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EVERYDAY AESTHETICS

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It. *Estetica del quotidiano*, Fr. *Esthétique de la vie quotidienne*, Germ. *Alltagsästhetik*, Span. *Estética de lo cotidiano*. Everyday Aesthetics is a line of research that investigates the aesthetic features of everyday life experience dealing with them more or less in continuity or discontinuity with the established aesthetic discourse. The debate started principally in the United States and in the Nordic Countries but has then progressively expanded into other countries (see Di Stefano 2017). The interest in this topic and the programmatic effort to build a corresponding and “official” line of research began in the 1990s. Various factors have contributed to this process. Among the most relevant ones, according to Leddy (2012): a renewed interest in Deweyan aesthetics, the blur of the distinction between high and popular arts, the development of environmental and feminist aesthetics and the dialogue between Western and non-Western philosophical traditions. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the 1990s is also the context in which investigations on aestheticization have begun to appear.

THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

The topics which are at the centre of the investigations carried out within Everyday Aesthetics are several. They range from the aesthetics of urban spaces, domestic practices, cultural venues and leisure forms to the aesthetics of weather, aquariums, junkyards, etc. The various issues of the online journal *Contemporary Aesthetics* provide a useful overview of this lively debate and have also allowed the development of this quite young sub-field of aesthetics. Leddy (1995), Light, Smith (2005), Mandoki (2007) and Saito (2007) are the seminal texts that have spurred Everyday Aesthetics’ first development phases. This development has been “tracked” in such entries as Irvin (2009), Sartwell (2010), Livingston (2012) and Saito (2015). Many authors were involved in the establishment of Everyday Aesthetics, but a few of them count as its main “theorists”. Saito (2007; 2017) develops an aesthetics in which the intertwining between moral and aesthetic aspects of everyday life experience are crucial for the project of a better world-making. Haapala

(2005), following a Heideggerian-existentialist ontology, advocates an Everyday Aesthetics which relies on the absence of extraordinariness linked to the process of familiarization, and therefore to the acquisition of a sense of belonging and identity in relation to a place. Leddy (2012) is currently the volume that has addressed in the widest and most systematic way Everyday Aesthetics as a sub-discipline (see also his blog *Aesthetics Today*). His aesthetics has two specific focuses: on aesthetic properties (he advocates an expansion of their range) and on a phenomenological understanding of the notion of aura (Leddy 2012: 127-49). Melchionne (2014) maintains that the everyday aesthetic possesses an intrinsic relevance and value as compared to artistic value, since it has a great impact on the quality of subjective life, that is, on that which he defines as "subjective well-being". Naukkarinen (2013) carries out a clear analysis of the ways in which the everyday unfolds, which he then applies to crucial issues discussed within Everyday Aesthetics. The everyday, according to him, has a strongly relational nature: although it has rather stable characteristics it can change over time running on a spectrum that equally includes positive, negative, and neutral features of experience. What emerges from this overview is that the "theorists" of Everyday Aesthetics work more or less in continuity or discontinuity with traditional aesthetics. This entails at least two relevant questions often debated by everyday aestheticians. The first one addresses a fundamental "tension": should Everyday Aesthetics concern experiences of the ordinary *qua* ordinary or as something that has been rendered exceptional, special, or extra-ordinary? Is it a matter of de-familiarizing and thus of making what is familiar strange? In this regard, frequent reference has been made to the Deweyan idea of aesthetic experience as "*an* experience" and to his criteria of the aesthetic arguing whether they transform ordinary experiences in something they are not. The second one deals with normativity: is Everyday Aesthetics a theoretical venue for what cannot be easily categorized as fine art or natural beauty? Does "everything go" in Everyday Aesthetics?

In more recent years, and more specifically between 2010 and 2016, some scholars have joined this discussion with a "critical" attitude towards the "theorists" of Everyday Aesthetics. For this reason, they may be defined "meta-theorists": Christopher Dowling, Dan Eugen Ratiu, Jane Forsey and Giovanni Matteucci. They have attempted to answer these fundamental questions by proposing a so-called "normative turn" in Everyday Aesthetics (see Iannilli forthcoming: chaps. 5-6).

First, they systematized Everyday Aesthetics' various "voices" by developing different labels according to the continuous (weak formulation or pole, extraordinarist stance or continuistic option) or discontinuous (strong formulation or pole, familiarity stance or discontinuistic option) relationship they have with art-centred aesthetics. They also tend to share a preference for a continuistic option: they understand everyday aesthetic experience (and hence Everyday Aesthetics) from a relational standpoint, that is, as shaped by the interaction between various levels of aestheticity (more or less "striking" ones), between various spheres of life and culture (more or less "institutionalized" ones) and as regulated by intersubjective practices (more or less "discursive" ones). Then they have made an effort to find both a selective and constitutive criterion of aesthetic experience meant as an intersubjective experience in which the expression of a taste preference does not necessarily take place at a propositional level but can be carried out in a gestural or more implicit dimension of experience. In this sense, we can speak of a "normative turn".

BEYOND THE NORMATIVE TURN: A RENEWED EVERYDAY AESTHETICS?

As we said, the first studies on Everyday Aesthetics appeared coevally with those on aestheticization in the 1990s. Yet their relationship is controversial. Although they share the same *milieu*, Everyday Aesthetics has generally either ignored or demonized aestheticization processes (which include consumption practices and the digitization of experience, for instance). Nevertheless, it must be noted how, perhaps by welcoming the “normative turn”, lately some first everyday aestheticians have modified their stance towards the latter, which greatly exemplifies an “anti-isolationist”, continuistic model of aesthetic experience in which various elements relationally cooperate. This passage is useful to explore since it sheds light on the current state of Everyday Aesthetics.

In order to clarify this point, we could address the two “extremes” of the evolution (or permanence) of Saito’s and Leddy’s original stances on aestheticization. Testbeds for this are two contributions they each published in a “pre-” and “post-” normative turn phase. While Saito (2007; 2017) has not modified her stance at all and actually tends to insist on consumption’s (hence aestheticization’s) negative aspects, Leddy (2012; 2018) no longer maintains an oppositional stance towards aestheticization and criticizes precisely Saito’s most recent perspective on it.

Actually, not only Leddy, but also others have over the last few years and to various extents taken in the instances that have promoted this theoretical widening and hence a more constructive view also on aestheticization phenomena. Haapala (2017), for instance, no longer maintains a strictly discontinuistic stance, but seems open to consider the continuity and hence the absence of a hierarchical order between various spheres and levels of aesthetic experience; Melchionne (2017) has combined the question of subjective well-being, aesthetic choice and the construction of taste through the algorithmic component of digitized experience; Naukkarinen (Naukkarinen, Bragge 2016; Naukkarinen 2017) has progressively focused on the aesthetic feature of social behaviors but also on the relationship between academic aesthetics and the so-called digital humanities. More generally, then, some essays which appeared in 2017, thus in a fully “post-” normative turn phase, are noteworthy since they have attempted to enucleate and then to relate various (more or less “structured”) levels in which everyday experience takes place (see Haapala 2017; Naukkarinen, Vasquez 2017; Ratiu 2017).

It seems then possible to talk of a maturation of Everyday Aesthetics if not even of its germinal transformation into a more general aesthetics which *also* deals with the everyday as such.

A recent issue of *The Monist* (MacBride, Haldane 2018) seems to go against this process. It addresses the aesthetics of everyday life by on the one hand recognizing the urgency to deal with its topics, but on the other hand ignoring *de facto* thirty years of research carried out by everyday aestheticians. From an overall analysis of this issue what emerges is the attempt to establish a new start within the debate on the nexus aesthetic-everyday. It is true that, if we take into consideration some of its internal limits, an overcoming of Everyday Aesthetics may be necessary. Yet, in *The Monist*, this happens by disqualifying it with an almost ideological “repression” and not in terms of a perspective opening. What the contributions included

in this issue share is an overall ethico-social viewpoint that neglects fundamental theoretical questions, which are at least discussed within *Everyday Aesthetics*: from the statuses of the aesthetic and of the everyday to the analysis of its investigations' ontological and/or phenomenological limits. In this way, though, too much seems to be sacrificed to the will of finding a new start for this field of aesthetics in the nominal change that from the thematization of "everydayness" should lead to the analysis of "the aesthetic life".

It must be noted that these topics have been at the centre of French philosophical tradition too, although, generally, it has not deepened the eminently aesthetic implications of everyday experience. Classical studies on the everyday are those carried out for instance by Blanchot, Lefebvre, De Certeau, Barthes and Baudrillard, and more recent ones are those carried out by Bégout (2005), who develops his research from a phenomenological viewpoint, and by Formis (2010), who specifically focuses on performativity.

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