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## **Possible Worlds of Everyday Aesthetics: The Experiencing Self, Intersubjectivity and Life-World**

**Abstract:** This paper investigates the relationship between the subjective-private and intersubjective-public dimensions of the aesthetic experience in everyday life. I claim that our everyday aesthetic life cannot be conceived of as a mere private world in absolute discontinuity to the public world, such as the “artworld” or the “life-world”, since it includes both personal and intersubjective dimensions. Likewise, although the “everyday” should not be thought of as absolutely one and the same for all, it is possible to search for the common features that emerge from the background of its multiple particularities. The intersubjective engagement is an essential element when analyzing the subject experiencing the everyday aesthetically, so we should acknowledge as well the intersubjective nature of a subject’s self-constitution and experience. Against the idea of the overall discontinuous nature of one’s aesthetic experience, in everyday context vs. artworld contexts, it is therefore important to consider everyday aesthetic experience as being both distinct and integrated into the continuous flux of one’s experiences, as well as related to one’s whole life. These claims will be supported by some insights on the *experiencing self*, supported by practical philosophy (Gadamer), as well as the characteristics of *everyday life* and *life-world* highlighted by phenomenology (Husserl, Simmel, Schutz). All these accounts offer powerful lines of argument in defending a consistent conception of the whole experiencing self and the structure of one’s everyday aesthetic life as well as its intersubjective dimension.

**Keywords:** everyday; everyday aesthetics; everyday life; experiencing self; intersubjectivity; life-world; self; subjectivity.

### **Introduction: A brief overview of Everyday Aesthetics and its dissents**

Everyday Aesthetics (hereafter EA) has developed in the last three decades as a new research area interested in the aesthetic character of ordinary, everyday life or experience, against previous neglect by the art-centered aesthetic theory. Despite this common interest, this movement is heterogeneous, since it follows different traditions (continental, pragmatist, and analytical) and defends conflicting accounts of some

core practical and theoretical issues.<sup>1</sup> Among these issues are the defining characteristics of the “everyday” and the “aesthetic” – tainted by tensions or oppositions between daily and rare, familiarity and strangeness, ordinary and extraordinary, private-subjective and public-intersubjective – as well as the aesthetic credential of some daily, ordinary qualities or experiences, and the blurring line between art and life.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most consequential disagreements is that between the so-called “strong” and “weak” or “moderate” formulation of EA (or “Aesthetics of Daily Life Intuition” – ADLI, according to Christopher Dowling<sup>3</sup>), concerning the relationship between aesthetics of the everyday and art-centered aesthetics. The “moderate” account<sup>4</sup> holds a monist framework for the aesthetic discourse and a concept of the “aesthetic” integrating both differences and resemblances between experiencing the everyday life and art aesthetically. Among these resemblances, there is the *normative aspect*, which is able to secure the significance of the aesthetic and to support a communicable experience consistent with a compelling view on *intersubjectivity*. The more radical, “strong” version<sup>5</sup> holds instead of a pluralist account that challenges the regular assumptions of art-centered aesthetics and the model of a spectator-like “special” aesthetic experience, aiming at a radical rethinking of the realm of everyday aesthetic life. Some major proponents of EA (such as Yuriko Saito and Kevin Melchionne) hold a notion of the *aesthetic* as a mere private feeling and sphere and, thus, support the idea of everyday aesthetic experience as *private* and *radically distinct* from art’s standing-out, public experience and “world”. For example, Saito uses the alternative notion of “aesthetic life” to replace in daily occurrences the concept of a spectator-like “aesthetic experience” or “attitude” molded on our special relationship with art.<sup>6</sup> In this view, EA requires aesthetic insights and concepts completely distinct from those needed to account for art. This notion is founded on the assumption that everyday aesthetic experience operates independently, *discontinued* and isolated from the experience of art, thus alleging a relation of exclusion between the art-world (*public*) and

<sup>1</sup> For an extended overview of the main accounts in Everyday Aesthetics, see Dan Eugen Ratiu, “Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: On Recent Controversies about the Aesthetic and Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life,” *Estetika* 50 [6], 1 (2013): 3–26, and Dan Eugen Ratiu, “Everyday Aesthetic Experience: Explorations by a Practical Aesthetics,” in *Experiencing the Everyday*, ed. Carsten Friberg and Raine Vasquez (Copenhagen: NSU University Press, 2017), 22–52.

<sup>2</sup> Yuriko Saito, “Aesthetics of the Everyday,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. N. Zalta, (Winter Edition 2015), 1–22.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Dowling, “The Aesthetics of Daily Life,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 50, 3 (2010): 225–42.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Thomas Leddy, “The Nature of Everyday Aesthetics,” in *Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, ed. Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 3–22; Thomas Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2012); Dowling, “The Aesthetics of Daily Life,” and other scholars.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Kevin Melchionne, “Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life: A Reply to Dowling,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 51, 4 (2011): 437–42; Kevin Melchionne, “The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics,” *Contemporary Aesthetics* 11 (2013): 1–7, and other scholars.

<sup>6</sup> Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 9–12, 14–15.

our life-world (*private*), whose intersubjective dimension is either ignored (by Saito) or explicitly put into brackets (by Melchionne).<sup>7</sup>

The private dimension is indeed constitutive to experiencing the everyday aesthetically. Nonetheless, we should not ignore or neglect the intersubjective-public dimension, which, I will argue, is also constitutive to our everyday aesthetic life.

The lively debate on the nature of the *everyday* and its *aesthetic* experiencing is carried on in recent issues of *Contemporary Aesthetics* from 2014 to 2019 as well as in other recent publications.<sup>8</sup> In spite of differences between them, one can detect in some recent accounts a shift in emphasis towards its *relational* nature or the *subjective attitude*, that is, the subjective character as an essential aspect of experiencing the everyday.

For example, Ossi Naukkarinen and Raine Vasquez emphasize the *relational* nature of the everyday and non-everyday and the difference between the former and “daily-life”, insofar as they see “the everyday” as an *attitude*, as “merely one (special) mode of being” – situated, specialized and interpretative, separate from the lived daily-life towards which it orients us. Yet this approach, which aims “to challenge the traditional conception of aesthetics itself, by beginning with the everyday rather than the aesthetic”<sup>9</sup>, left unexplored precisely the *aesthetic* aspect of the everyday and daily-life.

Previously, the overview of developments in the “Aesthetics of the Everyday” published by Saito in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2015) has critically revisited EA’s approach to the features of the *everyday* and the *aesthetic*. She suggests that the best way to capture the “everyday” is to locate its defining characteristics not so much in specific kinds of objects and activities but rather in the *attitude* and *experience* we take toward them. The typical attitude is, in this view, full of pragmatic considerations while the experience is generally regarded as familiar, ordinary, commonplace, and routine. She also advocates the inclusion of bodily sensations into the realm of the “aesthetic” and the return to its *classificatory use* or root meaning as “experience gained through sensibility, whatever its evaluative valence may be.”<sup>10</sup> This line of thought is further developed by Saito in her recent book *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (2017).

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The reference to a subject’s intentionality, sensibility, affect, and corporeality or

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion of this contended issue, see Ratiu, “Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics,” 9–14, and Ratiu, “Everyday Aesthetic Experience,” 23–29.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Jane Forsey, “The Promise, the Challenge, of Everyday Aesthetics,” *Aisthesis* 7, 1 (2014): 5–21; Thomas Leddy, “Experience of Awe: An Expansive Approach to Everyday Aesthetics,” *Contemporary Aesthetics* 13 (2015): 1–12; Yuriko Saito, *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Yuriko Saito, “The Role of Imperfection in Everyday Aesthetics,” *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 15 (2017): 1–9; Giovanni Matteucci, “The Aesthetic as a Matter of Practices: Form of Life in Everydayness and Art,” *Comprendre* 18, 2 (2016): 9–28; Carsten Friedberg and Raine Vasquez, eds. *Experiencing the Everyday* (Copenhagen: NSU University Press, 2017); Gioia Laura Iannilli, *L’Estetico e il Quotidiano. Design, Everyday Aesthetics, Esperienza* (Milano: Mimesis, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Ossi Naukkarinen and Raine Vasquez, “Creating and Experiencing the Everyday through Daily-life,” in *Experiencing the Everyday*, eds. C. Friberg and R. Vasquez (Copenhagen: NSU University Press, 2017), 181, 183–86.

<sup>10</sup> Saito, “Aesthetics of the Everyday,” 4–5.

bodily engagement is indeed necessary when characterizing everyday aesthetic experience. A proper analysis cannot ignore its *embodied* dimension or the subject's corporeality since the experiencing subject is not a mere mind, but also a living body. However, on the one hand, this reference is not sufficient to capture entirely the phenomenological twofold nature – both subjective and objective – of the experience, which is crucial to its proper understanding.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, it lacks an explicit conception of the *experiencing self* that should underlie the EA's account, especially when proposing such a shift in focus towards the experiential subjectivity in its analysis.

Such shifting in focus firstly requests a revision of the concept of experience itself as well as a reflection on the nature and structure of the *experiencing self* and *everyday life*. Unlike other authors,<sup>12</sup> I do think that we can find some valuable insights on this matter in the philosophical tradition. Such insights are notably the dialectics of discreteness-and-continuity of experience in the unity and totality of one's life, emphasized by practical philosophy (Hans-Georg Gadamer), and the intersubjective aspect of everyday life and its dialectics of fragmentation-and-continuity, highlighted by the phenomenological research on *life* (Georg Simmel) and *life-world* (Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schutz).

### The experiencing self

A question can be raised as to whether an explicit view of the “selfhood” is requested when approaching everyday aesthetic experience or “aesthetic life.” This is indeed debatable, and in *Everyday Aesthetics*, the phenomenal presence of the experiencer is usually ignored: “the self” is invisible, I might say since there is no explicit account on this topic. By this remark, I do not contest the worth of so many interesting and substantial approaches to different aspects of everyday aesthetic life, already mentioned. Rather I aim to highlight one of EA's blind spots for boosting up its consistency.

It is true that not all philosophers give a similar answer to “the universality question”, i.e., whether all our experiences are with necessity accompanied by a sense of self. There is an opposition in the current philosophy of mind between different approaches of selfhood. Briefly, between defenders of a strong “eliminativist” position, which supports a “thin notion of the self”, and those who consider that any experiencing is necessarily and essentially a subject-involving occurrence or defend at least an “experiential minimalism.”<sup>13</sup> As Dan Zahavi states in his study “Consciousness and

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Ratiu, “Everyday Aesthetic Experience,” 38–42.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Forsey, “The Promise, the Challenge, of Everyday Aesthetics,” 5–6.

<sup>13</sup> These positions are supported, in order, by authors such as Jesse Prinz, “Waiting for the Self,” in *Consciousness and the Self: New Essays*, ed. J. Liu and J. Perry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 123–49; Gale Strawson, *The Subject of Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Dan Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2005) and his further writings on the “minimal self”. See also Dan Zahavi, “Consciousness and selfhood: Getting clearer on for-meness and mineness,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Consciousness*, ed. U. Kriegel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019 forthcoming), 1–25.

selfhood: Getting clearer on for-me-ness and mineness” (2019), a minimal claim in selfhood theory is that all experiences regardless of their object and act-type or attitudinal character are necessarily subjective in the sense that they feel like something for *someone*. One could reasonably concur at least with this minimal claim and the statement that “the experiential self should be identified with the ubiquitous dimension of the first-personal character”. Accordingly, even if the “experiential self” is not conceived of as a separately existing entity, it is not reducible to any specific experience, but can be shared by a multitude of changing experiences.<sup>14</sup>

If applying to EA’s accounts these findings of the selfhood theory, it follows that a proper analysis of the everyday aesthetic experience has to address the questions of the “duration of the self” or its *diachronic identity* and *unity* in the flux of various experiences as well as their interpersonal constitution that EA’s accounts fail to recognize or deliberately left unattended. It is worth giving a clear, consistent view of the “self” since its lack undermines EA’s potential to incorporate various layers of experience into a compelling explanatory framework and to secure an adequate comprehension of the aesthetics-ethics interrelations in everyday life.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, a comprehensive view of the “experiencing self” could provide an answer to the question of continuity or discontinuity of experiencing art and everyday life aesthetically. EA’s “strong” postulations of the *absolute discontinuity* of the everyday and art-related aesthetic experiences, and the *private* character of the former, imply the notion of a *discontinuous, not-enduring self, isolated* from others (the monadic-isolation premise). This is similar to the “thin notion of self” supported by the eliminativist position in philosophy of mind: “The identity of the experiencer is so tightly linked to the identity of the experience [i.e. daily or art-related] that the cessation of the experience entails the cessation of the experiential self”, while “the arising of a new experience [entails] the birth of a new self”<sup>16</sup>. A question arises then as to whether it is possible to address differently the so-called persistence issue and the *diachronic identity* and *unity* of the self as well as the role of intersubjectivity thereof.

In order to sketch out the nature and structure of the “experiencing self” I will draw on Gadamer’s practical philosophy. This allows to freshly attend the question of the diachronic identity and unity of the self (still open in EA) through an examination of the faculties of a *social-and-moral human being*, which is also engaged in experiencing and appreciating *aesthetically* the everyday (and the art), or in Saito’s terms, has a complex “aesthetic life” with practical-moral implications. In Zahavi’s terms, it is about a “full-fledged human self”, since he recognizes that the “minimal account of self” (concerning the relationship between phenomenal consciousness and selfhood) is not an exhaustive one. As he rightly adds, “there is certainly more to being a human self than being an experiential self”, such as its situatedness in “the space of

<sup>14</sup> Zahavi, “Consciousness and selfhood,” 2–3, 7–8, 19–20.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Ratiu, “Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics,” 18–19, 23–4.

<sup>16</sup> Zahavi, “Consciousness and selfhood,” 15–16. For an analysis of this “monadic-isolation premise” of EA and its theoretical impact, see Ratiu, “Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics,” 12–13, 23.

normativity” and the “role of sociality” in its interpersonal constitution.<sup>17</sup>

The reference to the *self* and the mutual implication between theoretical interest and practical action is essential to the practical philosophy, as developed by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (1960/1988) and other writings. For example, if ethics is a teaching about the right way to live, it still presupposes its concretization within a living ethos.<sup>18</sup> The same is true for aesthetics if considering the *dialogical* and *dialectical* or *transformative* nature of aesthetic experience and generally of the process of understanding, which is seen by Gadamer not as a specialized attitude but as a human way of being in the world. Within the framework of such a hermeneutic ontology, a human being is conceived of as a *dialogical subject*, that is, as a *self in formation*, open to alterations by means of dialogue with other subjects, cultures, and histories. The dialogue or conversation with tradition – which encompasses institutions and life-forms as well as texts – entails a dialectics of self-understanding, as do other ontological characteristics captured by the Gadamerian notions of “correspondence between subject and object” and the “fusion of horizons” of the present experience and tradition in the process of understanding, which is the proper achievement of language. Thus understanding, and implicitly the aesthetic experience as an experience of understanding, is for Gadamer also a key means of an ontological self-constitution, *Bildung*.<sup>19</sup>

The notion of *Bildung* (theoretical, practical, historical and aesthetic), seen by Gadamer as the proper way of developing the whole self, not only one’s natural talents and capacities,<sup>20</sup> calls for the intersubjective engagement as an essential element when analyzing the subject/self experiencing the everyday aesthetically. The idea of *intersubjectivity* is of special interest here as it lays emphasis on some characteristics often ignored by EA view of the self: the openness to the one other, the selflessly attending to the ordinary reality of others, and the enlargement of vision that is at stake in aesthetic experience and judgment or in noticing the everyday.<sup>21</sup> Intersubjectivity is also called in by the principle of “the linguistic (*sprachlich*) nature” of the human experience of the world, stated by Gadamer when posing language as the “horizon” of such a hermeneutic ontology. For individuals are bound to one another in a community of understanding by language, in which “the individual I’s membership of a particular linguistic community is worked out”. This common language precedes experience, is “already present in any of its acquisitions” and thus “is at the same time a positive condition of, and a guide to, experience itself”<sup>22</sup>. Everyday Aesthetics would

<sup>17</sup> Zahavi, “Consciousness and selfhood,” 12.

<sup>18</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy,” in *Reason in the Age of Science* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1990), 97, 111.

<sup>19</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (Second Edition, London: Sheed and Ward, 1988), 230–2, 271–8, 340–1, 416–19.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–18.

<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Dyer, “Review: *The Everyday: Documents of Contemporary Art*, by Stephen Johnstone (ed.),” *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal of Visual Culture* 13, (2008): 63.

<sup>22</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 311–13, 342, 414.

definitely strengthen its philosophical basis by acknowledging as well this intersubjective nature of a subject's self-constitution, language, and experience.

This philosophical foundation has significant implications for the study of everyday aesthetic life, by conveying a heuristic network of concepts – *Bildung* (self-formation), *sensus communis*, judgment, taste, practical knowledge, and so on – that allow us to make sense of complex interviewing of aesthetic, ethical and political aspects in everyday life and to clarify its ontological assumptions. All these aspects are, in fact, parts of the *whole* of one's life. In other words, to contemplate, decide, deliberately act, and so on, are experiences that only a *whole* human being can do. Yet it does not mean that this *whole (self)* is uniform, indistinct and unchanging. Rather it means that the discreteness of experiences or aspects of life is preserved in the “hermeneutic continuity of human existence”, as the experiencing self is structured as a “unity in division and articulation”<sup>23</sup>, or as an *identity in difference*.

In two previous articles,<sup>24</sup> I defended this idea through the notion of an embodied self, seen as a *body-and-mind unity*, which not only perceives, feels, reflects, deliberates, appreciates, and reacts, but also decides, acts, communicates, relates with others and participates in different practices. The conceptual framework provided by practical philosophy supports the account of the self as *embodied* and developed through cultural-social interaction, by emphasizing the inseparable virtues or faculties – judgment, common sense, taste – of a social-moral being engaged in aesthetic experience as well as its context-embeddedness and the openness to one another. This view of selfhood is better suited to providing a consistent framework to the analysis of an aesthetic experience grasped as intertwined with different social and cultural practices in the flux of everyday life.<sup>25</sup> Apparently, all participants in the EA debate hold (implicitly) such conception of selfhood. Yet in some cases (Saito, Melchionne) this compliance is undermined by the monadic-isolation premise they embrace when considering everyday aesthetic life as a mere *private* world in absolute discontinuity with the *public* world – not only the art-world, but also other forms of public everyday aesthetic experience – and thus ignoring or neglecting of its intersubjective dimension.<sup>26</sup>

### The everyday and the “life-world”

Next, for better conceptualizing “everyday life” within Everyday Aesthetics, it is useful to call in the phenomenological research regarding the intersubjective aspect of the “life-world”, or “world of lived experiences” (Husserl, Schutz). This offers powerful lines of argument in defending a conception of the everyday as inter-subjectively

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 86, 222–3.

<sup>24</sup> Ratiu, “Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics,” and “Everyday Aesthetic Experience”.

<sup>25</sup> See also Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture and Social Identities* (Burlington, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 54, 62–4.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Ratiu, “Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics,” 13–14, 20–22, and Ratiu, “Everyday Aesthetic Experience,” 30–37.

shared with others and thus allows us to outline a coherent ontology of everyday aesthetic life.

The concept of “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) was introduced by Husserl in his *Ideas II* and largely analyzed in the third part of *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936/1970). It enfolds a rich, multi-faceted sense. To put it briefly, it can be understood as: a dynamic “horizon” in which one lives; a pre-given “basis” of all shared human experiences; and a communal “world” of socially, historically, and culturally constituted meanings. Hence, it includes both *personal* and *intersubjective* dimensions and constitutes the *unity* of the flow of experience that is anterior to the discreteness of experiences and necessary to it.<sup>27</sup>

Within the EA accounts of the everyday, the concept of “life-world” was already referred to by Naukkarinen, in the sense of a “basis” on which other layers of life and culture are built, when developing his idea of everyday (life) around the kernel of “my everyday now”.<sup>28</sup> Thus, he stresses the *personal* dimension of the everyday.

Other authors have mostly considered its *intersubjective* aspect, the “everyday” being qualified as the common ground of experience which connects individuals, activities, and histories.<sup>29</sup> Of course, the two dimensions of the everyday do not oppose each other but suppose each other. Likewise, the everyday should not be thought of as absolutely one and the same for all. In fact, as evidenced by the phenomenological analysis, “the world of everyday life is neither unique nor uniform; there are always private worlds in which we find ourselves always-already immersed”. Yet, even if “everyday life vanishes in a changing plurality of objective contexts or symbolic formations that hardly could be brought together under one clear-cut name”<sup>30</sup>, philosophy can search for the common features that emerge from the background of such multiple particularities.

The intersubjective dimension of the everyday and the pragmatic, social pole of the life-world (that complement its subjective pole, the subjective consciousness) are even strongly emphasized in the seminal analysis of the life-world by Schutz (1962) in the context of “the problem of social reality”. According to this phenomenological-sociological viewpoint,<sup>31</sup> “the world of everyday life is our paramount reality; it is the inter-subjectively shared reality of pragmatic action, where we are awake and working in standard time”. The everyday world of working is the archetype of our everyday experience of reality, as distinct from other realities experienced as “finite provinces of

<sup>27</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 102–268; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 217–21.

<sup>28</sup> Ossi Naukkarinen, “What is ‘Everyday’ in Everyday Aesthetics?” *Contemporary Aesthetics* 11 (2013): 2, 7.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Stephen Johnstone’s anthology *The Everyday: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, and Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2008), and its review by Dyer, 63.

<sup>30</sup> As noted by Ion Copoeru, “Vie quotidienne et normativité,” in *La phénoménologie comme philosophie première. Mémoires des Annales de Phénoménologie*, ed. Karel Novotny, Alexander Schnell and László Tengelyi (Prague: Filosofia, 2011), 281. Translation is mine.

<sup>31</sup> Summarized by Thomas Eberle, “Photographing as Creative and Communicative Action,” in *Communication, Culture, and Creativity*, ed. H. Knoblauch, M. Jacobs, and R. Tuma (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2014), 135–51.



meaning”, such as the personal worlds of dreams, of imageries and phantasms, as well as the worlds of art, of religious experience, of scientific contemplation, and so on. Yet all these other realities may be regarded as its modifications.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, “this everyday world is experienced as meaningful, as pre-interpreted, and as inter-subjectively shared with others”. Within such a conception of the everyday world or mundane reality, which includes inherently the aesthetic, the aesthetics of the everyday does not constitute a separate, finite province of meaning,<sup>33</sup> to be opposed to the aesthetics of the world of art (which also implies pragmatic actions in the “real world”).

EA’s “strong” version faces inescapable difficulties in dealing with the complex structure of the everyday and its aesthetic experiencing – Melchionne’s struggle to develop an appropriate ontology of everyday life for grounding Everyday Aesthetics is a case in point. Among the EA proponents, he has devoted a particular interest in developing an appropriate ontology of everyday life to ground EA. In his view on daily life, its characteristics of “ordinariness” and “everydayness” mean a flow of experiences and actions, in which the aesthetic ones should not be taken as isolated, cut off slices, nor as lacking aesthetic value or significance. This is because “what matters is the routine, habit, or practice, the cumulative rather than individual effect”, and “how each discrete aesthetic experience is rooted in the pattern of everyday life”. The *pervasiveness* of “the aesthetic”, built into the fabric of everyday life, and the *on-goingness* of its experience are, in his view, foundational for a properly construed EA.<sup>34</sup>

Any proponent of EA, “strong” or “moderate”, would endorse these features. The interesting analysis by Melchionne of the ongoing nature of the aesthetic experience in daily, ordinary occurrences – yet in them alone, in his account – is nonetheless impeded by the way in which this characteristic is thereafter subordinated to the idea of the overall discontinuous nature of one’s aesthetic experience – in everyday context vs. art world contexts. In his view, any break in the on-going daily, private aesthetic experience is also a radical change in nature for the experience itself, as “everydayness substantially changes how we value our experiences”<sup>35</sup>. This is because he fails to recognize the full dialectic of continuity-and-discreteness of experience in the *unity and totality of one’s life*. It is, therefore, important to consider the everyday aesthetic experience as both distinct and integrated into the continuous flux of one’s experiences, as well as related to one’s *whole life*.

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

<sup>32</sup> Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers Vol. 1 – The Problem of Social Reality*, ed. M. Natanson and H. L. van Breda (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), 231–32; Eberle, “Photographing as Creative and Communicative Action,” 139.

<sup>33</sup> Eberle, “Photographing,” 140.

<sup>34</sup> Melchionne, “Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life,” 438–40.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 440.

Simmel conceptualizes human “life” in a dynamic, holistic manner as an embodied stream of consciousness directed toward “contents” of experience. The matter of experience is shaped by “forms”, evolved in life’s higher stages of self-reflection, and in that process, life constitutes for itself a world of mental contents. Thus the “world”, which according to him, is a formal concept, primarily designates a discrete “totality of contents of mind and experience”<sup>36</sup>. By “world”, it is also meant “the sum and order of possible things and events that can be arranged into a continuum of some kind according to any kind of overarching principle”<sup>37</sup>. Hence, there exist for the human mind multiple discrete and self-subsistent worlds of value and meaning: not only a “real” world in a practical sense of the term, but also a religious, a scientific, and an artistic world, which fundamentally share the same and all content of experience, but articulated into very different forms. As mental content, these worlds are distinct from their historical realizations, which as worlds within historical life, remain particular and one-sided and do not achieve any full and ideal completeness.<sup>38</sup>

Within this framework and considering the thesis of the parallelism of categorial worlds (mental contents), the idea of life as “fragmentary” in character is a matter of perspective on life – in other words, a matter of different views of life’s contents. Specifically, this idea results from a view of life from the perspective of these particular-discrete categorial worlds, which is a view of life’s contents “from the outside”, as things and events, as works and bodies of knowledge, as regularities and values. According to Simmel, life is fragmentary in the sense of a unique relationship that an individual led life takes up to these various worlds, that is, acting at the “intersection”, “in-between”, or “oscillating” constantly between these worlds seen as different layers of existence, and from each of them taking away only a fragment. However, a different perspective – from within *life as life* and its dynamic process – shows life as making up a *whole*, a self-sufficient flow of occurrences, present in all its moments in all its entirety. As Simmel makes clear: “Always only one life pulses through these particles as beats of the same life, inseparable from it and therefore also inseparable from each-other.”<sup>39</sup> From this perspective, then, life’s character is not fragmentary, and Simmel emphasizes the constant movement of life moments and fragments and its overcoming in the *unity* and *continuity* of one’s life.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, the fragmentary aspect or discontinuity of experiencing aesthetically the everyday and the art, as distinct worlds of life, backed by Melchionne (2011), is not a final, single ontological feature or structure of experience or life as such. Rather it is a matter of analytic perspective that is complemented, from a broader perspective of life as a whole, by the continuity of experiencing in one’s life. Moreover, the apparent paradox of completeness versus fragmentation is overcome or solved in the idea

<sup>36</sup> Georg Simmel, “The Fragmentary Character of Life,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 29, 7–8 (2012): 237–9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 241, 243–4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 246–7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

of the inherent unity and continuity of life. This is made clear in this essay by Simmel's notion of life as a flow of experience shaped by "form", and developed later in his theory of life as a limitlessly creative flow of embodied will, feeling and understanding.<sup>41</sup> This theory helps us to understand the essential structure of the everyday life-world and its experiencing as constituted by the dialectics of discreteness and-continuity and unity-in-differentiation.

## Conclusion

To sum up, I have shown that the "strong" EA's discontinuistic approach does not provide a conception of the experiencing self and everyday life consistent with its shift in focus towards the experiential subjectivity and its complex, practical "aesthetic life", where aesthetic and ethic interweave. Yet it is possible to address these issues differently based on some different, new claims on the nature and structure of *everyday life* and *experiencing self*: 1) the intersubjective nature of a subject's self-constitution and experience as well as of everyday life. 2) the structure of the experiencing self as an identity in difference, to which the relationship to otherness is constitutive; 3) the essential structure of the everyday life-world (and its experiencing) as constituted by the dialectics of *discreteness and-continuity* and *unity-in-differentiation*.

From this viewpoint, the discontinuity in experiencing the everyday and art aesthetically as distinct worlds of life, backed by the "strong" EA, is not an absolute ontological feature or structure of experience or life as such. This preliminary analytic perspective should be integrated into a final, broader perspective of *life as a whole*. Yet this does not mean that this *whole self* is uniform, indistinct and unchanging. Rather it means that the discreteness of experiences and aspects of life is both preserved and integrated in the unity and continuity of one's whole life. Likewise, the "everyday" is not a mere private world in absolute discontinuity to the public world, such as the "art world", since as part of our "life-world" it includes both private-subjective and public-intersubjective dimensions. *Private* and *public* are both possible *worlds of life* in Everyday Aesthetics.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 247. See also the "Editorial Note" by Austin Harrington in Simmel, "The Fragmentary Character of Life," 237.

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