

Journal of **Scottish Thought**

Research Articles

Wonder and the Everyday: Hepburnian
Considerations and Beyond

Author: Arto Haapala

Volume 10, Issue 1
Pp: 139-152
2018
Published on: 1st Jan 2018
CC Attribution 4.0

1 4 9 5



ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Wonder and the Everyday: Hepburnian Considerations and Beyond

Arto Haapala

1 Preliminaries

In the celebrated essay ‘Wonder’ Ronald W. Hepburn makes a passing reference to John Stuart Mill who writes: ‘It is not understanding that destroys wonder, it is familiarity.’¹ Mill, specifically discussing William Hamilton’s ideas, is arguing against the views that science expels wonder – that the more we know, the less there is to wonder. Mill argues that ignorance is not a necessary condition of wonder, strangeness is. Even when we know and understand nature, nature can still raise wonder. Mill continues: ‘To a person whose feelings have depth enough to with stand that, no insight which can ever be attained into natural phenomena will make Nature less wonderful.’² Hepburn does not discuss Mill’s idea any further, although he certainly seems to accept it. An interesting detail is that there is, in the essay collection, even an indexed item for the expression ‘wonder destroyed by familiarity’³.

In this essay, I want to discuss these two notions: wonder and the everyday. When our everyday routines are in their places, there is nothing to wonder about them. I will take Mill’s statement as my starting point: familiarity destroys – or at least diminishes – possibilities for wonder, strangeness increases them. If familiarity is one of the characteristics of our everyday – as I think it is –, is there any role for wonder in our everyday? Is it impossible to experience wonder in our everyday existence, or are we somehow removed from the everyday when facing matters that raise wonder? Can we wonder at everyday items – the chair I am sitting on, the technically very complex machine I am using while writing this, the fly that I can see on my window? And what about

1 Ronald W. Hepburn, ‘Wonder’ in idem, *‘Wonder’ and Other Essays: Eight Studies in Aesthetics and Neighbouring Fields* (Edinburgh, 1984), 131–54, fn, 152; John Stuart Mill, *Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy: The Principal Philosophical Questions Discussed in His Writings* (London, 1865), 545.

2 Ibid., 544.

3 Ibid., 192.

aesthetic phenomena and wonder, are there any connections? If strangeness and wonder are connected, it is likely that there are.

Contrary to some contemporary writers, I will argue for a robust notion of the everyday: the everyday as such is permeated with familiarity. This does not entail, however, that there could not be extraordinary moments in human existence. There clearly are, produced by, for example, nature and art. The extraordinary moments can be seen as cracks or as highlights in the weave of the everyday. Sometimes they are negative, for example, encountering a deep loss; sometimes positive, like having a wonderful experience of nature. When we keep the notions clearly separate, we can appreciate the aesthetic, as well as other experiential, potential of them both. They both constitute human existence, although, as I will argue, familiarity has a privileged position: it is only in contrast to the everyday that wondrous moments can occur.

2 Wonder

The word itself, ‘wonder’, can refer to objects that raise wonder, as well as to our reaction to objects. Something that is out of the ordinary, say, a miracle, is an object of wonder. “Miraculous wonders” might actually be examples of wonders that can be expelled by science – science explains away miracles. So, there is a point in Hamilton’s claim, although it clearly does not cover all cases of wonder. I am more concerned, in a way similar to Hepburn, about the other side of the coin: not so much about wondrous objects, but human reactions and attitudes.

In a later essay ‘Values and Cosmic Imagination’, Hepburn makes, again very passingly, an intuitively plausible distinction between the ‘questioning’ and ‘appreciative’ modes of wonder.⁴ This is a very commonsensical distinction, and is implicit in the ‘Wonder’ essay as well, but he does not use the terms in the original essay. Instead, he talks of ‘interrogative element’⁵ and ‘meditative wonderment’.⁶

The questioning mode is, presumably, the more mundane of the two: I may wonder what you mean when you say this or that; or I may wonder what is this strange-looking plant. My wondering is easily satisfied by asking you,

4 Ronald W. Hepburn, ‘Values and Cosmic Imagination’ in idem, *The Reach of the Aesthetic: Collected Essays on Art and Nature* (Aldershot, 2001), 148–65, 161.

5 Hepburn, ‘Wonder’, 135.

6 Ibid., 136.

or by consulting an encyclopaedia of plants. The appreciative mode is more interesting and relevant from the philosophical point of view, and I shall come back to it very shortly. But before that, I want to point out other distinctions that Hepburn makes in reference to Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger which are very close to the one I picked up above, but have, if nothing else, a different emphasis.

The Kantian distinction is between ‘astonishment [*Verwunderung*]’ and ‘wonderment that is steady and unthreatened [*Bewunderung*]’.⁷ The former ‘wears off’ when the novelty effect disappears. The latter, to which Hepburn also refers by the term ‘admiration’, is the much celebrated case of ‘the starry heavens above and the moral law within.’ This seems to be a distinction between two kinds of reactions, a more immediate one and a more contemplative one. The latter often requires a special attitude, which might also be called ‘wonder’.

Hepburn continues by referring to a passage in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* in which Heidegger considers the phenomenon of ‘*Neugier*’, curiosity.⁸ In Heidegger, this is in connection with other characteristics determining human everyday existence; the very mundane way of being of *das Man*. Curiosity has a close link to ‘idle talk’ or ‘chatter [*Gerede*]’ and ‘ambiguity [*Zweideutigkeit*]’. Furthermore, they constitute what Heidegger calls the ‘falling [*das Verfallen*]’ of *Dasein*. I will quote a somewhat longer paragraph than Hepburn in order to get more of the Heideggerian specifications into play:

The basic state of sight shows itself in a peculiar tendency-of-Being which belongs to everydayness – the tendency towards ‘seeing’. We designate this tendency by the term ‘curiosity’ [*Neugier*], which characteristically is not confined to seeing, but expresses the tendency towards a peculiar way of letting the world to be encountered by us in perception. [...] When curiosity has become free, however, it concerns itself with seeing, not in order to understand what is seen [...] but *just* in order to see. It seeks novelty only in order to leap from it anew to another novelty. [...] Therefore curiosity is characterized by a specific way of *not tarrying* alongside what is closest. Consequently it does not seek the leisure of tarrying observantly, but rather seeks restlessness and the excitement of continual novelty and changing encounters.⁹

7 Ibid., 133.

8 Ibid., 134.

9 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson

Hepburn compares this to the touristic attitude; ‘a tick on the tourist’s placelist’.¹⁰ Using terminology introduced by John Urry, we could speak of the ‘tourist’s gaze’ which seeks the extraordinary: ‘potential objects of the tourist gaze must be different in some way or other. They must be out of the ordinary’.¹¹ This is a particular kind of attention, seeking for novelty. Curiosity is the driving force behind all this; in Heidegger’s concepts, it is a way in which we are connected to the world; it is a mode of ‘care [*Sorge*]’.

Hepburn contrasts curiosity with wonder: ‘wonder does not see its objects possessively: they remain “other” and un-mastered. Wonder does dwell in its objects with rapt attentiveness.’¹² Hepburn reads Heidegger so that ‘*thaumazein*’ would correspond wonder. Heidegger makes this point very quickly: ‘Curiosity has nothing to do with observing entities and marvelling at them – *Θαυμάζειν*. To be amazed to the point of not understanding is something in which it has no interest.’¹³

I admit that that it is heuristically useful to distinguish the two, but phenomenologically they go often hand in hand: curiosity is the starting point for wonder, and moments of wonder may end up in curiosity. This is acknowledged also by Hepburn when he writes: ‘There seems, too, a variable relation between the element of curiosity or interrogation in wonder and a contemplative-appreciative aspect (“dwelling”), in which it is furthest from mere curiosity.’¹⁴

Before entering the issues of the everyday in more detail, I want to correct a common misunderstanding to which Hepburn also subscribes. He writes that ‘mere curiosity is given an inferior place in Heidegger’s scheme.’¹⁵ Admittedly, Heidegger does sometimes get a bit carried away by language, and gives the impression that phenomena such as curiosity and chatter are somehow inferior compared to their authentic counterparts. However, Heidegger is in great pains to emphasize that the expressions such as ‘curiosity’, ‘falling’ and ‘inauthenticity’ do not carry any negative evaluations; they are meant to be purely descriptive:

(Oxford, 1962), 214, 216.

10 Ibid., 134.

11 John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London 2011), 15.

12 Hepburn, ‘Wonder’, 134.

13 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 216.

14 Hepburn, ‘Wonder’, 134-5.

15 Ibid., 134.

This term [i.e., *falling*, *Verfallen*] does not express any negative evaluation, but is used to signify that Dasein is proximally and for the most part *alongside* the ‘world’ of its concern. [...] We would also misunderstand the ontologico-existential structure of falling if we were to ascribe to it the sense of a bad and deplorable ontical property of which, perhaps, more advanced stages of human culture might be able to rid themselves.¹⁶

In sum, wonder can be an object or a human state. Wonder can be attitude, and it can be a reaction. When an attitude, it should be distinguished from curiosity (Heidegger); when a reaction, it should be distinguished from astonishment (Kant). So, when talking about human states, we have four closely related phenomena: curiosity or questioning mode, ‘contemplative-appreciative aspect’,¹⁷ astonishment or being surprised, and finally, wonder in the sense of admiration and awe.

3 Everyday

Now it is time to go into questions of the everyday. Heidegger was one of the first philosophers who attended problems of the everyday. He introduces the concept at the very beginning of *Sein und Zeit* with the, by now, celebrated expression *zunächst und zumeist*,¹⁸ ‘proximally and for the most part’,¹⁹ or ‘firstly and mostly’²⁰: humans exist *zunächst und zumeist* in their *durchschnittlichen Alltäglichkeit*,²¹ in their ‘average everydayness’.²² The average everydayness consists of certain structures which, then, define humans. Heidegger is after the ontological structures of human existence. In this context, there is no need to go into details of the Heideggerian analysis, which is, by now, well-known, anyway.²³ For my purposes, besides Heidegger’s observation of the *zunächst und zumeist*, his remark concerning the overlooking of the ontological

16 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 220.

17 Hepburn, ‘Wonder’, 135.

18 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, 1979), 16.

19 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 37.

20 Michael Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary* (Oxford, 1999), 59.

21 Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 16.

22 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 38.

23 See, for example, Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).

importance the everyday and the ‘averageness [*Durchschnittlichkeit*]’ is relevant.²⁴ The ordinary, average everyday is closest to us, but for this very reason ‘the farthest and not known at all’.²⁵ We are embedded in the structures of the everyday; they constitute our very existence. I think that this is true also of the aesthetic aspects of the everyday: most often they go unnoticed because they are so close to us.

Rather than saying that we are *in* the everyday, we should say that we *are* the everyday. We construe ourselves by living our lives, by creating liaisons to our fellow-humans and to other entities with which we are dealing. Firstly and mostly, we are – happily – the average somebody, *das Man*, but the average somebody exists on the ontic level, in numerous manifestations. You as an average everyday person are different from me as an average everyday person. There is nothing wrong, avoidable or even deplorable in existing as the average somebody. In the Heideggerian scheme this is a simple fact: ‘*The “they” [das Man] is an existentielle; and as a primordial phenomenon, it belongs to Dasein’s positive constitution.*’²⁶

Is there any aesthetic potential in the average everyday existence? In our very everydayness, things tend to disappear in the sense that they do not stand out in any particular way. Heidegger’s well-known analysis of tools or pieces of equipment applies to a large extent to anything we encounter while leading our lives. A pair of shoes is a good pair when they do not announce themselves; we do not have to pay any attention to them; they simply serve in their function of covering our feet and making effortless moving possible. In a similar way, our everyday surroundings do not require special attention; ontically speaking, we get used to it, there is nothing new to be seen, nothing that would raise our curiosity, much less wonder. When there are changes in the environment we inhabit – a building is being constructed – then we pay attention. Our curiosity is aroused.

Meanwhile, what is aesthetically noteworthy is that which seems to stand out from the ordinary averageness. Yuriko Saito claims that ‘the enemies of the aesthetic are inattentiveness and mindlessness.’²⁷ When considering traditional objects of aesthetic interest, works of art and scenic natural sights, this is true. The whole institution of art aims at this: works of art have to stand

24 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 69; Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 212.

25 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 69.

26 Ibid. 167, emphasis in the original.

27 Yuriko Saito, *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (Oxford, 2017), 25.

out, attract our curiosity and attention, be noteworthy. The question concerning the aesthetic potential of the everyday remains unanswered: perhaps we should extend the range of the aesthetic to cover the basics of human existence – the firstly and mostly.

On earlier occasions, I have pointed out that the very mundane everyday has its own aesthetic characteristics: it is the flow and rhythm of things that matter.²⁸ This is the ordinary, everyday, average existence; taking care of daily matters and routines. Taking a familiar route to work, to school, to the grocery store, or where ever one standardly commutes. This does not have to happen daily, but it must be a routine-like activity, which one takes without any particular planning or effort. For some, this has been rather counter intuitive,²⁹ but I think that the steadiness of the everyday should be taken seriously in philosophical aesthetics: this is the bedrock of our existence, and it provides us many quiet pleasures which often go unnoticed.

I do not deny that boredom is the other side of the coin – if one's everyday is very monotonous, the state of being bored is understandable. This is a standard strategy in punishment: one's options of diversifying one's everyday are limited. A kind of an extreme is solitary refinement: there is very little to do, very little to see. And clearly, people do get bored even when living in freedom. But pointing out the aesthetic potential of the everyday does not entail that there should be only the everyday. We need breaks from the everyday – that is why we go to foreign places, to the nature (if we are mostly city dwellers), to concerts and other art events.

In recent philosophical aesthetics, there has been a fair amount of discussion on the concept of the everyday. Thomas Leddy defines the everyday in contrast to the arts and to nature:

the objects of everyday aesthetics are not works of art. Although some works of art, both high and popular, are experienced every day by someone [...], everyday aesthetics is not defined by what is experienced literally every day but what is not art or nature. Moreover, there is a commonly accepted domain of everyday objects and experiences. People generally recognize what is meant by 'everyday life': that it refers

28 Arto Haapala, 'On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Strangeness, Familiarity, and the Meaning of Place' in Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (eds), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (New York, 2005), 39–55.

29 Thomas Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Broadview, 2012), 107–12.

less, for example, to the part a concert pianist's life that involves performing as an artist than to what happens when she goes to the grocery store.³⁰

I find this counter-intuitive: if I live in a natural environment, in a cottage in deep wilderness, the natural setting around me is my everyday. And if I pass a monument – a public work of art or a building – every day on my way to work, this particular object is an everyday object for me. Furthermore, if Leddy's pianist is not in the habit of doing her groceries herself – her husband does that –, the occasion of her actually going to the supermarket for groceries, is not her everyday. From the Heideggerian point of view, the everyday is a relational phenomenon, depending on the person and on her relationships with the environment. It is not only objects that constitute human everyday, we are also together with other humans: *das Mitsein* is one of the existentials structuring our existence. On the ontic level, your 'being-with' other people differs from mine, because you know different people, because we are not from the same family, etc. But ontologically, we are always with other humans, even complete solitude is defined by the absence of other people.

More recently, Ben Highmore has emphasized the relational nature of everyday: it is not a fixed set of objects, but rather a set of relations.³¹ Even though Highmore himself does not refer to Wittgenstein, it is not too farfetched, I think, to talk about a 'form of life'. I find it slightly misleading to characterize the relationality of the everyday in terms of 'attitude' or 'attention'. In a recent article, Ossi Naukkarinen and Raine Vasquez write as follows:

We have already highlighted the fact that the everyday is a relational concept, that is has to do with our relations towards objects, events, or others – specifically, the mood in which we engage, encounter, or experience them. This fact encourages the view that the everyday is a form of attention; thus, we can experience things which are not normally a part of our daily-lives with the feeling of the everyday.³²

30 Ibid., 20.

31 Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (Oxford, 2011).

32 Ossi Naukkarinen and Raine Vasquez, 'Creating and Experiencing the Everyday through Daily-life' in Carsten Friberg and Raine Vasquez (eds), *Experiencing the Everyday* (Copenhagen, 2017), 179.

As an example, they give ‘parties, changes at work, or planned holidays that fail to break the grip of the everyday’. In their view, they ‘illustrate the possibility of experiencing even extra-ordinary events through the lens of everydayness.’³³

Living in the everyday does not require, or even involve, any particular ‘form of attention’; rather the opposite: a special attention is required if we want to distance ourselves from our daily routines. Everydayness is not a lens which can be changed to something else instantaneously at will. Everydayness is a form of life defining us as human beings. We can sometimes take some distance from our everyday, its objects and events, but even if we do so, there is no way to get rid of the fact that they constitute our everyday and have accordingly an aura of familiarity in them. The examples Naukkarinen and Vasquez give illustrate something else than what they suppose. Naukkarinen comments on his experiences of ‘remarkable’ events in the everyday as follows:

Rather, I tend to think that even many rather remarkable things, in good or bad, are part of the everyday. For example, over the years some close people around me have died. Those were very sad moments that moved me deeply. Yet, they didn’t prevent me from leading the life that I have. I continued with those routines related to my job, home, and hobbies – not happily and lightly, but still.³⁴

The everyday has, indeed, the potential of “carrying” us through many of the losses all of us have to go through in our lives. There are ruptures in the weaves of the everyday, both positive and negative. But this is exactly what they are – ruptures, cracks, highlights which many of us, although not all in every situation, can deal with. If deaths and funerals would indeed become an everyday routine for someone not in the business of an undertaker, his everyday would be a very peculiar one, and if the losses would always be from the ring of family and friends, it would be devastating for anyone’s existence. As far as I can see, in the second quote, Naukkarinen is using the term ‘everyday’ in a meaning referring to the life history of a particular person, not in the sense of a form of attention, to say nothing of the sense that I have outlined.

Another terminological comment is worth making: is there a distinction between the everyday and the daily? In the kind of philosophical discussion I am leading here, as is also the case with Naukkarinen and Vasquez in their essay, we are not relying entirely on a common sense understanding of a

33 Ibid., 179–80.

34 Ibid., 177–8.

language, or “intuitions” – whatever they might be and where ever they might come from – but also make stipulations. For Naukkarinen and Vasquez, the ‘daily-life’ seems to be some kind of quantitative notion: if I encounter something almost on a daily basis, it is part of my daily life. But in this context, they characterize the everyday as a ‘feeling’ which might even be ‘paradoxically, removed from daily life’. From this they conclude: ‘the everyday is merely one (special) mode of being’.³⁵

I am puzzled: for Naukkarinen and Vasquez, the everyday has become something special. I do understand it that in the hustle and bustle of our everyday activities, we do not pay attention to – we do not reflect on – the everyday. I certainly agree with the idea that there is a danger that the everyday loses its everydayness once one starts to pay attention to it. However, I cannot see the benefit or advantage for naming the attention to daily activities the “everyday.” The everyday is, indeed, a relation, rather than a ‘form of attention’ or a ‘(special) mode of being’.

I would rather bring in the distinctions Hepburn refers to – curiosity and wonder. We can take a step back from our routines, and take a curious look around. This might not be an easy exercise, because we are in the everyday. It is much more natural to occupy a curious gaze in unfamiliar locations. We might even adopt a wondrous attitude to the whole phenomenon of our individual everyday: that I exist as I exist. This would be a modified and shortened version of the traditional philosophical wondering which Heidegger formulated as follows: *‘Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts?’*³⁶ ‘Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?’ This kind of wondering cannot be an attitude for everyday existence: we need to act and do things in the everyday, and with existential wondering this all would cease.

4 Wonder – everyday

But let me now turn back to wonder. What is the role of wonder in our everyday? Clearly, there are many matters in our *Lebenswelt* that we can wonder about. Small children wonder about matters that we adults take for granted: “Why is it so-and-so?” In principle, one can take a ‘wondrous attitude’ to just about anything. We might even be able to practice wondering so that even the most trivial of matters would raise wonder. The world would be full of

³⁵ Ibid. 181.

³⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen, 1953), 1.

wonders. But this kind of “wonderization” would make the whole phenomenon trivial. This is very analogous to aestheticizing our everyday in the traditional sense of the “aesthetic”; there is noteworthy ‘ordinarily neglected, but gem-like, aesthetic potentials hidden behind the trivial, mundane, and commonplace façade’, Saito’s expression,³⁷ in everything, but if everything is aestheticized, the notion of the “aesthetic” becomes futile. This applies to wonder too: matters of wonder have to be worth of the special attention we give them – there must be something extraordinary in them.

Wonder and aesthetic attitude seem to be closely related – they both require attentiveness on part of the perceiver, and more often than not, there is a strong element of wonder in aesthetic experience. We may be caught by a natural scene or a work of art, and be simply “amazed” by it. As Hepburn rightly points out, not only aesthetic, but also religious phenomena raise the feeling of wonder.

The everyday is not our whole existence, rather we are in the everyday ‘*zunächst und zumeist*’, firstly and mostly. Firstly in the sense that the everyday forms the foundation of our existence, mostly in the sense that for most of the time of our conscious existence, our way of being is being in the everyday. These existential facts do not exclude moments of wonder, whether aesthetic, religious, or of any other kind. It might go too far to say that the everyday requires breaks in it, but it clearly is a deeply human characteristics to look for breaks in the continuum of existence. For a concert pianist the break might be a visit to the grocery store, for somebody else a concert performance. Whether such breaks amount to wonder in the sense of a reaction, depends on the person in question, and on the language game in which he is involved. I myself have had “truly amazing experiences” – this is the expression I would use – both in nature and in art. Both in nature and in art some of the experiences are of a quiet and subtle sort, some of them much more grand and deep. But, even though I would be willing to describe many of these experiences as “wonderful”, I would be hesitant to use the word ‘wonder’ in this context.

When talking about ‘appreciative wonder’, I would again admit that this kind of attitude can be in place in many contexts, and creates opportunities for both subtle and grand experiences. However, to avoid trivialization, one should be rather careful in adopting such an attitude; it cannot be an everyday

37 Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, 50. I should add that Saito is well aware of the dangers of beautification and aestheticizing: ‘the inquiry into everyday aesthetics should also challenge an attitude of *indiscriminate* aestheticizing’ (203).

attitude. ‘Meditative wonderment’³⁸ is an exception requiring some effort. Moreover, as Hepburn forcefully puts it: ‘The attitude of wonder is notably and essentially *other-acknowledging*,³⁹ which, in turn, implies ‘*gentleness* – concern not to blunder into a damaging manipulation of another.’⁴⁰ In the later essay, when discussing ‘sacred’ and ‘holy’, Hepburn gives very similar characterizations, and refers to Heidegger’s notion of ‘*es gibt*’, ‘it gives’, which he connects with ‘gift’, and continues:

Obscure and arcane though much of this Heideggerian material appears, it can certainly be taken as a poetical-rhetorical expression of a way of seeing and evaluating one’s world: wonderingly, and under the category of ‘gift’. As such, it might well be a viable, though limited, deployment of the language of ‘sacred’ and ‘holy’. Nature or being is to be respected and revered: we should assume a thankful and responsible posture, not an exploitative or rapacious one.⁴¹

So, I would endorse the role of wonder as well as of curiosity in our existence. And especially with regards to wonder, I agree with Hepburn’s considerations: there is an element of other-acknowledging and respect in wonder. But perhaps more than Hepburn, I would emphasize that moments of wonder are special ones, and should be kept as such, so that they can offer a break from the everyday.

To avoid misunderstandings, I want to stress again that when I speak about the aesthetics of the everyday, I am not referring to special moments in our daily lives, to the ‘extraordinary in the ordinary’. But neither am I denying the relevance and importance of different kinds of extraordinary moments in our existence. What I want to highlight is the imbedded aesthetic character of the everyday which goes most of the time unnoticed, or noticed as something going smoothly, and as it should be. This is the comforting stability of the everyday; this is the favourite couch which invites and welcomes us without any effort. Ben Highmore puts this very nicely:

38 Hepburn, ‘Wonder’, 136.

39 Ibid., 144.

40 Ibid., 146.

41 Ronald W. Hepburn, ‘Restoring the Sacred: Sacred as a Concept of Aesthetics’ in idem, *The Reach of the Aesthetic*, 113–29, 117.

Beds, chairs and clothes accommodate us: most of the time they receive our 'daily inattention'. We don't notice them, but we do interact with them. What are the circumstances of a favourite armchair when we seem to be so unconcerned by it, while it perfectly preforms its role of comfortably supporting us precisely so that we don't have to 'give a notice'? Is noticing or not noticing significant for the intimacy of our relationship with some of our most familiar things? Does the old adage 'familiarity breeds contempt' really apply when we consider the preciousness of a family photograph that we can see each day but rarely pay any heed to?⁴²

In this sense, the aesthetic is something which goes along with daily activities. It is like the Sartrean consciousness which exists only when directed to something else. The fluency and the rhythms of the everyday are constituted when the everyday is in place. This is the aesthetics of the familiarity, of the ordinary, of the *zunächst und zumeist*.

5 Closure

Let me conclude with yet another quote which is very relevant when discussing aesthetics and the everyday. Hepburn wanted to expand the field of aesthetics by considering notions such as 'wonder'. He saw it very clearly that aesthetic phenomena are connected with, for example, ethical and religious ones. The boundaries, if there are any, are blurry. Hepburn did not himself discuss the notion of the everyday, but in his spirit, it is possible, perhaps even fair, to take yet another step: the aesthetic is not only about the "wondrous" but also about the mundane. This is exactly what is so wonderful in the aesthetic: there is no essence, but a variety of phenomena waiting to be explored. Hepburn writes:

There have been aesthetic theories that put their whole explanatory burden upon a single key concept. [...] I should be unhappy with that kind of theory [...]. [I]n common with many other writers, I cannot see any single-concept theory as adequately accounting for the whole, highly diversified range of aesthetic data. In order to understand

42 Highmore, *Ordinary Lives*, 58.

aesthetic activity and aesthetic value, [...] we require a plurality of key concepts...⁴³

One of the key concepts might well be wonder and its assimilates. However, the foundation of wonder is the ordinary – only against the ordinary can something be regarded as wondrous. That is why I think it is important to give the everyday in everyday aesthetics a chance, not to change it to something else.⁴⁴

University of Helsinki

43 Hepburn, 'Wonder', 2–3.

44 I want to thank Raine Vasquez for improving the language of this paper and for good comments. In the final stages, Endre Szécsényi's professional editing was very valuable – many thanks for that. I am grateful to the International Institute of Applied Aesthetics (Lahti) for the financial support, and to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Helsinki for the mobility allowance.