

Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: On Recent Controversies about the Aesthetic and the Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life*

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ABSTRACT. This article addresses controversial issues in philosophical aesthetics that are still open problems: the nature and value of the aesthetic and the aesthetic experience when approached from the standpoint of ‘aesthetics of everyday life’ (AEL). Contrasting ‘strong’ AEL approaches that consider them radically different from those in the sphere of the arts, I claim that extending the realm and scope of aesthetic(s) towards everyday life does not necessarily dismiss concepts of the aesthetic and the aesthetic experience as relentlessly shaped in relation to the arts. Drawing on ‘weak’ formulations of AEL and on theories that call attention to the new regime of contemporary art practices and experiences after the postmodern turn, I sustain this claim through the arguments of the normative aspect of the aesthetic, the changing and fluid nature of both the arts and everyday life, and their intermingling and hybridization in the continuous flux of experiences.

In this article, I investigate the expansion of the realm and scope of aesthetic(s) by the recent movement labelled ‘aesthetics of everyday life’ (AEL), aiming to reveal its implications for aesthetic theory and to question its potential to incorporate various objects, phenomena, and experiences from everyday life into one compelling explanatory framework. I address the very basic questions of aesthetics that is the nature and value of the aesthetic and aesthetic experience. Firstly, considering AEL as response to the limits of modern aesthetics, I submit that expanding its

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scope towards areas that were neglected by some mainstream approaches and reviewing its core concepts are valid strategies in order to overcome these limits. Yet, the problem is still open whether the nature of the *aesthetic* and the *aesthetic experience* as well as the corresponding concepts are radically different when approached or employed from the standpoint of 'the aesthetics of everyday life'. Secondly, contrasting 'strong' AEL approaches that consider them radically different from those in the sphere of the arts, I claim that extending the realm and scope of aesthetic(s) towards everyday life and the reflected or un-reflected aesthetic reactions that also prompt us toward decision-making and actions does not necessarily dismiss the concepts of the aesthetic, aesthetic experience, and aesthetic judgement as relentlessly shaped in relation to the arts. Instead, the corresponding phenomena and practices of everyday life and contemporary art world should be systematically examined through a comparative approach that could disclose both their common features and specific differences. In the third part, drawing on 'weak' formulations of AEL and on theories that call attention to the new regime of contemporary art practices and experiences after the postmodern turn, I sustain this claim through the arguments of the normative aspect of the aesthetic, the changing and fluid nature of both the arts and everyday life, and their intermingling and hybridization in the continuous flux of experiences. I conclude that in order to overcome the tensions and inconsistencies within 'aesthetics of everyday life' a broader conception of aesthetics is needed, able to integrate consistent views upon the embodied self, intersubjectivity and 'the ontology of everyday aesthetic life' as well as upon the aesthetic-ethic interrelations and the way in which aesthetic responses prolong in actions.

1. Aesthetics of Everyday Life: a Response to the Limits of Modern Aesthetics

In the field of philosophical aesthetics there are various claims that aesthetics should be redefined and practised differently than the former branch of modern Western philosophy and its followers have previously done. One of the major discontents regards the continuous association between aesthetics and art by which the aesthetic dimension and the artistic

institution are conflated and then insulated from ordinary human life/experience. This tradition, often defined as philosophy of art, and dealing almost exclusively with the 'high' or 'fine arts', continues to impact contemporary understandings of aesthetics as concerned with experiences that are beyond the realm of the mundane or everyday life. Likewise, the aesthetic experience is equated with the fine arts-like purely autonomous reception, contemplative, distanced, and disinterested. Various authors have tried to overcome the reputed limits of modern aesthetics or the so-called 'crisis of aesthetics' at large, by disengaging art from either speculative philosophy or its counterclaim, the formalist account. Some authors have moved towards different approaches: anthropological and sociological. For example, French philosopher Jean-Marie Schaeffer in a book with the revealing title *Adieu à l'esthétique* maintains that the solution to the crisis would mainly consist in reorienting the thinking upon the aesthetic facts towards a 'naturalistic' approach whose proper horizon is anthropological, meaning that the human being has no transcendental basis but only a genealogy and a history, thus culture taking part to his/her biological nature.¹ In contrast, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was already widely reputed as trying to demystify taste –through the social critique of 'pure' judgment– as a component of powerful social forces that establish and maintain status hierarchies. He also aimed to show through the analysis of practices and rules of art how the dominant aesthetics of disinterestedness works to support society's powerful by becoming a tool of domination. The aesthetic is thus reduced to structurally determined differences of taste.²

Other recent approaches, mostly in the Anglo-American space, tend to expand the scope and realm of the aesthetic(s) by focusing on the aesthetic character of everyday life, neglected by some trends in traditional aesthetics as well as contemporary analytic aesthetics, especially the on-

¹ Schaeffer, Jean-Marie. 2000. *Adieu à l'esthétique*. Paris: PUF, pp. 9-12, 21-22. Other revisions of modern aesthetics would consist in recuperating the hedonist dimension of the aesthetic experience in the very course of the cognitive activity, and in accepting the aesthetic judgment only as consequence of the aesthetic experience (comprising attention and appreciation), not as its constitutive condition (Ibid., pp. 30-31, 50-52).

² Bourdieu, Pierre. 1979. *La Distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Minuit; 1992. *Les Règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*. Paris: Seuil. See also Battani, Marshall. 2011. Aura, Self, and Aesthetic Experience. *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 9, pp. [1-2].

going formalist account.³ These attempts prompt a movement or a new sub-discipline labelled ‘everyday aesthetics’ or ‘aesthetics of everyday life’ (AEL), distinct from the more established art- or nature-aesthetics. Still this movement is heterogeneous, following different traditions –continental, pragmatist, and analytical– and advancing along distinct lines that address ordinary life as well as build environments and popular arts. This assortment is apparent in that Martin Heidegger himself is considered along with John Dewey (*Art and experience*, 1934) among the ‘founding fathers’ of everyday aesthetics⁴. Interesting overviews of the main trends of everyday aesthetics are already submitted by some of its proponents such as Crispin Sartwell, Tom Leddy, and Sherri Irvin⁵. Here I will briefly recall some of these trends or lines of thought without pretending to encompass all contributions: ‘participatory aesthetics’ and ‘social aesthetics’ by Arnold Berleant who was among the first authors to advocate an alternative to the tradition of separation or disinterestedness by connecting art to everyday cultural practices and embracing the social and cultural aspects of the aesthetic⁶; ‘aesthetics of human environment’ by Berleant and Allen Carlson among others that extend the area of enquiry towards environmental con-

³ It is worth mentioning that Western philosophical tradition/aesthetics used to address issues related to objects, phenomena and activities of everyday life. Hence this focus is not exclusively the merit of recent approaches mentioned below.

⁴ Haapala, Arto. 2005. On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Familiarity, Strangeness, and the Meaning of Place. In: Light, A. and J. M. Smith eds. *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.40; Sartwell, Crispin. 2003. Aesthetics of the Everyday. In: Levinson, J. ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 761, 767.

⁵ Sartwell 2003, pp. 761-770; Leddy, Tom. 2005. The Nature of Everyday Aesthetics. In Light, A. and J. M. Smith eds. *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 3-22; Irvin, Sherri. 2009. Aesthetics of the Everyday. In Davies, S. and K. Huggins, R. Hopkins, R. Stecker, D. Cooper eds. *A Companion to Aesthetics*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Willey-Blackwell, pp. 136-139.

⁶ Berleant, Arnold. 1991. *Art and Engagement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; 2005. Ideas for a Social Aesthetic. In: Light, A. and J. M. Smith eds. *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 23-38. Among the earlier works explicitly to thematize the AEL are also mentioned *Experience as Art: Aesthetics in Everyday Life* (1983) by Joseph Kupfer and *The Boundaries of Art: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Place of Art in Everyday Life* (1992) by David Novitz, as well as *Of Birds, Beasts, and Other Artist* (1988) by Ben-Ami Scharfstein. See Sartwell 2003, pp. 768-769, and Leddy 2005, p. 20.

nections⁷; ‘pragmatist aesthetics’ and ‘somaesthetics’ by Richard Shusterman that advocates the value of aesthetic experience by exploring its different roles and meanings in areas that were marginal to traditional aesthetics but that are vibrantly alive in today’s culture, including the popular music and film as well as the somatic arts of self-improvement and the wider arts of self-stylization⁸; ‘aesthetic multiculturalism’ by Crispin Sartwell among others dealing with the conceptions of art and experience of non-Western cultures where the aesthetic is integrated within everyday life⁹; ‘aesthetics of the everyday’ that extends aesthetic analysis to virtually all areas of life, trend supported by various authors such as Tom Leddy, Kevin Melchionne, Yuriko Saito, Sherri Irvin, and Christopher Dowling.¹⁰

I will next particularly address this latter trend within AEL. The typical claim of the ‘aesthetics of the everyday’ or what Dowling calls ‘aesthetics of daily life intuition’ (ADLI)¹¹ is that despite the functional and utility-driven character of much of our everyday interactions, not essen-

⁷ Berleant, A. and Allen Carlson eds. 2007. *The Aesthetics of Human Environments*. Peterborough: Broadview Press. Other relevant articles on this topic were already collected in von Bonsdorff, Pauline and Arto Haapala eds. 1999. *Aesthetics in the Human Environment*. Lahti: International Institute of Applied Aesthetics. See also Parsons, Glen and Allen Carlson. 2008. *Functional Beauty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 167.

⁸ Shusterman, Richard. 1992. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford: Blackwell; 1999. Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57(3), pp. 296-313; 2000. *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

⁹ Sartwell, Crispin. 1995. *The Art of Living: Aesthetics of the Ordinary in World Spiritual Traditions*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

¹⁰ Leddy, T. 1995. Everyday Surface Aesthetic Qualities: “Neat”, “Messy”, “Clean”, and “Dirty”. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 53(3), pp. 191-200; 2005. The Nature of Everyday Aesthetics; 2012. *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*. Peterborough: Broadview Press; Melchionne, Kevin. 1998. Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decorations, and Environmental Aesthetics. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56(2), pp. 191-200; 2011a. Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life: A Reply to Dowling. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 51(4), pp. 437-442; Saito, Yuriko. 2001. Everyday Aesthetics. *Philosophy and Literature* 25, pp. 87-95; 2007. *Everyday Aesthetics*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press; Irvin, Sherri. 2008. The Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic in Ordinary Experience. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 48(1), pp. 29-44; Dowling, Christopher. 2010. The Aesthetics of Daily Life. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 50(3), pp. 225-242.

¹¹ Dowling 2010, pp. 225-226, 232-233.

tially connected to art and nature, our daily lives are replete with aesthetic character and afford occasions for aesthetic experience and appreciation. Hence a central strategy (already employed by Dewey), although not entirely shared, is to deflate traditional distinctions between the fine arts and other domains of life. The project of the ‘aesthetics of the everyday’, typically, is to redress this situation by providing a conception of the aesthetic that better reflects its pervasiveness¹². A widely used one is the ‘transformational’ function or conception of the aesthetic, aiming to ‘revise or enlarge the aesthetic field’, rather than to ‘define, delimit, and explain the aesthetic status quo’ as does the ‘demarcational’ one.¹³

The *scope of aesthetics* is expanded to include areas of everyday life previously neglected – consumer goods, artefacts, the urban or suburban built environment and ambience with which we interact on daily basis, including weather, other domains of life such as sport, sex, and everyday decision-making, and the ordinary domestic practices of homemaking such as cleaning, discarding, purchasing, using tools, cooking, dressing up and so on. Accordingly, the *realm of the aesthetic* – i.e. ‘the whole apparatus of aesthetic experience, aesthetic objects, aesthetic attitude, aesthetic quality, aesthetic value, aesthetic pleasures, and their ilk’¹⁴ – is revised or extended to include not only states of mind but also mere 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 private life. The way Sherri Irvin exemplify the ‘pervasiveness of the aesthetic in ordinary experience’ is illustrative for this recent line of thought:

Being in the room you are in right now, with its particular visual features and sounds; sitting the way you are sitting, perhaps crookedly in an uncomfortable chair; feeling the air currents on your skin – all of these things impart a texture to your experience that, I will argue, should be regarded as aesthetic [...] I drink tea out of a large mug that is roughly egg-shaped, and I clasp it with both hands to warm my palms. When I am petting my cat, I crouch over his body so

¹² Parsons and Carlson 2008, p. 168; Irvin 2009, p. 136.

¹³ For these contrasting functions/conceptions of the aesthetic, see Shusterman 2000, 21–22.

¹⁴ See Gary Iseminger. 2003. Aesthetic Experience. In Levinson, J. ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 107, 109.

that I can smell his fur, which at different places smells like trapped sunshine or roasted nuts, a bit like almonds but not quite.¹⁵

Yet a methodological tension continues to animate this sub-discipline of aesthetics. As Irvin has observed, for validating its disciplinary status AEL ‘must demonstrate that, at some level, is fundamentally concerned with the same concepts and phenomena that have preoccupied mainstream aesthetics’; conversely, AEL has to prove its appeal and distinctive contribution, ‘by virtue of introducing a distinctive subject matter, methodology, or set of aesthetic concepts’.¹⁶ This tension and consecutive approaches within AEL leaves place for contentions regarding the ‘triviality’ of the concept of the aesthetic that is its meaningless if broaden to include any experience ‘just by virtue of having a qualitative feeling’, as well as the significance of AEL itself if tending to emphasize such idiosyncratic or ordinary aesthetic experiences and objects. These issues are still controversial and subjected to questioning: Is there some aesthetic state of mind or experience common to our interaction with artworks, nature, and everyday-ordinary objects and phenomena? Is it consistent to cast on everyday objects the same aesthetic regard traditionally reserved for artworks? If not, how to secure the ‘non-triviality’ of the concept of the aesthetic?¹⁷

The answers are different and range from a *weak* pole to a *strong* pole or version of AEL, largely depending on how art- and non-art aesthetic experience/appreciation are thought of lying along a continuum rather than on opposite sides of a sharp divide. Some proponents hold that ‘an investigation of the aesthetics of daily life should follow the standards upheld in the aesthetics of art’ (Dowling 2010) or endorse a ‘transformative conception’¹⁸ of the aesthetic appreciation of daily life, accepting Dewey’s structural criteria –unity, closure– but only on their weaker senses as relevant for securing the aesthetic character of *an* ‘ordinary’ experience (Irvin 2008), or look for ‘the extraordinary in the ordinary’ backing up a conception of the aesthetic experience as experience of object with ‘aura’ (Leddy

¹⁵ Irvin 2008, pp. 30–31. This viewpoint is open to contentions regarding the ‘triviality’ of the concept of the aesthetic, which are addressed below.

¹⁶ Irvin 2009, p. 138. The next quotations are from p. 139.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 137. See also Iseminger 2003, p. 113.

¹⁸ For this qualification see Dowling 2010, p. 233.

2012). Instead others mostly draw attention to and strive for safeguarding ‘the *everydayness* of the everyday’, ‘the *ordinariness* of the ordinary’ and their appropriate aesthetic appreciation (Saito 2007), since ‘everydayness substantially changes how we value our experiences’ and ‘how we apply conceptions of aesthetic value’ (Melchionne 2011). Therefore, other layers of distinction within AEL hail from answering the questions whether the aesthetic judgment is constitutive of everyday aesthetic experience or only is its byproduct, and whether this experience is idiosyncratic-private or there is a role to play for the *sensus communis* or intersubjective engagement. Eventually at stake are a broader conception of aesthetics as philosophical discipline and some critical philosophical issues: a conception of the self and intersubjectivity as well as what Melchionne calls ‘a substantive conception of everyday life’, as a compelling framework for understanding everyday aesthetics.

2. The ‘Strong’ AEL: The Radical Rethinking of the Aesthetic and the Aesthetic Experience

In order to address these issues, I will next tackle some of the approaches that have recently developed as a more expansive version of aesthetics of everyday life (AEL) or what Dowling calls the ‘strong’ formulation of ‘aesthetics of daily life intuition’, ADLI-*strong*: ‘Experiences from daily life can afford *paradigm* instances of aesthetic experiences. Such experiences are not bound by the limitations and conventions that temper discussions of aesthetic value in the philosophy of art’.¹⁹ I mainly focus on one of the ground-breaking pieces of this new sub-discipline within aesthetics, Yuriko Saito’s book on *Everyday Aesthetics* (2007) and other related articles or developments,²⁰ as well as the previously mentioned accounts by Melchionne (1998) and his further defence of ADLI-*strong* after Dowling’s

¹⁹ Dowling 2010, p. 241.

²⁰ Saito, Yuriko. 2002. Environmental Directions for Aesthetics and the Arts. In: Berleant, A. ed. *Environment and the Arts*. Aldershot, Burlington VT: Ashgate, pp. 171-185; 2005. The Aesthetics of Weather. In: Light, A. and J. M. Smith eds. *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 156-176; 2011. The Power of the Aesthetic. *Aesthetic Pathways* 1(2), pp. 11-25; 2012. Everyday Aesthetics and Artification. *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Special Volume 4 *Artification*, pp. [1-11].

intervention.²¹

Saito's account starts from the common contention against the modern mainstream formulation of aesthetics that it neglected the everyday aesthetic experience because of its almost exclusive emphasis on artwork as model for the aesthetic object and the contemplative, spectator-like 'special' experience. Her main aims are to diversify and expand the realm of the aesthetic towards the everyday, but as a separate, completely distinct sphere, and thus 'to liberate the aesthetic discourse from the confines of a specific kind of object or experience'.²²

The reasons brought up by Saito when looking for a larger scope and distinct foundation of everyday aesthetics are both *theoretic* and *practical*. While I agree with some of these reasons, I also try to demonstrate that the radical implications supposed by her are not consistent with these premises. On the one hand, Saito argues for the necessity of everyday aesthetics to *complement* the art-centred aesthetics and the special experience-based aesthetics because they miss a large part of our everyday aesthetic experiences. According to these accounts, the core of the aesthetic consists of features either of objects or of our experience. An 'aesthetic object' consequently comes to be characterized by those features typically found in art objects: determinate spatial and temporal boundaries/frames, authorial identity, relative stability and permanence, and qualities such as coherent design, dramatic tension, or intense expressiveness. Likewise, the aesthetic experience *par excellence* is conceived as 'special moment', disinterested, distanced, disengaged, and standing out from the flow of ordinary experience in general.²³

²¹ Melchionne 2011a, and 2011b. A New Problem for Aesthetics. *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 9, pp. [1-9].

²² Saito 2007, pp. 40-41, 43.

²³ *Ibid.*, 4-5, 9-15; Saito 2002, p. 171. The accounts mentioned by Saito by no means exhaust the standpoints on the aesthetic experience. There is ongoing controversy and different accounts of what is distinctive about it were elaborated in last decades. No place here to develop such topic. I only mention, following Iseminger, two different, more specific ways of approaching aesthetic experience: as something characterized primarily by 'what it is like' to undergo it (a phenomenological conception), or involving direct or non-inferential way of coming to know something, which deserves to be thought of as aesthetic (an epistemic conception). Iseminger 2003, pp. 99-100, 115. For another typology of the accounts of the aesthetic/experience, see below Part III.1.

These notions are deemed by Saito as limitations set by the art- and contemplation-oriented dimensions of mainstream aesthetics that everyday aesthetics should overcome. Firstly, by redefining the realm of the aesthetic as ‘including any reaction we form toward the sensuous and/or design qualities of any object, phenomenon, or activity’. One might agree that the scope of investigation is enriched by also capturing objects and practices that share different features: frameless character, absence of definite and identifiable object-hood and authorship, transience and impermanence, our literal engagement, and the primacy of practical values.²⁴ Yet these features should not be identified as ‘non-art’ features (I will develop this argument in part III.2), as Saito does for supporting further implications of this redefinition. The second strategy is to assert the *action-oriented* dimension of everyday aesthetics, thus including in the realm of the aesthetic those seemingly insignificant and sometimes almost automatic, un-reflected responses that propel us toward everyday decision and action, without any accompanying contemplative appreciation. Without excluding the ‘gem-like’ experiences (analogous to those related to art), the focus of Saito’s everyday aesthetics is on the aspects of ‘aesthetic life’ that have traditionally been ignored in a serious academic discourse due to their ordinary and mundane nature: the inescapable interactions with everyday artefacts, environments and ambience, the domestic chores or activities such as cooking, eating, purchasing, dressing up, packaging, cleaning, repairing, discarding, as well as everyday aesthetic qualities such as ‘clean’, ‘dirty’, ‘neat’, ‘messy’, ‘organized’, and ‘disorganized’.²⁵

The contention of triviality and insignificance that this approach could face is discarded by Saito, on the other hand, by practical reasons. Everyday aesthetics proves its distinctive core and contribution as well as its significance from a practical perspective: ‘the power of the aesthetic’ to affect various aspects of our lives and the state of society and the world, such as the ‘serious moral, social, political, and environmental consequences’ of our everyday aesthetic preferences, judgments and responses. The topic of ‘the power of the aesthetic’ is crucial in Saito’s account and recently revisited in other articles, the mission of everyday aesthetics being accordingly

²⁴ Saito 2007, pp. 9, 17.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 18-28, 142.

to cultivate aesthetic literacy and a vigilant attitude toward the use of this power, and to explore ways of harnessing it to serve our collective project of better world-making.²⁶

This kind of account has further implications, in Saito's view much more radical: firstly, the denial that an art-centred aesthetics and a 'special' experience-based aesthetics could accommodate the everyday aesthetic life.²⁷ Her argument is that these approaches cannot fully and adequately account for many aspects of our aesthetic life –e.g. forming an opinion, making a decision or engaging an action guided by aesthetic considerations –, since they ignore the very nature of everyday objects, phenomena, and activities that is the *everydayness* of the everyday and the *ordinariness* of the ordinary aesthetic experience.²⁸ One might agree that everyday aesthetics should be attentive to their distinctive features, i.e. their commonplace, ordinary, mundane and routine character. Yet one might object that contemporary art and the analysis derived from its aesthetics do also play an important role in making us noticing these features and in approaching the ordinariness of the ordinary aesthetic experience without disregarding its specific differences or the common features by which it deserves to be thought of as 'aesthetic' (I will develop this argument in part III.1).

A second implication is the idea that everyday phenomena and actions require aesthetic insights and concepts distinct from those needed to account for art and nature. According to Saito, some sharp distinctions must be drawn between experiences of everyday life and art, such as: practical concerns *versus* non-instrumental values; impermanent *vs.* lasting aesthetic value; multi-sensory and bodily experience *vs.* the 'higher' senses experience.²⁹ The notion that the aesthetic dimension of everyday life should be examined on its own terms is founded on the assumption that it operates quietly independent, isolated from the experience of art. Again, one might object that this assumption is not consistent with the ontol-

²⁶ Saito 2011, pp. 11-25, and 2012, p. [1]. Some examples of how seemingly innocuous everyday aesthetic taste and preferences can lead to environmental harm are the objections in the US to wind turbines and laundry hanging by presuming them to be eyesores, and the wide spread obsession with weed-free, green lawns that require unsustainable cultivation and maintenance. Saito 2007, pp. 56-57, 65-68.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 43. See also Dowling 2010, p. 241.

²⁸ Saito 2007, pp. 48-52, 202-203.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 40, 43, 52-53. See also Dowling 2010, p. 238.

ogy of everyday aesthetic life and the conception of the self supposed by everyday aesthetics (I will develop this argument in part III.3).

Against the concept of 'aesthetic attitude', Saito purports a broader concept of 'aesthetic life' including positive (pleasant) or negative (unpleasant) aesthetic experiences, derived from our direct experiences of visual, tactile and bodily sensations as well as further thoughts, judgments (aesthetic and 'moral-aesthetic'), and actions. The recognition of this complex, immersive, and multisensory mode of aesthetic experience, readily applicable to everyday life, was inspired by the environmental aesthetics that pays attention to environments, rather than to isolated objects, as well as the new environmental ethic called 'civic environmentalism' that is interested in the dimension of personal engagement and the practical-moral implications of our aesthetic preferences.³⁰ Eventually Saito's account aims toward an *alternative* to the art-bond aesthetic theory, a pluralist theory contrasting the established mono-framework for aesthetic discourse.

Melchionne's account is akin with this radical tentative to rethink the concept of the aesthetic beyond the strictures of art: the broader concept he submits includes all everyday responses such as ordinary, trivial, mere pleasures. Yet there are two critical considerations to endorse for such 'strong' aesthetics of everyday life: '(1) the influence of pervasiveness on aesthetic value; and (2) the relative unimportance of critical discourse'.³¹ The pervasiveness is meant by him to ensure the non-triviality or significance of ordinary aesthetic experiences, by treating them as integrated in the pattern of everyday life, not as discrete, 'autonomous objects', 'each to be considered on its own terms, like paintings in a gallery'. The irrelevance of critical discourse, deemed as 'a byproduct of aesthetic experience', is meant to secure the latter as an idiosyncratic-private experience and thus to limit the role of the intersubjective engagement, 'at least insofar as intersubjectivity is defined by discourse'. This view entails even further skepticism about the critical discourse that 'can have negative consequences for the reliability of our self-understanding, including our understanding of our aesthetic experience'. Melchionne's skepticism is resumed

³⁰ Saito 2002, p. 182, and 2007, pp. 9-10, 100-102, 203-204, 212-213. See also Irvin 2009, p. 138.

³¹ Melchionne 2011a, pp. 437, 439. Next quotes are from pp. 439 and 441.

in a subsequent article introducing the problem of ‘aesthetic unreliability’ that is ‘the difficulty of grasping or knowing our aesthetic experience and the consequent confusion of what we take as our taste’. According to him, this problem requires us to reconsider the very cognitive and affective bases of taste as well as the transparent and unproblematic notion of contemplation (and of self) presupposed by ‘academic’ aesthetics. Against this, Melchionne holds a more complicated view of aesthetic experience by which he means ‘the mental states or episodes that occur when attending to aesthetic objects like works of art, especially the affective quality of our responses’. This may be marked by boredom, ambivalence and confusion, in addition to contemplation and tranquil satisfactions emphasized by conventional models of aesthetic experience.³²

Considering previous analysis, my point is that the validity of claiming to find everyday aesthetics as completely distinct from an art-oriented aesthetics depends not only on the concept of the aesthetic one has but also on the concept of *art* as well as the conceptions of *self* and *intersubjectivity*. On the one hand, Saito’s definition of the aesthetic and strategy to diversify-expand its realm are voluntarily similar to Noël Carroll’s ‘deflationary account’ of aesthetic experience, in which ‘design appreciation and quality detection are each disjunctively sufficient conditions for aesthetic experience’.³³ But the embracing by Saito of this content-oriented definition is not consistent with her refusal of art/artworks as model for everyday aesthetics, since Carroll explicitly limits discussion to the aesthetic experience of artworks (although he deliberately bypasses the question whether there is some aesthetic state of mind common to our intercourse with artworks and with nature³⁴). On the other hand, if one is interested in questions about the self and intersubjectivity to answer questions about the aesthetic and aesthetic experience, then it is hard to see how Saito’s and Melchionne’s views could be a satisfactory answer. My claim is that extending the scope and realm of aesthetic(s) towards everyday life and those reflected or un-reflected aesthetic reactions that also prompt us toward decision-making and actions does not necessarily dismiss the

³² Melchionne 2011b, pp. [1-2, 6-7].

³³ Carroll, Noël. 2001. *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 60. Saito 2007, pp. 9-11, 20.

³⁴ Iseminger 2003, p. 113.

concepts of the aesthetic, aesthetic experience, and aesthetic judgement as relentlessly shaped in relation to the arts. Instead the corresponding phenomena/practices of everyday life and contemporary art world should be systematically examined through a comparative approach that could disclose both their common features and specific differences, while also paying attention to the underpinning views upon the self and intersubjectivity that should provide a consistent framework of analysis.

3. *The ‘Weak’ AEL: a Normative but Fluid, Hybrid Model of Aesthetic Experience*

In the third part, I advance the concept of a normative but fluid, hybrid model of the aesthetic and aesthetic experience. To defend it, I will develop a threefold argumentation drawing on ‘weak’ formulations of AEL and on theories that call attention to the new regime of contemporary art practices and experiences –and therefore to new concepts of art and aesthetic experience– after the postmodern turn. The arguments are:

- 1) the normative aspect of the aesthetic –experience and judgement– pertains to both art and everyday life, entailing a view upon *intersubjectivity* able to secure the non-triviality (significance) of the aesthetic;
- 2) the changing, fluid nature of art, nowadays different than in modern age, which involves a consistent view upon *art* capable of ensuring a common ground of aesthetic theory;
- 3) the intermingling and hybridization of the art and everyday life in the continuous flux of experiences, unfolding views upon the *self* and *everyday life* equipped to provide a consistent framework of analysis.

3.1. The Normative Aspect of the Aesthetic Experience and Judgement

The first argument is built on a different formulation of AEL or, as maintained by Dowling, the ADLI-*weak*: ‘The concept of the aesthetic, at work in discussions of the value of art can be *extended to include* experiences from daily life’³⁵ This extension firstly depends on how one thinks of the con-

³⁵ Dowling 2007, p. 241.

cept of the *aesthetic*, especially the core that differentiate it from the *non-aesthetic* –modes of perception or attitudes, experiences, pleasures, properties, etc. Various attempts have been made to define its distinguishing characteristics, among which two major types of accounts labelled by Noël Carroll ‘affect-oriented’ and ‘content-oriented’. First-type accounts mainly rely on concepts of disinterestedness and distancing, generally accepted as differentiae of ‘aesthetic’ perception or attitude or experience. Despite Dickie’s attacks on this traditional conception because it confuses motivation with attention, at least in some definitions ‘the aesthetic’ still designates the *nature* of an attitude or experience or pleasure, which is ‘special’ in the sense already mentioned or with an emphasis on cognitive elements therein. Latter-type accounts characterize ‘the aesthetic’ in terms of content, holding that it refers to certain properties or qualities, sensuous but not reducible to them (e.g. design features are added by Saito in agreement with Carroll’s deflationary account); thus it is the *content* of the experience that makes it ‘aesthetic’: a specimen of experience is aesthetic if it involves detection of aesthetic qualities/properties or appreciation of formal relations of the object.³⁶ Both types of accounts were accommodated to everyday aesthetic life, yet by revising the realm of ‘the aesthetic’ in a manner running the risk to overlook what differentiate it from the non-aesthetic: either by including *any* ‘qualitative feeling’ or ‘affective quality of our responses’ and emphasizing the private, ordinary, idiosyncratic ones, without discursive mediation (Irvin, Melchionne), or by excluding properties typically found in art objects as a valid ground for defining everyday aesthetic experience (Saito). These strategies and their implications require further consideration if the aesthetic character of everyday experiences is to be maintained. In order to ensure this objective, I will employ the term ‘aesthetic’ in a sense agreed by the other version of AEL that preserves the core of specifically aesthetic experience both in art and everyday life.

The weak formulation of aesthetics of daily life (Dowling) firstly upholds the Kantian distinction between ‘agreeable’ –that which gratifies the senses, inciting mere subjective and idiosyncratic avowals– and ‘beauty’ –a

³⁶ Carroll, Noël. 1999. *Philosophy of Arts: A Contemporary Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, esp. Chapter 4 Art and Aesthetic Experience, pp. 156-203; Levinson, Jerrold. 2003. Philosophical Aesthetics: an Overview. In: Levinson, J. ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 9-12; Saito 2007, pp. 9-11.

source of disinterested pleasure, whose judgment poses a peculiar ‘normative’ aspect.³⁷ By the normative aspect of the aesthetic judgement Dowling means its appropriateness, corrigibility, and shareability, or possibility of consensus or criticism, as for Kant. Precisely this normative aspect that renders it of significant interest to others is the core of ‘the aesthetic’. Therefore I would state, in accordance with Dowling, that we are in the realm of the aesthetic when we find ourselves ‘arguing with others over appearances’ and ‘insisting that one’s aesthetic estimations should be acknowledged and respected’.³⁸ My point is that the aesthetic requires a sense of universal validity, understood in a Kantian manner as claim to agreement of everyone, and an idea of *sensus communis* or intersubjective engagement. Thus the possibility of individuals to judge by mere feelings but also to share and communicate feelings/pleasures or experiences would be considered as the inescapable core of the aesthetic.

The grounds upon which the ‘strong’ AEL draws the radical distinction between experiences of art and everyday life are challengeable from the standpoint of the normative conception of the aesthetic defended by Dowling that I am following here. He formulates the view that Saito in *Everyday Aesthetics* and in particular Irvin in ‘The Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic in Ordinary Experience’ are in danger to lose sight of the normative aspect of the aesthetic, i.e. its core, by equivocating between genuine ‘aesthetic value’ and mere ‘pleasure’, and thus trivializing what counts as the aesthetic.³⁹ Melchionne’s defence is that strong everyday aesthetics does not erase the distinction between agreeable and beautiful, but apply it in a different way: ‘when something is agreeable but pervasive, then it is likely to be more than trivial’.⁴⁰ Yet it is worth mentioning that, for Dowling, the distinction between the aesthetic and the merely pleasurable is not based on the division of senses, ‘higher’ vs. ‘lower’ (such as for Saito or Irvin) or on its more or less extension/integration in a pattern of daily life (such as for Melchionne), but on the normative aspect of the aesthetic judgement.

³⁷ Dowling, 2010, p. 228. Kant, Immanuel. 1952 [1790]. *Critique of Judgement*. Translated in English by J. Meredith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, § 7, p. 51.

³⁸ Dowling 2010, pp. 229, 238-240. For this viewpoint, see also Melchionne 2011a, pp. 438-439, who holds an opposite stance.

³⁹ Dowling 2010, pp. 226-227.

⁴⁰ Melchionne 2011a, pp. 440.

This is the main reason for aesthetics of daily life to follow the standards upheld in the aesthetics of art (and nature), notably the normative aspect of the aesthetic as utilized in the judgement of art, which has to be appropriate and interesting—*aesthetically* significant. Within this framework, as Dowling points out, values such as critical significance and discursiveness ‘can be extended to include experiences from daily life’, in the prospect to develop an art-centric aesthetic theory able to accommodate aesthetics of everyday life.⁴¹

I would add that Saito’s approach does not elude a normative claim but considers it differently than the stance previously mentioned, as having to do with the relation of the aesthetic to the *moral* aspect. For Saito, as for Japanese aesthetics, the aesthetic sensibility is often inseparable from moral values: while stating their independence, she accepts an overlap or even fusion between aesthetic and moral aspects in everyday life. Yet this overlap generates a tension between what she unconventionally calls ‘descriptive’ and ‘normative’ functions of everyday aesthetics: the normative functioning is associated with traditional aesthetic theories that de-emphasized moral and practical considerations and tried to render the ordinary extraordinary, whereas the descriptive approach pulls in the opposite direction by preserving and focusing on the ordinary mode and moral-practical concerns.⁴²

The notion of the fusion between the aesthetic and the moral in everyday life is largely shared within AEL proponents. Irvin as well aims at harnessing the aesthetic in service of the moral, suggesting that aesthetic attention to everyday experience is likely to contribute to our ability to pursue moral aims.⁴³ Still this emphasis on more effective moral agency is not consistent with the lack of a conception of intersubjectivity. The empathic identification with the other supposed by the fusion between aesthetic and moral values in both everyday life and the arts have as prerequisite a certain understanding of *sensus communis* and intersubjective engagement. The same for the so called ‘moral-aesthetic judgments’ of artefacts that Saito examines in the fifth chapter of *Everyday Aesthetics*, by which one is attributing moral qualities to them, such as ‘respect’, ‘con-

⁴¹ Dowling 2010, pp. 229-230, 232.

⁴² Saito 2007, pp. 244-245.

⁴³ Irvin 2008, pp. 30, 42-44.

siderateness', 'sensitivity', 'caring', and 'humility'. As Dowling notes⁴⁴, to require that there should be some entity, independent of the agent's experience, capable of anchoring the qualities under discussion, is typical for the normative accounts of aesthetic experience. Therefore, these accounts and a consistent view upon intersubjectivity are only able to secure the non-triviality (significance) of the aesthetic.

3.2. The Changing, Fluid Nature of Art

The second argument relies on theories of arthood different than those employed by the strong version of AEL (Saito, Melchionne). It is worth recalling that the radical distinctiveness of everyday life's aesthetic experience was set on against the ideas of art as separate sphere and of aesthetic experience as fine art-focused, contemplative, attentive, and disinterested. These concepts are particular to the Western modern account of arthood or, more recently, the 'aesthetic theories of art'. One might consent that this type of accounts have constituted the mainstream of philosophical aesthetics and that one of the characteristic ways we look at artworks was and still is to focus on aesthetic qualities. Yet neither these concepts nor the related receptive practices are in some way exclusive, and in the last century the concept of art has undergone transformations that open up new perspectives.

On the one hand, if the definition of aesthetic experience is considered independent from any object-determination then the definition of art/artwork is independent as well from the aesthetic problem. Non-aesthetic theories of art were developed that also took into account the practical and moral implications of art, whereas the institutional definitions of art (Danto, Dickie) hold as crucial the connection of an object to the social framework of 'the artworld'. On the other hand, one might contend that art is an activity only historically identifiable. For instance, like institutional definitions of art, Levinson's intentional-historical definition does not locate arthood in any intrinsic properties of the object, but unlike them it holds as crucial the connection an object bears to the preceding history of art taken as a datum.⁴⁵ In the same spirit is Carroll's narrative

⁴⁴ Dowling 2010, p. 239.

⁴⁵ Levinson 2003, p. 14.

theory of arthood, which resides in connections to the past that can be exhibited in a coherent and convincing narrative showing how a candidate object is related either by repetition, amplification, or repudiation, to artworks that preceded it.⁴⁶ All these kinds of relationship were ceaselessly experimented after the postmodern turn. Hence, one has to acknowledge the changing nature of art and its experience: a new regime of contemporary art, entailing a new regime of aesthetic experience, accompanies the fundamental changes in our life-world; neither the first nor the latter still completely conserve the contemplative and ‘intense’ experience of the high/fine arts. This way, the distinction between art-related experiences and non-art daily aesthetic experiences is less sharp than pretended by AEL-strong, while these experiences do share some common features.

A good insight of these features is offered by Gianni Vattimo in his book *The End of Modernity*. He claims that the end of metaphysics –the thinking of being in terms of presence, plenitude, perfection, permanence, force, and authority– entails the end of the emphatic, metaphysic character of the philosophical aesthetics’ concepts, such as the ideas of artwork as ‘eternal’ and of values as ‘absolute’. By refusing this view, the aesthetic discourse opens up to the affirmation of both temporal and perishable character of the artwork, but in a sense unknown to traditional aesthetics, and to a new aesthetic experience, different from the previous ‘intense’ living of values. This new experience is labelled ‘abstracted reception’ or ‘declining experience’, as it corresponds to the ontology of decline that is the rethinking of philosophy in the light of a ‘weak’ conception of being.⁴⁷

The idea that art and its experience as well as everyday aesthetic experience have undergone fundamental changes was also recently upheld by Yves Michaud in his book *L’Art à l’état gazeux: Essai sur le triomphe de l’esthétique*. According to him, a dual logic governs the current situation called ‘the age of the triumph of the aesthetic’. Beauty, neglected by contemporary art, pervades instead the daily life, enfolding our experiences into aesthetic dimension: this is the experience aestheticized. The counterpart of this situation is the new, more fluid, regime of the art that could be grasped under the appearance of a diffuse and vaporous aesthetic expe-

⁴⁶ Carroll 2001; Levinson 2003, p. 15.

⁴⁷ Vattimo, Gianni. 1988. *The End of Modernity*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, pp. 51-64.

rience. This metaphorical evaporation of art entails the evanescence of its experience that must be framed by strong rituals to be identifiable (that is for simply knowing that there is any experience at all). In this new regime of aesthetic experience, what matters is neither the content of experience –what it is experienced– or shape –means it uses– but the experience itself as a series, ensemble or family of experiences whose nature is fluid and fun. This kind of art-related aesthetic experience could be labelled as ‘de-aestheticized’, if the term ‘aestheticization’ continues to refer to the meditative contemplation of masterpieces, and is similar in nature with the ‘distracted’ experience announced by Benjamin in ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ (1936), where springs the issue of an aesthetics of distraction, in both senses of leisure and inattentiveness.⁴⁸

There are many other accounts of such conceptual transformations but no space here for further discussion of this issue. The point is that new concepts of the aesthetic and aesthetic experience are employed in recent debates about art, different from those related to modern/fine arts: they include practical concerns, literal engagement, multi-sensory and bodily experience, frameless character, transience and impermanence and so on, that were supposed to be non-art features. These concepts are useful in developing a consistent aesthetic theory able to accommodate both arts and everyday life and their interaction, thus undermining the sharp division between them presumed by proponents of AEL-strong.

3.3. The Intermingling and Hybridization of Art and Everyday Life in the Continuous Flux of Experiences

The third argument relies on views upon the self and the everyday life equipped to provide a consistent framework of analysis that could also include the art world. My point is that maintaining a relation of exclusion between our life-world (private) and the art world (public), as AEL-strong did, is to miss the actual continuity and interaction between two social worlds. Instead one should look at these worlds as hybrids intermingling in the continuous flux of daily experiences of an embodied self.

Both Saito’s and Melchionne’s accounts of AEL stand on a *monadic-*

⁴⁸ Michaud, Yves. 2003. *L’Art à l’état gazeux: Essai sur le triomphe de l’esthétique*. Paris: Stock, pp. 162-163, 181.

isolation premise. In Saito's view, the radical difference in nature between art and everyday aesthetics is drawn on the difference between two closed spheres –everyday life and the art world– with impermeable boundaries set by the art gallery or museum's walls or art world's conventions. Everyday life is equated with the modern condition of living in an urban built environment surrounded with artefacts. While it is understandable that the experience of nature is a precious and rare one in this daily living circumscribed between home and work, it is surprising that Saito imagines it without any interaction with art, relegated to museum or gallery space.⁴⁹ The same for Melchionne who contrasts the enclosed space of a private world –the everyday– and the exposed public one –the art world: 'With the everyday, one is often locked to one degree or another in a private world, without the conventions of publicity and intersubjectivity that mark the art world'.⁵⁰

Against the monadic-isolation premise shared by Saito and Melchionne, one might firstly argue that nowadays there is considerable overlap between daily life, environmental, and art-driven aesthetic experiences.⁵¹ All these are intimately related and even hybridized by the blurring/effacing of boundaries between art and life, art gallery and outside world, as well as between artistic mediums and genres, and so on. This non-specific/inclusive logic toward hybridization follows the undermining by the historical avant-garde of the art's claim to privileged autonomy as a special domain, and the striving for connections with the lifeworld. As Vattimo has noted, through its exploitation in the everyday practical world, art evaporates into a 'general aestheticization of existence', disintegrating 'into a world of hybrid artistic products'.⁵² I would mention that Saito acknowledges recent developments in art that have resiliently contributed to this situation, such as environmental art, happenings, performance, installation, interactive art, and 'art of the everyday' that continue to blur the distinction between art and life or specifically create works that simulate or *are* a slice of everyday life. Yet according to her, art, by its very definition, belongs to the art world: in contrast to non-art objects, the artworks (even denying the

⁴⁹ Saito 2007, pp. 38-39, 205.

⁵⁰ Melchionne 2011a, p. 442.

⁵¹ This argument is also supported by Leddy 2005, p. 4.

⁵² Vattimo 1988; Shusterman 2000, p. 2.

art world conventions) still exist in an art-historical context and cannot but participate in the art world. This stance remains the same in recent account by Saito of the contemporary interplay of art and non-art arising with an important cultural phenomenon such as ‘artification’.⁵³ Therefore, for Saito contemporary art world still stand as an autonomous sphere, ‘disconnected from everyday life’.

Secondly, one might argue that endorsing the supposition of a radical difference between art and non-art experience and their mutual impermeability, such as Saito does, equates with endorsing the assumption of a ‘pure perception’ in everyday life, which is not informed by one’s cultural frames or artistic experience. This assumption was strongly contested by a range of theoretical traditions from philosophical hermeneutics to visual studies to constructivist epistemology. The general idea is that all experience and knowledge of the self is mediated by language and relations with the other: not only concepts we use to interpret our lives are derived from the cultural context in which are embedded, but also perception is an act of interpretation.⁵⁴ One might object that Saito is entitled to not share such view since she holds that the un-reflected aesthetic responses are natural responses, thus endorsing the assumption of a ‘natural’ experience, universally human or trans-cultural. For instance, that of a ‘Midwestern farmer’ that may not have knowledge of, access to, or interest in the contemporary art world: his ‘aesthetic experiences are universal, regardless the existence of an art world in a particular society and one’s participation in it’. Yet this standpoint is not consistent with her other statements that recognize the culturally constructed or context-dependent character of our aesthetic responses or preferences and moral-aesthetic judgments.⁵⁵

Moreover, the view upon the *self* implied by this assumption is that of a mind-body split, inappropriate to support the complex concept of ev-

⁵³ Saito 2007, pp. 28-33, 35-40, and 2012, pp. [1-11]. See also the Introduction by O. Naukkarinen and Y. Saito in *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Special Volume 4 (2012) *Artification*, [1-4].

⁵⁴ Some tenants of everyday aesthetics also hold this idea: Berleant in *Art and Engagement* emphasizes the interplay of perception and meaning in direct experience, and Leddy in *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary* the role of the artist in our perception of everyday life itself.

⁵⁵ Saito 2007, pp. 37; 158, 168-169, 196.

everyday life aesthetic experience previously stated. I contrast this view by holding instead a *practical* account of the self as embodied self and developed through social interaction: a vibrant, pulsating subjectivity, and a body-and-mind unity, which not only reacts, perceives, feels, reflects, and appreciates but also decides, acts, communicates, and participates in different practices. This view upon the self is more appropriate to provide a consistent framework of analysis of an aesthetic experience grasped as intertwined with different social and cultural practices in the flux of our everyday life.⁵⁶

Finally, one might argue that the monadic-isolation premise is not consistent with the ontology of everyday life underpinning everyday aesthetics. As Melchionne himself notices about daily life, *ordinariness* and *everydayness* mean a flow of experience and action, which are not isolated and separated. Therefore, it is important to consider the continuous flux of aesthetic experiences: 'Taken by themselves most everyday experiences may have little or no aesthetic value. However, they are not supposed to be taken by themselves. Instead, what matters is how each discrete aesthetic experience is rooted in the pattern of everyday life'.⁵⁷ For Melchionne, the pervasiveness and routine that are built in the fabric of everyday aesthetic life are arguments supporting a properly construed strong everyday aesthetics. According to him, in everyday aesthetic life 'what matters is the routine, habit, or practice, the cumulative rather than individual effect'.⁵⁸ Even though, this 'very ontology' of everyday aesthetic life could be confidently seen as also making up the life of contemporary art world. While there is not space to develop this argument here, it will suffice to recognize, as interactionist sociology (Howard Becker) does, that art world itself is a social world, a network of cooperation supported by conventions, habits, and routine.

⁵⁶ For the pragmatist point of view on aesthetic experience, see Määttänen, Pentti. 2005. Aesthetics of Movement and Everyday Aesthetics. *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Special Volume 1 *Aesthetics and Mobility*, pp. [1-5].

⁵⁷ Melchionne 2011a, p. 438.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 439-440.

4. Conclusion

The examination of different versions of ‘aesthetics of everyday life’ (AEL) and their relationships suggested that, although submitting different accounts of the aesthetic and aesthetic experience, both could propel the analysis and understanding of the aesthetic aspects of everyday life beyond the mainstream approaches that neglect their significance. The ‘weak’ version of AEL maintains a monist framework for aesthetic discourse, a concept of the aesthetic integrating both differences between everyday life and art and their common features—such as the normative aspect, able to secure the significance of the aesthetic and to support a common experience consistent with a compelling view upon intersubjectivity. The more expansive, ‘strong’ version of everyday aesthetics holds a more pluralist account that challenges the regular assumptions of fine art-centred aesthetics and the model of ‘special’ aesthetic experience, aiming at a radical rethinking of the realm of the aesthetic. Yet this account is not as radical as supposed by its tenants, being a complement rather than an alternative to the art-oriented aesthetics if confronted, instead of modern fine art, to contemporary art and other phenomena such as aestheticization and artification that tend to efface the boundaries between experiences of art and everyday life. As I have argued, this complementary account is more consistent with the conceptions of the self and the ‘very ontology’ of everyday life underpinning everyday aesthetics.

Aesthetics of everyday life also generally aims to integrate the aesthetic and ethic-moral aspects (while stating their independence), prompting an approach at the confines of environmental ethics or cultural studies. Still a more integrative framework is needed for overcoming the tensions and inconsistencies within AEL, and integrating consistent views upon the embodied self, intersubjectivity and the ontology of everyday aesthetic life as well as upon the aesthetic-ethic interrelations and the way in which aesthetic responses prolong in actions. I only suggest here, without developing the idea as it demand further research, that a broader conception could be provided by thinking of everyday aesthetics as *practical philosophy*, in Aristotle’s tradition revisited by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his ‘hermeneutics as practical philosophy’. Its object is also practice, *praxis*, i.e. the human behaviour and the ways in which human beings organize their lives

in common. Hence aesthetics could differently address and integrate our daily aesthetic experiences, practices and preferences as well as their ethical and political consequences.

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