

## Chapter 2

# Aesthetics and the Everyday

**Abstract** In this chapter I provide the foundations for our understanding of aesthetics. I do not intend to provide an exhaustive literature review here for I am not satisfied with how this literature has generally developed. However, in the interests of providing a foundation to our discussion, I do attempt to introduce and discuss my understanding of the main features and developments of the aesthetics literature. However, a fundamental feature for me in this chapter, is the emphasis on the positive features of aesthetics—the beautiful, the sublime etc. For me, attention to these features represent only a partial understanding of aesthetics and that in order to provide a more persuasive balance to appreciate our emotive responses then we need also to value the negative, that is, the grotesque and the ugly. I also introduce in this chapter the everyday and discuss its characteristics with regards to aesthetics. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the importance for an international perspective of aesthetics.

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the reader will be introduced to the origins (and our general everyday appreciation) of the term *aesthetics*. I start by amplifying some of the comments that I started with in the opening introductory chapter—firstly, Richard Shusterman’s observations: aesthetics is: “conventionally identified in academia with the philosophy of art and beauty. But despite the considerable consensus on such a definition, the concept of the aesthetic remains deeply ambiguous, complex and essentially contested” (Shusterman 2006, p237) and he is not alone in his concerns. Cazeaux in the second edition of his “Continental Aesthetics Reader” claimed in the opening words of his introduction, that traditionally aesthetics has always occupied the margins of philosophy mainly because it deals with ‘those aspects of experience which are the least amenable to categorisation, i.e. art, beauty, emotion and the ever changing delights of the senses’ (Cazeaux 2011, p. xiii). Furthermore, it should be immediately appreciated that aesthetics is not confined to being an academic term exchanged and discussed with other academics! Rather, aesthetics is a term that is employed by people on a regular basis across everyday life. Perhaps the above confusion reflects

that this is a term that was not developed for everyday usage and this lies at the core of the problem. That is, its origins lie from exemplifications predominantly from art galleries, museums and other normative conditions—and not from everyday life!

This perhaps puts us in a difficult position—perhaps the term aesthetics should remain constrained by academia and normative conditions? However, this might then load this term with accusations of arrogance or irrelevance—whereas, realistically, we have to appreciate that now the term ‘aesthetics’ has become everyday parlance, and therefore we should attempt to situate it appropriately within this context? My response is simple—if the literature in this area were strong and clear, then it is likely that our everyday understandings would be informed by this—but the opposite seems to be apparent. It would seem the literature is weak (for a number of reasons that we will enlarge below) and that aesthetics is simply another word used to express the beauty or the sublime.

My aim in this text is to contribute in some small way to restore our understanding of aesthetics in everyday life. Therefore, not as a theoretical examination, but one that demonstrates relevance and value to society. I do appreciate that it is unlikely that I will convince the readership of this text that I have all of the answers, but let me ask no more than perhaps that I have a few arguments that deserves further consideration.

However, before we reach this point, we need to take a few steps backward and consider the origins and assumptions governing ‘aesthetics’ and thereby provide a base for our examination.

Firstly, I want to revisit the exemplar for examining aesthetics, and this leads me to my argument that in order to understand aesthetics in contemporary life that we need to discard (or at least develop an alternative to) fine art (and other forms of higher art) and replace it with a more accessible and relevant everyday example. Secondly, and this related to the former, I also think we need to rehearse the assumptions regarding the ontological/normative frame of how traditionally aesthetics was developed and discussed. The period of enlightenment was important in developing much of our thinking about philosophy—but in the context of aesthetics (and this is within a general frame of understanding aesthetics as how people emotively interpret objects and events) in this period, academics were almost ignoring the inevitable presence of the person in academic examinations. I will argue this denial of the person (and the use of fine art) is significant and that the relatively recent realisation of the importance and role of people—especially for this context and subject—demands a different frame of engagement. However, before we examine these core assumptions, let me provide the reader with a brief ‘indicative’ review of the aesthetics literature.

## 2.2 What Is Aesthetics?

Let me start by amplifying my opening statements in the introduction chapter. Firstly, I do not intend to provide an exhaustive review of aesthetics—not least that for me, much of this is likely to confuse the reader—so my judgement is to be

selective and present my own influences. And secondly, in only appreciating aesthetics as a descriptor of the beautiful or the sublime etc. this fails to appreciate its full potential. Traditionally the aesthetics literature has focused on a positive emotional assessment of an experience for a person and this might be of an object, an event or simply a place. For me, assessing something as beautiful or sublime represents simply one end of the continuum of possible emotional assessments that one might have towards the experience of something. Equally important is if the assessment is emotionally bad. For example, those features that lie on and towards the other end of a continuum of pleasure: the unpleasant, or ugly, grotesque etc. what some have described as ‘anaesthetics’ (see Dewey 1934). Therefore, I argue that the aesthetic reflects emotive responses to object and events that lie along the whole extent of this type of continuum. Nevertheless, and this indisputably complicates things, equally it might be argued those experiences that lie in the mid-points of the continuum—those experiences that might be described as pleasurable—what Dewey described as ‘mere’ experiences as compared to ‘an’ experience—might therefore not comply with our descriptor of aesthetics. The question that emerges at this point is, should aesthetics be only be concerned with ‘extreme’ emotive assessments or include all emotive assessments?

In other words, can we in everyday life allocate more than a passing acknowledgment to the ‘pleasurable’ or finding something merely ‘discomforting’? That is, do we cognitively possess the capacity to fully address and appreciate the lesser emotive responses that permeate daily life—or would we be overwhelmed if we attempted this? Should we therefore only focus on the extremes of the continuum? We will return to this fundamental question in the chapters below.

Thus, aesthetics relates to the emotive interpretation of the experience—not simply through measuring our observations, but one that draws upon our most valuable asset, that of making sense of the world (Gendlin 1991). Thus, through our bodies, and their movement, we generate layers of meaning that uncovers the experience of living-in-the-world. I want in this chapter to introduce the context for this range of experiences. Firstly, I want to provide a context and therefore I will provide an overview of the aesthetics literature and then I want to converge my approach towards why I argue that the everyday is important.

At this point, if we acknowledge that aesthetics can include emotive responses that can either be the sublime or the ugly (for the sake of brevity I have labelled these according to these two simplistic terms)—then perhaps the origins and discussion of aesthetics might have followed a different course of development than the one I need to introduce now. However, traditional discussions have predominantly focused on the positive, the beauty, sublime aspects of aesthetics and the guise it normally follows is either with a discussion of Plato and the Ancient Greeks or a detailed introduction to Alexander Baumgarten and Immanuel Kant their respective contributions to this term. For a detailed introduction I would point you to one of many publications that do this very well (for an introduction to the Analytical tradition of Aesthetics then see Levinson 2003; and for the Continental, see Cazeuax 2011).

However, let me provide the reader with a brief (personal) indicative review of the evolution of aesthetics literature. My approach here is to provide a selective

introduction to the literature that leads me to enable and refine my examination of aesthetics and its relationship to the body. This is not an incorrect starting point for any discussion of aesthetics, for if we trace back to the origins of aesthetics it derives from the Greek word for ‘perception’ (*aisthesis*). A word/term used by Plato, and then later Aristotle, to mean lived, felt experience; that is, knowledge developed through the senses which traditionally is in complete contrast to *eidos*, which is knowledge derived from reason and intellection.

For Plato, art needed to be kept away from the serious order of life—even to the point of banishment from Plato’s notion of the ideal republic. Plato in his writings never really considers art on aesthetic grounds for to do so would mean introducing criteria that might give it more independence. Autonomy and social prestige were exactly what Plato wanted to undermine in order to establish the hegemony of philosophy. In his *Republic* books (3 and 10 see Plato 1998), Plato regretfully concludes that he must banish imitative poetry from his ideal state because, as Mark Johnson reminds us, “it stirs up and waters the passions’ while simultaneously misleading us with third-rate copies of what is real’ (Johnson 2007a, p210). Nevertheless, not all the Greeks felt the same way, Aristotle (1968) for example, felt otherwise and sought to defend art from Plato’s extreme attack by showing the cognitive value of mimesis (in terms of it being a natural, primary means of learning), by arguing that art imitated the essential and not mere superficialities, and by introducing the doctrine of *catharsis* to reveal how art’s arousal of the passions might be a good thing since they are expurgated within the protected context of art’s experience. Nevertheless, Aristotle never felt that art deserved the same status as philosophy. Aristotle’s theory of *catharsis* emphasized that art should arouse passions only to ensure that they be purged, without harming character or society.

This foundation led to two of the most important contributors to Aesthetics to base their subsequent arguments. The first is Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten and it was he who advocated an epistemological-scientific approach that construed aesthetics as a general science of sensory perception that was involved in discerning and producing beauty. Though beauty was important to the field, the emphasis of the aesthetic (as reflected in its etymological root) was more on its mode of perception or consciousness. However, it was his claim that the scope of aesthetics was much wider than art, including not only natural beauty but also our daily practices and that provides the valuable context and foundation to our subsequent discussion that we will develop later in this chapter. For Baumgarten, he advocated an improved aesthetic perception (achieved through various forms of training) was not simply for fine arts, but as a way of improving our general, including practical, functioning (see Baumgarten).

The second author who I want to mention at this point is probably the most well-known and influential philosopher of his age - Immanuel Kant. Kant followed Baumgarten and he amplified this understanding to argue that subjective knowledge and the condition of belonging to a world are interrelated. Cazeaux (2011, p. xvi) argues that “Kant’s ingenious move is to take the property of being resistant to conceptualization and transform it to the arena in which the interaction between consciousness and reality is worked out”. Cazeaux continues: ‘for the first time,

what exists beyond description is not placed beyond understanding or in opposition to everyday experience but argued to be the dynamic state of conceptual reappraisal that is constitutive of our attempts to deal with any new situation. What has been theorized as a narrow and isolated band of experience is seen to arch across the ‘hard’, world-confronting regions of thought, e.g. epistemology, ethics, ontology” (Cazeaux 2011, p. xvi).

For me, one of the major problems for our contextual review is that much of the twentieth and twenty-first century understandings of aesthetic theory is inherited from Kant. It is from his assumptions that the key question of the aesthetics literature, that I introduced at the start of this chapter emerges from, and for him, aesthetics ultimately is a question about ontology, in terms of approach and epistemic in terms of design (i.e., questions about knowledge claims), and therefore our literature in this area should be primarily concerned with the nature and validity of aesthetic judgments. For me, whilst I value many of Kant’s contributions, there are significant question marks for me over his normative stance and it is this that we will revisit below. We should also appreciate that Kant wanted to explain how judgments of “taste” (for example this “X” is beautiful) could be both subjective, that is, based on feeling, and yet still lay claim to universal validity. That is, in Kant’s text entitled: *Critique of Judgment* (1952), originally published in 1790 but still widely regarded as the most pivotal and influential work of modern aesthetics, Kant makes a concerted effort to discuss and refine the notions of taste and the aesthetic. ‘The judgment of taste is aesthetic’ and its ‘determining ground [of pleasure or displeasure] cannot be anything other than subjective’, though the disinterested and non-conceptual nature of this pleasure and judgment should, Kant argued, make them universally shared (Kant 1952: 41–2). Kant sharply distinguished the aesthetic from the realm of truth and from practical or ethical matters. It was Kant who argued that aesthetics be reduced to a minor role when he argued that the experience of beauty requires a form of ‘disinterested’ judgment – a judgment that suspends one’s practical, ethical and political engagements.

The result is that from the late nineteenth century onwards, the emphasis became to privilege the aesthetic over taste. Aesthetics became the umbrella concept for explaining our appreciation of art and nature. Hegel (1993: 3, 5, 9), who identified aesthetics narrowly as the ‘Philosophy of Fine Art’ (thus excluding natural beauty), was especially important in this privileging of fine art. His idealist, intellectualist ambition could not accept aesthetics as a realm of mere taste but instead conceived it as a ‘scientific’ discipline that addressed the high truths expressed in art. Natural beauty, he argued, did not have the deep meaning and truth that art possessed, and was also guilty of being ‘too open to vagueness and too destitute of a criterion’. Fine art, in contrast, along with religion and philosophy, conveys ‘the most comprehensive truths of the mind’ and the ‘profoundest intuitions and ideas’ (Hegel 1993, p. 11).

In the evolution of aesthetics from Baumgarten to Hegel, we can see three distinct axes for understanding aesthetics. Baumgarten’s epistemological-scientific approach construed aesthetics as a general science of sensory perception that involved discerning and producing beauty. Though beauty was important to the field, the emphasis

of the aesthetic (as reflected in its etymological root) seemed to be more focused upon its mode of perception or consciousness, thus suggesting, that the scope of aesthetics was much broader than art, including not only natural beauty but also including our everyday practices. Thus, Baumgarten advocated improved aesthetic perception (achieved through various forms of training) not simply for fine arts but as a means of improving our general, including practical, functioning. In the writings of Kant, we find aesthetics as a theory of taste that emphasizes beauty and the sublime in nature (with respect to which judgments of taste were alleged to be purer) and in art (where their purity was marred by representational, conceptual meanings). However, Kant sharply distinguished the aesthetic from the realm of truth, and from practical or ethical matters, thereby marginalizing it from our everyday application. In Hegel, aesthetics is defined as the philosophy of fine art. He notes the perceptual etymology of the term 'aesthetic' only to brand this meaning as irrelevant, just as he rejects the term 'kallistic' (from the Greek word for beauty, *j\_kkoy*) as too general for designating the aesthetic field, because he claims the science of aesthetics should deal only with 'artistic beauty', while making its prime focus 'the highest ideas' that art presents through its beautiful 'sensuous forms' (1993: 3, 9).

D'Angelo (2013) observed between 1950 and 2000 that US/UK-led analytical approach to philosophy seemed to be dominated by the problem of the definition of art. The principal aim of Aesthetics was identified as that of furnishing a definition, in terms of necessary conditions, of art and works of art. Frank Sibley wrote a notable series of articles, starting in 1959, defending a view of aesthetic concepts as a whole. He said that they were not rule- or condition-governed, but required a heightened form of perception, which one might call taste, sensitivity, or judgment. His full analysis, however, contained another aspect, since he was not only concerned with the sorts of concepts mentioned above, but also with a set of others that had a rather different character. That is, to describe works of art in terms which relate primarily to the emotional and mental life of human beings. Sibley suggested that we can employ terms such as: "joyful," "melancholy," "serene," "witty," "vulgar," and "humble," as suitable exemplars of aesthetics. However, he also acknowledged that such terms were not purely aesthetic terms, because of their other uses elsewhere, but he still felt we should acknowledge them as relevant descriptors of many aesthetic experiences (see Sibley, 2001).

This was in strict contrast, claimed D'Angelo, to main-land Europe continental philosophers. He noted that continental philosophy traditionally fragmented into trends that refer to various philosophical currents (phenomenological aesthetics, aesthetics of reception, aesthetic hermeneutics, Adorno's Aesthetic theory, etc.), yet more recently they seem to have found a relative wholeness in the last ten years by returning to the Baumgartenian origins and proposing a general philosophy of sense and sensibility. Philosophers such as Wolfgang Iser, Martin Heidegger or Gernot Böhme in Germany, or as Emilio Garroni and Maurizio Ferraris in Italy, proposed an aesthetics as a philosophy of sense, as a theory of sensation and/or perception, or as a study of atmospheric perceptions. Thus, in aesthetics (and this might be claimed in contrast to other topics in philosophy) the gap between Analytic and Continental philosophy became even deeper, given that Anglo-American philosophy has always

perceived aesthetics as a philosophy of art. However, there is an exception to this interpretation and this is through the writings of a sub-group of the analytical school and these are often known as the ‘pragmatists’. A pragmatist approach to aesthetics (following in steps of writers/philosophers such as Charles Peirce, Henry James, John Dewey and then later Richard Rorty) is attractive in its devotion to lived experience (and as we shall see below converges with some of the ideas of the continental phenomenologists). Its approach demands that it engages with genuine problems of people as they engage with their environment.

## 2.3 People and Aesthetics

The above section provides a brief overview of traditional aesthetics literature. It is not intended to be exhaustive—but nevertheless, I hope valuable for the reader in mapping out the main foundations of traditional aesthetics literature. What is interesting is that indisputably the Analytical and Continental philosophers both recognized the influence of Kant—however, each group drew on and responded differently to aspects of his writings. It might be claimed that aesthetics provided Kant the means to turn his understanding of the term into an epistemological examination that largely followed the route of formulating understandings of conceptual judgement. For Kant there was no real appreciation of the influence of the person—other than as an instrument of data collection—and thereby acknowledgement of the body and furthermore the potentiality of its movement is decidedly absent in his writings (although it should be noted that for Kant the self is a transcendent ego. Which, for my understanding, is fundamentally separate from any bodily perceptions or feelings, even though it actively organizes them on some occasions).

What I hope the reader will also note is the return to Baumgarten’s approach by the Continental followers; a route that in crude terms echoes my claims in Chapter 1 (and again as we will read in Chapter 3) of the limitations of adopting only a scientific position when observing aesthetics. This is not to suggest that the scientific route is incorrect in other contexts—but for me (and it would also seem for the continental followers) this route fails to incorporate sufficiently the role and contribution of people, the body and movement in understanding aesthetics across everyday life. The exception in analytical terms is the contribution by the pragmatists. In the remaining pages of this section I now want to move my attention forward to an embodied focus. Firstly, by introducing French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty and then American pragmatist John Dewey and then briefly, a writer who has attempted to converge these respective writers, Mark Johnson. Dewey and Merleau-Ponty, although from markedly different philosophical perspectives (namely, American Pragmatism and French Phenomenology), each of them tried to present a non-dualistic account of how meaning is grounded in aspects of our bodily engagement with our environment.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty was a French phenomenologist who died in 1961—at the young age of 52 years. He established his writing reputation through his thoughtful contributions on the importance of the body (see Merleau-Ponty, 1962)—and I will discuss this aspect of his contribution in more detail in the next chapter when I will discuss the body. However, Merleau-Ponty's influence is broader than this and much of his writing remains relevant (and challenging) for today's audiences. At this point I want to raise two issues, the first relates to a challenge of the relationship between subject and object. This relates to the position between the object (our bodies) and the subject (to that which we perceive). In our discussion of fine art and the traditional scientific lens of scrutiny this relationship is clear—there is a clear division between these—however, I would argue that for an appreciation of 'dress' in terms of aesthetics, this relationship is more complex and throughout this text we will return to Merleau-Ponty, who for me, appreciates this complexity. Not least, for Merleau-Ponty, there is no simple division between object and the subject—rather their relationship is one that overlaps (and is often relational) through our sensual capabilities. Thus the perceptual sensual capabilities of our bodies (vision, touch, smell, taste and sound) provide the perceptual bridge that goes to the very core of our understanding of 'being-in-the-world', and we will examine below, thereby part of a relational engagement. For phenomenologists appreciating that we are 'in-the-world' and thereby part of it, is contrary to the analytical/scientific model that demands that the researcher will do their best to remain distant and thereby objective in their knowledge claims. For Merleau-Ponty (and other continental theorists) this is not a sustainable position, it is inconceivable to deny the role of the body in people-based contexts and certainly, in the context of an examination of aesthetics in everyday life!

The second issue that I want to introduce here relates to something that Merleau-Ponty labels: The pre-reflective cogito and this basically is the idea that there is a cogito before language, or to put it crudely, that there is a self-anterior to both language and thought that we can aim to get in closer contact with. The notion of a pre-reflective cogito hence presumes the possibility of a consciousness without language, and it exhibits something of a nostalgic desire to return to some brute, primordial experience. For me, I will postulate below that dress could exemplify the guise of this layer of examination? I claimed in Chapter 1 that the facility of decorating our body through clothes and other forms of decoration is primordial and furthermore goes to the core of our identity (see Jacquette 2014). I also suggested that dress is as primordial as language—so accordingly, we will revisit these claims in Chapters 4 and 5.

Moving our attention now to John Dewey we can note that he was a US pragmatist whose writings and influence on philosophy were far-reaching from the late nineteenth until the middle of the twentieth century. In terms of our discussions of aesthetics largely we will confine our discussion to his 1934 text entitled: 'Art and Experience'. Dewey would largely concur with Merleau-Ponty when he argued there is no sharp division of the subjective and the objective, or between action and substance, as such for him, there is no clear gap between art and everyday life. For Dewey all inquiry is not passive but an on-going process of engagement in



everyday life. For Dewey inquiry should not be understood as consisting of a mind passively observing the world and drawing from this as if it would correlate truth with reality. No, for Dewey our daily lives are replete with aesthetic character and is pervasive across the whole of contemporary life. Therefore, Dewey argues, this experience can be reduced to an immediately grasped quality of unity that binds the elements of an experience together—and this is the necessary foundation for constituting any situation or state of affairs as a coherent, identifiable experience.

In this way, aesthetics no longer simply lies with the purview of fine art or the in terms defined by Danto or others (i.e. associated with art) but within ordinary everyday life, and is about the conditions of experience. Hans Georg Gadamer summarises this perspective:

Thus the end of our conceptual analysis of experience we can see what affinity there exists between the structure of experience as such and the mode of being of the aesthetic. The aesthetic experience is not just one kind of experience among others, but represents the essence of experience itself... In the experience of art there is present a fullness of meaning which belongs not only to this particular content or object but rather stands for the meaningful whole of life ... The work of art is understood as the perfecting of the symbolic representation of life, towards which every experience tends (Gadamer 1960/1975, 63).

It is this type of thinking that challenged contemporary philosopher Mark Johnson to converge the respective contributions of Merleau-Ponty with Dewey and conclude that an aesthetic experience is the integration of all the elements of ordinary experience that gives the experience a larger feeling of wholeness in the interactive flow of organism-environment transactions (see Johnson 2007a). In this way, Johnson argues, there is a continuity of aesthetic experience with normal processes of living that modifies and sharpens our perception and communication. That is, for Johnson, aesthetics is not confined to the arts or to simply assessment of the beautiful—but rather is based on our sensorimotor experience, our feelings, and our visceral connections to our world and on various imaginative capacities for using sensorimotor processes to understand abstract concepts (Johnson 2007a, b). The Aesthetic is grounded in pre-linguistic meaning and confers an experience the sense of wholeness. Furthermore, it is not something that I only grasp and forget about each day when I go to sleep but collectively builds towards a ‘store’ of understanding that continues to accumulate and guide me as I engage with events, situations, and people in each and every future day. This leads Johnson to present a very persuasive understanding of aesthetics in the context of this account when he writes:

Aesthetics is not just art theory, but rather should be regarded broadly as the study of how humans make and experience meaning (Johnson 2007a, 209).

## 2.4 Everyday Aesthetics

A frequent criticism of traditional aesthetics in our contemporary society is its insulation from everyday life (Berleant 1991, 1992; Leddy 2005). Berleant argues that we need to broaden the scope of aesthetic inquiry’ ... one that ‘demonstrates

the obsolescence of traditional concepts such as ‘disinterest’, ‘contemplation’ and the ‘quest for universality’ (Berleant 1991). Leddy agrees and amplifies: ‘Art concentrates and intensifies the aesthetic qualities we find in non-aspects of our lives ... Whether by the mediation of art or not, ordinary objects *can* be seen in a way that gives them heightened significance, making them, sometimes surprisingly, objects of awe or at least, of fascination’ (Leddy 2012 *his emphasis*). These opening comments would be music to the ears of the US Pragmatist John Dewey.

For Dewey, our lives are informed by our facility to open ourselves to the aesthetics replete in everyday life. Dewey argues that aesthetics should include the positive and the negative (the aesthetic and the anaesthetic). He was certain aesthetics should not be the purvey of the privileged, or the educated few, but be understood as accessible to all. For Dewey, the realm of the aesthetic—i.e. ‘the whole apparatus of aesthetic experience, aesthetic objects, aesthetic attitude, aesthetic quality, aesthetic value, aesthetic pleasures, and their ilk’—is revised or extended to include not only states of mind but also mere sensual and bodily pleasures, the so called ‘lower’ senses of smell, taste, and touch as well as negative or seemingly insignificant reactions and minor moments and behaviours of private life. Dewey, argues against the view, stemming historically from the sensationalistic empiricism of David Hume, that interprets the content of sense experience simply in terms of the traditionally codified list of sense qualities, such as colour, odour, texture, etc., divorced from the funded meanings of past experience. Rather that our emotive responses converge these towards an understanding of experience.

Of course, other authors since Dewey’s death have continued to refine these claims (see for example, Gernot Böhme). These have been many and varied—ranging from anything can be aesthetic in the everyday to calls for restraint. However, in recent years Jane Forsey concludes it comes down to a simple basic choice: “Either Everyday Aesthetics merely extends the range of objects fit for aesthetic attention while maintaining familiar theoretical models and concepts, *or* the movement demands a reconfiguration of our understanding of aesthetic experience as prompted by quotidian phenomena” (Forsey 2015). Dowling (2010) has labelled ‘the weak formulation as ‘extension to include experiences from daily life’ (broadly speaking see the writings of Thomas Leddy, Roger Scruton and Sherri Irvin defend this viewpoint—see Irvin 2008a, b; Leddy 2012; Scruton 1979). By contrast, Forsey (2015) comments: the “strong formulation” holds that “experiences from daily life can afford *paradigm* instances of aesthetic experience. Such experiences are not bound by the limitations and conventions that temper discussions of aesthetic value in the philosophy of art”. Proponents of this view include Yuriko Saito and Arto Haapala (see Saito 2007; Haapala 2005).

Pragmatic philosophy and aesthetics of everyday life differ. The former advocates ‘art as experience’ whilst everyday life interprets ‘experience as art’. Although these use the same words—they in fact mean considerably different things. The idea of *art as experience* aims at the restoring the continuity of ‘art *with* everyday life—its focus being on how art is integrated into everyday experience. Whilst the idea of ‘experience as art’ has its footing in experience, emphasising that art is merely part of human experience, and that art is merely a part of the human experience (that is, human

experience possesses ‘aesthetic qualities’). Everyday aesthetics does not have clear-cut borders despite the attempts of such authors as Melchionne (2011, 2013) who writes: “I would like to clarify the definition of everyday aesthetics at work here. Everyday aesthetics denotes “the aspects of our lives marked by widely shared, daily routines or patterns to which we tend to impart an aesthetic character” (Melchionne 2013). “Everyday aesthetic activities are ongoing, familiar practices with potential though not necessary aesthetic features. ... There are five main areas for everyday aesthetic practice: food, wardrobe, dwelling, conviviality, and going out (running errands or commuting)” (Melchionne 2013). Importantly, not all activities construed as vernacular are everyday activities. Ongoing activities, like cleaning or cooking, are part of the everyday, unlike feasts or interior decoration, which occur seasonally, at most, or once every several years.

Leddy suggests: “the aesthetic appreciation of everyday life requires de-familiarization, making strange, or casting an aura. Because we are most of the time preoccupied by the task at hand in our daily life, pragmatic considerations mask the aesthetic potential of commonplace objects and ordinary activities. Once we experience them with a different attitude and perceptual gear, we can unearth latent aesthetic values in the most ordinary and routine” (Leddy 2012, 128). This view can be interpreted as a faithful application of the claim made by the aesthetic attitude theory that theoretically anything can be an object of aesthetic experience. Mundane objects can acquire a kind of ‘aura’ that heightens their aesthetic value (Leddy 2012; Leonhardt 1985; Tuan 1993; Visser 1997; Gumbrecht 2006). According to this interpretation, what is new about everyday aesthetics is its illumination of those aspects of our lives that are normally neglected or ignored because they are eclipsed by standout aesthetic experiences we often have with works of art and nature. More careful attention and a different mind-set can reveal a surprisingly rich aesthetic dimension of the otherwise mundane, non-memorable, ordinary parts of our daily life. Many works of art are helpful in guiding us through the morasses of everyday life toward a rewarding aesthetic experience (Dillard 1974; Prose 1999; Stabb 2002; Welsch, 1997).

I will return to the value of everyday aesthetics in the discussion presented in Chapter 5. In the final section of this chapter I would like to introduce an international perspective. Too frequently discussions of aesthetics have taken a mainly Western perspective and overlooked the rich and strong contributions from other locations. Nevertheless, space (and knowledge) precludes me from examining all other locations outside the West.

## 2.5 International Aesthetics

A significant question emerged for me in preparing this text—how homogenized globally is our understanding of Aesthetics? Would an international perspective of aesthetics benefit from exemplars from dress? Will the traditions of dress in these different locations provide a different way of understanding of aesthetics? At this

stage I am not sure that I have many of the answers to these questions. However, what is apparent is that interest in dress and its primordial value is world-wide. For example, the recent rise in interest for indigeneous aesthetics (see Kelly 2014) reflects a growing realisation that awareness of specific local practices (of dress and other practices) is of growing interest to society.

Philosophers as different as John Dewey and Michel Foucault remind us that the ancient Greeks were keen to affirm the art of living and the blurring of ethics and aesthetics, and we can see the same insertion of art and its aesthetic stylization into the core of practical, ethical and political life in ancient Chinese (especially Confucian) culture and in other East-Asian traditions that it helped shape. These ancient cultures, however, did not employ the technical concept of the aesthetic as used in Western modernity. So when occidental philosophy was imported into East Asia in the latter half of the 19th century (initially in Japan through the great Meiji reform), the modern Western notion of aesthetics had to be introduced and given a Japanese translation. Ultimately, the Japanese term chosen was ‘*bigaku*’ which means the science of beauty (bi); and the Chinese, whose young intellectuals first imported modern Western ideas through Japan, similarly adopted this strategy in translating aesthetics as *meixue* (mei being the word for beauty). Furthermore, in India, for example, we can note the concept of *rasa* (“aesthetic mood”) and it having attained an ongoing prestige in the classical Sanskrit discourses of philosophy, theology, and cultural analysis traditionally maintained by the Brahman (priestly, literate) castes (see Kelly, 2014). Some Japanese aestheticians, however, who are aware of Baumgarten’s original meaning of aesthetics, and sensitive to the fact that aesthetics is much more than the study of beauty and that much of contemporary art has little to do with beauty, have recently proposed that aesthetics be translated as *ganseigaku*—the science of sensory perception. Several Japanese scholars are also critical of the way that the dominant occidental ideology of the aesthetic and fine art has tended to declass traditional Japanese arts (such as the art of tea and calligraphy) and relegate them to the realm of *geidoh* (ways of culture) while reserving the status of art for Western-style art forms (Aoki 1998; Shusterman 2004). Although the concept of the aesthetic has historically served as an ideological instrument of occidental cultural hegemony, it does not follow that the aesthetic dimension itself is inherently oppressive and parochially Western. Moreover, the concept of the aesthetic is open and contested, and some of its currently contesting interpretations seem congenial to Asian practices and also to popular Western expressive forms that fall outside the realm of fine art but are nonetheless appreciated for their aesthetic properties and expressive power. The interest in international aesthetics is relatively new. Some regions in the world (for example, Africa) have only been developing this interest since the latter decades of the twentieth century. For me, the need for an international understanding is imperative for the future and we can see the beginnings of this discussion in Michael Kelly’s 2014 edition of *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*.

## 2.6 Concluding Comments

This chapter has attempted to provide a brief, but focused, overview of aesthetics and the everyday. This chapter has not attempted to encompass the full range of aesthetics literature but rather be selective in its focus and discussion. The attention on Baumgarten, Kant and Hegel presents what I feel are the core developments of the aesthetics literature. Others may disagree, and certainly I thought long and hard about whether to include Mikel Dufrenne—as I am a great admirer of his writings, especially: ‘The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience’ (Dufrenne 1973). However, my aim was to capture what I argue is the present state of this literature; one that I argue is beset with difficulties and perhaps in danger of becoming stagnant and irrelevant outside a small group of academic scholars.

I am convinced that the future direction for aesthetics needs to encompass more than circular arguments and claims regarding ontological and epistemological issues. The interest in aesthetics is now widespread and it does not need to remain locked-up in these types of examinations. Aesthetics literature has the potential not to be confused or marginalized, but I feel this can only be achieved if we change direction.

My argument in this text is to suggest that its future lies less with scholarly examination and more with clarity as to its guise and accordingly, I suggest that the everyday is the obvious location for this development. Certainly this claim is not unexpected as Baumgarten was clear, that for him, aesthetics needed to be rooted in this approach. However, this will have a number of implications and we will discuss these further in the chapters below. Finally, I would like to add a further comment. Indisputably a more international perspective than what we will discuss in this short text is required. Only the above partial comment suggests that there will be both convergence and divergence with regards the potential of the approach I will offer in this text and it would be interesting to see its development. Perhaps this will be a future project for me!

In the next chapter we will examine the body.

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