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Andy Warhol and the Aesthetics of Everyday Life

In this paper I will argue that Andy Warhol presents us with interesting insights into the aesthetics of life and of everyday life in his book *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: (From A to B and Back Again.)*¹ He is like Plato in some respects and unlike him in others. Like Plato, he presents a utopia, an ideal society, which has its own profoundly aesthetic character; he valorizes beauty; and he asks what beauty is. But, unlike Plato, and surprisingly like John Dewey, he is a pragmatist and fiercely anti-dualist. For him, beauty is a matter of context, and his utopia, again unlike Plato's, is democratic. I will also contrast him with Arthur Danto, the later philosopher being fundamentally like Plato in that he posits two realms. Whereas Plato holds up the realm of the Forms, which are real, as superior to the realm of appearances, which are not, Danto distinguishes the realm of everyday life, of "mere things," and the artworld. Mere objects advance ontologically as they are transfigured into the artworld. However, rather than transfiguring objects into the realm of art, Warhol deconstructs the distinction between art and life. In this respect one can see him as, like Diogenes of Sinope, a philosopher qua performance artist. He does things, and his actions make philosophical points. Warhol's cultural insight, unlike Plato's and Danto's was essentially Nietzschean, not only in his aphoristic style, and his synthesis of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, but as a philosopher who says "yes" to life. All of this is ironic since Danto first developed his theory of art inspired by seeing an exhibit of Warhol's Brillo Boxes in 1964².

Warhol was famously shot in his studio by a madwoman. In *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, he imagines how a close friend (called "B") might describe this event to him. A and B are the lead characters in this book. B represents any close associate of Warhol. However we can assume that

¹ A. Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: (From A to B and Back Again.)*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego 1975.

² A. Danto, *The Artworld*, "Journal of Philosophy", 61, 19, 1964, pp. 571-584. His last major book on this topic was *What Art Is?*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2014.

whatever a “B” says is just as likely an expression of Warhol’s own views as not. One should see this book as a dialogue between A and B, where A directly represents Warhol and B indirectly represents him or represents another side, or represents the views of a close associate. B says “The founder of the Society for Cutting Up Men [the shooter] wanted you to produce a script she’d written and you weren’t interested and she just came up to your work studio one afternoon. There were a lot of people there and you were talking on the telephone. You didn’t know her too well and she just walked in off the elevator and started shooting. Your mother was really upset. You thought she’d die of it. Your brother was really fabulous, the one who’s a priest. He came up to your room and showed you how to do needlepoint. I’d taught him how in the lobby! (12)”

As with many of his vignettes, this one is funny, although of course it is also scary. The first four sentences are straightforward. But, as with Nietzsche’s aphorisms, the twist comes at the end. The next two sentences make sense since Warhol was close to his mother, although they are written in a deadpan way. The last two sentences are more philosophically interesting. His brother is a priest. But he is not behaving in a priestly way. Instead, he shows Andy how to do needlepoint. Of course this is a story told by Warhol himself, and it is intended to make a point. Warhol, in telling the story, focuses on an everyday life skill used as a hobby, more often by women than men in our society. The priest does the opposite of what he is supposed to do, qua priest, especially at this moment when, according to their mother, Andy might die. Moreover, he learns this hobby skill from B just before coming up to Andy’s room. Divine salvation is rejected in favor of an everyday life that involves aesthetic making.

In this paper I will interpret *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* as a contribution to the aesthetics of everyday life, and more broadly to *life* aesthetics. When most philosophers hear the name “Andy Warhol” in relation to aesthetics they think of Arthur Danto. Danto frequently refers to the moment he walked into the Stable Gallery in New York City and saw Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* as the moment in which he discovered the essential nature of art. He first mentions this in his famous artworld paper of 1964. But in 1975 Warhol writes *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, which, I shall argue, implicitly refutes an essential aspect of Danto’s philosophy of art. Danto’s point was that Warhol’s art provided him with an insight that gave him his definition of art. That definition changed over the years, but basically, in 1964, it was that something is art if it can be seen AS art by someone with appropriate art-historical knowledge. Having appropriate art-historical knowledge is what makes one a member of the artworld. In being seen AS art, an object has what Danto calls the “is” of artistic identification. Danto had asked what makes the *Brillo Boxes* art and their indiscernible counterparts in a warehouse not art. His answer was that,

because Warhol's boxes are in an art gallery at a particular time in art history, they are appropriately seen as art, i.e. under the artist's interpretation: they had been "transfigured" into the world of art.

Danto shows himself to be essentially a kind of dualist in that he holds that there are two realms: the realm of art and the realm of "mere things." The brillo box in a warehouse is a mere thing, but in the gallery, made by Warhol, it is art. Of course he is not a dualist in the classical sense: he does not hold that the realm of art is a realm of souls or a spiritual realm. However the term "transfiguration" meant at least somewhat seriously: he speaks of latent objects waiting to be "transfigured" like water into wine. There is a movement from one realm into another. As he says later, the *Brillo Boxes* insofar as they are in the gallery have "aboutness" whereas the brillo boxes as mere things do not. Thus even if we assumed that Danto did not literally believe in anything supernatural the *structure* of his theory is dualist. As a result, it would make no sense to Danto to talk about the aesthetics of everyday life. Aesthetics, for him, has been reduced to the philosophy of art. Moreover, on his view aesthetics isn't important anyway since *Brillo Boxes* and the commercial brillo boxes have the same look and hence the same "aesthetic." What distinguishes them is something the eye cannot descry! i.e. cannot be determined by close looking.

Warhol, writing nine years later, is essentially opposed to Danto. What he really meant by his *Brillo Boxes* had nothing to do with the apotheosis of objects into the artworld or the creation of art as a two-sided thing: mere material object as body, and meaning as soul. Warhol demolishes this idea, which Danto shared with earlier writers such as Collingwood. The point of Warhol, even back in 1964, is deconstruction of the world/artworld dichotomy -- NOT setting up a wall between the two. For Warhol, having art historical knowledge, or more specifically, knowing about the art scene in New York City, is pretty much irrelevant to art, or at least to his art. Indeed Warhol explicitly (although perhaps satirically) reduces art to a business, thus leaving little room for an artworld distinct from the businessworld. Describing the period after he was shot, he writes: "I had by that time realized that 'business' was the best art. Business art is the step that comes after Art. I started as a commercial artist, and I want to finish as a business artist." (92)

One cannot read *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* as a normal philosophy book. It should be read more as one reads Nietzsche. The style is aphoristic, and, and as I have suggested, much of it is not to be taken seriously. Warhol values humor highly, and this is a very funny book. Yet it has a complex structure and considerable depth. It consists of a prologue and fifteen chapters: B and I: How Andy Puts his Warhol On, Love (Puberty), Love (Prime), Love (Senility), Beauty, Fame, Work, Time, Death,

Economics, Atmosphere, Success, Art, Titles, The Tingle, and Underwear Power. The chapters most relevant to the concerns of aestheticians are “Beauty,” “Atmosphere,” and the last four. “The Tingle” is a dialogue between “B” and “A” about obsessively cleaning one’s apartment, where it can be seen that a certain style of cleaning can transcend mere cleaning and take on, through ritual-like practices, an aura of its own, perhaps even an aura of the sublime. The chapter on underwear, which describes a foray into a New York department store by A and B to buy briefs, does something similar in relation to shopping. I will be focusing on the first four chapters here.

I say “life aesthetics” or “aesthetics of life” since, in part, I want to forestall those who would say that the life of Andy Warhol is as far from “the everyday” as one can get. Although he was fascinated by fame and glamour he was equally fascinated with everyday life. One could say that he devoted his life to making the extraordinary seem ordinary and the ordinary seem extraordinary. I will start my analysis with the prologue: “B and I: How Andy Puts his Warhol On.”

Warhol’s paradigm of beauty is personal appearance. And of course this includes fashion. So let us turn to his defense of bluejeans, which comes in the middle of the prologue. As he puts it: “I believe in bluejeans.” (13) His discussion of bluejeans was in the context of his talking about the value of uniforms, and as we all know, jeans were a kind of uniform of the early 70s. They were essential to everyday life. People, mostly the young, wore them as a symbol of solidarity with the cultural left (the hippie movement) and the political left (what was called the “new left”). But Warhol treats them as objects of aesthetic delight. He sets up a principle of evaluation. As he writes, “The ones made by Levi Strauss are the best-cut, best-looking pair of pants that have ever been designed by anybody. Nobody will ever top the original bluejeans. They can’t be bought old, they have to be bought new and they have to be worn in by the person. To get that look. And they can’t be phoney bleached or phoney anything. You know that little pocket? It’s so crazy to have that little little pocket, like for a twenty-dollar gold piece.” (13) Jeans are not aesthetically simple. There are levels of quality, for example Levi Strauss being at the top for a variety of reasons, including cut. One aspect of the aesthetic excellence of Levi Strauss jeans is that they are the originals. However, some impose a phony aesthetic onto jeans, where they think that they have to look worn and that this is best effected inauthentically by various means, including bleaching, that do not involve the owner wearing them for a long time. An example of the charming authenticity of the originals is the little pocket. On reading the Wikipedia article on jeans, we realize

that Warhol must have done thorough research on them since the information and the set of aesthetic issues are essentially the same³.

The dialogue continues, when B says “French bluejeans?” and A replies “No, American are the best. Levi Strauss. With the little copper buttons. Studded for evening wear.” (13) As observed in the Wikipedia article, the buttons, which were put in for structural support, also had a secondary aesthetic function. Thus, having the buttons, which LOOK nonfunctional, yet are not, enhances the jeans, even, ironically for something essentially informal, for evening wear. The talk about American jeans being the best again has to do with authenticity, in this case cultural authenticity. It was movie stars, westerns, and youth rebellion -- all distinctly American, that gave jeans their meaning.

There is even a proper way to clean jeans: “No, I put fabric softener. The only person who irons them is Geraldo Rivera.” (13) Ironing them would be inauthentic in the very way that Geraldo Rivera, with his fake hair and manner, was notoriously inauthentic.

Warhol then muses, “This talk of bluejeans was making me very jealous. Of Levi and Strauss. I wish I could invent something like bluejeans. Something to be remembered for. Something mass.” (13) It may strike one as odd that Warhol envied anyone, and yet from his perspective, having this kind of impact on the aesthetics of everyday life would be massive, hence the reference to “mass.” Of course he is remembered by us for his art. He is hardly known at all for his writing and philosophy. For him, a memorable accomplishment would be inventing jeans, or something like that, in the way Levi and Strauss did: something both tasteful and nearly universal.

The Aesthetic Presidency and the Utopia of Andy Warhol

“Oh, A,” B said impulsively, “you should be President! If you were President, you would have somebody else be President for you, right?” (13) Why would he make a good President? Because his approach would be utopian, aesthetic, everyday and radically democratic. He would delegate responsibility in a democratic way. B says “You would videotape everything. You would have a nightly talk show – your own talk show as President. You’d have somebody else come on, the other President that’s the President for you, and he would talk your diary out to the people, every night for half an hour. And that would come before the news, What the President Did Today. So there would be no flack about the President

³ “Jeans.” Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeans> Access date 11/7/2022.

does nothing or the President just sits around. Every day he'd have to tell us what he did, if he had sex with his wife... You'd have to say you played with your dog Archie – it's the perfect name for the President's pet – and what bills you had to sign and why you didn't want to sign them, who was rotten to you in Congress... You'd have to say how many long-distance phone calls you made that day. You'd have to tell what you ate in the private dining room, and you'd show on the television screen the receipts you paid for private food for yourself. For your Cabinet you would have people who were not politicians. Robert Scull would be head of Economics because he would know how to buy early and sell big. You wouldn't have any politicians around at all. You'd take all the trips and tape them. You'd play back all the tapes with foreign people on TV. And when you wrote a letter to anyone in Congress you would have it Xeroxed and sent to every paper." (13-14)

Warhol realizes, as we found with Trump, that the Presidency is the ultimate platform for popularity and fame. Unlike Trump, who was not a talk show host but a Reality TV host, a very different, less intellectual thing, Warhol would make his Presidency a nightly talk show, thus raising the level of intellectual discourse on a daily basis for the entire country.

I am in accord with Warhol here. My philosophy of everyday aesthetics has to do not just with description but also with serious thinking about the ideals of everyday life, as, for example, was engaged in by such thinkers as William Morris and Le Corbusier. Note that Warhol, as President, would not consume a great deal of time and space: his show would be half an hour every night, and it would involve talking about his day, which would be the same sort of stuff we are getting in this book; that is, reflections on the aesthetics of everyday life. That's why it would come before the News. News, in an important way, is NOT about everyday life, or ordinary things. It is about murder and wars and other such things. If it were everyday stuff it would not be "news." So, although we may see the News every day, and although that is part of our everyday experience, the News itself is precisely NOT a window onto anyone's everyday world *qua* everyday.

Warhol realizes that what is everyday includes such mundane, but important, stuff as having sex with your wife or playing with your dog. It includes worries over moments of disrespect from colleagues, and over what and how you age. Warhol, as President would be a hero of returning to the everyday.

The rest of this account of Warhol's presidency is probably influenced by Plato. We are talking here about an ideal aesthetic republic. So, instead of politicians, Warhol would hire experts to, for example, manage the economy. And, unlike Nixon or Trump, or many other politicians, he would not hide his tapes or letters. He would be totally transparent. Of

course he would not agree with Plato's idea of the noble lie. So his politics would combine expertise and democratic openness in a way much more conducive to harmony than Plato's version.

B says: "You'd be a nice President. You wouldn't take up too much space, you'd have a tiny office like you have now. You'd change the law so you could keep anything anybody gave you while you were in office, because you're a Collector. And you'd be the first nonmarried President. And in the end you'd be famous because you'd write a book: 'How I Ran the Country Without Even Trying.' Or if that sounded wrong, 'How I Ran the Country with Your Help.' That might sell better. (14)"

This relates not only to politics but also to ethics. Warhol's ethics is based on aesthetics. So niceness is more important than duty since niceness demands empathy and sympathy, which require imagination, which is the aesthetic faculty. This faculty would compel him to be an aesthetic minimalist President in his tiny office. He would not take up airs. He would not let ego take over. Also, along aesthetic lines he would give value to collecting loveable objects. And of course he is a Taoist, trying to achieve goodness in the state through action through non-action, i.e. through aesthetic simplicity. The Taoist says you can run the country best when you follow the Way and do not even try. You do not make being the ruler a matter of power and glory but a matter of elegant action that achieves harmony as in the work of a master craftsman. And then it is no surprise that the alternative version of America imagined by his book entails a great democratic modesty, more appropriate to the true spirit of America. So, the title of "First" is moved from the pathetic secondary position of the first lady to the primary position of a man of excellence who follows the Tao and actualizes will to power in an authentic way, to paraphrase Nietzsche.

The fantasy about his presidency goes on along these lines: "You'd have no live-in maid at the White House. A B would come in a little early to clean up. And then the other Bs would file down to Washington to see you just like they file in to see you at the Factory. (14)" Warhol recognizes the inevitable hypocrisy of everyday life when one hires maids. In our household we learned this I think per necessity during the pandemic. We previously had cleaners who came in once every two weeks. We prided ourselves in our democratic treatment of them. But that was false in a way. After we had to lay them off because we were in partial quarantine, we had to clean everything at the same level of perfection (my wife's demand) once per week. We achieved this with great efficiency, and by doing so we avoided the hypocrisy of false smug appeals to democratic sentiments. We also became much more mindful, along the lines of Thich Nhat Hanh of mindfulness itself, of paying attention to minutiae of dirt and grime, and to the subtle joys of cleanliness.

It is wonderful the way Warhol conceived his own studio workplace as something everyday by calling it a factory and treating it as such. We are just a business, he implied. We on the outside always saw the setup as one of glamour. But it was quite the opposite, just as it was the opposite of Danto's idea of an isolated Artworld. To repeat my introduction, Warhol was the non-Danto. So, instead of the Presidential world being like Plato's world of Forms or Kant's transcendent or transcendental domain, Warhol's Presidency would not involve a President-World (Danto being himself just another Platonist with dualist assumptions and thin surface of anti-dualism) or an Artworld, but just another factory making things for the people.

Part of interest in the everyday is paying attention to the senses other than seeing and smelling. Warhol took smells much more seriously than most aestheticians of his time. He has a wonderful humorous riff on his love of perfumes, which he collected. (151) He expresses a desire for a "smell museum" so that certain smells cannot be lost forever. He talks about walking around New York being aware of the many smells, and then lists them in rich detail, for example, "the hot dogs and sauerkraut carts." (152) Again, this fits in with his multiculturalism: "it's wrong for people who are the same type to go and live together in the same groups with the same food. In America it's got to mix 'n' mingle." (155)

Beauty

Warhol insists "I've never met a person I couldn't call a beauty." (61) He sees beauty everywhere, much like the philosopher described by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* who, when reaching the second to top rung of the "ladder of love," sees a vast sea of beauty. At a lower rung Diotima describes the philosopher neophyte as discovering the beauty of all human bodies. Warhol would agree, although he considers this true relativized to time. As he puts it, "Every person has beauty at some point, or set of points, in their lifetime." (61) He does not share the common belief that personal beauty is stable and exclusive. As he says, "Sometimes they have the looks [i.e. of a beauty] when they're a baby and they don't have it when they're grown up, but then they could get it back again when they're older. Or they might be fat but have a beautiful face. Or have bow-legs but a beautiful body." (61) Neither beauty nor ugliness is permanently attached to any person.

Drawing from this, I would argue that experience of personal beauty and evaluation of it is part of the aesthetics of everyday life. Warhol's own situation is of course unique to him. However, he draws our attention to it in order to draw our attention to something universal, and to promote

certain changes in attitude, an increase in this case in democratic attitude and contextualist openness.

Like a professional philosopher, Warhol thinks about what we say when we use the word “beauty”: “I always hear myself saying, “She’s a beauty!” or “He’s a beauty!” or “What a beauty!” but I never know what I’m talking about. I honestly don’t know what beauty is, not to speak of what “a” beauty is. So that leaves me in a strange position, because I’m noted for how much I talk about “this one’s a beauty” and “that one’s a beauty.” For a year once it was in all the magazines that my next movie was going to be *The Beauties*. The publicity for it was great, but then I could never decide who should be in it. If everybody’s not a beauty, then nobody is, so I didn’t want to imply that the kids in *The Beauties* were beauties but the kids in my other movies weren’t so I had to back out on the basis of the title. It was all wrong.” (61)

In short, everybody is a beauty. Warhol is quite aware that he is doing philosophy. He even pins down the difference between beauty and “a beauty.” He can judge it, but cannot define it.

He further says: “I really don’t care that much about “*Beauties*.” What I really like are *Talkers*. To me, good talkers are beautiful because good talk is what I love.” This could be straight out of the *Symposium*. Diotima places love of the soul of the interlocutor at a higher stage of the ladder of love than mere physical beauty.

Unlike Plato, however, Warhol prioritizes fun. He just thinks it more fun to be with talkers, and generally, with people who are doing things, than with beauties, who are just *being* something. “Fun,” we might also observe, is a primary category in the aesthetics of everyday life. In my book I talked about “fun” as a neglected aesthetic property, one among many.⁴ What does it mean to prioritize fun?

Warhol’s Platonism extends to his handling of portraiture. He observes that, “[w]hen I did my self-portrait, I left all the pimples out because you always should. Pimples are a temporary condition and they don’t have anything to do with what you really look like. Always omit the blemishes – they’re not part of the good picture you want. (62)” This must have been how the idealistic Greek sculptors saw it too.

Returning to the question of relativism, Warhol says “When a person is the beauty of their day, and their looks are really in style, and then the times change and tastes change, and ten years go by, if they keep exactly their same look and don’t change anything and if they take care of themselves, they’ll still be a beauty. (62)” There is a “beauty of their day” for example Twiggy, a beauty that is in style. And yet it is not just style:

⁴ T. Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Broadview, Peterborough 2012.

there can be a kind of permanence even in a world dominated by fashion. Marilyn Monroe is still a beauty.

For Warhol, there are certain looks and styles that are eternal in a way in that they are right as long as authentic: “Schrafft’s restaurants were the beauties of their day, and then they tried to keep up with the times and they modified and modified until they lost all their charm and were bought by a big company. But if they could just have kept their same look and style, and held on through the lean years when they weren’t in style, today they’d be the best thing around. You have to hang on in periods when your style isn’t popular, because if it’s good, it’ll come back, and you’ll be a recognized beauty once again. (62)” There is a kind of dialectic of beauty, the thesis being the original, the antithesis being the decline, and yet there can be a return.

“Beauties in photographs are different from beauties in person. It must be hard to be a model, because you’d want to be like the photograph of you, and you can’t ever look that way. And so you start to copy the photograph. Photographs usually bring in another half-dimension. (Movies bring in another whole dimension. That screen magnetism is something secret – if you could only figure out what it is and how to make it, you’d have a really good product to sell. But you can’t even tell if someone has it until you actually see them up there on the screen. You have to give screen tests to find out.)” Photographs can idealize beauties and can cause even a model to be frustrated, never being able to meet that ideal, and then ending up trying to copy the photograph.

“Very few Beauties are Talkers, but there are a few.” Of course as we saw earlier, the talkers are to be preferred.

“Even beauties can be unattractive. If you catch a beauty in the wrong light at the right time, forget it. I believe in low lights and trick mirrors. I believe in plastic surgery.” Continuing on the topic of relativism, beauty can be relative to light, and to time. Plastic surgery can rectify that a bit. Warhol, unlike Plato,

It is as if he were arguing directly against Plato when he says “If people want to spend their whole lives creaming and tweezing and brushing and tilting and gluing, that’s really okay too, because it gives them something to do.” Plato attacks the art of cosmetics in the *Gorgias*. This could have been one of his arguments: i.e. that people unduly spend time on self-beautification. Warhol does not make this into an ideal activity. He is simply open-minded and democratic about it: it “gives them something to do.”

Yet another variation of the relativism of beauty: “Sometimes people having nervous breakdown problems can look very beautiful because they have that fragile something to the way they move or walk. They put out a mood that makes them more beautiful.”

Like Diogenes of Sinope, Warhol can turn his approach to beauty into a practice. “When you’re interested in somebody, and you think they might be interested in you, you should point out all your beauty problems and defects right away, rather than take a chance they won’t notice them. Maybe, say, you have (65) a permanent beauty problem you can’t change, such as too-short legs. Just say it. “My legs, as you’ve probably noticed, are much too short in proportion to the rest of my body.” Why give the other person the satisfaction of discovering it for themselves? Once it’s out in the open, at least you know it will never become an issue later on in the relationship, and if it does, you can always say, “Well I told you that in the beginning (65).” Beauty is seen here in the context of a personal erotic relationship.

“On the other hand, say you have a purely temporary beauty problem – a new pimple, lackluster hair, no-sleep eyes, five extra pounds around the middle. Still, whatever it is, you should point it out. If you don’t point it out and say, “My hair is really dull this time of the month, I’m probably getting my friend,” or “I put on five pounds eating Russell Stover chocolates over Christmas, but I’m taking it off right away” – if you don’t point out these things they might think that your temporary beauty problem is a permanent beauty problem. Why should they think otherwise if you’ve just met them? Remember, they’ve never seen you before in their life. So it’s up to you to set them straight and get them to use their imagination about what your hair must look like when it’s shiny, and what your body must look like when it’s not overweight, and what your dress would look like without the grease spot on it. Even explain that you have much better clothes hanging in your closet than the ones you’re wearing. If they really do like you for yourself, they’ll be willing to use their imagination to think of what you must look like without your temporary beauty problem.”

If you’re naturally pale, you should put on a lot of blush-on to compensate. But if you’ve got a big nose, just play it up, and if you have a pimple, put on the pimple cream in a way that will make it really stand out – “There! I use pimple cream!” There’s a difference.

But what makes a person beautiful? “I always think that when people turn around to look at somebody on the street it’s probably that they smell an odor from them, and that’s what makes them turn around and on. (66)” It is not just the way a person looks: it can also be the odor. It can also be a matter of the attitude: “Diana Vreeland, the editor of *Vogue* for ten years, is one of the most beautiful women in the world because she’s not afraid of other people, she does what she wants. Truman Capote brought up something else about her – she’s very very clean, and that makes her more beautiful. Maybe it’s even the basis of her beauty. (66)” Being very clean and not afraid can make one beautiful. “Being clean is so important. Well-groomed people are the real beauties. It doesn’t mat-

ter what they're wearing or who they're with or how much their jewelry costs or how much their clothes cost or how perfect their makeup is: if they're not clean, they're not beautiful. The most plain or unfashionable person in the world can still be beautiful if they're very well-groomed."

"Children are always beautiful. Every kid, up to, say, eight years old always looks good. Even if the kid wears glasses it still looks good. They always have the perfect nose. I've never seen an unattractive baby. Small features and nice skin. This also applies to animals – I've never seen a bad-looking animal. Babies by being beautiful are protected because people want less to hurt them. This applies also to all animals. (67)"

Finally, I want to consider the expansion of everyday life aesthetics in terms of a democratic openness not only to certain terms but also ways of life. Warhol notes that "in some circles where very heavy people think they have very heavy brains, words like "charming" and "clever" and "pretty" are all put-downs; all the lighter things in life, which are the most important things, are put down. (69)" It is of course controversial whether these are indeed the most important things in life. Yet reading someone who says they are is at least refreshing and different. As I argued in my encyclopedia article on "pretty" the term is amazingly neglected compared to the beautiful and the sublime (Leddy 2014).

I want to close with a quote once again on personal beauty. "Weight isn't important the way the magazines make you think it is. I know a girl who just looks at her face in the medicine cabinet mirror and never looks below her shoulders, and she's four or five hundred pounds but she doesn't see all that, she just sees a beautiful face and therefore she thinks she's a beauty. And therefore, think she's a beauty, too, because I usually accept people on the basis of their self-images, because their self-images have more to do with the way they think than their objective-images do. Maybe she's six hundred pounds, who knows. If she doesn't care, I don't. (69)"

Yet Warhol was not a total relativist. He had values, although often quite different from others. He writes: "Everybody's sense of beauty is different from everybody else's. When I see people dressed in hideous clothes that look all wrong on them, I try to imagine the moment when they were buying them and thought, "This is great. I like it. I'll take it." You can't imagine what went off in their heads to make them buy those maroon polyester waffle-iron pants or that acrylic halter top that has "Miami" written in glitter. You wonder what they rejected as not beautiful – an acrylic halter top that had "Chicago" (72)?" Bad taste exists, and sometimes it is just funny.

It is not surprising, given his democratic instincts, that Warhol would have had something positive to say about graffiti art, a premonition of his later alliance with Basquiat: "Usually people are very tired when they ride on a subway, so they can't sing and dance, but I think if they could sing

and dance on a subway, they would enjoy it... The kids who spray graffiti all over the subway cars at night have learned how to recycle city space very well. They go back into the subway yard in the middle of the night when the cars are empty and that's when they do their singing and their dancing on the subway." (155)

At the same time, Warhol had, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, a minimalist aesthetic. This, again, is couched in terms of aesthetic praise of something ordinary and everyday, i.e. the suitcase. "Suitcase space is so efficient. A suitcase is full of everything you need: one spoon, one fork.... One suitcase in one empty room. Terrific. Perfect." (155) He even elaborates on this in describing a minimalist ideal city. "One elevator, one doorman..." (156)

Conclusion

Eleven years after Danto appropriated him for his own purposes Warhol articulated his own philosophy of art and other things in his witty and aphoristic *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*. The point of this work was almost the opposite of Danto's instead of setting up a dichotomy between two worlds, the world of life and mere things, and the world of art, a world of transfigured things, Warhol sought to transform life itself, glamorizing it by way of breaking down the distinction between art and life. Indeed, that is exactly what he tried to do in his famous *Brillo Boxes*, which Danto so dramatically misinterpreted. Whereas Danto privileged an elite who could see what the eye cannot descry, Warhol, in his deadpan way, democratized art... and life. He was an unacknowledged founder of an aesthetics of everyday life in which the smells of the street of New York achieve great prominence, whereas art becomes mere business. Instead of art, Warhol glorified beauty, not the beauty found in art, but personal beauty and the beauties of the street. "I really believe in empty spaces, although, as an artist, I make a lot of junk. Empty space is never-wasted space. Wasted space is any space that has art in it." (143) For Warhol, words like "charming" and "pretty" are pretty darn important.

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Andy Warhol and the Aesthetics of Everyday Life

Andy Warhol presents us with interesting insights into the aesthetics of life and of everyday life in his book *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*. Like Plato, he presents a utopia, an ideal society, which has its own profoundly aesthetic character; he valorizes beauty; and he asks what beauty is. But, unlike Plato, and like John Dewey, he is a pragmatist and fiercely anti-dualist: for him beauty is a matter of context, and his utopia is democratic. I also contrast him with Arthur Danto, the later philosopher being fundamentally like Plato in that he posits two realms. Whereas Plato holds up the realm of the Forms, which are real, as superior to the realm of appearances, which are not, Danto distinguishes the realm of everyday life, of “mere things,” and the artworld. Mere objects advance ontologically as they are transfigured into the artworld. Rather than transfiguring objects into the realm of art, Warhol deconstructs the distinction between art and life. In this respect one can see him as, like Diogenes of Sinope, a philosopher qua performance artist. He does things, and his actions make philosophical points.

KEYWORDS: Warhol, Danto, Everyday Aesthetics, democracy.