Aesthetics of Urban Design

Heinz Paetzold[†]
Kassel University, The Netherlands

With this essay I would like to shift the scope of aesthetics. From the viewpoint of traditional aesthetics the subject of my essay may seem to be marginal. I am, however, presuming that aesthetics must leave the traditional orientation behind once aesthetics wants to cope with and be in accordance with contemporary conditions of living. Whatever we are looking at as basic aesthetic concepts – taste, beauty, sensuous experience, fine arts, literature, theater, music – we shall always find a link from each of them to urban culture. This might go without saying. However, I am concerned here with the function of the aesthetics of urban design for aesthetics as a whole. I want to show that urban design is the basis of aesthetics and that the telos of aesthetics must be the enhancement of everyday life. I want to clarify in which sense this thesis can be developed into a sound argument.

I

In discussions about aesthetics it was not earlier than in post-modern times that architecture attained a central relevance. In these discussions the double code turned out to be the undisputed trademark of postmodern buildings. The architecture theoretician Charles Jencks proposed this marker. According to Jencks postmodern architecture has a popular code. It is easily accessible for the common and in matters of architecture uneducated people. For the cultural elites, however, postmodern architecture provides a second code. It entails ironic hints and allusions to former styles and attitudes. This already shows the relevance of architecture for aesthetics.

II

In this essay I do not want to discuss issues of architecture as such. My concern here is rather architecture as part of the urban design. The subject of my essay is not the singular building and the singular square but much more the houses and streets in the relationship to the square. The design and the layout of cities are my focus. I pick up an idea brought forward by the great American urban theorist Lewis Mumford. He was convinced that the city was a 'special organ of civilization' (Mumford 1999: 70). Concerning the importance of the city for human culture, Mumford says that the city is 'a fact in nature, like a cave…or an ant-heap. But it is also a

Corresponding author:
Heinz Paetzold, Institute for Philosophy, Kassel University, Nora-Platiel-Str. 1, D-34109 Kassel, The Netherlands.

conscious work of art … Mind *takes form* in the city; and in turn, urban forms condition mind' (Mumford 1970: 5). This will be the central point in my essay: I want to discuss the relationship between the urban form and the human mind. In particular, I shall ask whether there exist criteria according to which urban design might influence our aesthetic sensibility as part of our mind. Is the aesthetic sensibility stimulated and even stirred by a specific urban design? Or is the aesthetic sensibility independent of the urban environment?

In his book *The City in History* Mumford has a thesis that I would like to discuss and to develop further so that it fits to our contemporary situation. Mumford is in praise especially of the medieval city in Europe. Walking through this city was, as he says, a 'dilation of the senses' (Mumford 1999: 343). It is, however, true that the medieval city had a religious underpinning. 'Aesthetic discipline might lack a name, for it was never separated from religious symbolism or practical requirements; but its fruits were everywhere visible. Nor was the desire for beauty unconscious: streets were extended, as Braunfels notes, "for the beauty of the city"… Carved statues, painted walls, corbels, triptychs, and screens decorated alike the church, the guild-hall, and the burgher' s house. Colour and design were everywhere the normal accompaniment of the daily tasks. The array of goods in the open market added to the general visual excitement: velvets and brocades, copper and shining steel, tooled leather and brilliant glass ...' (ibid.). Mumford rightly underscores that because people in their everyday life experienced aesthetically designed items and things in their environment they, to a certain extend unwillingly, were educating their senses and improving their aesthetic sensibility. Under such conditions one could say that life flourished since the senses were triggered and delighted every day. 'Without it, the beat of the pulse is slower, the tone of the muscles is lower, the posture lacks confidence, the finer discriminations of the eye and the touch are lacking, perhaps the will to live itself is defeated. To starve the eye, the ear, the skin, the nose is just as much to court death as to withhold food from the stomach' (Mumford 1999: 343–344). Mumford, thus, presupposes a positive, a stimulating relationship between the urban form and the aesthetic capacities of the mind.

Until now I was looking at urbanity from the perspective of someone living in as well as strolling through the city. The experience of the city by the inhabitant, the visitor or the burgher of the city was the main interest. What is there to say about the urban habitat itself? According to Mumford the habitat of the medieval city has been the product of a specific mode of planning. Only in early medieval cities in Europe do we find the use of the geometrical plan, the iron grid, for instance in the layout of the monastery of St. Gall in Switzerland. Most medieval cities, however, are designed according to organic planning. This has to be stressed. The plans of the medieval cities are much more informal rather than regular. 'In organic planning,' Mumford says, 'one thing leads to another, and what began as the seizure of an accidental advantage may prompt a strong element in a design, which an *a priori* plan could not anticipate, and in all probability would overlook or rule out. Many of the surviving irregularities in medieval towns are due to streams that have been covered over, trees that were later cut down, old baulks that once defined rural fields. Custom and property rights, once established in the form of lots, boundaries, permanent rights of way, are hard to efface. Organic planning does not begin with a preconceived goal; it moves forward from need to need, from opportunity to opportunity, in a series of adaptations that themselves become increasingly coherent and purposeful, so that they generate a complex, final design, hardly less unified than a pre-formed geometric pattern' (Mumford 1999: 347). With regards to this quotation I would like to underline two points. Firstly, organic planning proceeds in an informal and unordered way. It presupposes no overall design. Secondly, although a preconceived goal is not applied in organic planning it does not at all lack some sort of unity.

In order to come closer to contemporary conditions I set two steps. First of all, it has to be mentioned that the urban planner Kevin Lynch in his book *Good City Form* (1981) proposed organic planning as the adequate method of city planning today. It has to be opposed to the normative model of cosmic theory, which has been in use in ancient Asia (India, China) and it has to be opposed to the machine model, which has been used by Le Corbusier, Yona Friedman, the Archigram group, and Paolo Soleri. In the case of the cosmic model the city layout mirrors the order of the cosmos whereas the machine model implies a strict orderly relationship between the parts and the whole. This relationship is thought of as being as regular as the parts of a machine with regards to the whole (Lynch 1996: 73–98). If Mumford is referring to the model of organic planning during the Middle Ages such arguing cannot be charged with the critique of someone who as an old-fashioned person is looking back on former glorious days and is craving their return.

The second step brings me closer to our times. Between Mumford and ourselves there is the enormously influential functionalism. The idea of functionalist urban design has been propagated by Le Corbusier at first in his book *Urbanisme* (1925) (Le Corbusier 1994, 2000) and later in the *Athens Charter* (1933). The latter was pinned down under the lead of him at the CIAM-meeting of that year. Functionalism in urban design presupposes that we have to differentiate clearly between basic functions of urban life (dwelling, recreating, working, transporting) and that we accordingly should aggregate each of the functions mentioned in a specified part of the city. Exclusively in these regions of a city the functions have to be realized and effectuated (Berndt 1968). Le Corbusier's model as it was realized in his master-plan of the city of Chandigarh in India and in the design of Brasilia (by Oscar Niemeyer) became internationally very influential in the so-called 'international style' (William S. W. Lim). Though 'functionalism' and ' international style' have been criticized for different reasons as insufficient models of urban design city governments and state governments all over the world followed and still follow their directives and rules.

III

Now I come to the central point of my essay. In the following paragraph I shall outline a severe criticism of the functionalist model while at the same time I offer a workable alternative to it. Such an alternative is convincing only to the degree that one accounts for the social advantages achieved by functionalism and the garden city movement, which we have to take as two models that complement each other. We have to accept and even to appreciate some of the established standards, which both have brought about: housing for reasonable prices, necessary sanitarian comfort for a huge majority of city dwellers.

Nevertheless, the model of functionalism leads to several dead ends. Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard wrote a manifesto-like article, which can be interpreted as a critical answer to the *Charter of Athens* some fifty years later: *Toward an Urban Design Manifesto*. It was published in the year 1987 (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 492–502; Paetzold 2008: 27–29). I want to read Jacobs' and Appleyard's *Manifesto* as a possible contribution to the discussion of the relationship between the urban form and the human mind, which includes the aesthetic sensibility as a part of it. First of all, we have to realize that not only Le Corbusier's functionalism but also Ebenezer Howard's garden city movement have strongly influenced the ideas and programs of urban planning during the twentieth century. Both led to a negative result concerning the genuine urban quality of city life. Instead of offering new urban structures, functionalism and the garden city movement rendered houses and apartment-blocks, which are to be labeled as 'buildings in the park.' Both made the cities of the twentieth century healthier and housing socially achievable for the urban poorest. But the price to be paid for it was high. To name only a few shortcomings of both functionalism

and the garden city movement: we notice a successive devaluation of public spaces. To establish private spaces around the houses more and more became a rule. Interior spaces of the buildings increasingly received nearly all the attention. This in turn implies the neglect of public spaces.

Furthermore, the housing has turned out to be divorced from the streets. Private ownership of land is prevailing in both, functionalism and the garden city movement. The characteristics of genuinely urban mentality, such as experiencing surprise, getting under the spell of the magic or being transported with joy are rarely to be found in either of them. Social diversity, variety of life styles, and eccentricities in dress and behavior – Georg Simmel and Louis Wirth counted such qualities among the main features of the mentality of urbanites – are almost under attack. Conformity of behavior has become the unexpressed law.

Not only US-American big cities, but also European ones saw the rapid decline of public transit systems under the triumphant march of private automobile use. Cities are no longer the desired meeting places of sharply contrasting social groups. Uniformity and social homogeneity have become the unordained result of the fear of the stranger. Such fear had occasioned social groups to flee from each other into homogeneous social enclaves (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 494–495). Cities are in danger of becoming meaningless places outside the reach of their inhabitants. Cities have turned out to be 'symbols of inequality.' The design professionals can make neither head nor tail of the situation.

In the diagnosis of the contemporary situation of the city, Jacobs and Appleyard do not differ much from the criticism of the state of urbanity brought forward by theoreticians, such as Mike Davis, Edward Soja, David Harvey, or Hartmut Häußermann. Contrary to these men, however, Jacobs and Appleyard do not finish with observation and criticism. They propose criteria for a truly urban life. Drawing on phenomenologists' approaches to city life, such as developed by Kevin Lynch, Jane Jacobs, Richard Sennett, and Henri Lefebvre, Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard provide the following normative characteristics of urbanity. To discuss them is important for my intentions here since in one way or another they touch upon the relationship between urban form and aesthetic sensibility.

A city must have the quality of livability. It creates identity with its inhabitants. The city should offer opportunities for the experience of the unexpected and the surprising. The urbanites are to be enabled to live in an authentic habitat. Public life must regain its former role. Self-reliance and justice are the virtues by which city life is enacted and furthered.

A brief discussion of these normative standards of a good city form could come to the following conclusions. Livability as a criterion of the design of a city points in the direction that the urban environment has to offer some comfort to their inhabitants. Life has to be without unnecessary burdens such as noise, air pollution, dirt, and danger. By identity I mean that people want to be engaged in discussions and decisions concerning the environment of the city. Participation should be encouraged, in order to overcome alienation. People want to care for the physical environment of their city, to feel responsible for it and to design it. Jacobs and Appleyard argue that the freedom of anonymity that many urbanites might prefer is not a 'desirable freedom,' Here, I do not agree. I believe that both must be possible, the freedom of anonymity as well as the freedom of the commitment to city politics. I do, however, agree if Jacobs and Appleyard stress 'one fundamental difference' they have 'with the CIAM movement.' 'Urban design has too often assumed that new is better than old. But the new is justified if it is better than what exists.' The care for the environment includes motivated 'conservation.' Not least it causes a 'better sense of community' (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 496). Here I would like to add that there also exists the aesthetics of used things and objects. It attaches a genuinely aesthetic dimension to the criticism of fetishistic newness.

The city has to offer the opportunity to experience 'magical places' where 'fantasy' is possible. Here, to be sure, we find the explicit reference to the aesthetic sensibility. The city, in that it creates opportunities to stimulate our power of imagination, is an important source for an active aesthetic life. Like Lewis Mumford, Richard Sennett, Roland Barthes, Iris Young, or Henri Lefebvre and many others Jacobs and Appleyard underscore rightly: 'The city has always been a place of excitement; it is theater, a stage upon which citizens can display themselves, and see others. It has magic, or should have, and that depends on a certain sensuous, hedonistic mood, on signs, on night lights, on fantasy, color, and other imagery' (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 496; Paetzold 2011: 33–47).

The criterion of authenticity is not meant in the sense of an 'ethics of authenticity,' as Charles Taylor has presented it. Authenticity is fathomed in Kevin Lynch's terms. 'An authentic city is one where the origins of things and places are clear' (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 496). People should be able to understand their city. Its basic layout, the public functions, and the institutions are to be accessible to all city dwellers. 'A city should present itself as a readable story.' The standards concerning livability, identity, authenticity, and opportunity deal with skills, which serve the individual and the smaller social unit. The aesthetic sensibility is directly implied in the concepts of opportunity and identity, indirectly it is referred to in the claim of livability and authenticity.

Urban cities have more to offer than the striving of individuals for transparency in orientation and for aesthetic delight. Cities should encourage the commitment to goals that are only collectively attainable. Among them is tolerance. Lewis Wirth (1938) highlighted already the 'sense of toleration of differences' as one of the virtues of urbanites in his pioneering essay *Urbanism as a Way of Life* (Wirth 2000: 101).

Further long-term political aims of urban life are the realization of justice, law, and democracy. All this presupposes a lively public sphere. It is something that is stimulated not only by social institutions, but also by well-designed public spaces. Whereas a neighborhood by definition is restricted to a small community, public life, by contrast, is open to all members of the urban society. The public is the space where 'people of different kinds' meet (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 497). To realize justice as well as to realize democracy is only possible through engaging in interactions of people with different interests, different cultural backgrounds, and different opinions.

Jacobs and Appleyard emphasize 'urban self-reliance' as an important collective goal of a valuable urban design. A city should look for 'soft energy paths' in order to decrease the dependence on scarce resources from far away. Self-reliance would indeed fasten the legitimized sense of local and regional identity, authenticity, and meaning. This point recently became prominent in Germany and other European countries due to the small budgets in public households. Cities are increasingly suffering from these shortcomings.

Good environments must be accessible to all. Good urban design is for both, for the rich as well as for the poor. It fosters a truly pluralistic society. A good urban design is one that somehow balances the individual aspiration and the public social life. Too strong a stress on the individual side empties the common public life. If the public becomes prevalent then the individual does not count. A good city design is one that allows for individual and social identity. It encourages 'pleasure while maintaining responsibility.' It remains 'open to outsiders while sustaining a strong sense of localism' (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 497).

What is omitted here is the heeding of aesthetic sensibility. For that reason I shall insert what is missing. At least, three different aspects are to be distinguished. First of all, cities have to carry out an important cultural function. They have to provide cultural institutions, such as theater, concert hall, jazz club, café houses, art museums etc. Cities have to realize such aesthetically important institutions not only for the sake of their own population but also for the benefit of people from the rural region surrounding a given city. We have to distinguish this institutional side from the

architectural appearance. The aesthetic sensibility is not only something related to the experience of works of art but also to the buildings in which art works are exhibited. Something similar applies to theater and opera houses where theater plays and operas are performed. This is the second dimension relevant for the issue of the aesthetic sensibility. At third instance we have to think of art in public spaces. Here it is not the standards relevant to autonomous art which are decisive but special ones providing the accessibility of public art to a broader range of public. Something similar is valid for public monuments (Miles 1997).

IV

Functionalism and the garden city movement led to a remarkable loss of genuinely urban qualities of city life. As a remedy Jacobs and Appleyard propose five counter strategies. First of all, cities should be designed in such a way that people feel safe and secure in their neighborhood and on the street everywhere and experience their environment as clean. These requirements for a livable street life that was abhorred by the functionalists of the CIAM vary from city to city and from quarter to quarter. Only by revitalizing street life – as sidewalk spaces for children, passing pedestrians, elderly persons – does an experience of the city in the whole range of urban life seem possible (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 498).

Secondly, explicitly urban qualities of city life are to be regained only in so far as a certain concentrating density of houses, parks, buildings, monuments is realized. We have to think of a minimum of 15 dwelling units (with, say, 30–60 people) per acre of land, and one should not go below this. Only in this way is the necessary concentration of people and thereby the chance for cultural and social variety attainable (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 498–499). 'Cities are more than stage sets. Some minimum number of people living and using a given area of land is required if there is to be human exchange, public life and action, diversity and community.' (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 498).

Thirdly, a good city design requires the integration of diverse activities and industries in one and the same quarter. Functionalism, due to its desire to separate social functions (dwelling, recreating, transporting, working) led to boring 'dormitory towns' as they are called in Britain. At issue are residential suburbs where people are living who work in the nearby city while commuting each day. Contrary to such outcomes, living, working, shopping, and enjoying recreation should go side-by-side with inclusive public and spiritual activities in one and the same quarter. 'The best urban places have some mixtures of uses' (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 499). Regarding this point, Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard draw the line that was first set out by Jane Jacobs in her classic book *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). The expectation is that it is here that we will find again in a new form all the delight of the senses that Lewis Mumford was emphasizing with regards to the medieval city. It would be a return of aesthetic sensibilities to urban life.

Fourthly, the buildings should not just occupy space and be in space. Rather they should be arranged and understood in such a way that they define and even disclose public space. The rule to be followed here is that public space should surround the buildings. If buildings are placed close to each other alongside a street, for instance, they tend to define space if the street is not too wide in relation to the buildings. All this would stimulate our aesthetic sensibility that is in this case the experience of space, especially its atmospheric tuning. To experience atmospheres we have to open ourselves to the surrounding while at the same time we are cultivating our sensual self-awareness. In the beginning of modern urbanism, Ildefonso Cerdá had introduced a huge range of urban structures to which their specific shape had to be given –squares, side walks, parks – which has been lost in functionalism and the garden city movement (Cerdá 1999). In this sense Allan Jacobs and

Donald Appleyard underline the importance of public places. It is only here that people of different cultural backgrounds encounter each other. Toleration can come into existence: 'The most important public places must be for *pedestrians*, for no public life can take place between people in automobiles. Most public space has been taken over by the automobile, for travel or parking. We must fight to restore more for the pedestrians. Pedestrian malls are not simply to benefit the local merchants. They have an essential public value. People of different kinds meet each other directly. The level of communication might be only visual, but that itself is educational and can encourage tolerance' (Jacobs and Appleyard 2000: 500).

Fifthly, a city requires quite different kinds of buildings and spaces with complex arrangements and relationships. 'Diversity, the possibility of intimacy and confrontation with the unexpected, stimulation, are all more likely with many buildings than with few taking up the same ground area' (ibid.).

V

Summarizing briefly, I would like to say: cities, which are shaped according to principles of either the functionalism of the CIAM or the garden city movement, tend toward inwardness. The space within the four walls of a private house counts. Matters do not improve if we replace the private home with the privately used car. In both cases people are doomed to remain isolated and dependent on themselves. This trend has to be broken and turned around. The street, the square, the plaza, the park are important urban spaces. The city dwellers can meet there and have interchange or dispute. They encounter the unexpected and experience the magic. This is the ultimate attraction of the city. All the mentioned activities and attitudes presuppose the active participation of people in their environment and lead to their commitment to democratic values. The most important value for the productive and enhancing city life in times of pluralism is toleration. The aesthetics of urban design, as it was propagated once by Lewis Mumford in view of the medieval city, has neither been furthered by functionalism nor by the garden city movement. Only a post-functionalist model of urban design as it was proposed by Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard leads one step further. In the last section of my essay I would like to put my analysis so far into a broader perspective.

VI

By framing my essay I hope to make its main thesis stronger. I believe that there must be something like the aesthetics of urban life. My reasons are these:

First of all, more and more people live in the city. We notice that high culture in the traditional sense of this word is in a deep crisis. A philosopher from Hungary, Ferenc Fehér, once voiced the fear that there can come into existence a generation of people who don't sense or feel any longer the difference between popular music and classical music (Fehér 1987: 24–29). It would be a generation who no longer knows from their own experience the quality, relevance, and the compulsive force of that kind of music, say, a Schubert, a Mahler, a Schönberg, a Gorécki, a Tan Dun. I take this as a challenge. My answer to it is this: If and insofar as we are able to create an urban environment which nurtures our aesthetic sensibilities, then art as autonomous cultural form will have a better chance. Furthermore, the existence of an aesthetics of urban design will give support to the thesis, which in the (neo)Marxist tradition had been called: the sublation of art through its realization (German: 'Aufhebung der Kunst durch ihre Verwirklichung,' Paetzold 1974, II: 136–137). This is the classical topic, which was introduced by Marx in his essay *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844). With this topic the (neo)Marxist tradition

conceptualizes the following constellation. In question is the locus of art and the aesthetic within the society as a whole. If art is more than just an element of the super-structure and that means more than just mirroring the societal status quo it would mean that art as an element of genuinely human culture comprises a moment of promising an immanent transcendence. Art works are to be thought of as reservoirs of the promise of sensual happiness, to quote Stendhal's formula of beauty as 'le promesse de Bonheur.' (Neo)Marxist philosophers from Theodor W. Adorno via Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch including Herbert Marcuse to Lucien Goldmann and Georg Lukács assume such a project. The basic idea is that that which is existent in the isolated sphere of the work of art can become societally productive in that it regains a new function. The artistic attitude would then become a part of the everyday life of everyone. If the sublation of art into the realm of society takes place three aspects of this process are to be differentiated. According to the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel sublation (Aufhebung) is an important concept, in order to understand essential traits of social and political life. It includes three dimensions. Through sublation a negation takes place. Something does not keep its structure and substance. It changes its features and becomes something different. At second instance the act of the sublation includes also the aspect of conservation. Through sublation no one-sided negation takes place. This would be the case if something would lose its existence altogether. Through the act of sublation something is not destroyed but remains contained within the new structure. The third aspect of sublation is that through sublation a change takes place, a change which puts something onto a higher plane. It is not lost but on the contrary it is taking a new higher level. Sublation in the Hegelian sense comprises the act and process of sublation as negare, conservare, and as elevare (negation, conservation, and elevation). With regards to aesthetics it means that the promise of art and the promise of culture in general imply that art receives a new locus in society. It becomes, I would argue, as aesthetic sensibility its place within everyday life. The aesthetic sensibility implies giving a style to our life, to make our life and the things necessary for our everyday life a meaningful project, a project which comprises living in a surrounding that is pleasurable to our senses and our experiences.

Secondly, in consequence of this I would like to argue that the city is an entity where such sublation through realization can take place and precisely this is the credit that I give to Mumford: The medieval city design was such a sublation of art through its realization in everyday life, as it were, avant la lettre. The urban environment is very important because it has some duration in time. It is not of such a substance that it is already gone tomorrow. If such an environment provides the human species with a kind of feeding and desire for aesthetic sensibility then it must find our interest. I did not make a mistake by using the (neo)Marxist formula of the sublation of art through its realization to the everyday life of the medieval city as well as to the city of our postmodern or reflexive modern time. If one argues that the medieval city cannot provide such sublation of art through its realization because this formula should apply only to autonomous art then I would like to reply as follows. On one hand I would like to argue that in the context of the ancient Greek polis art was on the way to receiving the status of autonomy, just as philosophy had, to a certain degree emancipated from religion and constituted itself as an autonomous own form of reflection. In this case the medieval city continues, though with different accents, what has been a starting point in ancient Greek and ancient Roman culture. On the other hand the aesthetics of urban life remains beneath the threshold of autonomous art. It does not compete with the latter but has a right on its own. The aesthetics of medieval city design might raise some questions and hesitations. The aesthetics of modern city design, however, is a clear case. It cannot be understood from the viewpoint of architecture or from the viewpoint of fine arts proper, such as sculpture or painting or music. In any case the aesthetics of urban design carries out what is promised in works

of art. As a result of my reflections concerning the topic of sublation through realization, I would like to argue that the aesthetics of urban design has the status of being pre-autonomous as well as post-autonomous. On one hand, art as an autonomous symbolic form is in need of an aesthetics of everyday life as its base and groundwork. On the other hand autonomous art has its telos in becoming an integral part of everyday life. The aesthetics of urban design can thus fulfill a double function, one that is related to art, which has a pre-autonomous status, one that is related to art with a post-autonomous status.

Thirdly, we can also give a pragmatist framing to the idea that the city environment is a necessary presupposition of an integral aesthetics. John Dewey in his *Art as Experience* (1934) wanted to bring art closer to the ordinary experience. Art should not remain imprisoned within the museum far away from everyday life. As a result of cultural, political, and economic reasons works of art, as Dewey observed, function in the segregated realm of museums where they fulfill the political ambitions of the state (Dewey 1980: 8). Matters are becoming no better if works of art are only conceived as specimens of fine arts with no relevance for everyday life. Due to industrial modes of production artists are pushed into a position of outsider because they can't or won't work 'mechanically' for 'mass production.' Aesthetic 'individualism' flourishes and art is conceived exclusively as 'self-expression' of the singular artist. Artists cultivate eccentricity. Art has become something 'esoteric.' 'The task,' Dewey says, 'is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience' (Dewey 1980: 3). One could have expected that Dewey is referring to urban life, in order to recover 'the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of life' (Dewey 1980: 10). As far as I can see, Dewey, however, did not take into account the possible role of the urban environment for this function of bridging the world of everyday life with the more refined world of works of art. Anyhow, some of the characteristics which Dewey attaches to the aesthetic experience are also part of the aesthetic experience of city life. I mention genuinely aesthetic characters, such as '*appreciative, perceiving, and enjoying*' (Dewey 1980: 47) and the emotionality of aesthetic experience (Dewey 1980: 42). I take Dewey's arguments with regards to the characters of aesthetic experience as a proof for my own argument here. We are in need of the aesthetics of urban design in order to find new modes of access to autonomous and even post-autonomous art. A rich and differentiated urban life depends on the plasticity of the aesthetics of the city.

VII

As a kind of epilogue I have to mention one crucial precondition for my thoughts. The idea that aesthetics in the sense of philosophy of art today is in need of a base and fundament in the lived experience of urban design has its limits. This idea does not apply to the desperate realm of the cities, which are to be classified as slums. I follow Mike Davis in his book *Planet of Slums* (2007) that we have to avoid a perspective which might please one or the other aesthetician. Such a person would aestheticize the slums to be found in the huge cities of the Americas, of Africa, and of Asia (Davis 2007: 28 has an overview of the 30 'largest megaslums'). My argument against such an attitude is simply that it excludes the perspective of living in the slums permanently or for a considerable span of time. The aesthetization of the realm of slums can only be at stake if one isolates the aesthetics from normal everyday life. Such aesthetization would amount to proposing an aesthetics without any link with ethics and politics. The drift of my essay is completely against such an option. Dewey's holism, neo-Marxism's critical ethicality and Mumford's humanism outlaw the possibility of talk about the aesthetics of slums in an affirmative way. We would give up

resisting cynicism once we were in praise of urban life in the slums. We would betray the people who are obliged to stay in slums a second time. This does, however, by no means imply that I would deny that city dwellers in slum areas have aesthetic experiences and aesthetic sensibility. But it would not derive from the aesthetics of the urban design of their surrounding.

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