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## On Habits and Functions in Everyday Aesthetics

Kalle Puolakka

### Abstract

A group of theorists in everyday aesthetics, named restrictivists, have explicated the notion of the everyday in terms of a particular stance of everydayness that they believe, in time, comes to characterize people's relationships to their daily things and environments. The everyday is revealed to be something habitual and routine that, despite its ordinariness, provides a pleasurable sense of safety and trust. In this paper, I present a series of considerations drawing on John Dewey's notion of habit, on the one hand, and Jane Forsey's account of the aesthetics of design, on the other, that call into question the general image of the everyday present in restrictivists' work. These examinations, along with a look at the notion of the everyday at the end of the paper, will show, I believe, that while restrictivism may very well capture some important aspects of everyday life, the structure and character some of its main proponents attach to the everyday do not have the necessity and inevitability they assume.

### Key Words

design; everyday aesthetics; function; Haapala; habits; Naukkarinen

### 1. Introduction: expansionism vs. restrictivism

Thomas Leddy has helpfully framed the current state of everyday aesthetics as a debate between the expansionists and the restrictivists. The expansionists understand everyday aesthetics as a field dealing with heightened experiences that raise the everyday above the ordinary and the routine. John Dewey's notion of aesthetic experience, which refers to a very lively experience with its own unique developmental character, has served as an important background inspiration for the expansionist position, but Leddy has also used the concepts of awe and aura to describe the understanding of aesthetic experience behind this view.<sup>[1]</sup> While for the expansionists there is no determinate distinction between the aesthetics of the everyday and the aesthetics of art, restrictivists believe that the everyday has its own aesthetic character having to do with the sense of familiarity they believe, in general, colors our everyday lives.<sup>[2]</sup> Although these experiences are not as attention-grabbing and intensive as the best experiences of art, they nevertheless should be understood as aesthetic in character.

Some proponents of restrictivism have named the experiential level of the everyday that lacks the kinds of special qualities that Leddy tries to capture with notions of awe and aura as "the everydayness of the everyday." This emphasis is particularly important for the work of Arto Haapala and Ossi Naukkarinen. Moreover, they attach a kind of basic structure to the everyday that, in turn, has consequences on how the aesthetics of the everyday should be approached. What unites Haapala and Naukkarinen, in particular, is that they both place considerable emphasis on the relational character of the everyday. The everyday is not constituted by a group of objects, events, and activities but rather by a specific kind of attitude we take toward the objects and events that surround us daily and the activities we perform regularly. This is how Naukkarinen explains this relationship:

The everyday attitude is colored with routines, familiarity, continuity, normalcy, habits, the slow process of acclimatization, even superficiality and a sort of half-consciousness and not with creative experiments, exceptions, constant questioning and change, analyses, and deep reflections.<sup>[3]</sup>

Groupings of philosophical positions can, of course, be dangerous in that they can give some important details of individual philosophers' work too little consideration, but Leddy's taxonomy between restrictivism and expansionism does embrace some genuine points of disagreement between everyday aestheticians and helps to bring focus to the conversation. In this paper, I will continue on the path started by Leddy by taking a critical look at, in particular, the strand of restrictivism represented by Haapala's and Naukkarinen's work, and argue that the structure their analyses attach to the everyday is less necessary than they presume. Many of their formulations suggest that the idea of everydayness is intended to capture the constitutive factors of everyday experience, something that everyday experience necessarily is like. Because of the effect of repetition and routinization, most of our waking lives inevitably becomes characterized by the sorts of qualities Haapala and Naukkarinen include in the notion of everydayness. The everyday understood in this sense is "the unavoidable basis on which everything else is built," and the further away our experience moves from the qualities of routine and half-consciousness, the further away we move

from the sphere of the everyday. Instead of 'everyday,' 'break,' or even 'rupture' turn out to be more appropriate epithets for describing our experience in such cases.<sup>[4]</sup>

My argument will be founded on a reading of two notions that widely appear in Haapala's and Naukkarinen's line of restrictivism: habit and function. Drawing on John Dewey's understanding of habits that strangely has been little considered in everyday aesthetics, I show that habits are much richer and more complex things than assumed, particularly in Naukkarinen's view on the everydayness of the everyday, and that the notion of habit bears no necessary relation to unreflective routines. That our everyday lives are constituted by different habits does not, by itself, tell that much about the quality of the experiences the everyday includes. Similarly, the ubiquity of habits in everyday lives does not, by itself, imply everydayness in Haapala's and Naukkarinen's sense.

The second section of the paper is devoted to the concept of function, as it is approached in Jane Forsey's meticulous analysis of the aesthetics of design. As Forsey already points out, her analysis goes against the understanding of function apparent in Haapala's work in important respects.<sup>[5]</sup> I shall expand on Forsey's critique, showing the more fundamental problems that I believe her take on functions implies for the restrictivist position. Like Dewey, in the case of habits, the role the notion of function holds in Forsey's overall account of the aesthetics of design reveals aspects in this notion that restrictivists have not taken into proper consideration that, I believe, ultimately show problems in their understanding of the general character of the everyday.

Despite its somewhat provocative tone at times, the overall aim of this paper is by no means to call into question the restrictivist position as a whole; its proponents do provide some important insights into our possible everyday experiences. Rather, it is to argue that the philosophical conclusions of restrictivism on the nature of the everyday are weaker than Haapala and Naukkarinen believe. That is to say, restrictivist analyses of the everyday might very well capture characteristics that are typical for the everyday life of many people or, alternatively, are typical for all at some point, but there is no necessary reason why most of our waking lives has to have the sort of general character they assume. It is the leap from typicality to unavoidability the restrictivists arguably make at many points that I intend to question. The alternative accounts of the concepts of habit and function provided in the first two sections of the paper already point in this direction, and this criticism will be rounded up in the final section by again taking the concept of the everyday itself under more careful examination. Through an analysis of three notions that are at the very heart of restrictivism, habit, function, and the everyday, I want to shake up the images of the everyday present in the restrictivists' work, thus encouraging a more intensive dialog between the two main positions of current everyday aesthetics.

Some might find the take of this paper overly negative, as substantial portions of it are devoted to the critiques of others' views, but in the final part I also try to make a more positive contribution to the discussion concerning everyday experience. However, I remain in some ways a skeptic, for I believe it is very difficult to explicate the nature of people's everyday experience from the philosophers or phenomenologists armchair, as it were, without taking into account the individual features of people's habits and characters and how those pair up with their everyday environments.

## **2. Habits in the everyday**

Restrictivists use the concept of habit to point out the specific kind of effortlessness that they think characterizes the everyday. By habits, they mean regularly performed actions or sets of actions that are separated from other modes of thought and action, such as the deep reflection and creative experimentation on Naukkarinen's list, by not requiring direct, conscious reflection to be carried out. In this sense, the restrictivists group habits together with such things as routine and custom. Over time, we come to acquire different sorts of habits for managing everyday situations. Given their substantial role in the everyday, habits can be said to constitute its general character. As a cluster of habits underlies everyday behavior, experientially the everyday becomes marked by "normalcy, routine, repetition, habituality, and ordinariness," or even a sort of coziness, in the best of cases, rather than vividness or vibrancy.<sup>[6]</sup>

Dewey's account, however, shows that habits are much more nuanced and varied things than restrictivists realize. While habits do indeed include the unreflective forms of behavior that guarantee the easy flow of everyday life, according to Dewey, habits, ultimately, encompass a huge array of different forms of behavior and thinking, in addition to attitudes, dispositions, and sensitivities. Dewey explains this in his own distinctive style:

All habits are demands for certain kinds of activity... In any intelligible sense, they are the will. They form our

effective desires and they furnish us with our working capacities. They rule our thoughts, determining which shall appear and be strong and which shall pass from light into obscurity.<sup>[7]</sup>

By "doing all the perceiving, recognition, imagining, recalling, judging, conceiving, and reasoning that is done," habits determine our ways of interacting with the world in general and the "interpenetration" of our habits forms what Dewey calls our "character."<sup>[8]</sup> Although some individual habits and cultural customs can be very deep-rooted, habits are nevertheless ultimately elastic in nature. Otherwise, no form of individual development or social progress would be possible.<sup>[9]</sup> Some habits are also more malleable than others, and the most enduring ones form the steadiest parts of our character. In line with his general philosophy of experience, an aspect of habits that Dewey repeatedly emphasizes in his investigation is that they take form and develop in interaction with the environment.

In assimilating habits with some kinds of semi-consciously carried-out routines, restrictivists miss that not all habits stand on an equal footing or are of equal value. Dewey explains his reasons for choosing the word 'habit' rather than 'attitude' or 'disposition': "we need a word to express that kind of human activity which is influenced by prior activity and in that sense acquired; which contains within itself a certain ordering of minor elements of action; which is projective, dynamic in quality...."<sup>[10]</sup> Dewey also explicitly states that a habit should not be identified "with routine." Even though repetition is the "tendency" of many habits, it is, however, "in no sense the essence of habit."<sup>[11]</sup> We do indeed have habits related to cooking, cleaning, shopping, and commuting, but there are also "habits of exploration and imagination."<sup>[12]</sup> On the Deweyan account, imagination can also be seen as a kind of habit or as a collection of them, as long as it is something very ingrained in a person's character.<sup>[13]</sup> One has an imaginative character when one has the habit of thinking in imaginative ways.

Similarly, it is possible to make a distinction between different levels of habits, for some of them are sorts of metahabits. They refer to our capacity to look at and reflect upon our habits as a whole. While, at least to the best of my knowledge, the term does not appear in Dewey's work, these could be called "deliberative habits" that determine how we engage with situations that call for reflection and deliberation having to do with questions concerning the efficacy of our current habits, that is to say, whether we should refine, change, or develop new habits in light of new situations and changed circumstances, such as reaching a goal we have gradually started to find important. To adequately embrace such situations, it is, in Dewey's view, important to foster "those habits and impulses which lead to a broad, just, sympathetic survey of situations."<sup>[14]</sup> Moreover, not all habits emerge as kinds of byproducts of everyday dealings, but forming habits particularly related to work, hobbies, and some more complex social situations can involve a great deal of reflection, practice, and learning, and these sorts of habits can also be the objects of continuous refinement. Dewey calls habits with this sort of reflective background "intelligent" or even "artistic," which come close to what, ordinarily, is meant by skill.<sup>[15]</sup>

Naukkarinen believes that, for Dewey, the value of habits primarily lies in their making "almost automatic behavior" possible, which, in turn, is thought to lend support for the restrictivist view of the everyday as something smooth, normal, and routine.<sup>[16]</sup> Dewey's attitude towards habits, however, is, in the end, somewhat value-neutral. Habits themselves do not carry any value; we have to have them to simply stay alive or to have any type of social life. The relevant distinction is not between habits and some other forms of action, such as experimenting, but between different sorts of habits, particularly between those habits that stultify thinking and make us unresponsive to new situations and those that make rich and many-sided reflection and encounters with the world possible. From a Deweyan perspective, experimenting, too, is underlain by habits.<sup>[17]</sup> Forming new habits in response to new situations, in Dewey's view, requires such capacities as "increased susceptibility, sensitiveness, responsiveness," and such habits that reinforce these character traits are particularly valuable in Dewey's eyes. Habits can, indeed, be seen as kinds of grooves that help us navigate in our everyday life. Nonetheless, Dewey notes that we can also have "the power to acquire many and varied grooves," which, in turn, in his view, "denotes high sensitivity, explosiveness."<sup>[18]</sup>

Even this brief look at Dewey's conception of habits shows that not all habits bear a direct relationship to unreflectively carried out routines, as the restrictivist reading seems to assume. Precisely this assimilation is the weak spot in the restrictivist account. The upshots of this oversight, however, go beyond questions concerning how to interpret Dewey, for it undermines the restrictivists' general image of the everyday as something intrinsically routine, easy, and normal.<sup>[19]</sup> Even though our everyday lives are constituted by a set of habits, it does not follow that the general tone of the everyday is necessarily characterized by the sorts of qualities the restrictivists find essential to it.<sup>[20]</sup> There are, of

course, many routines that are more or less universally shared by all people, like morning routines and undressing before going to sleep. However, in light of Dewey's analysis, it is wrong to take these sorts of routines as providing some kind of general model of what an everyday activity is like and extend it to concern more complex everyday habits. If habits are far richer and more many-sided things than restrictivists assume, so can the general character of everyday life be, too. There is no intrinsic reason why the experiences had in connection with habits would, in some ways, be low-key and almost imperceptible. It is perfectly possible for the everyday to be exciting, even electrifying, even though it is permeated by various habits; this simply depends on the habits one has. Dewey's analysis shows that there is no one experiential quality that underlies all habits. From this perspective, half-consciousness also turns out to be more a matter of a particular set of contingent individual habits rather than something that would be in-built in everyday life, as Naukkarinen believes. The range and content of one's habits can have a huge effect on the general quality of one's everyday life; experientially, not all habits are of a piece.

The restrictivists could, of course, limit their view to concern those habits that are characterized by the sort of unreflectiveness that they see as the essential feature of all habits. However, this would seem to make the position too limited, as it would rule out many important human habits and character traits, such as imagination, that can be constitutive of the quality of the everyday. From a Deweyan perspective, this revised restrictivist image of the everyday would, actually, be a real travesty about the possibilities inherent in human life.

### 3. Functions in the everyday

Function is another notion with which restrictivists have analyzed some fundamental features of the everyday. In particular, it has been considered to illuminate the specific kind of relationship of everydayness that the restrictivists think we gradually form toward the activities, objects, and environments making up our everyday lives. In this respect, the notion of function, like habit, goes to the very heart of restrictivism.

Arto Haapala has provided the most extensive restrictivist treatment of the everyday from the point of view of the notion of function. His analysis builds on Martin Heidegger's well-known analysis of tools. The point that Haapala draws from Heidegger is that our relationship to tools is characterized by trustworthiness. The efficient tool does not call for conscious attention from the nailing carpenter but forms a kind of reliable background for achieving the end the tool was designed to fulfill. In this sense, the tool disappears in its usefulness. Similarly, many of our everyday activities, from commuting to writing on the computer to shopping at our neighborhood grocery store, are carried out with a similar type of inattentive smoothness that characterizes the work of a skilled carpenter using his familiar tools. We direct more conscious attention to a tool only when it no longer functions properly, as we try to figure out the cause of the malfunction.<sup>[21]</sup>

Haapala's understanding of tools is ultimately very broad. All facets of our everyday lives are essentially characterized by the sort of functionality that he seeks to capture with Heidegger's analysis of tools. Haapala argues that our attitude toward our everyday environment(s) is highly functional. Homes, offices, cafés, libraries, lunch places, neighborhood shops, and other everyday places are, in his view, things that we use to manage our everyday lives. They are, in other words, "tools for living."<sup>[22]</sup> Due to the functional role they have in our everyday lives, these tools are not something we tend to directly gaze at, as we do the sights in a strange environment, or even take any special notice of in the midst of our everyday dealings. Instead, we relate to them in a mode that Heidegger termed *Indifferenz der Alltäglichkeit*.<sup>[23]</sup> Like the well-functioning hammer, these everyday places also gradually disappear in their usefulness and become "simple backgrounds" or "mere bricks in the fabric of the everyday."<sup>[24]</sup> Despite no longer calling for our direct attention, the different tools we use to manage our everyday nevertheless give everyday life a specific experiential quality. As in Naukkarinen's case, the general tone of the everyday becomes characterized by a kind of comforting reliability and ease. This is how Haapala characterizes the experience of the everyday:

We take pleasure in being in the surroundings we are used to, and fulfilling normal routines. The aesthetics of everydayness is exactly in the "hiding" of the extraordinary and disturbing, and feeling homey and in control. One could paradoxically say that the aesthetics of the familiar is an aesthetics of "the lacking," the quiet fascination of the absence of visual, auditory, and any other kinds of demands from the surroundings.<sup>[25]</sup>

However, as in the case of habits, a different kind of understanding of function and of the position of functional objects in our everyday lives is also possible. Jane Forsey's aesthetic analysis of design, for example, includes such an account. Her understanding of design is very broad. It not only encompasses the different quotidian objects, from scissors to

shoes to bikes to chairs, but immaterial objects, such as web browsers, are also included in her conception of design.<sup>[26]</sup>As she correctly points out, design objects have an increasing presence in our everyday lives, even forming “the majority of our contemporary environments.”<sup>[27]</sup> This makes Forsey's account highly relevant for everyday aesthetics, as she herself notes. Moreover, even though Haapala does not use the term ‘design,’ his analysis concerns the same objects as Forsey's. As Forsey notes, “the majority of Haapala's examples are designed objects: our homes and offices with all of their furnishings, the buildings in our neighborhoods along with the cars and phone booths and details of our local streetscapes, the tools we use in our work and daily chores, and so on.”<sup>[28]</sup> The fact that design objects are not intended merely to be looked at but for use in everyday contexts only serves to further the connection between design and the everyday.

While Haapala's approach to functional objects centers on explicating the almost imperceptible sense of everydayness they can produce, Forsey believes they can provide a more nuanced addition to our everyday experience. Forsey sees in Kant's notion of dependent beauty a very promising framework for understanding the aesthetic character of design. What she finds particularly valuable in Kant's concept is that it shows how the object's function can be a part of the judgment of its aesthetic value. According to Forsey's reading, in Kantian judgments of dependent beauty, the cognitive component concerning the object's function genuinely informs the aesthetic judgment. The beauty of the design object, in other words, is not independent from its function but “we appraise the object *because of* the perfection in the way it fulfills its purpose.”<sup>[29]</sup> The beauty of design consists of an interplay between form and function, and the best cases of this interplay are specimens of what Forsey terms “design excellence.”<sup>[30]</sup> Forsey believes that judgments of design excellence are guided by the idea of perfection, that is to say, they include an assessment of whether the design object is a good thing of its kind.<sup>[31]</sup> Even though an assessment of a design piece's aesthetic value includes components that are ruled out from Kantian pure judgments of taste, such as concepts and the idea of a specific purpose, Forsey nevertheless believes that good pieces of design can give us aesthetic pleasure, in the genuine Kantian sense.

First, Forsey finds the conceptual component of design judgments less determinant than is the case in Kantian cognitive judgments. Judgments of design excellence do not arise from definite concepts, as cognitive judgments, like “This is a lamp,” do, but from entertaining a range of possibilities in the mind of how a particular design object's purpose can be realized. Judgments of design excellence thereby involve mental operations that come close to the free play Kant attaches to the pleasure behind aesthetic judgments.<sup>[32]</sup> Second, judgments of design excellence can be disinterested in the sense Kant requires from aesthetic judgments. Excellent pieces of design can cause pleasurable experiences even without us having any desire to own them or without their satisfying our personal desires.<sup>[33]</sup> Third, Forsey believes that even the Kantian idea of purposiveness without a specific purpose can be fitted into her scheme. Unlike crustaceans and pieces of absolute music, which are some of Kant's examples of free beauty, design objects do, indeed, have a specific purpose. The key is, however, to take a more universal or rational attitude toward the object's purposefulness. We can find a design object valuable not only when it helps us to achieve a certain end that we wish to pursue but also when it can be praised for its immediate goodness. That is to say, we can find the thing purposive, as being a kind of ideal embodiment of the relationship between form and a particular function, even though the purpose it is intended to fulfill would in no way intersect with our present concerns.<sup>[34]</sup>

These points, in Forsey's view, show that all aspects of design appreciation, from appreciating its surface design qualities to its use, can engage a free play of the faculties of imagination and understanding similar to that which Kant finds essential to the experience of beauty, in general. Experiences of design excellence can be genuine aesthetic experiences, not just pleasurable bodily sensations that Kant subsumes under the category of the agreeable. Though these Kantian considerations might seem rather far removed from the everyday, Forsey thinks quite the opposite is the case. By revealing how “symbiotically related” form and function are in the appreciation of design, the Kantian idea of dependent beauty precisely shows that, without integrating design objects “into our everyday lives and activities,” it is impossible to give a full assessment of their aesthetic value.<sup>[35]</sup>

This investigation of Forsey's view shows that she provides a very different kind of account of the position functional objects occupy in the everyday than Haapala, and Forsey actually explicitly criticizes him for not noting some important experiential aspects that the use of functional objects can involve. According to her, we do not direct attention to these objects only in the case of malfunction, as Haapala's central claim seems to be, but “we also notice things when they work extremely well, when they perform their functions with an ease and grace that calls for our appreciation. And this is the kind of aesthetic judgment that is particular to design.”<sup>[36]</sup> The sense of fit and purposiveness that

characterizes Kantian experiences of beauty is something we clearly do notice.

Haapala could, of course, respond that this is indeed the case with newly acquired design objects. They still have an aura of strangeness to them and entice our curiosity. However, once these novel things have gradually established their place in the fabric of our everyday lives, design objects, however excellent they may be, ultimately become mere background hum and, rather than free play, our relationship to them becomes stamped by the Heideggerian *Indifferenz der Alltäglichkeit*. The functional tools that we become accustomed to using turn into mere means to an end, into something that, in Haapala's words, "is looked through rather than looked at."<sup>[37]</sup>

Even though the daily use of design objects does indeed gradually weaken the sense of freshness that they had upon acquisition, an important factor of Forsey's Kantian analysis of design aesthetics nevertheless suggests that Haapala overstates the extent to which functional objects disappear in their usefulness. This is the fact that, being the quotidian things they are, our use of design objects has a long and wide background upon which our assessments of their aesthetic and other values are based.<sup>[38]</sup> For example, I have had dozens of coffee cups in my daily use before the Iittala cup from which I now tend to drink coffee. The past experiences with other design objects of the same kind offer a contrast for evaluating the design objects that are currently at the center of our everyday lives. Judgments of design excellence are, in this respect, strongly comparative.<sup>[39]</sup> Rather than fainting away, previous good and bad experiences with design objects set up the parameters for our present interactions with design. This background makes our experiences with the tools of our everyday life more nuanced in character than Haapala's analysis realizes. We can, for example, appreciate the feel of our favorite pen due to the number of bad experiences we have had with the pens that we have taken from hotel rooms and conferences. Another aspect worth noting is that we can also regularly change the design objects that we use for a particular daily purpose. For example, it is not extraordinary to have more than one pair of shoes for everyday use. In this case, the comparative class of other experiences forming the horizon for our present use experience is much more vivid in our mind than is the case, for example, with the single coffee cup we use from day to day. This makes design excellence an even more easily noticeable quality of some everyday objects.

I am prone to think Haapala simply exaggerates the extent to which functional objects fall below the radar of everyday consciousness as a result of continuous use. At least, some everyday objects would seem more resistant to this effect than others, whether it has to do with the aesthetic qualities accompanying their use, or just their surface aesthetic qualities or some kind of mixture of these two. It is also good to note that the reason behind the gradual diminishment of the experience is not always in the user's changed attitude but in the object itself. Even though a Bruno Magli will sustain its perfect feel substantially longer than a cheap sneaker, it is not an everlasting thing.

A possible rejoinder Haapala could, of course, make is that the experience Forsey attaches to design excellence requires an attentiveness that ultimately renders her account of design experience non-everyday-like. Everydayness is precisely something that does not capture or call for our attention. By attending to the design excellence of functional objects, we move from the comforting sphere of the familiar to the realm of the strange. However, I find this possible response a dead end, for it presupposes a far too simplistic picture of our everyday awareness. Not all forms of more direct attentiveness to objects and environments can be excluded this straightforwardly from everyday consciousness. We simply are not as blind in our everyday dealings as this response assumes. It is perfectly possible to appreciate the design excellence of a pen *while* writing and the comfort of a shoe *while* walking. This does not even require any sort of laborious multitasking or division of attention. As the appreciation of design objects is tightly incorporated into everyday activity, the experience of their excellence and beauty can be very much part of everyday life.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is important to note that the accounts of the everyday given by Haapala and Naukkarinen are not mere descriptions of everyday life but have a significantly more ambitious goal. They attempt to reveal the constitutive structure of an important area of human life, that is, the everyday, arguing that the attitude of everydayness that Naukkarinen assimilates with "a kind of half-consciousness" is the inevitable outcome of everyday habits. In Haapala's words, everydayness is something "as unavoidable as death," the significant difference between them merely being that the everyday is "present all the time."<sup>[40]</sup> It is not just that we humans tend to wake up in the same place each morning and do the same things daily. The restrictivists go further than this, arguing that, overtime, our attitude toward our daily activities and daily environments necessarily becomes colored by the kind of everydayness that they think

"constitutes the everyday."<sup>[41]</sup> Everydayness becomes almost a kind of blanket that, in time, encloses all aspects of our daily lives as a result of acclimatization and, in a way, swallows up the sense of extraordinariness and vitality that some everyday factors might have had at first. The events, activities, objects, and people our everyday consists of is, in Naukkarinen's words, "a completely different matter."<sup>[42]</sup> Everydayness is something that characterizes all possible contents and configurations of everyday life and, in this respect, is, in the restrictivist view, the condition of everyday experience.

However, what ultimately is the source of the necessity restrictivists posit to this attitude of everydayness? Where does it come from? And is human life truly sliced up in the way the restrictivist position seems to assume, that it necessarily has this kind of kernel, called "the everyday," that is separated from other areas by the unique attitude of everydayness? There are many factors that play a decisive role in forming people's everyday experience that restrictivists have not taken properly into account, such as individual temperament, personality, and character. It is hard to deny that these are constitutive to the character of one's everyday life, along with how these individual features resonate with one's everyday environments and with the communities of which one is a part. From this perspective, the following questions, for example, become relevant for investigating people's everyday experience. How well is a person able to use the different facets of his or her personality and skills in the everyday? What sort of interactions does one's everyday environments make possible for a person with a certain personality and character and with a specific set of interests? Do everyday environments set obstacles for realizing one's personality or support it, or even inspire growth?

Against this background, it seems somewhat questionable to posit some type of everyday attitude above these individual and environmental considerations that inevitably comes to determine the character of the everyday, regardless of people's individual characteristics and how those relate to their everyday environments. Behind these points it is, of course, not difficult to detect the Deweyan idea that "all conduct is *interaction* between elements of the human nature and the environment," where environment is understood in the broadest possible sense as "those conditions that promote or hinder, stimulate or inhibit, the characteristic activities of a living being."<sup>[43]</sup>

Naukkarinen writes that the everyday "is nothing very exceptional, strange, weird, or extraordinary."<sup>[44]</sup> This might well be true. But why cannot the everyday be imaginative, be filled with events, books, colleagues, people, and environments serving as endless sources of inspiration and hopes and dreams that give the everyday a sense of direction and rhythm? There is at least no conceptual reason why the everyday cannot be like this. If someone with a highly imaginative, creative, intelligent, and perceptive personality can utilize his or her character traits fully in daily life, why would the character of the everyday of this type of person be determined by some attitude of everydayness rather than by individual personality and how it resonates with such a person's everyday environments? And how about people with highly rich inner lives, or people open to new experiences who embrace novel situations effortlessly? Put conversely, if the character of a person with these sorts of imaginative traits would gradually degrade to the state of half-consciousness, as Naukkarinen describes the everyday attitude, wouldn't we say that everything is not right in that person's everyday life?

In the end, describing the everyday with terms such as imaginative, inspired, or vigorous seems to become nearly a conceptual impossibility, under the restrictivists' understanding of the everyday. They picture the everyday almost as a kind of closed space, where everything novel and fresh is perceived as something lying outside of its circles.<sup>[45]</sup> They conceptualize the everyday in highly binary opposites, such as routine/non-routine, familiar/strange, ordinary/extraordinary, normalness/exceptionality, harmony/rupture. Nonetheless, another type of image of the everyday is also possible. Rather than a circle, the everyday might be better described as a continuum that, like life itself, at different points, includes different degrees and shades of familiarity and strangeness. The efforts required from a researcher in setting up a new project is a good example of this type of mode of being. This process, that can sometimes take months, if not years, involves a very complex mixture of something old and new and, in the best of cases, engages all facets of a researcher's personality and creativity.

But why could the everyday in general not be characterized by such a mixture of old and new, in addition to imaginative engagement? That is to say, why could the routine and the non-routine, the familiar and the strange, the extraordinary and the ordinary not coexist in human experience at almost every moment, and sometimes interact with and even reinforce each other to generate improved everyday experience? As Thomas Alexander writes on the position of imagination in everyday life: "imagination, the human effort to organize experience and mediate the transition from past to future, from old to new, is an integral part of

our ordinary life, though it is capable of great refinement and conscious development...."[46] In a more recent article, Naukkarinen already moves toward the sort of image I am sketching here in his thinking about the everyday, claiming that the everydayness of the everyday ultimately is something that comes in degrees.[47]

All this is to say is that the everyday does not necessarily have to be conceptually connected to the sorts of things that the restrictivists try to capture with the notion of everydayness. I am not claiming that their account of the everyday could not overlap with the general qualities of the everyday of a great number of people. Instead, what I deny is the restrictivists' conceptual or constitutive point. Our daily lives do not have any kind of necessary structure or character that would encompass all possible forms of interactions between humans and their everyday environments. To say, as Haapala seems to, that a proper phenomenological analysis reveals the everyday of all people to be ultimately pretty much alike on some fundamental level, behind the possible appearance of glamor and fascination, arguably cuts quite a few corners.[48] My life is very different from the life of the dynamo Mariinsky maestro Valery Gergiev, and so is my everyday.

How people relate to the surrounding world is much more heavily determined by their personality and other mental conditions than some attitude of everydayness that the restrictivists impose on our everyday lives.[49] I see no reason why the kind of half-consciousness Naukkarinen explicates with the notions of routine, familiarity, and normalcy would be some necessary, overriding attitude of the waking lives of all people. Already Dewey's and Forsey's accounts of habits and functions have suggested these types of problems in restrictivist descriptions of the everyday, and it is this point that I have wanted to press further in conclusion.

There is no reason why the general experiential quality of our everyday lives could not be considerably more nuanced than Haapala's and Naukkarinen's views on the everydayness of the everyday arguably leave room for. Haapala actually explicitly states that his Heideggerian analysis is interested in "the gray colors of the everyday." [50] However, the view emerging from the parts of Dewey's and Forsey's work considered above shows that the colors of the everyday can be much more varied and vivid. Another upshot of the discussion is that people's everyday experience can ultimately be dependent on highly individual factors and be a result of a complex fusion between their habits and everyday environments that cannot be captured by general conceptual or phenomenological analyses, even when they are done as carefully as Haapala's and Naukkarinen's. In light of this article, it might be good to reformulate Naukkarinen's claim that "the everyday is the unavoidable basis on which everything else is built" to the form that our habits and character, and how those pair up with our everyday environments in the broad Deweyan sense, are the unavoidable basis on which our everyday is built.[51]

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#### Endnotes

[1] See Thomas Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary. The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2012) and "Experience of Awe: An Expansive Approach to Everyday Aesthetics," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 13 (2015).

[2] Among restrictivists, Leddy includes such theorists as Yuriko Saito, Kevin Melchionne, Arto Haapala, and Ossi Naukkarinen. In this paper, I approach restrictivism especially in light of the work of the two latter-mentioned representatives of the view.

[3] Naukkarinen, "What is 'Everyday' in Everyday Aesthetics?," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 11 (2013), Sec. 2. This description of the everyday attitude is favorably cited by Saito in her *Aesthetics of the Familiar. Everyday Life and World-Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 11.

[4] First reference: Naukkarinen, "What is 'Everyday' in Everyday

Aesthetics?," sec. 2. Second reference: Naukkarinen, "Everyday Aesthetics and Everyday Behavior," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 15 (2017), sec. 3.

[5] Jane Forsey, *The Aesthetics of Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 223-235.

[6] Naukkarinen, "Everyday Aesthetics and Everyday Behavior," Sec. 3 and Sec. 5.

[7] John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct. An Introduction to Social Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922), p. 25. Italics in the original

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 177. p. 38.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[12] Gregory Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics. Democracy as Experience* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 124.

[13] See, for example, Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, p. 176.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 207.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[16] Naukkarinen, "What is 'Everyday' in Everyday Aesthetics," sec. 2. Saito, referring to the work of Dewey's fellow pragmatist William James, puts forth an understanding of habits with similar emphases in her *Aesthetics of the Familiar*, p. 26.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 175

[18] John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958 [1925]), p. 281.

[19] Naukkarinen, "What is 'Everyday' in Everyday Aesthetics?," Sec. 6.

[20] *Ibid.*, sec. 5.

[21] Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Familiarity, Strangeness, and the Meaning of Place," in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, eds. Andrew Light & Jonathan M. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 39–55; ref. on pp. 48–49.

[22] Haapala, "The Everyday, Building, and Architecture: Reflections on the Ethos and Beauty of our Built Surroundings," *Cloud-Cuckoo-Land*, 22, 36 (2017), 171–182; ref. on 180–181.

[23] *Ibid.*, 171.

[24] *Ibid.*, 180–181.

[25] Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of Familiarity," 52.

[26] Forsey, *The Aesthetics of Design*, p. 69.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 230.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 162. Italics in the original.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

[33] In this context, it might be good to again remind readers that the Kantian idea of disinterestedness in no way implies a detachment from the object of appreciation as, in particular, some environmental aestheticians have thought. As Forsey points out, "disinterest does not refer to a stance we take towards the object but simply a freedom from immediate desire for it." *The Aesthetics of Design*, p. 239.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 160–161.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 183–184.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[37] Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday," 45.

[38] Forsey, *The Aesthetics of Design*, p. 169.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

[40] Haapala, "The Everyday, Building, and Architecture," 172.

[41] Naukkarinen, "What is 'Everyday' in Everyday Aesthetics," Sec. 2.

[42] Naukkarinen, "Everyday Aesthetics and Everyday Behavior," Sec. 3.

[43] First reference: Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, p. 10. Second reference: Dewey, John, *Democracy and Education. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955 [1916]), p. 13.

[44] Naukkarinen, "Everyday Aesthetics and Everyday Behavior," Sec. 3.

[45] The diagram with which Naukkarinen illuminates his understanding of the everyday is a telling example of this picture. See, "What is 'Everyday' in Everyday Aesthetics," Sec. 1.

[46] Thomas M. Alexander, *The Human Eros. Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 177.

[47] Naukkarinen, "Everyday Aesthetics and Everyday Behavior," Sec. 3.

[48] Haapala writes: "We are the everyday; there is nothing to be ashamed of in that; nothing to be avoided. Even the most extraordinary of humans, Oscar Wilde in his times, all the wanna-be-famous people in ours, all have their normalcy, their routines, their ordinary existence, however extraordinary it may look in our eyes—or however extraordinary it is portrayed to be." "The Everyday, Building, and Architecture," 174

[49] See, for example, Dewey's discussion on the differences between people with "strong characters" and "men with 'pigeon-hole' minds" in *Human Nature and Conduct*, pp. 38–39.

[50] Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday," 41.

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