aspects which clash in the double reading of everyday aesthetics: disinterest and usefulness. The former is identified here with the exceptionality of the "weak" interpretation in its attempt to transfer the artistic model to everyday objects and situations, and the latter, with the normality of the "strong" in its safeguarding of the

[2] In line with Yuriko Saito's thesis, in which the aesthetic discipline, originally oriented to the aesthetic phenomenon in its purely sensitive or perceptual nature, did not give preference to the artistic phenomenon with which it ended up being identified (Saito, 2017, p. 179).

[3] Based on the distinction between free beauty and adherent beauty in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (Forsey, 2013).

practical environment where the object is placed or the activity happens.

My purpose is thus outlined: to resolve the internal discrepancies in the aesthetics of everyday life from the perspective of Hume's aesthetic functionalism – along with its profound ethical component – and, in passing, provide the movement with the theoretical substratum and reflective antecedent that it has sometimes lacked.[4] To achieve this, the process is as follows: we will begin by breaking down each of the versions mentioned, drawing on, in the case of the "weak" version, the idea of 'strangeness' systematically invoked by its advocates and, in the case of the "strong" version, the notion of 'familiarity'. This task will enable a better understanding of the differences between them and the supposed difficulty in reconciling them; supposed, because that is precisely what we set out to achieve by then turning to the functionalist aesthetics of the young Hume, developed mainly in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1740) and in *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751). These two works are specifically concerned with the 'utilitarian' arts, those which, while possessing an objective physical component and the capacity to influence daily life, stem from a constructive and architectural tradition.[5] Furthermore, in both works disinterest and usefulness fit together through sympathy, the third and definitive concept which, by forming a link between them, makes them compatible, as we hope it will also do with the two positions on everyday life – since we will expressly apply it to them. After all, as Hume himself observes, whoever says everyday life also says utility,[6] so they can be taken as equivalent expressions. In short, Hume's sympathy will show us that, rather than a struggle or skirmish, what really exists behind these two visions of the everyday is an internal complementarity.

2. "Weak" Version: The Everyday as Extraordinary

In general terms, the "weak" formulation of everyday life links the aesthetic dimension of the everyday to a kind of exceptionality that allows it to be appreciated in a different way than is customary. The idea is that an object such as a chair or an action such as getting dressed, temporarily leaving aside their imperceptibility in the normal course of life, suddenly catches our attention, so we not only see them as we have never seen them before – in fact, it is as if we are seeing them for the first time –, but they take on a new meaning.

Thomas Leddy, advocate *par excellence* of this modality, argues that the mere fact of paying attention to an object – as Sherry Irvin (2008) contends in her example of a routine activity such as having a coffee – does not make it aesthetic. Aesthetic attention must be given to it, which means approaching the object, dispossessing it of its normality and investing in it the

4 In this regard, see Parsons and Carlson (2008, pp. 167-195), Forsey (2013, pp. 193-243) and Melchionne (2013), among others.

5 For this reason, Hume's major aesthetic work, *Of the Standard of Taste* (1757), focused on purely artistic objects – and more specifically, poetic objects (Jones, 1993) –, falls outside our theoretical framework. Even so, we will take some aspects of it into account in our discussion.

6 "In common life, we may observe that the circumstance of utility is always appealed to" (Hume, 2006, V, I, p. 33).

exceptionality that by its very essence it lacks. It is therefore an approach that makes the everyday automatically extraordinary (Leddy, 2012, p. 112), which inescapably refers to the artistic sphere.[7] While perfectly distinguishing between practical artifacts and works of art – Leddy asserts that the everyday aesthetics covers a necessary area, traditionally neglected by the aesthetic discipline (Leddy, 2012, p. 17) –, he claims that the aesthetic experience of utilitarian objects removes them from the continuous flow – instrumental and interested – in which they are embedded and grants them the superior status of other types of objects such as paintings, poems or symphonies. Not surprisingly, the ordinary seems trivial and boring, and of little importance, until it becomes aesthetic or special – artistic – and generates a memorable experience – just like art (Leddy, 2012, p. 59). This transformation – *artification*, as Saito calls it[8] – then allows for different degrees and intensities, ranging from the basic level of the simply clean or tidy, to the complexity of the sublime or tragic. Nevertheless, they are all included in the aesthetic category. They are all to do with beauty, since the object – or the action or process –, having left the realm of the inconsequential, enters that of the conspicuous and worthy of remembering (Leddy, 2012, p. 142).

As for the transformation process, Leddy explains that it happens because the utilitarian object, the ordinary activity, acquires what he, appropriating the term coined by Benjamin, calls "aura", and which moves it from the realm of the irrelevant and unnoticed – or the practical, to put it simply – into the realm of the interesting and striking. Nonetheless, his concept of aura is different from Benjamin's as Leddy expressly states: it is not an intrinsic property of the object, but a phenomenological property that it is acquired through our interaction with it, which makes us experience it in a particularly intense way, giving it a "heightened significance in which it seems to extend beyond itself" (Leddy, 2012, pp. 116-117). The fact that an object has an aura then means several things to us, according to Leddy: that we give it greater significance than it actually has, that it radiates a kind of glow and that it seems singularly vivid and real. We presuppose, in other words, a magic that is completely lacking in its natural practical environment. For this reason, we attribute aesthetic properties to it whereby we can say that the experience we are having is that of the aura and its fascination. We thus qualify a sofa as elegant because, by marvelling at it, we distinguish it from all the other anodyne sofas in the world, which in comparison are indifferent and have no value other than the purely practical.[9] With this judgement we confirm that we have had an aesthetic experience of the marvellous sofa since, freed from its futility, it has been able to reveal its inner poetry. In this sense, the author evokes the figures of the aesthete and the *flâneur* as examples of individuals appreciating the everyday, insofar as they contemplate the world "with the eyes

7 The artistic is, in itself, extraordinary in that it departs from the normal course of life.

8 In her case, from the "strong" meaning of everyday life, as we will see later (Saito, 2012).

9 Leddy has been a pioneer in promoting the aesthetic character of common, traditional despised perceptual properties – clean, cosy and tidy, for example –; but above all, aesthetic properties with a positive sign (Leddy, 1995), because the negative ones – the antonyms of the previous qualifiers –, however much the author claims to accept them, are not for him properly aesthetic (Leddy, 2012, p. 140).

of an artist" (Leddy, 2012, p. 260) and, in doing so, they show those who are less perceptive the wonderful – the aesthetic – side of banal things.

Leddy's recognition of the affinity between his approaches and those of John Dewey, on the one hand (Leddy, 2012, p. 55), and Edward Bullough, on the other (Leddy, 2012, pp. 130-131), is thus understandable. Both point towards the artistic paradigm enshrined in modern aesthetics to which Leddy himself subscribes. In Dewey's case – whom Leddy, like many others, considers to be a mentor of everyday aesthetics (2012, pp. 44, 77, 204)[10] –, Leddy values his quasi-mystical idea of the aesthetic experience, which, thanks to the continuity Dewey established between art and ordinary life, extends beyond the specifically artistic object to the bland and *grey* instrumental object. Hence for Dewey, following Leddy, the experience of viewing a Van Gogh canvas in a gallery is just as aesthetic as tasting a dish in a restaurant or fixing a car breakdown in a garage. There is no difference between them; they are all "experiences", as Dewey says, because they are all aesthetic, which means they are pleasant and complete experiences because, having reached their peak, they form a unity. In addition, they are so intense – and this is where Leddy (2012, pp. 86-87) draws a parallel with his concept of aura – that whoever experiences them feels transported to another world, as if plunged into a supernatural reality where the whole of existence takes on a new meaning. As far as Bullough is concerned, Leddy stays with the idea of illumination – also associated with aura – which Bullough's theory on aesthetic distance establishes. This idea involves glimpsing in the simplest things – by putting them out of gear with usual practical interests –, unexpected elements which, with the help of a little imagination, possess a mysterious component – in the thick fog over the sea, a sinking ship full of passengers, as seen in Bullough – with which to cast a spell on the ordinary object under our gaze (Leddy, 2012, pp. 246-247).

3. "Strong" Version: The Everyday as Strictly Everyday

Unlike the "weak" formulation, the "strong" version asserts the historically neglected everyday life as pure everyday life, and thus without surprises or exile to other places. Coffee makers, irons or screwdrivers, on the one hand, and doing the laundry, tidying up or throwing out the rubbish, on the other, thus remain in their original practical context. They are not extraordinary at all and it is, in that uninspiring and unappealing setting, that the aesthetic experience takes place. In its desire to preserve the everyday as strictly 'everyday', this approach aims to prevent the monotonous and the boring, but also the simplicity and humbleness of what is before us, from being buried beneath the grandeur, spectacle and drama customary in the art world. The intention here, explains its main proponent, Saito, is to move onto the aesthetic radar everything in everyday life that goes unnoticed because it is something we do – in the case of an action – or something we have contact with – in the case of a gadget – unconsciously and without paying much attention (Saito, 2017, pp. 24-25). But Saito goes even further: this is about

[10] He is also considered by Berleant (2012), Sartwell (2003) or Poulakka (2014).

moving them onto the aesthetic radar without the patina of exoticism afforded them by the "weak" variant, because, as she says, chopping vegetables while feeling the smoothness or roughness of their skin on our fingers, or listening to the sound of the knife hitting the chopping board is one thing, and doing it as if we have never done it before is quite another. In the first case, the everyday remains as it is – we simply switch off the automatic pilot with which we perform such actions –, while in the second, through the freshness inherent in novelty, it becomes exclusive.

In revealing the narrow-mindedness of modern aesthetics, the "strong" formulation really wants the aesthetic phenomena to which we tend to be immune, the "valley moments" as defined by Saito (2007, p. 48), to have the same relevance as the "peak moments" with which we identify artistic activity. The reason is that they form the greater part of our aesthetic life, despite their functionality and the fact that they are generally relegated to the background. In this sense, the Japanese author says: "It may not be enjoyable, memorable, or special, but such quotidian ordinariness does provide an aesthetic (understood in a classificatory sense) texture of everyday life" (Saito, 2017, p. 27). So, this formulation aims to focus on those objects and situations that, in their triviality and usefulness, provide an aesthetic experience, albeit perhaps less powerful and intense, or less appealing, than that established by 18th century enlightened thinkers on the basis of the artistic standard, but in any case an aesthetic experience and, as such, most likely pleasurable and certainly worthy of attention.[11]

If the main element in the "weak" formulation is strangeness, the decisive element in the "strong" formulation is familiarity, as echoed by Arto Haapala and Saito herself. To introduce this concept, Haapala turns to its natural opposite, or strangeness, where he believes its genesis lies and which he characterises in much the same as Leddy characterises the aura. He affirms that it is a phenomenological property that things acquire through our interaction or, rather, lack of interaction with them, since we tend to consider things strange when we are not familiar or have no contact with them. Quite the opposite happens when something is part of our life, becoming homey and familiar. In this sense, Haapala invokes the Heideggerian existential analysis of a tool such as a hammer[12] which, when working well, we do not notice. In other words, while fulfilling its purpose, its *being-in-the-world*, as Heidegger would say, it is totally invisible because it is so familiar to us. Only when it stops working, do we notice its presence, which we thus find particularly strange, synonymous here with deprived of use.

In this familiar and close environment, the aesthetic experience is described by the Finnish author in the strictly everyday terms we have seen in Saito, as the serenity that emerges from the lack of visual, auditory or other sensory requirements around us (Haapala, 2005). It is as if the everyday was already

11 Unlike Leddy and other representatives of the everyday, Saito does consider unpleasant or negative aesthetic experiences, which she deems essential as a warning that there is something in our life that is not working as it should, and therefore needs to be changed.

12 In Martin Heidegger's work *Being and Time* (1988).

pleasurable – therefore aesthetic – because of the sense of comfort and stability it brings, the feeling of knowing that everything is safe and under control. At no point then does it need to abandon its idiosyncrasies – whether that be comfort as it is here, or modesty and insignificance as seen in Saito –, just because of our familiarity with it, which provides a certain sense of being safe and at home.

4. David Hume, A Reliable Meeting Point

From the "weak" variant, Thomas Leddy has emphasised that even in his belief that the everyday, experienced aesthetically, is inexorably brought into the realm of the extraordinary – increased attention always has this effect –, he is also aware that this circumstance greatly alters its intrinsic nature. In other words, as the everyday becoming extraordinary ceases to be strictly everyday, "there is a tension with the very concept of the aesthetics of everyday life" (Leddy, 2005, p. 18). In the same sense but from the other perspective, Yuriko Saito argues that although illuminating moments in our ordinary lives allow us to find hidden treasures (Saito, 2007, p. 50), it is still a contradiction that in order to reveal the aesthetic value of everyday life, the familiar must be denied, or "defamiliarized" (Saito, 2017, p. 20). She is also convinced that by elevating the everyday to artistic status based on the dominant aesthetic model, the intrinsic strangeness of that artistic dimension will eventually vanish, as the familiarity against which it stands out is no longer there. For this reason, Saito considers that, rather than a coming together of the two meanings of the everyday as Forsey proposes – and which led her to the neutral field of design (Forsey, 2013, pp. 137-192) –, there should be a balance between what each of these meanings represents: the intensity of art and the mundane nature of life (Saito, 2017, p. 21), which is what we believe is produced in Hume's aesthetic functionalism by means of sympathy, as we are about to explain.

It must be said at the outset that Hume's aesthetics offers one of the most solid and thorough non-reductionist solutions to the dialectic between disinterest and utility in 18th century British aesthetics (López Lloret, 2003). Hence, we can speak correctly of functionalist aesthetics. In Hume's thinking on beauty, disinterest as a hallmark of the aesthetic object, which the Scottish philosopher draws from Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, and its essential utility, to which he arrives at mainly through Berkeley, effectively come together in a successful counterbalance or attractive tension. This fact makes Hume a faithful trustee of the classic synthesis between the useful and the pleasant theorised by Vitruvius.[13] In many passages of the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*, the author effectively indicates

[13] In his well-known and influential work *The Ten Books on Architecture* (Vitruvius, 1960). But it is not necessary to leave the British Isles to find the classical synthesis, because, as it was later expressed by Leon Battista Alberti and, above all, Andrea Palladio, it was imported there in two phases: in the 17th century by Jones and Wotton and in the 18th, by the Neo-Palladian school (Wittkower, 1983; Tavernor, 1991). Hume attempts to dialectically receive the two aesthetic theories in force on the islands – the disinterest of aesthetic experience and the utility of the artistic object – in the light of the consolidated classical aesthetic theory by tradition, to which the philosopher was always receptive.

that aesthetic pleasure is directly proportional to function and, through it, to the comfort and safety perceived in the object:

> [...] a great part of the beauty, which we admire either in animals or in other objects, is deriv'd from the idea of convenience and utility [...] That shape, which produces strength, is beautiful in one animal; and that which is a sign of agility in another. The order and convenience of a palace are no less essential to its beauty, than its mere figure and appearance. In like manner the rules of architecture require, that the top of a pillar should be more slender than its base, and that because such a figure conveys to us the idea of security, which is pleasant; whereas the contrary form gives us the apprehension of danger, which is uneasy. (Hume, 2007, II, I, VIII, p. 195)

As stated in the quote, not only utility, but also convenience and security or strength, core principles of architecture – the classical architectural principles of Vitruvius –, are for Hume the basis for the ability to produce aesthetic pleasure. By adhering to the theory of architectural orders – through its essential element, the column – and its proportional variations – the measurable relationships between the upper and lower parts –, the philosopher thus offers a functional explanation (they are this way so that the building seems safe), emanating from a utilitarian theory (it is more convenient to live safely in those constructions), which ultimately translates into pleasure (or the beauty of the built form).

However, here the appeal of this aesthetic functionalism is that it rests on an affection such as sympathy which manages to bring together two initially conflicting terms such as *voluptas* and *utilitas* – and, hand in hand with the latter, *firmitas*, as in Vitruvius. This is why we think it could also articulate the normality-exceptionality binomial of the everyday, where the underlying tension is in fact the same, pleasure *versus* utility. It is worth remembering that sympathy for Hume, as for other British Enlightenment thinkers, is the foundation for the 18th century moral proposals formulated as an alternative to Hobbesian natural selfishness. Through this emotion, sociability was considered a natural human tendency, together with an equally natural propensity towards goodness and virtue. For all of these philosophers – Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and, of course, Hume –, sympathy warmed the cold relationship between individuals and elevated sociability to a universal brotherhood in its capacity to be widely displayed. In Hume's case, this openness to other people was also presented as an inclination towards communicability and emotional transfer "however different from, or even contrary to our own" (Hume, 2007, II, I, XI, p. 206); that is to say as the substratum of a relentless exchange to and from others' impressions and ideas, whereby the experiences of others become our own, thus tracing a permanent set of relationships between oneself and others (Infante del Rosal, 2013).

This social interrelationship, with its ethical imprint, is easily recognisable in the way sympathy operates within the framework of Hume's aesthetic functionalism. Ultimately, it all really boils down to this maxim: there is an aesthetic experience and, therefore, beauty, if a *deferred* utility is

experienced.[14] In other words, aside from an object capable of meeting a need or a utilitarian object – or just *utilitas* –, there must also be a subject who notices how this possibility takes or can take effect in another subject – or *voluptas* –, who, by addressing their needs, is pleased.[15] The important point is that the interested pleasure of this second subject, that of the direct user of the object, in turn generates a disinterested pleasure in the first, since it arises sympathetically from the perceived benefit attained by a fellow human and always through imaginative intercession.[16] Thanks to the imagination, the spectator effectively becomes aware of what it means to satisfy a need, attaching themselves to the beneficiary of the object and also feeling satisfied – feeling it *next to* them or *with* them, *by* their side, through a transfer of the original satisfaction –, even though no personal benefit is obtained: "By a turn of imagination, by a refinement of reflection, by an enthusiasm of passion, we seem to take part in the interests of others, and imagine ourselves divested of all selfish considerations" (Hume, 2006, appendix II, p. 90). The spectator then feels satisfaction out of sheer sympathy and, because this pleasure is disinterested, it is also entirely aesthetic:

> Cloaths which warm, without burdening the body; which cover, without imprisoning the limbs, are well-fashioned. In every judgement of beauty, the feelings of the person affected enter into consideration, and communicate to the spectator similar touches of pain or pleasure. (Hume, 2006, V, II, p. 41)

The quote brings together the two articulating elements in the sympathetic bond: the object and its formal construction or structure – here, warm clothes –, from an examination of which its potential to satisfy a need is deduced – that of shelter and also comfort –, and a subject – the wearer of the clothing – whose needs are satisfied. In this happy conjunction, the spectator is imaginatively placed and, even knowing that they are the outside with no intention of participating, they themselves feel satisfied.

Transferring Hume's way of acting sympathetically to the realm of everyday life, it can be said that only when there is a functional object[17], providing a service to a human being, is it then in a position to be aesthetically valued. The object is thus required to remain ordinary as Saito intends, integrated into its practical world – in accordance with the "strong" modality as a whole–, even if this means disappearing from the user's sight, as is the case with

14 Therefore, beauty acquires a moral aspect, because beauty and aesthetics are "moralized" certainly in Hume, as Peter Kivy says, unlike in Hutcheson, where according to Kivy it is morality that "is aestheticized" (Kivy, 2003, p. 287).

15 For Hume, it is indifferent if the user is real or potential; the relevant thing is the well-being that can be achieved with the utilitarian object: "A house, that is contriv'd with great judgement for all the commodities of life, pleases us upon the account; tho' perhaps we are sensible, that no one will ever dwell in it. A fertile soil, and a happy climate, delight us by a reflection on the happiness which they wou'd afford the inhabitants, tho' at present the country be desert and uninhabited" (Hume, 2007, III, III, I, p. 373).

16 Townsend outlines that this disinterested pleasure in Hume is not a prelude to that which will appear later in Kant; it is only a way of understanding affective experience beyond the dichotomy of moral character egotism/benevolence (Townsend, 2014, pp. 100, 109, 143 and 154).

17 In Hume, furniture, clothes, carriages, houses, lands and possessions of a very different nature.

Heidegger's hammer discussed by Haapala; or, alternatively, being diluted in its role, because it works exactly as expected. Nevertheless, the fact that its presence goes unnoticed by the subject who uses it, does not make it invisible at all. Thanks to Hume, we know that there is another subject paying attention to it and who, in doing so, allows the aesthetic condition to be added to its instrumental nature. This other individual also relates to the object, albeit not in a profitable or interested way, but in a purely contemplative – disinterested – way, as in the "weak" modality of the everyday, since it is a strictly visual relationship and from a distance. Endowed with great sensitivity or with an artist's eyes, as Leddy says – with a minimal capacity to connect sympathetically with peers, in Hume's ethical terms – this second individual discovers some benefits in the object that escape the first. It is thus led towards the exceptionality of Leddy, but without forcing it to move away from the normality where it is embedded, as argued by Saito, because the object remains in the practical environment where the task is performed. This is thus how this spectator subject actually perceives the well-being that the user derives from its functionality, the pleasure that this beneficiary obtains and that gives rise to their own.

For our purposes, we must also bear in mind the important role that possession of the artifact plays in Hume for its aesthetic consideration: so much so that it is this private ownership itself on which the beauty of a utensil ultimately depends.[18] On the part of the owner, they must possess, have possessed, or be able to possess, the object from which to derive satisfaction from its use: "A prince, that is possess'd of a stately palace, commands the esteem of the people upon that account; and that *first*, by the beauty of the palace, and *secondly*, by the relation of property, which connects it with him" (Hume, 2007, II, II, I, p. 215). As for the non-owner or simple spectator, despite not owning the object – and having no expectations of doing so, as Hume indicates[19] –, they must enjoy the other person's use of their possession: "Wherever an object has a tendency to produce pleasure in the possessor, or in other words, is the proper *cause* of pleasure, it is sure to please the spectator, by a delicate sympathy with the possessor" (Hume, 2007, III, III, I, p. 368). In this sense, we must remember that in the mid-18th century British context, the Industrial Revolution was in its infancy and, although social tastes had begun to move away from the luxury and finery of French Rococo, the object continued to have unique value for use and exchange, but above all, for display. It was a sign of ostentation and power, of the affirmation of the upper classes – of the old nobility first, of the stunning bourgeoisie, second –, who thus acquired the most expensive and exclusive items, guided by the criterion of comfort and, at the same time, by appearance and visual appeal, by the desire to project an image of opulence in society so as to earn the respect and admiration of all.

18 According to Saccamano (2011), we think that private ownership occupies a central place in the structuring of sympathy in Hume's thought.

19 The philosopher talks about some things "in which, tho' we have no hope of partaking, yet we enter into them by the vivacity of the fancy, and share them, in some measure, with the proprietor" (2007, II, II, V, p. 235).

However, despite the importance of the nouveau riche, the bourgeois, for the advent of the capitalist economic system – not in vain is it the great protagonist of the public arena that everyone admires and wishes to emulate[20] –, Hume's functional beauty also makes him consider those who are not so socially favoured, those who know that their well-being and pleasure depend on the well-being and pleasure of others with whom they will never be on a par, but with whom they still get along simply because they are lucky. It depends on non-owners or spectators, on their sympathetic pleasure as we have seen, for the common and ordinary object to be a beautiful object at the same time. It is they, delighting in gadgets beyond their reach and in inconsequential acts in which only the powerful participate, who have an aesthetic experience. It seems as if the aesthetic appreciation of the everyday, of granting the utilitarian object the power to surprise, was then a privilege of those who are socially deprived of possessions.

If so, the economic freedom which allows one to be surrounded by all kinds of whims and comforts would be at odds with enjoying them aesthetically. Hume, however, solves this kind of problem – and this is of particular interest for my goal – by pointing out that the owner also has access to the experience of beauty, but on one condition: one must step into the shoes of the non-owner – the spectator – to identify oneself as the gratified user of the object and thereby obtain a pleasure which is necessarily different – being indirect and disinterested – from the pleasure obtained from one's superior status – the pleasure of profit and profitability – and which results in even greater pleasure: "'Tis certain, then, that if a person consider'd himself in the same light, in which he appears to his admirer, he wou'd first receive a separate pleasure, and afterwards a pride or self-satisfaction, according to the hypothesis above-explain'd." (Hume, 2007, II, I, XI, p. 208) Possession of the artifact does not, therefore, exclude the aesthetic experience, but it does require the suspension of direct use, that is, contemplation, or better still, sympathetic competence in order to imagine oneself in the spectator's position and see things exactly as they see them. Even the owner is then forced to momentarily dispense with their interest in the object, with its use, in order to become paradoxically aware of the benefit it brings and, in so doing, the aesthetic pleasure derived contributes to a greater utilitarian pleasure.[21]

Hume's commitment to virtually placing the user-owner next to the spectator in order to share their distant vision and pleasure, leads to an exegesis in everyday terms which favours the reconciliation between the two versions: by stepping out to contemplate oneself from the outside in the manner of Leddy's aesthete or *flâneur*, the beneficiary of the object comes to appreciate its beauty, but not because it becomes a work of art – as a useful object, it never

20 By chronological proximity we apply to Hume the dramaturgical metaphor as a hermeneutical tool of Adam Smith's social theses used by López Lloret (2009).

21 I defend the difference of pleasures and, therefore, of emotions, invoking Hume's own general theory of the mind, which expresses how the spectator's pleasure, although resembling that of the user, is not exactly identical, because the original emotion has a force and a liveliness that the secondary or derivative one lacks: "In every judgement of beauty, the feelings of the person affected enter into consideration, and communicate to the spectator *similar touches* of pain or pleasure" (Hume, 2006, V, II, p. 41, my emphasis). Infante del Rosal (2013) holds a different opinion.

stops functioning or making life easier –, but because that which previously had no aesthetic interest because it was unconscious and customary, is brought to consciousness, onto Saito's aesthetic radar. By putting themselves in the place of someone who enjoys their own pleasure, the owner becomes aware of the surrounding comforts which explain their advantageous social position. Opening their eyes to their comfortable existence is fascinating, as it is to the non-owner – the spectator – on seeing other people taking advantage of their own fortune and belongings. In summary, by learning to value everything they have through sympathetic connection with their fellow humans – because by approaching their fellow humans, they realise that not everyone has the same standard of living and opportunities –, the rich bourgeois happily – aesthetically – contemplates the many objects at their disposal which make their existence positively enviable.[22]

5. Conclusion

David Hume's aesthetic functionalism is a good starting point in trying to solve internal disagreements within the aesthetic field of everyday life. His recourse to sympathy as a way of combining two such seemingly irreconcilable notions as disinterest and usefulness is also applicable when it comes to bringing together two other polarised concepts, now strictly everyday, such as normality and exceptionality, where the real conflict is between art and life. The routine in which we are immersed prevents us from seeing something valuable in useful objects, perhaps not something as remarkable as climbing Everest or hearing a Beethoven symphony, but undoubtedly beautiful if given its due attention. That is if, as Hume suggests in his ethical approach to sympathy, we are capable of perceiving the happiness it provides, be that rejoicing for a fellow human, feeling their well-being *by proxy*, or for ourselves, which we realise by meeting that fellow human and forgetting ourselves for a few moments. Art and life do not clash in the aesthetics of the everyday. Instead,

[22] Even exceeding our framework of study, it is worth considering the imprint that this discourse by the young Hume will leave on his *Of the Standard of Taste* (1757); especially, in the characterisation of the true judges to whom Hume attributes, as spectators, a mind free of prejudice. In practice, this again means the ability to go out of oneself towards the other, to sympathise with them, but in addition to "forget, if possible, my individual being and my particular circumstances" (Hume, 1963, p. 245). The philosopher adds here the forgetting of the self, which introduces a first difference with respect to what we have seen in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*: the aim is to be absorbed by the other whose place is occupied, the public for whom the work – the poem – was originally written. A second difference is related to property, an essential component of beauty until now, but no longer so because the aesthetic object has changed too: no longer a useful object, the owner is of no importance (Shusterman (1989) thinks otherwise); the important thing is to know the identity of the original audience, to whom it was destined. And thus, exonerated from private ownership, the aesthetic experience increases affection; so much so that the true judge, transcending space and time, develops a deferred sympathy and adopts exactly the point of view required by the work, that of the historical moment and place where it was born: "There needs but a certain turn of the thought or imagination to make us enter into all the opinions which then prevailed, and relish the sentiments or conclusions derived from them" (Hume, 1963, p. 253). So, once the game of possession declines in one way or another in 18th century British society, for Hume beauty becomes interested – disinterestedly – in the concerns of a broader population; immeasurable, given its dispersion in space and time, which the true judge must make their own to mentally recompose what a segment of that huge population – the pristine recipient of the work – may have felt in the moment they received it. It is only from this broadening vision that Hume's ideal critic finds pleasure in the pleasure of those who either preceded him/her or who are thousands of kilometres away, and from that exemplary pleasure (Levinson, 2002), he/she manages to make a just pronouncement.

they complement and help each other, reminding us of the ultimate fraternal bonds which hold us together, making us a little more human when all is said and done.

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Decorum. An Ancient Idea for Everyday Aesthetics?

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Everyday Aesthetics was born in the 21st Century as a sub-discipline of Anglo-American Aesthetics and it has spread in the international debate. However, the contribute of historical perspective has not properly explored yet. Is it possible to trace the history of everyday aesthetics before the official birth of this discipline? I will try and give an affirmative answer by focusing on an exemplary category: that of the *decorum*. Using the history of ideas, I will analyse the Greek concept of *prepon* and the similar Latin concepts of decorum which express the idea of 'convenience' or 'fitness to purpose' in the ethical and rhetorical sphere. Later I will analyse the evolution of the concept of *decorum* in the theory of Ancient and Renaissance architecture (Vitruvius, Leon Battista Alberti). My goal is to demonstrate that in Ancient and Renaissance culture *decorum* is a category that refers to the objects and practices of everyday life but also a principle that regulates appropriate behaviour in the sphere of good manners. Consequently, given its pervasiveness in the different areas of everyday life, the concept of *decorum* can be a paradigmatic example to trace the history of everyday aesthetics. | Keywords: *Decorum, Everyday Aesthetics, Prepon, Good Manners, History of Ideas*

1. Introduction

Originated at the start of the new Millennium as a sub-discipline of Anglo-American aesthetics focusing on art, Everyday Aesthetics has distinguished itself for its shift towards practices and objects of everyday life. Several fields and varied aesthetic categories have been included in its inquiries, nevertheless one line of investigation has received little attention until now, that is to say, the historical realm. This essay aims to go back to the early origins of Western culture in the attempt to trace the steps of the history of everyday aesthetics before its official birth. To this aim I will rely on the methodology of the history of ideas in the footsteps of the Polish philosopher Władysław Tatarkiewicz (1980). His method turns out to be particularly fitting for my inquiry seeing as Tatarkiewicz developed the history of aesthetics including all ideas affecting aesthetic issues, even when presented under different names, and belonging to other disciplines not only philosophical.

Tatarkiewicz's historiographical approach allows us to find a way out of the traditional impasse inherited from the early historians of aesthetics, Robert Zimmerman (1858) and Benedetto Croce (1902). They firmly held onto a general framework excluding all contributions not produced by philosophers, and inevitably got bogged down while attempting to legitimize a history of aesthetics also predating the eighteenth-century foundation of the discipline. By separating the history of words from that of concepts, Tatarkiewicz claimed that aesthetic thinking began in Europe more than two-thousand years before a name was found for it and an autonomous field of research was established.

Considering that everyday practices and objects had rarely attracted philosophical interest before, usually being seen as too trivial, this method, that targets on implicit aesthetics, proves to be suitable above all for everyday aesthetics. The reason for this is that it aims at including a variety of concepts touching upon the field of aesthetics by relying not only on philosophical texts but also on artistic and literary contributions, technical textbooks and private documents.

Needless to say, a full outline of the history of everyday aesthetics is an ambitious goal far beyond the limits of this essay. I will therefore limit myself by outlining the origins of one single aesthetic idea, that of *decorum*. This notion has an exemplary value, inasmuch as it cuts across several cultural realms. While changing its names in the course of different periods, it preserves a consistent meaning: 'aptness', 'convenience', 'fitness to purpose'.

Tatarkiewicz includes this notion among the varieties of beauty and focuses on its terminological transformations:

> From ancient times regarded as a variety of beauty has been aptness, specifically the aptness of things to the task the things were meant to fulfil, to the purpose that they served. The Greeks called this quality πρέπον; the Romans translated the expression as *decorum*. […] Later, in Latin, the name *aptum* was used more frequently, but in the Renaissance *decorum* returned. Frenchmen of the 'Great [17th] Century' most often called this property *bienséance*, Poles of the age spoke of *przystojność*. Today one speaks rather of suitability, appropriateness, purposefulness and functionalism as a quality of certain arts and the cause of the pleasure that we find in them. The terminology has varied, but the concept itself has persisted." (Tatarkiewicz, 1980, p. 159)

Among the above listed terminological variations, *decorum* is in my opinion the most interesting, inasmuch as it qualifies as a norm regulating the beauty of both behaviour and architecture, two realms in which the Italian language still uses the same Latin-derived word *decoro*.

The notion of *decorum* was first conceptualized by Cicero as a norm of rhetoric and as a principle of everyday life (*Orat.* 21, 70): "In an oration, as in life, nothing is harder than to determine what is appropriate. The Greeks call it πρέπον; let us call it *decorum* or 'propriety'" Cicero, 1952, p. 357).

Starting from Cicero's early definition and in reference to the history of ideas, I will first explore the Greek notion of πρέπον from which the Latin concept stems; then I will focus on *decorum* as conveying the idea of 'convenience' and

'fitness to purpose' in the rhetorical and ethical sphere. Finally, I will analyse the evolution of *decorum* in the Ancient and Renaissance architectural theory (Vitruvius, Leon Battista Alberti) and in the field of good manners.

My goal is to demonstrate that *decorum* – and its analogous terms – is a category that not only refers to the objects and practices of everyday life but is also a principle that regulates appropriate behaviour. Consequently, given its pervasiveness in the different areas of everyday life, the concept of *decorum* can be a paradigmatic example to trace the history of everyday aesthetical ideas.

2. The concept of πρέπον in Greek culture

As emphasised by Pohlenz (1933, p. 53), the substantivized adjective *to prepon* has many meanings. In archaic Greek it designates a shining quality, a conspicuousness which, like the virtues of Homeric heroes, stands out before the eyes of the beholders (Homer, *Iliad*, XII, 104). However, the timelessness of the myth fades away when the term *to prepon* is coupled with the noun *kairos*, 'occasion'. The temporal determination provides a new meaning to *to prepon* and connects it to what Mario Perniola defines as 'actual beauty', that is to say, a type of beauty waiving off its absolute and universal value to adapt to given circumstances (Perniola, 1982, p. 45).

The connection between 'convenience' (*prepon*) and 'occasion' (*kairos*) is abundantly documented in Greek literature and it is particularly powerful in technical writings about medicine, politics and rhetoric. This bond describes words and actions being effective, since they are placed in a given space-time configuration (i.e. the decisive place, the crucial moment) and therefore they are well adapted to the situation (Trédé, 1992).

In the field of rhetoric, the link between *prepon* and *kairos* was first established by Gorgias and then reinforced by Isocrates, according to whom discourses cannot be beautiful if they are not attuned to the circumstances and befitting the topic (*Soph*. 13). Furthermore, Isocrates was the first to confer an educational and political value to the notion of *prepon* connecting it to the issue of *paideia*, that is to say, the education of youth in relation to which the rhetor is the life mentor.

In the realm of philosophy, Socrates plays a key role in the understanding of the idea of *prepon*. Since he left no autographic writtings, his legacy can be evinced from the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon, which often feature Socrates in the main role.

In the Platonic dialogue, *Hippias Major* (289d-290e), talking about utensils, Socrates claims that not all materials are well adapted to all shapes, but only to those for which they are 'appropriate'. For stirring a bean soup, a fig wooden spoon is more appropriate than a golden one because "it makes the soup smell better, and at the same time, […] it won't break our pot, spill out the soup, put out the fire, and make us do without a truly noble meal, when we were going to have a banquet" (Plato, 1982, p. 13).

However, while Plato's Socrates is mainly concerned with metaphysical

questions and the quest for beauty in itself (i.e. the idea of beauty), Xenophon's Socrates launches the notion of functional beauty. This latter, which is to be found again in the Latin concept of *aptus* (appropriateness to purpose), will survive through Medieval theoretical contributions – as testified by Agustine's surviving treatise, *De pulchro et apto* (Tatarkiewicz, 1980, p. 160) – until modern functionalism many centuries later.

Socrates's key role in the elaboration of an aesthetic category pertaining to everyday life is made clear by his many references to domestic environments and objects of daily use. In a passage from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (III, 8, 4), Socrates claims that a golden shield, although beautiful to look at, is not suited to a battle since gold is too fragile to guarantee safety. The careful choice of materials then translates into care for the people who are going to use them and for their needs. This is clearly stated in a later section of the *Memorabilia* (III, 10, 9-13). Talking to the armorer Pistias, who is bragging about his breastplates and how they are well-made because they are well-proportioned, Socrates claims that an armour should not be perfectly well-proportioned, but in relation to the wearer. As a matter of fact, unfitting armours, as they hang from one's shoulders or burden some other part of the body, are oppressing and difficult to wear, while those which are fitting should look like "an accessory rather than an encumbrance" (Xenophon, 1979, pp. 237-239).

Furthermore, the notion of convenience is abundantly discussed by Aristotle in his contributions both to rhetoric and to philosophy. He defines convenience as the right correspondence between the language and the character of the rhetor (*Reth*. III, 7,1408 a-b) and in the *Poetics* (13, 1454a) he emphasises how each character is supposed to use words and perform actions that are consistent with their character. This line of thought has then been further developed in Theophrastus' *Characters*.

Finally, among the most important Greek theoretical contributions on the notion of *prepon*, one should mention Panetius, a member of the middle Stoa. While breaking with the early Stoa and its idea of the wise life as isolated from the world, Panetius addresses all people, who while dealing with everyday affairs have to make choices and perform actions. According to Panetious, people should use their abilities and gifts to the benefit of society by following the *prepon* which guides everybody to do the right thing at the right time (Cicu, 2000, pp. 136-137).

3. Cicero and *decorum*

The close correspondence between the Greek word *prepon* and the Latin *decorum* is clearly stated by Cicero in the texts *Orator* (21,70) and *De Officiis* (I, 93). Although the two expressions are similar, the notion of *decorum* undergoes some evolution in meaning in the transition between the text on rhetoric written in 46 BC to the one on ethics written two years later.

It would actually be wrong to believe that the notion of *decorum* as presented in the *Orator* is simply a tool of rhetoric. This latter is not only an operational field connected to politics, but also one in which *decorum* is presented as

a guiding principle, whose validity extends beyond the rhetoric to the arts and life in general (Guérin, 2009, p. 125). Nevertheless, an even stronger connection between ethics and aesthetics can be found in the *De Officiis*, inasmuch as *decorum* is introduced as the fourth part of the *honestum* dealing with the appropriateness of discourses and daily actions performed within one's community.

In the rhetorical field, *decorum* is a virtue of style, harmoniously regulating the relations between speaker, message, audience, and register of communication (*Orat.* 21, 71). Latin rhetoric distinguishes three styles, *genus tenue* or plain, *genus medium* and *genus grande* or grand. *Decorum* should see that each genre is matched with the appropriate arguments, styles and audiences.

Despite appearing at first as a normative principle with codified rules, *decorum* is introduced by Cicero when dealing with the difficulties connected to understanding what is appropriate both in discourses and in life in general (*Orat*. 21, 70: "*ut* […] *in vita sic in oratione nihil est difficilius quam quid deceat videre*"; "In an oration, as in life, nothing is harder than to determine what is appropriate" Cicero, 1952, p. 357).

It should be added that, in the realm of ethics, grasping the appropriateness of words and actions with respect to circumstances is the result not of rational intelligence but of a form of sensibility which is able to perceive nuances, atmospheres and moods. Jumping ahead to a notion engendered within the *milieu* of Romanticism, one might say, with André Demouliez (1976, p. 286), that convenience belongs to the realm of taste, provided it is not taste itself. This remark is confirmed by Quintilian (*Inst. Or*. 11, 1, 91); while connecting decorum to measure and temperance, he states that convenient behaviour cannot be guided by pre-established rules but only by sensitivity. We might refer to it as a certain taste, as suggested by Quintilian's analogy with food, where, rules are of little value. Inspired by the philosopher Panetius, in *De officiis* Cicero emphasises the bond between decorum and moral integrity, which is applied to interpersonal relations within the community, in the following terms:

> We have next to discuss the one remaining division of moral rectitude. That is the one in which we find considerateness and self-control, which give, as it were, a sort of polish to life; it embraces also temperance, complete subjection of all the passions, and moderation in all things. Under this head is further included what, in Latin, may be called *decorum* (propriety); for in Greek it is called πρέπον. Such is its essential nature, that it is inseparable from moral goodness; for what is proper is morally right, and what is morally right is proper. The nature of the difference between morality and propriety can be more easily felt than expressed. (Cicero, De off., I, 27, 93; 1928, pp. 95-97)

Self-control, temperance and moderation make up the essence of *decorum* and provide aesthetic value to everyday life (*quidam ornatus vitae*, 'a sort of polish to life'), making one's manners gentle and one's behaviour refined, while respecting not only those who belong to the high society but to all citizen.

As it was in Greek culture, also in Latin culture *decorum* is a form of beauty.

This is confirmed by Cicero's analogy between the harmony of the body and the appropriateness of one's conduct. However, whereas physical beauty is visible to the eye, *decorum* is a 'relational' aesthetic category. In other words, it is a behavioural beauty which shines through words and daily actions and sparks approval in the community.

> For, as physical beauty with harmonious symmetry of the limbs engages the attention and delights the eye, for the very reason that all the parts combine in harmony and grace, so this propriety, which shines out in our conduct, engages the approbation of our fellow-men by the order, consistency, and self-control it imposes upon every word and deed. We should, therefore, in our dealings with people show what I may almost call reverence toward all men – not only toward the men who are the best, but toward others as well. [...] It is the function of justice not to do wrong to one's fellow-men; of considerateness, not to wound their feelings; and in this the essence of propriety is best seen. (Cicero, De off., I, 28, 98-99; 1928, pp. 101-103)

This form of beauty that glows in a correct behaviour is the distinctive feature of the *vir bonus* (honest man), whose ideal portrait is painted by Cicero in *De officiis*. This would be someone who is active in public and political life, and who spends their free time (*otium*) engaging in the arts and philosophical studies. By nurturing a sense for aesthetics and abiding to the principles of honesty and convenience, this person achieves elegance in their being and acting.

As he outlines this ethical and aesthetic model of the ideal person, Cicero includes in *De officiis* (I, 126-134) some sort of 'manual of good manners', suggesting hygiene and behavioural norms inspired by the right measure and avoiding all excess. He recommends bodily hygiene without affectation but also without negligence; a way of walking neither too fast, nor too slowly; a clear and fluent way of conversing, which avoids excluding others from the conversation or falling into tittle-tattle (Cicu, 2000, pp. 150-154).

As a result, Cicero's ideal person, in close resemblance to Roman models such as Scipio Aemilianus, is well-read, balanced, never out of place or out of measure, with a strong sense of attachment to their homeland and community.

As Guérin (2009, p. 126) points out "the *decorum* described in Cicero's *De officiis* is [...] a principle of coherence between the ethical agent and his actions, a means to reach a state of general appropriateness, the rational *convenientia* by the virtue of which one can make the choices and accomplish the actions which correspond to his own nature". As a result, Cicero applies to his *vir bonus* model the same criterion of convenience, based on which the poets choose only those words and actions that are befitting of a character – according to the previously mentioned Aristotelian principle consolidated by Theophrastus.

Along the same line one can place Quintilian's contribution on the topic of convenience in the XI book of his treatise, *Institutio oratoria*. According to Quintilian as well, *decorum* is a norm regulating the choice of content, the distribution of words, the style and even the performance of the rhetor.

However, as it shares its lexical root with the impersonal verb *decet* (it is convenient, it is befitting), *decorum* qualifies also as a moral principle, guiding choices and behaviours even to the detriment of personal interest. Quintilian mentions the example of Socrates, who refrained from simple personal defence in court, which would have saved him from being sentenced to death, since it was contrary to his moral values. Hence, the rhetor has to refrain from persuasion if this latter clashes against a higher value (*Inst. Or.* 11, 1, 11). As a result, also for Quintilian, *decorum* is a rhetorical norm regulating the rhetorical performance as much a moral principle, guiding one's lifestyle and the consistency of thinking and acting. Indeed, in the footsteps of Cicero (*De or*. 3, 212), he claims that the main virtue of the orator is *prudentia* (practical sagacity). This is a moral virtue that can be acquired with experience and its effects derive from the ability to grasp what is appropriate in each occasion.

In this regard, Latin culture establishes *decorum* as an ethical and aesthetic category which describes the ideal of an honest person (Cicero) and of a rhetor engaged in the rightful and appropriate administration of public affairs (Quintilian) for the good of the community.

4. The Architectural Theory: Vitruvius and Leon Battista Alberti

The migration of the notion of *decorum* into the area of art – already inaugurated by the numerous architectural metaphors employed by Cicero (*De or*. III, 152 and *Or.* 50.) – was further legitimized by Vitruvius, who imported into architecture many terms and concepts from rhetoric. According to Vitruvius, architects have to design a building taking into account beauty (*venustas*), utility (*usus*) and appropriateness (*decor*) (*De arch.* VI, 10). In *De architectura* (IV, I, 7-8) *decor* is the principle that connects the use of the various orders of architecture to the character of the divinity to whom a temple is dedicated: the Doric style, simple and sober, is appropriate to gods who manifest strength and military valor; the Ionian style is appropriate to female deities; the Corinthian style with its delicate ornaments and floral motifs to the youngest and most graceful gods.

Whereas Vitruvius is mainly receptive to the normative aspect of the principle of convenience, Leon Battista Alberti also picks up on its moral value. In line with Cicero's and Quintilian's teachings, he claims that a good architect must be able to evaluate 'what is fitting' to each building since each of them has its own specific 'character' (Alberti 1988, IX, 10, p. 315: "The greatest glory in the art of building is to have a good sense of what is appropriate"). Paradigmatic remarks are then provided concerning the differences between the palace of a prince and the fortress of a tyrant:

> A royal palace should be sited in the city center, should be of easy access, and should be gracefully decorated, elegant, and refined, rather than ostentatious. But that of a tyrant, being a fortress rather than a house, should be positioned where it is neither inside nor outside the city. Further, whereas a royal dwelling might be sited next to a showground, a temple, or the houses of noblemen, that of a tyrant should be set well back on all sides from any buildings. In either case an appropriate and useful guideline, which will lend the building

> *dignity*, will be to construct it in such a way that, if a royal palace, it should not be so large that it is impossible to throw out any troublemaker, or, if a fortress, not so constricted that it resembles a prison more than the apartment of a fine prince." (Alberti 1988, V, 3, pp. 121-122, *emphasis mine*)

Decorum is therefore connected to the idea of *dignitas* (dignity)[1], which conveys the ethical and aesthetic distinctive features of individuals with respect to their character and social status. While developing this line in book VIII of his treatise on architecture, Alberti claims that *decorum* establishes the amount and type of ornaments for different buildings taking into account hosted functions and the social prestige of their inhabitants.[2] Alberti then outlines an ascending scale of aesthetic values from private dwellings to public and religious buildings. These latter are said to require greater decorative richness as no house can be more beautiful than the house of God. As a result, the ornament is no longer just an additional and decorative element, and is perfectly integrated to the structure, characterizing each building according to the principle of *decorum*, understood as both an ethical and aesthetic measure.

Besides the *decorum* of the rhetorical tradition, Alberti also retrieves – although just in a quick implicit remark – the Socratic notion of *prepon* as functional beauty. Socrates' criticism of the golden shield, which despite being aesthetically pleasing is of little use in battle, seems to find an echo in Alberti's words, as they criticize the "doors like those about which we read in historians and poets, so heavily weighed down with gold, ivory, and reliefs that they could be opened only by a team of men, and would give off a terrifying creak" (Alberti 1988, VII, 12, p. 226). On the contrary, those less elaborate and light, "that are easy to open and close", should be appreciated more because they are more functional.

The idea of beauty as aptness or fitness to purpose, already launched by the Socratic *prepon*, is reborn along the centuries under many other names. As emphasised by Tatarkiewicz:

> During the Enlightenment, the concept of beauty became still more strongly bound up with the concept of aptness; in that period, aptness had advocates especially among the philosophers, essayists and aestheticians of Britain: no longer now in the sense of social aptness, but once again in the sense of utility, as formerly in Greece. David Hume wrote (*Treatise*, 1739, vol. II) that the beauty of many human works derives from their utility and fitness for the purpose which they serve. Likewise Adam Smith (*Of the Beauty which the Appearance of Utility Bestows upon all Productions of Art*, 1759, part IV, chap. I): The effectiveness of any system or machine in producing the purpose for which they were designed, lends beauty to the entire object. And in the same vein, Archibald Alison (*Essays on the Nature and Principles of*

[1] The connection between the concept of 'dignity' (dignitas) and that of 'convenience' (decor / decorum) is found in the treatise De pictura II, 38, (Alberti 1980, p. 67: "Dignity must be observed in everything. It would not be suitable to dress Venus or Minerva in a servant's hood nor to dress Mars or Jupiter in female clothes" (my transl.).

[2] Alberti (1988 VIII, 3, p. 250) claims: "In these matters I do feel, however, that even when the dignity of the individual is considered, a sense of measure must be maintained, and that even kings may be criticized for overexpenditure."

> *Taste*, 1790) said that there is no shape that does not become beautiful when it is perfectly suited to its purpose. For these writers the field of beauty continued to be split: some objects possess their own beauty, others acquire it thanks to their utility. (Tatarkiewicz, 1980, p. 161)

While the Socratic *prepon* will launch a line of thinking on architecture and objects of use which will reach modern functionalism, the ethical and aesthetic notion of *decorum* will sustain the debate on good manners and what is befitting of those who wish to be part of 'high society'.

5. The Good Manners

The ethical notion of dignity (in Italian *decoro*) recurs in a lot of books on good manners. Already in *The Book of the Courtier* written by Baldassare Castiglione in 1528, one reads that the perfect courtier must display courtesy and most of all 'discretion' – that is to say, the ability to act appropriately according to the circumstances (Castiglione 1901, par. 7-8, pp. 82-83).

The Courtier enjoyed great literary success in sixteenth-century Europe, and it would be misleading to take it as just a handbook of good manners, like those popping up in the following centuries starting with Giovanni Della Casa's *Galateo*. Already bucking the trend of his time and the decline of court values, Castiglione aims to outline the ideal figure of the courtier, who is able to bestow beauty on everyday life through an elegant and graceful behaviour. The distinctive *sprezzatura* which shapes all of the courtier's behaviours is a refined art which avoids all artificiality. Virtue is indeed achieved, according to Castiglione, when that affectation is kept at bay, that is to say, when each activity is distinctively natural, simple and modest. However, Castiglione's ideal courtier belongs to the already faded Renaissance world. In the sixteenth century, the courts of the great Italian lords resemble more a theatre stage, where a role needs to be played, that is to say, one's behaviour needs to be adapted to what ensures the prince's or leader's benevolence; as a result, courtesy turns into sterile formalism and etiquette.

The several treatises on good manners of the following centuries bear testimony to the need to establish a code of norms defining the behaviour of high society. Social aesthetics is hence developed on the basis of a shared ceremonial, which is often more a matter of appearance than a real expression of virtue.

As Tatarkiewicz points out, over time the notion of aptness appears under other names, particularly in seventeenth-century French classicist theory: 'convenance', 'justesse', and especially 'bienséance'.[3]

> The change was not only one of terminology. A fairly significant shift in thinking had taken place: the concern now was less with qualities of things fitting them to their use, and more with qualities of a man fitting him for his social station: a man is pleasing when his appearance and behaviour match his estate and dignity. (Tatarkiewicz, 1980, p. 161)

[3] As Tatarkiewicz (1980, p. 161) points out: "According to Dictionnaire de l'Academie Française (1787 edition), 'bienséance' signifies 'convenance de ce qui se dit, de ce qui se fait par rapport a l'age, au sexe, au temps, au lieu etc."

The issue of behavioural appropriateness finds ample development in French and English debates in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, leading to the origins of the person 'of good taste', a refined, elegant person, who is tactful and able to select appropriate words and perform appropriate actions in each moment of everyday life.

6. *Decorum* as a Category for Everyday Aesthetics

This short historiographical journey has shown that the notion of convenience has crossed several cultural fields (philosophy, rhetoric, art, good manners) and has received many names (*prepon, decorum, decor, biénseance*). What remains to be investigated is whether this notion can be rightfully credited with exemplary value with regard to everyday aesthetics.

Although Cicero presents *prepon/decorum* as operating within every aspect of life, the propounders of Everyday Aesthetics do not seem to be familiar with the Greek-Latin notion, despite often speaking of fitness for purpose and convenience in relation to circumstances.

Within the Anglo-American contemporary debate, only Glenn Parson and Allen Carlson (2008, pp. 2-4) directly refer to the Socratic *prepon* in order to provide their theory of functional beauty with a historical foundation. However, their inquiry focuses on the question of whether beauty results from 'being fit' or 'looking fit' for function. They thus forget that, according to the rhetorical theory of *prepon/decorum*, there is no dyscrasia between the two options. Both Aristotle and Cicero (*De or.* III, 45, 179) conceive the perfection of the discourse on the model of the human body, that is beautiful because each organ fits its specific function. Following the rhetorical tradition, the architect Leon Battista Alberti compares buildings to living organisms ("a building is very like an animal"; Alberti 1988, IX, 5, p. 301), and on this ground points to the unity of 'being' fitting to purpose and 'looking' fitting to purpose:

> Take the case of a horse: they realized that where the shape of each member looked suitable for a particular use, so the whole animal itself would work well in that use. Thus, they found that grace of form could never be separated or divorced from suitability for use. (Alberti 1988, VI, 3, p. 158)

Without mentioning rhetoric but staying in the same line, Jane Forsey (2013, p. 238) connects the idea of function with those of 'character' and 'active use' that are reminiscent of the Aristotelian ideas of 'character' and 'enèrgheia'[4]: "The functional beauty [...] marks out its everyday character, which can be experienced only through active use as demanding singular and specific attention".

Closer to Everyday Aesthetics, the contributions of Japanese-American scholar Yuriko Saito and Finnish philosopher Ossi Naukkarinen deserve particular attention here.

In her famous book *Everyday Aesthetics* (2007, p. 7), focusing on "the care and

[4] According to Aristotles, (Met. IX, 6, 1048b e) the act (enérgheia) is the existence itself of the object.

respect for the materials, users, and dwellers", Saito echoes, unawarely, the notion of appropriateness or adaptedness to purpose already developed in the classical era through the Greek word *prepon* and the Latin *decorum*.

Furthermore, while repeatedly mentioning Archibald Alison, Saito mainly references his association theory and the emotions evoked by natural environments. She therefore does not seem to grasp the sense of Alison's contribution to the development of an idea of beauty as aptness or fitness to purpose.[5] As already discussed elsewhere (Di Stefano 2020), Alison retrieves, without particular theoretical rigor, the topos of the expressive qualities of architectural orders[6], which is first to be found in Vitruvius's *De architectura*, but then focuses in particular on everyday objects. Concerning furniture, machines and tools, he claims, "nor is there any form which does not become beautiful, where it is found to be perfectly adapted to its end." (Alison 1821, p. 281)

Although Saito (2017, p. 125) discusses the issue of the appropriateness of clothing to different circumstances and cultures, she fails to acknowledge that Alison had already developed a wide investigation on this topic. According to the Scottish philosopher, no garment is beautiful in absolute terms: the colours of clothes should fit the situation and the person wearing them (Alison 1821, pp. 176-178). Bright colours suit young people, sober ones the elderly, and the colours of a prince's garments are different from those of a farmer: "the dresses in every particular performance had some relation to the character of that performance, and to the emotion it is destined to excite in our mind." (Alison, 1821, p. 247)

Alison's remarks influenced the American cultural debate of the late nineteenth century and had an impact on the theoreticians of modern functionalism. One can indeed hear the echo of Alison's words in American sculptor Horatio Greenough, one of the greatest propounders of American functionalism (Ringe, 1960, pp. 314-321), as he says that: "The most beautiful chairs invite you by a promise of ease." (Greenough, 1947, p. 122) According to Greenough, beauty is the 'promise of function' and it expresses a proportion in relation to action and character.[7] Alison also influenced Ralph Waldo Emerson, who established an insoluble connection between beauty and convenience.[8] Along the line traced by Greenough and Emerson, also Louis H. Sullivan developed contributions which have earned him the title of father of modern functionalism (Di Stefano 2012).

Over the centuries the category of *decorum* has undergone several

5 See Tatarkiewicz (1980), pp. 159-161, in particular on Alison, p. 161.

6 Alison (1821, p. 256) claims: "The Tuscan is distinguished by its severity; the Doric by its simplicity; the Ionic by its elegance; the Corinthian and Composite by their lightness and gaiety. To these characters, their several ornaments are suited with consummate taste."

7 Greenough (1947, p. 71) points out: "I define Beauty as the promise of Function; Action as the presence of Function; Character as the record of Function [...] but so long as there is yet a promise of function there is beauty, proportioned to its relation with action or with character."

8 See Hopkins (1951, pp. 78-80).

transformations in relation to its different philosophical backgrounds. In Saito's contributions, for instance, the care for the materials, the users, and the inhabitants is enriched with perceptual and sensorial nuances previously unheard of, especially in the aesthetic debate predating the eighteenth century. As a result, Saito's concept of convenience acquires connotations which are closer to sensibility than to normativity. The importance given to sensibility is clearly expressed when Saito attempts to reconcile aesthetic and functional criteria in the design of objects and buildings, by emphasizing the need to take into account the physical and psychological effects that objects and environments will produce in their users: "a design process also engages the moral capacity of care and respect for other people", overall people with special needs, for instance, children, elderly people, patients, people with disabilities and refugees (Saito 2017, p. 227).

Along the same line Saito polemicizes against the narcissistic and self-referential trends in contemporary architecture, which make it arrogant if not alienating, and hopes instead for "an architecture of courtesy and attention." (Saito 2007, p. 221)

Connecting the field of architecture and good manners, Saito is unconsciously in line with Tristan Edward's teaching (Edward 1944), who wrote a book titled *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture*, thus reconciling the two evolutionary lines of *decorum*: the architectural theory and the behavioural precepts. According to the Welsh architectural critic and town planner, there are selfish and presumptuous buildings, like skyscrapers, or even rude buildings. To contrast these, he suggested polite and sociable buildings.

As we have seen, courtesy would in origin stand for the respect of given rules of conduct and the being endowed with certain virtues (kindness, generosity) which used to be a prerequisite for the members of the court. In a leap from the Renaissance to the present time, within the line of the notion of appropriateness and convenience applied to everyday behaviour, the remarks on tact presented by another supporter of Everyday Aesthetics, the Finnish scholar Ossi Naukkarinen, find an appropriate collocation. He claims that tact is to be understood as a behavioural mode which is appropriate to given circumstances and respectful of others (Naukkarinen 2014). To behave tactfully is really important in all those sectors where a given behavioural etiquette is in place (e.g. at work; in politics; in social relations).

In the globalized and multiethnic world of today, it is easy to crash against customs stemming from different cultural values and behavioural norms. In this context, to use tact means to follow a form of sensibility related to the situation, selecting actions based on circumstances.

7. Conclusion

Following Władisław Tatarkiewicz's example and traced path, I tried to show that, since Antiquity and through the Renaissance, *decorum* has been a category encompassing both objects and practices of everyday life as well as the principle that regulated appropriate behaviour.

Although it might at first seem a normative principle, since Antiquity *decorum* has had an ancipital meaning: it has both a normative aspect and an aspect connected to natural instinct. The former appears to be prominent in rhetoric and architecture, where the fitting ornaments for each discourse (rhetorical figures) and for each building are established. The notion of aptness regulates also the design of objects and affects also the realm of behaviour, whenever strict rules of conduct need to be followed (e.g. etiquette, diplomacy). However, rules do not always provide the fitting solution in relation to changing circumstances, and a natural instinct need to take over. In the realm of social relations, this kind of sensibility is called tact.

By means of this short historical journey, I have tried to demonstrate to what extent the concept of *decorum* has pervaded all spheres of everyday life and to what extent it not only belongs to the categories of everyday aesthetics, but it also allows us to trace the history of Everyday Aesthetics before its official birth.

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Modes of Experience: Everyday Aesthetics Between *Erlebnis*, *Erfahrung*, and *Lebenswelt*

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This paper focuses on the notion of experience, whose conceptual analysis seems to be often neglected or at least not sufficiently made explicit in the current discourse on Everyday Aesthetics. In our investigation this notion will be tackled, in particular, through the lens of such concepts as *Erlebnis, Erfahrung*, and *Lebenswel*t, which are drawn from the continental philosophical tradition. Purpose of the paper is to present a provisional framework aimed at clarifying that a more accurate conceptualization of experience allows for a better contemporary reflection on the aesthetics of everyday life. | Keywords: *Aesthetic Experience, Erlebnis, Erfahrung, Lebenswelt, Everydayness*

1. Experience as Everyday Aesthetics' Underlying Core Concept

As it developed over the last few decades, Everyday Aesthetics has established itself as a sub-discipline that deals with phenomena that are also (if not, at least in some cases, somewhat exclusively) located outside the perimeter of a culturally defined sphere such as that of the Fine Arts. In an attempt to delineate its own research scope, this sub-discipline has therefore been mainly concerned with understanding whether the boundaries of the aesthetic are or are not to be traced with respect to the art world. As is well known, the views that have emerged in this regard diverge. In order to bring these differences to the fore, these views have been categorized on the basis of various oppositional labels, such as, for instance, 'weak-strong' (Dowling 2010; Ratiu 2013; Forsey 2014), 'expansionist-restrictivist' (Leddy 2015; Puolakka 2017), 'continuist-discontinuist' (Matteucci 2016). Another way of describing these views has been provided by Shusterman (2012), by stressing a 'transfiguration-

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ordinariness' opposition originally meant to highlight a different conception of the aesthetic in general. A comparison between these dichotomic couples can be found in the overview offered by Iannilli (2018; 2019).

Rather than returning to the terms at issue in these disputes, here we would like to address a question that underlies them and yet, as such, seems to us to have usually been ignored. Whatever the answers or types of answers to the question about the relationship between everyday aestheticity and artistic aestheticity are, in our opinion the everyday aesthetician should first of all clarify what notion of experience he or she adopts in carrying out his or her analyses. Actually, while there has often been an interest in discussing what an *aesthetic* experience is, or how it is configured, there has unfortunately been a neglect in clarifying in what sense one can speak of an aesthetic *experience*, while naïvely assuming that the notion of 'experience' can be considered univocal and unambiguous and, hence, universally acceptable.

This neglect risks being a reason for developing an unclear or flawed theoretical approach. This undoubtedly affects what has seemed so far to be the main question of Everyday Aesthetics, which lies at the core of the abovementioned controversies on the specificity of the everyday (non-artistic) mode of the aesthetic. Much of what has been discussed in this regard might perhaps be part of an unintentional comparison between alternative models not of the aesthetic, but of experience. It is no coincidence that such debates do not seem to adequately emphasize the fact that Everyday Aesthetics implies a mapping of experience as such and, consequently, a particular conceptualization of it, even prior to a determination of the aesthetic dimension. If the model of experience one wants to enforce in the description is not made clear, the risk is to be unable to compare the different strategies of articulation offered by Everyday Aesthetics. One question that needs to be asked, then, is whether there are conceptual models of experience that prove particularly fruitful for addressing the analysis of the aesthetic in its everyday mode, that is, beyond (or outside) the territory of the arts at least potentially.

We believe that one of the strengths of Everyday Aesthetics is having challenged the possibility to define the aesthetic starting from the identification of specific objects (just like artworks, in the case of the classical approach of aesthetics). Instead of selecting a circumscribed set of objects, Everyday Aesthetics invites us to see or consider the aesthetic in its concretization in practices, processes, actions, gestures, and behaviours. In our opinion, this means equating the aesthetic with an experiential dimension. Therefore, the question whether there are well-defined contents that belong to the proper domain of the aesthetic can be left aside at first. Instead, the question of what conception of experience might be able to accommodate this same dimension cannot be avoided, all the more so because the experience at issue here, in our specific framework, must be clearly compatible with the characterization of everydayness. It is not, therefore, a matter of an experience (or a conception of it) established starting from the exceptionality or extraordinariness of some culturally defined contents, regardless of how much one might leave open the possibility that there is a continuity between such

an operative dimension in the everyday and some cultural manifestations that are strongly characterized in some sense. And even in the case in which it is believed that the aesthetic in the everyday possesses its own extraordinariness (which is uncertain anyway), it would still be necessary to justify this belief by starting from an everyday flow which, as such, is not exceptional or ordinary.

The work we present here is a theoretical sketch, whose aim is to outline what is currently an ongoing research project. For this reason, we will simply proceed on the level of a conceptual characterization, retrieving or drawing from the contributions of some of those who, in an exemplary way, have placed the notion of experience at the centre of their philosophical analysis. As a sketched proposal, this work cannot but be programmatic. We will limit ourselves to provide general indications with generic references aimed at establishing connections between continental philosophical traditions and Everyday Aesthetics.

2. Between *Erlebnis* and *Erfarhung*: Starting from Walter Benjamin and Georg Simmel

We have just said that the ordinariness of the aesthetic is what Everyday Aesthetics deems relevant. But what does it mean to speak of 'non-exceptional' or 'ordinary' experience in our historical context? Today, the conspicuous or even emphatic practices of production, promotion and consumption of 'certain' experiences, also thanks to the so-called new technologies, are indeed widespread, and precisely on an aesthetic basis. Let's just think of the countless phenomena of aestheticization of the everyday that populate our real and virtual environments today. Moreover, all this is clearly related to the fact that the sub-disciplinary path of Everyday Aesthetics began in the 1990s, namely the historical moment in which a phenomenon such as aestheticization took off and spread widely. This connection between the flourishing of Everyday Aesthetics and the advent of aestheticization is not secondary at all (Matteucci, 2017). As a consequence, we can say that Everyday Aesthetics, and its inherent way of conceiving of experience, answers to processes of radical transformation of experiential regimes, also on the basis of technological advances.

From this point of view there are important analogies between our historical-anthropological context and the context that fuelled the thought of Walter Benjamin, who tried to identify and interpret the violent impacts brought about by metropolitan reality and mass culture. Also for this reason Benjamin's reflection on experience can serve as a trigger or starting point for our investigation.

More specifically, it is useful to recall Benjamin's stance here because of the conceptual typology he proposes. In his essay *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire* (Benjamin, 1939), by exploiting a terminological richness of the German language that has no counterpart in English, Benjamin distinguishes between experience as *Erlebnis* and experience as *Erfahrung*. These are two crucial terms in the history of philosophical thought (on this, with reference to Everyday Aesthetics, see also Ratiu (2017, pp. 40-43)). If *Erfahrung* generally amounts to

what is defined as 'experience', *Erlebnis* has no corresponding unambiguous single term in English. It is usually translated as 'lived experience', as if it were a specification of experience in general or as if it designated that particular portion of the experience that is, indeed, 'lived'. To grasp the nuanced meaning implied by the two German terms, however, it is useful to take into consideration their respective etymologies.

Erfahrung comes from the verb *erfahren* and therefore from *fahren*, which means 'to travel'; instead, *Erlebnis* comes from the verb *erleben* and therefore from *leben*, which means 'to live'.[1] In both cases there is the prefix 'er-', which makes the subsequent verb transitive. Consequently, in the first case, experience is understood as taking a journey that makes what is encountered along the way become a content of the journey itself; it is as if along the way what is encountered turned from an obstacle into a 'baggage' that the traveller collects and carries with him or her in the continuation of the journey. An eminent philosophical example can help clarify what we mean. Think, for instance, of that "Experience of Consciousness" (*Erfahrung des Bewußtseins*) whose "science" (*Wissenschaft*) Hegel outlines in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807). He describes it precisely as the integration in consciousness of the various "determined negations" that consciousness absorbs in itself in the course of the journey it makes to progressively rise as "Absolute Spirit". Should the English grammar allow it, we would have to say that experiencing as *erfahren* means 'to travel something'.

With *Erlebnis*, on the other hand, experience is understood as 'to live something', just as one experiences a circumstance (i.e., being abroad) savouring, so to speak, a certain situation (i.e., being on vacation) and so forth. The function of the prefix 'er-', in this case, is to present life as a relational operativity, and not as a mere indistinct flow. If the *Leben selbst* is the relentless flow of life, the *Erleben* is the process of moving about in a vital relationship until assuming a (also reflective) stance within it.

In order to fully grasp the conceptual polarity in question, one should not consider *Erlebnis* as a subset of *Erfahrung* in general. Instead, one should make a distinction between 'experience as a journey' (*Erfahrung*) on the one hand, and 'experience as life' (*Erlebnis*) on the other. There would then be a further complication to be taken into account, due to the fact that while the ending '-ung' of the term *Erfahrung* indicates the taking place of an action, the ending '-nis' of the term *Erlebnis* indicates the abstract property that is realized in an action. But for our purposes this further complication can be neglected here.

Starting from this terminological-conceptual distinction, Benjamin defines two experiential regimes that are tendentially opposed. In particular, he pays attention to the experiences of shock that are 'lived' (precisely!) in

[1] The *Erlebnis/Erfahrung* distinction on the basis of the identification of the difference between *leben* and *fahren* has also been explored, albeit within the framework and with the partiality of the hermeneutic-ontological tradition, by Amoroso (1988, pp. 13–45). This text also offers precious indications on the history of the concept of *Erlebnis* from its origin in the *Goethezeit* until its revival in Husserl, also in relation to the notion of *Lebenswelt*, which will be dealt with later in this paper.

the metropolises, namely the scenario for Baudelaire's poetry. Such *Erlebnisse* are linked to sensationalism, to what is emphatic, to what is even more liable to manipulation and commodification. Now, in his view, such a way of living contrasts with the integration in which experience is accomplished as a journey, namely *Erfahrung*, in the sense that it narrows its space or scope. The more one is engaged in living the environment, in dealing with its stimuli and shocks, the more one reduces the ability to sediment, to let 'settle' the contents of his/her own interaction with the environment. This way of experiencing fails in making that interaction an integrated baggage of experience, and thus in fully actualizing its expressive potential.

It is not hard to see that in this contraposition, the pole of *Erfahrung* has a priority, or at least a more positive connotation. This latter seems to bring with it a characterization of experience in a fuller sense. Consequently, we will have to say that whatever has the character of shock, of trauma, and is encountered in an environment saturated with stimuli, which is embodied in Benjamin's time by the metropolis (particularly, in Baudelaire's case, by Paris), denies experience in the proper sense. Thus, if experience in general and without characterizations is *Erfahrung, Erlebnis* becomes the way to express a lesser form of it, in terms of something that tends to impoverish it.

Benjamin is not entirely unprecedented in this analysis. His diagnosis concerning the characterization of life in the metropolis echoes a theme that was already addressed by Georg Simmel. In his celebrated essay *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903), Simmel similarly contrasts metropolitan and non-metropolitan life. In fact, we could even say that Benjamin focused on and clarified the technical terms which he found useful for retrieving a Simmelian antinomic relationship. In fact, Simmel grasps this tension when describing the relationship between the shock of metropolitan frenzy and the progressive sedimentation of the slow, cyclical temporality of non-metropolitan life. Suffice it to consider that experience as *Erfahrung* is described by Benjamin in a way that recalls the characteristics of non-metropolitan life highlighted by Simmel, namely in relation to the cyclical and ritual recurrence of civil and religious festivities that make a community cohesive. It is in such situations that experiences resonate in the current moment as endowed with meaningfulness, while integrating tradition and expectation, past and future. Hence, experience as *Erfahrung* is charged with the potential of auraticity, while *Erlebnis* is a contraction in the moment involving the negation and disappearance of any echo of an aura.

Thus, to go back to another of Benjamin's all-too-famous theses, the experience of *Erfahrung* seems to take place in relation to that same aesthetic dimension of the aura that was in force before the age of mechanical and technical reproducibility of art. An auratic art that would be the 'object' of an *Erfahren* would now be replaced by an art that is no longer auratic, but the object of a mere *Erleben*. The antinomic matrix introduced by Simmel in his analysis of the two experiential regimes, would thus seem to be not only resumed, but even radicalized in Benjamin's analysis.

Indeed, with his own analysis Benjamin also underlines how an incessant, everyday, ordinary increase in shock produces a growing numbing of the ability to relate with the environment that results in a true anaesthesia. Busy with parrying the blows that come from the hectic environment in which it is immersed, the consciousness would not have the necessary energy to dwell in the expressive relationship with the context and therefore to integrate its potential into its baggage. What fails in the regime of *Erlebnis* would be, in other words, the aesthetic ability to relate with the environment that, instead, is reflected in the sense of aura that surrounds the experiential regime of *Erfahrung*. The loss of experience-*Erfahrung*, thus, would also mean a loss of aestheticity.

In this regard too, Benjamin's debt to Simmel cannot be ignored. The analysis of the metropolitan *viveur* offered by Benjamin seems to recall, in fact, that of the attitude of the *blasé* developed by Simmel. Both are so immersed in the sensationalistic spectacles of the metropolis that they are no longer impressed by anything. Their gaze shows the same detached indifference that is obtained through habituation. Therefore, it is quite telling that Benjamin's metropolitan *viveur* is embodied by a borderline case of a traveller (i.e., a potential subject of *Er-fahrung*), namely, the *flâneur* who strolls in slow motion at the pace of the turtles he walks on a leash.[2] According to this diagnosis, the regime of *Erlebnis* contracts the journey to the point of shattering it into atomic, crystallized, repetitive instants. Experience is no longer articulated, is no longer *Erfahrung*, and loses the potential connection with an aura.

On a closer look, this has several interesting implications in relation to the topic of everydayness, and therefore for the framework of an Everyday Aesthetics. As an *Erlebnis*, experience becomes an-aesthetic precisely in becoming everyday, in becoming no longer extraordinary and incapable of dynamism. In other terms, *Erlebnis* denotes an experience that is of an everyday kind precisely to the extent that it is no longer sensitively pregnant or expressive – like the haughty eyes of the *blasé*, which never return a meaningful correspondence to those who meet them. Therefore, according to this typological thesis that Simmel lays out as an antinomy and Benjamin dialectically retrieves, the increase in shock, or the increase in shocking interactions would be a sign of the loss of both aestheticity and experientiality in the proper sense (here the close nexus between these two elements is indeed to be stressed). Precisely to the extent that all this becomes everyday and familiar, experience would result in a loss of aestheticity.

3. Beyond Benjamin's Typology

All this constitutes a significant conceptual problem for the everyday aesthetician. Indeed, if the everydayness of *Erlebnis* amounts to a dissolution of aestheticity, the very notion of Everyday Aesthetics turns out to be inconsistent or oxymoronic. The apparent corollary of Benjamin's analysis is that when we speak of aesthetics in an everyday mode we are at best speaking of something that is inherently deficient from an experiential point of view.

[2] Benjamin (1939, p. 282) recalls how "around 1840 it was briefly fashionable to take a turtle for a walk in the arcades" by the first *flâneurs*.

Insofar as *Erlebnis* is the effect of a mere stimulus, a reaction to a shock, our lived everyday experience would be reduced to a clash with the surrounding reality. Hence, our everyday would not generate anything that could be considered authentically experiential in a properly aesthetic sense. So the loss of the aura that resonates in Benjamin's concept of *Erfahrung* is *tout court* the collapse of the aesthetic into an empty lived everydayness. As a consequence, from the point of view of an enquiry into the question of experience, the label 'Everyday Aesthetics' risks losing any meaning.

This apparent puzzle, however, is not surprising. In fact, defining everyday (aesthetic) *experience* is far from being a simple task. That's why, insofar as *Erlebnis* is concerned, in order to avoid the risk of lapsing into forms of mechanical reductionism, it is necessary to begin from a sufficiently dynamic and processual vision of experience in general. And it would certainly not help to widen the notion of experience as auratic *Erfahrung* to the point of including extraordinary everyday scenarios.[3] This could lead to a sort of aestheticism of the everyday that sublimates this latter into the artistic to endow it with some sort of aesthetic connotation. Actually, it should be pointed out that this is the path already taken by Benjamin, who in the essay on Baudelaire refers to the involuntary memory described by Proust in order to show a rare, 'happy' case in which an *Erlebnis* turns into *Erfahrung*. So much so that it eventually deserves the prestige of a refined literary narration; indeed, a way of transforming the everyday into an artwork.

It is therefore no coincidence that in Everyday Aesthetics the notion of everyday life tends to lean towards one of the two extremes of habitual and almost mechanical triviality, on the one hand, or of the extraordinary, an almost artistic event, on the other. In this regard, a rather balanced view is that offered by Ossi Naukkarinen (2013), who, in response to Melchionne (2013), defines in a precise manner what it means to be 'everyday' and 'aesthetic' exactly by deepening the dynamic and processual character of the experience as such, with its various gradations of intensity. As Naukkarinen has observed, when one enters the exceptional and the extraordinary, a character of shock emerges, which resembles the *Erlebnis* that is criticized by Benjamin as something not properly experiential and aesthetic. At the very least, according to Naukkarinen, that level should not be attained as a steady condition, as this would be devastating or destabilizing. It is true that one can reach that level in the processuality that constitutes the everyday. In fact, though, when it prevails, one exits the everyday as such. In such instances, the aesthetic that is encountered in an everyday setting configures another type of interaction.

Yet everyday experience is still to be meant as life, since the everyday surroundings are precisely 'lived'. But this is a form of *Erlebnis* that is defined according to a very different meaning from the one against which Benjamin polemicizes. In this regard, it may be useful to recall a different usage of the

[3] This seems to be the direction taken by Leddy (2012), who provides a phenomenological interpretation of Benjamin's notion of aura in order to qualify the everyday as aesthetic. Investigating this, however, would deserve an attention that we cannot provide here for the sake of the discussion.

concept of *Erlebnis* that can be traced back to Wilhelm Dilthey,[4] a philosopher who is regarded as one of the first and main theorists of experience as *Erlebnis*. In Dilthey many of the characteristics attributed by Benjamin exclusively to *Erfahrung* constitute salient aspects of *Erlebnis* as such, starting from its irreducibility to an instantaneous and punctiform event and also from its configurative nature.[5] It is not pointless to note, then, that with his argument against *Erlebnis*, which results in dissociating experience as life from the aesthetic, Benjamin is targeting only a reductive conception of this notion: the one that flourished in Germany in the generations following Dilthey.

On this basis, we could say that, in order to develop an Everyday Aesthetics, it is not enough to use a grid that opposes *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* as merely antinomic experiential modalities (as happens in Simmel) or, at most, as dialectical in an art-centric sense (i.e., such that they can be condensed or synthetized, but only in highly artistic works, as happens for Benjamin with Proust's narrations or with Baudelaire's poems). Taking up a less narrow notion of *Erlebnis*, such as that offered by the line of thought that starts with Dilthey, might help here. One can therefore move away from a view of experience that is centered on the stimulus-response mechanism. Instead, one can start from the emphasization of the performative and expressive component of experiencing. In this way, experience as (everyday) life does not appear as devoid of components of accumulation, sedimentation and stratification, which indeed constitute the aesthetic surroundings of true familiarity.

Familiarity emerges to the extent that there is a continuous texture we are enveloped in, yet not in a single point in time nor on the basis of a dualistic relationship between subject and object. The very sense of familiarity implies a relational field. Not by chance the word familiarity refers to a dense context such as the network of 'relatives', of people one is inherently but multifariously related to. So much so that if we ought to become familiar with an environment that is extraneous to us, we generally build a series of practices that serve as a cocoon-ish dimension within which we move at ease, notwithstanding the individual atomic contents that we encounter in the wider space in which we live. This is an operative mode that remains stable also while the contents on which it is exercised vary, at least within certain limits. We recognize operatively – that is, through use, practice, and behaviours – our points of orientation and reference with respect to the environment around us; way before any conceptual determination (i.e., thematically). The environment possesses a familiar physiognomy, like a face that we know and whose individual features we may not be able to recognize, although it conveys a halo (an aura) of familiarity. In this sense, the experience that seems to be best suited to Everyday Aesthetics, though meant certainly 'as life', cannot be that of shock. It is a sort of *Erlebnis-Erfahrung* at once. So a structural limit of the typology proposed by Benjamin emerges.

4 A similar move is proposed by an anthropologist like Victor Turner (1985 and 1986).

5 For the sake of conciseness see Matteucci (2004, pp. 59-82); see also the aesthetic writings collected in English in Dilthey (1989) and the seminal interpretation provided by Makkreel (1992).

The everyday is, therefore, already 'experience' as a dialectical nexus between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* in the sense in which these notions are defined by Benjamin. As mentioned, the possibility of such a dialectical synthesis was apparent to Benjamin himself, in that he ascribes poetic excellence to Baudelaire (who also investigated such everyday aesthetic phenomena as fashion) precisely for having expressed the connection between these two poles. That is why we have claimed that Benjamin presents a *dialectical* conception of experience considered in the entire *Erfahrung-Erlebnis* arc. And yet, he attributes this synthetic capacity exclusively to art (i.e., Baudelaire's poetry). On the one hand, this solution overcomes the merely antinomic contrast that can still be found in Simmel. On the other hand, however, it is flawed in conceiving this dialectical-aesthetic articulation of experience as possible only at the level of artistic expression, *de facto* overshadowing the level of everydayness.

4. A Little Help from John Dewey

The retrieval of this aesthetic-dialectical characterization of experience within the everyday comes into play through a perspective which is very well-known to everyday aestheticians, and which emerged in a milieu similar to that of Simmel and Benjamin: John Dewey's. A contemporary of Simmel (Dewey was born in 1859 and Simmel in 1858) and active during Benjamin's time (*Art as Experience* was published in 1934), Dewey in turn witnessed the transformations that followed the development of the metropolis and the opposition between experiential regimes.

The kind of experience described above is in fact what Dewey (1934) has in mind when he speaks of having "an experience". Indeed, having an experience does not equate with the *Erlebnis* of a shock that hits and does not develop as such. It is an experiential articulation shaped on the basis of the repetitive *rhythm* of natural cycles, such as the seasons of the year, but also such as certain festive occasions that for Benjamin embody the potentially auratic meaningfulness of *Erfahrung*. Thus, the Deweyan conception of experience stands in some ways on the threshold between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* in the sense we have seen before. It is as if Dewey thematized an experiential field in which two modalities usually thought of as primarily separated or opposed are instead understood as primarily co-operative polarities of a single dense field in which they are therefore integrated.

This integration does not happen only on the emphatic level of artistic configuration, but already in the operative texture of everydayness. In this sense, the relationship between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* in Deweyan terms is an integrated, polar, continuistic one. This is why the conception of experience offered by Dewey is both a strongly unified conception and is also capable of doing justice to the aesthetic dimension of the everyday as such. Above all it does not presume artistic paradigms, despite various misunderstandings of this stance. In this, it is similar to Dilthey's conception of *Erlebnis* as relational rather than as punctiform. Both Dewey and Dilthey speak of an experiencing that emerges according to the rhythm of life (anything but an indistinct flow),

based on a significance (or *Bedeutsamkeit*) that is immanent and intrinsically extra-propositional. And they both connect this significance precisely to the aesthetic, in a very close nexus between sensing and expressing that art 'only' intensifies. While this significance immanent to the experiential field as a correspondence between organism and environment expresses itself, it also confers a sense of familiarity, or inherence to us, on what appears to be an aesthetic phenomenon, thereby giving qualitative importance to *an* experience in the flow of experience. The all-too-famous meal in Paris that Dewey brings as an example counts as an experience not because of its punctiform extraordinariness. The kernel of the question is that its qualitative intensity, which binds together what happened during the meal, is integrated into an individual's life insofar as it will work as an immanent source of salience for this individual to appreciate the significance of the meals he or she will later have. It will become more than a term of similitude. It expresses in itself the multi-aspectual sense that the whole series of events we might label 'Having a Meal' can take on for an individual, by embodying not only what it means to share a meal in good company in a certain environment, but also how a meal can mark a turning point for a person's life, the matrix of experiences with qualitative intensity that are variously constituted, the sense of knowing 'how to be in a situation' that will act as an operative competence at hand, and so forth.

Our proposal, then, is to consider the experientiality promoted by Dewey as an amendment of antinomic or dialectical views that are not entirely integrative and that tend to oppose modalities such as Benjamin's *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* (and it would be interesting to ascertain to what extent this amendment is accidental and to what extent intentional). Our thesis is that on the basis of this integrative model of experientiality we can construct aesthetic practices that are valuable not only to the individual who experiences them in a merely lived moment, but also because they nest and accumulate potentials for meaning that are experienced as familiarity. They can thus become devices also for an intersubjective ecological niche by virtue of the meaningfulness they aesthetically make viable and available. The everyday, caught in this dynamic, expresses an aesthetic familiarity that is not reduced to the present since it interpolates the past, the present and the future, the here and the elsewhere, as Baudelaire's poem *À une passante* analyzed by Benjamin shows in literary terms.

5. The Expressive Import of Familiarity: Experience and *Lebenswelt*

One of the problematic issues this essay aims at delving into can be summarized by the following question: what kind of everyday, or: familiar and non-'exceptional', experience can Everyday Aesthetics be concerned with, particularly in the context of these first decades of the 21st century in which radical processes of aestheticization of experience are widespread? We shall see now that there is a further notion that Everyday Aesthetics might consider in order to become more aware of the implied conception of experience it actually advocates. This is another notion that could be clarified by comparing Everyday Aesthetics as such with an apparently extraneous philosophical tradition.

Everydayness and familiarity do not constitute a monolithic dimension, as we have tried to show. They imply a plethora of aspects dynamically and processually related to each other that are not reducible exclusively to our interactions with and within urban or even metropolitan reality *tout court*. This premise is useful to clarify how our reference to the contributions by Simmel, Benjamin and Dewey in particular is exemplary with respect to the problem of the constitution of familiarity in a context in which the individual and society undergo various stimuli (stimuli that, as we have seen, also exceed the set of those ascribable to the art world). This is because this experience, in some ways, must be very similar to what must have been the experience of the metropolis carried out by the individual at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. Another way to clarify this point is to note how what can be described as the 'metropolitan' character of everyday experience is today experienced online, for example, or digitally. This is an increasingly pervasive environment that may not engage us physically. It does in fact 'furnish' our everyday lives and, in particular since the last two years, it has begun to shape in an unprecedented and meaningful way our idea and practice of familiarity.

In any case, the type of experientiality that is most useful to illustrate this context consists in what emerged in the previous sections: an amendment, in a strongly continuistic and processual Deweyan sense, of the relationship between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* understood either antinomically or dialectically. This is apparent in the fundamentally relational conception presented in Naukkarinen (2013), albeit without the aim of programmatically bringing to the fore the philosophical references involved in the discourse. Given the purpose of our essay, however, it seems worthwhile to carry out a further exploration of the references underlying the conception of everyday experience *sub specie aesthetica* promoted by a contemporary Everyday Aesthetics.

The amendment of the described modes of experience in a Deweyan sense implies the idea of an almost tacit, operative sedimentation, a subsistence of experience in a state of potential meaningfulness, that can acquire the connotation of particularity and perspicuity and that can therefore also, yet not necessarily, be thematized. At a closer look, this conception is not far from that which connotes another fundamental concept coined within the continental philosophical tradition: that of *Lebenswelt* understood as a 'fabric' of continuity of practices with a strong intersubjective connotation. The in-depth study of this aspect through key points will allow us ultimately, in this concluding section, to further clarify what we mean by 'the expressive import of familiarity'.

Synthetically, the concept of *Lebenswelt* as it was first thematized in Husserl's late philosophy (see especially Husserl (1936)) has to do with the plane of knowledge. The peculiarity of this concept lies in being perceived as 'natural', 'given', and at the same time being constituted, namely historical. In Husserl's reflection, it concerns the set of sedimented pre-Galilean knowledge that is disrupted by the arrival of Galileo and modern science.

On the other hand, by developing the discourse *sub specie aesthetica*, the plane on which we move properly concerns the constitution of *Lebenswelt* on a different basis. In this context, in particular, we would like to dwell on the plane of expressivity. Clearly, we do not mean to claim that the question can be wholly resolved on such a plane. Yet, we believe that it can exemplify in a particularly fruitful way the connotation of meaningfulness that, previously, we have already ascribed to what has been called a nexus between sensing and expressing as distinctive of the aesthetic.

We refer to *Lebenswelt* when we speak of a pervasive, operative, even implicit fabric or set of practices, ideas, values, etc., that we share to a greater or lesser extent with other conspecifics with whom we happen to live together in different contexts. As such, *Lebenswelt* would seem to coincide with a dimension of familiarity, of everydayness. But is it really so? Our thesis is that between everydayness and the *lebensweltich* dimension of experience there is a relationship of dynamic continuity and reciprocity, which therefore cannot be thought of as an identity relationship. Everydayness is a peculiar configuration of aspects of a background that is not properly of an everyday kind precisely because it is *lebensweltlich*. This configuration is peculiar because it is not always conscious, and above all not always carried out on a propositional level. It is a way of making those background aspects perspicuous and salient, of making them more explicit, of bringing them from the background to the foreground. Exactly this transition is described by the integration between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* according to the conception of experience we outlined before.

Has Everyday Aesthetics ever been aware of these layers? Only partially.

Fruitful indications about this issue can be found in the relatively recent literature that has appeared in this field. Although different labels are sometimes used, it seems to us that the distinctions that are made there are consistent with those we advocate. In this key, it is interesting to mention some attempts to distinguish and link different but related levels in which everyday experience would take place.

First of all we can mention Haapala (2017), in partial continuity with Haapala (2005), where a distinction is proposed between a 'lived world', or individual level of experience, and a 'life world', or collective, cultural, social level of experience. The two levels are intertwined into a circular relationship based on the temporal aspect of experience. Then we can recall Naukkarinen and Vasquez (2017), in which a distinction is made between a 'daily life' experience and an 'everyday' experience. The former is understood as a non-thematized background imbued with routines, while the latter is seen as the emergence, from the almost imperceptible flow of routine, of a particular type of pattern that corresponds to the everyday, which the authors see as a stance we take towards our daily life. We can then recall Ratiu (2017) resorting to a Gadamerian (see Gadamer (1960)) phenomenological-hermeneutical reading of the notions of *Erlebnis* as a lived and immediate experience in which consciousness is intentionally directed to phenomena, and of *Erfahrung* as

an experience derived from an interpretive activity that occurs temporally. Both of them would equally be part of the *Lebenswelt* of which also Ratiu emphasizes therefore both the individual and cultural-intersubjective dimension.

Three more examples are in line with this path. Formis (2010) discerns what she defines as the *ordinaire* (the ordinary) from the *quotidien* (the everyday). On the one hand, *ordinaire* would be a more general, even transcendental, collective and potential mode of living. On the other hand, *quotidien* would be a dimension with a specific and actual spatiality and temporality which includes the various, single applications of this general mode. In other terms, the ordinary would be an invariable, universal dimension of experience, while the everyday would be the form, or the set of forms, it can take on, variably. Matteucci (2019) focuses on the relationship between an "aspectual complex" and a niche. He holds that our everyday is what stems out of our encounter with such a complex: it is a scenario as a *pars pro toto* of a "niche" that we inhabit. Finally Iannilli (2020) addresses the relationship between backgrounds and foregrounds. She holds that our everyday, our familiarity, consists in a "fully rounded out" area of experience that emerges from something that (following the corresponding mathematical concept) she labels "neighborhoods". In the first case, "fully rounded out" would be a rather (i.e., contingently, dynamically, processually, non-essentially) stable, focused, saturated, foreground that we deem our own, personal, familiar. In the second case, "neighborhood" would be a proximal surrounding in which we are immersed, an environment, a milieu, a background that we share with others.

Going back to our issue, we can say that in all these cases everydayness, or familiarity, is meant as a way of expressing *Lebenswelt* in a specific present context. It should be noted that when we say 'expressing' we also imply a shift from a density (the dense texture of the *Lebenswelt* in which we are immersed) to a discreteness (the recognizability of the familiar, everyday space, that we experience as our own), in which very particular structured forms emerge. *Lebenswelt,* in other words, is denser and finds specific emergencies and expressions in everyday familiarity. Here, namely between the two layers, there is an expressive nexus.

The distinction at issue concerns, on the one hand, operating in an automatic way when one is immersed in environments that are taken for granted in their functioning, and, on the other hand, sensing that some aspects of this fabric actually possess some kind of 'viscosity' that is not reducible to cognitive recognition, but as such are savored as one's own and therefore as familiar and everyday. An example may help to understand the point. Belonging to *Lebenswelt* is the set of practices that are carried out when one enters a coffee shop in general by performing a series of gestures that are perceived as 'normal': one approaches a counter, orders a coffee, buys it, waits for the order to be completed, drinks it and leaves. All these gestures imply the acquisition of a competence on how to activate as effective devices the elements that 'furnish' the surrounding space according to their operative expressiveness ('operative' in the sense of the German *fungierend*, which is

proper to the phenomenological lexicon). One will be rude or well-mannered, but also evidently local or foreigner, depending on the degree to which this competence is shared. One thus remains within the perimeter of the impersonality of the *Lebenswelt*. Moreover, though, when all of this acquires the hue of familiarity, these same gestures, far from losing their automatism feature, are in fact charged with a *peculiar*[6] expressive value. It is *that* counter that is approached, *that* 'usual' coffee that is ordered, *that* familiar face to whom one smiles that is serving us, *that* way home that we take as we leave the place, etc. In the familiar surroundings, thus articulated, the traits of a *Lebenswelt* become aspects that can be quasi-formalized in a precise surrounding that is traced by the everydayness of those who inhabit it by virtue of its expressive import. It is as if we crossed the threshold that leads from impersonality to a personal domain that is not necessarily, entirely and immediately private.

This, indeed, does not mean that *Lebenswelt* needs familiarity to become expressive. *Lebenswelt* is a network of expressive correspondences between organisms and environment on a perceptual basis. Let's just think of the role played by affordances in the creation of the networks of automatisms that are implemented in our social reality. The question is thus of a different kind. On this same non-cognitive but aesthetic basis, *Lebenswelt* can find a more explicit manifestation and expression in the experiential nuclei of familiarity and everydayness precisely when these are actually practiced by this organism in this environment in a certain way, or according to a certain style. Then the more implicit *Lebenswelt* becomes that everydayness, that familiarity. Indeed, the same *Lebenswelt* can become many different everydaynesses, many different familiarities, depending on the moment and context. It is as if, in the shift from *Lebenswelt* to familiarity or everydayness, the impersonal and purely operative content of the former is reduced through experiential forms that tend to take on a more clear-cut configuration that traces specific familiar surroundings.

This passage leads us to a further feature of the relationship between *Lebenswelt* and everydayness. In both cases, a principle of stability, of sedimentation, is in force, despite the fact that, at the same time, a dynamic continuity and mutual transformation processes are also in force. If what has been said so far is true, *Lebenswelt* is dynamic and fluid in a higher degree than familiarity, or everydayness. The latter requires *de facto* a greater level of qualitative stability, otherwise it would not be felt as familiar, everyday. To go back to our example of the coffee shop, what is at stake is not experiencing with 'a' counter but with 'that' counter. This, as already mentioned, obviously does not prevent us from becoming familiar with 'things' other than our own nucleus of familiarity and everydayness by virtue of our *Lebenswelt*. But this eventually produces a process of modification of what we experience as familiar and everyday. In other words, *Lebenswelt* and familiarity are both dynamic but at different rates, so to speak, or with different degrees.

[6] This qualification is used "intransitively", as in those enunciations like "this soap has a *peculiar* smell", which Wittgenstein deals with for instance in Wittgenstein (1958, p. 158).

Sedimentation and transformation, operativity and expressiveness, potential making sense and actual practice of making sense are clearly the cornerstones of this relationship. And in our opinion, they further corroborate the thesis that has been argued so far, according to which what is proper to (a contemporary) Everyday Aesthetics is an integrative mode of experience that has these very characteristics. Namely, Everyday Aesthetics should not reduce its discourse or even itself to the extremes of 'pure' and 'uncontaminated' low-key ordinariness on the one hand, or the aesthetically validating, striking exceptionality on the other. In this sense, thanks to the mediation of *Lebenswelt* in its aesthetic acceptation, it would overcome the opposition between two conceptions that are both reductive as far as experience-*Erlebnis* and experience-*Erfahrung* are concerned.

6. Conclusion

The path we attempted to trace ends here. It was meant to show how Everyday Aesthetics could (or perhaps should) reconsider today important references that have generally been kept outside of its own focus due to the temporal and geographical origins of the sub-discipline. As a matter of fact, although the historical origins of Everyday Aesthetics are well delimited temporally (the 1990s or so) and geographically (the United States and Northern Europe, in particular Finland), its roots seem to lie in a context that is geographically broader and historically deeper. This reconsideration can happen once the problem of experience is grasped in its centrality for establishing a research program that addresses the aesthetic dimension of everyday life in a theoretically aware manner.

The integrative nexus of the *Erlebnis-Erfahrung* polarity brings together references such as Simmel and Benjamin (as well as Dilthey). Moreover, through the retrieval of the notion of *Lebenswelt*, it leads to a reconsideration of the phenomenological matrix of Everyday Aesthetics while showing a fruitful convergence with its more usual pragmatist matrix. We believe that, in order to help Everyday Aesthetics fully take root in the context of the European continental tradition, these passages concerning the notion of experience can play a role that is by no means secondary. Namely, they can help specify those modes of the aesthetic that today dominate our technologically infrastructured ecological niche, which makes the Everyday Aesthetics' program even more urgent.

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The Dialectic of Presence and Interpretation in Everyday Aesthetics: Applying Heidegger and Gumbrecht to a Walk in One's Neighborhood

Thomas Leddy

Gumbrecht's Heidegger-inspired book, *Production of Presence*, provides valuable tools for resolving issues in everyday aesthetics. Gumbrecht distinguishes between "presence cultures" and "interpretation cultures." (Gumbrecht 2004) We live in an interpretation culture, and yet even in our culture there are presence effects. Gumbrecht understands aesthetic experience in terms of the idea of presence. His paradigms are great works of art and great athletic events, all of which take us away from the everyday. I argue that his theory can be adapted, ironically, to everyday aesthetics, in particular to the experience of taking a walk. Much of what we experience aesthetically while taking a walk is experienced in the mode of silence. But, as Gumbrecht observes, there is an oscillation between presence effects and interpretation effects in aesthetic experience. I see that oscillation as something more like a dialectic. I also bring Plato's theory of beauty and Danto's theory of the artworld into this discussion. | Keywords: *Everyday Aesthetics, Presence, Gumbrecht, Heidegger, Walking*

1. Introduction

This issue of ESPES is devoted to the application of European philosophical traditions to everyday aesthetics. My contribution will be drawing on Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art* by way mostly of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's reading in his *Production of Presence* (2004). Although Gumbrecht has little or nothing to say about everyday aesthetics in that book (it is mainly about literary appreciation and the future of the humanities) his understanding of presence provides some helpful direction for the new sub-discipline of everyday aesthetics.

The terms ‘presence’ and ‘presencing’ should not be confused with another Heideggerian use of “presence” and correlated use of “present.” Heidegger speaks critically of the “metaphysics of presence,” specifically of Aristotle’s privileging of the present, ignoring the dimensions of the past and future, in his interpretation of time. In doing so, he is thinking of the present not only as ‘the now’ but also as eternal presence in the mind of God or in the unchanging laws of science, and really, the way the Forms are said to be eternally the same. Oxford Reference says the term “was used by Heidegger to characterize the central mistake of western metaphysics [...] [a postulation of a] self-knowing and self-propelling autonomous agent, for whom nature exists only in so far as it is present, which means useful” (Chandler and Munday, 2020). Presencing, however, as described by Gumbrecht and adopted here, is not directed towards anything eternal or excluding of the dynamic of past/present/future. Nor does it approach nature as present to an autonomous agent as merely useful. Like Heidegger, Derrida speaks of the metaphysics of presence as, to quote from another encyclopedia article, the “tendency to conceive fundamental philosophical concepts such as truth, reality, and being in terms of ideas such as presence, essence, identity, and origin - and in the process to ignore the crucial role of absence and difference” (Encyclopaedia Brittanica, 2020). Yet the idea of “presencing” in Gumbrecht does not rely on any of this, and in fact Gumbrecht joins Derrida in condemning it. In short, presencing is quite the opposite of what happens in the metaphysics of presence.

Rather it focuses on the material aspect of the object, as something in space. As Heidegger would put it, it directs us to the thingly nature of the thing. But, Gumbrecht argues, we live in an “interpretation [or meaning] culture” which, unlike such previous “presencing cultures” as that of Ancient Greece (emphasized by Heidegger), and medieval culture (emphasized by Gumbrecht), sees material presence as a mere stepping stone to interpretation. Gumbrecht does not favor returning to a presencing culture, but he does believe that we should give credit as much to “presencing effects” as to “meaning effects,” oscillating between these (Gumbrecht, 2004, pp. 2, 19).

Gumbrecht’s position in his book, briefly, is that the humanities have in recent years overemphasized interpretation and have paid too little attention to presencing oneself to the aesthetic object. (This could be seen as a reactive defense of formalism, which always stressed direct confrontation with the art object.) He associates presence culture with medieval culture and meaning culture with modern culture (Gumbrecht, 2004, p. 79), although, as he puts it, “all cultures [...] bring together components of meaning culture and presence culture.” (Ibid.) The dominant idea in a meaning culture is mind and, in a presence culture, body (Ibid., p. 80). I will suggest in this paper that a dialectic between the two represents the best way to handle their natural conflict. And yet this dialectic seems to entail a contradictory way of life, or does it?

The conflict between presence culture and meaning culture, and between presence effects and meaning effects, also takes place in everyday aesthetics. I take daily walks in my neighborhood. These provide me with a multitude of

aesthetic experiences. For example, I am delighted by the colorful kitschy display of blown-up comic-strip characters that currently populate one front yard. I thrill to the view I get of a meandering path in another front yard highlighted in its greens, silvers, and dark shadows by the effects of the setting sun. I am amused by the look of a lady dressed in red, covered in transparent plastic, standing in line in the rain, self-composed. I take such sights and experiences as paradigmatic of everyday aesthetic experience, and I measure aesthetic theories of the everyday by whether or not they can handle them.

Increasingly in my walks I have come to realize that my appreciations are (despite such after-the-fact descriptions as given above) essentially wordless. This poses a problem. How can one discuss, describe, or theorize about something that is wordless? However, I do not want to imply that words play no role in everyday aesthetic experience. First, putting your experience into words helps shape that experience as it expands into memory and in communication with others. Second, insofar as words we read impact us, they also impact the ways we experience the things they describe. They affect even the ways we experience things we never describe through establishing a way of seeing. So, there is a dialectic, but there is also silence.

A poet may describe an experience in his or her medium, and then this description can influence how one sees the phenomenon. An English Department colleague at my university, Alan Soldofsky, recently published a poem, titled *Entitled* (Soldofsky, 2021). It is about pear trees in my neighborhood in Spring. After reading his poem I was able to see those trees differently during my daily walk. Poems consist of words. Evaluations and defenses of functional beauty also use words. For example, one might say that a coffee pot is beautiful and defend this with reference to both functionality and appearance. But even after reading Soldofsky's poem several times I do not have those words in my mind when I notice the way the flowers collect along the curb. Heidegger says language is the house of Being, and yet, perhaps contradictorily, it alternates with silence just as World alternates with Earth, or rather dialectically engages with it in creative agon.

Most philosophical disciplines and sub-disciplines are evaluatively neutral. For example, the theory of justice allows for multiple theories about what justice is, and each theory entails different evaluations. The theory of justice does not in itself imply a way of life. Everyday aesthetics may be different. The subdiscipline itself suggests a way of life, one based on a certain comportment towards things experienced. It suggests (holds? demands?) that one should focus on 'the now', on 'lived experience', on what the senses display. The very existence of the discipline promotes the thought that one ought to focus more on the aesthetic qualities of things of everyday life, on, as Heidegger would put it, listening to Being, rather than as approaching things as mere things, as mere equipment for our use and using up.

Let us now apply this to the daily walk of the community aesthete. Here we are talking about things experienced as they are passed by the walker in the course of walking. The way of life implied by this practice is not only in the habit of

the walk. It is entailed by a way of attending to things while engaging in everyday tasks of many sorts, including washing dishes. This way of life bears some similarity to that of the *flâneur* first described by Baudelaire (Baudelaire, 1995). The *flâneur*, says Baudelaire, is someone with "an insatiable desire for seeing and feeling" and "an excessive love for visible, tangible things" (Baudelaire, 1995, p. 9). To be sure, Baudelaire puts the point in intensely emotional terms. Terms like "insatiable desire" and "excessive love" may be more passionate than we would feel comfortable with today. But there is still desire and love for the contemporary lover of sights and sounds. Of course, the 19th century *flâneur* was limited. For example, he always seemed to be male and well-off, and he tended more to be attracted to crowded urban settings than to walking alone in a neighborhood. He (or, rather, they) might, however, be redefined for our own context as a passionate aesthetic observer of everyday life, someone who seeks "to see the world with the eyes of an artist" (Leddy, 2011, p. 260). This posits the ideal aesthetic walker as descendent of the attitude taken by *artists* towards life as perceived and represented; artists as diverse as Durer, Hopper, Hiroshige, and the Keinholzes. It is a way of life dominated by a non-practical attitude towards perception of the things of everyday life. This attitude might be described as 'worshipful' (a term appropriated from religion) or 'non-alienated' (a term appropriated from Marxism). But perhaps the best way to describe it is Heidegger's "letting beings be."

Also, as noted above, everyday aesthetics is broader than our experience of the contemplative walk. It includes also such things as cleaning the kitchen so that it looks 'spick- and-span'. The moment you look at a kitchen you have cleaned and say (to yourself or aloud) 'good', or something similar, is an aesthetic moment, although simple and at a low level of intensity and complexity. Attending to and enhancing such moments can also be part of a way of life that is aesthetic.

What is the demand of the above-mentioned way of life? It is to pay attention aesthetically to all that is about you, letting beauty and other positive aesthetic qualities emerge where they can. The claim is not that *everything* is beautiful (or aesthetic) but that everything is potentially beautiful, taking 'beauty' broadly, to refer to all positive aesthetic qualities. Only when you take this attitude will you experience the beauty in things. Beauty here is seen as neither objective nor subjective but as emergent from the interaction of the walker and the things perceived in walking.

2. Plato, Surprisingly

There is a passage in Plato's *Symposium* that inspires this thought, although the thought is contrary to Platonism, at least on the standard interpretation, in which Plato is seen as bent on attacking the arts in favor of a transcendent experience of eternal, unchanging Forms, none of this having a dynamic dimension. On the standard view Plato has nothing to say about Beauty, Art and Love other than that they are eternal and unchanging. The *Symposium*, however, goes against all of this. Plato there has Socrates describe

Diotima's view in this way: after advancing up the ladder of love, the neophyte no longer takes delight "like a slave [...] in the beauty of one single thing, whether beauty of a young child or man or of one practice." Rather, "having been turned toward the multitudinous ocean of the beautiful and contemplating it, he begets many beautiful and imposing discourses and thoughts in ungrudging love of wisdom, until, having at this point grown and waxed strong, he beholds a certain kind of knowledge which is one, and such that it is the following kind of beauty" (Plato, 1991, pp. 155, 210d). Note that what is apprehended is not a thing, but "a certain kind of knowledge," i.e., a certain way of knowing things. The phrase "the following kind of beauty" refers to Beauty itself. So, Beauty itself is a way of knowing things. To put it differently, grasping Beauty is grasping *being able* to see the world in a certain knowing way. Four stages are posited here: (1) turning to the multitudinous ocean of beauty, (2) contemplating it, (3) engaging in much impressive talk and thought (presumably philosophical), and (4) beholding and knowing Beauty itself, which is grasping a certain way of knowing.

The neophyte, taking a walk in their neighborhood turns to Beauty as it shows itself in a multitude of places, and contemplates it. The dialogical component comes in as well, not directly, but in the interaction between moments of silent appreciation and another part of life; that devoted to reading, interpretation and critical discussion – what Gumbrecht calls "interpretation effects." Diotima, and presumably Socrates and Plato, would also insist that this is interpersonal: that the quest for Beauty involves a social component, a relation between lover and beloved. This raises a question: how would everyday aesthetics as a practice be possible without an interpersonal dimension, i.e. of friendship or love? Even when walking alone, if there is friendship or love in the home from which one walks, this provides important (although perhaps not necessary) background for openness to beauty.

Note four things:

(1) Plato believes the beauty of "one single thing" distracts from appreciation of the beauty of particular things. This means not that one should avoid seeing beauty in particular things but that to follow this path one needs to open up and get beyond initial narrow passions. The ideal aesthetic walker contemplates each passing sight and moves on, from passion to passion, which is to say from one interesting sight to the next. There are two ways to interpret Plato's idea of "one single thing." The first is to reject individual beauties as worthless. The second, less extreme way, is to only reject exclusive obsession with single things, for example that single person one loves. The first cannot be taken seriously, especially given Plato's stress placed on the interpersonal dimension of love.

(2) Insofar as the student of beauty generates "many beautiful discourses" he/she is steeped in what Gumbrecht calls "interpretation culture." So it seems he/she is moving away from his so-called "presencing effects," i.e. the silent appreciative engagement with the aesthetic qualities of the objects observed.

And yet (3), through this, ironically, the neophyte presences himself or herself to Beauty itself. This seems to imply that presencing and interpretation are dialectically interrelated, that they need to work together as the kind of marriage, somewhat like the marriage of the Dionysian and the Apollonian Nietzsche spoke of as necessary for aesthetics in the opening lines of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

(4) It is only after presencing to Beauty itself (after ascending the ladder of love) that the neophyte sees something "marvelous, beautiful in nature" (Plato, 1991, p. 155, 210e) towards which all his or her previous labors were directed. Yet we have seen that the beauty in all bodies is "one in the same" (Plato, 1991, p. 155, 210b) and, so too, the beauty in all souls and in all institutions. So perhaps this "one in the same" just *is* Beauty itself, and, conversely, that Beauty itself just is the one and same beauty that is in all instances that participate in it. (So the temporal sequence I have suggested in the first sentence of this paragraph does not hold.) If so, Beauty *is* the beautiful in nature. It is the "one in the same." On this interpretation, "presencing to Beauty itself" just means getting to the point that one can see the beauty in things. Each particular has its own beauty, to be sure, but in each instance we recognize it as the one and same beauty.

Beauty, Plato insists, is non-relativistic (Plato, 1991, p. 156, 211b). The beauty one apprehends in a presencing culture is non-relativistic as well, not because it is a matter of objective knowledge but because it is not being compared to anything, not interpreted, not cognized in a discursive way. It is known, but non-discursively. When Diotima says "It is here, if anywhere [...] that human life is to be lived: in contemplating the Beautiful itself" (Plato, 1991, p. 156, 211d) this can mean either one ought to contemplate the Beautiful itself independent of its manifestations, or that contemplating the Beautiful itself *just is* contemplating the beautiful in things. The latter is my interpretation.

Admittedly, Plato does have Diotima say: "Nor [...] will it appear beautiful to him as a face does, or hands, or anything else of which body partakes, nor as any discourse or any knowledge does, nor as what is somewhere in something else....but it exists in itself alone by itself, single in nature forever [...]" (Plato, 1991, p. 156, 210a). This would seem to only allow for the first of the two interpretations suggested. Such a statement looks to exclude everyday aesthetics since it would exclude focus on the beauty of individual things of everyday life, such as the face of a lover. However, as I have suggested, this is not expelled so much as backgrounded. Beauty itself is not affected by the fact that all other things are beautiful because they share in it (Plato, 1991, p. 156, 210b). But all this can only be true if beauty itself is *in* the hands, face, and so forth. It is not affected, but it is not really, contra Plato, "alone by itself," since things and lives share in it.

It is, admittedly, unorthodox to say that Beauty is to be found only in the things that participate in it. It may also seem strange to think that the beauty found therein is not at all affected by relations. On this view, although each thing is beautiful in its own way, the beauty in each thing is, paradoxically, the same. It is the same because it cannot be described or interpreted.

I think there is some truth in this, but only if we interpret this passage without hypostatizing Beauty as something external. Better to see it as internal, i.e. in the things in the world perceived as beautiful. Similarly, we can interpret it, not as strictly eternal, but as 'as if' eternal, and yet still within the physical world we perceive. This would involve interpreting the "ladder of love" as not so much reflecting Plato's theory of Forms as Diotima's own much more down-to-earth theory of beauty as developed in the "lesser mysteries" described at the beginning of Socrates' speech (Plato, 1991, 206b-210a).

But what does this have to do with Heidegger? Surely Heidegger's "letting beings be" has nothing to do with the Forms as objects of a science-like investigation of definitions of key concepts (i.e. the orthodox Plato). I agree, and yet, as I have suggested, there are different versions or strands of Plato. Diotima's ladder of love is not about scientific investigation or definition. The Form 'Beauty' is never defined in this dialogue, or anywhere in Plato. Instead, it is grasped at the end of a process. And we only know that it has been grasped if '*arête*' is generated in the disciple. Part of that *arête* is being able to see beauty in the things that participate in Beauty. The Diotima strand of Plato's *Symposium* allows for a non-metaphysical interpretation of Beauty and Being, i.e. one that abjures, or at least is agnostic about, transcendent reality. It allows for "letting beings be," and hence for everyday aesthetics, but only of 'the ordinary goes beyond itself' sort.

Many have argued that everyday aesthetics is all about perceiving the ordinary in the ordinary (Haapala, 2005; Saito, 2007). For me, it is mainly about perceiving the extraordinary, or at least 'the interesting', in the ordinary. This does not mean that one has to perceive the ordinary as strange. The ordinary need only be perceived as having what I have called "aura" (Leddy, 2012, Chapter 4). Nor do I want to deny the importance of appreciating the ordinary in the ordinary, which is a special kind of appreciation of everyday things. Artists such as Edward Hopper and Ed Ruscha have focused on this kind of experience. Think of Ruscha's book *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963) which just gives us black and white photographs of gas stations. Here we appreciate the ordinariness of these ordinary things. But in doing so, the art, and indirectly, the things themselves, take on aura. The irony or paradox of everyday aesthetics is that, as soon as the ordinariness of something ordinary is appreciated, the thing appreciated is no longer merely ordinary: it has ratcheted up to the level of 'the interesting', or even 'the extraordinary'. Gas stations are experienced differently after experiencing Ruscha's work. They have been framed by the perceiving mind as special. This is not to say that they become special every day or all of the time but that, under the unconscious influence of Ruscha's way of seeing (or some other artist's way of seeing), they can be seen as beautiful… they become beautiful.

3. Danto vs. Heidegger

Arthur Danto often spoke of the way in which ordinary objects are transfigured into the domain of art through entering into the artworld, his key example being Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, which, although indistinguishable from boxes

found in a warehouse, take on art status and aboutness when displayed in a gallery (Danto, 1964). There is something partly true about this. Warhol's boxes do tell us something about the nature of art, about how we see art differently once in an artworld context. But Danto's position comes directly, and legitimately, under Heidegger's attack against the concept of a work of art as an allegory where "it seems as though the thingly element in the art work is like the substructure into and upon which the other, authentic element is built" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 20).

Insofar as Danto refers to the identical Brillo box in the warehouse, as well as to the material element of *Brillo Box*, as a "mere thing" (Danto, 1964), he relies on a form of subject-object dualism that Heidegger sought to overcome. The Analytic/Continental divide is often explained away as a matter of style, but here we have simple disagreement between leaders of the competing schools. Danto's theory, for all of its elegance, leaves no room for everyday aesthetics, for any Deweyan continuities between art and life (Dewey, here, is on the side of the continental philosophers), or even for the physical creation of works of art in the studio. One might think that since, on Danto's theory, anything can be transfigured into art, then there is no such divide. However the division is strict: when something is not yet transfigured it is a 'mere real thing' and when it is transfigured it enters another realm, the realm of the artworld.

Danto later refers to what happens to the ordinary thing when it is taken into the world of art as "transfiguration" (Danto, 1983). This is a useful metaphor, but he failed to see that ordinary objects are also transfigured simply by being perceived aesthetically, although in a different way from what happens when they are transfigured into art. For Danto, when, and only when, ordinary things are transfigured into the realm of the artworld, do they enter into the domain of the aesthetic. But, on mine and perhaps Gumbrecht's view, the gas stations are transfigured into the aesthetic the moment Ruscha looks at them with an artist's eye. Then Ruscha enters the studio to make things. Entering the artworld is a later development.

This is not to say that the two transfigurations are unrelated: they are inescapably intertwined. Monet transfigures his pond when he creates a painting of waterlilies. But he also does it in his physical creation of the pond and in his way of seeing the pond before painting it, influenced, as both of these activities are, by his artistic project.

The idea of the aesthetic attitude has been criticized as one that gives too much power to the perceiver. It has been thought that the perceiver need only take a special attitude to perceive beauty, and that the perceiver must take a special attitude to perceive beauty. The first claim is more problematic. Beauty emerges in relational terms. The aesthetic attitude is not a willful thing. It is an attitude of openness, of willingness to be approached by beauty, which, for me, is as an enhanced sense of significance when something emerges as being worthy of our aesthetic attention.

But Danto got it wrong on another level. He thought that works of art can be distinguished by their aboutness, by their interpretability, and that it is

interpretation that brings them up into the world of art. In his *What Art Is* he says that artworks are embodied meanings designed to get viewers to grasp the meaning they embody (Danto, 2013). He also radically distinguishes between aesthetics and art. Contrary to Danto, my Deweyan approach stresses the continuity between art and life, aesthetics being what they both deeply share. Aboutness is not the property that distinguishes art from the everyday. Everyday objects can and usually do have meaning. At the very least they have names and histories. So they are interpretable. They do not, of course, have interpretations in the sense of 'meanings assigned to them by their creators,' although few works of art have meanings in this sense either. Nor is interpretation sufficient to make the object art: someone in the artworld also must believe it worthy of being considered art. Moreover, as I have argued above, interpretation is not necessary for aesthetic experience, and can actually interfere with the presencing of Being. Of course interpretation does enrich our experience when we write and think about it.

In his original article, Danto implied that something is art if it is seen as art by someone with appropriate art historical knowledge: "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry [sic: he meant "descry"] - an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld" (Danto, 1964, p. 580). Dickie interpreted Danto's theory to mean that something is art if it is an artifact and someone in the artworld says it is art, or more precisely, confers upon it the status of candidate for appreciation (Dickie, 1969). But, as critics of Dickie soon saw, this act of conferral cannot be arbitrary. Appropriate art historical knowledge was required by Danto for a reason. And worthiness usually implies valuable aesthetic features.

It is common these days for aestheticians to see everyday aesthetic objects just in terms of interpretation, which is to say just in terms of how they can be understood cognitively. Allen Carlson and Glen Parsons, for example, think that everyday aesthetics must be framed in terms of the look of functionality in the object (Carlson and Parsons, 2012). They believe that such an object is aesthetically good if it looks fit for its function. In this, they exclude everything from everyday aesthetics that has no function or that doesn't look quite fit for its function, as for example junked cars and abandoned homes. Yet, when I take a walk in my neighborhood there is a multitude of things that I find aesthetically interesting that have no clear function, or even if they do have a function, it plays no role in my experience. Carlson and Parsons say we need to have a lot of knowledge (sometimes scientific, sometimes practical) of the object not only to properly interpret it but to correctly appreciate it. This is only half the truth. The other half is best explained in terms of Gumbrecht's concept of presence and Heidegger's concept of Being. My argument, in short, is that to properly appreciate something in everyday life one needs to draw both on the experience of presence *and* cognitive understanding, although not necessarily at the same time.

Learning about the objects we see, i.e. learning about their names, functions and histories, is relatively easy. Experiencing an object as having presence is more difficult, at least for people living in our time. Why is it hard for us to

experience objects as having presence? As Gumbrecht says, the kind of society we (most of us) live in is not a presence society – it is a meaning society. We cannot go back to living in a presence society (at least not normally). But we can learn *from* such societies, and this is perhaps what atheists whose minds are closed to varieties of religious experience and other enlightenment thinkers fail to see.

And how do we experience presence? Take a walk and observe the world about you. If you simply contemplate what you see without thinking at all, without thinking about anything, without naming what you see or how you experience, things will emerge as visually interesting. This can happen with the other senses as well. Do not think of the phrase "visual interesting," or of any other term that labels an aesthetic property. Do not ask yourself whether your appreciative experience is pleasurable. Let the visual interestingness of the thing, scene, or perceived event strike you. You will note its distinctiveness: that specific color, that shape, that look. This way of perceiving the world is much like what Buddhists like Thich Nhat Hanh refer to as mindfulness (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999). Paying full attention to the phenomena on one's walk, allowing presence to happen, brings a kind of joy or, if you prefer, delight.

Does this mean that meaning, which is culturally specific, does not play a role? Not at all. How we see and what we focus on is culturally determined. Art, too, is culturally specific. Studying art, viewing many artworks, and learning how to paint are all activities that train the eye. The mind is stocked by these cultural practices unconsciously in such a way as to animate vision even, and especially when, the vision is not encumbered by language. Moreover, speaking, writing, painting, photographing, and other cultural practices happen after and before the moment of presencing, are comments on, and can extend and enrich that experience. There is a loop that goes from presencing to the cultural, then presence, then the cultural, and on and on.

Gumbrecht is right that we live in a meaning culture and that medieval and classical cultures were presence cultures (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 79). We need to work hard to perceive the world in a different way, to focus on presence rather than on meaning. As Heidegger says, we no longer listen to Being. Opening up to the pre-linguistic presence of things opens up to Being. Heidegger thought that, in Van Gogh's art, truth comes into unconcealment. But whatever we learn about the art nature of art through his analysis is really about the thingly nature of a thing, and particularly about the equipmental nature of the piece of equipment, which itself is an element in our everyday lives. Heidegger's essay is about the origin of the work of art but it is also about the shoes and about the everyday life, not only of the peasant woman, but of all of us. His point comes out even more when he talks about the temple and the earth/world relationship. However, as we will see, this needs some explanation.

4. Formalism and Contextualism

There was something good about formalism which has been lost in our current unquestioning acceptance of contextualism. By "contextualism" I mean the belief that something can only be appreciated in the light of understanding it

within its context. The thing that the formalists gave us was a direct method of looking at works of art. They called on us to focus on the thing itself. Their demand was: do not think about the intentions of the author/artist! Do not think about the historical context! Now, this may seem old-fashioned, and it is in fact overly limited: but if we are only contextualists we no longer look at the thing itself, like those museum visitors who only read the curators' texts on the walls, or the art appreciator who pays more attention to the taped lecture than the work. All attention to context takes us away from encountering the thing itself.

This is also true in everyday life. There must be a moment in the process of appreciating the things of life that is direct – that involves attending simply to what we see. This is not, however, to advocate formalism. Formalism has its limits in that it calls on us to see things in terms of colored shapes and lines, as though the thing itself were defined in terms of shapes and lines. If I really 'see' the disturbing shape of this burnt log in the park on my walk I see it not just as a shaped color but as a thing with expressive properties. Attending to the thing itself does not imply formalism.

Now there is no question that what we see is strongly influenced by culture. There is no escaping the unconscious influence of context, of education, of background, of language. Nor is there any denying that more contextual knowledge gives more understanding. When I say that one needs to attend to the thing itself I am not saying that there is a thing-in-itself independent of interpretation. What I am saying is that setting aside, or 'bracketing' (in the language of phenomenology) allows for presencing, which, in turn, allows for emergence of Being and, with it, beauty.

Gumbrecht is well aware of the potential charge of naiveté, of his being a 'substantialist' as having a naïve belief in stable or unchanging substances or essences. The charge would be that the stance fails to recognize that everything is 'under interpretation,' that we cannot escape interpretation. Gumbrecht does not deny the existence of cultural meaning: he simply reveals a layer of cultural objects that is not a layer of meaning (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 54). So how does he understand presence? As bringing back "physical closeness and tangibility" (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 57), and also as bringing back something onto which we can never permanently hold (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 58). Nonetheless, and importantly, for him, when we are talking about Being we are not talking about theology. Rather, Being is something physical in space.

Heidegger's "Origin" essay is as much about the everyday as about art. We are looking for the thingliness of the thing. The first key example is a pair of working shoes. These shoes are part of the everyday life of a peasant woman. Truth comes into unconcealment in her own life. But Van Gogh's painting intensifies and focuses that experience. What is true of art is also true of the artist in the world. What is true of the artist in the world is also true, I argue, of anyone who perceives aesthetically.

Heidegger sets the stage in *Being and Time* when he talks about *Dasein*.

Our "being in the world" is already in a substantial, and spatial, contact with things in the world. I would add that this correlates with G.E. Moore's common sense realism (Moore, 1993). When I see or touch a chair I am not in contact with a mere collection of sense data. I am touching a chair. How do we then account for the fact that different people see the chair differently? First, they do not see different chairs. As Nelson Goodman would put it, there is one world, but there are many ways the world is (Goodman, 1978). There is one chair and many different ways of seeing it. Moreover, that there is one world does not mean we have to privilege physical descriptions over painted representations. Yet, although aesthetic appreciation may be silent this does not negate the unconscious influence of elaborate conceptual structures in our perception. Recognizing this helps us escape the charge of naïve realism while retaining our realism.

But what about this strange thing called "Being"? Being, Gumbrecht argues, takes the place of "ideas" including not only Plato's Forms but also other, more recent, forms of conceptual configuration (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 67). Truth, as Heidegger argues, "happens," and it happens through the double movement of revealing (un-concealing) and concealing. This is admittedly a hard part of Heidegger. My own view is consonant with Gumbrecht's but moves in a somewhat different direction, interpreting the concealment with more positive language. For me, it is the turning of the object into what Susanne Langer called the "image" (Langer, 1953). The object is concealed in that its scientific nature is set aside: it is bracketed. The "concealed" object is concealed by its aura, by its aesthetic intensity. Unconcealment brings out the thingly nature of the thing which retreats from its context of interpretation.

As we enter Being, we enter the landscape (think of walking again, where the landscape is literally the one that one walks through) in a different way: "to be in this landscape is the fundamental prerequisite for restoring rootedness to historical Dasein" (Heidegger in Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 68). Heidegger says that when Being withdraws so that the things that appear "no longer have the character of objects" (Heidegger in Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 69). I say they no longer have this character since they have aura: aura masks interpretable character as objects. But that means they are not withdrawing behind appearance and experience. Instead, they are these very things intensified and bearing heightened significance. Gumbrecht and I agree that Being refers to a world of things "before" they are part of culture, and that, to experience them, they must begin to cross the presence/interpretation threshold, i.e. into the specific sphere of a specific culture, a culture where Being is no longer Being (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 70). Gumbrecht goes on to say that Dasein, human being-in-the-world, contributes to unconcealment through "letting things be" - through what Heidegger calls "composure," an attitude which neither manipulates, transforms nor interprets the world (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 71).

Gumbrecht then turns to the example of the Greek temple, quoting the famous lines: "This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the mystery of that rock's clumsy yet spontaneous support. Standing there, the building [...] first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence. The luster and gleam of the

stone [...] first brings to light the light of the day..." (Heidegger in Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 74). The Greek temple, then, brings out the expressive qualities of such things as storm and light. But how can this unconcealment of Being happen without the Temple or its equivalent, i.e. on one's walk in an ordinary non-sacred neighborhood? One could say that the temple is present in the perceptive attitude of the walker. Thus, I do not completely agree with Gumbrecht that "[o]nly the presence of certain things (in this case, the presence of the temple) opens up the possibility of other things appearing in their primordial material qualities [...]" (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 74). The "certain things" do not themselves have to be present. Perhaps 'attitude' is not enough of an answer. Perhaps there is one modern "temple" whose precinct extends as far as my neighborhood, that temple being Danto's "Artworld." Perhaps another is the practice of a Buddhist monk. Perhaps there are many things that can establish a "temple" even in our 21st century context.

Readers of *Origins* often find the relationship of "earth" and "world" to be particularly difficult. Gumbrecht offers his own solution specifically in terms of two interpretations of "world" and two theories of how "world, "earth", and "Being" should be related (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 75). The first sees references to "destiny" and "gods" as "integrative modalities within Being." (Ibid.) Such terms do not refer to individual things or dependent on specific cultures. Being unconcealed to Greek peasants is not Being unconcealed to 21st century academics. This relativism makes them very unlike Plato's Forms. "World" on this interpretation is "the changing configurations and structures of which Being as substance [earth] can be a part" (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 76).

In the second interpretation, which Gumbrecht prefers because it fits his idea of tension between presence and meaning, "world" is excluded from Being. On this view, Being is "tangible things, seen independently of their culturally specific situations" (Ibid.), but with an understanding that this is in tension with the context of those very situations. Thus, on this view, earth and world "diverge within this togetherness." (Ibid.) Or, as Heidegger puts it, "In essential striving [earth and world] raise each other into the self-assertion of their nature." (Ibid.) Gumbrecht interprets this as the tension between presence and meaning. It is not clear to me, however, why these two interpretations are taken to be incongruent: instead they seem to be two sides of the same point.

5. One Difficulty

There is one difficulty with application of Gumbrecht's ideas to everyday aesthetics. His only explicit discussion of aesthetics in *Production of Presence* makes a strong *contrast* between what he calls "moments of intensity" and everyday life (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 97). He writes that "what we call 'aesthetic experience' always provides us with certain experiences of intensity that we cannot find in the historically and culturally specific everyday worlds that we inhabit," (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 99) and, further, that it provides "something that our everyday worlds are not capable of offering us" (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 100). Moreover, "aesthetic experience will necessarily be located at a certain

distance from these everyday worlds" (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 101). His ideal aesthetic experience is one of being lost in focused intensity which is "the element of distance vis-à-vis the everyday world" (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 104). His key example is of the focused intensity of the extreme levels of performance of an expert athlete. This is very different from the intensity of the contemporary *flâneur* wandering the urban and suburban streets that I advocate.

This opposition of the aesthetic and the everyday seems to make an aesthetics of everyday life impossible. And yet Gumbrecht can be interpreted as attacking a certain *kind* of everyday experience, an alienated one, one that we long to escape. Thus he asks: "are we not precisely longing for presence, is our desire for tangibility not so intense – because our own everyday environment is so almost insuperably consciousness-centered" (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 106)? This consciousness-centeredness is associated with the Cartesian worldview, still dominant today … with interpretation more than presence. Nonetheless, as Gumbrecht admits, we can only encounter presence effects today within our predominantly meaning culture.

For Gumbrecht, moments of intensity that we mainly get from great art, but sometimes also from great moments in sports, take us away from the Cartesian-conditioned everyday, the everyday of interpretation cultures. And yet another example of his (suddenly being hit by the intensity of sunlight on arriving in a California city from Europe) is itself taken from everyday life. Further, Gumbrecht defines aesthetic experience as "lived experience" in which there is an "oscillation between presence effects and meaning effects" (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 107), and this definition can be applied to everyday aesthetic experience. In short, it is our present cultural conditions, constituting 'the everyday', as they do from a Cartesian perspective, that makes aesthetic experience rare - yet the everyday is still redeemable.

Gumbrecht argues that we need a framework ("insularity" or "focused intensity") in order to experience this tensional oscillation. I believe that such a framework need not be so rarified or extreme as the events he describes (great art, great sport events): it could be something small, like noticing the way a gardener has put out two plastic pink flamingos entwined amusingly to form a couple. Gumbrecht worries that we bracket the presence side of this oscillation in our Cartesian culture. He fails to consider the obvious solution: to bracket the meaning side, at least temporarily, to allow the presence side to come forth.

Gumbrecht speaks also of the event character of the aesthetic epiphany, the way in which, referring to Heidegger's talk of the *phusis* as "emerging and rising in itself and in all things," (Heidegger in Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 112) this emerging of presence is an event. He sees the beautiful play in sport as exemplifying such an event. But the idea can be used to refer to something on a much less grand scale: the emerging of "the interesting" during the walk of the contemporary *flâneur*. This too is a reaction against the Cartesian construction of the everyday. In the end I agree with Gumbrecht that "it makes

sense to hope that aesthetic experience may help us recuperate the spatial and the bodily dimension of our existence… that aesthetic experience may give us back at least a feeling of our being-in-the-world, in the sense of being part of the physical world of things" (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 116), and that the pay-off of this is the sense of being "in sync with the things of the world" (Gumbrecht, 2003, p. 117). This is the normative aspect of everyday aesthetics.

6. Conclusion

How then should we, or can we, apply these ideas to everyday aesthetics? For Gumbrecht there are meaning effects and presence effects in all cultural artifacts. In this essay I have considered taking a walking in one's neighborhood, observing both the cultural and natural aspects and scenes, for instance the pear blossoms, as paradigmatic of the domain of everyday aesthetics. Everything seen on the walk has both meaning and presence effects. Everything can be interpreted, or at least categorized and explained, but can also be approached *without* this if approached while listening to Being.

This implies a new *flâneur*, not attracted necessarily to crowds (Baudelaire) or arcades (Benjamin) but to the entire panoply of the everyday. This *flâneur* looks at the world as an artist does or would, having a passion for seeing and feeling. As he or she walks through their neighborhood things emerge into beauty sequentially: first the children's toy, then a piece of garbage, followed by a bramble of branches. Presencing and interpretation effects intertwine. But, at least at first, the experience is silent, the presencing is wordless. Beauty happens. This is the same as Being coming into unconcealment, to use Heidegger's language, although with stress placed on pleasure. This beauty is not eternal, but is 'as if' eternal. The 'as if' eternal beauty is always the same, although each object of beauty manifests it in a different way. Seeing in this way is not isolated. It is the practice of opening to Being. The thing perceived is transfigured, taken up into the aesthetic. The artist does something similar, transfiguring the world both with her eyes and her hands, making things out of materials which, themselves, are transfigured into the world of the work. There is not only oscillation and tension between presence of interpretation: there is also dialectic. This dialectic extends to the relationship between the aesthetic and the world of art, the two transfigurations.

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Enjoyment in Levinas and the Aesthetics of Everyday Life

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Through the concept of enjoyment in Levinas, this paper examines the phenomenological and ontological dimension of everyday aesthetics. Enjoyment, in Levinas, forms an essential element in the constitution of the subjectivity of the human being and is no longer to be seen as a moment of 'inauthenticity' or 'alienation'. The experience of the objects of everyday experience is not related to that of objects of representation or of tools, but rather to that of a system of nourishment into which the subject is integrated, as in an 'element' or 'atmosphere'. This constitutive closeness of enjoyment indicates the fundamental difference between what we understand as everyday aesthetics and other aesthetics characterised by contemplation or disinterest. | Keywords: *Levinas, Enjoyment, Everyday Aesthetics, Phenomenology, Beauty, Sublime*

1. Introduction

It is night and we get home tired. Once we open the front door, we turn on the light, which has a slight orange touch. It is neither too bright nor too dark, however it illuminates the objects with a night halo that is clear enough to make them recognisable without highlighting. We take off our clothes and shoes and put on pyjamas whose texture immediately announces relaxation and calm. We are hungry and go to the kitchen to prepare dinner. While we do it, we put on a playlist that we play every night, full of songs that we have heard dozens of times. We know them by heart and there is nothing unpredictable in them, rather, we already advance each phrase that is going to be sung and each note that is going to be played. All the music that is being played is included in a playlist called, 'music for cooking'. No song stands out from any other, none steps on the next, but they all follow each other harmoniously, maintaining a homogeneous style as if they were part of an extensive medley. It also seems that the rhythm of the music matches our rhythm as we cut the potatoes and aubergines or beat the eggs. We are not paying attention to the music too much, in fact at times we forget that it is playing. However it is there, along with the light that rests slightly on

the objects; the pyjamas that caresses our body announcing rest and relaxation; the aroma of the food in the night background; perhaps the distant sound of cars or of the television in the living room sending out its tunes from the centre of the house like the crackling of a fireplace, but also together with the passing of the day that we feel concentrated on that precise moment, as if the night accumulated at that very moment all the weight of work at the time we could finally relax. All these senses and affections create a whole of sensations where the comfort of the pyjamas does not stand out from the musical harmonies nor from the aroma of the food that we are in the process of making. They are all part of the same silent symphony which, precisely because of its harmony and extreme familiarity, we no longer listen to, but which shapes each of our nights and which we feel as close as our own skin.

The music, the clothes, the soup, the sounds, the weight of the hours are not here as an object of contemplation, they are not the direct object of the phrase, rather they constitute a circumstantial complement of the place. We are in them and not in front of them, they are the customary framework through which things can appear a posteriori.

This undifferentiated space of sensations will constitute the centre of the reflections on the aesthetics of the everyday that will be carried out in the following pages. I will not be interested in romanticising these experiences, but in exposing their ontological dimension in our constitution as subjects. Things, rather than being merely useful, are values to which we adhere and which form a part of our life.[1] Human beings inhabit these things - they are not simply represented to their conscience. Thanks to Levinas and his concept of enjoyment, we will be able to revalue the role of aesthetic experience through everyday aesthetics. I will also consider the notions of alienation and reification, through which these attitudes have been interpreted by many thinkers in the philosophical tradition.

The text will be developed as follows: first, I will introduce some common conceptions of everyday life within phenomenology and aesthetics. Later I will go on to deploy the Levinasian critique of these conceptions, and his notion of enjoyment as an alternative to them. I will then discuss the relevance of this concept for the aesthetics of everyday life and, finally, I will try to differentiate this aesthetic dimension from the more classical conceptions, those of the beautiful and the sublime.

2. The Beautiful Versus the Everyday

This character of aesthetic experience - a notion in which we generally do not include normal daily experiences such as preparing dinner (explicitly extra-artistic experiences) but mainly arts such as music - could seem a way of

[1] As Husserl (1983, p. 51) already pointed out: "The world is there for me not only as a world of mere things, but also with the same immediacy as a world of objects with values, a world of goods. I simply find the physical things in front of me furnished not only with merely material determinations but also with value-characteristics as beautiful and ugly, pleasant and unpleasant, agreeable and disagreeable, and the like [...] These value-characteristics and practical characteristics also belong constitutively to the Objects 'on hand' as Objects regardless or not I turn to such characteristics and the Objects."

trivialising both art and the concept of aesthetic experience by introducing them into our daily lives in the same way as a perfume or scent is applied. However, underestimating these practices would, on the contrary, trivialise the constructive character that these aesthetic practices have in our daily lives, and how the choices of ambient music, or of any aesthetic decision that surrounds us in our day to day life, is characteristic of what we build as a home.

An eminent example of such an undervaluation of aesthetics in the everyday sphere can be found in the first chapter of José Ortega y Gasset's *Essay on aesthetics as a preface*, entitled *Ruskin, usability and beauty*. The relevance of his statements, in comparison with what we are going to argue here makes it worth quoting him at length:

> Reading poetry is not something I do very often. is not one of my usual occupations. Generally speaking, I cannot conceive that it could be anyone's regular occupation. Just as we demand a certain seriousness for creating poetry, we should also demand a certain seriousness for reading it. Not a seriousness that is all show, but rather that feeling of inner awe that invades our hearts at very special times. Contemporary pedagogy is beginning to have a deplorable influence in the cultural realm of esthetics by making art a usual normal, regulated thing. This way, we lose the feeling of *distance*; we lose *our respect* for and our *fear* of art; we approach it at any time in the dress and mood we happen to be in, and grow accustomed to not understanding it. The real emotion to which we refer when we sepak of aesthetic pleasure these days is [...] a pale delight, lacking in vigor and depth, which merely touches the work of art. [...] The English interpretation of things consists in their reduction to ordinary domestic objects. The Englishman above all, aspires to live well, comfortably; what sensuality is to the Frenchman and philosophy to the German, comfort is to the Englishman. Now then, comfort and convenience, requires different conditions of things, different according to the vital function that in each case the convenience is intended to serve only one condition is generic, inevitable, and almost a priori to everything convenient: that it be customary [...] Whatever we are not accustomed to, for the sole reason that we are not accustomed to it, makes us uncomfortable. [...] Naturally, such a view can only recommend to the intellect those arts that, to be exact, are not really art, the industrial or decorative arts. Ruskin insists on introducing Beauty into the severe, meek English home; to do this he must first domesticate it, weaken it, exhaust it. And so, reduced to a ghost, to an adjective, he leads it to the honourable dwellings of British subjects. [...] I need to drink water from a clean glass, but don't give me a beautiful one. [...] It would seem to me that in drinking water for it, I drank the blood of a fellow human being [...]. Either I attend to quenching my thirst or I attend to Beauty: a middle term would be a falsification of both. So when I am thirsty, please give me a glass that is full, clean and without beauty. (Ortega y Gasset, 1975, pp. 127-131)

It is not my intention to claim that Ortega y Gasset is wrong here. It is very likely that the 'Authentic Beauty of Art' is similar to what he points out, i.e., something that constitutes an event which is 'exceptional', 'singular' and necessary of a certain 'distance'; ultimately, the experience of art, especially since Kant's aesthetics. But such an assertion can lead us to confusion, not only

because it could be an apparent condemnation of our daily lives to a kind of 'anaesthetic' asceticism[2], but because it is more than likely that the truth itself is missing.

Adorno's aesthetic theory is also a good representative of this devaluation of aesthetic experience in everyday life. Quotations like "In the false world all ἡδονή is false" (Adorno, 1997, p. 36) or "to be entertained means to be in agreement" (Adorno, 2002, p. 115) are two good examples of this devaluation. His aesthetic conception is a paradigmatic example of the idea of aesthetic experience understood as negativity, an idea common to both artistic and natural beauty. The autonomy that Adorno conceives for art is precisely what gives it its independence from other consumer objects. This autonomy constitutes the truth of art, which gives it a power that is, in turn, an essential lack. As power, art is shown as an autonomous object in the face of market and consumption that seem to encompass everything, but in doing so it cannot show complacency in itself, rather it can only constitute a reflection of the alienation of society. Art can only constitute a negative experience that announces a promise of happiness and reconciliation with respect to this alienated society. However, in Rancière's words, "mais si l'ouvre promet cette réconciliation, c'est au prix de la différer indéfiniment en repoussant toutes les conciliations qui cacheraient le maintien de l'aliénation" (Rancière, 2009, p. 138).[3] The true value of art consists of reflecting and promising a home that, like an utopia, can never be built since, ultimately, if art fulfilled its promise, art itself would end (Adorno, 1997, p. 32).

Ultimately, art is essentially a promise and, therefore, it can never fulfill itself, since in that fulfillment the promise is no longer a promise. An understanding of the aesthetic experience within this discursive realm condemns it to absolute negativity, where there can be no solid ground on which to build a proper home. If aesthetic experience can only be a promise of happiness, it cannot build such happiness, but only announce it or reflect it.

Adorno's global conception of aesthetics is representative of an aesthetic idea that continues to anchor aesthetic experience to a notion of the singularity of the work of art as an exceptional, distant and eminently negative moment that cannot be inhabited; inhabiting would indeed be related to the always-despicable consumption. The industrial dimensions of art that are integrated as objects in our daily lives are not simply ignored but explicitly disregarded as they are related to consumption. Art, for Adorno, cannot be inhabited nor does

[2] In keeping with the spirit of Ortega y Gasset, Sartre comes to admit that the beautiful can only exist in an aesthetic attitude, considering ultimately that "the real is never beautiful. Beauty is a value that could never be applied more than to the imaginary and that involves the annihilation of the world in its essential structure. That is why it is stupid to confuse morality with aesthetics" (Sartre, 2004, p. 193). The beautiful, for Sartre, only exists in the imagining attitude as an annihilation of the world in the face of the realising attitude of practical life (in which the useful and the good are integrated). The beautiful is always an attitude (Sartre speaks of attitudes, not of objects or beautiful things) that makes an epoché of the reality of the world. There is no beauty without epoché, there is no beauty without an aesthetic attitude, according to Sartre.

[3] "If the artwork promises this reconciliation, it is at the price of indefinitely deferring by rejecting any reconciliation that would hide the maintenance of alienation." Unless otherwise indicated, translations of texts not originally published in English are by the author.

it seem to provide any positive dimension to pleasure or enjoyment. In what sense, therefore, can we understand all aesthetic phenomena we have described at the beginning in an eminently positive way?

If we withdraw from the puritanical condemnation of the everyday pleasures that could be derived from the above considerations (with all its compendium of degrading nouns, such as 'consumption, 'reification', 'alienation', 'possession', and so on), and rather observe them from the perspective of inhabiting, many of these practices gain a new meaning and allow us to better understand the aesthetic relationship we have with our environment, not only in a purely negative way, but also as a constitution of our 'being in the world'.[4]

3. Levinas and Enjoyment

Heidegger is a common reference in the aesthetics of everyday life (see, for example, Haapala, 2005; Carreño, 2019; Leddy, 2014; Hainic, 2015) when seen from a phenomenological perspective. His analysis of everyday life in *Being and Time* or his ontology of the work of art in *The Origin of the Work of Art* provide extensive material for this aesthetics and its different branches. However, despite the meticulousness he employs to describe daily life in his main work *Being and Time*, the everyday is still a 'fallen state' for him, a kind of inauthentic affective position that represents a fall in front of the anguish. Although Heidegger is 'careful' to consider this ontological-existential question not in a moral but in a structural way[5], he clearly privileges the state of anguish described as a fundamental temper or state of mind. Only through it can we have a proper access to Being.

Both in *Totality and Infinity* and, in a more informative language, in *Time and the Other*, Levinas explicitly positions himself against the primacy of the affective disposition of anguish in the face of the hypothetical inauthenticity of everyday life:

> However much the entirety of preoccupations that fill our days and tear us away from solitude to throw us into contact with our peers are called 'fall', 'everyday life', 'animality', 'degradation', or 'base materialism' these preoccupations are in any case in no way frivolous. One can think that authentic time is originally and ecstasis, yet one buys oneself a watch; despite the nudity of existence, one must as far as possible be decently clothed. And when one writes a book on anxiety, one writes it for someone, one goes through all the steps that separate the draft from the publication, and one sometimes behaves like a merchant of anxiety. The man condemned to die straightens out his uniform before his last walk, accepts a final cigarette, and find an eloquent word before the salvo. (Levinas, 1987, pp. 59-60)

[4] Levinas, years before this already mentioned the dangers of this kind of thought, especially referring to existentialist philosophies: "It enables one to denounce the joys of communication, collective works, and everything that makes the world livable, as Pascalian diversion and the simple forgetfulness of solitude. […] concern for things and needs would be a fall, a flight before the uttermost finality that these needs themselves imply, an inconsequence, a nontruth, inevitable, to be sure, but bearing the mark of the inferior and the reprehensible" (Levinas, 1987, p. 59).

[5] "So neither must we take the fallenness of Dasein as a 'fall' from a purer and higher 'primal status' […] We would also misunderstand the ontologico-existential structure of falling if we were to ascribe to it the sense of a bad and deplorable ontical property of which, perhaps, more advanced stages of human culture might be able to rid themselves" (Heidegger, 2001, p. 220).

In the primacy that Levinas gives to the ethical relationship over ontology, everyday life is no longer understood as a negative step of inauthenticity through things, but rather as a primal situation towards a genuine contact with otherness. As regards the considerations of the inauthentic Heideggerian Dasein, human beings, for Levinas, face their daily life with happiness, enjoying their nourishments. To live is, for Levinas, to enjoy in the first place, and enjoyment is the first step for that openness to the world that would allow us to access the ethical dimension. Without delving into the totality of Levinas metaphysical project and its complexities, I am interested here in the peculiar phenomenology of everyday life as enjoyment described by Levinas, in order to rescue the type of particular intentionality that occurs in everyday aesthetic experience.

Levinas conceives the human being in their daily life as someone who "lives from", not as a completely independent subject[6], but as a being already 'entangled' in things. "We live from 'good soup', air, light, spectacles, work, ideas, sleep, etc. These are not objects of representations... We live from them" (Levinas, 1991, p. 110). In other words, these objects (soup, air, light...) that constitute our living are not noemas in the manner of intentional objects, as in the Husserlian sense; they are not objects of representation for a consciousness. The representative intentionality that turns the objects of the world into noemas cannot properly inhabit the world precisely because it does not leave from itself, but rather reduces the world to the noema, to a clear and distinct idea that is immanent in thought. The world, from Levinas' notion of representation only has what thought put into it, so it becomes a "first-person thought".[7]

However, the subject doesn't even understand things in the way of tools, in the Heideggerian sense. The tool is always something direct towards an utility, something else beyond itself. In that case, the relationship of things would always be vicarious of a subsequent sense to which the subject is dependent. The enjoyment of objects results in Levinas in an end in itself which is not dependent on any other need such as, for example, the preservation of material existence. That is why the subject of enjoyment is "independent".[8] The human being does not lament for having needs, as if they were only an intermediate step, a mere 'tool' in the pursuit of satisfying higher ulterior needs; rather they are pleased to have them, "what we live from does not enslave us; we enjoy it. [...] the human being thrives on his needs, he is happy for his needs" (Levinas, 1991, p. 114). This happiness constitutes their own independence, the enjoyment of joy as the constitution of their own subjectivity: "Subjectivity originates in the independence and sovereignty of enjoyment" (Levinas, 1991, p. 114).

6 Which Levinas calls the subject of hypostasis.

7 Levinas refers especially to Husserl in these paragraphs. However, his considerations about the German author may not be particularly fair. This has been noticed by Harman in *Guerrilla Metaphysics* (2005, pp. 34-35).

8 "Whereas the recourse to the instrument implies finality and indicates a dependence with regard to the other, living from [...] delineates independence itself, the independence of enjoyment and of its happiness, which is the original pattern of all independence." (Levinas, 1991, p. 110)

Faced with Husserl as with Heidegger, the intentionality of enjoyment builds its first independence in its original joyous contact with the world. This 'joyful' consciousness faces the world not by affirming itself as an object, as in a form of representative spontaneity, but by exposing itself 'indigently' to it, bathing in that exteriority and allowing itself to be affected by it. That is why enjoyment takes the form of nourishment. To live is to love life and the constitution of subjectivity consists of nourishing ourselves with the world, not in the recollection of the subject in their interiority. In the words of Levinas, "Life is *love of life*, a relation with contents that are not my being, but more dear than my being: thinking, eating, sleeping, reading, working, warming oneself in the sun. Distinct from my substance, but constituting it, these contents make up the worth [prix] of my life…" (Levinas, 1991, p. 112).

In short, need, according to Levinas, is not constituted as a lack that has to be filled, but as something positive that not only causes pleasure, but only through that pleasure it is capable of constructing that first stage of subjectivity, "Living from, it is dependency that turns into, into happiness – essentially egoist sovereignty, essentially selfish happiness" (Levinas, 1991, p. 114).[9] That is, the soul is only happy when it satisfies its needs, not when it gets rid of them. The independence of enjoyment from any subsequent need becomes paradigmatic in the aesthetic experience as in a play: "The aesthetic orientation man gives to the whole of his world represents a return to enjoyment and to the elemental on a higher plane" (Levinas, 1991, p. 140) and: "The suspension or absence of the ultimate finality has a positive face-the disinterested joy of play. To live is to play, despite the finality and tension of instinct to live from something without this something having the sense of a goal or an ontological means-simply play or enjoyment of life" (Levinas, 1991, p. 134).[10]

Faced with the rationalistic spontaneity of representative intentionality, the proper modality of enjoyment intentionality is sensibility. In contrast to the cognitive dimension of the former, this one has a vital dimension. Here Levinas approaches Kant in a kind of dualism between reason and *sensibility*.[11] Understanding and reason, for Kant, are faculties that give a background to the things which they focus on. Sensibility, on the other hand, is simply 'content'

9 It is important to clarify that enjoyment, as the concept of selfishness may show here, is not the ultimate form of ethical life for Levinas, but just the primal phase through which the subject – being open to the objects of enjoyment – may hear the call of the Great Other. To pass from the implicit to the explicit a master who evokes attention is necessary" (Levinas, 1991, p. 138). That is to say, only if we pass through the experience of enjoyment will we be able to build a proper ethical relation with the Other in capital letters.

10 This idea is exposed more clearly in *Time and the Other*: "Prior to being a system of tools, the world is an ensemble of nourishments. Human life in the world does not go beyond the objects that fulfil it. It is perhaps not correct to say that we live to eat, but it is no more correct to say that we eat to live. The uttermost finality of eating is contained in food. When one smells a flower, it is the smell that limits the finality of the act. To stroll is to enjoy the fresh air, not for health but for the air. These are the nourishments characteristic of our existence in the world. It is an ecstatic existence – being outside oneself – but limited by the object" (Levinas, 1987, p. 63).

11 "The strength of the Kantian philosophy of the sensible likewise consists in separating sensitivity and understanding […] Kant does indeed go beyond the phenomenology of the sensible. But at least he does recognize thereby that of itself the sensible is an apparition without there being anything that appears. Sensibility establishes a relation with a pure quality without support, with the element" (Levinas, 1991, p. 136).

with finitude. While thought searches for the background, sensibility is content with the figure, the form in its concrete presence, or, as Levinas points out, "sensibility touches the reverse, without wondering about the obverse; this is produced precisely in contentment" (Levinas, 1991, p. 135). Sensibility is the quality of the finite, that which conceives it as something "by itself" (Levinas, 1991, p. 136) a pure appearance "without there being anything appearing" (Ibid.). Sensibility, in short, is the affective modality that has a predilection for the finite as an end in itself: "The finite as contentment is sensibility" (Levinas, 1990, p. 138).

> Sensibility is not an inferior theoretical knowledge bound however intimately to affective states: in its very gnosis sensibility is enjoyment; it is satisfied with the given, it is contented. Sensible 'knowledge' does not have to surmount infinite regression, that vertigo of the understanding; it does not even experience it. It finds itself immediately at the term; it concludes, it finishes without referring to the infinite. [...] This earth upon which I find myself and from which I welcome sensible objects or make my way to them suffices for me. The earth which upholds me does so without my troubling myself about knowing what upholds the earth. I am content with the aspect of this corner of the world, the universe of my daily behavior, this city or this neighborhood or this street in which I move, this horizon within which I live, turn to me; I do not ground them in a more vast system. It is they that ground me. I welcome them without thinking them. I enjoy this world of things as pure elements, as qualities without support, without substance. (Levinas, 1991, pp. 136, 137)

Sensitivity, insofar as its objects are not representations for a consciousness (as in representative intentionality), is not related to them as singularities. Rather, it is related to a world of pure apparitions or, as Levinas claims, of "adjectives without substantive" (Levinas, 1991, p. 132). It is what Levinas understands as the *element*: an undifferentiated quality that constitutes a kind of atmosphere in which human beings are introduced. But this quality is not 'represented' to me as we pointed out, rather it 'wraps' me, I 'bathe' in it, "The relation adequate to its essence discovers it precisely as a medium: one is steeped in it; I am always within the element" (Levinas, 1991, p. 132). Although, in an ontic way, we could consider that the element is made up of different objects like water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen atoms, the form of enjoyment does not take water, to follow the metaphor, for its separate particles, rather it takes it as a continuum, as a pure quality, in which the bather immerses himself. [12]

It is important to note here that this 'element' is not an ontical quality in which all subjects are immersed in the same way, as if there were a universal element common to all human beings. This would go against Levinas' philosophy in itself, since in that case the elemental would be conceived as a part of the totality and therefore, it would annul in itself the relationship of the Same with the Other, thus assuming the elemental within the representative logic in which the difference is determined by the identity.

[12] "We can, to be sure, represent the liquid or the gaseous to ourselves as a multiplicity of solids, but we then are abstracting from our presence in the midst of the element. The liquid manifests its liquidity, its qualities without support, its adjectives without substantive, to the immersion of the bather" (Levinas, 1991, p. 132).

In other words, each 'element' indicates an existential dimension in which the subject immerses themselves in their world, which is, however, at each moment their own in the particular way that the relationship of the Same with the Other has to exist. The examples used by Levinas – soup, shows, ideas – always end with an ellipsis to indicate their hypothetical and contingent nature. The element can be anything in which a subject bathes as long as it is part of the element that constitutes the independence of this subject: the knot that individualises the steps of the subject's life. I point this out to meet Harman's criticism that seems to take this 'element' as constituting some kind of empirical substance.[13] From Harman's perspective, the element into which human beings immerse themselves is always the same and, consequently, enjoyment is also the same. Harman seems to be unaware that Levinas provides us with an ontological structure and not an empirical-ontic one. The element refers to an existential dimension in which the things of our daily life are presented to us in enjoyment; it is not, thus, a literal element.

4. Enjoyment and Everyday Aesthetics

Enjoyment, understood in this way, introduces an ontological dimension in what we understand by everyday aesthetics. Thus, returning to what has been said before, I will establish a link between both concepts to clarify that this form of aesthetic experience is not simply an alienation, from the perspectives that we saw in the critical theory or Heidegger, but a dimension of our subjectivity and a fundamental aspect in the way in which we inhabit the world.

From the unreflective dimension characteristic of enjoyment, as we have seen, the objects of its daily life are not represented, but we inhabit them, so we are interior to them. Things do not appear before us as objects of analysis or contemplation, we are inserted in them without them having to claim their presence to our attention. Their silent way of accompanying us in our day to day life is their specific way of existing. As Heidegger had already claimed: "The readiness-to-hand which belongs to any such region beforehand has the character of inconspicuous familiarity" (Heidegger, 2001, p. 137). A similar idea about everyday life can be found in Bataille as quoted by Highmore: "the everyday receives our daily inattention" (Highmore, 2002, p. 21). The only way that we can understand enjoyment as an experience of the everyday is as an experience of something that does not appear to our attentive consciousness precisely because it is extremely close to ourselves, something that we simply live without reflecting upon it. This calls into question the concept of experience devised by Dewey: "The enemies of the aesthetic are neither the practical nor the intellectual. They are the humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention in practice and intellectual procedure" (Dewey, 1958, p. 40). Dewey also faces Yuriko Saito's requirement for an aesthetic experience as developed in her *Aesthetics of the Familiar*: "Being attentive is

[13] "For Levinas, there is a single formless element from which the things of our lives emerge [...] It is confined to a single passive or receptive layer of reality, and refuses to become entangled in all the manifold layers of objects. Strictly speaking, this would mean that enjoyment is always the same enjoyment" (Harman, 2005, p. 43.)

a prerequisite for any kind of aesthetic experience" (Saito, 2017, p. 3). My contention here, on the contrary, is that there is a mode of aesthetic experience that does not entail this type of attention and that, in fact, exists precisely in that lack, in the pure life of those who attend to their 'needs' without representing them or singling them out from the rest of their lives. Returning to Highmore, "things become 'everyday' by becoming invisible" (Highmore, 2002, p. 21). This happens when things become invisible and take the form of a kind of atmosphere or environment that is not 'confronted' with me but through which I am. As Arto Haapala (2005, p. 45) points out, "before being looked at [things] are looked through."

Haapala's definition of 'place' has many resonances with what I have claimed about Levinas' notion of element:

> Together these things determine an 'environmental character', which is the essence of place. In general a place is given as such a character or 'atmosphere'. A place is therefore a qualitative, 'total' phenomenon, which we cannot reduce to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of sight. (Haapala, 2005, p. 42)

For Haapala, our way of being in the world is the construction of a familiarity around us that, ultimately, is the way we have to 'inhabit' the world: "'Placing' is the process of 'home building'. Familiarising oneself with the environment is home building in the sense that home is by definition of utmost familiarity. Home is a place where everything is familiar" (Haapala, 2004, p. 46).

In this sense, the lack of attention is no longer considered as a characteristic of the aesthetics of everyday life, but as a necessary condition for this experience to be lived as such.[14] The fact of being immersed in the experience entails precisely its familiarity. Familiarity is that which never catches one's attention, by simply being there, exerting its timid influence without ever standing out. Its mode of appearance is precisely that of hiding in the centre of our life, like Poe's stolen letter. As Haapala mentions in another text: "The ordinary, average everyday is closest to us, but for this very reason 'the farthest and not known at all'. We are embedded in the structures of the everyday; they constitute our very existence. I think that this is true also of the aesthetic aspects of the everyday: most often they go unnoticed because they are so close to us" (Haapala, 2018, p. 144). Although we can eventually rescue that dimension from eternal unconsciousness and realize the importance that these elements have in our lives, the genuine influence of the things in our daily existence has a different nature than when we pay attention to them. It is the fundamental difference between being involved in an activity and contemplating it. In her text *The aesthetic value of the unnoticed*, when considering the experience of a ray of sunlight appearing every day in her office, Francisca Pérez Carreño points out that:

> There is certainly something really lacking when I stop typing on my computer and contemplate the sun entering through the balcony. What

[14] As we will mention in the next footnote, this experience would be understood more as an *Erfahrung* than an *Erlebnis*.

> is lacking is my own presence, my movements and actions inside the scene. I stop being part of the environment to become a beholder. And, consequently, my experience changes. (Carreño, 2019, p. 157)

However, as Carreño emphasises later, this lack of attention does not entail a lack of aesthetic pleasure, but rather that this pleasure is located on another place:

> It is not that the non-aesthetic features of the object are aesthetically experienced only once they are attentively contemplated, but rather that the object was from the beginning aesthetically perceived, if non-reflectively. There are some symptoms revealing that my activity was suffused with pleasure also during the time it was routine: I didn't realise the time passing, my body expressed calm and comfort, or I smiled. Equally, children playing don't reflect about having fun, but they have: they jump, run and laugh. To the contrary, familiarity does not convert a certain ugly building in our way home into something beautiful. Familiarity allows us to see it daily without paying attention to it. We don't perceive its ugliness constantly, but from time to time we are sadly disappointed by its presence. (*Ibid.*)

A lack of consciousness is not ultimately a lack of experience, although such experience does not stand out as a singularity in consciousness. Rather, in this situation, the aesthetic phenomenon does not present itself to our consciousness as an objective noema, but as an elemental environment in which everything is offered mixed. Our enjoyment of food may not reside so much in the food in itself as in the summer environment that 'enveloped' it at that time, or perhaps the pleasure comes from the awareness that while I was eating this food I was with the person I liked the most in the world, or maybe the grass was extraordinarily green that afternoon, or maybe it looked extraordinarily green because the person I loved was there... That is, the aesthetic object fades into a general synesthetic atmosphere in which all the sensations come together in a style, an 'element' that does not differentiate itself in its particular parts by not being distinguished by consciousness. This dimension no longer assumes the object in its otherness, but rather in the feast of relationships that our sensibility projects. The object thus loses the sovereign autonomy of the work of art to become a relational nexus, in which what belongs to the subject and what belongs to the object is no longer clear.

> This is the consequence of the absolute breakdown of distances. The object never appears to be confronting us as an object in itself, nor does it require specific attention from us, nor is the thing a simple extension of myself, rather the thing is entangled in a whole system of values that introduces it into an existential structure of the subject. As Haapala points out: "The aesthetics of place is stamped by our existential structures; in one sense of the word, it is more subjective than the aesthetics of unfamiliar surroundings. (Haapala, 2005, p. 50)

Proust is one of the authors who have best understood the aesthetic dimension of our life beyond consciousness. All his reflection on involuntary memory points to the powerlessness of conscious memory to bring together the true essences of the past-in-itself. Voluntary memory, in its objectifying dimension, can scarcely make the past a diffuse present, but it cannot bring its true

presence as past. However, even further, what involuntary memory does is precisely to recall episodes lived in the past that were retained in the unconscious and that explode from time to time. At that moment these episodes appear to the involuntary memory with all their beauty. However, if they are beautiful, if memory can recall the happiness of certain moments or particularly sensitive experiences, it is precisely because those experiences were fully lived, although not attentively. Each of the experiences that Proust describes in detail is full of extraordinarily rich and complex aesthetic dimensions that Proust, through the redemption of writing, will only unfold and objectify in the work of art by drawing from it its truth and its essence. Only distance can bring us back to the truth of certain facts, but only full presence can give us the material for such an experience. For example, the smell of one's grandmother's house can only be noticed after many months without visiting her, although this does not exempt that smell from being there from the beginning and from being experienced as such. Nevertheless, it was in such an intimate way that our conscience could hardly identify it, we just enjoyed its faithful closeness unconsciously.

In *On Some Motives in Baudelaire*, reflecting on involuntary memory and resorting to Freud, Benjamin comments: "Put in Proustian terms, [...] only what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an experience [*Erlebnis*][15], can become a component of the *memoire involontaire*" (Benjamin, 2007, p. 160-161). It is sensitivity meant as a purely passive quality, one that commands in these phenomena that the subject never thinks, but simply lives. Sensitivity, in Proust, becomes sovereign at the very moment when it alone can appear, as consciousness sleeps or withdraws:

> For the truths which the intelligence apprehends through direct and clear vision in the daylight world are less profound and less necessary than those which life has communicated to us unconsciously through an intuition which is material only in so far as it reaches us through our senses and the spirit of which we can elicit. (Proust, 2014, p. 237)

A reading of Proust from the perspective of everyday aesthetics has yet to be done, however. Here I have just pointed out some ideas that link to my thesis. However, Proustian oeuvre could be considered as an artistic work that constantly redeems these unconscious aesthetic experiences enunciating their truth through the artistic work. Examples of this would be numerous, and would extend beyond the scope of the present essay.

5. Enjoyment and the Experience of the Pleasant, the Beautiful and the Sublime

Enjoyment, as I have pointed out, is an eminently subjective and subjectivising experience. The elements that surround us as defining our being in the world adhere to us and therefore, despite being outside of us and being recognised as such otherness, are collected in the territory of the Same. If we rely on

[15] Benjamin uses here the distinction between 'Erlebnis' and 'Erfahrung'. Both can be translated to 'experience', but 'Erlebnis' refers to a consciously lived experience, while 'Erfahrung' refers to an unconscious and unreflective one.

a Kantian conception, the existence of objects of pleasure is required as a necessary condition for the experience of enjoyment, making it an experience that would not satisfy the necessary requirements, neither those of quality nor of quantity, for such an experience to be considered aesthetic, both according to the beautiful and to the sublime. This experience is not disinterested, since the existence of the object is required beyond its mere contemplation, nor is it universal, since the aesthetic world that surrounds me is constitutive precisely of my subjectivity. If we were to assume Kantian categories, only the faculty of sensitivity would intervene in the experience of enjoyment, that is, the aesthetic faculty in the sense of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Therefore, there would be no free play between imagination and understanding, but only this passive faculty.

In the case of the sublime, the distance is even greater since while preserving the essential characteristics of the beautiful – universality and disinterest – reason is the intervening faculty. In the experience of the sublime, it is not the object that produces the experience; rather, the object is only a medium for the discovery in ourselves of a faculty that is superior to any of the senses: Reason. As Kant points out in his *Critique of Judgement* (1987, p. 106): "Sublime is what even to be able to think proves that the mind has a power surpassing any standard of sense." The pain and pleasure experienced in the sublime is the confirmation of an idea that cannot be schematised through imagination. Thus, there is, on the one hand, the acknowledgment of the separation via the rejection of the object, and on the other, the satisfaction in the acknowledgement of a moral superiority in us.

In Lyotard's concept of the sublime the scheme changes. As Rancière comments, it is no longer imagination that is powerless but reason itself in the face of the pure alterity of the sensible. "Elle manifeste la servitude de la pensée à l'égard d'une puissance intérieure à l'esprit, et antérieure à lui, qu'il s'efforce en vain de maîtriser" (Rancière, 2004, p. 126).[16]

In both, however, whether the accent is placed on one faculty or the other, the experience of the sublime manifests itself as the absolute opposite of what we understand here by enjoyment. That is to say, the sublime is the verification of a separation within ourselves that privileges one side, either reason, which revitalizes our moral superiority in front of the natural world, or sensitivity, which revitalizes this world that will never cease to be mysterious to us. In enjoyment, the experience is not of separation, but of union. Enjoyment, as we saw, is 'content' with the appearance without projecting any kind of infinity on it; it is satisfied with the pure appearance and with its clash with sensibility. In this sense, enjoyment is spiritualised, but is content with mere sensation, and thereby brings us closer to the sensation of what is pleasant.

This satisfaction of enjoyment, a completely interested and subjective happiness, therefore departs from all the honorary aesthetic categories indicated by classical aesthetics. It consciously moves away without entailing

[16] Benjamin uses here the distinction between 'Erlebnis' and 'Erfahrung'. Both can be translated to 'experience', but 'Erlebnis' refers to a consciously lived experience, while 'Erfahrung' refers to an unconscious and unreflective one.

a kind of feeling of inferiority, but rather supposes a different stage of the constitution of the subjectivity, i.e., of the movement between the Same and the Other. In Levinas we read that "enjoyment, as interiorisation, runs up against the very strangeness of the earth" (Levinas, 1991, p. 142). Enjoyment is a process of selfhood and familiarisation. The movement of the sublime, on the contrary, is the presentation of a strangeness. It is the phenomenal display of something that we can never fully inhabit, an experience of negativity and absence. Enjoyment is fulfillment and satisfaction.

Contentment, as we have seen, characterised sensitivity in the experience of enjoyment as that which did not go beyond appearance. This was done by Levinas to highlight the passive dimension, in a phenomenological sense, that enjoyment possesses as it is governed by the faculty of sensitivity. However, the fact that one is simply content does not imply that one only stays on the 'surface'. In any case, this surface already gives us access, in its immediacy, to a symbolic depth without 'presenting it to consciousness'. This, therefore, involves an important leap, so much so that Levinas' apparently radical division between reason and sensitivity can make us confused, since what is apparently done is to link reason with activity and sensitivity with passivity. When understanding the symbolic value of our passive attitude, what Husserl would call passive synthesis, we could consider that this aesthetic dimension of enjoyment is not simply a passive letting go of the world, but, in effect, a primal form of symbolic appropriation of the world. Alluding to this experience, Simon Høffding and Tone Roald claim what follows:

> Referring to passive syntheses does not mean that the subject is passive or inert. Think of my simple perception of the tree outside my window. I direct my attention to it, but its appearance is not exhaustively explained by this attention. […] The tree is in the attentive foreground, but, like any figure-ground constellation, the surroundings or other 'features' – these familiar buildings, given from this particular angle in this particular light – enclosing it, partly constitute what makes it 'this tree'. And emotions of nostalgia and anticipation are likewise activated, as I see its first little spring leaves, reminding me of this season of lush growth and of the past springs during which I've seen the tree. None of these associations are actively or purposively initiated by me, but co-presented as immanent in the perception of the tree. (Høffding and Roald, 2019, p. 7)

Merleau-Ponty, more than Levinas, constantly sought to establish a union between matter and spirit, sensibility and reason, first from the concept of body and, lastly, through the concept of flesh. Without entering into Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, I would like to conclude this section with a quote from the posthumous work The Visible and The Invisible, in which Merleau-Ponty states precisely that the everyday and apparently passive character of objects is not without depth, but rather implies a whole symbolic network, since the "sensible itself […] is capable of establishing itself up on a level or horizon" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 237).

It is perhaps from this dimension that the constitutive character of our unreflective aesthetic experience could be better understood, without having

to consider that there is a duality between understanding/reason and sensitivity. In *The world of perception* he expresses this idea:

> The things of the world are not simply neutral objects which stand before us for our contemplation. Each one of them symbolises or recalls a particular way of behaving, provoking in us reactions which are either favourable or unfavourable. This is why people's tastes, character, and the attitude they adopt to the world and to particular things can be deciphered from the objects with which they choose to surround themselves, their preferences for certain colours or the places where they like to go for walks. (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 63)

Ultimately, the experience of enjoyment departs from the classical aesthetic categories devised in the Kantian model, insofar as the requirements of disinterest and universality are not met. Although we can consider them as closer to the pleasant, these objects of enjoyment are not simply objects of an absolutely passive sensibility, but the enjoyment with these elements is symbolically charged. The objects with which we surround ourselves constitute our home, our first appropriation and, ultimately, the first step of our subjectivity. The pleasure of enjoyment with objects is sensitive but not thereby irrational. Rather, it is sensitive in the way of the unreflective, but this sensitivity, also relying on Merleau-Ponty, is loaded with meaning.

6. Conclusions

The concept of enjoyment in Levinas has allowed us to understand a possible model of ontological understanding of the aesthetic experience in everyday life. The idea is, therefore, to capture the role that pleasantness, sympathy or attraction in general have in our daily lives as a way of constructing and edifying our personality. Daily life is not exempt from aesthetic experience, as we constantly make unconscious judgments that make us approach some objects rather than others; surround ourselves with objects that are more pleasant to us than others; schedule when to go outside; dress a specific color of clothing, and so on. All these aesthetic choices do not entail the realisation of an epoché of our natural attitude, but are precisely the essence of it. The way in which we enjoy life; how we 'wrap' ourselves in the objects that we love, constitute an extension of our subjectivity that, despite being referred to as the Same, is not the Same, but part of a world that enfold us: the world of our objects, customs, desires, ideas and pleasures.

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From Everyday Aesthetics to Rethinking Existence

The Possible Dialogue between Jean Luc Nancy's Ontology and the Aesthetics of the Everyday

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My aim is to argue that Jean Luc Nancy's conception of Being can be particularly valuable for underlining Everyday Aesthetics' specificity and thus for revealing its philosophical worth, one that I believe is overshadowed when treating Everyday Aesthetics solely as an extension of traditional aesthetics. Nancy's ontology is nevertheless rooted in the Heideggerian perspective of Being, and is thus seemingly opposite to an Anglo-American approach, which is the sort of ground that Everyday Aesthetics seems to rely on. This paper will be divided into three parts: first, I discuss what separates Everyday Aesthetics from the European approach – Heidegger included – and why this rupture is legitimate. Secondly, I present what I consider to be the strongest philosophical points that Everyday Aesthetics puts forward. Finally, I show why Nancy's work, in its specific way of challenging Western thought, can make a considerable contribution to Everyday Aesthetics. | Keywords: *Everyday Aesthetics, Jean-Luc Nancy, Ontology, Quotidian, Touch*

1. Having to Leave (European) Tradition (Very Much) Behind

Even though I agree that Everyday Aesthetics (EA) already possesses the background and the tools necessary for its explorations, and that these explorations are pertinent enough to be the issue to focus on (e.g. the environmental effects of the choices we make based on aesthetic preferences and regarding our everyday objects (Saito, 2010)), I also believe that a more manifest contrast to what has been previously done in aesthetics and in philosophy in general is not at all futile and can only play in favour of EA. Such a contrast would indeed help, first, to better outline EA's specificity, so that EA's 'objects' are not merely seen as 'something new' that aesthetics has 'absorbed' through the enlargement of its boundaries. Secondly, it may contribute to disclosing more discerningly EA's conceptual richness. In this

way, EA could be understood, not as merely offering additional 'subjects' to discuss, but as the possibility of calling into question what we traditionally understand as aesthetics. Thirdly, it may serve us to detect and thus avoid unneeded remnants of the tradition.

EA and Jean-Luc Nancy's work do have a few points in common, one of them being the fact that EA takes into consideration the 'lower sense' of touch, and touch is undoubtedly a central notion in Nancy's philosophical proposal. They appear however to share something more essential. Both EA and Nancy seem to adopt the same philosophical stance towards a particular denial, a manifest exclusion, that has been applied by European thinking to everydayness and the ordinary, a stance that, from my perspective, informs both EA's and Nancy's approaches. In short, in EA, or at least in some of its variants, and in a more explicit and developed manner in Nancy, what we find is not simply the discussion of this or that subject, but the call for a shift in philosophical thought.

1.1 A General View

When considering the conceptual conditions required for its development, one could argue that EA, by being focused on the aesthetic experiences that take place within the ordinary, not only had to perform a deliberate and radical rupture with traditional aesthetics but also with the European approach to Being in general. In other words, what EA can unfold is much more complex and far-reaching than the already rich debates it generates within aesthetics. What it unfolds goes further since it concerns the manner in which the (European) philosophical tradition in general conceives – or has conceived up to very recently – of existence itself. To put it (very) briefly: the European approach, in aiming to reach what is considered to be the realm of truth, has persistently chosen to distance itself from the immediate and the familiar presence of things, i.e. the realm of the everyday. Now, such a depiction of European philosophical history – an overly complex and heterogeneous history of well-known disputes, and thus, of disparate perspectives and methods – is certainly a generalization that, to say the very least, lacks rigour. Nevertheless, when it comes to the main European referents, namely, those whose work has shaped in greater extent than others the path, the contours, the ground, the contents and the style of philosophical thought, it is not completely incorrect to recognise a somewhat recurrent dismissive attitude towards the immediate and the everyday. Focusing on this particular dismissal, let us name a very few examples. First, Plato's rejection of *aesthesis* not only as a mode of perception but more importantly as that which is perceived by our senses – in a word, Plato's rejection of the objects that circulate in the immediacy, and this immediacy itself; second, Descartes, who – as he confesses in his *Meditations* – had to persuade himself to discredit what he saw, touched and surrounded him, and determined what he perceived through his senses as ontologically dependent and thus subsidiary, in sharp contrast to an autonomous *res cogitans*; finally, Hegel's distinction between *Wirklichkeit* in a proper sense and what we usually but wrongly call 'reality', i.e. the external world as it surrounds us with its materiality but also our

internal world (Hegel, 2015, 2Ho).[1] (Interestingly, this very distinction is formulated when presenting his philosophy of art). In short, it could be argued that a persistent (albeit multifaceted) conceptual tendency has been underlying the 'European approach', thus explaining why certain 'things' have been regarded as philosophically pertinent, and contrastingly, why others have been ontologically and epistemologically devalued.

As we all know, one of the most – if not the most – explicit and radical efforts to shift from this philosophical tradition was Heidegger's *Being and Time* (and evidently his following publications continued that same path), where it is explicitly asserted that "we should raise anew *the question of the meaning of being*." (Heidegger, 1978, p. 1)[2] Now, Heidegger not only goes back to the fundamental question of the sense of Being. In this major shift that his thought undertakes, he also takes into consideration exactly what the tradition neglected: everydayness. Hence, the question arises: what did this Heideggerian radical approach that aimed to overcome the philosophical tradition mean for the comprehension and treatment of the everyday?

1.2 Heidegger and the Place of Everydayness in the *Destruction of the History of Western Ontology*

One of the several informative examples in Heidegger's work of how in order to properly think philosophically we have to go past the everyday and the immediate, is his radical distinction between the 'surrounding world' (*Umwelt*) and the 'shared – or common – world' (*Mitwelt*). The former is limited to the (measurable and quantifiable) physical space and the totality of on-hand entities that we encounter in everyday life. *Umwelt* hence corresponds to an ontic comprehension of the world. Conversely, *Mitwelt* concerns only *Dasein* and thus coincides with the proper (*eigentlich*) manner of being-in-the-world (which is not simply being 'within' the world) and being-with-one-another (*Miteinandersein*). In other words, *Mitwelt* corresponds to an ontological grasp of the world. Consequently, even though for Heidegger Being cannot be understood independently from the world, the world he is thinking about, the one that is part of the ontological structure of Being, is not the world as we perceive it in our quotidian way of being.

Such a distinction between *Umwelt* and *Mitwelt* – which is far from being the only distinction in Heidegger's writings between notions apparently close but profoundly unalike in an ontological level[3] – rests on, and thus also enables, the ontological lessening of the *Umweltdinge* or 'environmental things', i.e., that which composes our everyday concerns, the mere things and their mere presence, that which we perceive with our senses, that which we can

1 It has been claimed that Hotho imposed his own views on his edition of Hegel's 1823 lectures on the philosophy of art, yet it is also true that the Introduction is regarded as a reliable Hegelian direct source, since in contrast to the majority of the other segments of Hegel's notebooks (i.e. short and isolated sentences), the introduction was formulated in an integral and stylistically polished manner (Gethmann-Siefert, 1998, p. XXXI).

2 I am following the pagination of the *Gesamtausgabe*.

3 To name just a few: Cause (*Ursache*) and origin (*Ursprung*), fabrication (*Erzeugung*) and production (*Herstellung* and *Hervorbringung*), exactitude (*Genauigkeit*) and rigour (*Strenge*), etc.

touch. Subsequently, even though, with Heidegger, everydayness (*Alltäglichkeit*) went from being overlooked to earning a place in philosophical thinking – hence, some sort of philosophical 'dignity' – it did so solely as a strategy, as a way for thought to 'simply' let the world be and unveil itself, instead of rushing to impose on it our (usual) categories. Taking everydayness into consideration certainly didn't equate to "leap right away over that domain of things in which we know ourselves [to be] immediately at home" (Heidegger, 2018, p. 145). Hence, everydayness is in Heidegger chiefly a method, and thus a means (it is also a way for Heidegger to distinguish himself from the tradition). Everydayness does therefore earn a place in Heidegger but only as a starting point that has to be later abandoned in favour of something belonging to another ontological order. It can thus be said that Heidegger's dismantling of metaphysics did not amount to a withdrawal from the proclivity for conceiving truth as something not to be found in the immediate presence. In other words, Heidegger's approach, as those of his predecessors, continued to (philosophically) disqualify what takes place within the ordinary in the manner as it takes place ordinarily.[4]

Even though Heidegger is not the subject of this paper, reviewing some of his terminology associated with the renewal of the question of Being serves as a significant reminder when developing EA's theoretical ground: when affirming finitude, it is not enough to take as the starting point the finitude (or the ordinary), as opposed to the infinitude (or the out-of-the-ordinary). First and foremost, one has to remain within it. As we shall see later on, some EA's accounts propose to acknowledge the extraordinary in the ordinary, as a way to make everydayness philosophically relevant. Such a perspective is not only unnecessary, but does a disservice to EA's interests.

1.3 The Pervasiveness of Significance

EA rightly drew attention to the fact that traditional aesthetics had neglected a whole and undeniably critical dimension of our aesthetic experience: our aesthetic interactions and responses to the objects and matters that constitute our everyday life.[5] Nevertheless, if aesthetics has disregarded certain objects and experiences, we should also notice that 'plain' existence has suffered from the same intellectual indifference, or what is more, discredit. The inclusion or the omission of certain modes of existence (by ontology and/or by epistemology) is not by any means simply a matter of taste, merely a preference for certain subjects over others. That disregard is on the contrary rooted in an ontological disqualification. Was the neglect of the everyday philosophically legitimate?

Being in the immediate surroundings as entities that are simply there among other entities is a mode of being. Furthermore, and no matter how this observation may humble our particular way of being as humans, that simple mode of being is the most basic, i.e. the most rudimentary and the primordial

4 It goes without saying that scientific truth (laws, explanations), as something that does not correspond to the mere description of the immediate surroundings, is another matter.

5 I am here paraphrasing Yuriko Saito's introduction to her Everyday Aesthetics (Saito, 2007, p. 1).

mode of being, and, by extension, the shared way of being.[6] To rephrase it in terms closer to Heidegger, we can say that there may be a privileged entity (at least from the human perspective of language, sense-making, self-determination and other considerations of the sort), which is of course Dasein, but this 'favoured' way of existing does not rest on a special ontological status. Or as Jean-Luc Nancy would put it: "the ontological difference is null" (Nancy, 2007, p. 71). On that account, not only aesthetics is pervasive, but being is as well, as redundant and as self-evident as this assertion may seem. Is it however really so evident?

If the philosophical tradition before Heidegger seems to have proceeded as if it were possible to conceive Being independently from *time*, the *world* and the *others* – hence, some sort of 'overexistence' – Heidegger, on the contrary, posits time as the horizon for the understanding of Being; the world as *the* way of *Dasein*'s way of being; and being with others as coessential to *Dasein*. Another manner of 'overexisting' nevertheless seems to permeate this new approach.

Being in its 'authentic' (eigentlich) sense exceeds what simply is. And I call it an 'excess' because what the other entities experience as being, time, world and 'with' is also possible for Dasein. Dasein can indeed experience them in that way and as a matter of fact, it frequently does (Dasein's inauthentic way of being). This way of being is a *possibility* for *Dasein*. *Dasein*, however, is also concerned by another way of being which is only *Dasein*'s possibility, whereas for the other entities this particular way of being is impossible.

There is also an excess in the sense that that which defines *Dasein* is not simply the sense of Being that is characteristic to it but also what is closer to the proper understanding of Being in general. In other words, *Dasein* is not only that entity for whom the sense of Being is an issue (which distinguishes itself from other entities). *Dasein's* authentic way of being is what better exposes what something really is. Accordingly, *Zeitlichkeit* is not the ordinary time, *Being-in-the-world* is not simply being-*within*-the-world, and the 'Mit' from *Mitsein* cannot be understood as any kind of 'with', i.e., a mere spatial contiguity, for it is not enough to be next to each other (*Nebeneinandersein*) to properly be *with* another. The latter, evidently, is only possible for *Dasein* – and only within its proper way of being – which is what allows the passage from the *Mitsein* to another fundamental trait of *Dasein*, the dangerous telos that is the shared destiny (*Geschick*). To put it briefly, there are reasons to suggest that, with Heidegger, European thought went from one type of 'overexistence' to another. In other words, Heidegger put finitude on the forefront but only as a (privileged) access route to something that in the end revealed itself to be another type of infinitude.

If going back to ontology is justified, it is because EA is not only a matter of aesthetics. To put it another way, the way we think of Being and existence determines how we develop aesthetics. It is indeed not a coincidence that as happens with 'being', 'aesthetic' – the adjective, not the theory – in its core is

[6] To some degree, I am borrowing this idea, to which I shall come back later on, from Nancy (2000, p. 9).

also something very basic, and that it is the manner in which its theoretical evolution was conducted that detached it from what is simply on-hand. Moreover, by trying to present the philosophical pertinence of everydayness not as an *intention* but as an equally legitimate way of existence, one of the aims is to make possible for EA's legitimacy not to rely on some sort of aesthetical or ethical voluntarism, on a, however well-intentioned, injunction. Some EA's accounts indeed suggest that we *should* promote moral activity (Irvin, 2008, p. 44) or that the ordinary *should be* seen as a source of aesthetic wonder (Formis, 2010, p. 8). However, there are stronger approaches to EA.

2. Why I Prefer EA's 'Strong Version'[7]

2.1 Because of the 'History' of Aesthetics

When questioning Sherri Irvin's interest in the acknowledgment of how pleasurable some 'insignificant' private experiences are, Christopher Dowling rightly reminds us of Kant's distinction between agreeableness and beauty (Dowling, 2010, p. 228). That there are 'minor' experiences that are pleasurable is undeniable, but should we call them 'aesthetic'? Dowling's main concern is to draw attention to the possible danger of "trivializing what counts as the aesthetic" (Dowling, 2010, p. 226). And partially, I agree – as Kevin Melchionne would do too: examples such as Irvin's are "strikingly banal observations" (Melchionne, 2011, p. 439). I do not agree, however, with Dowling's premise – a supposed core concept of the aesthetic (Dowling, 2010, p. 226). Even less do I agree with his way of reading Kant, whom he heavily references in order to formulate what constitutes this core, and therefore the criteria that – according to him – must be taken into account when determining what has a proper aesthetic value; all of which is used to call into question some of EA's claims. Is there thus a key principle that determines what is and what is not 'aesthetic'? As Dowling's article suggests, this question concerns EA's general pertinence but more importantly, how far can EA go. Now, Kant is undeniably a decisive philosopher, but is his contribution in aesthetics so unequivocal?

Since it is mostly because of his first Critique that he gained such a prominent place in the history of philosophy, we should not minimise the fact that, before reflecting on the *a priori* principles pertaining to the aesthetic judgment, Kant used the term 'aesthetic' in a manner that had nothing to do with art or beauty. Moreover, Kant underlined at the time that the use of 'aesthetic' for matters of 'taste' was grounded in a failed hope (elevating the criteria for the estimation of the beautiful to a science). Consequently one had to desist from using 'aesthetic' for those other matters and – as he did for some years – reserve its use to epistemology. What I want to point out is quite simple: that particular meaning of 'aesthetic' – the adjective that depicts our immediate experience and contact with the world – is still valid to this day. Why is this relevant? As mentioned before, Yuriko Saito's focus is on our aesthetic interactions with the objects and matters of our everyday life, not on art. Not to mention the fact

[7] Succinctly, the 'strong version' is the version that asks to be removed from the authority of the art-centred criteria. Other articles have already identified and analysed the main variants of EA (cf. Dowling, 2010; Ratiu, 2019).

that she is rather explicit about the need of separating 'aesthetic' from 'art' (Saito, 2017, p. 1). She even calls for EA's autonomy from art-centred criteria, and is certainly not concerned about an approval from aesthetics in its restrictive sense. It could be said then that her conception of what 'aesthetic' is, is closer (certainly, not identical) to the meaning Kant gives it in his first Critique than to what 'aesthetic' has come to mean today. Certainly, things are not that simple. Saito's concerns are not purely limited to the immediate, the routinary and the material, but also consider the fact that what circulates in this immediacy exerts on us through our senses – here, we are still within the limits of the 'basic' sense of the aesthetic – an attraction, which is closer to the other sense of the aesthetic. In other words, some degree of 'beauty' plays a role in Saito's account. Nevertheless, even if that 'attraction' relied entirely on beauty, the matter in hand would still be beauty and not art. And since we were discussing Kant, if we were to omit his first Critique and focus only on his third one – the first half, that is – to a certain extent we could claim the same. Kant's concern when examining this 'new' sense of 'aesthetic' was neither exclusively nor primarily art, but 'beauty'. Furthermore, although aesthetic judgments are about empirical objects, what 'aesthetic' describes is the *subjective* side of such experiences, not the qualities of the objects, i.e. what can be evaluated, debated upon and normed. The latter are closer to judgments of knowledge, which Kant explicitly distinguishes from aesthetic ones, something Dowling seems oblivious of. Also, the universal validity (or 'universal communicability') claimed by those judgments – unlike Dowling's way of presenting it – does not refer to a set of universal "established conventions" (Dowling, 2010, p. 229). Such conventions or norms would not be of an *a priori* nature. In other words, the matter of 'communicability' is not intended to produce tools and norms so that we can "engage critically with others" (*Ibid*.). The §33 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is rather clear on that subject. As a matter of fact, a pure aesthetic judgment, i.e., an aesthetic judgment in its proper sense, is one that judges forms without resorting to concepts, which also explains Kant's preference for natural beauty over artistic beauty (i.e. beauty that is created in accordance to rules).

To summarize, Kant's third Critique is not intended as a contribution to our 'critical' contemplation nor to our 'critical' exchanges about artworks. And yet – always with Kant as his source – Dowling reiterates that an appropriate aesthetic judgment implies having tools and norms, so as to elevate our discourses and debates about art. In fact, it could be suggested that the interest that lies in (the first half of) Kant's third Critique, not only surpasses art, but also beauty, inasmuch as the feeling of beauty appears to be a glimpse of a wider issue: a particular rapport we have with the surrounding world, one that is neither exhausted by knowledge nor by moral imperatives.

Now, this does not mean that there is not a history of aesthetics. Yet, instead of a 'core' concept, what this history rather unveils is a flux of agreements and disagreements, with some approaches certainly being more eventful than others. However, every philosophical 'event', perhaps precisely because of its magnitude, seems to have been quite rapidly followed by alternative

interpretations, oppositions, and even new major shifts. And a major shift did indeed take place, a development that did refine major concepts and restrict the discipline's scope. However, that shift took place with the emergence of 'Philosophy of Art', that is, when *aesthetics* was deemed either insufficient or unsuitable for the new philosophical ambitions regarding art.[8] This new period was inevitably much more conscious of the tradition that preceded it, and subsequently chose much more carefully which subjects to include and which concepts to use, and all in the name of the 'dignity' of the discipline (philosophy as a whole) and of the new understanding of art (narrowing the contents suitable for 'great art'). Nevertheless, this shift didn't pertain solely to philosophy of art. It was rather a manifestation of how the academic sphere as a whole embarked on a more 'serious' path where 'plain everydayness' had little to no place.[9]

2.2 Because of Its Potential to Undermine Some Lasting Assumptions of the Tradition

For Yuriko Saito – one of the main exponents of EA's 'strong version' – the philosophical pertinence of EA seems to be, above all, the series of implications that objects and matters of everyday life have in our lives since of course our lives are not only ours. Our lives are indeed not limited to a private sphere but, quite contrarily, have considerable consequences (e.g., of an ethical and environmental type) for other people's lives and for the world in general. To put it in a different way, Saito's research does not have as a central argument that there is an extraordinary dimension within the ordinary. As a matter of fact, she is rather aware of the theoretical danger of such a claim: "by making the ordinary extraordinary and rendering the familiar strange, while we gain aesthetic experiences thus made possible, we also pay the price by compromising the very everydayness of the everyday" (Saito, 2007, p. 50). Indeed, arguing that there is an extraordinary dimension in the ordinary would amount to falling again in the trap of making the out-of-the-ordinary, which has also been regarded as the out-of-this-world, the criterion for philosophical legitimacy. And as I have already underlined, more important than making the ordinary the starting point, is to remain in it, that is to say, to keep the everyday in its everydayness.

In what could be the opposite end of EA's theoretical spectrum, Barbara Formis certainly stresses how embedded in routine and thus how ordinary our daily experiences habitually are, and how uninterrupted these ordinary experiences are by the extraordinary (Formis, 2010, pp. 7-8). However, despite emphasising

[8] Even then, what followed was not an homogeneous path. The focus on beauty was not replaced by a focus on art. Both Schelling and Hegel reserved a central spot for beauty, but took it to another level. 'Nature', on the other hand, received a different treatment from each. If in general, 'nature' was finally given more credit, in Hegel it lost almost all philosophical dignity. And it was Hegel's approach that prevailed over those of his contemporaries.

[9] In other words, it was within European intellectual development that a restrictive tendency came into play. I therefore disagree with Saito when she singles out the twentieth-century Anglo-American aesthetics as the one that, because of its narrowness, sees in EA the "opening of a new frontier" (Saito, 2017, p. 1). It is true that Saito does not mention a 'European approach' in those pages. She does however specify the Anglo-American approach as being restrictive, and, contrastingly, refers to the Greeks and also to Baumgarten, i.e. the Europeans, as an example of a broader conception of the aesthetic.

this clear manifestation of finitude, Formis does not remain within the limits of the latter, and does the complete opposite. She characterises the occurrence of those repetitive and meaningless experiences, i.e. the fact that they actually happen without being interrupted (that they are possible everyday), as extraordinary, and what is more, as a *miracle* (*Ibid*., p. 8). This, she clarifies, is not a celebration of banality. However, even though a celebration of banality is certainly not needed, stressing how pervasive banality is would be intellectually more stimulating than appealing to words such as 'miracle'. What we perceive in Formis is our perennial need for significance, for some sort of transcendence, i.e., precisely what has nourished and justified the neglect of everydayness. And neither Saito nor Jean-Luc Nancy are afraid of the fact that existence can present itself in a trivial manner.

Another reason why I prefer EA's 'strong version' is because its main concern is not simply the appreciation of the private experience (in itself and for itself). If Dowling sees Sherri Irvin's account as problematic in that it trivializes 'aesthetics', my concern is rather how trivial Irvin's argument appears to be. Irvin seems to merely acknowledge that our everyday experiences are "replete with aesthetic character" (Irvin, 2008, p. 29). She notices indeed that many of her experiences, perhaps all of them, are of sensuous and pleasurable character. She acknowledges that she is there in a familiar environment, existing as a singular Being yet intertwined with everything around, directly or indirectly touching and being touched (for seeing, hearing and smelling are ways of being reached by), experiencing and interacting with colours, forms, sounds, movements, volumes, etc. And because she is inter-acting with different entities (or parts of them) and these in turn inter-act with her – by the way, these entities can be anything around us, not just entities especially suited for contemplation – it is safe to say that we constantly and inevitably shape and are shaped by the world. It is beyond our choice. To be honest, however, this is not her argument. It is the way I present her series of examples (cf. Irvin, 2008, p. 31) with a little help from Jean-Luc Nancy. By themselves, Irvin's examples are mostly a description of a few of her recurrent behaviours and how these are a source of personal satisfaction. That is, her analysis is not about how we are deeply intertwined with the world, but how *I* nourish *my* world. Later in her paper, the segment of her argumentation centred on the moral reasons for her claims does not go past an invitation to develop a more satisfying relation with what we already have, which at the very most constitutes a moral recommendation.

Finally, perhaps I am overestimating this version of EA, but from my perspective, there is a (potentially substantial) difference in the fact that Saito doesn't limit her sights to neither the isolated traits of isolated objects nor to the isolated 'I' going through a flow of sensations. Rather, she sets her attention on how the traits that we get *from* an object X that we touch and use *on* Y, exert an influence on our decisions and thus on our actions, and therefore on the network that we are and that we are in. It is not then so much about the (everyday) objects in themselves, nor about us feeling satisfied with ourselves (through the private and pleasurable insignificant experiences). It is more

about the *circulation* of it all, and how this circulation is aesthetic. In this sense, Saito's account leaves the door open for further explorations, whereas the accounts centred primarily on private enjoyment or on how the ordinary is actually extraordinary stray us away from this other understanding that is opened up by a more radical approach to EA.

3. Jean Luc Nancy's Ontology (or Keeping Existence within Finitude)

Just as he highlights how pivotal Heidegger's work has been for Western philosophy, as well as for his own thought, Jean-Luc Nancy also explicitly stresses Heidegger's shortfalls (Nancy, 2008b, p. 5). These shortfalls, however, as Nancy underlines, are not exclusive to Heidegger. On the contrary, they permeate the whole of Western thought (*Ibid*.). Nancy's own work could hence at least partially be read as a response to those shortfalls; thus, as a conscious drifting away from the tradition. Throughout his oeuvre, the recurrence of some particular concepts ('singular plural', 'touch', etc.) and the specific way of treating some familiar notions ('community', 'art', etc.) could be interpreted as a call to undertake a turn in our philosophical path. As a matter of fact, Nancy explicitly underlines the urgency for such a shift (Nancy, 2000, p. xv). Notwithstanding this shift, Nancy's approach remains a 'European approach': he does not abandon the often criticised 'European' way of being particularly technical in his terminology. His thought unfolds through the pages in a somewhat opaque way. Nor does he ever discard ontology. Rather Nancy makes the question of the sense of Being the fundamental one. In what could be considered his most important work – 1996's *Being Singular Plural* – Nancy clearly states that this book's ambition is to redo the whole of 'first philosophy' (*Ibid.*). One should not, however, be fooled by this expression, which certainly echoes an old concern but most importantly, a traditional way of thinking and thus of disregarding certain ways of being. It has indeed to be noted that Nancy's ontology is profoundly rooted in what the tradition, contrary to him, predominantly either dismissed or devalued: *presence*.

3.1 Presence (and the Other Sense of Sense)

Here are a few examples of Nancy's main ideas on the subject: being is the being of an entity and *nothing other* (Nancy, 2007, p. 71); (as quoted earlier) "the ontological difference is null" (*Ibid*.); the world is just present and this presence does not differ from anything (*Ibid*.); "a world is nothing that is outside existence" (Nancy, 2000, p. 29). Consequently, and in clear contrast to Heidegger, in Nancy there is no privileged entity when it comes to ontology; likewise, being-in-the-world equates to being-*within*-the-world.

Through these and a variety of other assertions, Nancy stresses finitude, one that seems to be in need of being repeatedly underlined given our 'natural' propensity to look elsewhere and not here or to make of what we encounter next to us something other than what presents itself. By privileging presence, Nancy diminishes the predominance of 'meaning' in our understanding of the world and of things in general (he does not, however, nullify meaning nor he invalidates it). In other words, in Nancy's thought, the fundamental sense of 'sense' is not meaning but what goes through the senses. And it is indeed

a going-through, a circulation: passages from one entity to another; human, not human, 'natural', manufactured, etc. The consequence is no small matter: it is the *space* between the entities and the 'touching' that goes through it, that exposes existence more than *time*, more than *meaning*, and more than the entities in themselves (i.e. isolated). Hence, our (rudimentary) relation with the world, our being-in-the-world, our understanding of it, is aesthetic. Or, to rephrase it, the aesthetic comprehension of things is the comprehension of things. In any case, whatever significance, meaning, discourses or norms we can construct, all of them rely on presence, they come 'after' presence (although, in this attempt to drift away from the tradition, we should find alternatives to the habitual thinking in terms of 'before' and 'after' as if there was something 'behind' and 'preceding' everything else). An inability to trust presence has however shaped our perception of the world. We see, we touch, we are touched, we go through things. Despite all this, "we have to seek assurance for it. That *the thing itself* would be there isn't certain" (Nancy, 2008, p. 5). If someone were to retort that Nancy wrote that sentence not to talk about our dealing with entities in general but quite exclusively with respect to the body – the book I took that quote from is titled *Corpus* – it must be reminded that for Nancy, the body is not a 'particular' entity: "The *ontology of the body* is ontology itself: being's in no way prior or subjacent to the phenomenon here. The body is the being of existence » (*Ibid.*, p. 15). Such a claim shows how far Nancy intends to go when rethinking ontology, for the body has notably been devalued by the tradition, ontologically, epistemologically and morally.

Could such claims be read as a trivialization of ontology? From a certain perspective that remains faithful to the tradition, certainly yes. However, I want to focus on another possible objection to this insistence on presence. An objection that could be considered legitimate, particularly when combined with the claim that there is no ontological difference. Indeed, one may argue that such ideas could lead to social and political indifference and inaction, e.g. not identifying ourselves as responsible to elaborate a plan of action, initiate it, to carry it through, etc. Nancy is nonetheless clear that emphasising presence does not equate to surrendering to some sort of 'presentism' (Nancy, 2017, p. 123). On the contrary, by underlining the ontological primordiality of what surrounds and touches us, by stressing that this world is the only world, that being is being-with-others (any others), ontology cannot but be political (and consequently, neither indifferent nor passive). However, expressed in this way, it might seem that what forces us to redo ontology is a need (for instance, a political urgency) or some sort of good intention, and thus not a legitimate philosophical re-evaluation of Being. When analysing Nancy's proposal in detail, however, this redoing proves to be not only needed but also possible, and since possible, necessary. Western's thought has missed a fundamental trait of being: the 'with' that is structurally essential to being (Nancy, 2008b, p. 5). Being is being-with, fundamentally, and thus, all the time, every time. Furthermore, unlike Heidegger, Nancy's 'with' concerns all entities, not just humans. It is partially through the development of what entails the being-with that, in Nancy, the political – and, by extension, the social and the ethical – reveals itself as constitutive of Being. Consequently, it proves to be not

a separate and external dimension from the (supposedly) primordial one of the individual, i.e. something to resolve afterwards or in a complementary way (Nancy, 2000, p. 38). How is this pertinent to this article's concerns? First, because one of EA's concerns is the ethical dimension of the pervasiveness of the aesthetic in our everyday life. Second, because it encourages us to reflect on the potential reach of EA. Nancy's ontological approach paves the way to thinking beyond the acknowledgment of the agreeable moments of our private experiences; beyond the 'self', the 'subject', and even 'intersubjectivity' (a notion that, more or less, still privileges the 'subject'); and beyond the consideration of our life experience as humans and our connexion to other humans. Finally, it also allows us to rethink our relation with simple things and with the world in general, outside the enduring perspective of the 'higher' and 'lower' senses, of the 'meaningful' and the 'merely instrumental'.

3.2 Touch, the Highest Sense?

Trying to go past the criterion of 'significance' as one of the decisive ones within ontology, discussing 'touch' should not be a matter of 'higher' or 'lower'. If touch plays a central role in Nancy's understanding of Being, it is because it not only exposes the basic and rudimentary way of being, it is that basic way of being.

As focused as it is on meaning, philosophy seems to have lost track of this other sense of 'sense', the basic sense, when in fact, *the sense of the world* is that sense, since what the world presents to the touch is not "a mere exteriority of [an] impenetrable thing" (Nancy, 1997, p. 11). To put it another way, sense "does not signify" (*Ibid.*, p. 10), "sense is touching" (*Ibid.*, p. 63). And it is because thought is *touched* by existence (by the world) that thought creates meaning.

Given our 'bad habits', Nancy warns us of the obvious risk in all of this: making of this 'basic' sense "a superior signification" (*Ibid.*, p. 10), i.e. going back to our intellectual (mal)practice of oversignifying, thus exalting the sensory to a caricatural extreme (Nancy, 2008, p. 23). In other words, the sensory has to remain sensory. In this sense, Nancy's ontology could therefore be useful in addressing one of AE's theoretical issues: preserving everydayness as everydayness. This, however, does not mean that thought and meaning do not play a critical role. What it does mean is that there is no thinking without touching (*Ibid.*, p. 37). Besides, since existence touches thought and, in turn, thought touches existence, we are always producing-sense (both senses), and therefore, making-the-world. Once again, it is our (rudimentary) aesthetic relation with the world, the base of our making-the-world. Nancy's ontology could therefore also be useful – once more – when working on the ethical implications of the everyday.

3.3 The Quotidian

If Heidegger identified the quotidian with the inauthentic, the undifferentiated and the statistical, Nancy conversely understands what manifests itself in the quotidian as an "affirmation of the world" (Nancy, 2000, p. 9). The quotidian

exposes existence, in that existence has no essence and is not a substance. Heidegger, as the tradition before him, seems to have been moved by a 'natural' distrust, ontologically lessening what presents itself in an ordinary way (e.g., a stone, that which has no 'World'). However, what is it that legitimises the everyday to be considered as a lesser manifestation of *what is*? Nancy contends the opposite: "[existence's] intimate discord, its polymorphy and its polyphony" (*Ibid*.) is exposed by the everyday, through the everyday, in the everyday. Nancy is rather explicit about it: "the humble layer of our quotidian experience contains a fundamental ontological attestation" (*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9). That fundamental attestation is that Being is *being singular plural*, i.e. existence's singular and material manifestations are not simply 'multiplicity', something whose 'truth' is to be found in a non-material 'totality' elsewhere. Also, that there is not *one* origin, but a plurality of them, happening at each moment, each one affirming the world, this world. The quotidian is thus not the trivial nor the inauthentic. Any entity is, and its way of being is the shared way of being by any other. Furthermore, the absence of an ontological difference does not mean that we are indistinct from one another, for every entity is singular (hence the discordance, the polymorphy and the polyphony) and remains so, but always as a being-with.

Another idea that shows that Nancy not only welcomes what the tradition would consider as trivial but actually takes it into serious consideration, is his suggestion that thought itself – i.e. not just the ephemeral mental acknowledging of some random perception but philosophical thought – is intruded, and thus shaped, by the 'trivial'. Nancy notices that not only cities, but also the countryside, have increasingly become louder (cars, machines, tractors, trains); radios and TVs are never too far away, cell phones are ringing here and there. Thinking happens *throughout this network*, and is consequently "surprised, shaken, called or summoned from very far or very near" (Nancy and Lèbre, 2017b, pp. 13-14). To put it another way, existence – in its plainest sense – *touches* thought. As a general rule, in Nancy, nothing is free from being affected by the ordinary. Not only during thought's process, but also because any object can stimulate thought to apply itself to its exercise: to start thinking (Nancy, 2002, p. 55). In other words, thinking – a process that happens within (this) time and (this) space, and hence, is entangled in matter – not only is interrupted, but shaped by the way the everyday unfolds. In short, the way Nancy works ontology is a door to the everyday.

3.4 Art

Art may seem absent here but it is certainly not absent in Nancy's body of work. Nancy's general idea of art brings art closer to the broader sense of the 'aesthetic'. According to him, art is *the most telling exposure of existence*. Art makes more evident what constitutes existence: senses, gestures, matter, entanglements, lines, shapes, volumes, sounds, touching, forming, dislocating, the using of tools, the choosing of tools, randomness, deciding, doing, and so on. Art lies primarily in its operation(s) more than in the finished artwork. It lies in the plurality of aesthetic exchanges that do not (because they could not) exclude the non-artistic and the banal. In short, the aesthetic should not be,

and actually is not, dominated by 'Art'. It is the arts that are formed by the aesthetic, and are therefore determined by it.

3.5 Conclusion

One random and trivial experience may not tell us much about anything. Nevertheless, the fact that existence manifests itself as if it were primarily constituted of the singular, the ephemeral, the sensory and the 'insignificant' is worthy of our philosophical attention. This should not entail, however, that we should make a totality of the singular, a necessity of the contingent, and so forth. More than the trivial, the problem seems to lie in our need for 'meaning' and in how far we carry this need. Indeed, this need seems to play a considerable role when our intellect ontologically and epistemologically dismisses certain things that, even though they are, are not in a certain way. The neglect of the everyday might therefore rely not on its limitations, but on our limitations regarding our conception of Being.

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Everyday Aesthetics and Philosophical Hermeneutics

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This article discusses Everyday Aesthetics seen from philosophical hermeneutics where aesthetics is understood as a form of knowledge. Two approaches are made, one concerning content, i.e. the knowledge made apparent to us in the aesthetic situation which is usually, but not exclusively, an exception to the everyday; another concerning the appearance of knowledge in form which, likewise, is also in danger of becoming isolated from the everyday. Everyday Aesthetics is reviewed through the same two approaches to understand how it differs from hermeneutics and where possible exchanges between them appear. | Keywords: *Form, Interpretation, Sensuous, Knowledge, Art*

1. Introduction

To discuss Everyday Aesthetics in relation to European traditions is an odd endeavour. Everyday Aesthetics is a discipline, Europe is a continent. Disciplines in philosophy may have geographic origins like the Vienna circle, but their practice is not related to geographic locations. Of course, some disciplines are more strongly positioned in some institutions and countries than in others. It makes a difference to the choice of topics and use of concepts if one's training is in German idealism or British empiricism, but today we find all philosophical disciplines practised everywhere. So does this endeavour make sense?

Everyday Aesthetics is written with capital letters in the call which indicates it is not merely an interest in the relation of aesthetics to the everyday but an established discipline with its own characteristics. Everyday Aesthetics comes from opposing the dominant focus on art in Anglo-American aesthetics (Saito, 2017, p. 1), which may explain why little interest is shown in other discourses sharing a wider focus on cultural phenomena seen for example in works by Herbert Marcuse (1969; 1972), Wolfgang Fritz Haug (1971/1986), Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991), and Jacques Rancière (2008). A question is, if the little interest is due to an unbridgeable difference, or if there is a potential for exchange.

I approach this question of Everyday Aesthetics and European traditions from philosophical hermeneutics to understand what they may have in common. First, I will present a hermeneutic understanding of aesthetics with an emphasis on knowledge and form. Secondly, I will look at Everyday Aesthetics through that lens to finally discuss if there are common interests and if they can enrich each other.

2. Aesthetics in a Hermeneutic View

Philosophical aesthetics is about reflecting on the knowledge implied in aesthetic analysis of artefacts. Such analysis is not philosophical but about characterising concrete artefacts. One can argue whether 'philosophical' is already implied in aesthetics and thus a superfluous addition, but often aesthetics is used for aesthetic theories that are not also philosophical. My perspective is philosophical, but for simplicity, I will proceed without adding it.

Everyday Aesthetics belongs to philosophical aesthetics though this is only occasionally emphasized (e.g. Brady, 2005, p. 179; Saito, 2007, p. 11; Mandoki, 2007, pp. 4 ff.; Leddy, 2012, p. 45). Nevertheless, I believe we can establish it to be the case.

My approach from philosophical hermeneutics is from the tradition of Hans-Georg Gadamer where interpretation is not limited to interpreting texts, artworks, and cultural phenomena; it is to interpret our existence. With this in mind, I will also stop adding 'philosophical' to hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics, Gadamer writes (1993, p. 3), is the art of understanding what is not immediately apparent in what the other says. Karlfried Gründer (1982, pp. 78 f.) emphasizes how interpreting implies a reflection on the difficulties of understanding – we do not interpret that which creates no difficulty. From this view, aesthetics is a matter of making an intellectual effort of understanding rather than, for example, a sensuous reaction to something. It is an intellectual effort that has a sensuous aspect.

I believe we have a key to what aesthetics is in the first lines of the conclusion to Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788/2015, p. 129 (A 288)) where he states that the starry heavens above and the moral law within filling his mind with admiration and awe. Between the heavens above and the moral law within, between cosmology and norms, we find the concrete individual filled with admiration and awe. We individuals must ask how cosmology and norms become concrete for us and relate to our lives. These forms of concretisation are sensuous and as such, they affect us.

An example illustrates the point. In Sophocles' Antigone we encounter something concrete, a story about people and events, with a general point about conflicting norms, including in conflict with divine law, i.e. cosmology, and false behaviour. The individual figure, king Creon, and his actions are concrete events. These lead to tragic events when one believes that the authority as ruler depends on giving indispensable commands instead of reflecting on the conflicting matters of the situation. We learn from the concrete narrative of a king's acts that power depends on good judgement and not merely on the authority to give commands.

Our position between cosmology and norms requires a concretisation of those abstract ideals which make them meaningful to us. Aesthetics is about: (1) how this knowledge is provided through the concretisation, and (2) the form in which it is done. Aesthetics investigates the form and legitimacy of the process of making sense of something by sensorial means that affect us and enable us to understand what is otherwise inaccessible or at least difficult to comprehend.

Sophocles's Antigone exemplifies how cosmology and norms can be translated to concrete individuals allowing us to proceed from the concrete to the general, i.e. to understand norms from the concrete narrative.

The translation between concrete and general is one of the most difficult problems in philosophy. I call the object in front of me a tree but the word *tree* can be applied to innumerable many phenomena and does not exhaust the concrete tree I encounter. Nevertheless, I do understand the object in front of me when classifying it to be of a kind, as a tree, similar to other objects. We distinguish conceptual knowledge from a painting or poetic expression about the tree. The former aims at unambiguously translating a multiplicity of perspectives on a phenomenon present into what is considered to be essential for us to know; the latter goes the opposite direction to make the tree present to us in its phenomenal richness through a concrete representation. The former is as a matter of knowledge eliminating the need for interpretation – to say this is a tree is immediately understood in any normal context; the latter is an aesthetic form inviting us to an interpretation that does not come to a final conclusion.

The painter's tree is concrete, yet it invites me to see something more. This is why we enjoy looking at pictures, writes Aristotle (*Poetics* 1448 b15 ff.). We come to understand something, otherwise we only take pleasure in the colours. Richard Hamann (1919, p. 21) writes likewise in his *Ästhetik* that our interest in aesthetics is not in how one experiences (*erlebt*) an image, which is a matter of psychology; aesthetics is about the relation to spiritual sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) – in what the perception of the image means and the conditions for it being meaningful.

The painter's tree appears in an intuition (*Anschauung*) where something is made present to us without being conceptually determined – to say the painting is of a tree does not exhaust it as painting. Joachim Ritter calls it a double movement when the object of the intuition, like the house of God, is more than we intuit and also something in itself, an artwork (Ritter, 2010, p. 78; cf. Bubner, 1989, pp. 62 ff.).

We must here abandon discussions whether intuition is defined as non-conceptual (Kant) or we should acknowledge also an immediate understanding in form of an intellectual intuition (Fichte). They are, however important to German Idealism and consequently to the traditions formed by its heritage such as hermeneutics (Bubner, 1989, pp. 56 ff.). However, we should pay attention to what Gadamer (1993, pp. 191 f.) says, that Kant's division between sensuous intuition and concepts is a problematic abstraction. Kant himself

is aware of how the division serves its purpose for achieving knowledge of phenomena in nature where concepts provide us with rules for determining what is given in our intuitions; however, this is something different from asking about nature itself. Nature is not given in any intuition as it forms the limit to our intuitions and experiences he writes in *Critique of pure Reason* (1781/1787/1998, B 753). Nature is an interpretation and requires a reflection, the central topic of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790/1799/2000). Kant points at a problem central to aesthetics, namely the meeting point between senses and spirit (*Geist*) where the intuition is no mere intuition but an invitation for a reflection in which we search for a determination which proves to be indeterminate because it is inconclusive. The tree we determine because we have a concept is different from the poet's tree that is given in an intuition as something more than an intuition, hence, it is indeterminate.

Cosmology and norms can be translated to concrete individuals and be given in intuitions like Sophocles' Antigone or the painter's tree but they also invite us to search for a meaning-giving frame for our interpretations. The painter's tree represents a tree as well as an invitation to reflect on what nature is and our human relation to nature, and Sophocles's Antigone makes us reflect on norms and laws in the world we live in.

Hence, the aesthetic artefacts, whether a painting, a play or other forms, invite us to reflect on what makes sense for our everyday existence. The occasion for this reflection is when we step out of the everyday. Such occasions are when we participate in festivals representing a divine order giving a religious explanation to our existence, or when we participate in a profane and humanistic celebration such as a nation's liberation, independence, and constitution giving meaning to the secular order we live in (Bubner, 1989, pp. 144 ff.). In our modern world such events have often lost their significance and do not define our world-interpretation in the same way as before. Festivals do not offer an authoritative world-interpretation or give consolation for suffering like before. Instead, suffering has become a practical problem to solve rather than to explain. Bubner writes that we expect to find consolation in having time off for festivals that become parties and leisure time and not a moment of meaning. The props of the festival then become themselves the focus of attention instead of the interpretation they previously offered – they become aesthetic objects (Marquard, 1989, p. 13; cf. Gadamer, 1993, p. 110). However, such a focus-change on the festival does not discredit the model of interpretation of our existence embedded in it; it is merely the content, meaning and significance that change.

The dissolution of universal frames of interpretation allows aesthetic artefacts in the form of artistic experiments to step out of our everyday lives and offer us alternative interpretations of our world. In the context of the religious cult, the ceremonial props would invite us into the community celebrated. With the dissolution of this frame the artists' task changes. To follow Gadamer (1993, p. 98), the artist now creates a community. While the religious festival intended a universal community, and some artistic ambitions of the avant-garde did likewise for a political community, this is also a characteristic we can

apply in moderate forms, such as the props of a music festival and a sub-cultural community. Aesthetics is not about the content of the interpretation, but about the means of it.

Hence, the exception to the everyday does not rule out aesthetic dimensions of ordinary artefacts and situations. However, the interest in the exceptional is emphasized when a visit to the art museum can be said to change our views (Gadamer, 1993, p. 117) and when the exceptional artefact is one we keep coming back to because we never finish with it (Bubner, 1989, p. 60). The hermeneutic perspective does not exclude more trivial examples of the everyday, it just takes more interest in the significant moments.

Sophocles's Antigone tells us something through affecting us. Following Aristotle, we learn how king Creon too late comes to recognise, *anagnorisis*, the fatal error of his behaviour at which point a reversal, *peripeteia*, happens, tragically too late. Anyone could give us the same information, but we understand differently through the play.

How it works, and how well it works, are matters of aesthetic analysis, i.e. analysis of the different components in the composition – like the execution of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*, along with elements of style, figures etc., and of receptions. If the aesthetic experience offers a moment off from the everyday it could be considered a moment of aesthetic pleasure. Nevertheless, aesthetic pleasure, appreciation and similar characteristics so common in Everyday Aesthetics are rare in hermeneutics. Hans Robert Jauß (1982/1997, p. 71) even writes that whoever has the courage to say they enjoy or appreciate art will expose themselves to the accusation of satisfying themselves with mere kitsch or mere consumption – which in fact is not different from Aristotle's point above about only taking pleasure in the colours of an image. There is an important difference between what we feel and what the significance of what we feel is.

The tragedy makes me feel something which is conveyed and emphasized by its structure. We should keep in mind that aesthetics has its origin in rhetoric that is not merely about persuading someone to think something specific but to make them *want* to think it when we follow Quintilian in *The Orator's Education* (1921, pp. 417 ff. (VI, 2)). As human beings we sense, feel and react emotionally along with what we think, and different structural elements can correspond with and enhance our feelings. Hence, the trembling and terror I may feel at the tragedy are feelings I share with others in the audience, and I can embark on a learning process in which I come to sense and feel in ways similar to others. We express this in judgements of taste. They are not merely about evaluating aesthetic qualities of something but about demonstrating social affiliation and cohesion through the evaluation.

The analysis of how narratives, images, and artefacts work, of how we feel about them, points towards knowledge as we do not stay at the mere image or narrative. What is given in an intuition is no mere representation, in that case, the painter's tree is just identified as a representation of an object. An image is something we *read*, and it involves our imagination and thinking which is set

at work by the form (Gadamer, 1993, pp. 193 f.). Sophocles's Antigone may teach us something about rulers and conflicting norms by means of sensorial effects that integrate into our world-interpretation far better than when explained in a sleepy lecture. The aesthetic situation, object, play etc. provide no immediate pleasure, but an affective situation that requires an effort of us to make sense of (Gadamer, 1993, pp. 199 f.). The pleasure of such an interpreting effort, Odo Marquard (1982, p. 31) says, is that we do not stay the same but learn – it is the pleasure of saving us the effort of remaining ignorant.

If we return to Kant's starry heavens and moral law, we may easily wander off into cosmology and norms – into scientific knowledge and ethical conflicts. Yet, we also wish to come back and ask what they mean for our concrete lives. Aesthetics is about taking us, as concrete individuals, seriously by making the abstract and universal concrete. This is why it becomes important that the analysis of aesthetic elements does not become isolated from the world the aesthetic artefact belongs to. Such an isolation creates what Gadamer (1993, pp. 9 ff.) calls an aesthetic consciousness. He is critical about this as the isolation turns the aesthetic relation into a mere appreciation of artworks that lose significance for our experiences and knowledge. Art is supposed to offer perspectives to our everyday existence; an aesthetic consciousness only demonstrates one's skills as an art lover where one takes pleasure in oneself as an art critique.

3. Everyday Aesthetics Approached From Hermeneutics

I will now pursue the two questions from hermeneutics about knowledge and form in the dominant view on Everyday Aesthetics.

Kant's starry heavens and moral law translated into our concrete existence in a narrative like Sophocles's Antigone exemplifies what Everyday Aesthetics finds as a narrow view of aesthetics. Instead of viewing something for the sake of our everyday life, we should take an interest in the everyday as it is. Yuriko Saito (2017, p. 56) writes that we should care about "the familiar experienced as familiar."

To say what everyday signifies causes difficulties for Everyday Aesthetics (Naukkarinen, 2013). It is paradoxically how we experience the everyday without negating its everydayness – without taking it out of the ordinary to be foregrounded and defamiliarized in order to make something invisible visible (Saito, 2017, pp. 20 ff.; cf. 2007, pp. 50 f.; Leddy, 2012, p. 77). Or it is difficult to say what is aesthetic about our experience if objects remain in their ordinariness and resist being taken out of it, and our aesthetic experience of them is in their familiarity as unnoticed (Haapala, 2005, pp. 50 ff.). These positions and their respective difficulties are summarized by Jane Forsey (2013). Despite the variations, I think there will be agreement that hermeneutics burdens the everyday with too many expectations of meaning and with too much exception from it. If aesthetics relates to making us aware and understanding our lives, the approach, according to Everyday Aesthetic, should not be through exceptions but through an increased awareness of what happens in our lives.

What is then, the interpretation of our everyday lives that aesthetics should turn its attention to instead of occupying itself with exceptions; and how does it affect us in forms worthy of aesthetic appreciation?

The festival is what Everyday Aesthetics seems to say holds no particular privilege in giving significance to the everyday. It is not that the celebrations are insignificant, but they do not make sense of the everyday in any emphatic sense; we can only say it makes sense to have celebrations. Perhaps they deserve attention for how we dress up and hold the celebration, but not for sense-making. This is in contrast to the hermeneutic view in which the wedding is a celebration of a ceremony with a significant meaning for the celebrated couple and their relatives. The enjoyment of the dress, food, music and other aesthetic features of the celebration is secondary to what it signifies. To make them objects of aesthetic pleasure is a mistake of perspective, like if one of the guests is inappropriately dressed and comes to steal the attention from the couple.

In a culture that is aestheticized, i.e. where everything is subject to an aesthetic treatment and consideration, the difference between party and everyday is erased. Everyone can now celebrate oneself. The wedding becomes the excuse for having a celebration instead of the celebration being of the wedding, i.e. of the significance of the ceremony. In a hermeneutic perspective, this is a loss of significance because the exception stops being an exception. Where the everyday becomes a permanent festival the aesthetic turns into the anaesthetic – it loses the explanatory potential for the everyday and becomes insignificant (Bubner, 1989, pp. 152 f.; Marquard, 1989, pp. 11 ff.). For Everyday Aesthetics, on the contrary, it is the opposite. Now the everyday can step out of the shadow of special events and become more significant. However, we should be careful as significance may be considered in two different ways by the two approaches.

In a hermeneutical understanding, the exception is a significant event because it gives meaning to our everyday life. In Everyday Aesthetics, we give meaning to something and grant it significance. From this view, hermeneutics will be seen as falsely believing that a prosaic everyday must be rescued to make it reveal its hidden poetry (Saito, 2017, p. 12), and also for neglecting experiences of what is pretty, shiny, glittering, and cute because they will be considered incapable of generating profound and meaningful experience that has significance (Saito, 2017, pp. 39 f.). The problem for Everyday Aesthetics is not that art generates significant aesthetic moments; the problem is that an art-oriented approach ignores aesthetic moments in the everyday. The experiences of the everyday are far more important for guiding us in our daily life than the exceptional experiences; whoever neglects them demonstrates inattentiveness and mindlessness (Saito, 2017, p. 25) as well as apathy (Mandoki, 2007, p. 93). To become aware of everyday moments and cultivate an aesthetic appreciation of them is to develop "a mindful way of living" and, furthermore, to "restore our mode of being-in-the-world" (Saito, 2017, p. 59). In this context, Sherri Irvin (2008, p. 27) discusses whether scratching an itch can be considered an aesthetic

experience, i.e. an experience in which we are able to discriminate qualities and meaningful features we can be attentive to for their own sake. If that suffices as qualifying, the argument is, scratching an itch can be included into aesthetics. It enables one to become more sensuously aware in trivial situations like when attending a meeting; one can acquire an "ability to transform such moments into occasions for aesthetic satisfaction" (Irvin, 2008, p. 32).

Of course, a question is what is considered qualities and meaningful features. I think this question finds different answers in Everyday Aesthetics. Emily Brady represents what may be considered one extreme here. In her discussion of Kant as representative of a classical tradition, she opposes what she sees as a traditional rejection of smells and tastes from aesthetics due to their lack of complexity and, consequently, their lack of an intellectual effort of making distinctions. However, I think her example of comparing tastes of ice cream by memorizing and imagining tastes to determine whether I like a taste or not (Brady, 2005, p. 183) confuses an ordinary sense perception in which something is identified as something with an aesthetic. Her appeal to cognitive values in smells and tastes valued through appreciation does not do the job. It is not a matter of aesthetics if I am served a dish of seafood in which I, in its complexity, detect that something is wrong and ask to have it replaced; I simply do not want to have a bad stomach.

If an imperative of Everyday Aesthetics is to be attentive about our sensorial relations because aesthetics is about sensory perception and sensibility (Saito, 2017, p. 1) – a theory of sensibility as it is called by Arnold Berleant (2010, p. 155), we should also acknowledge that not any sensorial perception is aesthetic. Brady points at how the values of smelling socks or the pine trees in the forest are socially or culturally differentiated. Nevertheless, she does not pursue questions of the relation between sense and an informed reaction to the sensed (Brady, 2005, p. 180). Berleant (2010, pp. 27 ff. and pp. 51 ff.) is explicit about how training is essential for sense perception, and that we must understand such training to be culturally filtered and inherently cultural. Epistemology and aesthetics here overlap regarding perception because our relation to the world is an active, sensuous engagement (Mandoki, 2007, pp. 67 ff.). What matters then, is the interpretation (Mandoki, 2007, p. 9) through which aesthetics is what highlights appreciative effects of perception (Mandoki, 2007, p. 47). The cultural filtering and training form our perception of and emotional relation to our cultural environment.

It is far from easy to understand the exact uses of perception and experience in Everyday Aesthetics, but according to Berleant (2010, p. 29) an aesthetic experience is both sensory and an experience of meaning, and consequently, it relates an aesthetic evaluation to social, political, and environmental values (Saito, 2017, p. 98). In the aesthetic experience, our relation to the world differs from ordinary experiences that are about understanding what something is, which is an act that separates us from the concrete and present thing. In the aesthetic experience we have an opportunity to engage differently with it.

While this seems to be a meeting point with hermeneutics, I think it is also a point where the traditions part. A hermeneutic interest is to understand better what this meaning in the aesthetic experience is, i.e. the form it has and the knowledge it provides us with, which is an occasion for challenging our ordinary understandings and making way for different perspectives on it. Everyday Aesthetics is about improving our sensorial awareness and becoming more attentive to what there is in our everyday life to enrich it. We should work on improving and changing what we otherwise find will impoverish and harm the quality of life and environment (Saito, 2017, p. 216). Not to make use of the potential of aesthetics here is a missed opportunity (Saito, 2017, p. 198).

Saito's (2017, pp. 95 f.) examples of improvements are e.g. in disputes over wind farms that are found aesthetically unacceptable to imagining what could be even worse or to accept a situation that is impossible to change like conditions in the Gaza strip where "everyday aesthetic experience can help its residents retain a sense of humanity, dignity, and resilience" (Saito, 2017, p. 19). The conservative hermeneutic philosopher Odo Marquard sounds almost radical in comparison. He explains that experience (*Erfahrung*) is when our expectations are met with a veto from reality (Marquard, 1982, p. 23). In our contemporary culture, he writes, we lack experiences because of its accelerating processes of changes. Due to our limited capacity for changes, we cannot adjust to them all. Instead, we choose, on the personal scale, to stick to routines and habits, and in the societal scale to prognosis and statistics enabling planning of actions. In a world of accelerating changes, we insist on our expectations and ignore the veto that could give us experiences – like when our plans lose touch with reality. Everyday Aesthetics would ask us to pay more attention to our reality, to be more sensitive. Marquard, on the contrary, suggests that instead of seeking consolation with an increasingly changing world we may find experiences that can make us see our world in ways that give a veto to our expectations which are increasingly out of touch with reality. It is those kinds of experiences that are called aesthetic. Hence, it does not help to find the aesthetic in the everyday if we live in a world where the everyday can only be saved through the aesthetic (Marquard, 1982, p. 30).

We have a century of artistic experiments intended to make us discover perspectives on the world we live in. It is possible these experiments have been in vain because of the creation of what Mandoki (2007, p. 24) calls an aesthetic attitude, an attitude of the snob. The opposition of Everyday Aesthetics to an aesthetic attitude found in institutionalized art is shared by hermeneutics. Gianni Vattimo (1997, pp. 58 ff.) gives an illustrative example. We find visitors in the Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza church in Rome. One is religious who is present to pray, the other a tourist. The latter has an aesthetic experience of a kind similar to a visit to a museum, an experience different from experiencing a room that translates the space for prayers into a concrete, sensuous form. If the aesthetic experience becomes self-sufficient, i.e. about the aesthetic form itself and not what it gives form to, we encounter what Gadamer (1960/1990, pp. 87 ff.) considers as the dubiousness of the concept of aesthetic cultivation (*Bildung*). Now, the form becomes our object of interest and we care for the techniques

used to produce the appearance and how the outcome, the artwork, is. We analyse and communicate to like minded, now called aestheticians, in aesthetic judgements. What Gadamer finds dubious is when this approach to the aesthetic object serves to differentiate and distinguish it from non-aesthetic objects. It becomes a separation where the aesthetic object loses its place in the world (Gadamer, 1960/1990, pp. 90 ff.).

Everyday Aesthetics, I believe, places itself in difficulties here. It shares Gadamer's critique of losing the focus on our lives to excel in institutionalized discourses on art. However, it does not liberate itself from them. We live, Saito tells us, an aesthetic life and have aesthetic experiences where aesthetic includes "any reactions we form towards the sensuous and/or design qualities of any object, phenomenon or activity" (Saito, 2007, p. 9; cf. Leddy, 2012, pp. 259 f.). This use of aesthetic is all-inclusive. It seems to exclude investigating what an aesthetic life is and aesthetic experiences are, out of a fear that qualifications could exclude anything. The inclusiveness is seen as a liberation of aesthetics from narrow discourses by moving beyond canonical aesthetic terms such as beautiful, elegant, graceful, and ugly – Thomas Leddy (2012, pp. 64 ff.) suggests including neat and messy even though later in the book he moderates their significance and admits they are not "to be called aesthetic qualities in the fullest sense of the term" (Leddy, 2012, p. 236).

My difficulty here concerns what it is we come to understand better in light of these categories. Contrasting them to how Sianne Ngai (2010) suggests zany, interesting, and cute as categories with a critical potential for analyzing art, cultural artefacts and formations, political and economical forms in late capitalism, I fail to see what we learn from Leddy's categories, developed further by Saito (2007, pp. 152 ff.), and how they provide anything else than an adjustment of the dubious aesthetic differentiation. I can now be engaged in discussing a neat room as the occasion for experiencing "a certain pleasure in apprehending that neatness" (Leddy, 2012, p. 229), which, we are told in the preceding page, is no mere personal preference but an expectation of others seeing the same. This appears to be a mere substitution of one aesthetic characterization with another, but we do not overcome the logic of aesthetic differentiation because we expand the characteristic to also include neat, ordered, right, clean and similar terms. Saito finds that we currently lack a discourse for analyzing, educating and improving our relation to everyday artefacts and activities (Saito, 2017, p. 201) – we lack it to the point of asking for a "new aesthetic vocabulary" (Saito, 2017, p. 208) and I wonder what is then wrong with Ngai's suggestion.

If the aesthetic form should not merely repeat institutionalized discourses expressed in judgements of taste, we should give attention to how something is interpreted and become apparent to us in a sensuous form that affects us. The form should make the interpretation appear as one we not only understand but also feel we understand and feel to be part of our world. It is, parallel to Quintilian, to not only make us think but to make us want to think something. This is why it is important to recognize the "cultural and cognitive filters" that qualify an aesthetic experience (Berleant, 2010, p. 61). Saito (2017,

p. 54) demonstrates this well in examples such as reactions to a practice like hanging laundry where she has adopted ideals that make her hang it in ways that appear "as inoffensive, orderly, and organized as possible" i.e. "informed by spectator-like aesthetic judgments." However, it is difficult to see how a new vocabulary instead of the existing one helps here. She asks for it in relation to being able to re-evaluate some aesthetic values such as to be able to appreciate a wildflower garden which one could suspect in fact just reveals her reflection on her own values – on many occasions she express a discomfort with what looks messy and unkempt (e.g. Saito, 2001, p. 93; cf. 2017, p. 125). But a new vocabulary does not question the aesthetic differentiation revealed to be present in the many examples in Everyday Aesthetics; at its best, it only changes some of the rules of play.

It should be clear how important it is to reflect on what the forming of our sensorial awareness is, on what is called perceptual commons by Berleant (2010, p. 209). Cultural norms appear in a sensorial practice and make us relate to it and appropriate it. Does it then help to expand categories of aesthetic appreciation from the art-related to the everyday? Are inattentiveness and apathy that Everyday Aesthetic wants to battle met by new terms and vocabularies that enable different experiences to be felt as significant? Or is it rather about understanding better the significance of our senses in our relation to and interpretation of the environment? Is it about understanding how this is also a central philosophical problem about the relation between sense and interpretation? These seem to be questions marking differences between Everyday Aesthetics and hermeneutics.

4. Concluding Discussion

Albert Camus notes in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942/1979, p. 95) that if a writer like Dostoievsky dwells at a question such as whether existence is either a lie or eternal only to ask this question, he would be a philosopher. But because he demonstrates the consequences of such a question for a human existence he is a poet. He makes it concrete for us. It is the task of aesthetics to understand what this concretization in the sensorial form of literature is. This concretization is not limited to art, but art has taken a prominent position here because it often makes space for moments of reflection.

It does not require a Dostoievsky to become aware of our sensuous and perceptual reactions and relations. It is a matter of awareness. Hermeneutics and Everyday Aesthetics will agree to that, and to opposing ideas of aesthetics limited to the institutionalized situation. The differences between them appear when it comes to expectations of aesthetics being about an interpretative translation of general views into concrete and sensuous appearances, and about the form of these appearances that through affecting us make the meaning appear. Such an emphasis on aesthetics as a matter of knowledge is not expressed in Everyday Aesthetics despite interest shown in the cultural content of perceptions and appreciation.

I have suggested that a point of departure between the traditions is the differences in what a significant aesthetic experience is – whether it is

an experience that gives meaning to something or one that plays an important role in one's life. This is well illustrated by Leddy's misreading of Heidegger's *Die Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (1950/1980) when he suggests that Heidegger's point about a Van Gogh painting of a peasant woman's shoes is that "great art enhances and intensifies our experience of the everyday" and brings us to "experience the everyday with wonder" (Leddy, 2012, p. 110). But Heidegger is not interested in a significant experience of something in our everyday life. The painting appears in relation to asking what a thing is, and here the painting, as painting, reveals something about our understanding of things – different from our understanding of a thing represented in the painting. The point is not what it makes us see, like the peasant woman's life; it is that it makes us see, i.e. something is made apparent to us through art. The origin of the work of art is not where or what art originates from, but how something originates from art. Leddy's misreading confuses the act of seeing with what we see. It is no shortcoming of Heidegger that he does not reflect on how the peasant woman can also set aside the demands of the everyday and enjoy the familiar scene as Arto Haapala (2005, p. 51) suggests. Heidegger's concern is not for immersing oneself in contemplating one's surroundings or finding a moment of wonder – if anything of such reflection is made it will show the fundamental difference between the peasant woman seeing her harsh conditions of living while we experience our privilege of taking a pause to enjoy the nature as landscape.

To discuss Heidegger's analysis would take us beyond the scope here, but one point should be emphasized to pin the difference between Everyday Aesthetics and hermeneutics. Recognizing the everyday in aesthetic and philosophical contexts should not obscure that we must ask what the everyday is rather than what we encounter in it, the latter is in far better hands in empirical disciplines than in philosophy. We do not see the everyday in the everyday; we interpret it to be our everyday. It is not what can be significant for me, and for the peasant woman, the spectator of Saito's laundry, or the Palestinian in a newly bombed Gaza, we should take an interest in; it is the frame of interpretation granting it the significance we find or ascribe to it.

To focus on what appears in the everyday, to include it into existing categories of aesthetics, and perhaps to learn from sensuous practices in other cultures to make us become more attentive, is to practice the aesthetic differentiation Gadamer finds dubious. The integration of everyday experiences into an aesthetic discourse is no reflection on our existence but a refinement of an instrumental use of aesthetic views and notions. It only concerns what exists for us. Haapala's (2005, p. 51) critique is false when he finds that the avant-garde art's endeavours of bringing art into the everyday have failed because they only manage to estrange the everyday and reinforce the institutional aesthetic discourse that neglects the everyday. It is true if one neglects the artistic intentions and reproduces the dubious aesthetic discourse of differentiation, but why reproduce that pattern when the exact motivation of Everyday Aesthetics is to oppose it, at least according to Saito (2017, p. 1)? For a philosophical aesthetics the question must be about the frame of interpretation we encounter, its origin, implications and legitimacy.

Saito and Berleant both emphasize how the interest in Everyday Aesthetics is not merely for having a larger field of phenomena that can be aesthetically appreciated and thus enrich our aesthetic enquiry; it also has "the potential for improving the quality of life and the world" (Saito, 2007, p. 52) and for revealing the morally negative (Berleant, 2010, p. 167). Granted their point that some institutionalized forms of aesthetics seems to take more interest in performing a role as art critic and aesthetician – we know this figure from Kant (1790/1799/2000, § 33) as the virtuoso of taste – a question is if the aesthetic dimension in the everyday can deliver the expected improvements.

I think we should see this in relation to what the expectations are. If they are modest there can be an improvement through acceptance when we learn "to find positive values in things we normally dislike or detest" (Saito, 2007, p. 132). The same holds for strategies of communication when the issue can be protests against wildflower gardens. Here, aesthetic standards and values are created and changed through affective means. They are responsible for forming sensuous reactions and cultural filters that become perceptual commons. The sensuous forms may form challenges, like Haapala says about avant-garde art, and of course, they can become estranged from our everyday life. However, this can also be an opportunity to make an effort of interpretation, like José Ortega y Gasset so well investigates in his essay *The dehumanization of art* (1925/1968) written in light of complaints of the new art forms of his age. Gadamer asks the same in relation to modern mass and popular culture that perhaps, due to a generation gap, are incomprehensible for him. He must acknowledge them to be used in rational ways by a generation having an understanding that differs from his; for him to understand them will imply an effort of interpretation (Gadamer, 1993, p. 141).

If aesthetics, as I have suggested, is about expectations of an interpretative translation making general views to appear in concrete and sensuous appearances where the form of these appearances convey the meaning by affecting us, Everyday Aesthetics may provide hermeneutics with more attention to and insights in some of these phenomena. In return, it may benefit from an understanding coming from hermeneutics of aesthetics as providing knowledge to answer questions that seem to lurk just beneath the intentions of Everyday Aesthetics.

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Ordinary Sensibilia

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In this paper, I propose some philosophical reflections arising from the encounter with a work of art, namely the *Squatting Aphrodite*, which is one of the Roman copies that is held in the same room as the *Venus de Milo* in the Louvre Museum in Paris, France. From the description of this artwork and the effect it has on the spectator, I draw three main consequences: the conceptual difference between ordinary sensibility and everyday aesthetics; the criticism of aesthetic conformity, and the political implications of adopting an ordinary perspective towards aesthetic experience. | Keywords: *Ordinary, Body, Greek Sculpture, Performance, Everyday Aesthetics*

1. Being Struck by the Ordinary

When one visits the Hall of the Caryatids at the Louvre Museum, one wanders through the remains of Greek and Roman statuary. As soon as one enters, one passes under a balustrade held by columnal goddesses, the so-called caryatids, statuesque figures of immense women who hold the architectural forms on their heads, without really carrying their weight, as if architectural stone blocks were held by the vulnerable strength of their necks, in a posture of grace and power. At the other end of the room, opposite the entrance, as the culmination of the visit, one will come face to face with the *Venus de Milo*, the symbol of classical beauty. She is placed on a pedestal, alone in the middle of the last room, she appears as if she is raised above the ground, surrounded by tourists taking pictures of her, like paparazzi.

We know the *Venus de Milo*, her fame has already touched us, we have heard of her, we have seen photographs, we already know her and now we meet her in real life for the first time. She seems to be looking at us from the top of her pose, her torso is undulating, her breasts and her stomach are naked, a sheet surrounds her hips, and her arms are missing, even if one can guess their position. Her face is similar to Apollo's: she has a beautiful, gentle but distant gaze, exactly like him. Her look is slightly androgynous just as his look is slightly feminine. She is larger and taller than human size. She incarnates the ideal beauty and she is indeed a goddess, a star.

Yet before reaching the *Venus de Milo*, one discovers other statues, some of them are relatively famous, some are very well preserved, some others are

broken, their bodies amputated. And there, before the end of the larger middle room, just to the left of the wall separating you from the *Venus de Milo*, next to a window, one will see a replica of the *Squatting Aphrodite*. It is also called the *Venus of Vienna*, it is quite a compact and round sculpture of a naked woman, coming out of a bath or preparing to go into it.

Figure 1: Squatting Aphrodite.
Source: Photo by the author

This particular copy was discovered in 1827–1828 by M. Michoud in the *frigidarium* of the thermal complex of Saint-Romain-en-Gal called the Mirror Palace, a place identified in 1835 by Prosper Mérimée on the right bank of the Rhone and classified in 1840. It is one of the numerous Roman replicas of a theme Hellenistic artists were fond of; that of Aphrodite in the bath. These ancient copies decorated baths and gardens. The original model, probably in bronze, has not survived. It is attributed to the Greek sculptor Doidalsas of Bithynia, according to the description of the portico of Octavia in Rome by Pliny the Elder. This sculpture, carved from Paros marble and polished, measures 140 x 42 x 60 cm.

One will notice the representation of the folds of the skin on the belly of the figure as well as the marked right hip. If the Greeks represented Aphrodite as a severe and cruel goddess, the Romans on their side, retained more of her benevolent aspect. The statue strikes us; it interests us and at the same time it makes us uncomfortable, we are intrigued by it, but also somehow driven back from it. It attracts us, but for no clear reasons, in a sort of opaque way, it appeals to us in an intuitive way, we cannot really make sense of it, and it feels somehow liberating. It is a human-sized statue of which only the body remains. She is crouching, her back is bent, and her round belly bulges. The label tells us that she is represented as performing her toilette, we imagine her at the edge of a lake or a pond. We are embarrassed to surprise her in an intimate moment. The head, arms and feet are missing: the statue is damaged; traces of torn marble can be seen on her right buttock, on her thighs, and the neck shows a deep mark at the level of the internal central axis. She has been slaughtered.

We are here in front of a trashed, wrecked beauty, so unclassical, without pride, and vulnerable. She has been caught during a moment of an ordinary ritual, washing. Her curves are realistic, and contrary to the ideal of harmonious Greek beauty she carries scars of violence and mutilation. Moreover, nobody looks at her. All the visitors rush to the *Venus de Milo* who is assailed by photos: the visitors form a court around her, standing up to take a picture, aiming their cell phones upwards from below, admiring her immense and imposing figure. Meanwhile, the *Squatting Aphrodite*, being of human size and due to her posture and her height (it is only 140 cm tall), forces us to bend, to curve our backs, mirroring her posture. And whilst everybody is so busy admiring the *Venus de Milo*, the *Squatting Aphrodite* looks lonely. She is indeed alone, next to a window, in a corner, as if left behind, as if she had been abandoned.

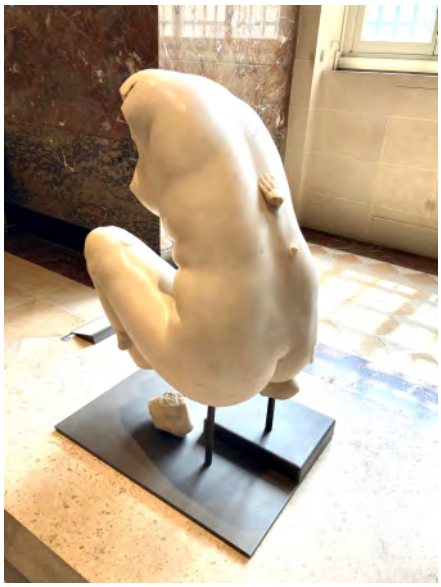

Figure 2: Squatting Aphrodite.
Source: Photo by the author

But if we take time to discover this ordinary beauty, if we explore her body, we will be surprised. The *Squatting Aphrodite* is neither attractive nor charismatic, she easily passes unnoticed, but she provides an aesthetic experience once we turn around her. Her body is rounded and full, and there, in the middle of her back, we are struck by an astonishing detail: a very small hand, a child's hand, placed on the right-hand side of her back, just at the level of the shoulder blades. The five fingers are intact and the hand is cut off at the level of the wrist. The label tells us that it is the hand of her son *Eros*, the demigod of love. Her son Eros is present *in absentia*, through a hand alone, whilst his body is completely missing, and this lone hand will strike us as the ordinary but powerful bond of a lovingly feeling, the trace of a new sensibility.

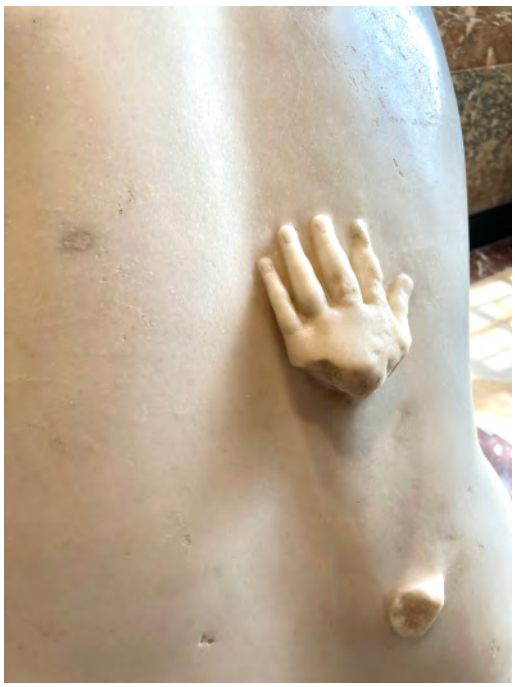

Figure 3: Squatting Aphrodite.
Source: Photo by the author

The *Squatting Aphrodite* is embedded in an ecological environment, she is not separating and establishing herself from a distance, she is grounded and related to the natural elements. She is connected to the *earth,* she turns her body towards the ground and has a direct link to what Wittgenstein would call the "rough ground" that we have lost and to which philosophy has to be able to return. The *Squatting Aphrodite* is also connected to the element of *water*. She performs a commonplace gesture of washing, keeping herself clean, purifying her body and keeping it in good health. Other replicas of the original Greek statue show that she is usually accompanied by her son Eros, leaning on her back. Between her and her son an exchange takes place of glances of complicity and love. In the replica in the Louvre, only the tiny hand of Eros has remained

on Aphrodite's back since the rest of the body has disappeared. Our gaze is electrified by this hand which is like a relic, a lost grasp, a gesture between the tragic and a joke. This hand is entirely attached to the mother's back, as if to symbolize the bond of dependence, the ethics of care and relations that brings the goddess down to the status of the mother.

The type of love that is expressed through this statue can be defined as *ordinary*. Why? Because it is a common and widely shared feeling because this sensibility recalls 'love' with a small 'l', ordinary love, maternal eroticism, the relationship and the interdependence of the bonds of care. It is a non-idealistic aesthetic feature marked by an elementary form of desire. This is how we are struck by ordinary aesthetic qualities: we don't know about this figure before coming to the Louvre, we haven't seen pictures representing it. This sculpture is not preceded by its fame, it is not perceived dominantly by its visual form. But we get to access this figure in another way, she touches us from the inside, through a feeling: we understand the emotions the statue is communicating because we carry these emotions in our guts, we recognize the emotions that the *Squatting Aphrodite* is expressing not thru comprehension but from a non digested experience.

Why do we pay attention to the *Venus de Milo*, androgynous and proud in her posture, and not to this mutilated copy of the *Squatting Aphrodite*? Why is the violated, vulnerable, realistic and ordinary body not attractive? Why is the logic of beauty an aesthetics of verticality and not of horizontality? Why do we prefer to look at bodies that expose themselves to the gaze, bodies that do nothing, that are carried by their own audacity, instead of being interested in ordinary bodies, in everyday gestures, in those bodies that are doing something, caught in a universe of use and practice? If we erect the *Venus de Milo* on a pedestal, and sideline the *Squatting Aphrodite*, if we relegate the latter to the category of the low and vulgar, it is because we rank theory as superior to practice, because we value the ideal over the ordinary and because we prefer an aesthetics of contemplation to an aesthetics of practice.

And yet, this hierarchy is not particularly stable and these distinctions are not very clear: they can be re-examined. It is not so much a question of rewriting the history of art and the logics of power, but rather of revealing intricate confusions between what is supposedly ugly and what is supposedly beautiful, vulnerability and strength, practice and theory, contemplation and use. This inquiry is helped along by recalling that the term *aesthetics* has two meanings: on the one hand it refers to harmony, order and visual contemplation, and on the other hand it is indebted to the senses, embodiment, disorder, violence and erotic desire. Indeed, the main reason why the *Squatting Aphrodite* does not encounter the same fate as the *Venus de Milo* is that she expresses the link between the aesthetic and the erotic in a far more sensual way and connects the aesthetic to the realm of the body in all its earthly qualities.

This mutilated, violated figure is above all a maternal figure. She also incarnates the violence practised on certain subjects, who might be perceived as different or eccentric. This form of violence is related to her being

a maternal figure because maternity is a condition of the female body. From a feminist perspective, the *Squatting Aphrodite* is an alternative figure to masculinity and it stands for the minor figures and the subalterns. However, the differences, the conflict, the domination and the discrimination evoked here are not exclusive but inclusive. What I mean by this is that the *Squatting Aphrodite* strikes us not so much by her specificity, but by the fact that she suggests a vulnerability that is more or less shared by everyone. She strikes us as ordinary because her eccentricity is a source of vulnerability. Indeed, human subjects are constructed through a form of mediation which has its starting point in the body as the seat of consciousness, of force and weakness. In this manner the hand of *Eros* seems to act both as a call for *help* but also as *support*. The child helps the mother to carry herself, as if this hand came to support the fragility that unites them. The aesthetic feature that links these mutilated and love-driven figures is not that of beauty but that of sensitivity. Such a sensitivity doesn't strike us through visually harmonious forms or through a call to desire and frustrated love, but rather through a mediation built on the vulnerable dimensions of corporeality, namely through the reality of being a body and having a body: the reality of vulnerability due to corporeal materiality.

2. Getting out of conformity

The *Squatting Aphrodite* not only helps us to oppose an ordinary aesthetics to an idealizing one, but it also helps us exit aesthetic conformity, it helps us resist placing the value of the aesthetic experience in collective and pre-established expectations. An attitude of conformity is the act of matching our behaviour to group norms, especially if we experience an object inside the walls of a museum and a gallery and we perceive it through the lenses of the institution. Certainly, expectations and psychological circumstances change if we are in the street or in a theatre, but there is no evidence that this is true also for empirical conditions: it is with the same body and with the same eyes that we watch a show and that we observe passers-by in the street. In a theatre, our perceptual modality does not vary, it is only our attitude that changes. Conversely, one could contemplate a passing street as if one were in the theatre, thus dissociating the subjective experience from its usual physical context. Georges Perec's *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* (Perec, 1974) is a literary example of this second attitude.

Now, that the *artworld*[1] gives legitimacy to the work does not imply – and it would even be a contradiction – that it generates the qualities that this same world recognizes as artistic. Conformity only recognizes art through its institutional codification and not through the process undergone by the artist. It sees art only once the latter has died, mummified in a museum, the living process of its insurrection in the world lost forever. Aesthetic conformity forgets the process of poietics (*poïétique*), a practice of inspiration dear to Paul Valéry (Valéry, 1937, 1944); it also forgets René Passeron's concept

[1] This expression by George Dickie, itself borrowed from Arthur Danto, has now become a standard way of defining the whole institutional context of art (See Dickie, 1973).

of "instauration" (Passeron, 1989); it forgets the preliminary outlines, the sketches, the blockages, the failures, the experiments which are the very fabric of the "creative process", dear to Marcel Duchamp and to the artistic lineage he inspired.

And yet, as we have seen previously, the *Squatting Aphrodite* is placed in *exactly* the same room as the *Venus de Milo*, the material is the same, the forms represented are similar. Of course, we possess a cultural heritage bound to our consciousness and knowledge. As spectators holding a ticket, we enter the Louvre with certain expectations and experience. We already know the *Venus de Milo*, we have seen it represented, in photos, on posters and even sometimes on coffee cups. Her presence is expected and we will meet her as if she were a celebrity. The *Squatting Aphrodite*, on the other hand, is a mutilated copy of a lost and more precious statue made of bronze. We do not know her, we did not expect to meet and face her, nor did we look for her. This is why the encounter we might have with the *Squatting Aphrodite* is similar to the encounter with what Duchamp names "the beauty of indifference" which he invokes for his ready-mades. The power of the ready-made is a sort of delayed sabotage: ready-mades are objects of neutral or contradictory beauty, which we don't really like, and they don't possess harmonious qualities. The beauty of indifference implies that we like them precisely because we look the other way. The *Squatting Aphrodite*, while being a sculpture, embodies ordinary qualities; although installed in a museum, it nevertheless strikes us with both indifference and attractiveness.

The *Squatting Aphrodite*, with its mutilated form, is more easily recognizable as an aesthetic object by the gaze of a spectator who has become accustomed to modern and contemporary art. Her shape is trans-temporal. The political and aesthetic characteristics of the *Squatting Aphrodite* are more contemporary and turn away from classical categories. As a mutilated sculpture, it could also be seen as purposely unfinished and, since it has realistic characteristics, it could be understood as a figure of the modern era. It thus contradicts the place that has been chosen for her in the Louvre, and in particular next to the *Venus of Milo*, which dominates the room. In this situation, the aesthetic conformity is undermined since the institutional context and the cultural history no longer play their role.

Hence, if we take the problem not from the standpoint of what John Dewey called, not without irony, "the museum conception of art", but rather from the standpoint of the artists, their experience, their grammar, or their life, we can see that the criterion of context changes, and becomes less decisive. It is possible to understand and shape the definition and the experience of art *outside* its conventional places (museums, theatres or galleries). This is what artists themselves have been demonstrating for more than half a century. The physical places and institutions that publicize themselves as representatives of the art world can no longer, according to this new perspective, act with creative power, but must be satisfied with symbolic power.

The ordinary, with its erotic and sensitive impact, is not transmitted through the symbolism of ideas. During the neo-avant-garde, artists set themselves up against the limits imposed by the traditional artistic contexts. The aesthetics of the ordinary, the art of the banal became exemplary in the 20th century. It suffices to think of Daniel Buren's unofficial urban poster campaigns, Allan Kaprow's happenings, the Situationist Internationale's urban rambles, Joseph Beuys' actions, Anna Halprin's life-like-dances, Fluxus' ironic gestures, Trisha Brown, or the Judson Dance Theatre's choreographies to realize the fecundity of this approach and its importance with regard to critical theory. By placing themselves in an urban space or within nature, these practices, while being recognized as artistic, sought to extract themselves from the "genetic" influence of the institutional artistic context, as well as from the capitalist and neo-liberal influence that animates it.

Through the strength of its form, and through its practical posture, the *Squatting Aphrodite* instructs us on the vulnerable strength of ordinary life. She shows that living is a form of response to life's injunctions (washing, eating, sleeping, finding shelter), that life is a kind of domestication of feelings and emotions, and that experience is never immediate but always interspersed with layers of meaning. The life we live requires us to perform obligations and leaves little time for relaxation and pleasure, especially for those people who are subalterns, poor and in distress. The *Squatting Aphrodite* shows that living is a holistic and intertwined experience, in which ordinary gestures related to bodily needs are directly connected to an emotional dimension: washing one's body is also a moment of the exchange of love. The *Squatting Aphrodite* embodies, in my opinion, the condition of living, which Hannah Arendt (1958) named "the human condition". This condition is to be sought in "plurality", i.e., in the fact that we are born in a relation of care and dependence.

From the standpoint of Arendt's notion of plurality, if the *Venus de Milo* is isolated, a unique, one of a kind figure, on the other hand, the Squatting Aphrodite, in contrast, is 'double': she is not alone, she is with her son. Plurality as part of the human condition opens to the dimension of politics, as Arendt shows. Each of the activities categorized under the concepts of "labour", "work" and "action" are caught in a web of interdependent relationships. Acting in isolation is a contradiction in terms. The idea of *vita activa* as Arendt proposes it in *The Human Condition*, shows that biological life and political action are connected and that philosophy needs to grasp the inner relation between natality and history. Of course, in Arendt this is more a political than an aesthetic problem. Arendt underlies the features proper to the subject who acts under the often merciless light of public life. In parallel to Arendt's political insight, we can see how, within the realm of aesthetics, once conformity no longer plays a role, aesthetic experience is emancipated from the art world and its institutional contexts. A work of art is capable of striking us so deeply that it shows us our own intimacy and the plurality of our shared emotional condition, to the point that it sets in motion the very foundations of identity. On this basis, we can see that any situation whatsoever becomes active and *vital* in so far as a relationship is engaged within it: this incites us to define the situation through plurality, vulnerability and inclusiveness.

3. Ordinary sensibility and everyday aesthetics

We have seen previously that the *Squatting Aphrodite* helps us to look at the ordinary instead of the ideal (through the distinction with the *Venus de Milo*) and it helps us also to escape the context of the museum through the link with the plural condition of humanity. In this third section, I will show how it serves us in understanding the difference between ordinary sensibility and everyday aesthetics. What is ordinary sensibility and why is it not the same as everyday aesthetics?

Let us simply recall that *sensibility* is not an equivalent of *aesthetics*. Even though aesthetics concerns the domain of the sensible, as the Greek term *aisthesis* indicates, the history of aesthetics and its link with culture has taken the idea of aesthetics out of the body and its organic senses in order to intellectualize aesthetics and to produce a particular kind of consciousness. This philosophical turn, accomplished in an exemplary manner within the German tradition from Baumgarten to Hegel and beyond, is of crucial importance. It is in this way that aesthetics has become independent and separated from the philosophy of knowledge. The problem is that this transformation occurred at the expense of relegating the body, and especially the deeply animal somatic characteristics of human experience, to a lower level, excluding them from the realm of aesthetics, as happens for instance in the Hegelian system of the fine arts, which dismisses the role of the senses of smell and touch in aesthetics.

In contrast, everydayness and ordinary aesthetics opens the path seeking to recover the sensible even from the standpoint of its sensibility, which can be defined simply as a return to the senses and to things that can be sensed. From a very basic point of view, it can be related to *sense data* without being reduced to it. Sense data is a popular concept employed in the early 20th century by philosophers such as Bertrand Russell, C. D. Broad, H. H. Price, A.J. Ayer, and G.E. Moore. The important point for me here is that *sense data* are supposedly properties that are known directly to us via perception. In other words, sensible properties are derived from an unanalyzed experience. These data are thus distinct from the 'real' objects in the world outside the mind, about whose existence and properties, in contrast, we can often be mistaken. This is the main reason why sense data theories were criticized by philosophers such as J.L. Austin, and Wilfrid Sellars, mainly because sense data appears as something that is simply given (Sellars most notably formulated his famous "Myth of the Given" argument).

This is not the place to go into details about the complicated debate concerning *sense data* in contemporary philosophy. Rather, I would like to invoke the importance of the senses over intellectual understanding in order to grasp the specificity of ordinary aesthetic experience. The non-reflexive experience afforded by ordinary life does not possess the structure of logical judgment, nor does it provide clear knowledge, and yet it is quite evident to the senses. This evidence could be linked to a type of intuition that does not require the operations of cognition; it is the realm of *sensibilia*. How can we

describe *sensibilia*? *Sensibilia* can be understood in this context as sense data that give rise to an aesthetic experience without judgment or imagination. They are experienced with no distance and they build an aesthetics with no imagination.

This is why, in order to maintain the ordinary aspect of aesthetic experience, it is important to remain on the bodily level of *sense data* without including imagination, which can lead us into rather misleading metaphysical grounds since it involves the intellect. Contrary to ordinary *sensibilia*, imaginary sense data are abstract stimuli as presented from the senses to consciousness because imagination includes inner subjective states of self-awareness such as expressive emotion and self-reflection. This is why I prefer to think of sense data as separate from abstraction and related to the animal senses and the biological dimension.

This aspect of our inquiry leads us to explore the role of animality in aesthetics, as Wittgenstein pointed out: there is something fundamentally uncertain in our supposed knowledge, an uncertainty reassured by mutual trust, which reveals the primitive form of our functioning. Wittgenstein, most commonly considered the father of the philosophy of language, never invoked abstraction in philosophy. On the contrary, especially in his latest philosophy we find a form of logic that is primitive and unanalysed, as shown by § 475 of *On Certainty*: "I want to regard man here as an animal; as a primitive being to which one grants instinct but not ratiocination. As a creature in a primitive state. Any logic good enough for a primitive means of communication needs no apology from us. Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination [Raisonnement]"[2] (Wittgenstein, 1969, p. 38).

Language is a veil draped over a feeling of shame coming from our animality. Wittgenstein encourages us to be uninhibited, to remain on "the rough ground" of the ordinary, to assume the mixture of impressions and expressions, to keep the indistinguishability between my gesture and that of others, to remain in the minimal primitivism of our ways of communicating, because, in some odd ways, *shame could be useful to comprehension*. This animal primitivism evoked by Wittgenstein could assist us in redrawing the sense of our gestures and our language. It could allow us to understand how animality plays an essential role in the expression of our *forms of life*, and how such expression builds continuity between nature and culture.

After having outlined the main features of sensibility and its difference from the aesthetic, I still need to explain what I mean by the *ordinary* and how it is not identical to the *everyday*. First of all, the ordinary possesses a form of neutrality, it has no special or distinctive features, it is somehow normal. The ordinary is 'common', and 'average"' and in contrast to the everyday the adjective 'ordinary' is often used in a derogatory sense. "This restaurant is very ordinary" does not simply mean that it is normal or mainstream, but rather that it is mediocre. This is one of the main reasons why the semantics of the 'ordinary' is resistant if not oppositional with regard to the realm of

[2] The French word *Raisonnement* is in the original version.

traditional aesthetics. The everyday can still contain something special and remarkable, but the ordinary is intrinsically common, both banal and shared.

The everyday does possess its own aesthetic tradition that I can quickly recall here, particularly in the French tradition. Maurice Blanchot (1962) *L'Homme de la rue* was directly inspired by Henri Lefebvre (1961) - and particularly by the second volume of the *Critique de la mise en scène quotidienne*, called *Fondements d'une sociologie de la quotidienneté*. Other authors have also worked on this everyday: Michel de Certeau (1980) was interested in the social procedures of consumption and production; Georges Perec (1974) discovered an inexhaustible source for literary innovating in the observation of the everyday. More recently, two works have admirably summarized previous results and opened them up to new avenues of research, whether in literature (Sheringham, 2006) or in philosophy (Bégout, 2005).

One could add to this scholarly research, a whole series of scientific books, artists' monographs, exhibition catalogues, writings in criticism and art history on this theme of the everyday. Among this vast panorama, we can quote the very well-known works of Yuriko Saito (2007; 2017) who carried aesthetic investigation to the margins of ethical and ecological concerns by focusing on the qualities of our common existence as the dirty, the neglected and the organized. She developed a very subtle critique of 'neutrality' by opening the debate to the Japanese aesthetics. A similar concern is also present in the research of Thomas Leddy (2012) who investigates the connection with the aesthetic categories of the natural environment and the sublime. Arnold Berleant (2010) also raises questions of a political nature and anchors all human activity in aesthetic experience. The interest of this vast research enterprise lies in the fact that the idea of the everyday helps to craft a dimension of aesthetic values that serves as a counterpoint to the classical idea of beauty and aesthetic judgement as 'pure' intellectual operations. The everyday refuses the posture of the Hegelian "belle âme" or the Kantian disinterest in order to situate the aesthetic experience in a 'raw' context. From the point of view of the everyday day, aesthetics is already covered with meanings, signifiers, cultural habits and affects; aesthetics is never pure.

Nevertheless, a crucial difference between the ordinary and the everyday, is that the idea of the ordinary seems to be much less flexible. Indeed one can indicate a very organized formal modality in the ordinary, a way of proceeding that is less personal or less free than that animating daily life and experience. Etymology lends support to this aspect of the ordinary: *ordinarius* means 'judge' in Latin, someone who is discerning and applies order. More generally, in the semantic range of the ordinary, if one moves away from the subjective realm, one also moves away from the world of the intimate and of ritualization. The ordinary thus loses the religious residue that the everyday, on the contrary, maintains.

Thus, the concept of the ordinary has also arisen through a kind of democratization if not even a profanation of the everyday, as we can see in the

work of one of its greatest defenders, the American philosopher Stanley Cavell (1988). In the wake of Wittgenstein, Cavell was able to turn the ordinary into a real philosophical object. Cavell discovers, or better 'recovers' in the ordinary an unusual, even disturbing dimension, aptly summarized by the Freudian expression of "the uncanniness of the ordinary". Cavell's approach is meant to show the ordinary through a 'sceptical' conversion of the gaze, in which doubt plays the same role as philosophical astonishment. This conversion is fecund because it takes the ordinary to be a non-obvious dimension. It contradicts any presupposition that the ordinary is inferior.

Yet, there are two main reasons that I prefer the ordinary to the everyday: its form of temporality and its inter-subjectivity. The first reason lies in the fact that the ordinary remains fundamentally indeterminate with regard to the temporality according to which activities take place. If the everyday is repeated automatically (every day), the ordinary is more a matter of the simple possibility of repetition (one could do it each day). Sweeping the floor is an ordinary activity, although it is not necessarily a daily one. The daily belongs to the present, the ordinary is projected onto the conditional. The second reason (inter-subjectivity), lies in the fact that the everyday is subjective and individual whereas the ordinary is inter-subjective and plural; the everyday of an acrobat or an airplane pilot cannot be called 'ordinary'. If the everyday is *ad personam*, the ordinary is impersonal. As I have shown elsewhere (Formis, 2010), the ordinary encompasses several 'everydays': it is a modality of living, whereas the everyday brings together the multiple singular applications of this general modality.

If the everyday is private and intimate, the ordinary is collective and social. If the everyday is what everyone does, the ordinary is what could be done by anyone. The everyday is in the actual, the ordinary in the potential. We can say that the everyday calls upon a very precise individuality and temporality (what I do every day), whereas the ordinary is less determined: it evokes a larger community and potential capacities (what I/we could do at any moment). While the everyday consists of a series of daily personal activities and thus remains of the order of the real, the ordinary is not always an execution, but very often a potentiality of execution. The ordinary thus adds a dimension of possibility to the real.

Thus, unlike the everyday, the ordinary firmly opposes a resistance to the extra-ordinary – and this point is crucial since it testifies to its anti-metaphysical tendency. My everyday life can become extraordinary once I extract (*extra*) a certain number of qualities (ritual, intimate, poetic, imaginary, etc.) from it. The ordinary, on the other hand – as long as it is intrinsically common and collective – retains only the minimal qualities of experience: it does not 'colour' itself with a whole series of personal and singular nuances, and if it does, it is as an attitude or a way of doing things and can never be universalized. It is because the ordinary remains more neutral than the everyday that it poses a real challenge to our idea of art and aesthetics, the latter being understood as the privileged places of pleasure and beauty. From my perspective, the ordinary is similar to what Pierre Bourdieu

calls the *habitus*[3], namely the generating principle of our life modalities, and also to what John Dewey names ordinary, a dimension potentially collective and thus differentiated from the every-day[4]. The indeterminacy of the ordinary is thus more fundamental than that of the everyday. Its difference with the everyday is thus useful insofar as it confers a collective and multiple character upon life.

4. Conclusion. Political Implications of Ordinary Art

Let's now go back, one last time, to our visit at the Louvre. The *Squatting Aphrodite* is thus profoundly ordinary, with also the derogatory implications that this adjective embodies. That's why she embodies ordinary sensibilia more than the everyday aesthetics and seems to be particularly rich in philosophical and aesthetic qualities: she approaches what Wittgenstein calls "forms of life" (*Lebensform*). Moreover this powerful concept has been massively imported into the field of the art by artists themselves or by theorists, such as Nicolas Bourriaud (2009) who made it into the foundation for his theory of *relational aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 2003). There is something extremely banal in the very fact of living in a human body, but this banality is in reality highly rich in meaning, because it is precisely in the multiplicity of the micro-events that are common to all of us that one of the most philosophical and truthful meanings of existence is hidden: the irreducibly shared and indiscriminate plurality of living beings. It is through gestures that we inhabit the world, that we shape it in our own way, it is through gestures that the world gives itself to us, in all its texture, its form of appearance and in its vitality.

My hypothesis is that it is not really when experience rises above the mediocrity of everyday life that it becomes aesthetic, but rather it does so by recourse to an inverse process. It is when experience infiltrates and 'dives' completely into the murky waters of reality, with all that it may have in common with repetition and indifference, that it shows potentially aesthetic qualities. This contrasts obviously with classical aesthetics in the sense that art does not try to improve life, but takes it with its own qualities, without any attempt at transformation. Thus, for example, repetition allows one to relive and show an experience without transfiguring it, *contra* Arthur Danto's conception (Danto, 1981). Consciousness within such repetitions remains distracted as in the ordinary accomplishment of our activities, if not even more so.

This kind of ordinary aesthetic experience is impersonal and collectively shared and thus avoids the risk of subjectivity via a fundamental critique of the exceptional and the singular. With respect to this line of thinking, the *Squatting*

[3] Bourdieu defines the habitus, as the "capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (taste), that the represented social world, i.e., the space of life-styles, is constituted" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 94). Similar to habitus, ordinariness allows us to understand the modus operandi of an individual and a social class in relation to the cultural context. Moreover, because it makes habitus a principle of "distinction", Bourdieu's approach would also evoke the primary function of the ordinary as judge, namely discernment.

[4] Although he sometimes uses the term every-day, Dewey follows the English usage and often prefers ordinary and compares 'ordinary' experience to 'aesthetic' experience (Dewey, 1934, see especially p. 12 and p. 6).

Aphrodite is very instructive. Ordinary art, especially in its gestural or performative form, opens up another kind of experience, it reveals a corporeal experience in which the subject is collective and dispersed, and which does not lend itself to the classic criteria of judgment, nor to the distance of contemplation. Of course, one could object that this will lead to the dissolution of art in the troubled waters of life. Perhaps this is the case, but it is probably the only way to aesthetically frame a properly performative experience of ordinary life. *Ordinary sensibilia* instruct us in the aesthetic character of human experience. They show how human experience is anchored in a cultural and collective context. They reveal the vulnerability of human beings, the possibility of making mistakes, appearing weak, and feeling emotions that are difficult to control.

Vulnerability is what leads to sociability, dialogue and the emergence of communities around work. When vulnerability is evoked by ordinary *sensibilia*, recipients take on an active position of witness and go beyond the comfortable position of a passive, uninvolved audience. Such human characteristics are not to be considered as defects to be corrected, according to an idealistic vision of the human being, but on the contrary as powers and forces for action. This is one of the major challenges posed by contemporary art, especially in its relationship to political space and social practices. It is a challenge worth undertaking, though, one that should also be taken up from the standpoint of art's philosophical anchoring and its capacity to create conceptual operations. Ordinary art could thus act as a philosophical and social laboratory in which concepts and relationships may be forged in an exploratory and experimental way.

Ordinary aesthetics, or the aesthetics of the ordinary teaches us that the incompleteness of figures and the display of mutilation become forms of resistance. Plurality *per se* is a challenge to individualization. The *Squatting Aphrodite* can thus be assumed as a model, an exemplar. It presents a broken but resistant subject who does not function like the Kantian subject of a transcendental order, which is capable of accompanying all our representations. Rather, the type of subject emerging from this work's gestural indiscernibility arises from an animal organism, from a body that is capable of emotions, of sensitive impressions, of desires and fear. This subjective form is fundamentally impersonal and plural, breaking from the idea of individual subject and embracing the realm of practice: it moves amongst things, reacts and interacts with the forces and tensions that surround it as well as those that inhabit it.

This kind of subjective form is highly political because individualization forges a single form by considering all the objects, machines, and instruments that the body uses as subordinate to it, as in a hierarchy. This is Simondon's great lesson in *Du monde d'existence des objets techniques* (1958) et *L'individuation à la lumière de notion de forme et d'information* (2005). The collective force of the gestures is thus employed to reorganize culture through shaping nature, nature itself being understood as a formless matrix. This quite patriarchal vision sees in the forms of action a way of identifying forces and tensions

which can unify and avoid alienation only if subordination is set up. The machine and the tool must be governed by our hands. This alienation is connected, as Marx had already indicated, to a capitalist vision of society, since it is based on the division between mental and manual, between the contemplative and the practical, between knowledge and labor. It is an alienation that is not simply economic and political, it is not limited to the possession of the means of production (in Marx's terms), but it also touches more widely the psychological and anthropological dimensions that account for what we call an 'activity'.

The *specter* of alienation can also cover ordinary experiences, because the latter is produced by multiple forms of interactions and reactions. It is essential to integrate this fear of alienation rather than attempting to avoid or banish it, because otherwise it risks creating other alienations and other dominations, as it systematically does. These forms of alienation are more insidious and dangerous precisely because they have been rendered invisible: the fear of feeling alienated, of losing one's means of production and reflection, makes the human subject (often masculine, or at least masculinized) lose his equilibrium, which will, in turn, start alienating natural energies and ecological resources, just like a whole series of other human subjects who belong to other social classes, races and genders. These subjects and these energies are thus in their turn instrumentalized and subordinated.

Through this speculative analysis of the impression, the impact, and effect of the ordinary in its gestural form within a single statue, we have seen that forces and tensions emerge between means and ends, domination and subordination, power and alienation, violence and freedom. It is quite remarkable that a simple gesture and a banal posture can reveal a whole panoply of attitudes and postures caught up in a multitude of intertwined relations. This multitude of relations shows that the subject of a supposed 'gesture' can only forge herself as an individual subject at the price of a certain violence that impacts something or someone else: an object, an instrument, a machine, or another living being (human or non-human). The human subject completes her process of individualization once she has overcome a resistance and has been made able to forge a form where the forces are minor, or minorized. Hence, although non-completion and mutilation may be perceived as dangers, they nevertheless remain a stage to be included in the very process of giving rise to subjectivity worthy of this name; that is to say, a subjectivity that is neither individual nor violent, but collective and peaceful.

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Collectors, Collecting and Non-collectibles

Between Everyday Aesthetics and Aestheticism

Mădălina Diaconu

Collecting goes beyond art collecting and seems to meet a more general need. Although it originally aided survival and has predecessors in the animal world, the gesture of collecting has complex motivations. After exploring the collector's psychology and the behavioural differences between collectors and spectators, this paper analyses the logic of collecting and its principles: order, variation, attractive and meaningful display, the control of contingency, processuality and growth, seriality, and limitation. Finally, the paradoxical attempt to collect non-collectibles, such as gods, clouds or human relations will be shown to illustrate a para-aesthetics of collecting which ranges from the poetics of everyday life to aestheticism. Keywords: *Collecting, Everyday Aesthetics, Aestheticism, Kierkegaard*

For a long time, aesthetic theory has referred only to artists and spectators; later on, it integrated the interpreters and performers. More recently, museums have started to portray art collectors, while museums and art collections are considered typical for modernity (Groys, 1997). However, the gesture of collecting surpasses the art market and pertains to the aesthetics of everyday life. Private collections are not only preliminary stages of galleries and museums, but also appear to meet a more general need: people of all ages and in all times collect all sorts of things depending on their interests, aesthetic taste and financial means. This paper first sketches a portrait of the collector, looking into her motivations and considering her behaviour toward the collection, with emphasis on the differences between users, spectators and collectors. The second part analyses the logic of collecting, identifying the principles that guide the birth, evolution and documentation of a collection, some of which have aesthetic relevance. Finally, the question of the limits of collecting in terms of time, space, and categories of objects will be raised. Regarding the latter aspect, some paradoxical attempts of collecting non-collectibles bring poetry into everyday life, while others epitomise

aestheticism. Retrospectively, the diversity of collections, collectibles and collectors' motivations supports the idea of a continuity between aesthetic and non-aesthetic values, as well as between everyday aesthetics and the theory of art.

1. Homo collector[1]

One person collects watches, another stamps, a third perhaps postcards, perfume flacons, comics, old cinema posters, teddy bears, or paintings. Early in life, the small boy starts up a collection of car toys; as an adult he may afford to collect vintage cars. What do all these people have in common, what triggers their passion, and what does it mean to collect? To start with the last question, a distinction should be made between the natural processes of accumulation or accretion – which produce, for example, the patina of objects, a musty atmosphere in a junk shop, or a cloud – and the human act of collecting. The protagonist of this paper is neither a dust collector, nor a waste collector or a sun collector, but an intentional subject. Moreover, her motivations differ from those of a tax collector, since they involve a free activity which is deployed as a self-rewarding hobby. Professional collectors may well transform their passion into a source of profit, yet their primary motivation is the enjoyment caused by the things collected.

As a matter of fact, collecting has deeper roots than everyday aesthetics and can be considered "as old as humanity" itself (Hadamowsky, 1965, p. 9). Collecting originally enabled biological survival; in the oldest Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures it began to serve political or religious purposes of representation, as grave goods demonstrate. Collecting is likely to have become 'aesthetic' for the first time in Ancient Greece, when the urban elite started to purchase works of art and the art trade flourished. In early modernity, the gesture of collecting remained confined to aristocrats, merchants, and wealthy scholars; the chambers of art and curiosities and the cabinets of rarities emerged from a mixture of (pseudo)scientific interests and the love of art. Up to the middle of the 18th century the collections remained a prerogative of the sovereigns and nobility and held mainly works of art and handicrafts, manuscripts, and printed books. The spreading of collections is undoubtedly the result of democratisation and economic affluence. Nevertheless, like haute couture advances only the top end of a common profession, the 'high' collections, too, represent only the elite segment of a more general activity. Before acquiring an aesthetic meaning, the gesture of collecting is anthropologically relevant.

The etymology of the verb 'to collect' leads us back to the early 15th century, when it meant 'to gather into one place or group' (Online Etymology Dictionary). The English verb is derived from the Old French 'collecter', which originated in turn from the Latin participle of 'colligere' ('gather together'). Initially the verb was used in English with a transitive sense; the intransitive meaning of 'gather together' or 'accumulate' is first recorded in use as late as

[1] On the collector's psychological profile, with focus on the collector of antiques, see also Diaconu (2012).

1794. The fact that the primary meaning was transitive may support the hypothesis that collecting is principally an intentional and possibly typical human activity. This also allows for a phenomenological approach to this gesture.

According to Manfred Sommer, the essence of collecting is twofold, consisting both of gathering and looking at something (Sommer, 1999). On one hand, the collector brings together what was previously scattered; in this respect, collecting is the reverse of dispersion and creates spatial unity. On the other hand, this activity reaches its peak when it is performed for the sake of perception – which brings into play its aesthetic-aisthetic dimension. This dual essence also enables the comparison of two sorts of collecting: as accumulation and as differentiation within the same category – in other words, the economic type (gathering) and the aesthetic type (collecting *sensu stricto*). The concept of economic 'collecting' is characterised by a sheer amassing of the same sort of thing and should be considered a primitive form of collecting, which is guided by the principle: "the more, the better". By contrast, aesthetic collecting is interested in differences and variations, and obeys the rule: "the more diversified, the better". While gathering produces amorphous piles or heaps, the spatial and taxonomical arrangement of the items is typical for a collection; this higher form of collecting evidently reaches its most elaborate form in specialised museums.

The developmental psychology confirms that collecting stands for an "aesthetics of preservation" (Sommer, 1999, p. 11). Even the child feels a natural urge to collect 'treasures'. In this stage, the objects of passion often have a natural origin and obtain attention through their (again) 'natural' properties, mostly shape or colour. This attests to collecting as a genuine aesthetic gesture, since it is deployed for the sake of beauty and not, as is often the case with adult collectors, as an appropriation of prestige objects. It may be precisely this relation between collecting and social representation which explains why collectors were ignored by aestheticians. Collectors, they would say, violate the concept of aesthetic disinterestedness (by enjoying the possession of objects) and break the rule of "noli me tangere" (since they enjoy not only contemplating, but also handling them). These two qualities were reason enough to suspect the collector of an 'impure' or 'incorrect' aesthetic experience. If the coupled joy of possessing and touching works of art undeservedly banish the collector from the aesthetics of art, at the same time they convey to him/her a special value when it comes to discussing the importance of tactility for the aesthetic experience. The pleasure of touching practically depends on the *right* to touch; only the owners (or those authorised by them) may touch the collection at any time, sit on it or use as many senses as possible in order to enjoy it. Ernst Battenberg noted:

> An antique that one has inherited or acquired can be touched, placed in the bright light of the morning or in the dim glimmer of the lamp in the evening. Its owner can caress it, smell it and look at it, it belongs to him. (Ehret, 1981, p. 7)

Jean-Charles Moreux, too, who was not only an architect and set designer, but

also the owner of a cabinet of curiosities, attached great importance to the "indisputable tactile value" of the collected objects and characterised it as "the most fundamental and at the same time the most superficial feature" of the aesthetic experience (cited in Mauriès, 2002, p. 223). As is well known, Kantian and post-Kantian aesthetics condemned such sensual pleasure, which can be regarded as an episode in the longer process of forbidding touch in the public space as an expression of civilisation (Elias, 1997). In the Middle Ages it was common to touch the 'works' in the cathedrals, and until the early modern age, private collectors allowed their guests to lay their hands on their exhibits. The fact, however, that this began to be considered a temporary privilege that was granted only under the owner's supervision and as the result of her courtesy, attests to the gradual privatisation of tactile pleasure.

The right to multisensory enjoyment is derived from possession and the result of purchase. Before acquiring the object, the collector is engaged in a more or less assiduous search, which sometimes combines serendipity with a persistent 'hunt'. The passionate collector must not only manifest tenacity in building up the collection, but must also develop the qualities of a private detective. Translated into anthropological concepts, the *homo collector* is an aesthetic avatar of the prehistoric gatherer and hunter. She is happy about the 'trouvailles' she comes across at flea markets or in antique shops, but she can follow an object over years with admirable dedication, perseverance and obstinacy. Dashiell Hammett's famous *Maltese falcon* (1932) is an exemplary illustration of the risks a passionate collector is willing to take in order to come into possession of an intensively desired object. Items of collection are not neutral objects, but investments of libido, and collecting itself combines satisfaction with the pride of possessing and the pleasure of hunting. Like hunting, the collecting process alternates "phases of building up excitement and tension-relieving satisfaction" (Stagl, 1992, p. 42). In their quest for a rarity, the collectors systematically explore the market, gain and extend their knowledge about a specific type of objects, and build up a network of useful relations to producers, experts and other collectors. Collecting is a typical individual activity, but its passion founds (aesthetic) communities of peers. Ownership cannot be shared, but passion can, as collector's clubs demonstrate.

Persistence and detective skills characterise, however, only one kind of collector, who obsessively chases the unique. Other collectors let themselves be guided solely by their subjective taste and appreciate the elementary, almost childlike joy of rummaging about at flea markets as much as they enjoy purchasing an object (Jackson and Day, 1999, p. 10). The pastime of fossicking around mediates between the intentional search and luck, given that with a little patience surprises turn up (Reichl, 1995, p. 198). The mixture of valuable objects with junk that is typical for the flea markets (not to mention some internet platforms), conveys an additional charm to the rummaging around; the collector is attracted precisely by the (never guaranteed) *possibility* of finding a good item among "horror homeware stuff and hideous kitsch" (Hadamowsky, 1965, p. 13). The collector's opportunity is

the opportunity of the object as well: by picking it up, separating it from the bare trash and giving it a new home, the object is born again, though for an artificial life.

Exploring, chasing, picking up and bringing home comprise the sequences of the quest and combine playfulness with the scholar's meticulous, systematic research and with the social skills of the experienced *homme du monde* (not least during price negotiation). This psychological alloy corresponds to the collector's characterisation as a *senex puerilis* (Mauriès, 2002, p. 134). The collector's almost childlike "pleasure for the unusual and strange", which was at the heart of the cabinets of curiosities and the art and wonder chambers (Philippovich, 1966, p. 1), is deeply anchored in senectitude. Collecting can mean a defensive reaction against one's own aging and physical decay through the accumulation of objects, or an attempt to protect oneself from death by an ever-thickening wall of objects. 'Saved' objects become a life saver for the collector. By gathering things into one place, the collection protects the subject against dissolution; being is compensated by having. The agency that pulls out the objects from the flow of time and keeps them in cupboards as if in a place outside of history promises the collector the control over her own facticity and temporality. Collecting is a two-step process of extraction and abstraction.

This implicit meaning distinguishes human collecting from animal collecting. What may appear as specifically human turns out to sublimate a proto-aesthetic animal activity. For example, Richard O. Prum's book *The Evolution of Beauty* includes a picture showing a male Vogelkop Bowerbird in New Guinea that "curates a collection of strange objects and materials on a planted garden of moss in front of its hut bower."[2] Other bird species collect items of the same colour and display them in beautiful arrangements, in order to attract a future mate. This temporary tasteful 'collection' serves as a stage for an equally impressive dance of the male in front of the female. On this basis, Prum claimed that many nonhuman animals can be assigned aesthetic agency and that the time has come to outline a post-human approach to art that would include the biotic artworlds, to use Danto's concept. My present focus is different. The bird's 'collection' is an instrument of the sexual selection and serves the perpetuation and multiplication of life. As for human collectors, some of them are indeed driven by economic reasons and conceive of their precious collection as an investment for the future; others yet invest a precious amount of time, energy, and money in their collection for its own sake. More importantly, the univocally positive and indirectly life-fostering character of collecting seems to lack in the human gesture of collecting, which is rather tinged with the ambivalent pleasure of nostalgia. The collector is a kind of Proust of material culture who fights against the irreversibility of time, decay and oblivion. Collecting is a defence strategy that secures, archives, and organises a fragment of the world with the final aim to freeze time. In Justin Stagl's words, collections are "materialized memories", just as "memory is

[2] This is composed of: "globular red fruits; flakes of rotten wood infiltrated with green fungus; charcoal, black fungus, and rotten red fruits turned black; red flowers from *Freycinetia* vines; shiny black beetle elytra; blue berries; and gelatinous amber tree exudate" (Prum, 2017, no page).

a materialized collection" (Stagl, 1998, p. 41). Collecting helps recollecting both the collective and the individual past. The age of the object is an essential criterion for collectors, since so-called antiques revive past cultures, but the age of an item *within* the collection is precious as well: the founding piece of collection has a sentimental value for the collector irrespective of its price on the market. In short, collecting nourishes nostalgic feelings and makes it possible to travel into the past (Battenberg in Ehret, 1981, p. 7).[3]

The collector's melancholia is sometimes documented biographically (for example, in the case of Rudolf II), but the "symptoms of an obsession or a depression as well as a mechanism of isolation and protection" (Mauriès, 2002, p. 182) can also apply to the common collector. Further, Patrick Mauriès ascribes to the collector a "passionately inquiring mind, inclination to mystery, propensity to brooding, passion for appropriation, enthusiasm for changing forms and hybrids, and a ceaseless questioning of the boundary between life and death, the purpose of existence and its transience" (Mauriès, 2002, p. 183). This quasi-philosophical dimension is accompanied by the extension of life with the aid of objects. Like the reader of narratives who makes the characters' lives her own, the collector appropriates the stories told by the objects and enlarges her personal biography. Along with the objects, she collects and archives their stories, and collecting becomes a self-reflective practice. If museums are "places where cultural-historical trash is processed into cultural identities" (Groys, 1997, p. 48), then private collections process the cultural-historical trash into personal identities. Collecting sets forth the formation of personality.

Each item has its own biography; the more dramatic this is, involving human fates or prominent former owners, the more it increases in value. Old jewels, works of art and masterfully crafted objects have special stories and have written history. But common objects can enter a collection at the end of memorable adventures, when their purchase involved a strenuous effort, risky expeditions, or thorough research. In this way, the object's "biography" is interlaced with the collector's life.

Another possible motivation for collecting is vanity. Given its intricate connection to social appearances, vanity can itself be assigned to everyday aesthetics. Recently, Barbara Carnevali made the attempt to rehabilitate vanity against its traditional disdain in Western metaphysics and morality, where it was condemned as a symptom of frivolity and relegated to the illusory sphere of appearances, as opposed to reality (Carnevali 2020, p. 57 ff.). Understood as the obsessive concern about one's image due to a strong need for recognition, vanity can indeed be suspected as the subjective motivation lying behind some collections of objects of prestige. Moreover, the passion for collecting can become a principle of alienation and trigger social competition among collectors (which moralists again associate with vanity). Like other passions, collecting can reach a self-destructive intensity and take over the

[3] On historicity as an atmospheric value in interior design see Baudrillard (1968). Old objects exhale authenticity and enable a narcissistic regression in time. As symbolic objects, they have a minimal functionality, but reach a maximum of meaning.

collector's life. Nevertheless, if the passion for collecting is authentic, it is certainly driven (also) by a sense of beauty and intellectual curiosity: only aesthetically appealing or interesting objects unleash the desire to own them. Once more, the primary motivation for collectors ought to be the concern about objects and not about their egos.

For all these reasons, a phenomenological interpretation should consider collecting in its entire complexity. To dismiss collecting in general as an "amusing pastime" (Philp, 1975, p. 6) falls short of the mark; to suspect non-aesthetic interests behind every collection would be equally unfair toward enthusiastic collectors; finally, to reduce this phenomenon to a cultural expression of the accumulating logic of capital[4] sounds hyper-intellectualistic. Such approaches ignore the notion that collecting is a factor of construing identities. Collecting objects is inextricably linked to collecting oneself both in the aesthetic meaning of a focused contemplation of the displayed and in a psychological sense, as recollection or the (re)assembling of the self, grace to memory. All of this is possible owing to the logic or *ratio* of collecting.

2. The Logos of Collecting

In his reading of Heraclitus, Heidegger pointed out that the Greek *logos* was related to *legein*, which meant not only 'to speak', but also 'to lay down and present', or 'to submit and deposit' (*nieder- und vorlegen*) (Heidegger, 1994, p. 200). The Latin word *legere* signified in addition: 'to read', 'to catch up' and 'to bring together'. The gesture behind the *logos* thus had the meaning of laying down and displaying (or collecting) himself and other things.[5] Most importantly, it implied for Heidegger that what is collected comes "to lie down in the (re)collection of rest."[6] The collection itself is a resting camp (*Ruhelager*) or a "reserve where something is deposited and created."[7] Further on, Heidegger recalls the double etymology in German and Old Greek of *legein*/*lesen* as 'reading' and 'picking something up' or 'harvesting'. In sum, the activity called *legein* appears as a succession of picking up (*Auflesen*), removing (*Abnehmen*) and collecting (*Zusammentragen*) (Heidegger, 1994, p. 201).

To my knowledge, this Heideggerian reading of the *logos* has not yet been fructified for an interpretation of collecting, although its terminological repertoire presents astonishing analogies with our topic[8]: What was "picked up" or harvested is brought together and deposited in containers and reservoirs with the aim of storage and safekeeping (Heidegger, 1994, p. 202). These are the "safe" places where what was picked up can recover itself, claims Heidegger, who plays in this context with the polysemy of *Bergen*. The collecting process ends by collecting people in a dual, social and psychological, respect: collecting/harvesting brings people together in an assembly (*Versammlung*); moreover,

4 The art historian Adalgisa Lugli disqualifies collecting as a parodistic-critical reflection of the overproduction and oversaturation in Western society (cf. Mauriès, 2002, p. 231).

5 "das sich und anderes sammelnde Nieder- und Vorlegen" (*Ibid.*).

6 "sich niederlegen in die Sammlung der Ruhe" (*Ibid.*).

7 "der Hinterhalt, wo etwas hinterlegt und angelegt ist" (*Ibid.*).

8 It is true that Heidegger obviously prefers the agricultural connotations.

they collect themselves and concentrate their work on the action of saving and enabling recovery (*Bergen*).[9]

This dense interpretation of the *logos* can inspire a phenomenological reading of collecting in general. Collecting, too, begins with a selection (picking up), which is equally gratifying as harvesting, although useless from a practical point of view. The carefully chosen objects are removed from their context, if they had not already been decontextualised as is the case with the flea markets. The reaped objects are brought into the same place and stored in showcases. Professional collectors build special rooms or houses for this purpose and do not merely store things, but also take care of their conservation and restoration. In so doing, they 'rescue' objects from deterioration and keep them in 'safe' places or in safe-deposit boxes. The analogies do not end here. Collectors enjoy contemplating their 'crop', which is a good opportunity to collect themselves, and like to present them to friends. As a result, collections bring people together in various ways, by gathering them around the exhibits or in collector's clubs, the members of which have common interests.

However, apart from this reinterpretation of the *logos* of collecting following Heidegger it is worth reconstructing its logic also with respect to its principles. Let us start with the *order*. A collector treasures the same type of objects. Therefore, collecting is preceded by the organisation of the material world according to categories. Any collection arranges first the world and then sets forth the taxonomical principle within the collection itself. Sometimes this ordering of the world – which is essential for being human – is materialised in catalogues and inventories, which accurately document the origin and characteristics of the pieces. Collections have strong similarities with the taxonomical-descriptive approach in the modern sciences; in the 18th and 19th century it was a common practice in biology, geography, and cultural anthropology to pick up, remove from their natural environments and bring to Europe samples of plants, insects, minerals, or artifacts. Especially methodical subjects satisfy their wish to get an overview of a certain field by collecting things. They systematically set up a second world and manage it; experts' recommendations help them to maintain and improve its order. One of these specialists is Franz Hadamowsky, who remarked: "At the beginning of every collection there is order; the salutary necessity not only to plan it, but also to implement it consistently, is one of the most positive side effects of any collecting activity" (Hadamowsky, 1965, p. 11). A pedagogical undertone is unmistakable: "'In the beginning was the order' – this is how a Bible for collectors should begin" (*Ibid.*).

Nevertheless, the order is not only an epistemological, but also an aesthetic principle. The arranged microcosm of the collection produces both intellectual satisfaction and perceptual enjoyment. Collecting creates a *unitas multiplex* or

[9] „Zu jedem Sammeln gehört zugleich, daß die Lesenden sich sammeln, ihr Tun auf das Bergen versammeln und von da her gesammelt, erst sammeln. Die Lese verlangt aus sich und für sich diese Sammlung. Im gesammelten Sammeln waltet ursprünglich Versammlung" (Heidegger, 1994, p. 202).

unity in diversity, which was one of the first definitions of beauty.[10] The collected items appear like sensible variations of the same Platonic prototype. However, unlike the philosopher, the collector does not seek the unity that underlies plurality as much as she enjoys diversity in itself. Therefore making *comparison* possible can be considered another principle of collecting. A collector is less interested in gathering samples that look alike than in acquiring something slightly different; collecting trains the sense of observation and takes pleasure in the richness of the world.

A third aesthetic aspect concerns the *display* of the collection, which can indeed reach the level of art. However, the common collector is already a proto-designer, having to stage neat and meaningful arrangements of her pieces. Options about the illumination and position of the objects, the container, and its position in a private environment are unavoidable and express judgments of taste. The collector has to decide what pieces deserve to be highlighted and what can be rather hidden. Even the distances between the objects contribute to form materialised sentences, in which some objects are given the prominent status of nouns or verbs and others modestly fill the space, like prepositions. The spatial distribution of objects between foreground and background creates an internal hierarchy which may reflect the object's value on the market, its rarity, difficulty of acquisition, or age, or can simply betray subjective preferences.

Apart from its intellectual meaning (as classification) and aesthetic dimension (as arrangement), order has a third major sense, which is related to the process of collecting. A collection often starts with a 'trouvaille', a curious or beautiful object one accidentally encounters, a gift, or more rarely an inherited object. In general, contingency plays an important role at the beginning of collecting. Once set up, the further growth of the collection, however, integrates the initial accident into a fairly coherent system of relations. In this respect, collecting is the human gesture of *controlling contingency*, conveying order to a chaotic experience and seeing similarities and differences in an amorphous world. Collecting is a sign of the subject's power over the material world: one collects what one does not need, just for its own sake, and controls the accumulation of things. This principle of command and control needs a serious revision in practice, given that the collector seems to constantly switch between agency and passivity: on the one hand, she is actively searching, takes decisions about what to acquire, and owns the pieces; on the other hand, a passionate collector can succumb to the addiction of collecting. Maniacal collectors become possessed by their possessions.

Nevertheless, even in such a case collecting is not perverted into hoarding – the mental health disorder characterised by the accumulation of (usually worthless) things which the hoarder finds difficult to let go. It is precisely the order associated with control that draws a sharp line between a collector and a hoarder. The hoarder does not appreciate variation within the same category

[10] "[…] Beautiful wholes are formed of similar as well as opposite elements" (Tatarkiewicz 2015, p. 333).

of objects, but absurdly amasses copies of the same thing. Hoarders neither proudly showcase their objects to other people, nor display them in neat arrangements; they cannot even manipulate them with ease after a point. The order of the collection degenerates into chaos, and collecting is converted from a delightful hobby into a habit that interferes with normal life. Instead of giving objects a second life, hoarders risk becoming buried alive by objects. Moreover, such people can end up in social isolation – which is the very opposite of Heidegger's assembly. The aesthetic dimension is hard to find in the hoarder's world.[11]

On the contrary, a collector builds up her own world – and this takes time. Therefore, collecting is inconceivable without *duration*, *continuity* and *growth*; collections are dynamically, steadily or intermittently expanding works. Pieces of a collection can be sold or exchanged for other objects, but on the whole collecting follows the logic of accumulation. In this respect, despite historically preliminary forms and anthropological invariants, aesthetic or scientific collections are typical in modernity. As long as it 'lives"' a collection is a work in progress and the result of a long-term process. As such, it does not only express the collector's personality and social status, but is also her lifework.

The starting point of collecting can be clearly identified, though sometimes only retrospectively; it usually takes some time between acquiring or receiving the first piece and the decision to gather the objects of the same kind. This *capo d'opera* does not have to be a masterpiece, but it should be attractive enough in order to awaken the desire for similar things. The *opera* itself is the collection as a series. Once again, a principle of collecting – in this case, *seriality* – has a particular relevance for our age, being widespread in modern and contemporary art, from Monet's cathedrals to Warhol, from photography to cartoons. The aesthetics of seriality has been analysed so far mainly in examples from literature and film (Pohn-Lauggas et al., 2018; Bronfen, 2016); more seldom it included serial imagery in art (Sykora, 1983), and integrated the mass production of industrial series, scientific and epistemic series in general, as well as art and TV series in a cross-disciplinary approach. (Rothöhler, 2020) Seriality opens a field of relations between the series as a result and its building through succession, between repetition and variation, identity and difference, continuity and transformation or interruption, redundancy and innovation (Rothöhler, 2020, p. 12). Regarding everyday collections, these are favoured not only by technological and economic factors, but also by marketing strategies (in particular for children's products) that awaken the passion for collecting from an early age.

Once it begins, the collection can stop after a long process of agony, during which the collector loses her interest in it, or it can end with the collector's death – unless she is forced to 'freeze' their collecting for various reasons. For the passionate collectors, both the beginning and the end of this process leave the impression of heteronomy: the debutant collector assumes a passion she is seized by; the old collector is forced to leave this world *and* her

[11] The border between collectors and so-called pickers is less sharp.

collection behind. Valuable collections can be donated or left to heirs. Nevertheless, the almost organic unity of the collection remains essential until the end, the items being *pieces* of a whole; no collector would break it unless she is forced to.

Usually collections are the work of *individuals* or couples, such as the *Essl Collection* for contemporary art, which was built by Agnes and Karlheinz Essl for over 50 years. Rather exceptionally, some collections are continued over generations within the same family. Collected items are heritable, the passion for collecting (the same kind of objects) is not. This truth holds even more strongly for common collections; they hardly survive the collector's death if they are devoid of objective value on the market and are instead put down to some collector's idiosyncrasy.

The collector's existential finitude represents only an aspect of the principle of *limitation* that concludes the presentation of the *logos* of collecting. A second limitation is spatial but derived from the collector's passing away. If collecting entails the gathering of objects into one place, then the collection simply disappears with the dispersion of its pieces. A collection is *per definitionem* a collective of objects and in the owner's eyes almost an organic being; indeed, it can survive 'amputations' better than living beings, yet, aesthetically speaking, it is affected as a whole. The ideal of a collection is completeness; as any other ideal, this is impossible to reach, however, fragmentation can be fatal to collections. Third, the limitation applies to the kind of collected objects and to collectibles in general. No collector can collect everything, and instead usually selects specific objects from a certain epoch and a certain culture. In addition to this, not everything is collectible in principle. This brings us to the last question: What is collectible and how can the paradoxical collecting of non-collectibles be relevant to aesthetics?

3. Collecting Non-collectibles

Experts are confronted with almost insurmountable difficulties when it comes to classifying the possible objects of collection. Peter Philp (1975) and Dennis Young (1979) prefer to order them alphabetically, according to categories of products, their materials, and functions. Sometimes the material becomes the unique criterion of classification, as when the focus lies on cleaning, repairing and restoring antiques (Jackson and Day, 1998), and special investigations can be confined to a single type of object (Lutze 1977). These studies have the same outline for each chapter or lexicon entry: they begin with a concise art history of the kind of object (e.g. furniture, China, etc.), before integrating issues of style, as well as explanations of materials and manufacturing techniques. These books provide excellent technical descriptions and practical advice for collectors but are useless for any reconstruction of the collector's psychology or the logic of collecting, as expounded above. Besides, they never raise the question about the *fundamental* limitations of collecting. If we stick to the definition of the collector as the Proust of material culture, then obviously only material objects are collectible. Nevertheless, this trivial statement can lead us to interesting situations if we ask further what kind of non-collectibles still

tempt people to collect them. Let me mention in the following only three such cases. In so doing, the intended phenomenological analysis is completed through what Husserl called the eidetic variation, by testing what falls outside the realm of collecting.

First, from the perspective of monotheism God is uncollectible and gods ought not to be collected. For believers from strong monotheist and aniconic religions this interdiction even applies to images of gods (in their view, idols). In their eyes, a private sanctuary with statues of gods or saints or a wall covered with painted icons are alarming signs of idolatry. For the scholars of religious studies, who adhere to a methodological agnosticism, these are no more than collections of devotional objects, while art historians see in them aesthetically valuable arrangements of skilfully crafted cult objects. From the believer's perspective, however, these are *not* collections – this difference in perception makes clear the implicit aesthetic dimension of any collection in general. No matter how passionate the collector can be, seen from outside, her collection falls under the categories of aesthetic, hobby, leisure, and superficial enjoyment.

Secondly, collecting implies a sense of property; the collector owns the object and is its 'master', being in principle entitled to do whatever she wishes with it, including destroying it. Conversely, whatever belongs to the public domain is per se uncollectible. The same goes for the so-called commons, indivisible natural resources that are shared by communities, such as air, light, and water. The modern territorialisation of the atmosphere (think of national airspaces) would require a special discussion. Others contest the object-character of the atmosphere and prefer to call it a hyper-object (Morton, 2013). If the physical atmosphere is uncollectible, how can then Marie-Luce Nadal present herself as a "collector of clouds" (Nadal, 2021)? The author of this statement is a contemporary French artist who produces artificial vapours and clouds (one of her installations is titled *Fabrique du Vaporeux*) and in this sense she can indeed 'collect' self-made cloud-works. More generally, each of us can collect physical and mental *images* of clouds. While the statement about collecting clouds is intuitively absurd, its metaphorical dimension activates a poetical thinking. The idea of collecting clouds opens the way for letting poetics enter everyday life outside of an artistic context.

The religious collector and the poetical (artistic) collector (not to be confused with the art collector) represent only two types of para-collecting behaviour. One can certainly add to them the globe trotter, who 'collects' memories of places, and the obsessively photographing tourist, who collects images of places. More interesting than these, however, is what may be called existential collecting. As already mentioned, collectibles have to be material; for example, we cannot collect human relations – or can we? We do not 'collect' friends or interesting acquaintances, let alone parents, partners or children – and if one does so, one is criticised for her irresponsibility, superficiality and objectification of others. In the same vein, it is impossible to collect love, friendship, and respect, but it is possible to 'collect' love affairs, memberships, diplomas, and honorific titles. Vain people collect signs of recognition, whereas

Don Juan and Casanova were 'collecting' female beauty and erotic experiences. For Søren Kierkegaard, Don Juan and the character of the seducer in general embody the aesthetic stage of life (Kierkegaard, 2013).

Roughly speaking, every seducer is a collector of the non-collectible, though Kierkegaard does not use this expression. Instead, he pays closer attention to the fine differences between the Greek and the modern seducer on the example of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (Kierkegaard, 2013, p. 93 ff.). The Greek love was affecting the psychical; the Greek seducer, be it Zeus or Hercules with his mythical fifty love affairs, fell in love with a girl and did everything that was possible to get her; after a while, he got bored and started to look for new love – and the cycle began again. However, for Kierkegaard he was not a real seducer, given that he was still praising the individuality of each 'conquest' and was merely reacting to accidental encounters. Conversely, Don Juan seeks the abstract idea of femininity or the principle of the sensuous, which can be found only in individuals, but can never be fully realised by a single woman. For him, "every girl is an ordinary girl, every love affair a story of everyday life" (Kierkegaard, 2013, p. 97). The Greek hero's biography has a richness of content and obeys the logic of accretion (Kierkegaard claims for Hercules that he eventually reigned over an extended family); in contrast, Don Juan's love is *in principle* unfaithful and the series of his erotic adventures build a mere sequence of moments and pure repetition.

No matter how A (the author of the aesthetic part of *Either/Or*) endeavours to distinguish between similar behaviours, both the Greek seducer's and Don Juan's ways of life are unacceptable from the perspective of the moral stage given that they do not take life seriously and reject longer commitments, in this case (Christian) conjugal fidelity. However, since moralising is not the aim of this paper, we should better attempt to detect common characteristics of the seducer and the real collector on the basis of Kierkegaard's analysis. The seducer's never-ending quest for new objects of desire could indeed be compared to the collector's 'unfaithfulness' to single objects. At first glance, the collector's psychology recalls the Greek 'polygamy' rather than Don Giovanni's almost abstract repetition, since the Greek seducer never fully abandons the old loves. At the same time, however, the collector indirectly evokes Don Juan's idealism: s/he is adulterous, so to speak, to each object taken separately; the collector remains faithful to the *category* of objects she collects – in Kierkegaard's words, to the idea of that object – and to her own identity as a collector.

Another feature of the aesthetic stage opens the possibility of a different kind of comparison. The motto of the *Diapsalmata*[12] which opens the 'aesthetic' part of *Either/Or* is a French poem expressing the classical motif of the *vanitas vanitatum* (Kierkegaard, 2013, p. 18). This holds that prestige, intellectual knowledge, and honours, no less than friendship and sensual pleasure, are ultimately worthless and do not deserve to be pursued. This melancholy –

[12] *Diapsalmata* is a collection of aphorisms. The literary genres that 'collect' ideas and short notes over a period of time, from anthologies and diaries to Lichtenberg's famous *Sudelbücher*, who also developed a special method of ordering the entries, would deserve special analysis.

which, in Kierkegaard's case, is nothing but the *mal de siècle* of Romanticism – has already been commented on in relation to collecting. However, the collector's nostalgic *Grundstimmung* is counterbalanced by an active reaction: instead of complying with passive nihilism, the collector fights to save objects from consumption and decay; instead of denying the common human values, he affirms life and manifests solidarity with what is transient. The collector's implicit moral philosophy is ultimately positive and constructive.

The aesthetic stage of Romanticism enjoys a comeback in postmodernity. Zygmunt Bauman's interpretation of the "liquid love" of our times includes Kierkegaard's Don Giovanni among its predecessors, but adds to it the dimension of consumption (Bauman, 2003). Bauman bemoans that relationships have been converted into ephemeral and superficial *Erlebnisse*, into "profitable investments" and "top-pocket relationships" that can be kept in one's pocket to be brought out whenever one needs them (Bauman, 2003, pp. 15, 20). This world, in which real social bonds are lacking and commitments are considered meaningless, could also be reclaimed for an existential form of collecting that simply 'accumulates' human relations. Compared to the common collectors' attachment to their objects – which (so to speak) can 'trust' their owner – the collecting of relationships precisely gives away the subject's deliberate detachment and fear of emotional involvement.

The contrast with the 'real' collector is striking. The latter appreciates the privilege of intimate contact with her objects, which leads to ambivalent tactile behaviour. On one hand, the collector enjoys touching the pieces, weighing them in her hand and turning them on all sides, opening and closing recipients, and wearing the objects (think of jewels, watches or other historic accessories). On the other hand, the conservation of objects requires protecting them from any contact, which brings into play an entire aesthetics of veiling. Touch can be integrated into a ceremony of possession, and possession be in turn aestheticised through ritual: valuable pieces are touched only with gloves, hung behind curtains, placed in skilfully manufactured cases or in special cabinets. The collector touches and lets herself be touched by the objects; she is aware of the exposure of the material world and assumes it – and with it, her own vulnerability. On the contrary, the collector of human relationships avoids being (emotionally) touched, and her aestheticisation does not reach the stage of elaborating rituals – she lacks the time to develop them. While the material collector is profoundly 'conservative' and reacts to modern speed by slowing down the rhythm in which objects are used, worn out and discarded, the existential collector sets forth the logic of acceleration and consumption.

Consumption at bottom appears to be the very opposite of collecting and preserving. Nevertheless, the existential collector, like the collector of places and their images, is engaged both in collecting and consuming. The result is a typically modern eclectic subjectivity, which reminded Boris Groys of museums. Modern museums collect heterogeneous objects in a homogeneous space and are devoid of the coherence that was proper to churches and palaces. "This absence of inner organic unity and this irreducible inner heterogeneity

characterize not only the modern museum, but also modern subjectivity as such" (Groys, 1997, p. 50).

In contrast, collections obey or at least should obey the previously described logic of gathering and ordering items according to the principle of unity in diversity. The collector's life, too, achieves a certain coherence through the collection. Although her home, cabinet or private gallery remains a temporary shelter for homeless artifacts and a transitory space for the remnants of historical worlds, a collection is still an island of order amidst contingency and an example for how things can embellish daily life.

To conclude, the gesture of collecting shares common features with other aesthetic phenomena; these regard the collector's psychology and behaviour, as well as the collection as such. Collecting is a passion for a certain kind of object that seizes the subject and develops in time; it praises the fragile beauty of the material world and is tinged by nostalgia. The collector's experience alternates between activity and passivity, control and enjoyment, possession and fascination, manipulation of objects versus their contemplation. It would be simplistic to reduce the collector's motivations to economic interests or vanity; genuine collecting is disinterested in the Kantian sense, for it gathers objects for their own sake and takes pleasure in the variation of perceptual qualities and styles. Yet collecting not only sharpens observational, aisthetic skills; insofar it brings order into the world, it also nourishes curiosity and teaches perseverance, thus having both epistemic and educational value: far from merely being an amusing pastime, collecting can serve to build character. From the viewpoint of aesthetic theory, there is no sharp line between the activity of everyday collecting and art collecting; both follow the same principles, such as the aforementioned production of order and of a unity in diversity, along with seriality and the ideal of completeness. In relation to the collector's life, on one hand, collecting conveys continuity and coherence, as it adheres to the principle of a controlled growth, and on the other hand, the special and delightful moments spent with the collected items form enclaves that fall outside the flow of the everyday life, similar to the experience of art. Moreover, pieces with an interesting history have 'quasi-biographies' and evoke the status of quasi subjects that Mikel Dufrenne (1973, p. 190) assigned to works of art. Finally, the display of the collection – for the owner's personal satisfaction or for showcasing it to peers – has to be appealing and meaningful, which requires proto-curatorial skills from the collector.

As the last part of the paper has shown, the continuity between everyday aesthetics and the aesthetics of art under the concepts of beauty, order and diversification represents only one side of the coin; the broad field of para-aesthetical practices related to collecting would be of equal interest for further exploration. Not only is it difficult to make a complete list of collected categories of objects, but it is also impossible to provide an overview of the indefinite field of non-collectibles that may be tempted to collect them. Our exemplifications have demonstrated that some of these practices border on aestheticism by improperly extending the aesthetic stance to human relations, while others refresh everyday life in a poetical manner.

Finally, collecting has relevance beyond everyday aesthetics due to its anthropological and existential implications. Since collecting can be encountered in the animal kingdom, it raises the question of whether it is legitimate to attribute aesthetic agency to some non-human animal species from the perspective of evolutionary aesthetics. Moreover, while the standard collecting affirms life and attempts to rescue ephemeral things, it degenerates into its opposite, sheer consumption, when it is applied to human relationships; the aesthetics of existence, in the sense of self-cultivation and self-design by means of objects, then turns into the reification of other people and ends up in self-alienation.

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Everyday Aesthetics Solving Social Problems

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What is the role of aesthetics, everyday aesthetics in particular, in processes of solving social problems? Many if not most social problems arise from and affect our daily lives. As far as these problems contain aesthetic aspects, these typically are also of an everyday kind. In this paper, I address the relations between social problems and everyday aesthetics in five sections. I will start by briefly describing what I mean by social problems. Second, I will outline what solving such problems means. Then, I will move on to defining aesthetics for the purposes of this article. Fourth, I will focus on the main question, the potential role of everyday aesthetics in solving social problems. Lastly, I will drill down a bit deeper into my own experiences in this matter in order to concretize the general points and give examples stemming from my working life. | Keywords: *Aesthetics, Everyday Aesthetics, Problem Solving, Social Problems*

1. Introduction

What is the role of aesthetics, everyday aesthetics in particular, in processes of solving social problems? Many if not most social problems arise from and affect our daily lives. As far as these problems contain aesthetic aspects, these typically are also of an everyday kind. In this paper, I address the relations between social problems and everyday aesthetics in five sections. I will start by briefly describing what I mean by social problems. Second, I will outline what solving such problems means. Then, I will move on to defining aesthetics for the purposes of this article. Fourth, I will focus on the main question, the potential role of everyday aesthetics in solving social problems. Lastly, I will drill down a bit deeper into my own experiences in this matter in order to concretize the general points and give examples stemming from my working life.

The motivation for the essay originally came from a group of students. In spring 2021, students of aesthetics at the University of Helsinki, Finland, organized a lecture series called *Aesthetics Solving (Social) Problems*. I was invited to be one of the speakers. At first glance, the theme seemed somewhat

odd to me. Do they think that aestheticians can 'solve' social problems? Why should we? Is this not just another strand of the madness through which even students have been brainwashed to think that everything that universities do must have a social impact and be directly useful? Isn't it enough that we address philosophical problems? Or perhaps analyse social problems without trying to solve them?

However, as it often happens, the students had been cleverer than me. The issue, indeed, is a fruitful one to ponder. It helps us to see what the role and value of aesthetics is in academia and elsewhere, and what aestheticians can be expected (not) to do. Thinking of this also offers a more general framework for this text. Why do we bother spending our time and energy on aesthetics in the first place? Do we have the right – or even the duty – to do that, and why?

Contrary to my first reaction, I do welcome the idea that it is one motivation for being an aesthetician to believe that the aesthetic approach is valuable for our societies at large because it can offer tools to tackle social problems and thus improve our daily lives. This is by no means the only reason to be an aesthetician, and it is clear that aesthetics alone cannot solve a single social problem, and that it can even cause others. However, we can have an interesting and important role in the whole, and I will try to say something about what this role may be and what it means in practice.

There is a long tradition of addressing the role of aesthetics in and of social life – in some cases focusing on social problems – starting from Plato's *Republic* and continuing via David Hume's *Of the Standard of Taste*, Friedrich Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, and John Dewey's *Art as Experience*, to contemporary authors such as Arnold Berleant (2019), Thomas Leddy (2012), Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy (2013), Sianne Ngai (2012), Jacques Rancière (2000), Monique Roelofs (2014), and others. The space this article provides does not allow me to contextualise in any detail my own approach in this rich tradition. However, it can be said that offering an interpretation of the positive potential of the aesthetic point of view in our daily lives, and in solving social problems in particular, takes me close to the pragmatist tradition as developed by Dewey and his legacy: Aesthetics exists and affects our lives in everyday practices, and it cannot be detached from other aspects of life. Here, I offer some suggestions for characterising such an approach without aiming at a comprehensive coverage of the theme, or at a detailed case-study.

2. The Nature of Social Problems

Some of the main aspects of social problems can be summarized in a short list. First, they are problems that negatively affect large groups of people; they are not challenges that are rare and concern only some individual members of society. Second, they have to do with human life and relations, although they can also affect animals and other non-human beings. Third, they cannot be dealt with, understood, or solved from any single point of view, but require a combination of perspectives to be addressed – economic, political, technical,

philosophical, material, aesthetic, etc. – even though they are often the 'main' area of interest especially for politicians and political activists. Fourth, often it is not even quite clear what is a social problem or whether a phenomenon is a problem at all.

Examples of social problems are related to themes such as poverty, hunger, racism, gender inequality, homelessness, violence, unemployment, immigration, access to education, and data security. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals is probably the most comprehensive framework for addressing such intertwined problems that are also tightly related to environmental problems. Such issues affect everyone's daily life, whether we suffer from them directly or indirectly. To take a more focused example, we can discuss whether it is a social problem that the unemployment rate is 5%. If it is, we will discuss what causes it and what it causes, who is responsible for it, how it could be improved, how it is related to other social problems, and so on.

3. Solving Social Problems

It is notoriously difficult to solve social problems. Various kinds of political, religious, and ethical systems and practices, combined with numerous economic models and technologies, have been tried out over the past centuries to improve our lives: democracies, meritocracies, dictatorships, Buddhism, Islam, Maoism, Keynesian politics, neo-liberalism, and many more. This has not solved all social problems, of course – not to mention environmental problems – and new ones arise as some old ones are met. However difficult it might sometimes be to remember, much has still been achieved, and in many countries the average life is much better and easier than it was, say, a century ago. This is especially true in Europe and in other Western countries, but also elsewhere.[1]

But what does solving a social problem mean? Of course, we do have problems that are rather easy to solve, such as puzzles, crosswords, and sudokus. Many scientific, mathematical, and logical problems are typically more demanding than puzzles, but can be as fun to solve while they can also open ways to very useful applications. Still, they can be solved once and for all. Once such problems are solved, they are done for good, we know the answers and they are no longer problems for us. Social problems are not like this.

First, we must identify a problem. Is the 5% unemployment rate a problem? (I am not sure.) Is it a problem if the Olympic Games are organized in China where some of the country's minorities are treated in a very harsh and inhumane manner? (In my opinion, this is a problem.) Is it a problem if universities have tuition fees and not everyone can afford to have an education? (I believe it is.) Even this first step is often very difficult to take, and we will not find agreement.

[1] For good overviews on local and global improvements, see Pinker (2018) and Rosling, Rosling and Rosling Rönnlund (2018).

When we have identified a problem, no matter whether everyone agrees, it must be analysed. What exactly is wrong with the situation? What should be changed, i.e., improved, and why? How could this be done? Sometimes we end up just noticing that we have a problem, but will remain unable, even in principle, to find a solution. We have no idea how to get rid of this problem. Then, we just have to live with it and get used to it. I doubt that many who consider themselves 'realists' tend to think this way of many social problems, such as global educational inequality. Luckily, not everyone is a realist in this sense, and sometimes solutions are found for even those problems that have seemed impossible to tackle: getting rid of the official apartheid system in South-Africa, deciding to offer equal voting rights for men, women, and others in numerous countries, teaching major parts of populations to read and write, and so on. Yet, at least for periods of time, there are problems that especially those who are affected by them cannot even think of how to solve them.

For some other problems, someone can invent solutions in principle, but cannot take things forward in practice. There might be other groups of people who do not believe that the solution might work. Perhaps we might have a technology that is needed but no money to buy it (say, a sanitation system in poor countries). Or someone might be of the opinion that the offered solution will cause even more problems in some other context. The attempts to change the US healthcare system is a well-known example of an extremely many-faceted issue full of different approaches and suggestions, failures and partial successes over the past decades. Brexit is a telling European example. The difference between completely unresolvable and practically extremely difficult problems is not sharp, however.

In a normal case, we are forced to come up with several alternative solutions and their combinations and discuss them, at least in normal cases within European and other mostly democratic systems. One important aspect of such discussions is who could offer an idea for a solution and who, in turn, could actually realize it in practice and how: For example, if ideas come from politicians or scientists, should the execution phase be taken care of by private companies or the public sector? Moreover, there should be an idea of when and by using which criteria we can conclude that the problem is solved, and how this can be verified – or do we have a problem that won't ever be solved for good but requires a continued fight, as is the casewith many diseases? Clever decision-makers also try to foresee what kinds of new problems will arise when the old ones are solved or partially tackled. For example, when we increase the usage of computers and remote work in education in order to be more effective and flexible, how does that affect energy consumption and social contact?

All this is very complex and challenging, and I truly admire those who try to address the most burning global social problems, often risking their privacy, freedom, or even life. It is amazing how many things have been improved despite the myriad obstacles we face in such processes. But how is all this related to everyday aesthetics?

4. Aesthetics, in the Plural

It can be claimed that social problems are serious issues that require lots of political power, money, and developed technologies to be tackled, whereas aestheticians play around with art, beauty, and other lighter shades of life. I do not think this is a totally justified picture, and the counter-argument is related to how we understand what aesthetics is or, actually, are. After we have an answer to this question, we can try to work out the role of various types of aesthetics in solving social problems.

Elsewhere, I have repeatedly argued that aesthetics should be understood in the plural, agreeing with some of my colleagues such as Wolfgang Welsch. There is no single aesthetics, but a family or group of them.[2] Here, I won't address the question of what all the possible variations of aesthetics are, but will only refer to some features that are relevant to several family members, covering very theoretical, philosophical, and academic as well as practical, mundane, and non-academic everyday variations of aesthetics. By academic variations I refer to cases or instances of aesthetics that are practised (mostly) in universities: reading and writing books and articles, focusing on philosophical issues, often related to art but sometimes also to everyday aesthetics, building up verbal argumentation chains, studying the history of previous colleagues, running research projects, translating texts from one language to another, and so on. Practical aesthetics, in turn, is carried out by artists, cooks, hairdressers, tattooists, athletes, designers, gardeners, and many others in their practices. They produce objects and events and by doing that change how the world looks and feels, even if they do not necessarily have to talk and verbally analyse what they do. They have physical, hands-on skills. But they, too, focus on similar things as academics, but from a different perspective.

Similar things? Here, I only mention a limited number of themes that are often and typically addressed by people who are interested in aesthetics, either from a theoretical or practical point of view or from both, from the everyday point of view or otherwise.

The first area of interest is sensitive and careful sense-based evaluation of things that are seen, heard, tasted, touched, felt, and smelled. The central issues of this theme are, for example, what is a sense-based approach and how it can be skilfully practised? How do our senses function, e.g. in relation to logical thinking? And how do we evaluate things via perception? For academics, this family of questions has been relevant since Alexander Baumgarten at the latest, and for practical aestheticians, forever.

Another variation of this theme focuses on clarifying how operating on a non-formally logical and non-metric or non-measuring basis works. How does measuring and calculating differ from aesthetic, sense-based evaluation, or from using the faculty of taste? This, too, was one of Baumgarten's concerns, as it was David Hume's, and it is of particular interest to professions such as architecture where one has to master both calculations and a sense-based

[2] For example, Naukkarinen (2020) and Welsch (1997).

approach. In a digital era when/area where more and more things are done by computers and/or by computational methods, this discussion has garnered new and complex aspects.

Emotions, bodily feelings, sensations, and experiences have always been of interest to aestheticians. How do we invoke (positive) emotions? How do we direct them appropriately? Plato and Aristotle were already pondering this, as most probably were cave painters much earlier. Later John Dewey, for example, had much to say about the theme.

The roles of particularity and generality in the realm of aesthetics continue to puzzle. Is every perceived thing of its own kind when approached carefully enough? How do particular things differ from general ones? Are there rules or universal features for aesthetic evaluation? Immanuel Kant had his own thoughts about this in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, and the recent discussions around evolutionary aesthetics follow suit from a very different point of view.

Traditionally, since Hegel, art has been one of the main areas of aestheticians' interest, but more recently the relations of the arts to other aesthetic phenomena and everyday aesthetics itself have also received more and more attention. How do artists master the phenomena mentioned above? What is the difference between artists' approach and that of others? This has been the question ever since the concept of art started to evolve and artists were seen as something else than 'ordinary' people or craftsmen. When this process really started is a matter of dispute.[3]

Often, aestheticians have a very good understanding of the history of the above-mentioned phenomena. We know how they have been addressed before and what is new. This helps us to see how I could do something else than my predecessors, yet be part of the continuum. Artists have sometimes desperately been willing to be geniuses, creating something completely unforeseen. This becomes evident, for example, in disputes between the *anciens et modernes*, and modernists versus post-modernists. Unlike in engineering and sciences, old things will not necessarily become useless in the arts and humanities.

Aesthetics is also typically related to the inclination to discuss and verbalize the things just described. What do we say and write, what kind of terminology is needed and how is it connected with the senses, emotions, and other issues mentioned above? Should I verbalize at all, or should I rather concentrate on painting or sculpting? Are there levels or aspects of aesthetic activities that cannot be verbalized and are completely ineffable? Everyone who has taught academic aesthetics in art schools has faced radically differing opinions about this family of questions.

All these issues are of interest and seen as valuable areas of discussion in the discourse of aesthetics – and practised in some form. Some of the incarnations of aesthetics probably have an evolutionary, biological basis, which is, however, strongly affected by our cultures, resulting in numerous different outcomes. In any case, the urge to see aesthetically gratifying things, create them, talk

[3] For this discussion, see e.g. Shiner (2001) and Young (2015).

about them, own them, and have emotionally satisfying experiences with them is part of human nature. Some individuals value the aesthetic more than others, but it is very rare for someone not to care about it at all. It is one of our perspectives, albeit many-faceted, to the world around us. Without it, our world would be completely different.[4]

What kinds of (aesthetic) things are held as being of the everyday type varies from perceiver to perceiver. For a painter, looking at things extremely carefully and creating your own pictures are daily activities. On the other hand, it might be that for such a person, cooking and its aesthetic aspects are not. There is no list of things that tells us which things belong to the sphere of everyday aesthetics and which do not, but everydayness has to do with one's *relations* with things. Whatever aesthetic (or otherwise) is familiar, well-known, and often-encountered, has great potential for being part of our everyday. Moreover, we tend to get used to almost everything rather quickly. Even things that initially may feel very strange tend to become everyday items.[5]

5. Aesthetics in and of Social Problems

From the perspective of social problems, what is relevant in all this? First, aesthetic objects and activities clearly affect our well-being. It is a social problem in its own right if they are not noticed at all, or if they are poorly taken care of. How, exactly, art and other aesthetic activities improve the quality of life, and whose life they improve, is an area of dispute. There is no one-size-fits-all model for this issue. Some value verbal, others visual, and a third group tactile activities. And some probably do not care very much at all about the aesthetic aspects of the world around them. Yet, considering the sheer mass and long history of all kinds of aesthetic activities, there is undoubtedly something very positive in it all for the majority of people. This leads me to deduce that the aim should be to create positive aesthetic phenomena for society our everyday life. Not doing so is a social problem.

The question is, of course, what this means in practice, and in different contexts. There is no unanimous agreement on what is beautiful or otherwise aesthetically good or positive. Chart lists in music show what a large group of people like in their daily lives right now, but such is not valid for everyone. Nonetheless, whatever we decide to do always and necessarily has aesthetic aspects to it, and these can be more or less positive or negative. Even if it is not clear what exactly should be aimed at or produced, we should try to aim at socially beneficial aesthetic solutions. It is worse if we do not even try – that, in itself, is a potential social problem.

If we accept this, the next question is what society should do to support and promote a rich and fruitful (everyday) aesthetic culture? Offer respective education, support artists financially, guide contents, or give absolute freedom in that respect? I am personally not in favour of providing fixed answers and solutions, but in supporting ways in which such issues can be

4 For a more detailed discussion on variations of aesthetics, see Naukkarinen (2020).

5 For an analysis on what makes some things everyday-like, see Naukkarinen (2013).

fruitfully discussed and resolved again and again. I am for offering space and resources for aesthetic activities, not for control and censorship. This could perhaps be seen as a modest variation of 'Adornian' aesthetics: urge people to seek their own solutions actively and not force anything on them. New solutions do not *necessarily* differ from the old ones, but the old ones can be constantly re-evaluated. Encourage people to demonstrate, show, and exemplify their own aesthetics, as Adorno did with his *Ästhetische Theorie*.

Of course, what people may come up with may eventually be unacceptable and harmful, but I would rather take this risk and react to troubles if and when they appear, than have strict pre-censorship and lists of acceptable themes, techniques, or content. In my opinion, this way of thinking represents some of the core European values, emphasizing both freedom and responsibility. In another context, it is very well expressed in the Magna Charta declaration of a network of universities. (Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum, 2018)

I am aware that this attitude is not easy to have in the discussion of phenomena such as those addressed by the MeToo movement. Why did we let all that abuse happen? Why did we not control these things better and prohibit harmful practices in advance? It took too long before people said that certain things cannot continue. There are very clear cases of not acceptable deeds that are also violations of law, although many of them were hidden. But if we are not talking about such glaring cases, even now it is not simple to have universally valid lists of acceptable and unacceptable deeds and activities. I am personally for aesthetic freedom, but it brings responsibility with it. It does not mean that everything is OK, but what is and what is not is often related to social problems that simply do not have easy solutions. Moreover, it is not always easy to say which things are aesthetically problematic and which are problematic in some other respects. How should different types of people be represented in films, for example? If some are presented as ugly, is this a problem? And what kind of problem is it? What kinds of jokes are acceptable in stand-up shows? How do you write a novel about racism without promoting it? What kinds of new houses can be built in an old neighbourhood? We have no other good option than to discuss, compare different proposals, and try to give good reasons to do or not to do something. My point thus is that despite the impossibility of actually proving what is aesthetically good and finding solutions that will serve everyone, we should be willing and able to *consciously and actively develop and argue* for some solutions.

Second, even if most or even all social problems include many important aspects that do not have anything to do with aesthetics, aesthetic aspects do play a significant role in many social problems, and most if not all social problems have some aesthetic aspects. So, even if we are not discussing 'purely' or 'mainly' aesthetic social problems, many types of social problems also include aesthetic aspects, and these should be addressed with skill. If they need improvement and we can offer that, the problem can be partly addressed and improved, even if not completely solved. Why would we not do that?

But the question still remains: How can poverty, hunger, racism, gender inequality, data security, physical violence, unemployment, immigration, or access to education be addressed in such a way that it would be wise and relevant to focus on aesthetics, among other things? I cannot underline too strongly that of course all of them require political, economic, technical, and many other types of handling, and the aesthetic approach is probably not the most important one. But the aesthetic can still be one aspect whose skilful treatment eases the whole to some extent. Unemployed people remain unemployed as long as they do not have a job. But if they have the possibility to do something aesthetically rewarding, their life might be a little bit better. Access to art might help immigrants to adapt to a new culture. Soothing aesthetic activities might help victims of physical violence to recover.

My core argument is this: Whenever we try to improve things, any things, we must make decisions and choose some options over others. Often, several options can have more or less similar prices, technical characteristics, and some other features, but they may differ aesthetically. In such cases, why should we not opt for the better aesthetic version – while (or if) that improves the overall situation?

Moreover, even if different options had different technical, economic, or other characteristics, one differing characteristic that can have a significant role in decision-making is aesthetics: What looks, feels, or sounds more tempting, beautiful, or cool? We should understand what this means in different contexts. In some cases it can lead to an improvement, in some other cases, it leads to a worsening. For example, it has been shown repeatedly that in social relations, we estimate each other's looks constantly, and that this strongly affects how we treat each other.[6] It affects our decision-making and, through that, well-being. It contributes to potential social problems. People who are considered to be good-looking tend to be treated differently, i.e., better, in practically all walks of life: education, work life, courts, hospitals, and so on. This is why the phenomenon should be understood and perhaps controlled better. Otherwise, it may increase inequality. If, and as, we hire people because they 'look better', we may not get the best employees; and those who are not hired may remain unemployed and with too little money for their daily lives, even though they might be perfectly suitable for a particular job. If good-looking patients get more attention in hospitals, it probably has an impact on their recovery. And what happens if we choose a piece of software because it looks tempting, even if its security is not good enough? Yes, aesthetically gratifying things improve the quality of life, but our aesthetically justified choices are not always quite innocent from other perspectives.

However, when we are solving social problems of daily life, an important point is that we have to create solutions that people like to use, feel that they are worth having, or at least ones that people do not actively dislike or feel to be ugly, disgusting, or threatening: aesthetically good options. Otherwise, good things won't come into the mainstream – and social problems will continue.

[6] E.g., Patzer (2008).

Yuriko Saito, for example, has touched upon this 'power of aesthetics' in the contexts of so-called green design and elsewhere.[7] We can design very good products and services that do not waste materials and energy, are easy to use and recycle, are produced in good working conditions, and are not too expensive. But if they are considered boring or downright ugly, they won't have a chance to become popular, because they do not suit people's everyday aesthetics – and the social problems intertwined with environmental problems will continue. Aesthetically displeasing politicians offering clumsy, un-catchy slogans and programmes won't get their ideas further, even if their ideas having to do with poverty, inequality, or any other social problems of our daily lives are good in some other ways. Some would like to erase aesthetics from politics or from elsewhere, but this is impossible. It is stupid and irresponsible to pretend that it could be done, and to leave this power unused. The aesthetic power should be used for solving social problems, and forgetting about it may just create or strengthen problems. Both Barack Obama and Donald Trump were very aware of and skilful in this. They just had different ideas of what is a problem and what kind of everyday aesthetics is, well, great. The question of relations between aesthetics and politics is age-old, of course, and was already addressed by Plato in his *Republic*.

6. My Own Role in Solving Social Problems

I was trained as an aesthetician. I hold a PhD in aesthetics, and I have been publishing and teaching for some 30 years in the field. I believe that this qualifies me as some sort of expert. My present position, however, is not one in which I can primarily focus on aesthetics in the traditional academic sense of the word. I am Vice President for research at Aalto University (Finland), where we educate and do research in fields such as chemical engineering, electrical engineering, civil engineering, ICT, business, economics, physics, design, and architecture. It is a combination of different types of technology, business, science, and art and design approaches. My job is to support all these fields and their cross-cutting areas which, as a leadership task, is both very fascinating and difficult. I do not mention this to promote myself or my university but to concretize the general considerations I presented above: What can addressing social problems mean from one particular perspective I happen to know.

In the founding and strategy documents of the university, a practice-oriented approach is emphasized: One – but not the only one – of our tasks is to improve the innovation capacity of the country. Our Constitution expresses it like this: "The special national mission of the Foundation shall be to sustain Finland's success, to contribute to Finnish society, its economy, technology, art and design, internationalization and competitiveness and to promote the welfare of humankind and the environment" (Aalto University Foundation, 2016). This, of course, does not mean that free basic or blue-skies research, with no immediate applications, is not carried out and highly valued; their role is also secured by the Constitution. However, in my understanding, this

[7] E.g., Saito (2007 and 2017).

means that we must do our share in solving social problems, giving our input into the complex whole. We do what we can to make the world a bit better. We try to come up with scientific, technical, business, and art and design solutions that are sustainable in various ways but also aesthetically rewarding and interesting to use. And we try our best to educate our students to be professionals who can do the same in the future. Whether we succeed in this or not, and how we compare to other universities in this respect is for someone else to estimate.

How is everyday aesthetics related to all this? First, I believe that it is fair to say that in Aalto University's daily activities and investment decisions aesthetics has a fairly good position, even if the word 'aesthetics' is not always used. We have an entire school with more than 2,000 students and over 400 faculty and staff members dedicated to art, design, and architecture. We have an arts programme through which we buy and exhibit art in our premises. Our campus has several buildings designed by the architect Alvar Aalto, and new buildings are carefully planned to meet the standards of his legacy. These are rather local cases of emphasising the value of aesthetics, but they may contribute to solving social problems more generally by giving an example of how aesthetic issues can be valued and practically dealt with by an institution such as a university. They, hopefully, contribute to well-being.

But this is not everything Aalto tries to do. It is explicitly stated in our strategic guidelines that creativity must be actively promoted in all our fields and our six schools. In practice, this often means that art-related or other aesthetically interesting activities are combined with other approaches, although creativity is not always related to the arts, of course. The whole idea of the Aalto combination – to have exactly these fields interacting in one university – is based on the belief that technology, science, and business are inherently, at least partly, aesthetic or artistic areas. We believe that this approach also helps to solve or ease social problems outside the organization itself. One example: The long-term and rather well-resourced collaboration between chemical engineering and fashion and textile design has produced completely new, much more sustainable textile materials and fashion creations that would never have been born without this collaboration. At the beginning, no one really knew what could come out of it, but soon, hopefully, experiments will also grow into economically sustainable businesses. (Ioncell, no date). This creates new jobs, reduces the need for very harmful cotton production, and offers new kinds of clothes and other products to wear and look at. This, again, will change the everyday aesthetics of many. Other types of examples come from, say, game design taken forward in the collaboration between Aalto's technical and visual specialists and gaming and technology companies such as SuperCell and Nvidia. Games, of course, form a major part of contemporary everyday life.

What is my role in this? It is not wise to underline any single actor's role, because these are joint efforts and one person cannot do much, and in most cases I have not personally been involved at all. Yet, there are some areas in which I hope I can contribute, for my minuscule part.

I can and must repeatedly remind my colleagues *that* aesthetic aspects in our processes and elsewhere are important. It is not self-evident that this is always taken into account, even if the basic principle is widely accepted. My task is also to remind others *why* they are important: They can, for example, improve well-being, help marketing, offer emotional gratification, open up creative new perspectives, and strengthen communities. In all these cases, they can contribute to solving social problems.

A somewhat different and more demanding task is to explicate *how* aesthetic aspects of objects and practices exist (what their ontological status is, to put it more technically), and how they function and can be approached: for example, through our senses, sometimes requiring conscious learning or developing of taste, relating to history in a certain way, spreading through social networks in surprising ways. Without understanding the complexity of such questions, we are walking on very thin ice, and this is exactly why the plurality of the field of aesthetics must be unfolded again and again.

I can also ask and urge my colleagues to provide different creative ideas and solutions in the way artists often do. Often, this happens when I am one expert in groups where we make decisions about various options with different aesthetic aspects and impacts: recruitment, buying art, campus development plans. Here, I can also help others to formulate their ideas, e.g, about what is art (art has different funding instruments, and it thus can be important to see clearly what should be categorized as art, and why and when). Sometimes there is a need to remind people that art is not *only* art, but that it has its political, technological, ecological, and many other aspects.

Moreover, I do not only help my colleagues, but also our external partners, including funders, to understand all this. I can try to do these things because I am trained as an aesthetician and I have practised for decades how to discuss such things. I have concepts, terminology and some analytical competence thanks to the philosophical nature of my education, and I have spent a lot of time with others who also have much expertise in these matters (artists, art students, critics, curators, fellow aestheticians, and so on). I have tried to develop my taste and my ability to speak for it – and I also appreciate other people's taste, not just pushing my own through. My role is not to make artworks or other objects (I cannot do it), but I can help others to do that and to appreciate others' aesthetic solutions. At least, I try to do my best.

All this is part of the professional skill set and knowledge that I am expected to use in this position. I was probably hired (partly) because the university leadership team needs aesthetic expertise. This fact, in itself, shows that the aesthetic is appreciated. I am fully aware that I am in a very privileged position and have many more possibilities to affect everyday aesthetics than many others, but I would still say that others also have possibilities to affect how we, as a community, take care of social problems and note our everyday aesthetic aspects.

Thinking about what a whole university can achieve over a long period of time through research and education, the impact of this kind of practical – or

applied, if you will – aesthetics is probably much greater than that of my own publications could ever be. 'My' aesthetics is partly realized in this job, affecting, hopefully, social problems and making them at least slightly more tolerable, that is, improving their aesthetic aspects.

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Cultivating Aesthetic Sensibility for Sustainability

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Our aesthetic practices, by which we aim for better well-being, are intertwined with fostering sustainability. This article focuses on Yuriko Saito's aesthetics of sustainability, an idea denoting a new kind of aesthetic sensibility informed by and featuring both environmental and cultural sustainability. Saito's idea is based on our aesthetic relationship with everyday experiences. In this article, I defend the idea, on the one hand, by considering the immanence of change as a sense of contemporary everydayness and, on the other hand, by regarding mindfulness as a practice. Situating the discussion in the European context emphasises the aesthetics of sustainability as a sustainability transformation, that is, an ongoing societal change powered by the continuous cultivation of aesthetic sensibility. | Keywords: *Cultivation, Aesthetic Sensibility, Everyday Activities, Mindfulness, Sustainability Transformation*

1. Introduction

In 2019, the European Environment Agency (2019, p. 10) stated that Europe "[…] continues to consume more resources and contribute more to environmental degradation than many other world regions." Regarding this, our aesthetic practices – by which we aim for better well-being in Europe – do not remain untouched, for they are, through their entanglement in producing environmental harm, also challenged by sustainability goals.[1] In Europe, such goals are tied up with the European Green Deal, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the European Union by fifty-five per cent by 2030, compared to 1990 levels (europa.eu, 2021). Transforming production and consumption to hit this target means that not only global and local environmental crises but also their mitigation shape European lived environments, societies, and everyday lives. Considering this situation, what might it be like to cultivate aesthetic sensibility, to use and develop human aesthetic capability?

[1] It suffices to think, for example, how significant air travel is for the contemporary art world – or the sports world, for that matter.

In this article, I focus on Yuriko Saito's (2017) *aesthetics of sustainability*, an idea denoting a new kind of aesthetic sensibility informed by and featuring both environmental and cultural sustainability. The idea deepens Saito's (2007) earlier discussion on *green aesthetics* by approaching citizens as active proponents of forming a socially shared aesthetic sensibility. With this impetus, Saito builds on John Dewey's (1958) pragmatist account of aesthetic experience, which disagrees with separating everyday life from the aesthetic domain and grounds the aesthetic in the interconnectedness of an individual and her environment. The view also motivates my action-oriented discussion: the changing environment significantly influences how we live our daily lives, but what global environmental change and its numerous aspects elucidate is that the vice versa is also true.

The nation's state is famously discussed in relation to people's aesthetic capacities already in Plato's *Republic* and Friedrich Schiller's letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (2013/1794), which both rightly underline the significance of artistic activities for daily life. Saito (2017, p. 226) affirms that the arts are "[…] the best means available for sharpening our aesthetic sensibility." Yet, Saito (2017, p. 4) reminds us, "It is vital that we remain cognizant of the fact that everyday aesthetics determines the quality of society, and ultimately the state of the world, for better or worse." Saito thus elaborates the aesthetics of sustainability within the philosophical aesthetics' subdiscipline of everyday aesthetics and, by emphasising an action-oriented perspective, offers the idea, for example, for taming over-consumption and establishing more sustainable human-nature relationships. I argue that the aesthetics of sustainability manifests as a sustainability transformation, that is, as an ongoing societal change powered by the continuous cultivation of aesthetic sensibility, especially in the contemporary European context.

By considering the aesthetics of sustainability in the European context, I do not wish to undermine its relevance in other socio-geographic contexts. Saito elaborates her idea in the North American context and develops her discussion by weaving into it the cultivation of insights of Japanese aesthetic sensibility. However, I do think that considering the aesthetics of sustainability is especially relevant in the context of urban Europe, where the general rhetoric underlines bold action towards achieving sustainability.

I start in Section 2 by discussing aesthetic sensibility's relevancy to sustainable development. In Section 3, I examine how the aesthetics of sustainability is related to the various approaches to discuss the role of cultivating aesthetic sensibility in achieving sustainability goals. In the European – and, broadly speaking, Western – context, Saito's aesthetics of sustainability seems to possess a special role bound to our experiences in everyday life. I then continue in Section 4 by contemplating the contemporary everydayness in countries that strive for sustainability. I draw on my experience of living in urban Finland to affirm that our everyday aesthetic sensibility is also developed through experiences that stand out in our everyday lives. Nonetheless, in Section 5 I argue that Saito finds mindfulness central to developing an environmentally more sustainable aesthetic sensibility. By regarding mindfulness as a practice,

I defend the claim that everyday activities cultivate aesthetic sensibility, a view which I confirm in Section 6, before a brief conclusion, by apprehending the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility as an everyday activity.

2. Cultivating Transformations?

The cultivation of aesthetic sensibility is not a common issue in discussions concerning sustainability transformations.[2] By sustainability transformations, I mean "[…] fundamental changes in societies paving their way towards sustainable well-being of nature and humans" (helsinki-institute-of-sustainability-science, 2021). Conceptually, sustainability transformations are bound to sustainable development, which was defined as an intergenerational question in the United Nations' Brundtland Report in 1987. Regarding societal systems, colloquial, scientifical, and political discussions concerning sustainability transformations tend to revolve around such practical issues as food, energy, and mobility. I understand sustainability transformations as locally experienced situations where meaning-making is coloured by complex and systemic spatial and temporal relations. As such, sustainability transformations are situations of value conflicts and demand the development of skills, for example, in practising reflection (Soininen et al., 2021). Hence, I find relevance in aesthetic sensibility, which as an expression seems to denote, as Elisabeth Schellekens (2009, pp. 739–740) explains, the realm of subjective experiences, emotions, sensations, and aesthetic taste.

Aesthetic sensibility is an ambiguous concept of philosophical aesthetics.[3] Saito does not define the concept in elaborating the aesthetics of sustainability but connects aesthetic sensibility to "overcoming our normal attitudes," implying thus the skill-like nature of aesthetic sensibility (Saito, 2017, pp. 17–18). However, Saito builds on the same Deweyan basis as Arnold Berleant (2015a), who regards aesthetic sensibility as a "culturally bound sense perception" that is profoundly woven into being human. Following Berleant, aesthetic sensibility is a fundamental factor in aesthetic experiences and appreciation, which again provide sources for developing our aesthetic sensibility. Based on this, aesthetic sensibility has a systemic nature: it emerges in the interconnectedness of individuals, their environment, society, and culture.

When thinking about sustainability transformations as situations of value conflicts and aesthetic sensibility as an emergent feature of (human) existence, it could be useful to conceive of aesthetic sensibility in line with John Bender (2001), who suggests:

> […] that we think of sensibilities as dispositions or propensities to identify certain features, properties, or relations of a work as being aesthetically significant, i.e., as either being value-making or value-

[2] To give an idea, on 29 June 2021, Google Scholar gave three results for "sustainability transformation" and "aesthetic sensibility" together, whereas on 29 April 2021, it gave 16,400 results for "sustainability science," 230 results for "aesthetic sensibility" and "sustainability" together, and 29 results for the combination "aesthetic sensibility + sustainability science."

[3] About the concept and its history, see, e.g., Sibley (1959), Schellekens (2009), Vermeir and Deckard (2012).

> lowering. Differences in sensibility are disagreements about where the aesthetic value of an artwork lies; differences in refinement of sensibilities are differences in ability to identify various properties and relations as sources of value; changes in sensibility are alterations in our propensities to see certain properties and relations as value-making or value-lowering. (Bender, 2001, p. 74)

Defining aesthetic sensibility as a propensity to identify aesthetic value is in line with our embeddedness in the cultures we breathe. At the same time, the definition opens the question of what effectively influences such propensities.

Works of art provide the context for Bender's discussion, and often they are considered *the* field that cultivates our aesthetic sensibility. Although my view is congenial to Saito's view that we can appropriately discuss aesthetic sensibility also in relation to other fields of experience, in discussing the aesthetics of sustainability it becomes a challenge to explain how environmental sustainability can influence our propensities to identify aesthetic value. Answering this problematic question, Saito (2017, p. 105) considers the aesthetics of sustainability as a societal movement, depending on growing ecological literacy in societies. My account develops Saito's discussion by contemplating how the idea of sustainability transformation assists in apprehending the contemporary use and development of aesthetic sensibility, that is, its cultivation.

For Saito, cultivation means especially the guidance and education of non-professionals in aesthetic literacy, a view motivated by the belief that our aesthetic sensibilities change both without and with our consent. Saito (2017, p. 198) holds that with the current *laissez-faire* attitude in aesthetic matters, we support the distortion of sensibility for the sake of profit without our informed consent – "the co-optation of sensibility" – as discussed by Berleant (2015b). From the perspective of human action, influencing our propensities to identify aesthetic value is a part of transforming practices through which our aesthetic capacities influence not only individuals but also their environment, economic systems, society, and culture. Cultures change through cultivation, as gardeners and educators exemplify through their practice. Indeed, culture and cultivation are interconnected phenomena, as the words' shared etymological roots in Latin *colere* ('to cultivate, to inhabit') and *cultus* ('care, labour, cultivation') imply.[4] Next, I examine three approaches to discuss the role of cultivating aesthetic sensibility in achieving sustainability goals.

3. Three Approaches to Sustainability Transformations

The recent discussion in philosophical aesthetics offers some initial clarification about the role of cultivating aesthetic sensibility in fostering sustainability transformations. At least three converging approaches to the matter can be distinguished. These approaches are: 1) to discuss how the

[4] See *cultivate* in the Oxford Dictionary of English and the Online Etymology Dictionary, which gives the hypothetical origin of the word 'cultivation' in the Proto-Indo-European root 'kwel-', meaning "revolve, move round; sojourn, dwell." The mass media theory and socialisation perspective (e.g., Potter, 2014) and, e.g., Critical Theory, have repeatedly pointed to the connection between culture and cultivation.

category of the aesthetic broadens our understanding of sustainability, 2) to show how aesthetic capacities assist in driving substantial environmental and cultural changes, and 3) to provide aesthetically informed conceptual guidance for changing practices. The aesthetics of sustainability represents especially the latter approach, as I show by providing an overview of the three approaches in the following.

3.1 Aesthetic Sustainability

Sustainability transformations are usually discussed concerning environmental, economic, social, and cultural domains. These four domains are critically challenged by the aesthetic domain through the proposed concept of aesthetic sustainability, which primarily concerns the perceptible and experienced reality (Lehtinen, 2021). As such, aesthetic sustainability has to do with – but is not limited by – the individual dimension of sustainability. By embracing a reflective approach to individual experiences through time, aesthetic sustainability provides a lens to discuss the mentioned sustainability dimensions in particular instances. For example, regarding cultural heritage sites, an aesthetics advocate may seem destined to "weak sustainability," an approach in which ecological sustainability is considered negotiable with other values, such as cultural sustainability (see, e.g., Brady, 2014; Haapala, 2020). However, through aesthetic sustainability we can think of other cases, for example, national parks, in which case an aesthetics advocate could perhaps support strong sustainability and, by arguing for aesthetic sustainability, also argue for ecological sustainability.

From the perspective of critics, aesthetic sustainability is an important conceptual tool for the new kind of aesthetic sensibility. Aesthetic sustainability applies to those elements in the aesthetic domain that sustain changes (Lehtinen, 2021). In this sense, sustainability is not a novelty in the discussion of aesthetics but instead echoes the idea of cultural classics and "the test of time." As a concept, aesthetic sustainability invites us to deepen especially our temporal sensitivity, for which intergenerational thinking is relevant (Capdevila-Werning & Lehtinen, 2021). However, because the aesthetics of sustainability is both informed and featured by environmental and cultural sustainability, it favours aesthetic sustainability only when that would amount to achieving overall sustainability, a state described, for example, in the United Nations' seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (sdgs.un, 2021). Sustainability goals of various kinds are thus thought to influence peoples' propensities to identify aesthetic value, their aesthetic sensibility, in the aesthetics of sustainability. Nevertheless, Sanna Lehtinen (2021) seeks to point out with the concept of aesthetic sustainability that aesthetic values are also subject to change and that we are already witnessing such a paradigm shift in aesthetics, through which ecological sustainability may come to count more in aesthetic appreciation in the future (see also Saito, 2017, p. 209).

3.2 Resilience

Whereas the first approach attempts to offer a voice for mitigating global environmental change, the second approach targets human adaptation to the change. Recently, several aesthetics researchers have argued that, for example, artistic skills, aesthetic imagination, sensitivity, and appreciation contribute to building resilience – a capacity to positively manage changes (Irvin, 2008; Kagan, 2011; Saito, 2017; Nomikos, 2018; Affifi, 2020; Mikkonen, 2021). Through supporting human well-being and thus opportunities to participate in sustainable development, cultivating aesthetic sensibility manifests as a promise of sustainability transformations. Ramsey Affifi (2020) even provocatively holds that cultivating aesthetic sensibility should be placed in the core of curricula because becoming more sensitive to encountering especially vulnerable beauty and to act beautifully builds one's resilience through making impossible the negation of one's role in the climate crises.

Affifi follows the seminal view in aesthetics formulated by Alexander Baumgarten, who discussed both the experience of beauty and the activity of striving for beauty as parts of one's aesthetic capability (Kuisma, Lehtinen, and Mäcklin, 2019). Affifi (2020, p. 10) argues that "[a]esthetic recalibration is not a continuous process because I only ever catch up with myself in moments of imperfect realisation." Contrastingly, often in everyday aesthetics, the cultivation of aesthetic capacities is located in the flow of our lives. For example, Ariane Nomikos (2018) suggests that becoming more sensitive to everyday places and activities aids in gaining aesthetic consolation and thus helps to maintain well-being amid changing environments. Teaching and learning to enjoy what is present is also emphasised by Saito (2017, pp. 18–19) and Sherri Irvin (2008, pp. 41–42), who think that this way of cultivating everyday aesthetic sensibility could tame overconsumption, as well as despair in those situations that individuals cannot change.

The aesthetics of sustainability as a new kind of aesthetic sensibility, that is, a propensity to identify aesthetic value in a way that is both environmentally and culturally sustainable, suggests resilience, especially in the case of individuals. Increased capacities to experience complexity and uncertainty are closely related to such aesthetics, as Sacha Kagan (2011) points out when using "aesthetics of sustainability" in arguing for transdisciplinarity. However, the subject in Saito's consideration is not a professional seeking to contribute to world-making, nor the learner of a formal environmental education, for whom Saito's ideas undoubtedly can be adapted, see, e.g. Hurren (2017). Rather, Saito (2017, pp. 198, 199) regards us as dealing with unavoidable "everyday aesthetic decisions" that either hinder or facilitate in moving "toward a sustainable future" and welcomes "more informed aesthetic judgements."

3.3 New Conceptualisations of Aesthetic Sensibility

Yet another approach of aesthetics towards sustainability transformations is to offer and develop such concepts, which, while describing the contemporarily relevant realm of aesthetic appreciation, also suggest practices informed by global environmental change. For example, Saito's (2007) green aesthetics can be

considered as a "sustainable design strategy," which by founding "care" and "sensitive attitude" as its constituents "[…] opens up the possibility of 'nudging' people's aesthetic preferences towards more ecologically sustainable design solutions: we start finding something aesthetically pleasing gradually, when we know that it is ethically produced, for example" (Lehtinen, 2019, p. 117). Whereas green aesthetics focuses especially on production, the aesthetics of sustainability is located among those new conceptual formulations of aesthetic sensibility that focus on the realm of consumption in its broader meaning. Recently, for example, Arnold Berleant (2014) has proposed a concept of environmental sensibility, Madalina Diaconu (2019) the concept of weather aesthetics, and Emily Brady (2021) the concept of cryosphere aesthetics. These concepts invite us to experience and appreciate the environment, and specifically such phenomena as rain, ice, and snow, which due to global climate change are becoming ever more relevant phenomena in our orientation from the perspective of both infrastructures and experiences. Furthermore, these conceptions of aesthetic sensibility capture environmental values in the discussion of aesthetics while nevertheless resisting resignation to (scientific) cognitivism in discussing aesthetic capabilities and thus they argue against Allen Carlson's (2014) view that could be discussed, for example, through the concept of ecological aesthetics. By discussing the relevance of "the sensuous quality experienced with sensibility," Saito (2017, p. 4) finds it possible to consider the role of aesthetic sensibility in world-making without necessarily subsuming the aesthetic under other considerations. For example, through the concept of aesthetic sustainability, sustainability forms the central sensuous quality experienced with the new sensibility.

As a concept, the aesthetics of sustainability suggests sustainability, in all its ambiguity, as the contemporarily relevant realm of aesthetic appreciation, and it indicates movement towards establishing and developing sustainable practices, that is, both individual and cultural change. This change seems to deal with the European context, as Saito contrasts the aesthetics of sustainability with something called Western aesthetic sensibility. In Saito's elaboration, such a sensibility seems to have, through the history of Western aesthetics discourse, mainly European origins.

> Contemporary Western aesthetic sensibility, cultured in its artistic convention, such as listening to music in a concert hall, appreciating a drama on the theatre stage, and looking at paintings in a museum, is premised upon isolating the specific distal sense experience from the rest of the environment and flow of life constituted by experiences gained by proximate senses and other distal senses. (Saito, 2017, p. 46)

In contrast, as a new kind of aesthetic sensibility, the aesthetics of sustainability is premised on holistic engagement and social responsibility, and is cultured above all in everyday life (Saito, 2017). By regarding this kind of aesthetic sensibility as *more* sustainable, Saito implicitly marks out Western aesthetic sensibility's sustainability transformation. This approach broadens the approaches of aesthetics towards sustainability transformations by locating one influential societal change within our propensity to identify aesthetic value. To foster the change, we are to cultivate our everyday aesthetic sensibility.

4. Everyday Aesthetic Sensibility

In her book *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (2017), Saito presents the aesthetics of sustainability as more sustainable as an aesthetic sensibility due to the increased appreciation of using and developing our aesthetic sensibility in relation to everyday life. For Saito, everyday aesthetic sensibility does not mean our common, daily propensity to identify aesthetic value; rather, it denotes our sensuous and reflective relationship with the everyday. Saito (2017, p. 10) considers the everyday an experience that emanates from our mostly pragmatic attitude and experience related to objects and activities of everyday life. The pluralistic account of the everyday behind the aesthetics of sustainability combines both *restrictivist* and *expansionist* perspectives and can thus be opposed by both opponents of the everyday dispute. For example, Thomas Leddy argues from the expansionist perspective that only experiences elevating the humdrum of our life into something special cultivate aesthetic sensibility, an argument I respond to in the next section. Here, I respond to the restrictivist argument that the cultivation of everyday aesthetic sensibility is bound to experiencing everydayness proper. Through the response, I explore the influence of the current environmentally alarming situation on our aesthetic sensibilities.

It would seem plausible to hold that the environmental emergency has very little to do with the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility in urban settings today. In many European cities, climate change can still be felt as distant, and as a long-term global phenomenon it is impossible to grasp with human perception. However, while many features of global change can be – and are – parenthesised in urban experiences, climate change seems to be the feature we cannot escape for long, for it also impacts experiences in urban Europe through changing weather conditions and infrastructural mitigation of climate change. Climate change, as a topic and through the threat it also poses to urban settings, effectively popularises global environmental change. Yet overall, our daily experiences increasingly take place in the boundary conditions set by global warming and its effects, of which sustainability transformations are hopefully the constructive ones.

In urban Europe, those changes that dismantle the exploitation of nature, support biodiversity, and reduce inequalities are promoted, represented, discussed, and perhaps increasingly also lived in a way such that being acquainted with the idea of climate change, or its mitigation, is a daily experience. For example, in Finland, sustainability is promoted as a guiding principle for nearly all development as a general solution to the problems posed by global warming. A sustainable way of life, sustainable development, and a sustainable future are key themes in contemporary politics, business, and both basic and high education. Media increasingly addresses climate change (Lyytimäki et al., 2020). Public transportation, shopping centres, coffee culture, and packaging perceivably advertise environmental friendliness, which is bound to related systems as well as in general. Individuals ponder animal-based diets, private driving, and clean energy in everyday discussions. The concept of climate anxiety is part of everyday speech.

In countries that strive for achieving sustainability goals, climate change and its mitigation arguably form a part of contemporary everydayness. Thus, everyday experiences could be considered increasingly filtered by climate change in a way that Lissa Skitolsky (2019) considers "the distortion of sensory experience." Skitolsky (2019, p. 503) describes the functioning of such a filter in her Holocaust-related discussion as "[…] a predisposition to see, read, and imagine all facts in relation to the holocaust until this atrocity starts to act like an a priori condition of sense perception and the understanding […]." Similarly, through sustainability transformations, knowledge about human-induced global change and its devastating effects, like the mass extinction of species and the threat to ecosystems and humanity, increasingly functions as a predisposition of experience despite our possible indifference to or denial of the environmental emergency. In this situation, everydayness seems a less stable and comforting experience than previously proposed.

In everyday aesthetics, the everydayness has been characterised as nearly unnoticed, often routine-bound, and the familiar experiential backbone of our daily lives. Saito agrees with Ossi Naukkarinen in that "[…] creative experiments, exceptions, constant questioning and change, analyses, and deep reflections […]" are not characteristics of everyday attitudes (Naukkarinen, 2013, in Saito, 2017, p.10). Instead, they hold that, for example, habits and the "slow process of acclimatization" describe experiencing the everyday. This conception of the everyday is challenged, for example, by Kalle Puolakka (2019), who shows through analysing the everydayness of Valery Gergiev that such character of everyday experience and attitudes is not universal. Another challenge to the restrictivist conception is posed by sustainability transformations, for they demand rapid and constant changes in everyday practices and thus shake the familiarity of our daily lives. Against the restrictivist conception, I would argue that especially in urban settings, change as an idea, experience, and need colours everydayness in the age of a societally acknowledged environmental emergency.

The aesthetics of sustainability as a new and environmentally more sustainable propensity to identify aesthetic value is fostered through our sensuous and reflective relationship with the everyday, to which the immanence of change gives a flavour. Furthermore, Saito (2017) proposes, and I agree, that our everyday aesthetic sensibility also develops through experiences that usually are not considered a part of everyday life as such. Saito suggests three strategies to cultivate everyday aesthetic sensibility – *defamiliarisation*, *familiarisation*, and *experiencing the familiar as familiar* – and illustrates the strategies by exploring experiences with art, the environment, and everyday activities. Saito places the third strategy, on which I focus in the next section, in the core of everyday aesthetics. Nevertheless, our propensities to identify aesthetic value in relation to everyday objects and activities are also influenced, for example, by environmental experiences and the arts. For example, through defamiliarising the sky – one of the most common aspects of our daily life – sky art exemplifies how art develops our ability to perceive aesthetically that which we tend to leave unnoticed in everyday life (Saito,

2017, pp. 72–92).[5] Furthermore, through the example of wind farms, Saito (2017, pp. 93–114) states that familiarising ourselves with such environmental elements, which evoke strangeness and negative aesthetic responses, develops our ability to appreciate the previously unappreciated with the result that our aesthetic judgements may change. Besides developing our aesthetic abilities to perceive and appreciate, art and environmental experiences have, I think, yet another function in cultivating our aesthetic sensibility.

Art and environmental experiences mediate and generate in us the already proposed sense of the everyday that is coloured by the immanence of change. Artworks question our unsustainable way of life, for example, by generating in us a sense of loss (Welsch, 2020) and by providing imaginative terrain for the evolution of solutions in climate change mitigation (Mikkonen, 2021). Environmental conditions, like great floods and storms and the lack – or surprising presence – of snow or some species in urban areas, make environmental change perceivable and stress our intergenerational awareness as well as our awareness of, for example, the global change drivers of consumption and pollution. Also, for example, exploring new routes in cities due to diminished areas dedicated to cars may evoke reflection in reference to climate change and established change in practices like increased biking and, less obviously also, skiing in city centres.[6] Those kinds of experiences that rupture the routines of our daily life display change and thus facilitate reflection on change in general. In the current situation, the experienced immanence of change felt through those experiences becomes easily representative of our everyday experience. Therefore, everydayness also influences our everyday aesthetic sensibility through those experiences that stand out in our daily life.

5. Practising for Cultivation

Experiencing the familiar as familiar, the third strategy to cultivate everyday aesthetic sensibility, brings into consideration whether "[…] the quiet, unarticulated aesthetic satisfaction interwoven with the flow of daily life" (Saito, 2017, p. 124) also cultivates aesthetic sensibility in us and thus develops the aesthetics of sustainability. Saito (2017, pp. 126–134) exemplifies the strategy by considering laundering as both a way to work with aesthetic judgements and an aesthetically relevant everyday activity itself. While laundering, we can be multisensorily and bodily engaged with the activity as well as imaginatively and intergenerationally connected with others and their possible aesthetic experiences, aside from considering both the immediate and mediated aesthetic results of the work and using our awareness of the related aesthetic, environmental, and social aspects, among others, to mould our practice.

[5] Saito (2017, pp. 74–80) refers to such artworks as Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* (1976, Utah), Anish Kapoor's *Cloud Gate* (2004, Chicago), and James Turrell's *Roden Crater* (under construction, northern Arizona).

[6] The Finnish city of Lahti introduced City Skis as a part of the Lahti – European Green Capital 2021 project (greenlahti, 2021).

> In addition to enriching and enlivening our everyday life as well as sharpening our aesthetic sensibility, there are benefits for cultivating this kind of everyday aesthetic experience. Because aesthetic sensibility requires that we overcome our normal attitude toward the object, event, and environment, it essentially amounts to developing open-mindedness and receptivity regarding these things. We encourage ourselves to put aside preconceived ideas associated with them and allow them to speak to us and engage us. Such open-mindedness and receptivity have ethical importance. They also guide us to live mindfully by paying careful attention to things and surroundings. In short, our aesthetic horizons become widened and our lives enriched. (Saito, 2017, pp. 17–18)

With the strategy of experiencing the familiar as familiar, Saito holds, and I agree, that we need to recognise and increase aesthetic consideration also in relation to those experiences and activities we tend to leave outside the aesthetic domain. The view has relevance in terms of the social sustainability of the aesthetics of sustainability; using and developing propensities to identify aesthetic value is not exclusively a matter for those who have access to certain preconditioned experiences. However, establishing the set of the most suitable activities to cultivate such an aesthetic sensibility that would amount to increased environmental sustainability is problematic, if not impossible, and can come to be considered unsustainable; the perspectives on developing sustainability diverge, for example, concerning reliance on technology, even among those who actively strive to transform societies, businesses, and practices towards the sustainable well-being of both people and non-human nature (Soininen et al., 2021). In Saito's elaboration, such decision-making seems unnecessary, because through the defamiliarisation strategy, for example, unsustainable activities can also contribute to the formation of the new aesthetic sensibility. For instance, representations of a carnivorous lifestyle can in some cases be effective in eclipsing propensities to identify aesthetic value in relation to food. Nevertheless, I think Saito's aesthetics of sustainability is implicitly founded on one practice.

Although Saito does not address or define mindfulness as such when elaborating the aesthetics of sustainability, mindfulness seems crucially important for the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility. According to Saito (2017, p. 31), "mindful attention" is one of the common features of the "diverse modes of aesthetic experience," and Saito writes, in accordance with "mindful attention," that "[…] paying attention and bringing background to the foreground is simply making something invisible visible and is necessary for any kind of aesthetic experience, whether of the extraordinary or of the ordinary" (Saito, 2017, p. 24).[7] Nonetheless, the keys to cultivating everyday aesthetic sensibility are in learning and teaching a "mindful way of living" (Saito, 2017, esp. pp. 59, 210). Leddy (2021, p. 10) remarks on Saito's focus on "mindful self-actualisation" and acknowledges, albeit contrastingly, the value of mindfulness for everyday life and the cultivation of

[7] One should, of course, add that such an act is also about making inaudible audible etc., and I believe Saito does not use this only as a metaphorical expression.

aesthetic sensibility.[8] However, Leddy is not concerned with the development of an environmentally sustainable aesthetic sensibility but rather the key problem in everyday aesthetics: how to pay attention to the familiar without making it special.

Leddy (2021) reserves the key role in cultivating aesthetic sensibility for aesthetic attitude, for "making special." Leddy (2021, p. 13) is reluctant to agree with the three strategies to cultivate everyday aesthetic sensibility and argues against Saito that mindfulness weakly defamiliarises the experienced, like washing dishes, when speaking of everyday activities. Mindfulness allows us to look at ordinary things in a slightly different way. Common conceptions of mindfulness include "awareness of external objects, internal sensations," "controlling emotions," and "being in the present moment" (Hitchcock et al., 2016). Following Leddy (2021, p. 9), who in my opinion recognises mindfulness primarily as a virtue, "mindful perception" is "engaging and pleasurable," which amounts to our motivation, wherein lies mindfulness's relevance for increasing aesthetic experiences in everyday life.[9] I mostly agree. The secular and prevalent practice of mindfulness aims at practitioners' changed way of living (Rahmani, 2021). As a practice, it is firmly rooted in everyday life. Everyday activities of breathing, walking, talking, and eating accommodate its exercises, enabling continuous mindfulness practice. One can informally practise mindfulness, for example, while brushing one's teeth, besides engaging in formal practice through mindfulness meditation (Canby et al., 2021). Mindfulness meditation also promisingly seems to alleviate depression and stress, which leave their mark on one's everyday life (Canby et al., 2021; Cullen et al., 2021). Nevertheless, I believe that in practice, mindfulness is not so much about making special than it is about remaining familiar. Which of these paths our practice depends on matters, because activities are temporally (and spatially) based on each other – an issue into which Saito's three strategies provide insight.

First, mindfulness practitioners are, I believe, likely to experience the familiar as familiar because at least those who have established the practice in their daily life are familiar with mindful perception. I have encountered secular mindfulness as being taught and referred to as a tool to enhance one's ability to perceive the present situation while at the same time perceiving one's engagement in the perception. To my understanding, such practice essentially concerns caring about and for the functioning of oneself – in all its familiar unfamiliarity – in each moment. Understanding mindfulness – or meditation used in mindfulness practice – as a tool to achieve improved mental health, well-being, the realisation of human potential, and even resilience is common among mindfulness practitioners and, as Masoumeh

[8] Leddy (2021) refers to Vietnamese Thiền (Zen) Buddhist Master Thich Nhất Hạnh (1926–), whereas Saito's (2017) discussion leans on the Japanese Zen Buddhism of Dōgen (1200–1253). Secular mindfulness practice also originates from Buddhist traditions; Indian/Burmese Vipassanā meditation teacher Satya Narayan Goenka (1924–2013) has been particularly influential (Rahmani, 2021). My understanding of mindfulness is based on secular mindfulness as well as practising and studying yoga (Korpelainen, 2019).

[9] One can discuss mindfulness's role in cultivating aesthetic sensibility from the perspective of practice-based virtue theory as well. Here, I have limited my approach to action-oriented aesthetics, following Saito.

Rahmani (2021) holds, has a history in mindfulness rhetoric.[10] Saito (2017, p. 47) notes in relation to everyday experiences, "We certainly can isolate one element from these multisensory experiences, but doing so takes away the usual, ordinary, everydayness of those experiences." To experience the familiar as familiar, one needs familiarity with one's daily functioning.

Second, when practising mindfulness, one also practises familiarising, for the practice demands active work with perception and the associated thoughts, emotions, and biases. Despite being engaging, I doubt that such an endeavour is always pleasurable. In fact, pleasure becomes reconsidered through mindfulness practice, in which a non-judgemental attitude is commonly practised when paying attention to the diverse aspects affecting the situation. Consider the following description about open monitoring (OM), which is together with focused attention widely used in mindfulness practice (Cullen et al., 2021).

> OM exercises began with mentally noting and labeling thoughts, emotions and sensations according to their phenomenological classification (e.g. sound, touch, thought, etc.) and valence (e.g. positive, negative, or neutral), ultimately transitioning to silent noticing in more advanced stages of practice. Participants were encouraged to notice biases in attentional allocation and to apply "balanced coverage" across different phenomenological categories. (Cullen et al., 2021, p. 5)

Such practice encourages one to also notice one's biases concerning pleasure. So, to familiarise, one needs to improve skills in giving attention.

Third, even if the mindful perception takes the form of defamiliarisation, it does not necessarily follow that one experiences something special or extraordinary. Improving attention skills is constitutive of focused attention, an exercise commonly portrayed in mindfulness discourse by rehearsal in which one focuses either perceptually or metaphorically on the sky instead of passing clouds. Saito (2017, pp. 72–92) discusses such an activity, with awareness of the Buddhist tradition, in relation to sky art to describe the defamiliarisation strategy.[11] By guiding one's sense perception – or mental activity – to frame moving objects in relation to the sky – or the flow of thoughts – one defamiliarises the phenomenon one focuses on and gains a new perspective. Yet, "bringing the background to the foreground" does not necessarily exclude finding the experienced, like the sky, to be deeply familiar. Leddy (2021, p. 13) insists that such experience "must go beyond the merely practical." Still, in mindfulness practice, dealing with one's attention is a practical issue.

If practising mindfulness is a method for experiencing the familiar as familiar,[12] should we employ mindfulness practice for fostering sustainability transformations? Considering the prominence of mindfulness also in Europe, the practice's promise to teach us reflection and action concerning

[10] Illustratively, the Oxford Mindfulness Centre's different mission statements across the centre's history highlight these objectives (Rahmani, 2021).

[11] Saito (2017, p. 70) also remarks that both Chinese and Japanese Buddhist texts use the character for the sky when referring to the notion of "emptiness."

[12] The methodological problem in everyday aesthetics has sprouted discussion. Very recently, Swantje Martach (2021) introduced speculative narration as a solution.

the ramifications of our daily lives' aesthetic dimension is admittedly intriguing. The perspective of positive psychology could provide justification for promoting mindfulness for sustainability ends due to apprehending aesthetic sensibility as a positive individual trait supporting subjective well-being (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). However, in case the aesthetics of sustainability necessitates mindfulness practice, such cultivation of aesthetic sensibility means, especially in the European context, a change in propensities to identify aesthetic value more in line with the Buddhist tradition. Thus, mindfulness can downplay the significance of the aesthetics of sustainability from the perspective of cultural sustainability, especially because, as Rahmani (2020) notes, secular mindfulness discourse is not always transparent in terms of the practice's Buddhist underpinning. Furthermore, for gaining effects in mindfulness meditation, social relationships with one's group members and instructor may count even more than the practice itself (Canby et al., 2021). Therefore, due to social relationships and practice situations, practising mindfulness may also become contemporarily filtered by climate change, as discussed in the previous chapter. But does the aesthetics of sustainability have to be based on mindfulness?

6. The Everyday Activity of Cultivating Aesthetic Sensibility

I suggest that mindfulness is not necessary, either as a practice or as a virtue, for developing the aesthetics of sustainability because other practices (for example, reflection) could be argued to have a similar function, and because, as Saito points out, "[…] moral virtues such as respect, care, consideration, and thoughtfulness are often expressed, appreciated, and cultivated through *aesthetic* means" (Saito, 2017, p. 150). Instead, I would argue that mindfulness encouragingly exemplifies the power of everyday activities to influence our aesthetic sensibilities, and thus it paves the way for understanding the influence of those practices that concern, for example, food, energy, and mobility for our aesthetic sensibilities. Furthermore, the three strategies entail cultivating aesthetic sensibility essentially as an everyday activity. Based on the discussion in the previous section, such a proposal implies our aesthetic engagement with the cultivation that is due to sharpen our aesthetic sensibility, and it suggests everyday aesthetic experiences of the cultivation – experiences which can be increasingly flavoured by the immanence of change.

Regarding the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility as an everyday activity instead of an artistic activity means understanding aesthetic sensibility as a life-long condition of continuous value negotiation. It includes having a sensuous and reflective relationship with one's aesthetic experiences, judgements, and actions and the increasing consideration of the use and development of one's propensity to identify aesthetic value. Saito's three strategies to cultivate everyday aesthetic sensibility pinpoint attitude tactics, daily managing and developing of attitudes and participation in affective relationships. As Saito states, we need to

> […] discriminate between when and in what context it is appropriate and desirable to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary and when it is better to recognize negative aesthetic experiences as

> negative so that we can work on changing them in the literal sense. (Saito, 2017, p. 31)

The everyday activity of cultivating aesthetic sensibility thus means having sensitivity to different kinds of aesthetic experiences and qualities as well as resistance to maintaining one particular aesthetic taste, and hence choosing to sustain the cultivation, both the use and development of aesthetic sensibility, in a way that is also intergenerationally sensitive to the overall possibility of continuing the cultivation. It is in this sense that I find the aesthetics of sustainability manifesting as a sustainability transformation.

As an aesthetic sensibility that is based on enduring change, the aesthetics of sustainability critiques its very idea because, if sustainability is to be understood as an aesthetic value, sustainability must also remain renegotiated. In the current situation of environmental emergency and especially within urban settings, various sustainability goals are often promoted in a way that creates the illusion of a juncture after which we would not have to strive for changing our practices towards the well-being of nature and other beings. I think that such a feature, which could be called aspiring for aesthetics *after* sustainability, may increasingly characterise cultivating aesthetic sensibility. For this reason, I suggest that the aesthetics of sustainability is better appreciated as a means than an end, that is, not as a utopian future but as a necessary transition towards sustainable futures.

7. Conclusion

Fostering sustainability is intertwined with the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility. Yuriko Saito presents the aesthetics of sustainability as an aesthetically informed solution for sustainable development and bases it on cultivating everyday aesthetic sensibility, especially through experiencing the familiar as familiar. Through focusing on the aesthetics of sustainability, I hope to have shown that, while we can and need to acknowledge the value of the arts for the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility, everyday life and its activities are crucial for cultivating an aesthetic sensibility that supports sustainability transformations. Furthermore, the aesthetics of sustainability manifests as a necessary transition powered by our life-long processes of cultivating aesthetic sensibility, to which sustainability is not an end.

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Art and Everyday Life in the City

From Modern Metropolis to Creative City

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This paper addresses the relations between art and everyday life in the city from the vantage points of urban aesthetics and sociology, where the 'city' refers as well to a normative world. The aim is to show how art/artistic life contributed to the normative change and new urban lifestyles. First, I focus on Baudelaire's theory of beauty and life in modern metropolis or the city as "poetic object" and dandyism as an art of the self, seen as a crucial normative change: the emergence of new norms of excellence and art of living, such as creativity and self-fashioning. Second, I discuss a recent yet related normative change, described by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) as a passage to the "project-oriented city", seen as a new way of working and living that fuses cultures of creativity and uncertainty. Third, I tackle the "creative city" hailed by Florida (2002; 2005), where the creative lifestyle of "creative people" is the new mainstream setting the norms for society: individuality, diversity and openness, but also impermanent relationships and loose ties. I will argue that extending the hyper-mobile and flexible creative lifestyle from the extraordinary figure of the artist to ordinary people, as everyday urban life, triggers both benefits and risks. | Keywords: *Art of the Self, Baudelaire, Beauty, Creative Lifestyle, Creative City, Everyday Life, Metropolis*

1. Introduction

Everyday Aesthetics (EA) was and still is for me, as for many other scholars, a major field of investigation in last decades (Berleant, 2010; Leddy, 2012; Mandoki, 2007; Melchionne 2013; 2014; Naukkarinen 2013; Naukkarinen and Vasquez, 2017; Saito, 2007; 2017).[1] Here, I will deal instead with a topic that rather fits in a more specific, intersectional area, Urban Aesthetics (UA), which is currently advancing at the junction between everyday aesthetics and the philosophy of the city (see Meagher, Biehl and Noll, 2020). Recently, Sanna Lehtinen (2020a, 2020b) has provided an informative overview of the conceptual and methodological shifts in philosophical urban aesthetics towards a new, larger, vantage point focusing on the experience of city life:

[1] I mentioned selectively some of the main contributions in Everyday Aesthetics; there are many others. For comprehensive analyses and overviews of different accounts on EA and alternative approaches, see Ratiu (2013b; 2017; 2020).

the entire urban life forms and lifeworld, with their aesthetic and social dimensions/values and ethical concerns as well. Within this framework, the aesthetic interest in cities encompasses the whole range of urban aesthetic phenomena. From a *macro perspective*, or "the broad visually oriented approach" of UA, it concerns the look of a city, the style and size of the building stock, the cityscape. A complementary *micro perspective* of UA approaches the city as "a vibrant locus of different types of experience", with regard to its aesthetic dynamics and the more subjective everyday aesthetics, notably the experienced quality of the everyday urban life. The aims are to study "how the urban lifeworld is processed in the human experience" and "how cities are envisioned, experienced and assessed" (Lehtinen, 2020a). I would say that this new, "more comprehensive idea of urban aesthetics" allying macro and micro perspectives renders the city (life) its full spectrum of colours.

Likewise, social sciences and urban studies have witnessed in the last two decades an increased interest in the spatial insertion of creativity, especially in the urban space, epitomized by the notion of "creative city" (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002; 2005; Scott, 2006), and also noticed a shift to a city-centred perspective on cultural generativity (Menger, 2010). Moreover, the question of what we (also) mean by 'city' received a different answer in the work of French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (1991/2006) and Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello. There, the concept of city refers to a model of "justificatory regime" or "order of worth", an externally normative holding point of capitalism based on a specific principle of evaluation, and it is used to explain the emergence of new norms of excellence and ways of life.

My approach is consonant with these new paradigms in urban aesthetics/studies, philosophy of the city and sociology, which revive the classical idea of "urbanism as a way of life" (Wirth, 1938) and focus on the "urban lifeworld" (Madsen and Plunz, 2002) and the "urban experience" as complex dimension that constitute the city (Berleant, 2012). I will address the relations between art and everyday life in the city, from the vantage point of the aforementioned *micro perspective* of Urban Aesthetics (Lehtinen, 2020a), allied with that of sociology where the 'city' refers as well to a *normative world*, that is, a regime of values and ways of working and living (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a). Therefore, my interest here does not lie in the built environment in the city, the architectural formations or in other significant forms of urban creativity, such as street art, graffiti and similar styles, although all these are important subject matters for Urban Aesthetics (Berleant, 1992; 2002; Berleant and Carlson, 2007; Carlson 2005; Milani, 2017; Schacter, 2013; von Bonsdorff, 2002). Rather I am interested in *the experience of city life*, specifically in the aesthetic dimension of the creative urban life forms and lifeworld, articulated with ethical and social issues, including their sustainability. The main aim is to show how art and artistic life contributed to the normative change and new urban lifestyles. For this purpose, I will explore different figures of the city. First, the city as "poetic object",[2] an imaginative and dynamic *stage*

[2] For this notion, I am indebted to Graeme Gilloch (1996) who uses it in a slightly different sense, inspired by Benjamin's (1939/1969; 1939/1999) reading of Baudelaire's writings. See Gilloch (1996), Ch.4 "Urban Allegories: Paris, Baudelaire and the Experience of Modernity", pp. 132–167.

of modern life and art in Charles Baudelaire's essays. Next, the city as a model of"order of worth" or *normative world* in Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005a), and the "creative city" as *stage for everyday creativity/creative lifestyles* scrutinized by Richard Florida in *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) and *Cities and the Creative Class* (2005). Both these contemporary figures of the city include Baudelaire's aesthetics of modernity and culture of creativity as key references.

First, I focus on a key point in the long-lasting discussion on *life* and *beauty* in urban context: Baudelaire's theory of beauty and everyday life in the modern metropolis and dandyism as an art/aesthetics of the self. Both topics connect with matters of everyday/urban aesthetics, offering valuable insights into the modern urban experience. The first through the figure of the modern city/ metropolis as a *poetic object*, which reveals the everyday as the source of inspiration for artistic creativity, the second through the figure of *dandy*, which reveals modern art as a model of everyday life. These ideas signal a crucial normative change, although as Foucault noticed, "the idea of life which has to be created as a work of art" was already part of the ancient art of living or "culture of the self" (Foucault, 1991a, p. 362). I will argue that Baudelaire's attempt to turn life into art and art into a way of life indicates the emergence of a specifically modern attitude embracing new norms of excellence and ways of living. These include a new experience of time/the present and the modern city life as well as a *culture of creativity* implying a renewed relation to oneself – the self-fashioning or the inventive production of the self.

Second, I address a recent yet related normative change, described by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) as a passage to a new, "third spirit of capitalism", which is isomorphic with a third form of globalised, "network capitalism". This change towards a new normative world is epitomised by a new type of city, the "project-oriented city". Their concept of the city as normative world is helpful here for discussing the role of artistic creativity/life in the emergence of new ways of working and living and new regime of values, such as autonomy, adaptability, flexibility and hyper-mobility. I will discuss particularly their view that artistic critique since Baudelaire has contributed to this new regime of values by promoting a *culture of creativity and uncertainty*, which has at its core the opposition between stability and mobility.

Third, I address a follow up of this issue in the emerging "Creative Age", tackling the notions of "creative class" and "creative city" hailed by Richard Florida (2002, 2005). In this type of city, the nowadays "creative people" (among which the artists) with their experiential, creative lifestyle, represent the new mainstream setting the norms for society: values such as individuality, diversity and openness, but also impermanent relationships, loose ties, and quasi-anonymous lives. The reference to Baudelaire is present as well in this empirical-based theory of the current lifestyle in creative cities.

At the intersection of these topics, a question arises on the effects that these new norms of excellence and values have on the sustainability of the new

artistic-like ways of living and working. I will argue that extending the hyper-mobile and flexible creative lifestyle from the extraordinary figure of the artist to ordinary people, as an everyday urban life, triggers both (existential) benefits and risks.

2. Baudelaire: The Modern Metropolis or City as "Poetic Object"

Baudelaire is renowned for defining modern art and aesthetic modernity, both as poet and art critic. For my purpose here, I shall confine myself only to some of the crucial ideas that he formulates in his essays, notably in *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863/1995). One idea is about a new kind of *beauty* and *life* in the modern metropolis, experienced and revealed by the artist as "perfect *flâneur*". Another is about the *dandy* as an incarnation of a modern art or aesthetics of the self. These ideas give us valuable insights about new ways of experiencing time/the present and the city life, a renewed relation to oneself, as well as about how a key aesthetic value such as *beauty* changes when experienced in the urban context of a modern metropolis, in this case the city of Paris.

2.1. Looking for Beauty in Modernity: The *Flâneur* in Metropolis

2.1.1 The Art of Modern Life: A New Way of Experiencing the (Beauty of) Present

'Modernity' for Baudelaire is better understood as *a way of experiencing time* rather than as a period in time or periodizing label, despite its connections to the 19th century European reality and aesthetics; it is, first, a mode of relationship to time/the present (Foucault, 1984/1991b, p. 39; Marder, 2001, p. 4; Seppä, 2004). Baudelaire lays bare how he understands the modern relationship to time and beauty at the beginning of the essay *The Painter of Modern Life*, section 1 "Beauty, Fashion and Happiness". Here he uncovers his actual concern with "the painting of manners of the present" by establishing, through a comparison, the essential difference between experiencing (beauty of) the past and (beauty of) the present. This difference resides in the latter's "essential quality of being present" ("*sa qualité essentielle de présent*"), revealed by modern art, versus the "historical value" of the former (Baudelaire, 1995a, p. 1).

What is, in fact, this "essential quality of being present"? Answering this question is answering another one, related to the curious situation that Baudelaire's theory of modernity – and the relationship of art to *modern life*, *beauty*, and *the present* – is developed, surprisingly enough, around a "delightfully gifted but essentially minor artist" (Mayne, 1995, p. xv). This is Constantin Guys (1805-1892), called in this essay "Monsieur G.". Why didn't Baudelaire designate here Edouard Manet or Eugen Delacroix as examples of "the painter of modern life", that is, of artistic modernity?

The answer, which is spread all over his essay, is admirably synthesized in the end where Baudelaire emphasizes the singularity of Guys' aims, ability and character compared to other (great) artists:

> Less skilful than they, Monsieur G. retains a remarkable excellence which is all his own; he has deliberately fulfilled a function which other artists have scorned and which it needed above all a man of the world to fulfil. He has everywhere sought after the fugitive, fleeting beauty of present-day life, the distinguishing character of that quality which, with the reader's kind permission, we have called 'modernity'. Often weird, violent and excessive, he has contrived to concentrate in his drawings the acrid or heady bouquet of the wine of life. (Baudelaire, 1995a, p. 41)

On the one hand, Baudelaire makes use of Monsieur G's "painting of manners of the present" to settle the "essential quality of being present", that is, of "modernity", for which he was looking for. Hence, the answer to the first question is that, in brief, this quality indicates the *present in its presentness*, which is revealed by the art presenting the "beauty of present-day life". More specifically, this is the beauty of "the light and movement of life" and of "the circumstance" (*circonstance*) as well as "the memory of the present" – for, as stated by the famous formula summarizing Baudelairean aesthetics, "almost all our originality comes from the seal which *Time* imprints on our sensation" (Baudelaire, 1995a, p. 14).

The current reading of the spectacle of urban life in Baudelaire's works states that the modern urban aesthetics displayed by him consists notably in the transformed perception of urban environment and a new artistic sensibility and practice: the appreciation of the *ephemeral* and the *fugitive or fleeting*, as well as the experience of the anonymous crowd (Gilloch, 1996, pp. 133–134). It is true, as Anita Seppä (2004, p. 5) rightly observes, that the so-called 'low' dimension of modernity – the historical, affective and transitory – was for Baudelaire even more important than the 'high', classical one – the eternal and immutable. His idea of the "double composition of beauty" – the eternal, invariable and the relative, circumstantial elements – and his aim to establish a "rational and historical theory of beauty, in contrast to the academic theory of a unique and absolute beauty" (Baudelaire, 1995a, p. 3), confirms this observation. So does his belief that "eternal beauty" exists only as an abstraction or as a "general surface of diverse beauties", exposed in section XVIII "De l'héroïsme de la vie moderne" of his *Salon de 1846*. He considered the "particular" and "fugitive" element of modern beauty more challenging in that it grows from our individual passions, since for him it is due to the particular nature of our passions that we have our own specific conceptions of beauty (Baudelaire, 1846/1999, p. 237; 1995a, p. 25).

In this sense, ruptures and discontinuities appear commonly as the essential traits of Baudelaire's aesthetics of modernity. Notably, Foucault in *What is Enlightenment*? (1984/1991b) suggests the reading of Baudelaire's definition of modernity in terms of the "discontinuity of time". At the level of the relationship to time/the present, he accepts initially the characterization of Baudelairean modernity as a "break with tradition, a feeling of novelty, of vertigo in the face of the passing moment" (Foucault, 1991b, p. 39). However, as Foucault points out next, it is significant that Baudelaire also connects these "ephemeral, fleeting and contingent" aspects of modernity to another

complementary aspect. Namely, to the attempt to recapture something "eternal" in this very present, as in the famous definition in section IV: "By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable" (Baudelaire, 1995a, p. 12). Therefore, Baudelaire does not attempt to recapture this eternal as something that goes "beyond the present instant, nor behind it, but within it". As Foucault further observes, "modernity is not a phenomenon of sensitivity to the fleeting present; it is the will to 'heroize' the present". Yet such "heroization is ironical", since "the attitude of modernity does not treat the passing moment as sacred in order to try to maintain or perpetuate it" (Foucault, 1991b, pp. 39–40; Seppä, 2004). As Seppä subtly puts it, "in Baudelaire's view, the experience of the present demands both the archive that the past offers to us, and the actual experience of the present, for without this dialectic there is no such thing as an experience of the *living* present or, alternatively, of modernity" (Seppä, 2004).

Therefore, I concur with Foucault and Seppä in stating that, at this level of relationship to time, Baudelaire designates by 'modernity' primarily the present in its purely instantaneous quality but which also contains an eternal element. In this sense, as Foucault advocates, "Baudelaire's analysis of modernity contains elements that are applicable to various other historical phases of modernity as well, including our own time" (Foucault, 1991b, p. 42; Seppä, 2004).

2.1.2 The Artist as "Perfect *Flâneur*": Experiencing the City as Stage of Modern Life

Such a con-temporary element in Baudelaire's analysis of modernity is the experiencing of city life by the "perfect *flâneur*". In section III "The Artist, Man of the World, Man of the Crowd, and Child", and section V "Mnemonic Art", Baudelaire cites Monsieur G. as example of the artist as a "man of modernity", understood as "*parfait flâneur*". My interest here lies precisely in this kind of artist's wandering in the streets of the metropolis, regarded as a dynamic stage of modern life. In section IV "Modernity", this figure is opposed to the "mere *flâneur*", in that the former's aims are different, more general than "the fugitive pleasure of circumstance" of the latter. Apart the "task of seeking out and expounding the beauty in modernity", that Monsieur G. has taken upon himself, another major aim is the search for that quality called "modernity", that is, the "essential quality of being present" – notably by "distilling the eternal from the transitory" (Baudelaire, 1995a, pp. 12, 34). It is precisely for this ability that Baudelaire cites him in section IV "Modernity", in opposition to the "mere *flâneur*":

> [T]his solitary, gifted with an active imagination, ceaselessly journeying across the great human desert – has an aim loftier than of a mere *flâneur*, an aim more general, something other than the fugitive pleasure of circumstance. He is looking for that quality which you must allow me to call 'modernity' [...] He makes it his business to extract from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry within history, to distill the eternal from the transitory. (Baudelaire, 1995a, p. 12)

The next question is what kind of 'life' Baudelaire envisions here. The kind of life that modern "pure art" or artist – since pure art includes both "the world external to the artist and the artist himself" (Baudelaire, 1995b, p. 205) – should present is not the "natural life" of "the purely natural man". It is the *modern life* – "the supernatural and excessive life", the fashion, the artificial, and the "*maquillage*" (Baudelaire, 1995a, pp. 31–34). It is also "the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all elements of life", up to the "life itself, which is always unstable and fugitive". It is as well "the eternal beauty and the amazing harmony of the life in the capital cities", and "the swarming ant-hill of human life" within "the landscapes of the great city – landscapes of stone, caressed by the mist or buffered by the sun" (Baudelaire, 1995a, pp. 10, 35). Accordingly, the *beauty of modern life* in the metropolis, in contact with the metropolitan crowd of passers-by, is not conventional and pretty, it is rather "fleeting", "strange" and "bizarre". Moreover, in this "vast picture-gallery which is life in London or Paris", it is also "the special beauty of evil, the beautiful amid the horrible" (Baudelaire, 1995a, pp. 11–12, 34, 37–38, 41).

This kind of beauty illustrates well the contrasted mode of aesthetic experience including the *negative*, in which Everyday Aesthetics is interested. Walter Benjamin in his essay on Paris and some literary motifs in Baudelaire has identified it as the 'shock' experience (*Erlebnis*) that is lived through and registered as fleeting fragments of personal impressions and stimuli, and that Baudelaire has placed at the very centre of his artistic work and personality as well (Benjamin 1939/1969, pp. 163–164). Instead, Foucault detects in the artistic practice of C. Guys – whom he sees as an example of the modern painter *par excellence*, yet not as *flâneur*! –, a "transfiguration" of the world or reality (Foucault, 1991b, p. 40; Seppä, 2004). He explains the nature of this transfiguration as follows:

> [It] does not entail an annulling of reality, but a difficult interplay between the truth of what is real and the exercise of freedom. […] For the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present is indissociable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is. (Foucault, 1991b, pp. 40–41)

One way or another, the artist–*flâneur* that Baudelaire describes as mobilized and inspired by the urban spectacle "distils" or transfigures this ambulant, aesthetic practice into *an (ambiguous) art*. It could be an art of grasping the living expression of actual beauty as the essence of modern city life. Or it could be a "phantasmagoria" of the urban modernity, as Benjamin in *Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century* (1939/1999) calls such transfiguration following Baudelaire himself (1995a, p. 11), understanding it in its positive guise as an active, imaginative participation in the city life (Benjamin, 1999, pp. 14, 21, 26; Kramer and Short, 2020, p. 162).

2.2. The Artist as Dandy: a Modern Art of the Self

As mentioned previously, in Baudelaire's view modernity is an individually chosen attitude towards the present that includes aesthetic principles, such as

the modern beauty experienced and presented by the artist–*flâneur*. However, it is not reducible to this. Secondly, modernity includes the endeavour to cultivate this idea of modern beauty in one's person and the attempt to turn one's life into a site of art (Baudelaire 1995a, pp. 26–29; Foucault, 1991b, p. 40; Seppä, 2004). This "attitude of modernity" (*attitude de modernité*), as Foucault (1991b) calls it following Baudelaire, is best epitomized by the artist as "painter of modern life" and as *dandy*. On the other hand, Baudelaire makes use of Constantin Guys to illustrate both these twin figures, even if the figure of "The Dandy" portrayed in section IX goes beyond that of Monsieur G.

Imagination, originality, curiosity, childlike (that is, acute and magical) perceptiveness, and memory, all these are the qualities of the modern artist portrayed by Baudelaire in section III "The Artist, Man of the World, Man of the Crowd, and Child", and section V "Mnemonic Art". Yet these indispensable qualities do not delineate all the merits of Monsieur G. in Baudelaire's view. He describes him not so much as "an artist pure and simple". Monsieur G. appears to be a 'dandy' as well, a description that in this particular case "implies a quintessence of character and a subtle understanding of the entire moral mechanism of this world" (Baudelaire, 1995a, p. 9).

In sections IX "The Dandy" and XI "In praise of cosmetics" ("*Éloge du maquillage*") Baudelaire proceeds farthest to the glorification of the dandy and the praise of artificial. These ideas have been seen as "extreme statements", since his doctrine became "a corollary of the greatest importance" once transferred to the criticism of the arts in the mid-19th century (Mayne, 1995, p. xvi). Indeed, this doctrine has nourished the anti-naturalistic and anti-mimetic trends of modern art and criticism. Yet, what is more, in "The Painter of Modern Life" Baudelaire not only defines artistic modernity and the modern artist, but also sketches another kind of art – a modern *art of the self*. He does so through the analysis of *dandyism* in section IX, where he characterizes it as follows: "a calling [...] to cultivate the idea of beauty in their persons, to satisfy their passions, to feel and to think"; a "burning need to create for oneself a personal originality"; "a kind of cult of the self"; "a doctrine of elegance and originality", and "the last spark of heroism amid decadence" (Baudelaire, 1995a, pp. 27–29). In other words, as Foucault puts it, dandyism is for Baudelaire "an example of the specifically modern attitude (*culte de soi-même*) of making one's body, behaviour, feelings and passions, and existence a work of art" (Foucault, 1991b, p. 41).

Therefore, in Baudelaire's view, *modernity* is a form of relationship both to the present and to oneself. As Foucault points out, for Baudelaire to be 'modern' is not something that is given but a choice and a task one should accomplish, manifested in one's critical relation to the present and to oneself. Such a task is, chiefly, "not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of passing moments". What he demands instead is a certain "asceticism" and active aesthetic self-shaping. It is precisely "this taking of oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration [that] Baudelaire, in the vocabulary of his day, calls *dandysme*" (Foucault, 1991b, pp. 39, 41). On the level of the relationship that one has to establish with oneself, modernity for Baudelaire represents a new

type of *art of the self*, the inventive aesthetic self-creation. This is based as well on ideas of detachment and disinterestedness – dandyism as a manifestation of social inactivity and non-utilitarian liberty –, and on attempts to constantly bring forth one's originality in relation to one's own historical era and one's inventiveness in relation to one's own limits (Seppä, 2004).

Another important aspect of Baudelaire's art/aesthetics of the self is that this implies both soul and body, since he emphasizes "the perpetual correlation between what is called the 'soul' and what is called the 'body'" (Baudelaire, 1995a, p. 14). As Seppä rightly points out, "his modern reflexivity of the self pervasively affects not only one's psychic processes or gestures but also the experience of the body". In this way, the Baudelairean "man of modernity" tends to turn toward the aesthetic cultivation of the 'low', that is, the body, the feelings and passions (Seppä, 2004).

It is also crucial to note that, as Foucault emphasizes, this complex and difficult elaboration of the self – accompanied by the ironic heroization of the present and the transfiguring play of freedom and reality – did not take place "in society itself, or in the body politic. They can only be produced in another, different place, which Baudelaire calls art" (Foucault, 1991b, p. 42). Thus, art/artistic life appear as the favourite medium of this aesthetic elaboration of the self. This means that a dandy cultivates his own body, understood as an artificial work of art that is to take over the naturally beautiful, as a "site of aesthetic re-creation". Finally, as Seppä sums up following Saidah (1993, p. 145), in Baudelaire's view, "the dandy serves both as the creator and the object of his art. The aesthetic cultivation he practices on his body is meant to transform his art into an art of living, and his style into a personal style of living" (Seppä, 2004; see also Ratiu, 2021, pp. 60–65).

2.3. Baudelaire's Aesthetics of Modernity: New Norms of Excellence and Art of Life

To conclude, Baudelaire's view of aesthetic modernity and his attempt to turn life into art and art into a way of life signals a crucial normative change. It is about the emergence of a specifically modern attitude embracing new norms of excellence and ways of living. These include: i) A new way of experiencing time/the present and the modern city life – that of the "perfect *flâneur*" vs. the "mere *flâneur*". ii) A *culture of creativity* – since imagination, originality, curiosity, acute/magical perceptiveness and memory become the main faculties of the (artist as) "man of modernity". iii) A renewed relation to oneself incarnated by the *dandy* – the self-shaping or inventive production of the self, whose model is art/artistic life.

Thus, Baudelaire proves to be a key author in the long-lasting philosophical discussion on *life* and *beauty* in modern-urban settings as well as for Urban Aesthetics. He did contribute to the latter by sketching the figure of the city as a *poetic object*, that is, an imaginative and dynamic stage of modern art and life, experienced and revealed by the artist as "perfect *flâneur*". This gives us valuable insights into modern city life and the experience of the modern individual – "man of modernity", "man of the crowd" – in the dynamic urban setting. He also

contributed by indicating through the figure of *dandy* the fusion of everyday aesthetic creativity and the detachment/liberty that is the ferment of creative life in the modern city/ metropolis, but also a source of uncertainty.

A question arises here about the posterity of Baudelaire's 'attitude of modernity', in particular the new norms of excellence and the corresponding way of life or modern art of the self: should all these characterize once again our relation with our own present and with ourselves? In Foucault's view the answer is positive, considering his aim to restore or reinvent the (lost) culture of the self or "aesthetics of existence", which was forgotten in spite of its recurrences in the Renaissance and the tradition of artistic life (*vie artiste*) and dandyism in the 19th century (Foucault, 1991a, p. 362).[3] Nonetheless, there are other, different views on the various effects of the normative change aroused by Baudelaire's aesthetics of modernity and his legacy in the artistic critique on capitalism, such as that provided by French sociologists Boltanski and Chiapello in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005a). The conceptual framework they set up there is helpful in reflecting on the current normative changes in the art-world (as well as in other worlds of creative production) and the urban life-world, and it also provides a critical standpoint on these changes.

3. Boltanski and Chiapello: "The Project-Oriented City" as a New Normative World

Baudelaire's articulation in his aesthetics of modernity of new artistic norms and ways of living, especially the *culture of creativity and uncertainty* perpetrated later in the artistic critique on capitalism, plays an important role in Boltanski and Chiapello's assessment of the recent yet related normative change in capitalism, described as a passage to a new, "third spirit of capitalism".[4] That is, a distinct set of norms or legitimizing value system that is associated with the capitalist order, and strongly related to certain forms of action and lifestyle conducive to that order (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, p. 10). A new type of 'city', the "project-oriented city", epitomises the change towards this new normative world that includes new ways of working and living.

A particular focus of Boltanski and Chiapello's analysis on the interactions between the arts and other worlds of production is also significant in this context. They noticed the increased influence and expansion of the new exigencies of the artistic and intellectual professions – *creativity, inventiveness, self-expression, flexibility, adaptability* –, up to become the "new models of excellence" or "worth" for all working people (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, pp. 18–19, 419–420). This kind of analysis is evidently not singular. Other authors have also pointed out

[3] For further analysis of Foucault's view on this subject, see Ratiu (2021).

[4] In Boltanski and Chiapello's model of change of contemporary capitalism and its normative system, the concept of "spirit of capitalism" designates "the ideology that justifies people's commitment to capitalism, and which renders this commitment attractive". The concept of the new, "third spirit of capitalism" is used by them to explain the ideological changes that have accompanied the transformation of capitalism over the last thirty-forty years, towards its third form – that of a globalised, "network capitalism" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, pp. 3, 8–11). For a previous, detailed account on the topics in this section, see Ratiu (2018), pp. 175–189.

that, since the 1980s, the norms of work have changed following an internalization of the values associated with *artistic creativity*: autonomy, flexibility, non-hierarchical environment, continuous innovation, risk taking and so on (Menger, 2002, pp. 6–7; Zukin, 2001, p. 263). Yet the account by Boltanski and Chiapello is distinct in that they strongly relate this normative change with the "new spirit of capitalism", the correlated "project-oriented city", and the effects of the artistic critique thereof. In the following, will explore these complex inter-relations.

3.1. The Project-Oriented City and the Dynamics of Normative Change in Capitalism

To put it briefly, two important items of their "axiomatic of change" regards the central role of *critique* (social and artistic) as a catalyst for changing the spirit of capitalism and possibly the capitalism itself, by offering justifications that capitalism takes over and absorbs through its spirit (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, pp. 489–490). These justifications appeal to externally normative hold points of capitalism, which are, in essence, the 'cities' (*Cités* in French). This theoretical construct refers to models of "justificatory regimes" or "orders of worth", that is, normative worlds each based upon a different principle of evaluation. Boltanski developed it together with Laurent Thévenot in an earlier publication, *De la Justification. Les économies de la grandeur* (1991), translated in English as *On Justification: Economies of Worth* (2006). The six types of city outlined there are the reputational, inspirational, domestic, civic, industrial, and commercial city. These notions suppose a complex integration of relations governed by normative standards and relations of power, thus placing the orders of justification and the power relations into the same frame of analysis (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005b, pp. 167–169).

The city, in its new instantiation as "projective" or "project-oriented city" (*Cité par projet*), is one of the key concepts Boltanski and Chiapello use to explain the recent dynamics of change in capitalism and its spirit or normative system. This concept is helpful for discussing the role of art and artistic life in the emergence of new ways of working and living as well as new regimes of values that are of interest here. In their view, this change is about a major re-organisation in the dominant value system or sets of norms that are considered relevant and legitimate for the assessment of people, things and situations. In brief, this new "project-oriented city" is organised by networks and emphasises *activity, autonomy, adaptability, flexibility* and *mobility* as "state of greatness" or worth. Moreover, it conceives life itself as a series of different short-lived projects, and poses the ability to move quickly from one project to another as a paradigmatic test of worth (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005b, pp. 164–166, 169–171).

3.2. Artistic Life's Contribution to the New Norms of Working and Living

3.2.1 Artistic Practice and Life as a New Conception of Human Excellence and Lifestyle

One of Boltanski and Chiapello's viewpoints of major interest here is that the artistic life and practice/critique since Baudelaire have contributed to

constituting the new regime of values typified in the current project-oriented city, including a new conception of human excellence and a new (urban) lifestyle. They not only recall the importance that artistic critique – originated in the intellectual and artistic circles and the invention of a bohemian lifestyle in the 19th century Paris –, attached to creativity, pleasure, imagination, and innovation (as pointed out by Seigel, 1986). They observe as well that the artistic critique also foregrounds the loss of the sense of what is beautiful and valuable, and it is based upon a contrast between *attachment* and *stability* on the one side (the bourgeoisie), and *detachment* and *mobility* on the other side (the intellectuals and artists). Boltanski and Chiapello see this opposition as constituting the core of the artistic critique and found its paradigmatic formulation in Baudelaire's *Painter of the Modern Life* (1863): specifically, in his model of "the artist free of all attachments – the *dandy* – [that] made the absence of production (unless it was self-production) and a culture of uncertainty into untranscendable ideals." It is chiefly the absence of ties and the mobility of an artist-dandy "passer-by" that contribute, in their view, to this particular fusion of creativity and uncertainty (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, pp. 38–40, 52). Along with Baudelaire, they list as contributors to this new value system the subsequent trends in artistic critique that promoted in their own ways such fusion of creativity and "culture of uncertainty". This kind of culture has spread out particularly through Surrealism and the movements stemming from it, such as Situationism, as well as through some trends in contemporary art that promote the "project culture" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, pp. xxii, 38; Boltanski, 2008, pp. 56, 66–67).

Boltanski and Chiapello further explain in Chapter 7 of *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, "The Test of the Artistic Critique", the way in which artistic practice/critique contributed to the current normative change. In brief, the third spirit of capitalism has recuperated and appropriated many components of the artistic critique: the demands of liberation, individual autonomy, creativity, self-fulfilment, and authenticity. Nowadays, these seem to be not only widely acknowledged as essential values of modernity, but also integrated into management rhetoric and then extended to all kinds of employment. Hence, their thesis that the artistic critique has, over the last twenty-thirty years, rather played into the hands of capitalism and was an instrument of its ability to last (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, pp. 419–420). A proof would be, by example, the way in which managers made use of such demands in transforming the organizational ethos and practices: "At a time when the watchword was to reinvent one's existence every day, heads of firms were able to enhance creativity and inventiveness in their organizational mechanisms, and thus emerge as men of progress" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, p. 498).

Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) and later Boltanski (2008) also emphasise the contribution of artistic practice to the coupling of references to "authenticity" and "networks", assembled in a new ideological figure, that of the "project", flexible and transitory. This constitutes the core of the new conception of human excellence, the new societal arrangement aiming to make the *network* with its "project culture" a pervasive normative model. In a debate following-

up *The New Spirit of Capitalism*'s account on this topic, *Under Pressure: Pictures, Subjects and the New Spirit of Capitalism* (2008), Isabelle Graw mentions the example of Conceptual Art and its emphasis on projects, communication, networking, self-management and the staging of one's personality. Furthermore, the "project culture" that has emerged in some segments of the art world in the early 1990s sees its limits and guidelines set up precisely by the project-oriented city described by Boltanski and Chiapello. For example, most activities in this new normative world present themselves as short-term projects, the distinction between "work" and "non-work" becoming obsolete, as in the post-Fordist condition: "Life turns into a succession of projects of limited duration, and subjects are expected to quickly and flexibly adapt themselves to constantly changing conditions and unexpected developments" (Graw 2008a, pp. 11–12; 2008b, pp. 76–77).

3.2.2 The Artistic-Driven Normative Changes: Benefits and Side Effects

All of this raises serious questions about the effects of the new norms of excellence and values on the current artistic-like ways of working and living and their sustainability. There are certain benefits of this normative change triggered by the artistic practice/critique. In the Postscript of *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, "Sociology *contra* fatalism", Boltanski and Chiapello underscore the new liberties – *autonomy, self-expression, self-realization* – that have emerged in the third stage of the "network capitalism" (or post-Fordist condition) and accompany its constraints (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, pp. 535–536). As Graw (2008b, p.78) puts forward, it is a better solution to avoid the scenario of "total co-optation" of the artistic critique, and to acknowledge the valuable accomplishments made by the artistic critique and emancipatory movements of the 1960s and 1970s in terms of "autonomy" and "self-realization".

However, in Chapter 7, Boltanski and Chiapello also provide a critical standpoint on some side effects of the recent normative change. In fact, they take care to report and criticize some paradoxical effects of the demands of liberation, autonomy, and authenticity that the artistic critique has formulated and then capitalism has incorporated into its new, third spirit and eventually into its displacements.

Boltanski and Chiapello's critical stance targets firstly the "anxiety" (*inquiétude*) and the "uncertainty" (in a sense that contrasts it with calculable risk) related to the kind of liberation associated with the redeployment of capitalism. They argue that this affects all relationships linking a person to the world and to others and, by closely linking autonomy to job insecurity or precariousness, undoubtedly make "projecting oneself into the future" more difficult. They also call attention to the fact that the introduction into the capitalist universe of the arts' operating modes has contributed to disrupting the reference-points for ways of evaluating people, actions or things. In particular, it is about the lack of any distinction between time at work and time outside work, between personal friendship and professional relationships, between work and the person of those who perform it – which, since the 19th century, had constituted typical characteristics of the

artistic condition, particularly markers of artist's "authenticity" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, pp. 422–424).

The main target of their critical stance is nonetheless what they call the "culture of uncertainty", which emerged in Baudelaire's work along with the culture of creativity and was promoted by that trend of artistic critique having at its core the opposition between stability and *mobility*, above mentioned. In their view, this has become nowadays a *hyper-mobility* and its over-valuation has led to "insecurity" and "precariousness" in work and life. Therefore, a revived artistic critique would accomplish its genuine task only if undoing the link that has hitherto associated liberation with mobility (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, pp. 38, 535–536; Boltanski, 2008, p. 56).

On the one hand, it is true that for Baudelaire the path to modernity is difficult, because it is full of uncertainties and risks (this is the reason why the attitude of modernity represents for him a new form of existential heroism). However, as Seppä observes, this uncertainty is largely due to the imaginative and contingent nature of modern creativity. For Baudelaire, modernity or the "present in its presentness" is not a reality the artist should copy. It is rather a work of the artist's imaginative creation, able to pass through the banality of appearances towards the instant where eternity and ephemerality are one (Seppä, 2004). Understood as a condition of (self)-creation, uncertainty is therefore unavoidable in the modern art-world and life-world.

On the other hand, the emergence of such oppositions and new norms of excellence and lifestyles also relates to a certain type of city life explored by Baudelaire – the life in modern metropolis. As Iwona Blazwick mentions in *Century City: Art and Culture in the Modern Metropolis* (2001), by contrast with the stability of small city life, the metropolis offers a ceaseless encounter with the new. Thus, along with the oppositions between stability and mobility, there is another opposition between the traditional/familiar and the sense of the loss of identity and past, in many ways in accordance with the figure of the modern artists:

> Within the metropolis, assumptions of a shared history, language and culture may not apply [...] It is a paradox of the metropolis that its scale and heterogeneity can generate an experience both of unbearable invisibility and liberating anonymity; and of the possibility of unbounded creativity. (Blazwick, 2001, pp. 8–9)

To conclude, the link between uncertainty and creativity is bound to the very structure of life in modern metropolis and, in these kinds of urban settings/life-worlds, seems unavoidable. The issue at stake is how to tame this connection and channel it in ways allowing an urban lifestyle both creative and sustainable. The next question is whether Florida's model of "creative city", with its prescriptions for urban policies and creative lifestyles, does provide a sound solution to this problem or it still faces similar side effects.

4. Richard Florida: the Creative Lifestyle in the "Creative City"

The artistic life and work are processes where production, self-expression, and self-creation meet. As seen above, it is from the vantage point of the

interrelations between art and life – resulting in both the art of grasping the essence of city life and the art of the self as inventive self-production –, that the interactions between artistic life/creativity, normative change, and everyday life in the city become a major issue. Hence, there is need to explore further the role of artistic life in relation to the current imperative to *creativity* or the "creative ethos". This leads to a social figure not exempt of controversy: the artist as a model of existence or lifestyle not only for the "creative people", but also for everyone's daily life in the "creative city". Due to their impact on the everyday city life, all these social figures and urban formations turn out to be a challenge of great significance. I will address this challenge by analysing their avatars in Richard Florida's theory of the "creative class" in the "creative city".[5] The reference to Baudelaire is present as well in his theory of the current creative lifestyle in the city.

4.1. Creativity, Creative People and Artists in the City

4.1.1 Creativity as a Virtually Universal Capacity and Limitless Resource

The notion of a causal relation between (post)modern art or culture and the recent normative change at societal level is not new in sociology. Daniel Bell in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976) already observed that since the beginning of the 20th century culture has taken the initiative in promoting normative change. In addition, he formulated the idea that the "expression and remaking of the self" in order to achieve self-realization and self-fulfilment has become the axial principle of modern culture. Moreover, the cultural sphere has transposed its hedonistic-narcissistic principles – self-expression and pleasure as way of life – in the sphere of economy and geared it to meet these new wants. By altering the principle of efficiency of the economic sphere, (post)modern culture has had a dissolving power over capitalism, because this way the capitalist system has lost its transcendental (Protestant) ethic. Bell thus follows a line of thinking that persists in seeing work and life, or economy and culture/art, as separate spheres with distinct principles or value systems, and criticizing bohemianism because of its principles and effects (Bell, 1976, pp. xxiv–xxv, 13, 21–22).

Unlike Bell, Florida in *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (2002) admits instead the possibility of synthesis between hedonist ethic and Protestant ethic, between bohemian and bourgeois, or of actually moving beyond these old categories that no longer apply at all (Florida, 2002, pp. 196–199). According to him, *creativity*, understood as "the ability to create meaningful new forms", is nowadays valued more highly and cultivated more intensely than ever. Moreover, after analysing the current "Transformation of Everyday Life", he states that creativity "is not the province of a few selected geniuses who can get away with breaking the mould because they possess superhuman talents. It is a capacity inherent to varying degrees in virtually all people" (Florida, 2002, p. 32).

[5] For a previous, detailed account on the topics in this section, see Ratiu (2013a, pp. 125–133).

Thus, creativity appears as an ontological capacity that, albeit not actual for all people, characterizes at least a new class, the "creative class". The artists have a prominent position in the elite of the creative class, which is its "super-creative core". Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that artists are not the sole representatives of the super-creative core – this includes as well scientists, engineers, educators, designers, architects, and so on –, much less of the creative class as a whole (Florida, 2002, pp. 5, 72–77; 2005, pp. 34–36). In the subsequent publication, *Cities and the Creative Class* (2005), Florida has tried to defend the creative class concept against those criticizing it as elitist and exclusionary, by stressing the idea that "every human being is creative". In this way, human creativity or talent seen as "creative capital" would be a virtually limitless resource and the principal driving force in urban development (Florida 2005, pp. 3–5, 22). Consequently, 'creativity' in everyday life/work surpasses 'creation' in the field of art, as an extended potential capacity of everyday people (although not actualized in all cases) versus a rare (yet actual) capacity of an individual artist.

4.1.2 Creative People in Creative Cities: the Shared Values of an Experiential Lifestyle

Next, Florida identifies the "creative ethos" as "the fundamental spirit or character of [today] culture", that is, the emerging "Creative Age" or "Age of Talent". I would say (in terms borrowed from Foucault) that through this notion he offers an alternative ontology of present reality and of ourselves: "The creative ethos pervades everything from our workplace culture to our values and communities, reshaping the way we see ourselves as economic and social actors – our very identities" (Florida, 2002, pp. 21–22). Florida also define the creative ethos as an overall commitment to creativity in its varied dimensions. In his view, the rising of the "creative economy" in the Creative Age is not only drawing the spheres of innovation, business/entrepreneurship and culture into one another, in intimate combinations, but it is also blending the varied forms of creativity – technological, economic, artistic and cultural. All these forms are deeply interrelated: "Not only do they share a common thought process, they reinforce each other through cross-fertilization and mutual stimulation" (Florida, 2002, pp. 33, 201).

Another key assumption of Florida's theory is that the "creative people" gathered in "creative communities" in creative cities share values, norms and attitudes, and these have significantly changed due to the shift from the (declining) social capital to the (increasing) creative capital and the process of global talent migration. Supposedly, the members of these creative communities or the Creative Class share values such as: *individuality* and self-statement; *meritocracy*, hard work, challenge and stimulation; *diversity* and *openness*. As many of them are "migratory talents", they prefer *weak ties* to strong ones and desire "quasi-anonymity" and "experiential lifestyles". Therefore, the *impermanent relations and loose ties* that allow creative people live the quasi-anonymous lives they want define the creative communities. Florida correlates overtly these values and loose social relations of today creative people in creative cities with those aspects of the city life that

Baudelaire loved: its freedom and its opportunities for "anonymity" and "curious observation" that were reflected in the *flâneur*'s quasi-anonymity and free enjoyment of the diversity of the city's experience (Florida, 2002, pp. 15, 77–80, 267–282; 2005, pp. 30–33). Furthermore, these values and social relations have become nowadays the pattern of an experiential lifestyle and a model of existence. Florida admits, indeed, that the nowadays creative people (among which the artists) are not Baudelaire. Still these creative people – with their creative values, creative workplaces, and creative lifestyles – "represent a new mainstream setting the norms and pace for much of society" (Florida, 2002, p. 211).

However, Florida posits eventually an instrumental view on creative peoples, the artists in particular, since he envisages them as dispensable tools of urban economic growth or regeneration. In his view, the creative capital is a highly mobile factor, like technology: both are "not fixed stocks, but transient *flows*", "flowing into and out of places" (Florida, 2005, p. 7). This situation may look like that in "the city of passing encounters, fragmentary exchanges, strangers and crowds" portrayed by Baudelaire in his musings on 19th century Parisian life, as Florida suggests (2002, p. 278). Indeed, the theme of the *passer-by*, who is only passing through from one place to the next, from one situation to another is present in Baudelaire's essays. Yet, as shown above, this is notably the figure of "the mere *flâneur*", not of the artist as "perfect *flâneur*" whose ambulant aesthetic practice and aims are different and freely assumed. Today, instead, the transient flow or hyper-mobility of the creative people/ artists in the creative city could be a forced one: the increasing wealth for a city and property development also mean increasing gentrification that trigger an *out*-migration of artists or bohemians (Florida, 2005, pp. 24–25, 278). Ultimately, Florida's theory of creative capital approaches the urban community mainly as a social structure able or unable to generate economic prosperity, and a supportive context in attracting and retaining migratory talents (Scott, 2006, p. 15).

4.2. Towards a Creative yet Sustainable Urban Life

All of this raises, again, questions about the effects of the extension of such a hyper-mobile and flexible creative lifestyle from the exceptional figure of the artist to everyday people, up to becoming an ordinary lifestyle in a creative city. Would this creative-and-uncertain way of life be sustainable?

The playful form of the "creative ethos" that hails contingencies of making and unmaking of the social fabric in the creative cities, described by Florida, is at some distance from Baudelaire's "attitude of modernity" and its corresponding artist of the modern life. Yet it is not unforeseen. It can also be found in the normative world of the "project-oriented city" or the managerial discourse demanding creativity, inventiveness, autonomy, flexibility, mobility and ability to adapt to rapidly changing situations, discussed above. However, this creative lifestyle, because of its characteristics such as flexibility and

hyper-mobility, is unsustainable. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) have credibly called attention to the costs, in terms of material and psychological security, associated with the lifestyle adjusted to the recent development of "network capitalism", organized around short-lived projects: the increasing anxiety, instability, insecurity, and precariousness (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a, pp. 16–18, 466–468).

There are nonetheless clear benefits of the ongoing extension of creativity to the everyday and the presence of creative communities in the cities. Florida's account of *Cities and the Creative Class* suggests that a significant positive correlation exists between the incidence of creative class in different cities and the local economic development. He also emphasizes the increasing importance of the *immaterial* economic dimensions of the urban space – the creativity associated with the human capital – since the decline of physical constraints on cities and communities in recent decades (Florida, 2005, p. 1).

Consequently, his prescriptions for urban policies aiming to "build creative communities" and accelerate the dynamism of the local economy are mainly oriented toward the deployment of packages of selected amenities as a way of attracting elite workers, the "creative class", into given urban areas. Florida's strategy for developing a creative city revolves around a simple formula – "the 3 T's of economic development: Technology, Talent, and Tolerance". He stipulates, first, the development of urban amenities that are valued by the creative class desiring a high-quality experiential life. Among these amenities are: the "street-level culture" venues – cafes, bistros and restaurants, street musicians, art galleries, and the hybrid spaces like bookstore-tearoom-little theatre-live music space –, as well as fitness clubs ("the body as art"), jogging and cycling tracks for active recreation, and so on. Next, he instructs to ensure a prevailing atmosphere of tolerance, openness and diversity that will incite the migration of other members of the creative class. Finally, to further upgrade the urban fabric and thus to enhance the prestige and attractiveness of the city as a whole. Thus, the "quality of place", measured by various indicators of urban amenities and lifestyle, would be a main ingredient of viable creative cities (Florida, 2002, pp. 165–189, 249–266, 283–313; 2005, pp. 5–7, 37–42).

Florida's model of "creative city" and his prescriptions for urban policies aiming to boost its development have had a visible impact on current cityscapes and provide valuable insights into creative urban lifestyles. However, as stated above, this model confronts side effects similar to those detected in the case of the "project-oriented city". There is still need to find satisfactory answers in terms of creativity-led strategies for sustainable patterns of urban development and city lifeforms.

On the one hand, one might argue that we can measure the success or viability of an urban space by examining not only its *activity* – economic, social, cultural – and its *form* – the relationship between buildings and space. Its *meaning* – the sense of place, both historical and cultural –, and its *human dimensions* are very important as well (Roodhouse, 2006). As Roodhouse argues in his analysis of cultural districts, these are viable as long as they nurture and sustain those

within and around it, and they should be organized with this goal in mind (Roodhouse, 2006; Galligan, 2008, p. 138).

On the other hand, Florida's theory of creative class/capital not only overlooks the human and symbolic dimensions of places or creative cities. He also lacks to mention *sustainability* qualities – such as sociability, solidarity, and democratic participation – by which cities or urban communities could cope with the problems that he himself calls "negative externalities" of the global creative economy, among which the mounting stress and anxiety, and political and social polarization (Florida, 2005, pp. 171-172; Scott, 2006, p. 11). Instead, Scott contrasts Florida's view on urban community and values by emphasizing the complex interweaving of relations of production, work, and social life as well as the strong communal ties and forms of affectivity and trust as conditions for a sustainable urban existence (Scott, 2006, pp. 9–15).

Therefore, to conclude, a creative city would be viable and sustainable as long as it is about shaping both viable urban places and communities. From this standpoint, the ongoing extension of creativity to the everyday world of working and living does not show its benefits by deeming the creative people/artists as dispensable tools of urban development or regeneration. Rather these benefits would emerge when they actually play a role in fostering a wider and sustainable sense of place and of creative community.

5. Conclusion

I embraced here an intersectional Everyday–Urban Aesthetics approach, which combines an analysis of the experience of modern city life and beauty from a sensitive artistic viewpoint that envisions the city as a "poetic object" (Baudelaire) with a sharp sociological analysis of the normative changes instantiated recently by the "project-oriented city" (Boltanski and Chiapello) and the "creative city" as stage of everyday creativity (Florida). I hope to have proved this approach helpful for understanding the role of art/artistic life in the emergence of new norms of excellence and lifestyles and, this way, to have contributed to the ongoing discussion on the everyday life in urban setting, especially in the present-day creative city, as well as on strategies for making it more sustainable.

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INTERVIEWS

Reflections on Everyday Aesthetics

Considerations on Photography – Insights from Nino Migliori's works

Laura Rossi

This interview covers topics related to Everyday Aesthetics and confirms the multi-faceted, rich and inclusive environment surrounding Nino Migliori,[1] both as a human being and as a photographer. In particular, the experience from some of his workshops reveal how such concepts as space and time, playing and experiencing, amplify and broaden the classic definition of Everyday Aesthetics provided by field literature.[2] More generally, this approach also provides a cue to conduct an aesthetic analysis that is free from judgments in taste. This means considering Migliori's photographic gesture within an everyday life aesthetic perspective and proposing that it is analyzed along a pragmatic course. Therefore, pragmatism-related observations are here brought forward to provide research insights within the nature of Everyday Aesthetics.

Meeting the photographer Nino Migliori is always a remarkable experience – first of all, because of the vital energy he radiates and above all because, from the very outset, one realizes that he is part of the history of photography, as he has been a professional photographer since the end of World War II. All his works have experimental nuances that, beyond proving his mastery, accompany us along the progression of photographic camera technologies through time. All this explains why the names of some friends of his, like those of Peggy Guggenheim, Emilio Vedova, or Tancredi Parmeggiani, often pop up during conversation. One can just picture them, gathered together as guests of the Guggenheim home in Venice, intent on exploring new artistic expressions whilst aware of being the trendsetters of new cultural directions. Migliori has always followed this innovative, free-spirited course.

1 Nino Migliori (*1926), Italian photographer.

2 In particular, see the definition of Everyday Aesthetics, primarily by Ossi Naukkarinen (2013), Kevin Melchionne (2013) and Yuriko Saito (2008).

The project entitled *Favole di luce [Tales of Light]*[3] was comprised of activities that were in between education and play – can you elaborate on this experience?

I believe that *the expression the enjoyment of knowing* implies the idea of having fun and therefore of playing as a means of acquiring knowledge and skills in an *easy* – although not superficial – way. In fact, almost all of the workshops I have held from 1978 to date, have been run along a double track – playing while acquiring skills – and this regardless of the age of the participants. *Tales of Light* in particular, was a unique experience, a challenge, considering that it was aimed at children between 3 and 5.

In your opinion, was it an experience that significantly changed the way the children perceived the space around them?

The *MAST*[4] nursery school is a peculiar institution, where space is organized according to an educational project that focuses on children and which is coordinated by Reggio Emilia Approach.[5] From the outset, the project had a two-year timeframe. I was sure that children would respond, but as is often the case, reality outperforms one's most fanciful expectations.

Learning a well-defined, consequential process, where time also plays a role – using trays containing developer and fixer solutions, water for washing the prints arranged on the floor, moving from one tray to another to produce a photographic print, while avoiding putting one's foot in the trays, taking turns at the equipment without creating mutual discomfort – all this, may seem difficult to implement. The magic of seeing the images appear, and the impatience to replicate the experience obviously led the children to become enthusiastic, but they soon realized that coordination and harmony were necessary: learning and coordination spontaneously arose, I would say. I think it can be said that the workspace became the space of creativity, yearning, and respect.

How much did this endeavor change your attitude towards everyday life, in relation to the children's own attitudes?

As I mentioned, I assumed it would have been a unique experience. I think it is easy to imagine my enjoyment in seeing the children's lighting up from the

3 *Tales of Light* project: experiences of the photographer Nino with the children of the MAST Foundation nursery school, in Bologna (Italy). The project started in 2005 and continued for two years, during which young children were introduced to the discovery of the photographic medium, also through everyday items (such as pens, pencils, notebooks, and puppets). Thus, the children were able to create stories about their daily life, in a playful, story-telling fashion. On his part, the photographer used *off-camera* techniques such as *oxidations*, which are part of his well-known repertoire.

4 MAST Nursery School – MAST = *Manifattura di arti, sperimentazione e tecnologia, [A Manufactory for Arts, Experience, and Technology*] – in Bologna (Italy). It offers educational services for young children aged 3-36 months and 3-5 years. Research and experimentation in innovative educational contents is at the center of the activity of this nursery school. Coherently, this collaboration with the photographer Migliori, was aimed at letting the children get involved in activities linking experience, play, and mutual interaction. The ultimate objective was to make the children "feel good" when gaining practical knowledge.

5 The Reggio Emilia Approach®, is an educational framework where every child is deemed to have a strong potential for development and being entitled to specific rights. Children learn through the many languages belonging to all human beings and grow while relating with other people.

very moment some of them would spot me arriving and notify the others screaming, "Nino's here! Nino Migliori is here!". Enthusiasm in doing, understanding the need for generous relationships, curiosity about the new, not giving up in front of a failure are marks that have always been part of my work, but they have certainly been revived by experiencing them together with the children.

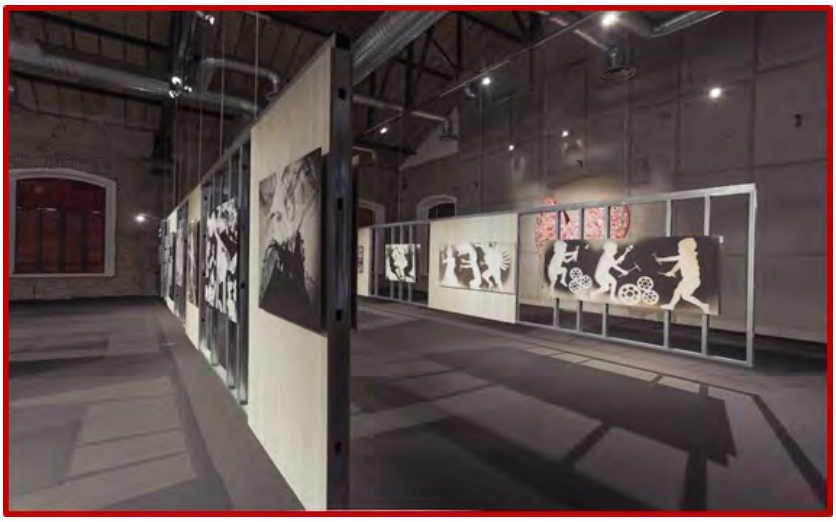

Figure 1: Nino Migliori, *Tales of Light*, Maxxi Museum, Rome, 2018.
Source: Photo by Giovanni Stella. Copyright: Mast Foundation, Bologna, Italy

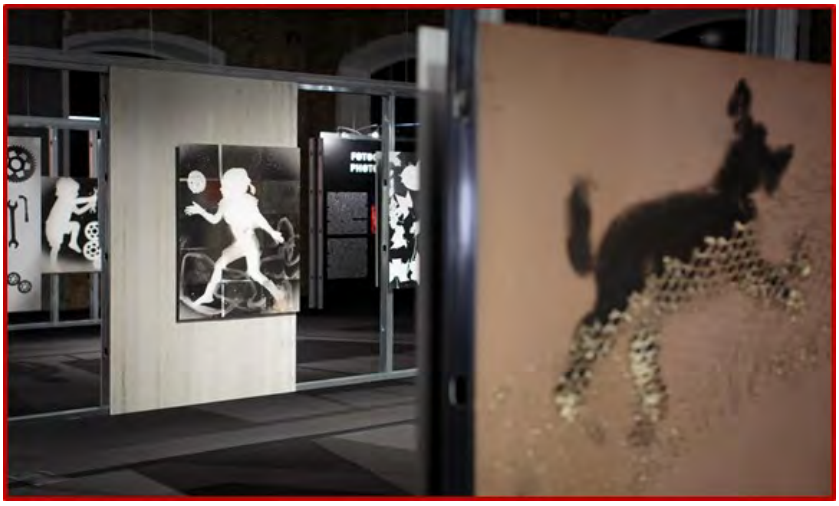

Figure 2: Nino Migliori, *Tales of Light*, Maxxi Museum, Rome, 2018.
Source: Photo by Giovanni Stella. Copyright: Mast Foundation, Bologna, Italy

Did you feel like you were the onlooker or the actor throughout this experience? Alternatively, did you perceive those two roles as being interchangeable?

I would say neither onlooker nor actor – it was a shared experience, consisting of working and playing together. I guess I could call myself a project facilitator.

While set to carrying out project activities, did the children replicate everyday life gestures or routines?

They certainly did. Besides their usual gestures for group work, there are others I can mention. For instance, the children would choose and pick up leaves and vegetables from the green and vegetable garden of *MAST* nursery school as one would do when taking a walk in a park or in the woods. When at *Re Mida (King Mida)* – a waste recycling centre with outreach activities aimed at schools – they would select and pick items the same way one would behave when in a shop.

The next step was also part of their usual behaviour, that is, they would use the "ingredients" they selected to carry out a project.

In your opinion, can this sort of learning by doing provide awareness of a better relationship with oneself and with the environment around us?

The ancient adage "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand" is at the basis of my approach – paraphrasing it, I could change it to "I understand and I learn." It is no coincidence that one of my first workshops for middle-school students was based on reading urban and school spaces, which I named *Giocafoto – immagine e linguaggio [PlayPicture – Image and Language].*[6] The awareness of living in a particular place– sharing it, analyzing its merits and weaknesses, also making suggestions – was the fulcrum of the work we did.

Have you considered replicating a similar experience with adults?

I have been holding workshops for over 40 years, and in any case, playing has always been one of their defining factors. For instance, there were the workshops I held at the end of the 1990s in Cavezzo,[7] which were attended by an interestingly heterogeneous mix of adults. Each workshop, which was comprised of at least 6 or 7 meetings, focused on a specific photographic technique: one was focused on the photogram and took place in two locations. I had selected because of their historical and social peculiarities. We used spaces and objects on the premises of the old weigh house. The resulting works brought to life what had remained stuck in a temporal bubble until then. The second location was the local village cemetery that we "visited" and photographed "by night" bringing all the necessary equipment – darkroom

6 *Giocafoto – immagine e linguaggio* [*PlayPicture – Image and Language*], 1986. Workshop held by Migliori with the kids of the middle school of Suzzara (Mantua), Italy. The kids were encouraged to take unusual pictures of their own town by means of Polaroid cameras. The outcome was interesting thanks to the freshness and freedom of the kids' view on their surroundings. This showed them the significance of *discovering* their own every day, familiar setting, which becomes unique through cognition and awareness.

7 Cavezzo is a town in the province of Modena, Italy.

trays, chemicals, flashlights – you name it. The participants also replicated and photographed daily gestures such as preparing a real dinner in the weigh house. The enjoyment of getting together and having a good time, overcoming psychological blocks, realizing with a positive attitude what had been formerly in denial – these were some of the experiences the participants said they had.

IN: Which of your past projects shared the following characteristics with the present one: education, awareness of the relationship between space and time in change, photographic gesture as a care of the self, or as an experience related to daily life?

I think *Via Emilia Crossroads* was an undertaking that resulted in historical awareness, and I was part of that. This is the only road that has given its name to a region – it runs through the very center of the towns that have grown along its path and its identity has significantly shifted through time. Part of my work demonstrates this. For instance, we know that we are on the Via Emilia road when we read its name from a sign, but how many people are there who know that the two landmark towers of Bologna actually stand on the very path of the Via Emilia road? Moreover, there are stretches of this road running through what used to be open countryside and has now become heavily built-up areas over time. There are suburban stretches of the present-day Via Emilia that do not retrace its original path and have been laid out in recent times, like in some sort of "roadway diplopia" condition.

Figure 3: Nino Migliori, *Via Emilia Crossroads*, Provinciale, 136-49, 2005.
Source: Photos by the artist. Copyright: Nino Migliori Foundation.

The value of photography in this context (*playing – doing – knowing*) is that it stimulates interest in active learning as opposed to passive learning, do you agree?

Photography primarily is language, narrative activity, iconic expression. By means of images you can tell stories, communicate feelings, impressions. Turning back to the project at the *MAST* nursery school, it is no coincidence that it is accompanied by a catalog entitled *Tales of Light*. Over the last six months of this two-year project, the children created stories through photography, and this despite the fact that they did not know about writing literature. They are articulated narrations that need no words to be

understood. The children took turns in inventing not only the narrative, but also choosing the costumes and objects to depict it – then, lying on photographic paper and assuming adequate poses under the direction of their companions, they converted the narrative into images, making photographs of sizes up to 106 x 247 cm.

Would you consider *Tales of Light* a learning experience for both you and the children?

Every time one gets to meet and know a person, this always results in mutual enrichment. You can just imagine what a wonderful experience I had with 20 children!

Afterword

Migliori's innovative experiences can help define useful elements enriching Everyday Aesthetics studies. First of all, they make us realize that the experiential environment within which the photographer operates and engages his audience (as in his workshops), strengthens the basic relationship between humans and their environment and which traverses pragmatic philosophy since its dawn. The works of John Dewey (1925, 1934) and George Herbert Mead (1938) testify to this possible osmotic connection which was mainly directed to go beyond the dualisms[8] that classical philosophy had tirelessly dealt with. Moreover, it is almost obvious that, when it comes to photography, the link with the environment becomes a central aspect of gesture itself – it is no coincidence that the photographer Henry Cartier-Bresson defined the photographic gesture as a window on the world, thus strengthening one of the main "rules" of pragmatic philosophy. The question that arises here is whether, when considering the bond with the environment as a given, photographic gesture can be part of a vision of aesthetics in the everyday. The nature of the everyday (or everydayness) can hardly be pinpointed, as mentioned in the studies of Melchionne (2013), Naukkarinen (2013) and Saito (2012). The difficulty of centering on everydayness arises from the vague nature of the object of study – daily practices and activities within a possible aesthetic characterization.[9] Dewey's definition of aesthetic experience can clarify the scope of this study – in Dewey's words (1934, p. 36): "We have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment." Conclusion, i.e. *consummation*, a term which was introduced by the American philosopher – is not a secluded event, instead, it actually creates the meaning of action itself – it is in this process leading to meaning that aesthetics lies. Furthermore, Dewey indicates that aesthetics cannot be distinguished from intellectual experiences or from daily experiences, such as when observing a thunderstorm, or a game of chess. "The enemies of the esthetic are neither the practical nor

[8] The American pragmatist philosopher's effort was generally aimed at recomposing and renewing the approach to aesthetics to include the world of art as part of everyday life. In doing so, they created an active and osmotic practice between the environment and the person, which, therefore, is no longer comprised of subject-object dualisms but consists instead of an inclusive, relational vision.

[9] Dewey is very similar (Dewey, 1934).

the intellectual. They are the humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention in practice and intellectual procedure" (Dewey, 1934, p. 42). Any action, to be determined as being aesthetic, should have no boundaries and be instead one where energies flow inwards and outwards, animating the action. While any aesthetic action has a complete meaning, it also is the basis for other actions and experiences. Thus, experience, and consequently aesthetic experience, can be considered as a process. The matter at hand, here, is not only accessing aesthetics through art or artistic gesture, but also understanding that we live in a world that is potentially aesthetic although not strictly artistic. In essence, Dewey argued that aesthetic experience enables a possible aesthetic reading of actions – gestures, daily experiences. In this sense, I consider him a philosopher who asserted and proposed a dynamic reading of *everydayness*.

Turning back to Melchionne's analysis (2013), he proposes to characterize everydayness within aesthetics, with the following definition: "An everyday aesthetic object or practice is: daily routine [...], [it] represents a particular way that the aesthetics exists outside of conventional form of artistic expression". Indeed, this clarifies that painting or creating an artifact is not part of a daily aesthetic. However, Melchionne argues, it is the adjective *common* that best defines the aforementioned notion, that is, an experienced or carried out action. So, even a common daily activity, such as cooking, becomes accessible and practiced because it is general. In addition, the activity translates into doing rather than into its product.[10] The author also points out that it is not ordinary objects that are central here, but their role. In fact, Melchionne (2013) writes:

> For example, a window with a view of a landscape has no everyday aesthetic value if the room is rarely occupied or the blind always drawn. However, if the light, the view, and the bench beside it contribute to the aesthetic character of some daily moment, then we may speak of the window of the evening sunset.

The interesting meaning offered here is that it is the departure from the ordinary that defines an action, or an object that is part of everyday aesthetics; thus, it is the term *aesthetic* which shapes the *everyday*. Following this line of thought, one can well understand how something that is not art, in its traditional sense, changes into an art-like item or activity which "takes influences from artistic ways of thinking and practicing" (Naukkarinen and Saito, 2012). Drawing from Dewey's thought, if this is the attitude toward the world, then it is not just observation that enriches us, but also *doing, undergoing, suffering, acting* within an experiential world to be lived and known.

Signaling the approach to the world allows us to also consider the spatial[11] -temporal elements that are not well clarified or engaged. The sense of *familiarity* – which comes from knowing and sharing a space at a given

[10] It is of interest here focusing on the notion that for pragmatic philosophy the concept of action is a continuous process, with moments of negativity and positivity. In this sense, the concept of *practice* in everyday aesthetics can take on process-related connotations, whether they are *routines or habits of action*.

[11] See Heidegger (1966); he wrote about space in the Aristotelian sense, that is, the set of tópos

moment – certifies and completes our everydayness. This is the case with Migliori's work at MAST in Bologna, where the children operated in a well-known environment, which contributed to them interacting in a relaxed way. Although the photographer was a stranger to them, through play, novelty, and curiosity, they interacted to create new forms of doing and sharing – thus, the boundary between everydayness and aesthetics was removed. In addition, especially in this case, the process of acquiring knowledge – understood as learning something new – came to fruition. I would define this kind of learning as being *situated*[12] or born of an act of *belonging* and *participating* – here the concept of everydayness can be linked to learning as a process distributed among the participants in an experience. In this way, everydayness opens up to learning. Certainly, using everyday items and materials made it possible for this experience, which stands in between photography, play, and the world of children, to unfold in a natural way.

Turning again to Migliori's workshops, the elements of time and space are obviously always present,[13] but it is the interaction with shared daily gestures and materials[14] that make these experiences an example of everyday aesthetics. The dynamic relationship with practices that have the elements of daily life provides awareness to the participants. This logic, therefore, is characterized by positive meaning.

At this point, it does not seem far-fetched to analyze the other side of the coin, the element of negativity and specifically what happens when instead of having a positive development and context, the experienced situation is quite the opposite. Considering everydayness also from a negative standpoint – such as, for example, in a game of soccer where our own favorite team loses, or routine elements that can hinder our vision of what is important and meaningful – can make everyday life more realistic, as, of course, it cannot be just made of positive events. Here, it is worth recalling Dewey's thought, who, in *Art as Experience* (1934), offers us a vision of aesthetic experience also in its possible negative passages – which is when streams of positive and negative energy intersect and characterize our aesthetic experience. Thus, proposing a pragmatic vision of everydayness implies a non-reductionist approach which indeed includes the space of everyday life. However, the risk here is that of adopting a sweeping concept of everydayness and of the aesthetics which

(space that the body immediately occupies) and córa (determined space). The space occupied by the body takes shape thanks to the body (sóma). For the Greeks, then, the limit (of space) is not something that ends, but that from which something begins, that is, thanks to which something has its fulfillment. In this sense, Aristotelian philosophy has pragmatic elements precisely in considering the beginning and not the end of things-space. Hence the passage appears direct to the understanding that: "I perceive the world in terms of how I can engage with it; and I perceive others in term of how I can interact with them" (Gallagher, 2021, p. 13).

12 Lave and Wenger (1991) define the concept of *situated learning* and place it in the context of specific forms of social sharing. The two scholars are not interested in determining what cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved in learning but rather scrutinize the forms of social participation that provide the appropriate context for such a process to come to fruition. Situated learning involves students in cooperative activities where they are challenged to use their critical thinking and kinesthetic abilities.

13 This refers to *PlayPicture – Image and Language* and to a workshop held by Migliori in Cavezzo (Modena, Italy).

14 "Photographing daily gestures such as preparing a real dinner in the weigh house contributed to the joy of getting together and having a good time"; see the interview above.

comes with it. Migliori's photographic gesture may exemplify this, when analyzed by just focusing on the image, not internalizing the value of gesture as a process of creation. In summary, the interview shows that such elements exist that enrich the experience of the participants in an aesthetic sense, such as playing, being aware of space and interacting with it, participating and sharing, and learning – which in a familiar environment, is defined as *situated* – and practice. All these aspects, which characterize photographic gesture, designate and define it. In other words, there is a motion from vagueness to meaningfulness, and this passage is relevant to a vision of a dynamic and synthetic photographic gesture.

Therefore, the proposal of including in everyday aesthetics photography as gesture – a dynamic and synthetic process, as it leads to a meaning – can provide a new approach to everydayness. The work of Giovanni Maddalena (2015) on the philosophy of gesture can represent a way of considering routine and habit[15] certainly as an aspect of incompleteness, but one that is remedied when meaningfulness is achieved. It is sense and meaning that give concreteness and completeness[16] to gesture.[17]

Along the same line of thought, Migliori's photographic gesture – when part of an everyday aesthetics environment – is relevant to synthesis, because it transforms a vague object-action by charging it with meaning, which puts daily life in an area where awareness emerges, making the subject central and reinforcing that characteristic element of pragmatism which is the fundamental and continuous link with the environment. Not last in consideration, is the vision according to which, within a possible everydayness with aesthetic aspects, the subject acts (Melchionne, 2013), that is, it is built up in a practical but also intellectual environment (Dewey, 1934), giving new meanings and possibly, or alternatively, an aesthetic character to actions. It is for this reason that it is not of secondary importance not to face daily life by considering the subject as being solitary and monadic (Naukkarinen, 2013), but instead immersed in a complex of relationships that, according to pragmatic logic, are a foundational element of the dynamic, social self (Mead, 1938).

This aspect, when subsumed in the main body of literature on everydayness, would provide a *social* and fruitful direction to this area of studies. I am convinced that, although within the framework presented in this article, gestural acts such as photography would then take on new connotations that are not merely linked to the image, but also to the emergence of awareness and growth in learning. Reaching and heading toward the meaning of an action or an object – whether an artifact or a functional object – resolves the possible dualisms that are present in everyday life such as routine vs. non-routine, or

15 On the notion of habit, see also Naukkarinen (2013), Saito (2017) and Poulakka (2018).

16 "Is not just one action among many others. It is the expression of meaning embodied in one person at a singular moment and it tends to become a habit for the person and eventually for the generalized person, the people, or the tradition" (Maddalena, 2015, p. 72).

17 This notion of gesture shows us a different point of view from the one provided by Barbara Formis (2010) which is based on the contrast between ordinary and artistic gesture. Differently, in the present article, the theme of gesture is taken into a context of signification that gives direction to gesture itself, whether ordinary or artistic.

conventionality vs. unconventionality, just to mention a few. Therefore, it is by focusing on meaning that we are driven toward the aesthetics – according to Dewey, toward *an* aesthetic experience – that emerges from Migliori's works. Certainly, following his work and his quest into experiential realism leads us to experience a form of well-being that is not contemplative, but practical – that is, the search for new meaning conveyed by the things that surround us.

In conclusion, practice and sharing, connection with the environment in an osmotic and dynamic way, give meaning to actions – in fact, meaning can guide the subject to new practices and awareness – reconsidering experience in an aesthetic sense, is *situated learning*.[18] Thus, everydayness brings on new meanings and significations, within the setting of everyday life.

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[18] In this sense, photographic gesture, can be considered an example of a *situated learning* both for children and adults in everyday life.

SHORT ESSAYS AND DISCUSSION PIECES

Some Remaining Problems for Fictional File Theory

A Short Reply to Eleonora Orlando

Zoltán Vecsey

Mental file theory has recently attracted growing interest among philosophers of mind and philosophers of language. Some experts are of the opinion that the insights of file theory may also be helpful in understanding the problems of fictionality. Orlando (2017) offered a specific version of fictional file theory to which she added later certain clarifications and corrections. In this paper I will first try to show that while Orlando's updated account of fiction is original and inspirative, it still suffers from some problems. Then I briefly delineate an alternative view, which is linguistic rather than mentalistic in its orientation. But, instead of arguing for the superiority of that view, I will conclude that the main challenge for the theory of fiction is to find an explanatory level where the mental and linguistic aspects of artworks can be treated simultaneously. | Keywords: *Mental Files, Concepts, Fiction, Fictional Names, Representation*

The literature on mental file theory seems to be uniform in one respect: every supporter of this theory agrees that files can and ought to play an explanatory role in understanding the fundamental mechanisms of thinking. More concretely, files are supposed to have an explanatory potential that can enlarge our knowledge about the generation and content of singular thoughts. One of the most often analyzed cases related to the mental phenomenon of singular thought is our knowledge of persons. Let us take Sigourney Weaver as an example. Presumably, even average movie fans know that Weaver is an American actress featuring in the *Alien* franchise and many other movies like *Gorillas in the Mist and Death and the Maiden*. They may also know that she was born in New York City and that she has a daughter named Charlotte. The leading idea of file theory is that thinkers collect and organize these various pieces of information into particular mental files. In their first encounter with this person, thinkers open a new file in their mind and label it with the name 'Weaver'. The WEAVER file then begins to be filled with mental

predicates such as 'features in movies' or 'has a daughter'. It is important to stress, however, that the file has to be individuated relationally, not through the satisfaction of each of the collected mental predicates. One might believe, falsely, that Weaver won a Golden Globe Award in 1999 and thus include in her WEAVER file the predicate 'won a Golden Globe Award'. Mental files may contain such kinds of misinformation and still be about a particular person. This is so because the individuation of files requires that thinkers stand in acquaintance relations to the targets of their files. Those who want to open a file about Weaver must already be connected to the person of Weaver through perception, testimony or some other epistemically rewarding relation.

The latter requirement is not absolutely general, however. The Weaver example merely illustrates that in *paradigmatic, everyday cases* the existence of mental files depends on the existence of their target objects. But it is not a necessary condition on the existence of files that thinkers stand in an epistemically rewarding relation to something in the mind-external domain. Imagined or expected epistemic relations to objects may also be sufficient conditions for opening files. Moreover, one can plausibly argue that files can be opened even in cases where there is no appropriate external object about which we could gather storable information.[1] Such relatively liberal conditions on file existence encouraged some theorists to apply the mental file framework to the domain of fiction.

Eleonora Orlando (2017) was among the firsts to argue for extending the theory of mental files to the treatment of fictional discourse. Even at first sight, this is not an easy enterprise. Thus, it is not surprising that some familiar hypotheses of the orthodox file theory must have been reinterpreted by Orlando. First, in order to explain how ordinary proper names can be used to express singular contents, she supplemented the mental file framework with a two-level semantics. The key point of this semantics is that declarative statements like 'Weaver is an actress' express two kinds of proposition simultaneously, a singular and a conceptual one. While the singular proposition is a Russellian proposition, which contains an object (Weaver) and a property (being an actress) as constituents, the conceptual proposition is built up from the WEAVER file and the descriptive concept ACTRESS. The conceptual proposition counts also as singular due to the fact that one of its building blocks, the WEAVER file, is directly related to the person of Weaver. The advantage of this two-level account of semantics in this context is that it is truth-conditional because it regards singular propositions as bearers of truth values, but it also illuminates how mental files get involved in the contents expressed by declarative statements.[2] Second, in order to show that this two-level semantics can be applied to fictional names, Orlando introduced the notion of oblique context into the mental file framework. In contrast

[1] An early articulation of this view is to be found in Recanati (2013, 2014). Note, however, that on Recanati's view files without target objects may exist only as thought-vehicles that are unsuitable to generate contentful thoughts.

[2] Orlando's two level semantics rests on the assumption that mental predicates can be conceived of as concepts. Note, however, that this is not a trivial assumption. For a critical position on this point, see Losada (2016).

to ordinary proper names, fictional names lack referents. While ‘Sigourney Weaver’ refers to a person, there is no individual or person to which ‘Sherlock Holmes’ refers. This generates a well-known interpretive problem since in its fiction-internal uses ‘Sherlock Holmes’ appears to refer to a detective. The notion of oblique context may help to solve this problem. For one can argue that fictional statements generate oblique contexts in which proper names do not refer to their customary referents but refer to their customary senses. And then, since mental files are to be conceived as senses of proper names, in its fiction-internal uses ‘Sherlock Holmes’ may be taken to refer to the HOLMES file. According to Orlando, the semantic effects of this kind of referential shift can also be observed in fiction-external uses of ‘Sherlock Holmes’, but the shifting mechanism is operative even in such cases where one interprets the Holmes narrative from a mixed internal/external perspective.

In my (2020) paper, I have criticized this view by arguing that it rests on an implausible understanding of referential shift. Some kinds of nominal expressions – typically, indexicals and demonstratives – shift their reference in a systematic way. The first-person pronoun ‘I’, for example, may refer to different persons in different contexts, depending on the identity of the person who uses that pronoun. Most semanticists think that the context-sensitivity of these expressions is encoded in their lexical profiles. It is implausible to think, however, that fictional names can shift their referents in that way. Purely fictional names like ‘Sherlock Holmes’ are introduced by their authors as empty names. Their semantic status is dependent on the circumstances under which they become part of a narrative discourse. If ‘Sherlock Holmes’ does not refer to anything at the occasion of its first occurrence in a narrative story, no context-sensitive lexical rule can modify the direction of this dependence relation. But, as mentioned, Orlando (2017) suggested that in oblique contexts fictional names change their semantic status and become referential expressions. The source of these changes was supposed to be a specific sort of authorial intention, which was called ‘simulative intention’. The problem with this explanation is that it seems intuitively equally implausible to think that authors have such intentions when they introduce names for their protagonists.

In a later paper in this journal, Orlando (2021a) responded to this critique in the following way. It is a mistake to interpret the phenomenon of referential shift as if it were based on a self-reflective attitude: simulative intentions are not controlled by other, second-order thoughts. Authors have indeed such intentions, that is, they intend to refer with their invented names to mental files, but they are not consciously aware of this intentional shifting mechanism. Fictional names like ‘Sherlock Holmes’ refer from their inception to mental files but the files themselves are not represented in the mind of the authors. As is well-known, ascriptions of intentional states to thinkers can be interpreted either transparently or opaquely. On the transparent interpretation, intentional states express relations between thinkers and objects, independently of how the objects in question are characterized. According to the opaque interpretation, intentional relations involve objects

that are characterized in a particular way. Orlando argued that ascribing a simulative intention to an author "must be interpreted in the transparent, not in the opaque, sense – in other terms, it is true on the transparent, not on the opaque, interpretation" (Orlando, 2021a, p. 83).

Now, I believe she was right in this regard. If ascription of intentional states to authors is interpreted in this way, it becomes more difficult to reject the hypothesis that fictional names refer to mental files. By using our *theoretical* vocabulary, we can explain adequately what happened when Conan Doyle introduced the name 'Sherlock Holmes' into his narrative. By and large, the upshot will be that he opened a mental file, HOLMES, and referred with the name 'Sherlock Holmes' to this file by performing a simulative intentional act. But we need not assume that Conan Doyle *himself* was acquainted with the theoretical notions of 'mental file' and 'simulative intention'.

Orlando's response to my critique shed also light on a further aspect of the debate about fictional narratives. As already mentioned, there is an interpretive problem concerning fictional names because our reading experiences suggest that the semantic profile of such names corresponds to the semantic profile of ordinary names: we tend to think, quite naturally, that 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Sigourney Weaver' can equally be used to refer to persons. But obviously Holmes is a fictional character, not a person. So we are faced with a pressing ontological question: what kind of objects are fictional characters? Orlando's fictional file theory offers a clear answer to this question. If we accept that fictional names refer to mental files, then there is no need to rely on auxiliary ontological assumptions: it can be said that the HOLMES file *is* the Holmes character.[3] And given that the HOLMES file is to be understood as a concept-type – grounded on tokens of concepts occurring in Conan Doyle's mind –, the Holmes character may be identified, in the end, with a certain kind of abstract object.

Fictional realists who conceive of fictional characters as abstract objects may find this theory congenial. But they may also think that the success of the adaptation of mental file theory to fiction is still questionable. I want to mention briefly two possible difficulties concerning this project. The first is the so-called containment problem.[4] Mental files as concept-types are thought of as containing (mis)information in the form of mental predicates. Now, consider the following fiction-external occurrence of fictional names: 'Holmes is smarter than Poirot'. What is the correct rendering of this sentence? If it is *Holmes is smarter than* __, then the expressed information belongs to the HOLMES file. If it is __ *smarter than Poirot*, then the expressed information belongs to the POIROT file. If the expressed information is the full proposition *that Holmes is smarter than Poirot*, then it must belong to both files. How could we decide between these possibilities? My impression is that mental file theory in its present form cannot provide a principled solution to this problem.

[3] On this theme, see also Orlando (2021b, pp. 129–130).

[4] For more on this problem, see Losada (2016) and Goodman and Gray (2020).

The second difficulty arises from synonymy relations between concepts. Let us assume that Conan Doyle introduced the name of his protagonist by tokening in his mind the concept *bachelor*. Thus the HOLMES file, the concept-type, must be seen as having been grounded (partly) on this token concept. Now, it is not unreasonable to think that the concepts *bachelor* and *unmarried man* have the same extension. A case like this would raise the following question: is it plausible to think that the HOLMES file has also been grounded on the concept *unmarried man*? Synonymy considerations would dictate a 'yes' answer. But the fact that Conan Doyle has not tokened the concept *unmarried man* in his mind would imply that the answer is 'no'. It is difficult to see, again, how mental file theorists could provide a principled answer to this question.

Orlando argues persuasively that mental files (i.e. fictional characters) can also be understood as mental representations (Orlando, 2021a, p. 79; 2021b, p. 111). It is worth noting that there is an alternative view, which defines fictional characters not in terms of mental representation but in terms of linguistic representation.[5] Interestingly, these rival views evaluate the ontological status of characters in a rather similar way. While some fictional realists contend that characters come into being as cultural artifacts, a specific type of abstract object, the mental file theory does not posit such peculiar objects.[6] The linguistic view rejects the enlargement of the ontology of the domain of fiction, too. The central idea is that we need not go beyond the analysis of abstract linguistic structures because the objects of our inquiry are given to us already at the level of these structures. According to this view, the primary source of our knowledge of fictional characters lies in our personal reading experiences. When we read Conan Doyle's detective novel, we find in the text a great number of different kinds of representation pertaining to the properties of the main protagonist of the novel. The distinctive feature of these linguistic representations is that they have a non-relational semantic profile: Holmes-representations are non-binary in the sense that they lack extra-linguistic representata. These non-relational representations constitute an integrated abstract network in the novel. From an ontological point of view, one can say that this abstract, non-relational representational network *is* the Holmes character.

In favour of the latter view, it may be noted that within the linguistic framework the containment problem loses its force. The fiction-external sentence 'Holmes is smarter than Poirot' can be interpreted as making a comparison between two distinct representational networks. The truth value of the informational content expressed by this sentence will depend on the details of the applied method of comparison. Synonymy relations do not pose insurmountable problems for the linguistic framework, either. If Conan Doyle's text represents Holmes (non-relationally) as being a bachelor, then this property is an integral part of the representational network. The fiction-external sentence 'Holmes is an unmarried man' can be interpreted as adding

[5] The idea can be traced back to Kamp (2015). For a more systematic elaboration of the representationalist stance, see Vecsey (2019).

[6] The artifactual view of fictional objects has been first articulated in Thomasson (1999).

a new property to the original (non-relational) representational network. Whether this addition is acceptable or not depends on how one evaluates the semantic relationship between the expressions 'bachelor' and 'unmarried man'.

Although the linguistic framework can offer plausible solutions to the above-mentioned two problems, it would be hasty to conclude that it has a higher overall explanatory power than Orlando's mental file theory. The explanatory cost-benefit relation between these views is, in a certain sense, symmetric. By applying the linguistic framework, one can elucidate the way in which authors of fictional texts construe representations from natural language expressions but the mental counterparts of these representations remain largely unexplained in this framework. In contrast, the mental file theory provides suitable means to analyse the structure and dynamics of mental representations of fictional objects but the linguistic aspects of these representations fall outside the scope of this theory. If this is a correct description of the present research situation, then it would be advantageous to find an appropriate explanatory level where the mental and linguistic aspects of fictional representations can be studied simultaneously.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Propedeutika divadelného umenia

Lukáš Makky

Kušnírová, E.: *Úvod do štúdia divadelného umenia*. Prešov: Prešovská univerzita v Prešove. 2021. 88 s. ISBN 978-80-555-2674-4.

Úvod do štúdia divadelného umenia (2021), učebný text Evy Kušnírovej, je príkladom práce prešovských teoretikov z Inštitútu estetiky a umeleckej kultúry na rozširovaní oblasti učebných materiálov pre študentov vysokých škôl, ktorá je nateraz stále poddimenzovaná. Úlohou vysokoškolského pedagóga, a azda i jeho 'poslaním', je vytvoriť pre študentov systematické dielo, ktoré ponúka prierez elementárnych teoretických východísk a metód s dôrazom na potreby a teoretický korpus realizovania jednotlivých disciplín. Týmto spôsobom sa členovia Inštitútu estetiky a umeleckej kultúry na FF PU v Prešove pokúsili v rámci edície *Compendium Aestheticae* inovovať a zmodernizovať jednotlivé disciplíny odboru, a to ako z hľadiska prístupu, z pohľadu na disciplínu estetiky, ale aj z hľadiska selekcie a preferencie jednotlivých metód a teoretických prístupov. Aktualizácia vedomostí a modernizácia prístupov je pre štúdium nevyhnutná, inak stráca disciplína kontakt so študentom a naplnenie cieľov pedagogického procesu sa komplikuje.

Eva Kušnírová sa rozhodla zúročiť svoje dlhoročné vedomosti z vedeckého pôsobenia na IEUK FF PU v Prešove v oblasti divadelnej vedy a skúsenosti z učenia predmetov spojených s divadelným umením. Ako autorka uvádza,

> Učebný text vznikol na základe podnetov študentov a vlastnej empírie, získanej v rámci divadelných disciplín Proseminár z divadla a Základné problémy teórie divadla. (Kušnírová, 2021, s. 4)

Autorka delí text na štyri hlavne kapitoly: *Divadelné umenie*, *O divadelnej vede*, *Divadelná inscenácia*, *Divadelný priestor*, ktoré dodržiavajú princípy a zásady analýzy.

Publikácia je v skutočnosti výsledkom náročnej snahy komplexne, celistvo a systematicky predostrieť študentom prvého ročníka text, ktorý ich nezahltí len množstvom teoretických problémov a cudzích pojmov, ale pomôže im do daného 'sveta' aj preniknúť. Aj preto bolo jej cieľom, ako priznáva aj autorka,

> Oboznámiť študentov so základnou odbornou terminológiou, viažúcou sa na atribúty a kategórie dramatického textu a segmenty javiskového diela. V takto postulovaných intenciách je cieľom učebného textu študentom zrozumiteľne predstaviť základný pojmový aparát z oblasti teórie drámy a divadla; poukázať na paralely medzi divadelným umením, dramatickými umeniami […] a inými druhmi umenia, uviesť študenta do základných vývinových procesov v dejinách teórie drámy a divadla. (Kušnírová, 2021, s. 4)

Kušnírová zohľadnila skutočnosť možnej teoretickej presýtenosti študenta a v naplnení svojich cieľov pripravila naozaj čitateľný a logicky štruktúrovaný materiál, ktorý ponúka študentom potrebný prehľad a expertné, ale zároveň prístupné vysvetlenie jednotlivých pojmov a problémov dejín a teórie divadla.

Učebný text nie je len sumár informácií a teoretických zistení. Musí byť nutne funkčným nástrojom pre potreby pedagogického procesu. To má vplyv na štruktúru, ale aj spôsob písania podobných textov, kde do ich konštituovania vstupujú aj didaktické metódy. Autorka explicitne oznamuje:

> Naše didaktické úsilie by vo výsledku malo viesť k budovaniu kompetencie aplikovať teoretické poznatky na konkrétne dramatické alebo divadelné dielo; k schopnosti percepčne analyzovať základné štýlotvorné atribúty dramatického a divadelného diela; interpretovať konkrétne divadelné dielo z hľadiska inscenačných zložiek a pod. (Kušnírová, 2021, s. 4).

Môžeme zhodnotiť, že autorke sa podarilo predostrieť text, ktorý rešpektuje didaktické princípy a môže poslúžiť ako veľmi vhodný materiál na oboznámenie sa so základnými problémami divadla.

Autorka koncipuje jednotlivé kapitoly ako vysvetľujúce slovníkové heslá, kde v úvode vždy preberaný pojem zadefinuje a rozpíše. Zámerne využíva viacerých teoretikov, pomocou ktorých heslo rozvíja a buduje. Ilustruje tak rôznosť teoretického diskurzu a prevzatých metód. Ich názory nekonfrontuje a nesyntetizuje ale ponecháva ako príklady možných polôh jednotlivých hesiel. Každá kapitola je dopĺňaná o vizuálny a grafický materiál (fotografie, kresby, pôdorysy a nákresy divadelných priestorov, pojmové mapy a pod.), aby si mohol

čitateľ priebežne konkretizovať teoretické skutočnosti. Napríklad, kapitola *Divadelné umenie* (Kušnírová, 2021, s. 6-14) začína definíciou pojmu divadlo a jeho usúvzťažnenia ako zložky sústavy dramatických umení a nasleduje vysvetlením pojmu dramatické umenia s jeho jednotlivými zložkami a formami. Kapitola pokračuje pomerne rozsiahlym, ale jednoznačným triedením jednotlivých foriem a druhov divadla s použitím viacerých perspektív a hľadísk. Všetky kapitoly sú vytvorené rovnakou stratégiou, čo svedčí o systematickom a cieľavedomom písaní autorky. Kušnírová neustále dbá, aby neboli informácie len vrstvené a kontinuálne prezentované, ale aby sa zdôraznili vzťahy a kontexty medzi jednotlivými skutočnosťami.

V prípade predkladaného textu ide o prirodzené a logické vetvenie informácií pre študenta, ktoré je nevyhnutné pre zvládnutie učiva a s dôrazom na túto skutočnosť je aj prísne kontrolované. Je veľmi ťažké vyzdvihnúť jednu kapitolu a určiť, ktorá časť textu je najprínosnejšia. Publikácia je prínosná ako celok, od začiatku do konca, kde sa študent komplexne oboznámi so základnou terminológiou a témami, ktoré ho budú sprevádzať počas celého štúdia. Ak si ju študent prečíta, určite ho obohatí, zorientuje a nasmeruje k ďalšej literatúre nutnej na prehĺbenie vedomostí. A predsa mám ako recenzent pocit, že najvýraznejšia, najkomplexnejšia, teoreticky najvyhranenejšia, ale predsa najjednoznačnejšia je druhá kapitola *Divadelná veda*. Táto časť neprináša len pojmy, súvislosti a skutočnosti, ktoré musí študent ovládať, ale venuje sa aj samotným *Dejinám divadelnej vedy*, čím sa dotvára a teoreticky vyjasňuje celkový obraz o divadelnej vede. Tento krok hodnotím veľmi pozitívne a je mi sympatický aj z teoretického a nielen z didaktického hľadiska.

Učebný text *Úvod do štúdia divadelného umenia* je presne tým prípadom publikácie, akú si pod daným názvom predstavíte. Systematická, objasňujúca, motivujúca, zámerne simplifikujúca, ale nedevalvujúca a pre študenta zrozumiteľná kniha, ktorá si plní svoju funkciu a ide priamo za naplnením svojho cieľa. Publikácia je vhodná aj pre iné predmety a pre iné odbory ako je estetika na IEUK FF PU v Prešove. Je potrebné ale poznamenať, že prílohy sú autorkou textu zvolené a použité s konkrétnym zámerom doplnenia teoretickej časti, ale so stratégiou, ktorú autorka využíva pri svojom pedagogickom procese, čo nemusí inému pedagógovi na inom odbore vyhovovať. Napriek tomuto špecifiku, ide o vhodný text pre každého, kto chce (alebo potrebuje) preniknúť do základných problémov divadla a dúfam, že študenti si k danému textu nájdu svoju cestu a ocenia jeho (pre nich aj pragmatické) kvality.

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

Rok 2021: slovenský film oslavoval na pokračovanie

Správa z 20. česko-slovenskej filmologickej konferencie, 21. – 24. októbra 2021, Krpáčovo

Michaela Malíčková

Rok 2021 sa do histórie slovenskej kinematografie zapíše hneď trikrát. Najmedializovanejšou udalosťou je storočnica slovenského filmu. Jej kľúčový význam potvrdila aj druhá výročná udalosť tohto roka, 20. česko-slovenská filmologická konferencia, v rámci ktorej sa zároveň historicky zadefinovaný začiatok slovenského filmu v diskusiách sproblematizoval. A za to, že odborná diskusia v prostredí slovenskej filmovej teórie je stále živá, podnetná a zmysluplná, nesie do veľkej miery zodpovednosť tretí oslávenec – slovenský filmologický časopis Kino-Ikon, ktorý má za sebou úspešných dvadsaťpäť rokov pôsobenia a na radosť jeho stálych čitateľov si udržuje printovú podobu.

Kino-Ikon

Polročníku venovanému „vede o filme a pohyblivom obraze“ vďačí slovenská akademická obec aj široká odborná verejnosť za priebežné, sústredené mapovanie slovenskej kinematografie v jej dejinnosti, žánrovej a druhovej rôznorodosti aj autorských osobitostiach. Časopis bol založený v roku 1996 pedagógmi a študentami filmovej vedy na FTF VŠMU v Bratislave a do dnešných dní mu patrí ako prvému časopisu špecializovanému na filmové teórie, histórie a estetiky na Slovensku nie len prvenstvo, ale zachoval si aj svoju exkluzivitu. Napriek tomu, že slovenských časopisov o filme už dnes existuje viac (napr. Film.sk, kinema.sk), plnia v slovenskom kultúrnom priestore iné funkcie, do veľkej miery spravodajsko-informačnú, čo potvrdzujú aj ich online formáty. Printová výlučnosť Kino-Ikonu nemá byť znakom anachronizmu, ale naopak v dlhodobej perspektíve potvrdzuje východiskovú filozofiu

časopisu – poskytovať priestor nie len na komentáre k aktuálnej kinematografii, ale vytvoriť prostredie pre domáce autorské myslenie o filme, pre vrstevnatejšiu, komplexnejšiu reflexiu existujúceho myslenia o filme (vrátane svetového), pre prezentáciu textov analytických, systematicky rozvíjajúcich, rozsiahlejších, pre ktoré je prirodzenejším médiom papier a online čítaniu nesvedčia. Papier pomáha rozkladať myslenie do priestoru, nie ho len frázovať v čase. Papier je na konci predĺženia mysle rukou, ktorá pomáha udržiavať vizuálny (a myšlienkový) kontakt s detailom bez toho, aby čitateľ stratil kontakt s celkom. Papier v tomto smere prirodzene dopĺňa hendikep filmového média. V špeciálnom výročnom vydaní Extra z roku 2006, šéfredaktor časopisu Martin Kaňuch, ktorý je na jeho poste od roku 1999, píše: „Kino-Ikon môže byť a je len taký, aké je jeho prostredie, v ktorom sa zrodila potreba ho vydávať a v ktorom nevyhnutne funguje a pokúša sa inšpirovať." Za dvadsaťpäť rokov prešiel časopis premenami, ktoré si prirodzene vyžiadala dynamika vývoja slovenského priestoru a to predovšetkým vo vzťahu k stavu myslenia o filme u nás. V prvých rokoch do istej miery suploval nedostatok prekladovej odbornej literatúry alebo sprítomňoval interdisciplinárne myslenie o filme a médiách v zasvätených výkladoch a analýzach. Tak sa v zornom poli slovenských a českých odborníkov zviditeľnili Paul Virilio, Vilém Fluser, David N. Rodowick, Henri Bergson, Pierre Bourdieu, Elisabeth Büttner, Gilles Deleuze, François Jost, Tom Gunning, Roger Odin, Noël Carroll, John Fiske a mnohí ďalší filozofi, filmológovia, teoretici populárnej kultúry a nových médií. Prispievateľská základňa sa pomerne rýchlo rozšírila o českých kolegov a to aj vďaka prehĺbeniu vzájomnej spolupráce v rámci československých filmologických konferencií, z ktorých tri (1998, 2001, 2003) využili platformu časopisu na textové publikovanie prednesených príspevkov. V súlade s hlavným poslaním časopisu však najväčší priestor naďalej patrí práve slovenským teoretikom, ktorí vďaka tomu ostávajú vo vzájomnom neprerušovanom kontakte, sledujú svoje odborné aktivity a témy. Hľadáčik redakcie sa však vytrvalo snaží upriamovať pozornosť slovenského čitateľa aj na témy, ktoré rezonujú v zahraničnom myslení o filme a dodnes nerezignoval ani na prekladový materiál. V roku 2003 časopis oživil a prehĺbil väzbu na akademické prostredie, z ktorého pôvodne vzišiel a jeho súčasťou sa stal kritický občasník Frame, ktorý pripravujú študenti filmovej vedy FTF VŠMU v Bratislave.

Kino-Ikon má nezanedbateľné zásluhy na sprítomňovaní svetového myslenia o filme v slovenskom prostredí a zároveň na rozširovaní horizontov myslenia svojou otvorenosťou voči interdisciplinárne zameranej reflexii aj metodologickej rozmanitosti. Vo výsledku sa tak časopis výraznou mierou dlhodobo podieľa na kultivácii slovenského myslenia o filme, ako aj jeho odborného jazyka. Nie je preto prekvapivé, že gratulácie prijímal aj v rámci výročnej filmologickej konferencie.

Česko-slovenské filmologické konferencie

Dnes sa už nemusíme sporiť o tom, že kinematografiu (a platí to aj o slovenskej) netvoria len filmy, ale aj diváci, fanúšikovia, publicisti, kritici, teoretici, všetci tí, ktorí vytvárajú živý priestor diskusie o filme a podieľajú sa tak nielen na vytváraní jeho aktuálneho kultúrneho a spoločenského statusu, ale spolu definujú aj jeho miesto v kultúrnej pamäti. Tento rok bol práve na rôzne podoby, formáty a žánre diskusií o slovenskom filme úrodný a v októbri kalendár udalostí doplnila aj česko-slovenská filmologická konferencia. Jubilujúca udalosť - oslávila už dvadsiaty ročník – sa až magicky spojila s ďalšími dvoma výročiami – spomínanými dvadsiatymi piatymi narodeninami časopisu Kino-Ikon a storočnicou slovenského filmu.

Od svojich začiatkov v roku 1997 bola konferencia zamýšľaná ako platforma pre dialóg a názorovú výmenu pre všetkých, ktorých zaujíma odborná diskusia o filme a stala sa ideálnym priestorom na preverovanie stavu myslenia o filme u nás. Konferencia si po celý čas svojej existencie udržala ráz produktívnych stretnutí s priateľskou a podnetnou atmosférou. Ich veľkým benefitom je udržiavanie kontaktu a spolupráce s českým prostredím, čo pre slovenský film znamená prirodzené pokračovanie tradície, dejinnej spriaznenosti, spoločnej československej identity začiatkov národných kinematografií. Organizačne bola konferencia pôvodne putovnou udalosťou medzi slovenskou a českou stranou. Prvých desať ročníkov sa konalo v pravidelnom rytme každoročného striedania, kontinuita bola narušená až v roku 2008. Česká strana sa v následnom období podieľa na organizačnej stránke konferencie len príležitostne, stabilný slovenský organizačný tím (Asociácia slovenských filmových klubov v spolupráci so Slovenským filmovým ústavom ako zakladajúcimi inštitúciami konferencie) úspešne udržiava kontinuitu v každom druhom roku. Projekt československých stretnutí bol od začiatku určený nie len filmovým teoretikom, kritikom, historikom, pedagógom a študentom filmových škôl, ale aj odborníkom ostatných humanitných odborov, ktorých témy odborného záujmu sa nachádzajú v priesečníku s filmom. Vedeckým garantom podujatí podieľajúcim sa aj na tematickom zadefinovaní slovenských konferencií je Peter Michalovič, estetik pôsobiaci na Katedre estetiky FF UK v Bratislave, ktorého fascinuje film o čosi viac než výtvarné umenie, a systematicky a dlhodobo participuje na skvalitňovaní slovenského myslenia o filme. Pokiaľ Michalovič sa aktívne zúčastňuje konferenčných vystúpení a diskusií, šedou eminenciou v zákulisí je Peter Dubecký, jeden zo zakladateľov Asociácie slovenských filmových klubov, aktuálne jej čestný predseda a generálny riaditeľ Slovenského filmového ústavu. Za dlhoročné zásluhy o česko-slovenskú vzájomnosť v oblasti kinematografie získal aj ocenenie od pražskej Akadémie múzických umení. Zdravé jadro organizátorsky dopĺňa Martin Kaňuch (SFÚ) a niekoľko vytrvalých, opakovane sa zapájajúcich teoretikov z Čiech i Slovenska vo vždy revitalizovanej zostave aktívnych účastníkov, autorov príspevkov, diskutérov, načúvajúcich. Ikonickými aktérmi

československých filmologických stretnutí sa vďaka svojej takmer pravidelnej účasti stali Jan Bernard (Praha), Lubomír Ptáček (Olomouc), Petr Mareš (Praha), Josef Fulka (Praha), Václav Kofroň (Praha), Jana Dudková (Bratislava), Eva Filová (Bratislava), Martin Palúch (Bratislava), Martin Ciel (Bratislava), Juraj Malíček (Nitra), Juraj Oniščenko (Bratislava), Katarína Mišíková (Bratislava) a Mária Ferenčuhová (Bratislava). Pokiaľ v prvej dekáde intenzívne participovali Peter Gavalier (Bratislava), Petr Szczepanik (Brno) a Zuzana Mojžišová (Bratislava), v posledných rokoch pribudli do pravidelnej zostavy Petra Hanáková (Bratislava), Jana Bébarová (Zlín) a Martin Boszorád (Nitra). V rámci interdisciplinárnej otvorenosti rokovaní sa vzácnym hosťom opakovane stal český filozof Miroslav Petříček (Praha), ktorý participoval na témach *Interpretácia a film, Béla Balázs – chvála filmového umenia* a *Minority a film*, vždy ako zasvätený vykladač, ktorý svojím premýšľaním prirodzene prekračuje rámce filmu a uvádza ho do širších súvislostí uvažujúc napr. o dynamike pohybu média medzi pólmi menšinovej a alternatívnej tvorby. Alebo inak, film vťahuje do konceptualizovaného uvažovania o povahe interpretácie ako o napätí medzi odchýlením a mimézis, či o povahe samotného média vo vzťahu ku gestu, pripodobneniu, fotografickému sprítomneniu, ktoré umožňujú redefinovať pojem mimézis.

Témy československých filmologických stretnutí sú zväčša koncipované tak, aby na konkrétnom materiáli umožnili riešiť všeobecnejšie teoretické problémy. Priestor na metodologické otázky recepcie a výkladu (umeleckej kritiky, interpretácie, analýzy) ponúkla *Interpretácia a film*, priestor na preverovanie filmového jazyka v jeho vývojových transformáciách a žánrových väzbách poskytla predovšetkým téma *Obraz – slovo – zvuk,* ale tieto osnovné jednotky filmovej reči podrobujú účastníci viac či menej minucióznej lektúre v každom zo svojich vystúpení. Pokiaľ napr. téma *Iluzívne a antiiluzívne vo filme* prirodzene rozširuje rámce definované médiom filmu a rečníkov smerovala k univerzálnejšej problematizácii vzťahu reality a fikcie, obrazu a zobrazovaného, témy sústredené na konkrétne naračné, textotvorné či tematické jednotky (*Postava, herec, hviezda vo filme* alebo *Vlak zvaný film* či *Současný český a slovenský film – pluralita estetických, kulturních a ideových konceptů*) vracali účastníkov konferencií do útrob kinematografie, prioritne domácej. Analogický efekt, predsa však s pridanou hodnotou hľadania a identifikovania stôp v rozľahlejších priestoroch kultúry (a v interdisciplinárnych presahoch) priniesli témy *Minority a film* alebo *Film a kultúrna pamäť*. Istými osobitosťami medzi zborníkmi sa vyznačuje Priestor vo filme / Space in Film z roku 2000, ktorý spojil príspevky z 3. konferenčného ročníka a z tematicky rovnorodého medzinárodného bratislavského seminára. Výsledkom je súbor textov, ktorý výnimočne obsahuje aj texty publikované dvojjazyčne, v anglickom a slovenskom jazyku, a to v prípade hostí zo zahraničia pôsobiacich v univerzitnom prostredí, akými boli Wiesław Godzic z Poľska, Bjorn Sorenssen z Nórska, Altti Kuusamo z Fínska, Jacqueline S. Stoeckler z USA a Anti Randviir z Estónska. Téma priestoru vo filme bola vo vzťahu k mileniálnemu roku až symbolická, vstup

do nového tisícročia sprevádzali otázky o novej podobe časopriestoru azda vo všetkých odborných diskurzoch. Film sám v poslednom predmileniálnom desaťročí stále intenzívnejšie (aj mimo rámec žánrového filmu) tematizoval problémy spojené s virtuálnou realitou, simuláciami a simulakrami a obrazy takéhoto sveta sa zas stávali predmetom teoretického záujmu, ako dokazuje hneď niekoľko konferenčných príspevkov. Záujem účastníkov sa však nezúžil len na leitmotív virtuality, rečníci sa pohybovali v rozmanitých filmových priestoroch s istotou starousadlíkov a v prípadových štúdiách venovali pozornosť formovaniu identity vo väzbe na priestor, zaujímali sa o rodovo špecifické priestory, o atypické vnímanie priestoru v spirituálnom filme, artovom filme či naopak o typizované priestory žánrového filmu, o rekonštrukcie rôznych chronotopov mestského priestoru, inokultúrneho priestoru atď. Lektúra filmových priestorov smerovala k sústredeným interpretáciám a analýzam filmového materiálu, často s ambíciou univerzálnejšie popísať vzťah medzi médiom, jeho jazykom a tematickými dominantami a to nie len v konkretizácii autorských poetík. Prostredníctvom problematizácie dynamiky medzi divákom a priestorom sa súčasťou odbornej diskusie stalo aj televízne médium ako narušiteľ hranice medzi súkromným a verejným priestorom. Príspevky venované televízii sa v ďalších rokoch stali prirodzenou, hoci menšinovou súčasťou konferenčného fóra, či už prostredníctvom témy diváctva, jazykovej a naračnej príbuznosti (a definujúcim odlišnostiam) filmu a televízie, trendom žánrovej hybridizácie či fenoménu hviezd a pod.

V ostatných rokoch jazyk konferencií a následne aj zborníkov ostáva verný slovenčine a češtine, čo považujem za zásadné. Nutnou podmienkou zmysluplných odborných diskusií je totiž odborný jazyk a ten nie je možné kultivovať inak než jeho používaním. Jazyk filmu a nových médií sa navyše dynamicky mení a globálna povaha tvorby a jej recepcie prináša aj do verejného, nie len odborného priestoru veľké množstvo nových termínov. Úroveň odborného jazyka je do veľkej miery zrkadlom stavu samotného myslenia, takže stratégia viesť diskusiu o slovenskom a českom filme v slovenskom a českom jazyku je prirodzená a vlastne aj nevyhnutná.

Storočnica na dvadsiatke

Zatiaľ posledné rokovanie českých a slovenských milovníkov filmu a premýšľania o ňom V rámci slávnostne ladeného večera venovaného dvadsiatym piatym narodeninám časopisu Kino-Ikon boli oficiálne uvedené do života dva čerstvé knižné tituly – monografia Jany Dudkovej z Centra vied o umení Ústavu divadelnej a filmovej SAV *Zmena bez zmeny. Podoby slovenskej televíznej hranej tvorby 1990 – 1993* vydaná v knižnej edícii Kino-Ikonu Cinestézia a *Slovenský filmový pop* päťčlenného autorského kolektívu pod režijnou taktovkou Juraja Malíčka z Ústavu literárnej a umeleckej komunikácie FF UKF v Nitre, vydaný univerzitným vydavateľstvom pri príležitosti filmovej storočnice.

Kniha Jany Dudkovej sa systematicky venuje vývoju ponovembrovej slovenskej televíznej hranej tvorby a demýtizuje obraz televíznej tvorby po roku 1989 spojený s úpadkom.

Dudková sa slovenskej hranej tvorbe venuje programovo, pokiaľ však v knihe *Slovenský film v ére transkulturality* (2011) ju zaujímal vývoj porevolučného hraného filmu určeného pre kiná, vo svojom aktuálnom titule prijala nepriamo formulovanú výzvu autorov *Dejín slovenskej kinematografie* sa sústredila na televíznu hranú tvorbu. Ich tvrdenie, že v roku 1990 nastal kolaps pôvodnej televíznej tvorby ju motivoval k dôslednému archívnemu výskumu, ktorý ju doviedol k úplne odlišnému poznaniu. Analýzu stavu obdobia, v ktorom podľa prvých a zatiaľ jediných dejín slovenskej kinematografie nemalo byť dokončené žiadne pôvodné televízno-filmové dielo, robila nakoniec na súbore dvestosedemdesiatich pôvodných hraných diel, ktoré vznikli v období rokov 1990 – 1993. Jej optiku definoval predovšetkým záujem o obrazy spoločenskej zmeny po Nežnej revolúcii, obrazy elít a ich rolí, o reflexiu napätia medzi idealitou a realitou v nich. Monografia Jany Dudkovej je rozhodne inšpiratívnou výzvou pre ďalšie skúmanie skutočnej povahy veci, pretože potvrdzuje, že nesúlad medzi paušalizujúcim predpokladom a faktickým stavom môže byť výpovedne zásadný.

Kniha *Slovenský filmový pop* mala inú a predsa podobnú motiváciu. Autori reagujú na stav verejnej mienky vo vzťahu k slovenskému filmu, v ktorej rezonuje presvedčenie, že domáca hraná tvorba nie je divácky atraktívna, nemá svojich fanúšikov. Kniha vznikla ako osobné vyznanie slovenskému filmu piatich filmových teoretikov a zároveň fanúšikov slovenského filmu pri príležitosti osláv 100. výročia slovenskej kinematografie. Trojicu autorov z nitrianskej estetiky (Martin Boszorád a Michaela Malíčková), dopĺňa filmový publicita František Gyárfáš a česká kolegyňa z Fakulty multimediálnych komunikácií Univerzity Tomáša Baťu v Zlíne Jana Bebarová. Každý z autorov si našiel vlastný kľúč k interpretačnému rozprávaniu o svojej osobnej top desiatke slovenských filmov a jediným spoločným usmernením bolo písať erudovane a zároveň užívateľsky prístupne a v tomto kóde odhaľovať divácky, teda popkultúrny potenciál vybraných slovenských filmov. Kniha vyšla v edícii Popkultúrna čítanka, ktorá má ambíciu preskúmavať široký priestor kultúry so zámerom identifikovať v nej javy, texty, udalosti, ktoré sú súčasťou živej kultúry, fungujú ako vkusovo či dokonca svetonázorovo definujúce texty individuálnych životov do tej miery, že získavajú status príznakových textov konkrétnej spoločenskej komunity, kultúrnej jednotky, generácie, doby. Recipienti im predlžujú život a vytvárajú im miesto v archíve popkultúrnej pamäti.

Archívy predpokladajú existenciu dejín, plynutia, vývoja, zmien, potrebu zaznamenávať, triediť, uchovávať dejiny ako históriu s identifikovateľným začiatkom a rozpoznateľným smerovaním. 100 rokov signalizuje dejinnosť a akosi implicitne potvrdzuje nárok na vlastnú históriu. 100 rokov slovenského filmu je výzva, ktorú sa teoretici filmu na Slovensku rozhodli

prijať tému dvadsiateho ročníka konferencie. Príznačne zvolená téma – *Stopy začiatkov* výrazne zadefinovala leitmotívy príspevkov a diskusií v niekoľkých vrstvách. Tá prvá, najčitateľnejšia, sa sústredila okolo prvého zachovaného hraného dlhometrážneho slovenského filmu *Jánošík*, ktorým sa formálne definuje začiatok slovenskej kinematografie do roku 1921. Príspevky Petra Michaloviča a Juraja Oniščenka prekročili rámcovanie premýšľania Siakeľovým *Jánošikom* smerom k univerzálnejšie postaveným otázkam povahy diela (a jeho možnej roly) vo vzťahu k autorskej signatúre, k dôležitosti opakovania ako potvrdenia vplyvu, k historicite počiatku (s možnosťou odlíšenia od začiatku) ako identifikácii pôvodu vo vzťahu k sprítomňovaniu v recepcii, v interpretácii minulého. Jánošikovskou témou sa otvorila aj problematika zobrazovania identity (napr. národnej u Aleny Smieškovej), ktorú už mimo rámce slovenského filmu a vo väzbách na výtvarné zobrazovacie stratégie prezentoval Miroslav Haľák. Záujem o vizuálne zložky filmového obrazu vyvažoval záujem o hlas v príspevku Josefa Fulku, pričom obaja rečníci sústredili pozornosť na dynamickú transformáciu pôvodne telesných kvalít na sémantické (rezonujúce aj v príspevku Josefa Rauvolfa). Interdisciplinárnu optiku uprednostnil tiež Ján Kralovič v hľadaní intermediálnych počiatkov slovenského umenia, Petr Mareš zas akcentoval autoreferenčný rámec filmového média. Mnohí rečníci reagovali na tému konferencie identifikáciou zlomových momentov vo vývojovej dynamike slovenského filmu, prostredníctvom ktorých je možné zadefinovať rôzne druhy začiatkov: Martin Cieľ vo väzbe na filmovú propagandu, Petra Hanáková vo vzťahu k ideologickej identite filmu, Jana Dudková vo vzťahu k postsocialistickému filmu, Zuzana Nemčíková vo vzťahu k trezorovému filmu, Martin Palúch vo vzťahu k strihovému filmu. Niektoré z týchto príspevkov upozornili na generačné väzby, iné ich priamo deklarovali (Katarína Mišíková, Luboš Ptáček). Valerij Kupka predstavil v analogickej optike ruskú kinematografiu. Mnohé príspevky preverovali v režime začiatkov, pokračovaní, prípadne aj koncov autorskú tvorbu, autorské poetiky a ich miesto v slovenskej kinematografii (Juraj Malíček, Jana Bébarová, Martin Boszorád, Michal Babjak) alebo v českej kinematografii (Jan Bernard), príležitostne s presahom k žánrovej kinematografii (Barbora Kaplánková), smerom k americkej tvorbe v hľadaní zrodu televíznej hviezdy (Klára Feikusová) alebo k reštartom mediálnych stratégií v oblasti filmovej distribúcie (Ondřej Kazík).

Súčasťou konferenčného programu sú vždy aj filmové projekcie, ktoré korešpondujú s tematickými výzvami stretnutí, občas aj v podobe jedinečných archívnych materiálov alebo kuriozít, niekedy zo súkromných domácich zbierok, inokedy z autorsky cenzurovanej tvorby alebo z odomknutých trezorov. Tento rok samozrejme nemohol chýbať *Jánošík* (1922) Jaroslava Siakeľa, rekonštruovaný a ozvučený, ktorý dopĺňal krátky dokument Miroslava Cimermana o režisérovi. Účastníci dostali aj zasvätený výklad k rekonštruovanej verzii filmu vzhľadom na identifikáciu filmových elementov americkej či slovenskej verzie. Druhou filmovou projekciou urobila konferencia radikálny skok v čase a ponúkla najaktuálnejší projekt Petra Kerekesa, v zahraničí oceňovanú *Cenzorku*,

ktorá je z hľadiska konštruovania rozprávania príkladom nekonvenčnej kombinatoriky hraného a dokumentárneho filmu a osobitým vyjadrením postoja tvorcov k možnej referenčnej (alebo mystifikačnej?) hodnote obrazu vo vzťahu k realite. V tejto otvorenosti voči heterogénnej povahe sveta a ambivalentnej (či hybridnej?) povahe obrazov sveta je režisérov postoj analogický s postojom organizátorov konferencie, ktorí už tradične vytvárajú priestor nie len pre filmových teoretikov v úzkom slova zmysle ale aj pre odborníkov z príbuzných disciplín. Vďaka tomu vzniká priestor pre miešanie jazykov, pre dialóg rôznorodých metodologických východísk a potenciál kontextuálne rozšíriť hlavnú tému konkretizovanú v jednotlivých príspevkoch, ktoré aj v tomto roku potvrdili, že myslenie o slovenskom filme a kinematografii je minimálne také živé a progresívne, ako aktuálna slovenská kinematografia.[1]

[1] *Kinema.sk* v januári 2021 zverejnila, opierajúc sa o informácie Audiovizuálneho informačného centra, že na Slovensku je vo výrobe viac ako tridsať rôznoformátových, rôznožánrových slovenských filmov (viac pozri in https://www.kinema.sk/filmova-novinka/253083/tychto-34-novych-slovenskych-filmov-by-sme-mohli-vidiet-uz-v-roku-2021.htm) Medzi nimi napríklad aj *Cenzorka* Petra Kerekeša, ktorá bola koncom tohto roka porotou sekcie Orizzonti 78. ročníka festivalu v Benátkach ocenená za najlepší scenár a na Káhirskom filmovom festivale získala Cenu kritikov za Najlepší európsky titul uplynulej sezóny alebo film *Muž so zajačími ušami*, za réžiu ktorého bol Martin Šulík ocenený národnou tvorivou cenou Slovenského filmového zväzu, Únie slovenských televíznych tvorcov a Literárneho fondu IGRIC za hranú tvorbu pre kiná.

ČÍSLO	TÉMA	MIESTO A ROK KONANIA	TEXTY
1.	*Podobnosti a diferencie českej a slovenskej filmovej reči*	Štiavnické Bane, SR, 1997	časopis Kino-Ikon 4/1998
2.	*Hranice (ve) filmu*	Poněšice, ČR,1998	zborník *Hranice (ve) filmu,* 1999
3.	*Priestor vo filme*	Vyšná Boca, SR, 1999	zborník *Priestor vo filme / Space in film,* 2000
4.	*Pohyb (ve) filmu*	Mikulov, ČR, 2000	časopis Iluminace 3/2001
5.	*História, čas a rozprávania vo filme*	Osrblie, SR, 2001	časopis Kino-Ikon 2/2001
6.	*Žánr ve filmu*	Olomouc, ČR, 2002	zborník *Žánr ve filmu,* 2004
7.	*Zvuk vo filme*	Bratislava , SR, 2003	časopis Kino-Ikon 2/2003
8.	*Film a národ*	Olomouc, ČR, 2004	--
9.	*Postava, herec, hviezda vo filme*	Častá-Píla, SR, 2005	zborník *Postava, herec, hviezda vo filme,* 2006
10.	*Filmové diváctví*	Poněšice, ČR, 2006	--
11.	*Interpretácia a film*	Krpáčovo, SR, 2007	zborník *Interpretácia a film,* 2008
12.	*Béla Balázs – Chvála filmového umenia*	Levoča, SR, 2009	zborník *Béla Balázs – Chvála filmového umenia,* 2010
13.	*Súčasný český a slovenský film – pluralita estetických, kultúrnych a ideových konceptov*	Olomouc, ČR, 2010	zborník *Súčasný český a slovenský film – pluralita estetických, kultúrnych a ideových konceptov,* 2010
14.	*Minority a film*	Topoľčianky, SR, 2011	zborník *Minority a film,* 2012
15.	*Film a kultúrna pamäť*	Krpáčovo, SR, 2013	zborník *Film a kultúrna pamäť,* 2014
16.	*Vlak zvaný film*	Krpáčovo, SR, 2015	zborník *Vlak zvaný film,* 2016
17.	*Spiritualita vo filme*	Ohrid, Macedónsko, 2016 (organizátor ČR)	-
18.	*Iluzívne a antiiluzívne vo filme*	Krpáčovo, SR, 2017	zborník *Iluzívne a antiiluzívne vo filme,* 2018
19.	*Obraz – Slovo – Zvuk*	Krpáčovo, SR, 2019	zborník *Obraz – Slovo – Zvuk,* 2019
20.	*Stopy začiatkov*	Krpáčovo , SR, 2021	zborník *Stopy začiatkov* (aktuálne vo výrobe)