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Everyday Aesthetics and its Dissents: the Experiencing Self, Intersubjectivity, and Life-World

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ABSTRACT. This paper investigates the aesthetic experience in everyday life, chiefly the relationship between its subjective-private and intersubjective-public dimensions, addressing two related core issues that still allow room for dissent in Everyday Aesthetics (EA): the nature and structure of *everyday life* and *experiencing self*. At stake, here are some critical philosophical questions, such as the unity or disunity of the self and the continuity or discontinuity of experience. I claim that consistent conceptions of the experiencing self, the structure of one's everyday life and life-world as well as their constitutive intersubjective dimension are required as a compelling framework for understanding the aesthetic dimension of everyday life. Yet most of current EA's accounts do not provide such conceptions, "the self" still sitting as a blind spot. Instead, I will make several theoretic claims about the nature and structure of the experiencing self and, accordingly, the everyday aesthetic life. Unlike other authors, I do think that one can find valuable insights on this matter in philosophical tradition. These are notably the intersubjective aspect of everyday life and the dialectic of fragmentation-and-continuity, highlighted by the phenomenological research on *life world* (Husserl, Schutz) and *life* (Simmel), and the dialectic of continuity-and-discreteness of experience in the *unity* or *totality of one's life* emphasized by Gadamer's practical philosophy.

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1. Introduction

In this paper², I investigate the nature of aesthetic experience in everyday life focusing on the relationships between its subjective-private and intersubjective-public dimensions and with the experiential subjectivity. I will address two related issues that still allow room for dissent in Everyday Aesthetics (hereafter EA): the nature and structure of *everyday life* and *experiencing self*. Since these concepts actually shape EA's accounts on the above-mentioned topics, they require further discussion. At stake, here are some critical philosophical questions, such as the unity or disunity of the self (the experiential subjectivity) and the continuity or discontinuity of experiencing aesthetically the everyday and the art. I claim that key in answering is the attempt to showing how to both preserve and integrate different layers of experience – aesthetic and ethical, art-related and ordinary – within the continuity of one's experience as well as the personal and inter-personal dimensions within the unity of one's life. The subsequent methodological claim is that a proper framework for grasping the aesthetic dimension of our everyday life requires consistent conceptions of the *whole* experiencing self, the structure of one's everyday life or life-world as well as their constitutive *intersubjective* dimension.

² This paper is a revised and augmented version of two sections in the Chapter: Dan Eugen Ratiu, 'Everyday Aesthetic Experience: Explorations by a Practical Aesthetics', in Carsten Friberg and Raine Vasquez (eds.), *Experiencing the Everyday* (Copenhagen: NSU University Press, 2017), pp. 22–52.

Yet most of current EA's accounts do not provide such conceptions. By this remark, I do not contest the worth of so many interesting and substantial approaches of different aspects of everyday aesthetic life, some of them below mentioned. Rather I aim for a meta-aesthetics approach able to boost up Everyday Aesthetics' consistency by highlighting its blind spots. In EA's studies, the question of the phenomenal presence of the experiencer is usually ignored: "the self" is invisible, I might say, since one can hardly find an explicit account on this topic. Moreover, some assumptions of the "strong" version of EA – especially the hypothesis of the *private* and radically *discontinuous* nature of everyday aesthetic experience – are inconsistent with or contradict other main assumptions, such as its ongoingness and its fundamental repeatability and practical nature, and are detrimental to EA's endeavoring to highlight and comprehend the ethic–aesthetic interrelations in everyday aesthetic life.

Therefore, I will make several theoretic claims about the nature and structure of the experiencing self and, accordingly, the everyday aesthetic life. Unlike other authors (e.g. Forsey 2014), I do think that one can find valuable insights on this matter in philosophical tradition. Such insights are notably the intersubjective aspect of everyday life and its dialectic of fragmentation-and-continuity, highlighted by the phenomenological research on *life-world* (Husserl, Schutz) and *life* (Simmel), and the dialectic of discreteness-and-continuity of experience in the unity and totality of one's life, emphasized by practical philosophy (Gadamer).

2. A Brief Overview of Everyday Aesthetics' Main Assumptions & Dissents

Since I provided elsewhere (Ratiu 2013, 2017) an extended overview of main accounts in Everyday Aesthetics, here I will not tell the whole story, just pinpoint some basic assumptions and dissents that are important in this discussion. One of the most consequential disagreements is that between the so-called “weak” or “moderate” and “strong” formulations of EA (or “Aesthetics of Daily Life Intuition”—ADLI, according to Dowling 2010), concerning the relationship between aesthetics of the everyday and art. One can also frame this disputed relationship (as Leddy 2015 did), in terms of the *continuity* hypothesis of an “expansive” approach to the everyday as a continuum of experiences *versus* a “restrictive” concept and a *discontinuistic* approach of everyday aesthetic experience or life.

The “moderate” account (e.g. Leddy 2005, 2012, 2015; Dowling 2010, and other scholars) holds a monist framework for the aesthetic discourse and a concept of the “aesthetic” integrating both differences and resemblances between experiencing aesthetically the everyday life and art. 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 (e.g. Saito 2007, 2017a; Melchionne 2011, 2013,

and others) holds instead a pluralist account that challenges the regular assumptions of art-centred aesthetics and the model of a spectator-like “special” aesthetic experience, aiming at a radical rethinking of the realm of everyday aesthetic life. Major proponents of the “strong” EA such as Yuriko Saito and Kevin Melchionne hold a notion of the *aesthetic* as mere private feeling and sphere and, thus, support the idea of everyday aesthetic experience as *private* as well as *radically distinct* from the art’s standing-out, public experience and world. For example, in Saito’s view the alternative notion of “aesthetic life” is meant to replace in daily occurrences the concept of a spectator-like “aesthetic experience” or “attitude” molded on our special relationship with art. This notion is founded on the assumption that our everyday aesthetic experience operates independently, *discontinued*, and isolated from our experience of art. Thus, these two worlds of our possible aesthetic experience, the *public* “art world” and the *private* “life world”, are separated as completely distinct spheres. Hence the radical distinctiveness of EA’s concepts too, which are reassessed beyond the strictures of art (Saito 2007; Melchionne 2011, 2013).³ The private dimension is indeed constitutive to experiencing aesthetically the everyday. Nonetheless, one should not ignore or neglect its intersubjective dimension – which, I will argue, is also constitutive to our everyday aesthetic life.

³ For a detailed discussion, see Dan Eugen Ratiu, ‘Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: On Recent Controversies about the Aesthetic and Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life’, *Estetika*, vol. L/VI (1), 2013, pp. 9-13, and Dan Eugen Ratiu, ‘Everyday Aesthetic Experience: Explorations by a Practical Aesthetics’, pp. 23-29.

The lively debate on the nature of the *everyday* and its *aesthetic* experiencing is carried on in some issues of *Contemporary Aesthetics* from 2014 to 2018 (Melchionne 2014; Puolakka 2014, 2015, 2018; Leddy 2015; Saito 2017b)⁴ as well as in other recent publications (e.g. Forsey 2014; Saito 2015, 2017a; Matteucci 2016; Friedberg and Vasquez eds. 2017; Iannilli 2019). In spite of differences between them, one can detect in some recent accounts a shift in emphasis towards the *relational* nature of the everyday or the *subjective attitude* toward it, that is, the subjective character as an essential aspect of experiencing the everyday.

For example, Ossi Naukkarinen and Raine Vasquez in their study ‘Creating and Experiencing the Everyday through Daily-life’ (2017) emphasize the *relational* nature of the everyday and non-everyday as well as the difference between the former and “daily-life”. Such emphasis is based on their view of the “everyday” as an *attitude*, as “merely one (special)

⁴ John Dewey’s *Art as Experience* (1934) is a key reference in this debate, with his distinction between ordinary “experience” – continuous but distracted, dispersed – and “*an* experience” – as a closed, unified moment, standing-out from the ordinary humdrum. Some authors, in line with Dewey, hold a thick concept of the “everyday” and defend the continuity hypothesis and an “expansive” approach to EA – including the entire range of aesthetic experiences, from the ordinary to extraordinary, and arguing for continuities and the dynamic interaction between the aesthetics of everyday life and of art (e.g. Leddy 2015) – over a “restrictive” concept and discontinuistic approach that focuses on some core ordinary activities, which are ongoing, common or widely shared, and mostly pursued in private (e.g. Melchionne 2014). Other authors defend a pragmatist view of everyday aesthetic experience – attentive to the “aesthetic rhythm of the everyday”, which makes an aesthetic experience in the Deweyan sense not quite an exception to the quotidian flow of experiences (e.g. Puolakka 2014, 2015, 2018) – over the theories that build an EA on the ordinariness of the everyday and see its aesthetic character as constituted by a particular feeling of “familiarity” (e.g. Haapala 2005 and Saito 2007).

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” (Naukkarinen and Vasquez 2017, pp. 181, 183-186), left unexplored precisely the *aesthetic* aspect of the everyday and daily-life.

Previously, an overview of developments in the “Aesthetics of the Everyday” published by Yuriko Saito in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2015) has also critically revisited its 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 *subjective experience* and the *attitude* we take toward them. The typical attitude is, in this view, full with pragmatic considerations while the everyday experience is generally regarded as familiar, ordinary, commonplace, and repetitive or 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” (Saito 2015, pp. 4-5). This line of thought is further developed by Saito in her recent book *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (2017).

The reference to a subject intentionality, sensibility, affect and corporeality 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 for capturing entirely the phenomenological *twofold nature* – both subjective and objective – of the experience, which is crucial to its proper understanding (for a detailed discussion of this issue, see Ratiu 2017, pp. 38-42). On the other hand, it lacks an explicit conception of the *experiencing self* that should underlie the AE's account, especially when proposing such a shift in focus toward the experiential subjectivity.

3. 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 *Everyday Aesthetics* usually ignores the issues related to the “experiential self”, such as the duration or persistence issue – its diachronic identity or unity in the flux of various experiences. It is true that not all philosophers give a similar answer to another, previous, “universality question”, i.e. whether all our experiences are with necessity accompanied by a sense of self. The subject of experience is a condition and a principle of its formal unity in the Kantian-type approaches, but not in all approaches (see Zahavi 2019, p. 3).

Apart the “narrative” account of the self, there is an opposition in

current philosophy of mind between different approaches of selfhood. Briefly, between the defenders of a strong “eliminativist” position, which support a “thin notion of the self” (such as Prinz 2012), and those who consider that any experiencing is necessarily and essentially a subject-involving occurrence (Strawson 2017) or defend at least an “experiential minimalism” (such as Zahavi 2005 and his further writings on the “minimal self”). As Dan Zahavi states in his study ‘Consciousness and (minimal) 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 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 (Zahavi 2019, pp. 2-3, 7-8, 19-20).

If applying to EA’s accounts these findings of the selfhood theory, it follows that a proper analysis of everyday aesthetic experience has to address the questions of the “duration of the self” or its *diachronic identity* in the flux of various experiences as well as their interpersonally constitution that EA’s accounts fail to recognize or deliberately left unattended. The arguments to support this methodological claim are as

follows:

1a. The radically *discontinuistic* approach of the everyday aesthetic experience logically implies the notion of a *discontinuous* or *transitory, not-enduring self*. **1b.** 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 – either daily or art-related –, that the cessation of the experience entails the cessation of the experiencing self, while the arising of a new experience entails the birth of a new self (see Zahavi 2019, pp. 15-16). **1c.** Consequently, there is an endless displacement or opposition between an *everyday life–self* and an *artworld–self*, fully disconnected. Yet such a theoretic position is unable to secure the diachronic identity of the self and cannot endorse the on-goingness of everyday aesthetic experience and its fundamental repeatability, generally accepted premises in EA’s accounts.

2a. EA’s “strong” postulation of the exclusively *private* character of the everyday aesthetic experience logically implies the notion of a *monadic* or *isolated self*. **2b.** This notion entails the lack/neglect of intersubjectivity or the self’ situatedness in the *public* “space of normativity”. **2c.** Such isolationist notion of the self and neglect of intersubjectivity 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 our everyday life and its fundamental *practical* nature (another major premise of EA).

3. Therefore, a coherent conception of *selfhood*, at least minimal, and of the essential structure of the *everyday life* or *life-world* are needed for such an attempt of EA – especially when it is also tied in with a conceptual shift from “aesthetic attitude” to “aesthetic life”, as in Saito’s account.

In order to sketch out briefly the nature and structure of the experiencing self I will draw on Hans-Georg Gadamer’s practical philosophy. This allows us to freshly attend the question of the diachronic identity and unity of the self 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 the 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 normativity” and the “role of sociality” in its interpersonally constitution (Zahavi 2019, p. 12).

The reference to the *self* and the mutual implication between theoretical interest and practical action are 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 (Gadamer

1990, pp. 97, 111). The same is true for aesthetics if considering the *dialogical* and *dialectical* or *transformative* nature of the 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. To sketch briefly his account of the structure of experience, in particular the *aesthetic experience*, which includes a living relationship to its “object” and transforms the experiencing self, I point out here its main standpoints as against other limited or dogmatic accounts:

- versus the one-sidedness of the concept of “lived-experience” (*Erlebnis*), his account is an inquiry into the essential structure of “experience” (*Erfahrung*);
- versus the idea of the aesthetic experience as “discontinuity of experiences”, this is integrated into the *hermeneutic continuity of one’s experience*, through the unity and continuity of self-understanding and its element of self-knowledge;
- versus the notion of *absolute discreteness* of one’s aesthetic experiences, the discrete aspects are eventually integrated into the unity and continuity of the flow of experience, hence into the *whole* of one’s life;
- versus “the dogmatism of everyday experience”, its fundamental *repeatability* does not abolish the historical and dialectical elements of any human experience, thus sharing the paradox of “being one and the

same and yet being different” (Gadamer 1988, pp. 55-63, 85-89, 311-324, 423, 430).

Within the framework of this hermeneutic ontology, the subject or the self is conceived of as a *dialogical subject*, that is, as a *self in formation*, open to transformations 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/works – 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* (Gadamer 1988, pp. 230-232, 271-278, 340-341, 416-419).

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 (1988, pp. 13-18), calls for the intersubjective engagement as an essential element when analyzing the subject/self experiencing aesthetically the everyday. The idea of *intersubjectivity* is of special interest here, as it lays emphasis on some characteristics of the self which are often ignored by EA: 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 judgement or in noticing the everyday (Dyer 2008, p. 63). 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” (Gadamer 1988, pp. 311-313, 342, 414). Everyday Aesthetics would 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 intertwining 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” (Gadamer 1988, pp. 86, 222-223), or as an *identity in difference*.

In two previous articles (Ratiu 2013, 2017) 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 (see also Mandoki 2007, pp. 54, 62-64). Apparently, all participants in the EA debate hold (implicitly) such conception of selfhood. Yet in some cases (Saito, Melchionne), as previously shown, 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.⁵

4. 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” (Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schutz). This offers powerful lines of argument in defending a conception of the everyday as inter-subjectively shared with others and thus allows us to outline a coherent ontology of everyday aesthetic life.

The concept of “life-world” (*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 (Husserl 1970, pp. 102-268; Gadamer 1988, pp. 217-221).

⁵ For a detailed discussion, see also D. E. Ratiu, ‘Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics’, pp. 13-14, 20-22, and D. E. Ratiu, ‘Everyday Aesthetic Experience: Explorations by a Practical Aesthetics’, pp. 30-37.

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” (Naukkarinen 2013, pp. 2, 7). 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 that connects individuals, activities, and histories.⁶ 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” (as noted by Copoeru 2011, p. 281), philosophy can search for the common features that emerge from the background of such multiple particularities.

The intersubjective dimension of the everyday is even strongly emphasized in the seminal analysis of life-world by Schutz (1962) in the

⁶ See, for example, Stephen Johnstone’s anthology *The Everyday: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, and Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 2008), and the review by Jennifer Dyer in *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal of Visual Culture*, vol. 13, 2008, pp. 62-66.

context of “the problem of social reality”. According to this phenomenological-sociological viewpoint (summarized by Eberle 2014), the world of everyday life is our paramount reality; it is the inter-subjectively shared reality of pragmatic action, where we are awake and working in standard time. The everyday world of working is the archetype of our everyday experience of reality, as distinct from other realities experienced as “finite provinces of meaning”, such as the personal worlds of dreams, of imageries and phantasms, as well as the worlds of art, of religious experience, of scientific contemplation, and so on (Schutz 1962, pp. 231-232; Eberle 2014, p. 139). Thus, the everyday world is experienced as meaningful, as pre-interpreted, and as inter-subjectively shared with others. Within such conception of the mundane world, which includes the aesthetic, the aesthetics of everyday does not constitute a separate, finite province of meaning (Eberle 2014, p. 140), to be opposed the world of art.

EA-“strong” version faces unescapable 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’s main 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 (Melchionne 2011, pp. 438-440).

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 feature is thereafter subordinated to the idea of the overall, radical *discontinuous* nature of one’s aesthetic experience – in everyday context *versus* art world contexts. In his view, any break in the ongoing daily, private aesthetic experience is also a radical change in nature for the experience itself, as “everydayness substantially changes how we value our experiences” (Melchionne 2011, p. 440). This is because he fails to recognize the full dialectic of discreteness-and-continuity of experience in the *unity* and *totality* of one’s life. It is therefore important to consider everyday aesthetic experience as both distinct and integrated into the flux of one’s experiences, as well as related to one’s *whole life*.

The philosophical background on which this idea makes sense can be sketched by drawing on Simmel’s analysis of the so-called “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*.

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” (Simmel 2012, pp. 237-39). By “world”, is also meant “the sum and order of possible things and events that can be arranged into a continuum of some kind according to any kind of overarching principle” (Simmel 2012, p. 242). Hence, there exist for the human mind multiple discrete and self-subsistent worlds of value and meaning: not only a “real” world in a practical sense of the term, but also a religious, a scientific, and an artistic world, which fundamentally share the same and all content of experience, but articulated into very different forms. As mental contents, these worlds are distinct from their historical realizations, which as worlds within the historical life remain particular and one-sided, and do not achieve any full and ideal completeness (Simmel 2012, pp. 241, 243-244).

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" (Simmel 2012, pp. 246-247). From this perspective, then, life's character is not fragmentary, and Simmel emphasizes the constant movement of life moments and fragments and their overcoming in the *unity* and *continuity* of one's life (Simmel 2012, p. 247).

Therefore, the fragmentary aspect or discontinuity in experiencing aesthetically the everyday and the art, as distinct worlds of life, is not a final ontological feature or structure of experience or life as such, as Melchionne (2011) and others supposed. 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 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 (Simmel 2012, p. 247; see also the "Editorial Note" by Austin Harrington in Simmel 2012, p. 237).

5. 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 interwove. Yet it is possible to address differently these issues on this basis of 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 the 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 aesthetically the everyday and art as distinct *worlds of life*, backed by the “strong” EA, is not an absolute ontological feature or structure of experience. This preliminary analytic perspective should be integrated into a final, broader perspective of *life as a whole*. Yet it 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 personal and intersubjective dimensions. *Private* and *public* are both possible *worlds of life* in Everyday Aesthetics.

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