

THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF THE EVERYDAY AND THE “LIFE-WORLD”

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ABSTRACT. *The Aesthetic Experience of the Everyday and the “Life-World”.* This article critically reviews the recent attempts for setting a better theoretical grounding for the new sub-discipline called “Everyday Aesthetics” (EA). I contend that: 1) many attempts are impeded by shortcomings rooted in inappropriate conceptualizations of the *aesthetic experience* and the *everyday*; and 2) it is possible to improve the analytical framework for approaching everyday aesthetic life by clarifying EA’s underpinning assumptions and open questions, such as the nature of everyday aesthetic experience, the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity in the flux of one’s experiences, and the relation between the subjective-private and inter subjective dimensions of everyday life. This claim will be supported by some insights on the characteristics of the *experience*, *life*, and *life-world* provided by practical-hermeneutical or pragmatic philosophy and phenomenology.

Keywords: *aesthetic experience, everyday aesthetics, everyday life, life, life-world*

Introduction: a brief overview of Everyday Aesthetics

This article¹ critically reviews the recent attempts for setting a better theoretical grounding for the new research area called “Everyday Aesthetics” (hereafter, EA) or “Aesthetics of Everyday Life” (hereafter AEL). Given the persistent weaknesses in the theoretical foundation of this new sub-discipline, a philosophical reflection is crucial for such endeavor. I contend that: 1) many of these attempts are

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impeded by shortcomings rooted in inappropriate conceptualizations of the *aesthetic experience* and the *everyday*, among other key notions of EA; and 2) it is possible to improve the analytical framework for approaching everyday aesthetic life by clarifying EA's underpinning assumptions and open questions, such as the nature of everyday aesthetic experience, the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity in the flux of one's experiences, and the relation between the subjective-private and inter subjective dimensions of everyday life. This claim will be supported by means of some insights on the characteristics of the *experience*, *life*, and *life-world* provided by practical-hermeneutical or pragmatic philosophy, philosophy of life and phenomenology.

In brief, Everyday Aesthetics has developed as a new research area interested in the aesthetic character of ordinary daily life or experience, as against its neglect by the art-centered aesthetic theory, particularly within the Anglo-American tradition. Instead, the scope and realm of aesthetics are expanded to incorporate various phenomena, objects and practices of everyday life (see Arnold Berleant 2005, 2010; Thomas Leddy 2005, 2012; Katia Mandoki 2007), and to include not only reflective contemplation and states of mind but also sensual and bodily pleasures, the so-called "lower" senses of smell, taste, and touch, as well as negative or seemingly insignificant reactions and minor moments and behaviours of our private life (see Yuriko Saito 2007; Sherri Irvin 2008; Kevin Melchionne 2011, 2013). Yet this sub-disciplines heterogeneous, since it follows different traditions (continental, pragmatist, and analytical) and defends contradictory accounts of some core practical and theoretical issues.² Among these, Yuriko Saito recently counts the defining characteristics of the "everyday" and "aesthetics" – tinted by tensions or oppositions between daily and rare, familiarity and strangeness, ordinary and extraordinary, private-subjective and public-inter subjective –, the "aesthetic credential" of some daily, ordinary qualities or experiences, and the blurring line between art and life.³

There is nonetheless an increasing awareness of the importance of theoretical stances, and vigorous demands for conceptual clarification also occur in this research area. The question of what is actually the nature of the „everyday“, as contrasted with the „non-everyday“, is freshly raised by Ossi Naukkarinen in the article "What is 'Everyday' in Everyday Aesthetics?" (2013). He provides an

² For a detailed presentation of these issues, see Dan Eugen Rațiu, "Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: On Recent Controversies about the Aesthetic and Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life", *Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics* Vol L/VI, No. 1, 2013, pp. 5–8.

³ Yuriko Saito, "Aesthetics of the Everyday", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2015 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, 2015, pp. 1–22.

interesting description and a figure which summarizes the central aspects of "my everyday now" with "its positive and negative breaks, sudden or slow", and explores how they affect some key points of EA.⁴

The lively debate on the nature of everyday aesthetic experience and the proper definition and scope of EA itself is carried on in other recent issues of *Contemporary Aesthetics* (2014, 2015). Some theorists, in line with John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934), defend the continuity hypothesis and an "expansive" approach to EA – including the entire range of experiences from the ordinary to extraordinary and arguing for continuities and the dynamic interaction between the aesthetics of everyday life and the aesthetics of art and nature – over a "restrictive" one that focuses on some core ordinary activities which are ongoing, common or widely shared, and mostly pursued in private (see Leddy 2015 vs. Melchionne 2014);⁵ or defend a pragmatist view of everyday aesthetic experience – attentive to the "aesthetic rhythm of the everyday" which makes an aesthetic experience not quite an exception to the quotidian flow of experiences – over the theories that build an EA on the "ordinariness" of the everyday and see its aesthetic character as constituted by a particular feeling of "familiarity" (see Puolakka 2014, 2015, vs. Haapala 2005 and Saito 2007).⁶

More recently, in the latest overview of developments in the "Aesthetics of the Everyday" (2015) published in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Yuriko Saito has critically revisited EA's approach to the features of the *everyday* and the *aesthetic*. She suggests that the best way to capture "everyday" is to locate its defining characteristics not so much in specific kinds of objects and activities but rather in attitude and experience. The typical attitude we take toward them is full with pragmatic considerations while their experience is generally regarded as familiar, ordinary, commonplace, and routine. She also advocates the inclusion of bodily sensations into the realm of the "aesthetic" and the return to its classificatory use or root meaning as "experience gained through sensibility, whatever its evaluative valence may be".⁷

⁴ Ossi Naukkarinen, "What is 'Everyday' in Everyday Aesthetics?" *Contemporary Aesthetics* Vol. 11, 2013, pp. 1–2.

⁵ Thomas Leddy, "Experience of Awe: An Expansive Approach to Everyday Aesthetics", *Contemporary Aesthetics* Vol. 13, 2015, pp. 1–12; Kevin Melchionne, "The Point of Everyday Aesthetics", *Contemporary Aesthetics* Vol. 12, 2014, pp. 1–6.

⁶ Kalle Puolakka, "Dewey and Everyday Aesthetics - A New Look," *Contemporary Aesthetics* Vol. 12, 2014, pp. 1–12; Kalle Puolakka, "The Aesthetic Pulse of the Everyday: Defending Dewey". *Contemporary Aesthetics* Vol. 13, 2015, pp. 1–12; Arto Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday. Familiarity, Strangeness, and the Meaning of Place", in *Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, edited by Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith, New York, Columbia University Press, 2005, pp. 39–55; Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2007.

⁷ Yuriko Saito, "Aesthetics of the Everyday", in *op. cit.*, pp. 4–5.

The reference to a subject intentionality, sensibility, affect and corporeality or bodily engagement is indeed necessary when characterizing everyday aesthetic experience. However, it is not sufficient to entirely capture the complex, twofold nature of the experience (as suggested by German terms *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*) which is crucial to an understanding of ordinary life.⁸ Such shift in focus firstly requests a revision of the concept of experience itself, like that supported by practical-hermeneutical philosophy (Hans-Georg Gadamer) and the pragmatic or “soma-aesthetic” (Richard Shusterman) approach. Then new claims should be made about the ontology of everyday life, notably its inter subjective aspect and the dialectic of fragmentation-and-continuity, highlighted by phenomenological-sociological research on *life* (Georg Simmel) and *life-world* (Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schutz).

The Aesthetic Experience of the Everyday

The major point I wish to emphasize here, drawing on Shusterman’s analysis, is the twofold nature of experience in general. That is, every experience has both an objective and a subjective dimension: it “can denote both the object of experience (what is experienced) and the way (or ‘the how’) that object is experienced by a subject.” Recognizing this phenomenological character of experience is crucial for any adequate conception of aesthetic experience,⁹ including experiencing aesthetically the everyday.

Acknowledging this central feature has significant implications for Everyday Aesthetics. First, it drives attention to the corporeality or *embodied* dimension of aesthetic experience, which always involves objective physiological aspects, as mentioned by Shusterman:

In some aesthetic experiences, notably those with strong emotions (evoking noticeable bodily reactions) or vivid proprioception, these bodily responses can be conspicuously present to consciousness and can form a significant part of the aesthetic experience.¹⁰

⁸ See Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives*. Studies in the Everyday, London, Routledge, 2011, p. 41.

⁹ Richard Shusterman, “Aesthetic Experience: From Analysis to Eros”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 64, No. 2, 2006, pp. 217, 227.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 227.

Likewise, it allows maintaining the phenomenological character of subjective feeling and object-directed intentionality: aesthetic experience "cannot be a mere subjective state; it always has an intentional object of some kind, even if that object is only imaginary".¹¹ EA's proponents seem tempted to discard the latter dimension once facing the lack of clear delineation of its object-hood, especially when having to account for ambience and activities or actions.¹² By approaching experience as intentional this difficulty is overcome, since its "object" is an ideal unity as correlative of this intentionality, not because it is a clearly delineated physical object.

Moreover, the object-directed intentionality and thus the "aboutness" of aesthetic experience imply a meaningful character that cannot be overlooked: aesthetic experience "is not a blind sensation devoid of signification but, rather, a meaningful perception".¹³ Some proponents of EA (Berleant, Leddy) also hold this idea of perception as always including meaning which in fact is largely shared, from constructivist epistemology to visual studies from hermeneutics to phenomenology. One of its chief bases is to be found in Husserl's concept of the "intentionality of consciousness", according to which there is no empty subjective consciousness; this is always consciousness-of-something and constitutes meaning: "perceiving phenomena in our daily world is thus not just perception; much of it is about meaning".¹⁴ This explains the possibility of inter-subjective communication and meaningful discussion also when experiencing aesthetically frameless "objects" or phenomena of daily world.

Another core feature of experience is the intricate connection between its processual character as "general flow of conscious life" and its fragmentation in discrete unities that can be singled out from this continuum, as "a heightened moment of living that is reflectively appreciated as such" or "an experience" in Dewey's terms.¹⁵ It is this peculiar characteristic which elicited the core disagreement among EA scholars, on how to distinguish everyday aesthetic experience from the stream of humdrum-ordinary experience, on the one side, and the "standing-out" art-related experience, on the other.

In order to clarify this mix of continuity and discreteness it is useful to call in firstly Gadamer's practical-hermeneutical account of experience in *Truth and Method* (1960/1988). His critique of the one-sidedness of concepts of "lived-experience"

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 219.

¹² See Yuriko Saito, "Aesthetics of the Everyday", in *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹³ Richard Shusterman, "Aesthetic Experience: From Analysis to Eros", p. 219.

¹⁴ Cf. Thomas S. Eberle, "Photographing as Creative and Communicative Action", in *Communication, Culture, and Creativity*, edited by H. Knoblauch, M. Jacobs, and R. Tuma, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2014, pp. 137–38.

¹⁵ Richard Shusterman, "Aesthetic Experience: From Analysis to Eros", p. 217.

(*Erlebnis*), the “aesthetic consciousness” and “differentiation”, and further inquiry into the essential structure of experience (*Erfahrung*) is crucial: this critique not only bring into attention the historical and dialectical or transformative elements of the experience (since as a hermeneutic process it includes a living relationship to tradition and does not leave the experiencing self-unchanged), it also offers powerful arguments against the idea of aesthetic experience as “discontinuity of experiences” by showing how this is integrated into the hermeneutic continuity of one’s experience, through the unity and continuity of self-understanding and its element of self-knowledge.¹⁶ Within this theoretical framework, the discreteness of one’s aesthetic experiences – as correlated with daily phenomena and with art or as distinct from moral ones – is not absolute, since all these are integrated into the unity and continuity of the flow of experience, hence into the whole of one’s life.

A brief analysis of the German terms *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, both employed to designate experience but from different angles, is helpful for further clarification of this idea. The basic differentiation from a phenomenological viewpoint is, as noted by Thomas Eberle, that in lived experience, *Erleben*, “our consciousness is intentionally directed to the phenomena that are perceived”. Instead *Erfahrung* involves a time perspective: it is “looking back, reflecting on past lived experiences”; in this, “we use interpretative, typifying schemes to make sense of our past lived experience and thereby constitute ‘experiences’”. In other words, these are not opposite but complementary modes in which our consciousness constitutes experiences: “in a monothetic mode, as a unity in a single grasp, or in a polythetic mode, as they have incrementally developed, step by step”.¹⁷

The complementarity of the two modes of experience was also emphasized in a different line of thought, the life-philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey who was the first to give a conceptual function to the word *Erlebnis* in his famous work *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (1922, translated as *Poetry and Experience*, 1985). This complementarity is expressed as a distinction between the immediacy with which something real is grasped, or what is directly given in consciousness as its ultimate unit, *Erlebnis*,¹⁸ and “experience as accumulated knowledge”, *Erfahrung*, which suggests a stock-taking of accumulated experiences, while the former suggests the

¹⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* [1960], Second Edition, London, Sheed and Ward, 1988, pp. 55–63, 85–89, 320–24.

¹⁷ Thomas S. Eberle, “Photographing as Creative and Communicative Action”, in op. cit. pp. 137.

¹⁸ Dilthey, Wilhelm, *Poetry and Experience* [1922], in Vol. V, in *Selected Works*, R.A. Makkreel and F. Rodi (eds.), Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1985; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 55–59.

on-goingness of experience.¹⁹ Yet, as Highmore further notes in his book *Ordinary Lives* (2011), in Dilthey's view Erlebnis is not simply a sentient experience but it is foundational to a sense of self precisely because it can be singled out from the continuum of everyday life as a meaningful unit.²⁰

These basic delineations could be further tainted with affective or contrasted colors as, for example, in case of Walter Benjamin's twofold notion of experience in his essays on Paris and some literary motifs in Baudelaire, collected in *Illuminations* (1969). In Benjamin's essays, Erfahrung suggests "the reassuring familiarity and continuity of a coherently assimilated past", since it is "fully integrated by the subject into a meaningfully and coherently organized experience". Instead Erlebnis means for him the "shock of the new", and is criticized as "sensational experience that is lived through and registered as shock or fleeting fragments of information and feeling".²¹ This "intense lived experience" is described by Benjamin in terms of a fusing unity between subject and object, which seems to overcome a clear distinction between the two. Yet, as Shusterman notes, although such theory of fusion may suggest the idea of experience without a clear sense of substantive subjecthood (allegedly dissolved in the fusion), it still maintains the phenomenological character of aesthetic experience,²² already exposed.

Even in case of such contrasted modes of experience, it is not difficult for Everyday Aesthetics to fully take them over, since it already addresses aesthetic experience as also including the negative – unpleasant emotional states, such as boredom, ambivalence, confusion, and so on (see, for example, Saito 2007; Berleant 2010; Highmore 2011; Melchionne 2011). As Saito recently remarks, this focus on negative aesthetics is important because it leads to EA's activist dimension, insofar "the action we undertake motivated by negative aesthetics in daily life has a direct impact on life". This is also seen as a means to differentiate EA discourse from the prevailing mode of aesthetic analysis (of art and nature) from the spectator's point of view.²³ However, neither of the two modes of experience, Erlebnis and Erfahrung, is reducible to a spectator's contemplation. Nor do they impede the discourse of an action-oriented aesthetics.

¹⁹ Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives*. Studies in the Everyday, p. 41.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 41–42.

²¹ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, New York, Schocken, 1969, pp. 156–59, 162–64; Richard Shusterman, "Aesthetic Experience: From Analysis to Eros", p. 217.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 227.

²³ Yuriko Saito, "Aesthetics of the Everyday", in *op. cit.*, pp. 7–8.

The everyday and the “Life-World”

Next, for better conceptualizing everyday life, it is useful to call in the phenomenological analysis (Husserl, Schutz) of the inter subjective aspect of the *Lebenswelt*, “life-world” or “world of lived experiences”. This offers powerful lines of argument in defending a conception of the everyday as inter-subjectively shared with others and thus allows us to outline a coherent ontology of everyday aesthetic life.

The concept of “life-world” introduced by Edmund Husserl in his *Ideas II* and largely analyzed in the third part of *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936/1970) enfolds a rich, multi-faceted sense. It can be understood as: a dynamic “horizon” in which a person lives; a pre-given basis of all shared human experiences; and a communal “world” of socially, historically and culturally constituted meanings. Hence it includes both personal and inter subjective dimensions, and constitutes the unity of the flow of one’s experience which is anterior to discreteness of experiences and necessary to it.²⁴

Within the EA accounts of the everyday, the concept of “life-world” was already referred by Naukkarinen (2013), in the sense of a basis on which other layers of life and culture are built, when developing his idea of everyday (life) around the kernel of “my everyday now”,²⁵ thus stressing the personal dimension of the everyday. Other authors have mostly considered its inter subjective aspect, the “everyday” being qualified as the common ground of experience which connects individuals, activities, and histories.²⁶ Of course, the two dimensions of the everyday do not oppose each other, but suppose each other. Likewise, the everyday should not be thought of as absolutely one and the same for all. In fact, as evidenced by the phenomenological analysis (Copoeru 2011), “the world of everyday life is neither unique nor uniform; there are always private worlds in which we find ourselves always-already immersed”. Yet, even if “everyday life vanishes in a changing plurality of objective contexts or symbolic formations that hardly could be brought together under one clear-cut name”,²⁷ philosophy can search for the common features that emerge from the background of such multiple particularities.

²⁴ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* [1935/54], translated by David Carr, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970, pp.102–268; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 217–21.

²⁵ Ossi Naukkarinen, “What is ‘Everyday’ in Everyday Aesthetics?”, pp. 2, 7.

²⁶ See, for example, the anthology by Stephen Johnstone, *The Everyday: Documents of Contemporary Art*, London, Whitechapel Gallery, and Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 2008, and the review by Jennifer Dyer, in *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal of Visual Culture* Vol. 13, 2008, p. 63.

²⁷ Ion Copoeru, “Vie quotidienne et normativité”, in: *La phénoménologie comme philosophie première. Mémoires des Annales de Phénoménologie*, edited by Karel Novotny, Alexander Schnell and László Tengelyi, Prague, Filosofia, 2011, p. 281.

The inter subjective dimension of the everyday is even strongly emphasized in the seminal analysis of the life-world by Alfred Schutz (1962) in the context of the problem of social reality. According to this phenomenological-sociological viewpoint (summarized by Eberle 2014), the world of everyday life is our paramount reality; it is the inter-subjectively shared reality of pragmatic action, where we are awake and working in standard time. The everyday world of working is the archetype of our everyday experience of reality, as distinct from other realities experienced as "finite provinces of meaning", such as the personal worlds of dreams, of imageries and phantasms, as well as the worlds of art, of religious experience, of scientific contemplation and so on.²⁸ Thus the everyday world is experienced as meaningful, as pre-interpreted, and as inter-subjectively shared with others. Within such conception of the mundane world, which includes the aesthetic, the aesthetics of everyday does not constitute a separate, finite province of meaning.²⁹

Among the Everyday Aesthetics proponents, Kevin Melchionne has devoted a particular interest in developing an appropriate ontology of everyday life to ground EA. As he notes about daily life, its "ordinariness" and "everydayness" mean a flow of experiences and actions, in which the aesthetic ones should not be taken as isolated, cut off slices, nor as lacking aesthetic value or significance, since "what matters is the routine, habit, or practice, the cumulative rather than individual effect", and "how each discrete aesthetic experience is rooted in the pattern of everyday life". The pervasiveness of "the aesthetic", built into the fabric of everyday life, and the on-goingness of its experience are, in his view, foundational for a properly construed EA.³⁰ Nevertheless, these features are then employed to support the idea of the radically distinctiveness of everyday aesthetic experience, which would be mostly private, from the art's standing-out, public experience and "world". Hence the radical distinctiveness of Everyday Aesthetics' concepts too, which are reassessed beyond the strictures of art.³¹

The interesting analysis by Melchionne of the ongoing nature of the aesthetic experience in daily, ordinary occurrences (yet in them alone) is impeded by the way in which this is thereafter subordinated to the idea of the overall

²⁸ Schutz, Alfred, *Collected Papers Vol. 1 – The Problem of Social Reality*, edited by M. Natanson and H. L. van Breda, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1962, pp. 213–32; Thomas S. Eberle, "Photographing as Creative and Communicative Action", in op. cit., pp. 139.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 140.

³⁰ Melchionne, Kevin, "Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life: A Reply to Dowling", *British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 51, No. 4, 2011, pp. 438–40.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 441–22. For an analysis of this "monadic-isolation premise of EA" and its theoretical impact, see Dan Eugen Rațiu, "Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: On Recent Controversies about the Aesthetic and Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life", pp. 12–13, 23.

discontinuous nature of one's aesthetic experience (in everyday context vs. art world contexts): in his view, any break in the on-going daily, private aesthetic experience is also a radical change in nature for the experience itself, as "everydayness substantially changes how we value our experiences".³² This is because he fails to recognize the full dialectic of continuity-and-discreteness of experience in the *unity or totality of one's life*. It is therefore important to consider the everyday aesthetic experience as being both distinct and integrated into the continuous flux of one's experiences, as well as related to one's *whole life*.

The philosophical background on which this makes sense can be sketched by drawing on Simmel's analysis of the "fragmentary character of life" (written in 1916, republished in 2012), which could help us to understand the dialectic of continuity-and-fragmentation of life-worlds.

Simmel conceptualizes human "life" in a dynamic, holistic manner as an embodied stream of consciousness directed toward "contents" of experience. The matter of experience is shaped by "forms", evolved in life's higher stages of self-reflection, and in that process life constitutes for itself a world of mental contents. Thus the "world", which according to him is a formal concept, primarily designates a discrete "totality of contents of mind and experience".³³ By "world", is also meant "the sum and order of possible things and events that can be arranged into a continuum of some kind according to any kind of overarching principle".³⁴ Hence there exist for the human mind multiple discrete and self-subsistent worlds of value and meaning: not only a "real" world in a practical sense of the term but also a religious, a scientific, and an artistic world which fundamentally share the same and all content of experience, but articulated into very different forms. As mental contents, these worlds are distinct from their historical realizations, which as worlds within historical life remain particular and one-sided, and do not achieve any full and ideal completeness.³⁵

Within this framework and considering the thesis of the parallelism of categorial worlds, the idea of life as fragmentary in character is a matter of perspective on life, in other words, of different views of life's contents. Specifically, this idea results from a view of life from the perspective of these particular-discrete categorial worlds, which is a view of life's contents "from the outside", as things and events, as works and bodies of knowledge, as regularities and values. According to Simmel, life is fragmentary in the sense of a unique relationship that an individual led life takes up to these

³² Kevin Melchionne, "Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life: A Reply to Dowling", p. 440.

³³ Georg Simmel, "The Fragmentary Character of Life", *Theory, Culture and Society* Vol.29, No. 7/8, 2012, pp. 237–39.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 242.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 241, 243–44.

various worlds, that is, acting at the "intersection", "in-between", or "oscillating" constantly between these worlds seen as different layers of existence, and from each of them taking away only a fragment. However a different perspective, from within life as life and its dynamic process, shows life as making up a whole, a self-sufficient flow of occurrences, present in all its moments in all its entirety: "Always only one life pulses through these particles as beats of the same life, inseparable from it and therefore also inseparable from each-other".³⁶ From this perspective, then, life's character is not fragmentary.

Thus Simmel emphasizes the constant movement of life moments and fragments and its overcoming in the unity and continuity of one's life. He offers a wonderful synthetic formulation of this theory in the concluding lines of his text:

Insofar as our contents of life exist more or less in between life per se, on the one hand, and life's ideal totality of worlds, on the other hand, they become fragments. Though they are not fragments when seen from life's own standpoint but are instead more like wave-forms of life's inherent unity and continuity, they nevertheless *are* fragments as soon as we think of contents as having a unity and continuity of their own within particular categorial worlds. Then life appears to be something lived always at the intersection of multiple worlds [...] Life makes up a whole, yet so too does each categorial world. Where life and worlds intersect, they create fragments – fragments of life, fragments of worlds.³⁷

Therefore, the fragmentary aspect or discontinuity of experiencing the everyday and the art as distinct life-worlds, backed by Melchionne (2011), is not a final, single ontological feature of experience or life as such. Rather it is a matter of analytic perspective which has to be complemented, from a broader perspective of life as a whole, by the continuity of experiencing in one's life. Moreover, the apparent paradox of completeness-and-fragmentation is overcome or solved when backing the idea of the inherent unity and continuity of life, made clear in this essay by Simmel's idea of life as a flow of experience shaped by "form", and developed later in his theory of life as a limitlessly creative flow of embodied will, feeling and understanding.³⁸ To sum up, this theory helps us to understand the essential structure of the everyday life-world and its experiencing as constituted by the dialectic of continuity-and-discreteness and unity-and-differentiation.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 246–47.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 247.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 247; see also the "Editorial Note" by Austin Harrington to Simmel (2012), p. 237.

Conclusion

This article aimed at fostering a theoretical framework in order to adequately address the aesthetic experience of the everyday. I argued that an improved analytical framework for the new research area or sub-discipline called “Everyday Aesthetics” can be fostered by drawing on some insights on the essential structure of aesthetic experience and the characteristics of everyday life and life-world supported by practical-hermeneutic (Gadamer) or pragmatic philosophy (Shusterman) and transcendental of sociological phenomenology (Husserl, Schutz, Simmel). The network of concepts provided by this novel account of the everyday aesthetic experience is effective in clarifying EA’s underpinning assumptions and in exploring properly the different layers of experience that are integrated in the deployment of one’s everyday aesthetic life. Basically, this account helps us to formulate a coherent ontology of everyday aesthetic life, by emphasizing: 1) the phenomenological-intentional, embodied, meaningful and transformative character of the aesthetic experience, its contextual embeddedness as well as its continuity in the unity of the self; 2) the inter subjective nature of a subject’s experience as well as of the everyday life. Therefore, the structure of everyday aesthetic experience and the life-world appears as essentially constituted by the dialectic of continuity-and-discreteness, and unity-and-differentiation, similar to the structure of the experiencing self.

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