

Aesthetic Evaluations and Fulfilment in Everyday Life: a Strategy for Survival and Prosperity

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Chapter 1 Holistic View of Life

1.1) Intent

I advocate a holistic view of daily life as the basis for our cultural life, propose aesthetic evaluations as being the criteria for the individual agent in their selections and actions for survival and symbolic reproduction. I challenge the thesis of the disinterested nature of aesthetic assessments (Chapter 1). I shall first of all explicate the results of preliminary research on aesthetics in everyday life (AEL) related to time use and space use (Chapter 2); offer a résumé of sociocultural research, in which readings of empirical research are included, of the aesthetic functions of the various senses (Chapter 3), and refer to the Mirror Mechanism (Vittorio Gallese 2017) (Chapter 4). Thus I emphasize the important function of the body as the guardian keeper and shelter of the individual agent.

1.2) Unreal Nature of Kant's Disinterested Aesthetic Judgment

I question Kant's proposition that aesthetic judgments can be made completely independent of interest.

Although the disinterestedness theory has intrigued generations of philosophers, the reality of the tyranny visual design holds over the general public, in advertisements, for example, makes it clear that it is the expectation of reward that leads our judgment, not the neutrality and virtuous disinterestedness; and that the beautiful and the good cannot be disinterested entities.

Therefore the Kantian proposition of disinterestedness, from my viewpoint, is unreal, if anything else. It would at the least seem to contradict common sense, and the reward theory taken by the recent neuroaesthetic research.

There are also those researchers who beg to differ between the cognitive and the affective aspects of aesthetic judgment, implying that the former should be considered disinterested. I find it hardly convincing. Do cognition and affection afford essentially different judgments, occurring in the same individual's brain circuit and motivating the individual agent?

Neuroaesthetics, among others, has amply demonstrated that the brain offers a reward mechanism for experiencing beauty. I join other scholars in seconding the conjecture that Kant thus proffered a stoic counter-offensive in the 18th century to nascent consumerism and capitalism.

Preferences, tastes, must resonate with innate inclinations, deeply felt physiological needs to appease anxiety and drives. I have no qualms here in mixing judgment, preference, sensation,

assessment, taste, liking, together, insofar as all are evaluations that motivate the individual agent to feel, think, choose, or act. I see no problem in throwing them in one jumble; that is not to say they are not different but that to indicate that they concur in creating motives and choices for the agent.

Kant refers to the rapturous warbling of the nightingale overheard during a walk in the woods, as an example of disinterested and spontaneous sensation of beauty. However: the sky, the sea, the woods, birdsongs are beautiful because they represent mankind's motherland and refuge, not because we are disinterested, *i.e.* : nor neither because we are virtuous enough to overcome interest, nor that the beauty was so overwhelming that we forgot our interests.

On the other hand, we recoil before snakes and centipedes because they are normally thought to be endangering. Snakes are also beautiful, however. Is this disinterestedness? –Not really. It is to be interpreted as the synaesthetic appeal of its scaly skin and its sinuous movements.



Figure 1 SUKI, Kitsch (Tada 1987)

1.3) Michitaro Tada: Suki, Kitsch

Michitaro Tada, who founded the Mukogawa Institute of Aesthetics in Everyday Life in 1990, had an original theory about aesthetic assessments, explicated in his colloquy with Takeshi Yasuda and later amplified (1969/ 1987).

His way of presenting ideas were neither structured nor cumbersome systematic.

Composing a diagram (Fig.1), he artfully tried to sidestep the problem of highbrow aesthetic and moral judgments to talk about lowbrow tastes, preferences, likes and dislikes, sentiments (*Nihon-jin-no Biishiki* 1987).

‘SUKI (preference in Japanese)’ he mapped as a sentiment with a perspective towards the future; ‘キッチュ (kitch)’ , being a label for ‘something that is of low quality but that many people find amusing and enjoyable (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/kitsch>), he also audaciously positioned as an endearing object of enjoyment with an astute outlook towards the future.

What is evident from Tada’s diagram is that he considered preferences and sentiments as entities having a timeline vector from the past with a resolute outlook towards the future, that is: having the defining axis of memory and nostalgia. I interpret this diagram thus: we are caught

in the middle of a world made up of things and fragmented spirituality; memory is our treasure trove for evaluating the sequences of cause and effect in life, as the ultimate reference and pilot into the unknown future. Tada's aesthetic assessments clearly rely on the warehouse of memories, and this implies that his aesthetic assessments are ultimately interest-biased.

1.4) Aesthetics in Everyday Life: Assessments

In conclusion to Chapter 1, I maintain that all human assessments, including the aesthetic, are made in continuity from the most humble details of daily life, such as neatness, cleanliness up to the most sublime spiritual values on basis of individual inclination, sensory data, and collation with memory.

Our search for beauty is economical, value-oriented.

Chapter 2 Preliminary Research on Aesthetics in Everyday Life

2.1) Preliminary Research

Since 2014, I have conducted research on aesthetics in everyday life, admittedly, no orthodox philosophical inquiries, but rather scrutinies with a sociocultural viewpoint.

2014 I conducted a survey search on publications since 1945 with the keyword 'Aesthetics in Everyday Life' (hereafter AEL), in Japanese and American databases, such as CiNii (Citation Information by National Institute of Informatics), "Web OYA-bunko" (Oya Soichi Library database for non-scholarly magazine articles), and EBSCO Academic Search Premier. Whether or not I succeeded in capturing a truly representative aspect, awaits further investigation. I set the beginning of the research 1945 on the hunch that 生活美学 (Seikatsubigaku) must have been the Japanese translation of Aesthetics in Everyday Life (AEL), and therefore, American and postwar in origin: which of course, could again ultimately turn out to be wrong. Of the scarce 126 articles I found, I extracted 7 positions. In the overseas literature, 11 academic articles; the remaining articles in Japanese were not of a scholarly nature. The keyword AEL was used as an attractive catchphrase, as a ruse with which to present topics from the elevated spheres of refined life.

The 7 positions to AEL that I found in related literature were: 1) AEL does not exist (denial), 2) some areas of everyday life (AEL) and aesthetics proper may intersect (convergence), 3) AEL is savvy conduct and appearances (decorum), 4) AEL is design capitalism (formalism), 5) AEL is transmission of joy (gifts, tokens of happiness), 6) AEL gives us the turning point (peripeteia, recognition), 7) AEL proposes the individual body as the seat and agency of aesthetic judgment (somatic basis and continuity).

To my knowledge, Katya Mandoki seems to be the most emphatic prophet of the positions 6 and 7 (1996, 2006, 2007, 2013). She emphasizes the thesis of structural interplay, from the cellular level to the most spiritual and transcendent level. She uses Darwin's theory of evolution to underpin the biological purpose of aesthetics for *fauna et flora*.

2.2) Timespace Use: Daily Activities and Exchange

In everyday life, our spirituality, whenever we awaken to it, finds itself always housed in the body, which maintains homeostasis meaning standby for action, and achieves autopoiesis, that is reproduction and tradition (H.Maturana & F.Varela 1994/2003). As the spiritual urge and

ambition is towards the sacral, the beautiful, the good, and as we want as much as possible to avoid the evil and the ugly, in striving for interest and meaning, we need a system of exchange, a re-ordering cleanup system.

Marcel Mauss's thesis of human society (and perhaps also nature) being based on an exchange structure, an intricately meshed network of benefits and gifts is useful here. The current monetary system would be one of the networks of gain and profit structured around this flow, vouching for the adequate circulation of values and symbols.

Here again, the act of choosing and exchanging symbols would presuppose aesthetic assessment.

2.3) Time

However first and foremost, the problem or the pre-existing condition that confronts our everyday life is time and space. Kant says that we will never make out their essence: they are immanent, and transcendent, a given. We are born into this timespace framework: no human being knows exactly what the consequences and connotations out of or inside this framework are.

Time is the most decisive and powerful element controlling our life and death. Time brings about growth and maturation and punishes with aging and destruction. The repetitive routine of everyday, as much as we are dependent on its daily stable course, is the source of our fatigue as it erodes our energy.

To confront the erosion of time, mankind has invented the ritual and the calendar, rendered meaning to events; but so far hardly anyone, with few rare exceptions, has overcome the oblivion that death brings. So far our sole consolation and support seems to be fragments or structures made up of memory, mementos, things, landmarks, monuments.

However, animals also confront the same problems of life. The cat daddy Jackson Galaxy claims that cats with problematic behavior have basic needs to be attended to in his TV series "Your Cat from Hell" (Animal Planet). The psychological framework that the cats make up with their guardians needs overhauling with the 3Rs: routines, rituals, rhythm. Galaxy recommends structuring the day with play, feeding, grooming, sleeping (Jackson Galaxy 2017). Not only do cats but also humans need a calendar, a sequenced fulfilment of needs, meaningful events

2.4) Space

Space is another element of the unknown and dread. Body is the point of reference, to disappear briefly into nothingness and infinity.

To quote our cat daddy again, the housecat, who needs calming down, might have territorial problems; ought to have his base camp redefined, extended and consolidated with that of the main base camps of the guardians; to secure a confident passage through the terrain, not only for bush-dwellers but also tree-dwellers the guardians should set up multi-level pathways, detours, refugee patios, cat-trees at strategic viewpoints, watchtowers, cat TVs, and other points of focus (Jackson Galaxy 2017).

Mobility, migration and structured action are the elements that promise both animals and mankind provisions and benefit. Patrol, reconnaissance of the arena is essential for survival. To

confront the indefiniteness and homogeneity of terrain, landmarks, landscapes, sacred sites are mapped out. Goals, goalposts, diamonds, bases homebases, are inscribed and positioned. Rooms are walled off, partitioned, windowed, provided with doors.

Time needs to be structured, space needs to be ordered.

2.5) Case Study 1: Daily Activities and Aesthetic Assessments:

The NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, an affiliate of the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), has researched time use and daily activities on a nationwide basis in Japan every five years since 1960. The data is open to the public. (<https://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/research/yoron/index.html?p=%E7%94%9F%E6%B4%BB%E6%99%82%E9%96%93%E8%AA%BF%E6%9F%BB>).

As a basic tenet of my version of the AEL, I propose a precise re-examination of the patterns and transformations in daily activities and aesthetic experiences. Andy Alaszewski in his *Using Diaries for Social Research* (2006) had already laid out the possibilities for using diaries to obtain various kinds of data for social research . Since 2014 in my lectures on AEL, I have asked students to keep diaries and examine their time use; asking them to link and mark their time use with the appearance, and revelations of beauty and pleasure.

Time use and daily activities are classified, employing the category protocol used by the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute: necessary activities, obligatory activities, free-time activities (Sekine Chie et al. 2016). The classification of activities are not exclusive, that is, they might be overlapping with social activities, informational activities, free-time activities, leisure activities. Of course, there is also such a thing as space use, which ought be worthwhile investigating from the viewpoint of mobility and migration (Chapter 2.6).

The main results from the analysis of time use 2014-2021 are four: Result1: There is overwhelming agreement that heightened moments of aesthetic awareness are encountered during necessary activities, *i.e.* eating, bathing. This suggests cleanliness, resetting , renewal is rewarding. This also implies that beauty rewards the agent with life; for continuing to live, willing to live. Result2: The transfers in public transport from domain to domain, home to work, work to school, an obligatory activity, coincided with the most unpleasant occurrences of the day, *i.e.* invasion of personal space, encounters with strangers. Result3: The most impacting unpleasant experiences, most likely materializing during obligatory activities, tended strongly olfactory (decomposing garbage, perfume, annoying body odour) or auditory (placed a distant second), because these raw senses would be easily activated when the individual was held vulnerable hostage in limited spaces of vehicles, pathways, workplaces. Result4: You abide, if it's beautiful and pleasant; avoid, if it's repulsive and disgusting; this is how an individual agent protects itself.

To conclude, the aesthetic assessment of sensory data navigates the individual agent through timespace in their daily activities and is essential for their survival and prosperity. The various domains of daily activities are seamlessly, organically incorporated into the symbolic, political, sacral spheres of life. The 3Rs, ritual, routine, rhythm performed by the individual agent are the links of interconnectivity between domains.

2.6) Case Study 2: Research Survey of Space Use in Koshien District

Here I refer to a timespace use survey of daily living activities for the residents in the Koshien district, near the contents tourism 'sacred site' Koshien Baseball Stadium. The district is located in Nishinomiya, a satellite city and a commuter suburb for Osaka and Kobe. The survey was conducted January-December 2020; of the 14,054 questionnaires distributed, 1,868 replies were received (search grant: JSPS 19K12597).

On the premise of performing all activities on the agenda, the individual agent has to transit from domain to domain, needs constant repositioning.

The daily cycle runs its course in quartiles of approximately 6 hours; the main activities sleep, rest and recreation, meals, personal care, shopping, transfer, transit, work, school; majority of activities are completed at home or in the districts. Transfer and short trips to nearby cities or travel are mostly limited to weekends.

The clear tendency was to use favorite pathways and itineraries, to access resources, destinations.

The residents' main complaints and grievances listed unavoidable: the inconveniences attending convenience; for instance a nice woody area, has its crow population, high accessibility brings more traffic into the area; walkability and cycling mobility enhanced by coastal flatlands but at risk of flashfloods and *tsunami*.

The residents showed high identification with the place name Koshien, and the landscape, as defined by the landmark, Koshien Baseball Stadium

Psychometric method was used for assessing emotional attachment to place. Factor analysis showed that memory and ownership were the necessary elements for bonding individuals with a place, and feel love, pride.

2.7) Conclusion: Memory and Legacy: Confronting the Spatiotemporal Preconditions of Life

In conclusion, memory and tradition, that is, - names, things, material culture, networks and organizations - constitute our mainstay in space, our *reference point*. Where would we be without addresses, place names, tribes? As to time, instilling rhythm, ritual, routine, or establishing the calendar gives us at the least some semblance of control over our destiny and future. The individual agent is motivated to structure timespace in a meaningful way. Their timespace use pivots on aesthetic assessments, in order to replace as many elements with as much symbolic and aesthetic value as possible.

Chapter 3 Aesthetic Fulfilment of the Five Senses

3.1) Résumé of the Sociocultural Phenomenon of the Five Senses

Here I present a brief overview of the sociocultural context of aesthetic assessments. I offer here a résumé of the sociocultural and historical survey of the aesthetic functions of the various senses: first of all the primary five senses, being taste, smell, hearing, sight, touch; the sixth sense I interpret as an integrator;

I emphasize the function of the integrator sense, which some name the sixth sense, or common

sense. I shall not refer to the sensorial support afforded by the 'minor' senses, of which there could be more than 20, but I intend to observe closely the integrating function of memory, with which we create episodes, narratives, and games and construct visions and test hypotheses and fiction and unreality.

3.2) The Lower Primary Senses

The gustatory and the olfactory are considered the lowliest, the most brutish of the senses; the extraordinary complexity of the related organs, receptors challenges research; moreover the intricate evaluation and collation of criteria that the sensory procedure implies, makes investigation all the more difficult. For instance, the eating process can be broken up into even six operations, with multisensory collaborations on the way, such as mouthfeel, or the snorting ritual during winetasting.

Remarkable is the spiritual and symbolic nature imbued in feeding itself, such as veganism or food taboos, or its iconic and addictive nature, as in the phenomenon of Mesoamerican counter-acculturation, the god-food (*Theobroma*) chocolate.

The sense of smell evinces especially deeply seated preferences and aversions (Waskul, D. D. & Vannini, P. 2008). Research shows the high ability of participants in identifying individuals, personality, kinship, even HLA gene congeniality.

3.3) The Other Primary Senses

The second most impacting remote sense is auditory. It is all encompassing with its resonance and vibration, has a direct affinity with the tactile sense. Music rhythm, tone, melody, are undeniably abstract in nature of sound itself; but even so the acute potency of sound to tap into emotions, and penetrate our organic being, whether accompanied or not by verbal/non-verbal expression or bodily movements is a mystery to be solved. The solution probably lies in the perspicuous investigation unraveling of the enigma of somatic and spiritual resonance, achieved by the senses. The Mirror Mechanism advocated by Vittorio Gallese might afford valuable insight here (Chapter 4).

For individuals with sight normalcy no doubt the most powerful and gullible sense, and with the auditory sense, the most predominantly examined sense, is the visual sense. It is also somewhat two-dimensional, compared to the convoluted handling necessary for the olfactory, gustatory, or tactile senses. Research seems to be especially partial towards the subject matter of artistic perception, visual symbols and stylization constructs are highly analyzable.

The tactile sense is the most fundamental and archetypal of the senses, the profoundest integrator of the senses, as the individual identity is based on kinesthetic proprioception. From this vantage point, it is currently bringing about a revolution in haptics, and robotics.

3.4) Conclusion: the Senses

An overview of the research literature retrieved with the keywords aesthetics and the senses makes it clear that the aesthetic assessments are tools for finding as many symbols, that is, valuable replacements as possible. The senses are the antenna that support the individual agent from their minimum subsistent needs for survival to an ever renewed replacement of material and spiritual culture to achieve prosperity. Thus, aesthetic evaluations are exploited for

motivating social transformations.

Chapter 4 Mirror Mechanism: Mirror Neurons, Mimesis, Narrative, Game, Play

Neuroaesthetics is flourishing, as well as the attempt to elaborate and consolidate the humanistic and the empirical viewpoints, and analyze the mechanism of aesthetic evaluations (M.Pelowski et al. 2017). Many theses with various, subtly contradictory ramifications have appeared. However, cerebral arousal data processed by fMRI equipment is very delicate and involves the close reading of graphic data, and the reception procedures of signals, after undergoing numerous processes of data-cleaning and rectification. Insofar as it involves the subtle interpretation of the activated regions of the cerebral anatomy, this can become problematic.

Thus the reward mechanism still awaits definitive clarification, but all the evidence points to various reward mechanisms functioning in the brain. In this sense, all reflexes and evaluations, including the aesthetic response, may be determined to be a conditional reflex.

One of the pioneers of neuroaesthetics, Vittorio Gallese (2017), in his article, “Visions of the body: Embodied simulation and Aesthetic experience” gives an overview of recent developments on the Mirror Mechanism. Gallese emphasizes the perpetual procedure of sensory input, impression, and reproduction or mimesis in output, expression in producing human culture. In this input/output relationship, memory, aesthetics and AEL play a vital role.

Mirror mechanism as I understand it, is the ability to trace, diagram and imitate, reproduce a certain movement, affords the basis of education. I here emphasize that to select certain details and structures for imitation is in itself a mnemonic and aesthetic process.

The ability to create narratives from episodes and sequences, games from situations of conflict, is another realm of aesthetics of everyday life (AEL) awaiting investigation, which will give us further insights on the meaning of play and unreal constructs for humanity, in its never-ending quest for replacing symbols with ever higher aesthetic values.