



# **ART (Aesthetics Research Torino) Philosophical Seminar**

**May 20th, 2021  
9 am – 1:30 pm (CET)**

Link:

[https://unito.webex.com/unito/j.php?MTID=m9c11668945db8fd336076e6bffa\\_aeb8c](https://unito.webex.com/unito/j.php?MTID=m9c11668945db8fd336076e6bffa_aeb8c)

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## ONLINE WORKSHOP

This workshop opens a series of meetings dedicated to the new research topic of **aesthetic habits** involving an **international team of scholars**.

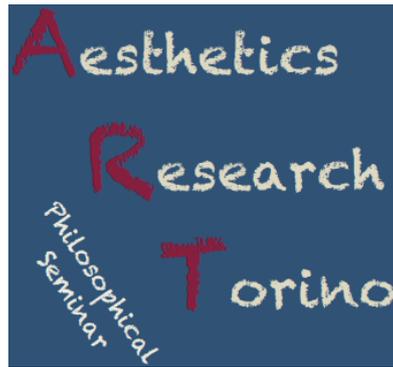
For some years the theme of habits has been at the center of the international philosophical debate, both in the perspective of **historical research** (with reference to philosophers such as Montaigne, Hume, Ravaisson, Hegel, Dewey, Peirce) and in that of **theoretical and empirical research**.

In general, **habits** are understood as dispositions acquired by human beings in their interaction with the environment. Habits guide and facilitate the exercise of different individual and social activities: from the most **common daily practices** to highly **qualified and specialized skills**, such as sports practices and playing musical instruments. Thereby habits influence the individual / environment interaction and contribute to shaping personal and collective identities. Philosophical investigation, especially in the **neo-phenomenological and neo-pragmatist fields**, and **neuroscientific research** are highlighting that human experience cannot be reduced to computational algorithms: rather, the human being acts thanks to habits that are not simple calculation routines, but **plastic capacities** able to (trans)form themselves through their own exercise.

In the context of the **contemporary research on habits**, the specific purpose of the **Turin workshop** is to lay the foundations for the study of the relation between **habits and aesthetics**, a still under-explored specific topic (the scholars involved in the workshop are among the few exceptions):

The focus will be on

- the role of **aesthetic experience** in the constitution and functioning of habits,
- the articulation of specific **aesthetic notions and categories** (such as those of -style, taste, ritual, performance) in terms of habits,
- the relation between **art and habits**,
- the role of **aesthetic habits** in the framework of specific questions of **contemporary aesthetics** – from **evolutionary aesthetics** to the question of **aesthetic normativity** and the growing role of **digital media** in the configuration of individual and social habits.



## Program

- 9 am - 9:10 am Alessandro Bertinetto, Federico Vercellone, Gaetano Chiurazzi (University of Turin), ***Introduction***
- 9:10 am - 9:20 am Georg Bertram (Freie Universität Berlin), ***Aesthetic Habits as Habits to Transform Habits?***  
I want to argue (sketchy and programmatically) that aesthetic habits are not to be understood as a specific set of habits. Rather, they are habits of a different order: habits by which we relate ourselves to other of our habits. This implies two aspects which I will try to illuminate: Firstly, habits are misconceived if we conceive of them as merely routine behavior. They encompass what Catherine Malabou calls “plasticity”. Secondly, habits are not only transformed through practice. They are transformed through reflection as well. In part, reflection is realized in form of habits, namely through aesthetic habits.
- 9:20 am - 9:25 am Discussant: Giovanni Matteucci (University of Bologna)
- 9:25 am - 9:35 am Emmanuel Alloa (University of Fribourg), ***Aesthetic Habits as the Habituation to the Unusual***  
According to Arnold Schönberg, the duty of every artist is “to tell you what you don’t know, what you’ve never heard of before”. Art creates aesthetic experiences that involve a disruption of the business as usual, it implies leaving well-trodden paths and exposing oneself to the unknown, in short, accepting a situation of not knowing how. Habits on the contrary involve a know-how, a stabilized way of doing, that tends to immunize us against unexpected encounters. I shall argue that we may nevertheless work on developing specifically aesthetic habits, that result in a habituation to the unusual.
- 9:35 am - 9:40 am Discussant: Adam Andrzejewski (University of Warsaw)
- 9:40 am - 10:10 am Discussion

10:10 am - 10:20 am Break

10:20 am - 10:30 am Igor Pelgreffi (University of Verona), *Habits and Practices: Some Notes Concerning the Aesthetic of Acting*

In my statement I would like to work on point 2 (“To articulate specific notions and aesthetic categories (such as those of style, taste, ritual, and performance) in relation to, and / or in terms of, habits”).

The issue under discussion will be that of the acquirement of behavioural patterns in the actor, in particular in the theatrical area. The acquisition of habits, through repeated exercises (*training*), and consequently of patterns that become natural at the moment of their greatest artificiality (therefore aesthetically relevant), is very typical in the actor’s performance. This will be understood both for the actor (individual dimension) and for the group of actors (proto-social dimension). In particular, I would like to come back and discuss some features of Denis Diderot and Konstantin Stanislavskij’s works.

At the end, it is significant to analyze and discuss the following point: the relationship between a) a learned pattern and repetition of the gesture and b) the ability to interpret and vary that habit. I will show in what sense the role of the body is crucial inside those dynamics.

My focus will therefore be, mainly, on aspects that involve both the anthropological field of human behavior and the aesthetic dimension of acting (the successful form of a play, in particular that of the theatrical and performing arts in general). As a more general goal: to inquiry possible isomorphisms between the aesthetic question of habits (relationship between performance and repetition) and social practices.

10:30 am - 10:35 am Discussant: Alice Iacobone (University of Genoa)

10:35 am - 10:45 am Tullio Viola (Maastricht University), *Habits and Symbols: A Conundrum for Naturalist Aesthetics*

In my presentation, I will start by considering the naturalist or pragmatist idea according to which symbols – both artistic and linguistic – are born out of habit and repetition. I would like to present some objections to this idea, objections that have been most forcefully formulated by spiritualist-oriented, idealist, and transcendental philosophers; and reflect on how the naturalist philosopher can possibly meet them. The argument I will present is part of a broader research on pragmatism and the philosophy of culture.

10:45 am - 10:50 am Discussant: Paolo Furia (University of Turin)

10:50 am - 11:20 am Discussion

11:20 am - 11:30 am Break

11:30 am - 11:40 am Mariagrazia Portera (University of Florence), *Habits and Niches: Two Sides of the Same Coin in the Development of the Human Aesthetic Attitude*

I argue in this short communication that one of the results of looking at the human aesthetic attitude through the lens of the notions of habit and habitus is that the embedded, non-species-specific, developmental, “ecological” nature of the human aesthetic is brought with all evidence to the fore. No one can form habits – included, of course, the aesthetic as a habit(us) – in isolation; in this sense, the concept of the “aesthetic as a habit” and the concept of the “aesthetic niche” are simply and straightforwardly two sides of the same coin. Within the field of evolutionary biology, an “eco-devo-evo” perspective has been recently put forward to highlight the multiple ways in which the environment plays a role in the development of a phenotype; in a similar vein, I argue that an “eco-devo-evo” perspective would be much useful in aesthetics if we want to understand how humans develop their ability to have aesthetic experiences.

11:40 am - 11:45 am Discussant: Gioia Laura Iannilli (University of Bologna)

11:45 am - 11:55 am Laura Candiotta (Freie Universität Berlin) and Roberta Dreon (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), *Affective Scaffoldings as Habits: A Pragmatist Approach*

In this paper, we provide a pragmatist conceptualization of affective habits as relatively flexible ways of channeling affectivity. Our proposal, grounded in a conception of sensibility and habits derived from John Dewey, suggests understanding affective scaffoldings in a novel and broader sense by re-orienting the debate from objects to interactions. We claim that habits play a positive role in supporting and orienting human sensibility, allowing us to avoid any residue of dualism between internalist and externalist conceptions of affectivity. We provide pragmatist tools for understanding the environment’s role in shaping our feelings, emotions, moods, and affective behaviors. However, we contend that in addition to environment, the continuous and recursive affective transaction between agent and environment (both natural and cultural) are also crucially involved. We claim that habits are transformative, which is especially evident when we consider that emotions are often the result of a crisis in habitual behavior and successively play a role in prompting changes of habits. The final upshot is a conceptualization of affective habits as pervasive tools for feelings that scaffold human conduct as well as key features in the transformation of behaviors.

11:55 am - 12:00 am Discussant: Emanuele Arielli (IUAV University of Venice)

12 am - 12:30 am Discussion

12:30 am - 12:40 am Break

12:40 am - 1:30 pm Final discussion