

REMAPPING THE REALM OF AESTHETICS: ON RECENT CONTROVERSIES ABOUT THE AESTHETIC AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

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This article addresses two controversial open questions in philosophical aesthetics: the nature and value of the aesthetic and of aesthetic experience when approached from the standpoint of 'aesthetics of everyday life' (AEL). Contrasting 'strong' AEL accounts that consider them radically different from those in the sphere of art, I claim that extending the realm and scope of aesthetics towards everyday life does not necessarily dispense with the concepts of the aesthetic and aesthetic experience as shaped in relation to the arts. Drawing on 'weak' formulations of AEL and on theories that call attention to concepts of art different from modern ones, I defend a normative but open model of the aesthetic and aesthetic experience pertaining to both art and everyday life. This more integrative theoretical framework needs to include clear and consistent views of the aesthetic as well as of the self, intersubjectivity, and everyday life.

In this article, I investigate the expansion of the realm and scope of aesthetics 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 two very basic questions in aesthetics: the nature and the value of the aesthetic and of aesthetic experience. Firstly, considering AEL as a response to the limits of the modern aesthetics of the 'fine arts', I submit that expanding the scope of aesthetics towards areas that were neglected by some mainstream accounts is a valid strategy in order to overcome these limits. Yet it remains an open question whether the nature of the aesthetic and of aesthetic experience (as well as the corresponding concepts) is radically different when approached or employed from the standpoint of 'aesthetics of everyday life'. Secondly, contrasting 'strong' AEL accounts that consider everyday life and art as completely distinct, separate spheres, I claim that extending the realm and scope of aesthetics towards everyday life does not by itself correct the concepts of the aesthetic, aesthetic experience, and aesthetic judgement as shaped in relation to the arts. Thirdly, drawing on 'weak' formulations of AEL and on theories that call attention to concepts of art different from modern ones,

This work was supported by a grant from the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-ID-PCE-2011-3-1010. I am grateful to the reviewers of *Estetika*, Professor Carolyn Korsmeyer and Professor Thomas Leddy, for their useful comments on an earlier draft of this article and especially for their patient and helpful revision of grammatical mistakes in the manuscript.

I defend a normative but open model of aesthetic experience pertaining to both art and everyday objects, phenomena, and practices. I sustain this claim by means of a thesis about the normative aspect of the aesthetic, the openness of the concept of art, and the interaction of art and everyday life in the continuous flux of experiences of an embodied self. I conclude that in order to overcome the tensions and inconsistencies within the 'aesthetics of everyday life', we need a theoretical framework that integrates clear and consistent views of the aesthetic as well as of the self, intersubjectivity, and everyday life.

I. 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 from the way it has hitherto been done in this branch of modern Western philosophy. One of the major discontents is about 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 or experience. This tradition, often defined as the philosophy of art, and dealing almost exclusively with the 'high' or 'fine' arts, continues to emphasize experiences that are beyond the realm of mundane or everyday life. Likewise, aesthetic experience is characterized as autonomous reception, contemplative, distanced, and disinterested. Various authors have tried to overcome the reputed limits of aesthetics modelled on the fine arts. Some of these authors have moved towards two different accounts: one anthropological, one sociological. For example, the French philosopher Jean-Marie Schaeffer, in a book with the revealing title *Adieu à l'esthétique*, maintains that the solution largely consists in reorienting thinking about aesthetic facts towards a 'naturalistic' approach whose proper horizon is anthropological, meaning that human beings have no transcendental dimension, only a genealogy and a history. Considering culture as an aspect of the biological nature of human being, he refuses both ontological and epistemological dualism (body versus mind, nature versus culture, empirical versus transcendental condition).¹ The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was already widely reputed as trying to demystify taste – through the social critique of 'pure' judgement – as a component of powerful social forces that establish and maintain status hierarchies. He also aimed to show, with an analysis of practices and rules of art, how the dominant aesthetics of disinterestedness

¹ Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Adieu à l'esthétique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 9–12. Other revisions of modern aesthetics consist in reviving the hedonist dimension of aesthetic experience in the very course of cognitive activity, and in accepting the aesthetic judgement only as a consequence of the aesthetic experience (comprising attention and appreciation), not as its constitutive condition (*ibid.*, 30–31, 50–52).

works to support the powerful of society by becoming a tool of domination. The aesthetic is thus reduced to structurally determined differences of taste.²

Other recent accounts, mostly in the Anglo-American sphere, tend to expand the scope and realm of aesthetics by focusing on the aesthetic character of everyday life, neglected in traditional aesthetics as well as in contemporary analytic aesthetics.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 approach that focuses on art. This movement is, however, still heterogeneous, following different traditions – continental, pragmatist, and analytical – and addressing ordinary life as well as built 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 aesthetics.⁴ 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 Irvin.⁵ Some of these trends or lines of thought include:

- '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 aesthetic;⁶
- 'aesthetics of human environment' by Berleant and Allen Carlson, among others, which extends the area of enquiry towards environmental connections;⁷

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (1979; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (1992; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); Marshall Battani, 'Aura, Self, and Aesthetic Experience', *Contemporary Aesthetics* 9 (2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7523862.0009.013>.

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

⁴ See Arto Haapala, 'On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Familiarity, Strangeness, and the Meaning of Place', in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, ed. Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 40; Crispin Sartwell, 'Aesthetics of the Everyday', in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 761, 767.

⁵ Sartwell, 'Aesthetics of the Everyday', 761–70; Tom Leddy, 'The Nature of Everyday Aesthetics', in Light and Smith, *Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, 3–22; Sherri Irvin, 'Aesthetics of the Everyday', in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, 2nd ed., ed. Stephen Davies et al. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 136–39.

⁶ Arnold Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), and 'Ideas for a Social Aesthetic', in Light and Smith, *Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, 23–38.

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

- ‘pragmatist aesthetics’ and ‘somaesthetics’ by Richard Shusterman, which advocates the value of aesthetic experience by exploring its different roles and meanings in areas that were marginal to traditional aesthetics but are vibrantly alive in today’s culture, including popular music and film, as well as the somatic arts of self-improvement and the wider arts of self-stylization;⁸
- ‘aesthetic multiculturalism’ by Crispin Sartwell, among others, dealing with the conceptions of art and experience of non-Western cultures where the aesthetic is integrated in everyday life;⁹
- ‘aesthetics of the everyday’ that extends aesthetic analysis to virtually all areas of daily life, a trend supported by various authors such as Thomas Leddy, Kevin Melchionne, Yuriko Saito, Katya Mandoki, Sherri Irvin, and Christopher Dowling.¹⁰

I will focus particularly on this last-named trend within AEL. The typical claim of the ‘aesthetics of the everyday’, or what Dowling calls the ‘aesthetics of daily life intuition’ (ADLI),¹¹ is that despite the functional and utility-driven character of much of our everyday interactions, not essentially 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) 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 pervasiveness.¹² A widely used ‘transformational’ conception of the aesthetic aims to ‘revise or enlarge the aesthetic field’, rather than to

⁸ Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), and *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

⁹ Crispin Sartwell, *The Art of Living: Aesthetics of the Ordinary in World Spiritual Traditions* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Thomas Leddy, ‘Everyday Surface Aesthetic Qualities: “Neat”, “Messy”, “Clean”, and “Dirty”’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 259–68; *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2012), and Leddy, ‘Nature of Everyday Aesthetics’; Kevin Melchionne, ‘Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decorations, and Environmental Aesthetics’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 191–200, and ‘Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life: A Reply to Dowling’, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 51 (2011): 437–42; Yuriko Saito, ‘Everyday Aesthetics’, *Philosophy and Literature* 25 (2001): 87–95, and *Everyday Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture and Social Identities* (Burlington, UK: Ashgate, 2007), and ‘The Third Tear in Everyday Aesthetics’, *Contemporary Aesthetics* 8 (2010), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7523862.0008.004>; Sherri Irvin, ‘The Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic in Ordinary Experience’, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48 (2008): 29–44; Christopher Dowling, ‘The Aesthetics of Daily Life’, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 50 (2010): 225–42.

¹¹ Dowling, ‘Aesthetics of Daily Life’, 225–26, 232–33.

¹² Carlson and Parsons, *Functional Beauty*, 168; Irvin, ‘Aesthetics of the Everyday’, 136.

'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 the ambience within which we interact on a daily basis, including weather, other domains of life such as sport, sex, and everyday decision-making, as well as the ordinary domestic practices of dwelling and homemaking such as cleaning, discarding, purchasing, using tools, cooking, dressing up, resting/relaxing, and so on. Accordingly, the *realm of the aesthetic* – that is, '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 reflective contemplation and 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 exemplifies the 'pervasiveness of the aesthetic in ordinary experience' is illustrative of 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 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, to validate its disciplinary status AEL 'must demonstrate that, at some level, it 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'. This tension implicitly acknowledges a potential critique of AEL – namely, that it runs the risk of rendering the concept of the aesthetic 'trivial'. The notion of the aesthetic resulting from AEL may turn out to be meaningless if it is broadened to include any experience 'just by virtue of having a qualitative

¹³ For these contrasting functions and conceptions of the aesthetic, see Shusterman, *Performing Live*, 21–22.

¹⁴ For this meaning of 'the realm' of the aesthetic, see Gary Iseminger, 'Aesthetic Experience', in Levinson, *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, 107, 109.

¹⁵ Irvin, 'Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic', 30–31. This viewpoint is open to contentions regarding the 'triviality' of the concept of the aesthetic, which are addressed below.

feeling'.¹⁶ The significance of AEL itself may diminish insofar as it tends to emphasize idiosyncratic or ordinary aesthetic experiences and objects. These points raise the following questions: 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 that have been proposed are different and range from a *weak* pole to a *strong* pole or version of AEL, largely depending on whether art-aesthetic and non-art aesthetic experience/appreciation are thought of as lying along a continuum rather than on opposite sides of a sharp divide. Proponents that hold the continuity hypothesis stand close to the 'weak' pole: some maintain that 'an investigation of the aesthetics of daily life should follow the standards upheld in the aesthetics of art'¹⁸ or that 'a broader yet no less precise demarcation of aesthetics [could] be elaborated with sufficient amplitude to encompass both the everyday and the artistic';¹⁹ others endorse a 'transformative conception'²⁰ 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,²¹ or look for 'the extraordinary in the ordinary', backing up a conception of the aesthetic experience as experience of objects with 'auras' of heightened significance.²² Instead, proponents at the 'strong' pole posit a gap between artistic and everyday experiences and mostly draw attention to, and strive for, safeguarding 'the *everydayness* of the everyday', 'the *ordinariness* of the ordinary' and their appropriate aesthetic appreciation,²³ since 'everydayness substantially changes how we value our experiences' and 'how we apply conceptions of aesthetic value'.²⁴ Notions of aesthetic 'objects', 'attitude', or even 'judgement' and its value/reliability are dismissed since modelled after the experience of art. Therefore, other layers of distinction within AEL hail from answering the questions whether aesthetic judgement is only a by-product of everyday aesthetic experience or is its constitutive condition, and whether this experience is idiosyncratic-private or there is a role to play for the *sensus communis* or intersubjective engagement.

¹⁶ Irvin, 'Aesthetics of the Everyday', 138, 139.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 137. See also Iseminger, 'Aesthetic Experience', 113.

¹⁸ Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 229.

¹⁹ Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 43.

²⁰ For this qualification, see Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 233.

²¹ Irvin, 'Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic'.

²² Thomas Leddy, 'Defending Everyday Aesthetics and the Concept of "Pretty"', *Contemporary Aesthetics* 10 (2012), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7523862.0010.008>.

²³ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*.

²⁴ Melchionne, 'Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life', 440, 438.

II. THE 'STRONG' AEL: A RADICAL RETHINKING OF THE AESTHETIC AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

In order to address these questions, I will now tackle some of the accounts 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.'²⁵ I mainly focus on one of the groundbreaking pieces of this new sub-discipline within aesthetics, Saito's *Everyday Aesthetics*, as well as other related articles,²⁶ in addition to the accounts by Melchionne and his further defence of ADLI-*strong*.²⁷

Saito's account starts from the common contention that the mainstream formulation of aesthetics neglects everyday aesthetic experience because of its almost exclusive emphasis on art as the model for the aesthetic object and the contemplative, spectator-like 'special' experience that art is supposed to evoke. 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'.²⁸

Saito's reasons are both theoretical and practical. While I concur with Saito on some of these reasons, I try to demonstrate that their supposedly radical implications are not consistent with her premises. On the one hand, Saito argues for the necessity of everyday aesthetics to *complement* both art-centred aesthetics and special experience-based aesthetics because the latter miss a large part of our everyday aesthetic experience. 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, and intense expressiveness. Accordingly, the aesthetic

²⁵ Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 241.

²⁶ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*; Yuriko Saito, 'Environmental Directions for Aesthetics and the Arts', in *Environment and the Arts*, ed. Arnold Berleant (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 171–85; 'The Aesthetics of Weather', in Light and Smith, *Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, 156–76; 'The Power of the Aesthetic', *Aesthetic Pathways* 1 (2011): 11–25, and 'Everyday Aesthetics and Artification', in 'Artification', ed. Ossi Naukkarinen and Yuriko Saito, *Contemporary Aesthetics*, special vol. 4 (2012), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7523862.spec.405>.

²⁷ Melchionne, 'Living in Glass Houses' and 'Aesthetic Experience'; Kevin Melchionne, 'A New Problem for Aesthetics', *Contemporary Aesthetics* 9 (2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7523862.0009.004>, and 'The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics', *Contemporary Aesthetics* 11 (2013), <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=663>.

²⁸ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 40–41, 43.

experience par excellence is conceived as a 'special moment', disinterested, distanced, disengaged, and standing out from the flow of ordinary experience in general.²⁹

These notions are deemed by Saito as limitations set by the art-oriented and contemplation-oriented dimensions of mainstream aesthetics that everyday aesthetics should overcome. It does this first 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'. Likewise, its scope expands by including objects and practices that share features different from those previously mentioned: frameless character, absence of definite and identifiable object-hood and authorship, transience and impermanence, and the primacy of practical values.³⁰ Aesthetic investigation is indeed enriched by also seizing objects and practices sharing these features. Yet it is contentious to ascribe these features to only non-artistic objects or practices (as Saito does in support of her critique) since different concepts of art and artistic practices may include these features as well. (I will develop the argument in part III.2.) 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, unreflective responses that propel us towards 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 mundane nature: inescapable interactions with everyday artefacts, environments, and ambience, domestic chores or activities such as cooking, eating, shopping, dressing up, packaging, cleaning, repairing, and discarding, as well as everyday aesthetic qualities such as 'clean', 'dirty', 'neat', 'messy', 'organized', and 'disorganized'.³¹

Saito rejects the criticism that her account results in a concept of the aesthetic that is trivial or insignificant. Everyday aesthetics proves its distinctive core and

²⁹ Ibid., 4–5, 9–15; Saito, 'Environmental Directions', 171. The accounts Saito mentions by no means exhaust the standpoints on the aesthetic experience. There is continuing controversy, and different accounts of what is distinctive about it have been endorsed in last decades. This is not the place to develop such topic. I only mention, following Iseminger, two different, more specific ways of approaching aesthetic experience: one, as something characterized primarily by 'what it is like' to undergo it (a phenomenological conception); the other involving direct or non-inferential way of coming to know something which deserves to be thought of as aesthetic (an epistemic conception). Iseminger, 'Aesthetic Experience', 99–100, 115. For another typology of the accounts of the aesthetic and aesthetic experience, see below, part III.1.

³⁰ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 9, 17.

³¹ Ibid., 18–28, 142.

contribution as well as its significance from a practical perspective: she references 'the power of the aesthetic' to affect various aspects of our lives and the state of society and the world by the 'serious moral, social, political, and environmental consequences' of everyday aesthetic preferences, judgements, and responses. The topic of 'the power of the aesthetic' is crucial to Saito's account, and the mission of everyday aesthetics is to cultivate aesthetic literacy and a vigilant attitude towards the use of this power, and to explore ways of harnessing it to serve our collective project of better-world-making.³²

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 everyday aesthetic life.³³ Her argument is that these accounts cannot fully and adequately explain many aspects of our aesthetic life – for example, forming an opinion, making a decision, or engaging in an action guided by aesthetic considerations –, since they ignore the very nature of everyday objects, phenomena, and activities, which is the *everydayness* of the everyday and the *ordinariness* of the ordinary aesthetic experiences.³⁴ One might agree that everyday aesthetics should be attentive to the features of objects and activities that are mundane, regular, repetitive, and unstructured. Yet one might also observe that contemporary art and the analysis derived from its aesthetics also play an important role in making us notice the everyday and in approaching the ordinariness of the ordinary (although by making it extraordinary, according to Leddy).³⁵ A general theory of aesthetic experience – in art, nature, and everyday life – does not obstruct recognition of its particular manifestations. Aesthetics simply has to approach 'everyday' aesthetic experience without disregarding the core features that qualify it as 'aesthetic'. (I will develop the argument in part III.1.)

³² Saito, 'Power of the Aesthetic', 11–25, and 'Everyday Aesthetics and Artification'. 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 by presuming them to be eyesores, and the widespread obsession with weed-free, green lawns that require unsustainable cultivation and maintenance. Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 56–57, 65–68.

³³ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 43. See also Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 241.

³⁴ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 48–52, 202–3.

³⁵ Tom Leddy, review of *Everyday Aesthetics*, by Yuriko Saito, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews: An Electronic Journal*, February 15, 2009, <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/23905-everyday-aesthetics/>. See also Stephen Johnstone, ed., *The Everyday*, Documents of Contemporary Art (London: Whitechapel; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008). This anthology offers varying accounts of twentieth-century art's concern with the mundane (first section, 'Art and the Everyday'), and delineates the modes by which the art of the everyday encourages viewers to attend to the experiences and exhibitions of everydayness (second section, 'The Poetics of Noticing'). See Jennifer Dyer, review of *The Everyday*, ed. by Stephen Johnstone, *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal of Visual Culture*, 13 (2008): 62–66, http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_13_/pdf/IVC13.pdf.

A second implication is that everyday phenomena require aesthetic insights and concepts completely 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 versus lasting aesthetic value, and multi-sensory and bodily experience versus 'higher' sense experience.³⁶ The notion that the aesthetic dimension of everyday life should be examined on its own terms is founded on the assumption that it operates quite independently, isolated from the experience of art. Again, it is debatable whether this assumption is consistent with the ontology of everyday aesthetic life and the conception of the embodied, experiencing self, which underpin everyday aesthetics, although this view is implicit in Saito's argument. (I will develop the argument in part III.3.)

Against the concept of an 'aesthetic attitude', Saito proposes 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 the thoughts, judgements, and actions they prompt. The recognition of this complex, immersive, and multisensory mode of aesthetic experience, readily applicable to everyday life, was inspired by environmental aesthetics insofar as it pays attention to environments rather than to isolated objects, as well as the new environmental ethic called 'civic environmentalism', which is interested in the dimension of personal engagement and the practical-moral implications of our aesthetic preferences.³⁷ Eventually, Saito's account aims towards an *alternative* to the art-bound aesthetic theory, a pluralist theory that contrasts with the established monolithic framework for aesthetic discourse.

Melchionne's account endorses a similar radical tendency to rethink the concept of the aesthetic beyond the strictures of art: the broader concept he submits embraces all everyday responses, including ordinary pleasures. His reply to Dowling endorses two considerations that are critical for such a 'strong' aesthetics of everyday life: (1) 'the pervasiveness of aesthetic value' and (2) 'the relative unimportance of critical discourse'. The pervasiveness is meant 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'.³⁸ In a brief article intended to clarify the definition of everyday aesthetics and avoid its arbitrary expansion, Melchionne sets out the conditions for identifying

³⁶ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 40, 43, 52–53. See also Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 238.

³⁷ Saito, 'Environmental Directions', 182, and *Everyday Aesthetics*, 9–10, 100–102, 203–4, 212–13. See also Irvin, 'Aesthetics of the Everyday', 138.

³⁸ Melchionne, 'Aesthetic Experience', 437, 439.

its object of study within a range of widely practiced daily human activities (and objects). To be properly the subject matter of AEL, the everyday practices or objects have to enjoy 'the dual features of everyday pervasiveness and aesthetic character', that is, to be conjunctively 'ongoing', 'common', an 'activity', and 'typically but not necessarily aesthetic'. These features distinguish them not just from fine art but also from practices which are not really *everyday* aesthetic practices (for example, dwelling versus interior decoration, daily rest versus vacations; a pianist's daily cookery versus fingering exercises; enjoyment of a window with a view of a landscape versus a landscape painting; dressing with style versus taking the rubbish out aesthetically).³⁹ The irrelevance of critical discourse, which Melchionne deems a 'by-product of aesthetic experience', is meant to secure this experience as an idiosyncratic, private one, and thus to limit the role of intersubjective engagement, 'at least insofar as intersubjectivity is defined by discourse'. He speculates that critical discourse 'can have negative consequences for the reliability of our self-understanding, including our understanding of our aesthetic experience'.⁴⁰ Melchionne's scepticism is resumed in a subsequent article introducing the problem of 'aesthetic unreliability', which is 'the very difficulty of knowing our aesthetic experience and the consequent confusion and unreliability 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 the tranquil satisfactions emphasized by conventional models of aesthetic experience.⁴¹

My point in the foregoing survey is that the claim that everyday aesthetics is completely distinct from an art-oriented aesthetics depends not only on one's concepts of the *aesthetic* and of the *everyday* but also on one's concept of *art*. Dealing with such matters also requires clear and consistent conceptions of *self* and *intersubjectivity*, because we are dealing with human subjects and their interactions with their lifeworlds. In this respect, the strong version of AEL is undermined by some tensions and inconsistencies. On the one hand, Saito's

³⁹ Melchionne, 'Definition of Everyday Aesthetics'. Hence the scope of everyday aesthetics is restricted to 'five main areas of consideration: food, wardrobe, dwelling, conviviality, and going out. Nearly all of us eat, dress, dwell someplace, socialize, and go out into the world for work or errands on a nearly daily basis.' (Ibid.)

⁴⁰ Melchionne, 'Aesthetic Experience', 438, 441.

⁴¹ Melchionne, 'New Problem for Aesthetics'.

definition of the aesthetic and her strategy to diversify and expand its realm are together intentionally 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'.⁴² But Saito's embrace of this content-oriented definition is not consistent with her refusal of artworks as models 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 nature).⁴³ What is more, if one is interested in questions about the self and intersubjectivity in relation to questions about the aesthetic and aesthetic experience, then it is hard to see how Saito's and Melchionne's views could provide a satisfactory answer. The former lacks explicit hints on these questions and the latter deems the aesthetic self and self-knowledge unreliable, and sets aside intersubjectivity together with critical discourse. My claim is that extending the scope and realm of aesthetics towards everyday life, including those aesthetic reactions that prompt us towards decision-making and action, does not necessarily dispense with the concepts of the aesthetic, aesthetic experience, and aesthetic judgement as shaped in relation to the arts. Instead, the corresponding phenomena and practices of everyday life and the contemporary art world should be examined by means of a comparative approach that could disclose both resemblances and their particular modes of manifestation.

III. THE 'WEAK' AEL: A NORMATIVE BUT OPEN MODEL OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

In this third part, I advance the idea of a normative but open model of the aesthetic and of aesthetic experience that includes both *art* and *everyday* objects and phenomena. To defend it, I will develop a threefold argument drawing on 'weak' formulations of AEL and on theories that call attention to concepts of aesthetic experience and art that are different from those employed by a modern aesthetics of the 'fine arts'. To provide a consistent framework of analysis, we must pay attention to the views on the self, intersubjectivity, and the everyday which are implied by the concept of the aesthetic. The main theses of this model are:

- (1) The aesthetic – experience and judgement – has a normative aspect that pertains to both art and everyday life; this normativity entails a view about *intersubjectivity* able to secure the non-triviality (significance) of the aesthetic in the everyday mode.

⁴² Noël Carroll, 'Four Concepts of Aesthetic Experience', in *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 60; Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 9–11, 20.

⁴³ Iseminger, 'Aesthetic Experience', 113.

- (2) The concept of art is an open one, since aesthetics today uses concepts different from the earlier modern aesthetics of the 'fine arts'; this openness nonetheless requires a consistent view of *art* capable of ensuring a common ground for aesthetic theory.
- (3) Art and everyday life interact in the continuous flux of experiences of an embodied self; this nexus reveals views on the *self* and *everyday life*, views that are equipped to provide a consistent framework of analysis, avoiding the monadic-isolation premises of 'strong' AEL.

III.1. THE NORMATIVE ASPECT OF THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AND JUDGEMENT

The first thesis is built on a different formulation of AEL or, as maintained by Dowling, 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.'⁴⁴ This extension primarily depends on how one thinks of the concept of the *aesthetic*, especially the core that differentiates it from the *non-aesthetic* – modes of perception, attitudes, experiences, pleasures, properties, and so forth. Various attempts have been made to define aesthetic experience in general, among which two major types of accounts are labelled by Carroll as 'affect-oriented' and 'content-oriented'. The first type mainly relies 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 here. The second type characterizes 'the aesthetic' in terms of the *content* of the experience which 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.⁴⁵ As we have seen, proponents of AEL have accommodated both types of accounts to everyday aesthetic life, yet they have done so in a manner that runs the risk of overlooking the specificity that differentiates the aesthetic from the non-aesthetic. Some authors, such as Irvin and Melchionne, have included *any* 'qualitative feeling' or 'affective quality of our responses', and have emphasized the private, ordinary, and idiosyncratic ones, without discursive mediation. Others, like Saito, have excluded properties typically found in art objects and accepted only supposedly non-art features as a valid ground for defining everyday aesthetic experience.

⁴⁴ Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 241.

⁴⁵ Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Arts: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1999), esp. chap. 4, 'Art and Aesthetic Experience'; Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 9–11. See also Jerrold Levinson, 'Philosophical Aesthetics: An Overview', in Levinson, *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, 9–12.

These strategies and their implications require further consideration if the *aesthetic* character of everyday experiences is to be maintained.

The weak formulation of aesthetics of daily life (Dowling's) primarily acknowledges the distinction between 'purely subjective and idiosyncratic avowals' and 'judgments possessing a normative aspect'. This is reminiscent of the Kantian distinction between 'agreeable' – that which gratifies the senses, inciting judgements based on private feelings and restricted to oneself personally – and 'beauty' – providing a source of disinterested pleasure, whose judgement claims a universal validity and possesses a peculiar *normative* aspect.⁴⁶ By this, Dowling means its appropriateness, corrigibility, and shareability, or the possibility of consensus or criticism, in accord with Kant. It is this normative aspect that renders the judgement something of significant interest to others, that is the core of 'the aesthetic', and that further distinguishes it from judgements grounded in subjective pleasure. As Dowling rightly contends, we are in the realm of the aesthetic when we find ourselves 'arguing with others over appearances, insisting that one's aesthetic estimations should be acknowledged and respected'.⁴⁷

Leddy has recently replied that Dowling's criticism of everyday aesthetics, criticism inspired by the Kantian distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful, and paralleled by the problem of distinguishing between aesthetic and non-aesthetic pleasures, ends in limiting aesthetics to art or to art plus nature. On Leddy's view, an 'aura of heightened significance' – ranging from lower to higher levels of complexity, richness or depth – is both necessary and sufficient for a pleasure, an experience, or a property to be 'aesthetic'. Hence he posits 'a continuum for [the realm of] the aesthetic, from the pretty to the beautiful and finally to the sublime', as well as 'the continuity between everyday life and the arts first emphasized by Dewey'. I concur with Leddy that 'there is no absolute and unchanging core concept of the aesthetic' and 'we *choose* to see certain things as core and others not',⁴⁸ and I assume the continuity hypothesis as well. Yet it

⁴⁶ Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 228; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James C. Meredith, rev. Nicholas Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), § 7, 43–44 (AA 5:212–13). It might be objected that the Kantian separation of the beautiful from the agreeable is plausibly based on mind-body dualism. Here I would briefly state that, for Kant, the conditions of possibility for an aesthetic appreciation/judgement or experience are neither simply mental nor merely bodily, since 'the free play of imagination and understanding' includes both sensibility in a wider sense and intellectual activities. On the other hand, the *feeling of pleasure or displeasure* as a faculty of the mind is less spontaneous than the cognitive faculties and more receptive, corresponding to an increase or decrease of the 'feeling of life' (*Lebensgefühl*): by means of the 'affects' (*Affekte*), consciousness discovers the unity of mind and body.

⁴⁷ Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 228–29, 238–40. For an opposing view on this matter, see Melchionne, 'Aesthetic Experience', 438–39 (presented above).

⁴⁸ Leddy, 'Defending Everyday Aesthetics'.

may be worth noting, first, that Dowling does not (and nor do I) absolutely disprove or approve of everyday aesthetics per se, but holds what he considers to be 'the most defensible approach to this relatively new area of discussion', that is, the 'ADLI-Weak' versus 'ADLI-Strong'.⁴⁹ My point is that the aesthetic – experience and judgement – requires an idea of common sense or intersubjective engagement, that is, to be shared and communicable, and thus anticipating agreement by others (yet not excluding the possibility of disagreement). On this view, the possibility of individuals judging by mere feelings but also sharing with others and communicating feelings, pleasures, and experiences would be chosen as the core of the aesthetic.

Second, the normative account of the aesthetic defended by Dowling, which I am endorsing here, is precisely the standpoint for challenging the grounds upon which 'strong' AEL draws the idea of the highly variable intension of 'the aesthetic' when it refers to either artistic or everyday experiences, phenomena, and actions. Dowling's contention is that Saito in *Everyday Aesthetics* and in particular Irvin in 'The Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic in Ordinary Experience' run the risk that they will 'lose sight of the core concept of the aesthetic', that is, its normative aspect, by equivocating between genuine 'aesthetic value' and mere 'pleasure', and thus 'trivializing what counts as the aesthetic'.⁵⁰ Melchionne's defence is that the aesthetics of everyday life does not erase the general distinction between agreeable and beautiful, but requires us to apply it in a fundamentally different way: 'Consideration of the everyday leads to a calculation of value on a different scale. When something is agreeable but pervasive, then it is likely to be more than trivial'.⁵¹ The pervasiveness of aesthetic value is certainly an important argument in directing attention to what matters in everyday life, yet it does not fully support the idea of the radical distinctiveness of everyday aesthetics concepts. Nor does it undermine Dowling's normative conception of the aesthetic, which does not rely on criteria associated only with the conventional fine arts, as Melchionne objects.⁵² It is also worth noting that, for Dowling, the distinction between 'the aesthetic' and 'the *merely* pleasurable' is not based on their extension and integration in patterns of daily life (such as for Melchionne) or on the division of senses, 'higher' versus 'lower' (which Saito and Irvin decline in favour of multi-sensory experience), but on the normative aspect of the former. This is the main reason for the aesthetics of daily life to follow the standards upheld in normative accounts of the aesthetic experience – of art *and* of nature – notably the normative aspect of the aesthetic,

⁴⁹ Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 225, 241.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁵¹ Melchionne, 'Aesthetic Experience', 440.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 437–38.

which in this view renders the judgement of considerable interest to others. Thus ADLI-weak supported by Dowling is not limiting aesthetics to art or to art plus nature, as Leddy contends. 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 developing an aesthetic theory able to accommodate the aesthetics of both everyday life and art.⁵³

I would add that Saito's account 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-emphasize moral and practical considerations and try 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.⁵⁴

The notion of the fusion between the aesthetic and the moral in everyday life is largely shared among AEL proponents. Irvin too aims at harnessing the aesthetic in the service of the moral, suggesting that aesthetic attention to everyday experience is likely to contribute to our ability to pursue moral aims.⁵⁵ Still this emphasis on more effective moral agency is not consistent with the lack of a conception of intersubjectivity begotten by the notion of the aesthetic as a merely private feeling/sphere. The empathic identification with 'the other', supposed by the fusion of aesthetic and moral values in both everyday life and art, presumes a certain understanding of the *sensus communis* and intersubjective engagement. The same is true of 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', 'considerateness', 'sensitivity', 'caring', and 'humility'. As Dowling notes, to require that there should be some entity, independent of the agent's experience, capable of anchoring the qualities under discussion, is typical of normative accounts of aesthetic experience.⁵⁶ Hence, these accounts and a consistent view about intersubjectivity are indispensable to secure the non-triviality (significance) of the aesthetic in

⁵³ Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 229–30, 238–40.

⁵⁴ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 244–45. See also Leddy, review of *Everyday Aesthetics*.

⁵⁵ Irvin, 'Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic', 30, 42–44.

⁵⁶ Dowling, 'Aesthetics of Daily Life', 239.

the everyday mode and an adequate comprehension of aesthetics/ethics interrelations in everyday life.

III.2. ART AS AN OPEN CONCEPT: CONTEMPORARY VERSUS MODERN USAGES

The second thesis relies on theories of arthood different from 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 up against the ideas of art as a separate sphere and of aesthetic experience as fine-art-focused, contemplative, attentive, and disinterested. These notions are peculiar to the modern Western account of the 'fine arts' or, more recently, to the formalist approach to art. One might agree that the former type of account has 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 exclusive, because in the last century the concepts of art and of appreciation have undergone transformations that have opened up new perspectives. Thus 'art' can be seen as an open concept, related to different notions of experience. For instance, some theories do not locate arthood in any intrinsic properties of the object, holding crucial the connection of an object to the social framework of 'the artworld' (the institutional definitions of art by Danto and Dickie) or the connection an object bears to the preceding history of art taken as a datum (Levinson's intentional-historical definition).⁵⁷ In the same spirit, Carroll's narrative theory of arthood focuses on connections to the past, which can be exhibited in a coherent, convincing narrative showing how a candidate object is related by repetition, amplification, or repudiation, to artworks that preceded it.⁵⁸ All these kinds of relationship were ceaselessly experimented with in twentieth-century art, entailing a new regime of experiencing artworks, similar to everyday aesthetic experience. As pointed out in the anthology *The Everyday*, contemporary art concerned with the mundane 'demands the viewer experience its objects in the repetitive, passive, and uneventful terms of the everyday without reverting to more familiar viewing practices that tend to set the artwork off from the world'.⁵⁹

There are many other accounts of such conceptual transformations but there is no space here for further discussion of this question. The point is that recent debates about art make use of new concepts of aesthetic experience and artworks, different from those related to conventional 'fine arts': they include

⁵⁷ Levinson, 'Philosophical Aesthetics', 14.

⁵⁸ See essays in Carroll, *Beyond Aesthetics*, Part II; see also Levinson, 'Philosophical Aesthetics', 15.

⁵⁹ Dyer, review of *The Everyday*, 63.

practical-moral concerns and implications of art, literal engagement, multi-sensory and bodily experience, frameless character, transience and impermanence, and so on, which were supposed by Saito to be non-art features. These concepts are useful in developing a consistent aesthetic theory able to accommodate both art and everyday life and their interaction. In 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 resemble each other in some features.

III.3. THE INTERACTION OF ART AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE CONTINUOUS FLUX OF EXPERIENCES

The third move in improving the everyday aesthetics' model of aesthetic experience is to provide a consistent framework of analysis, which includes both everyday and artistic encounters and experiences. This could be done by avoiding those premises of AEL, such as the monadic-isolation premise, which undermine its consistency, and clarifying the conceptions of the self and everyday life, which underpin it. My point is that maintaining a relation of exclusion between our lifeworld (*private*) and the artworld (*public*), as AEL-strong does, is to fail to see the actual continuity between two worlds that are interpersonal and social. Instead, one should look at these worlds as interacting in the continuous flux of daily experiences of an embodied self. Both the porosity of these two worlds and the common and continuing structure of everyday-life experience are crucial to an understanding of its ontology.

Both Saito's and Melchionne's accounts of AEL stand on a monadic-isolation premise. In Saito's view, the radical difference between art and everyday aesthetics is drawn from the difference between two closed spheres – everyday life and the artworld – with impermeable boundaries set by the art gallery or museum walls or artworld's conventions. Everyday life is equated with the modern condition of living in an urban built environment surrounded with artefacts, thus confined to one's home and workplace and to commuting between them. While it is plausible that this kind of daily living does not afford much experience of a luxuriant nature, it is surprising that Saito imagines it without any interaction with the arts, which themselves are relegated to museums or gallery spaces, theatres, or concert halls.⁶⁰ The same goes for Melchionne, who contrasts the enclosed space of a private world – the everyday – and the exposed public one – the artworld: '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.'⁶¹

⁶⁰ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 38–39, 205.

⁶¹ Melchionne, 'Aesthetic Experience', 442.

Against this monadic-isolation premise, I would, firstly, argue that it neglects the openness to the other, the attending to the ordinary reality of others, and the enlargement of vision that is at stake in aesthetic experience and judgement (or in noticing the everyday).⁶² Intersubjectivity also involves different forms of dialogue, including the inner one, not only the physical presence of others. For instance, the philosophy of self outlined by Charles Taylor emphasizes the 'dialogical' character of human life and the 'horizons of meaning,' the background of social and dialogical relations with others.⁶³ Melchionne himself in a recent definition insists on the commonness of everyday aesthetic objects and practices, meaning that they are widely experienced or practiced, not esoteric and rare.⁶⁴ Thus the everyday is the common ground of experience, connecting individuals, activities, and histories.

Secondly, I would state that nowadays there is considerable overlap amongst daily-life, environmental, and art-driven aesthetic experiences.⁶⁵ Saito does indeed acknowledge 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,' which continue to blur the distinction between art and life or specifically to create works that simulate everyday life or *are* a slice of it. Yet according to her, art, by its very definition, belongs to the artworld. In contrast to non-art objects, artworks (even those that challenge artworld conventions) still exist in an art-historical context, and cannot but participate in the artworld. This stance remains the same in a recent account by Saito of the contemporary interplay of art and non-art, which is arising with an important cultural phenomenon such as 'artification'.⁶⁶ Hence, for her, the contemporary art world still stands as an autonomous sphere, 'disconnected from everyday life'. Nevertheless, one might note that the arts could penetrate our life-world by way of certain daily aesthetic practices, such as watching a television series or listening to music on the radio.

Thirdly, I would argue that endorsing the supposition of a radical difference between art and non-art experience and their mutual impermeability, as Saito

⁶² See Dyer, review of *The Everyday*, 63.

⁶³ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 33–34: 'We became full humans agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence defining an identity, through the acquisition of rich human languages of expression [...] including the "languages" of art, of gesture, of love, and the like. [...] But we define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to recognize in us. [...] As such it is the background against which our tastes and desires and opinions and aspirations make sense.'

⁶⁴ Melchionne, 'Definition of Everyday Aesthetics'.

⁶⁵ This argument is also supported by Leddy, 'Nature of Everyday Aesthetics', 4.

⁶⁶ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 28–33, 35–40, and 'Everyday Aesthetics and Artification'. See also Ossi Naukkarinen and Yuriko Saito, 'Introduction', in Naukkarinen and Saito, 'Artification', <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7523862.spec.401>.

does, equates with endorsing the assumption of 'pure perception' in everyday life, a perception not at all informed by one's cultural frames or artistic experience. This assumption has been 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 are mediated by language and relations with the other. Not only are the concepts we use to interpret our lives derived from the cultural context in which they are embedded, but perception is also an act of interpretation.⁶⁷ One might object that Saito is entitled not to share such a view, since she maintains that unreflective aesthetic responses are natural responses, thus endorsing the assumption of a 'natural' experience that is universally human or trans-cultural. For instance, she asks us to consider a 'Midwestern farmer' who may not have knowledge of, access to, or interest in the contemporary artworld: his 'aesthetic experiences are universal, regardless of the existence of an artworld in a particular society and one's participation in it'. Yet this standpoint is inconsistent with her other statements that recognize the culturally constructed or context-dependent character of our aesthetic responses or preferences and moral-aesthetic judgements.⁶⁸

Moreover, this assumption implies a view of the *self* which is a mind-body split, and cannot properly support the complex concept of everyday aesthetic experience as described here. I contrast this view by offering instead a *practical* account of the self as embodied 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 of the self is better suited to providing a consistent framework of the analysis of an aesthetic experience grasped as intertwined with different social and cultural practices in the flux of our everyday life.⁶⁹ Apparently, all participants in the AEL debate, including Saito

⁶⁷ Some proponents 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* points to the role of the artist in our perception of everyday life itself.

⁶⁸ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 37, 158, 168–69, 196.

⁶⁹ For the pragmatist point of view on aesthetic experience, see Pentti Määttänen, 'Aesthetics of Movement and Everyday Aesthetics', in 'Aesthetics and Mobility', ed. Ossi Naukkarinen and Arto Haapala, *Contemporary Aesthetics*, special vol. 1 (2005), <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=347>. See also Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 54, 62–64, and 'Third Tear'. My view is distinct from Saito's and the pragmatists' views in that it thinks of everyday aesthetics as *practical philosophy* in the Aristotelian tradition revisited by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his 'Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy', in *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (1976; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 88–112. Its object is also practice, *praxis*, that is, human behaviour and the ways in which human beings organize their lives in common and appreciate their daily life. Hence, aesthetics could differently

and Melchionne, hold the conception of an embodied self. But this compliance is undermined in their case by the monadic-isolation premise they embrace, as I have sought to demonstrate.

Finally, it is doubtful that the monadic-isolation premise is consistent with the ontology of everyday life on which everyday aesthetics is tacitly (as in Saito) or explicitly (as in Melchionne) grounded. As Melchionne notices about daily life, *ordinariness* and *everydayness* mean a flow of experience and action in which these are not isolated and separated. It is therefore important to consider the continuous flux of everyday 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.'⁷⁰ For Melchionne, a properly construed strong everyday aesthetics is supported by the pervasiveness that is built into the fabric of everyday aesthetic life. According to him, in everyday aesthetic life 'what matters is the routine, habit, or practice, the cumulative rather than individual effect.'⁷¹ This very ontology of everyday aesthetic life could be confidently seen as also making up the life of the contemporary artworlds. Though there is no space to develop this argument here, may it suffice to recognize, as interactionist sociologists do,⁷² that the artworlds themselves are social worlds, that is, cooperative networks of various participants – artists, suppliers, performers, dealers, critics, members of the public – supported by conventions, habits, and routine.

IV. CONCLUSION

The examination of the strong and the weak 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 accounts that neglect their significance. The 'weak' version of AEL maintains a monist framework for aesthetic discourse, a concept of the aesthetic integrating both differences and resemblances between everyday life and art – such as the normative aspect, which is able to secure the significance of the aesthetic and to support a communicable experience consistent with a compelling view

address and integrate our everyday aesthetic experiences, practices, and preferences, as well as their ethical and political consequences. I only suggest here this broader yet consistent conception of aesthetics, without developing the idea, for it demands further research.

⁷⁰ Melchionne, 'Aesthetic Experience', 438.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 439–40.

⁷² For example, Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

on 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 proponents, being a complement rather than an alternative to the art-oriented aesthetics it confronted. This is particularly evident if instead of focusing on modern 'fine' art, one turns to 'contemporary' art as well as other late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century phenomena such as aestheticization and artification, which tend to efface the boundaries between experiences of art and everyday life. As I have argued, a complementary account that acknowledges the openness of the concept of art, as well as the changes in its experiencing/appreciation, is more consistent with the conceptions of the embodied self and the 'very ontology' of everyday life underpinning everyday aesthetics. Yet maintaining that art and everyday life interacts in the continuous flux of experiences of an embodied self does not mean that art is made into life (or vice versa). Rather, it means that the continuity between the lifeworld and the artworld should prevent everyday aesthetics from defining itself against the latter. The aesthetics of everyday life also generally aims to integrate aesthetic and ethical aspects of life, prompting an account that falls within either environmental ethics or cultural studies. Nevertheless, a more integrative philosophical framework is needed to overcome the tensions and inconsistencies within AEL, a framework that needs to integrate clear and consistent views of the aesthetic, as well as of the self, intersubjectivity, and the ontology of everyday aesthetic life.

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