

III. Reconsideration of the Conception of “Everyday Aesthetics”

Everyday aesthetics has been dedicated since then to the clarification of fine arts, beauty and taste only marginally referring to the aesthetics in design, crafts, urban environments and social practice until the emergence of everyday aesthetics during the later part of twentieth century.

In the history of Western aesthetics, beginning with the nineteenth century, the aesthetic discourse has become increasingly focused on the fine arts. But the prominence of the aesthetic attitude theory in modern aesthetics, according to which there is virtually no limit to what can become a source of aesthetic experience, have been progressed too. The tendency to assert aesthetics as the philosophy of art became widespread in twentieth century aesthetics, particularly within the Anglo-American tradition.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, this quite limited account of aesthetics began to be changed its scope with a renewed interest in nature and environment, followed by the exploration of popular arts. ‘Everyday aesthetics’ continues this trajectory of widening scope by including objects, events, and activities that constitute people’s daily life.

Furthermore, although not formulated as aesthetic theories, many cultural traditions outside the Western sphere are concerned with the aesthetics of

daily life. Especially in eastern traditions, such as Japanese and Chinese, with distinctive art-making practices of paintings, literature, theater, cultural activities, and the like, aesthetic practices permeate people's daily life. In these cultural traditions, there may not be a need for an aesthetics discourse specifically devoted to everyday life.

Everyday aesthetics also seeks to liberate aesthetic inquiry from focusing on beauty that is a characteristic of modern Western aesthetics. It includes within its scope those qualities that pervade everyday experience, such as pretty, cute, messy, gaudy, tasteful, dirty, lively, monotonous, to name only a few. These items and qualities are characterized by their pervasive presence in the daily life of people, regardless of their occupation, lifestyle, economic status, social class, cultural background, and familiarity with art.

Everyday aesthetics casts a wide net for capturing these diverse dimensions of our aesthetic life. It is noteworthy that in academic discourses outside of philosophical aesthetics, 'aesthetics' is often regarded in the classificatory sense, such as the aesthetics of manners, which includes both polite and rude behaviors, and the aesthetics of politics which, among other things, refers to the social and political construction of what counts as the sensible.¹⁷

¹⁷"Aesthetics of the Everyday". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (First published, Sep 30, 2015).https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetics_of_everyday/

In fact, cultivation of aesthetic sensibility and practice of aesthetic skills can contribute to facilitating respectful, thoughtful, and humane social interactions. The relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical has been one of the contested issues in the mainstream aesthetics discourse regarding art. However, it cannot deny that the ethical implications of art do not have a direct bearing on changing the world. They may affect the audience's perception, attitude, and worldview, which may lead them toward a certain action, but the impact is indirect. Ethics mainly base on rationality of the people through the understanding of their moral responsibility or duty.

However, the aesthetic impact of everyday affairs often leads to direct consequences that change the state of the world. Aesthetics typically associated with the direct inspiration the people because of its persuasive capability in communicating emotion and message of the creator. Hence, aesthetics can be considered as more effective to awaken the awareness of people than ethics because of its power of introducing one's idea into mental faculty of the others. Contrary to ethics, aesthetics mainly base on emotion through sensational experience of the people.

Regardless of how the relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical is conceived, there is no denying that the power of the aesthetic is considerable. Thus, one important mission of everyday aesthetics is stimulating the public awareness or educating the public. Its role is to

cultivate aesthetic literacy and sensibility so that the power of the aesthetic can be utilized toward bettering quality of life and the state of the world. The cumulative and collective effects of these judgments and actions led by aesthetics can direct the society to be more civil and humane and the world to be more sustainable, or lead them away from these ideals. Given this power of everyday aesthetics, despite various debates and disagreements outlined above, aesthetics discourse can no longer exclude a large swath of our everyday life from the scope of its inquiry.¹⁸

Hence, it is also necessary to pay attention the role or function of aesthetics in resolving environmental issues in comparison with that of ethics. According to Emily Brady,

Aesthetic value and ethical value frequently overlap, intertwine, harmonise and conflict in human experience. I have shown that aesthetic value and experience have some recognisable role in shaping our moral attitudes toward the environment, if not always a positive one. Although not all intimate relationships are caring ones, it is worth encouraging direct experiences of nature, aesthetic and otherwise, in an effort to develop feelings of care toward environments, even if this just means making the effort to get past prejudices and ignorance. This is presumably an underlying assumption of

¹⁸"Aesthetics of the Everyday". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

environmental education¹⁹.

It also means that aesthetic value and experience also play a crucial role in educating public or awakening human awareness toward their environments such as natural or social though Emily only focused on that of nature. And thus, everyday aesthetics which of social environment or everyday experience of the people is also noteworthy conception in considering environmental conservation.

When we make the discussion about everyday aesthetics there is in needs of taking into account the significant perspective of Saitō Yuriko who is a leading figure in this field. She did a great attempt for promoting her view in the *Every Aesthetics* (2007). She claimed that “I will illustrate how everyday aesthetic tastes and attitudes often do lead to consequences which go beyond simply being preoccupied with and fussing with the surface, and that they affect not only our daily life but also the state of the society and the world”²⁰ in it. And some of Saitō’s attempts to illustrate the significance of everyday aesthetics in today’s societies as follow,

In today's style-conscious consumer society, aesthetic considerations often influence our purchasing decisions. ... Hence, “style” becomes

¹⁹ Emily Brady. (2006). “Aesthetics in Practice: Valuing the Natural World”, *Environmental Values* 15. Cambridgeshire: The White Horse Press. p.282.

²⁰ Saito Yuriko. (2013). *Everyday Aesthetics* (reprinted). Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.55.

the crucial factor determining the commercial success of a product. The concern for “style” extends not only to the goods themselves but also the way in which goods are marketed, ranging from their advertisement to the environment in which they are placed, defined by specific lighting, display strategy, color scheme, overall ambience, and even the appearance of the salespeople. This preoccupation with appearance and style extends to the perception of political candidates, such as their hairdo, attire, and gesture, in addition to their qualifications, leadership ability, political platform, and party affiliation²¹.

Accordingly, it is obvious that the scope of aesthetics in today became to be emancipated compare to that of traditional scope since its utility in the lives of people commonly.

And she maintains that the role of aesthetics is also important in solving several social or environmental problems compare to that of ethical implications especially in environmental conservation and sustainable development. She argued that,

Environmental ethics, a relatively new but by now firmly established discipline, today examines a wide range of issues: anthropocentrism, the tragedy of the commons mentality, environmental racism, modern Western scientific attitude, rights of

²¹Ibid., p.56.

non-humans and future generations, to mention only a few. In discussing these issues, reference to aesthetics is typically made with respect to the aesthetic value of nature as pristine and wild, which is then cited as one of the reasons for its protection. This dominance of wilderness aesthetics in environmental discourse consequently eclipses the equally, or even more, crucial significance of our aesthetic reactions to our backyard as well as to everyday objects and activities, which generally do not provide memorable experiences or occasions for reflection. We thus tend to overlook their unexpectedly significant role in affecting, and sometimes determining, our ecological awareness, attitude, and ultimately actions, thus literally transforming the world²².

In the Saitō's opinion of the wilderness aesthetics it can be found that everyday aesthetics in our daily life is primarily interrelated with our awareness of ecological worldview. But it is necessary to recognize the crucial role of aesthetics in order to stimulate human awareness to their moral responsibility towards nature. Because, some practical functions of aesthetics can do more effectively than that of ethical implications in educating public for moral awareness. Saitō said that,

Without such an aesthetic attraction and emotional attachment, cultivating a respectful attitude toward the land would be, if not

²²ibid., p.57.

*theoretically impossible, a hard-sell psychologically and pragmatically*²³.

In fact, to promote the public awareness of environmental conservation and sustainable development, the role of aesthetics in everyday life of the people is crucial because of its utilities of stimulating their emotional attachment psychologically or pragmatically. Saito also claimed that "The power of the aesthetic to influence, and sometimes determine, our attitudes and actions has actually been recognized and utilized throughout history and among different cultural traditions"²⁴.

Nevertheless, Aesthetic value is a serious rather than trivial environmental value and ought not to be overlooked in considering environmental conservation even though it is considered less important, even trivial, compared to other more serious environmental values such as ethical or scientific values. Aesthetic value can be found its way into human practice in a pragmatic sense that is a reason why it should be placed a crucial role in environmentalism of today's studies. In other words, through a critical understanding of aesthetic value in our everyday experience it can be found the better way to grasp why it deserves serious dealing in policy debates of environmental issues.

²³Ibid., p.71.

²⁴Ibid., p.55.