

*Rhythm and Intensity  
The Art of Punctuation  
and the Aesthetics of the Everyday*<sup>1</sup>

*Ritmo e intensidad.  
El arte de la puntuación  
y la estética de lo cotidiano*

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ABSTRACT

The aesthetics of the everyday is often conceived of as a sub-discipline of the aesthetics of art. This is a consequence of using art, and most specifically representative visual art, as a point of reference. However, here we discuss the idea that it may be more fruitful to employ models based on rhythm and intensity, such as ornament, poetry or music. Such a move would open up the possibility of a rethink of certain types of common experience whose qualitative identity could then be found in a more subtle but not insignificant dimension of our lives. To make things more concrete we will deliberately limit our discussion to some well-known examples from Japan where the initial idea for this paper was born. In conclusion we will argue that an ethos without object turns out to be the way in which to qualify the experience of everyday beauty

KEYWORDS: RHYTHM, INTENSITY, PUNCTUATION, AESTHETICS OF THE EVERYDAY, JAPAN.

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## RESUMEN

La estética de lo cotidiano a menudo es concebida como una subdisciplina de la filosofía del arte. Esto es una consecuencia del uso del arte, y más específicamente del arte visual representativo, como un punto de referencia. Sin embargo, aquí discutimos la idea, quizá más fructífera, de emplear modelos basados en el ritmo y la intensidad, como la ornamentación, la poesía o la música. Como un movimiento que abriría la posibilidad de volver a pensar ciertos tipos de experiencia común cuya identidad cualitativa podría entonces ser encontrada en una dimensión más sutil, pero en modo alguno insignificante, en nuestras vidas. Para tratar este asunto con mayor concreción, limitaremos deliberadamente nuestra discusión a algunos ejemplos bien conocidos de Japón, en donde tuvo su origen la idea inicial de este artículo. Para concluir argumentaremos que el modo en el que podemos cualificar la experiencia de la belleza cotidiana es la de un *ethos* sin objeto.

PALABRAS CLAVES: RITMO, INTENSIDAD, PUNTUACIÓN,  
ESTÉTICA DE LO COTIDIANO, JAPÓN

ONE THING WHICH CAN LEAD US TO DISAGREE with certain books on aesthetics is the fact that they remain attached to two significant restrictions. The first of these is the idea that beauty is limited to the field of art. The second is the notion that aesthetics has a scientific destiny. The latter claim, which opens up the possibility that aesthetics could become a science of art, seems to be the consequence of a certain blindness as regards both the diversity of the expressions and contemplations which treat the subject of beauty, and the diversity of artistic expression which can be found in different cultures. Without denying the great contribution of the scientific approach, we prefer to conceive of aesthetics as being critical knowledge of many different kinds of sensitive experience. In a way, this is a return to Baumgarten's primary definition of aesthetics as being «*scientia cognitionis sensitivae*» (1750). According to this definition it seems possible to elaborate knowledge which remains philosophical rather than scientific and which at the same time leaves a place for discussing the value of aesthetic experience in everyday life.

More precisely, as we will be arguing later on, analysis in modern aesthetics tends to focus on the concept of «beautiful» as a transcendental category. This is related to the idea of individual thoughts as being fully completed in time. However, this concept of «beautiful» is not the most appropriate to use when discussing the aesthetics of the everyday. In this case we are dealing with experience; an experience of «beauty» which is common to a multiplicity of individuals and which can individualise itself in singular processes. The dimension of experience is not linked to any particular individual but rather to a subject, a subject involved in a process of change which never reaches completion. The aesthetics of the everyday can be elaborated if we replace the concept of beautiful with the experience of beauty. At the same time, we must

replace the individual as a numerical unit and as a purely intellectual object with the subject conceived of in terms of a process of individuation related to a common nature shared by a multiplicity of beings.

Taking into account the diversity of sensory experiences permitted by our present knowledge of the world, it seems clear that when discussing the aesthetics of the everyday we need to change our paradigms. The aesthetics of the everyday is often conceived of as a sub-discipline of the aesthetics of art. This is a consequence of using art, and most specifically representative visual art, as a point of reference. However, what we would like to discuss here is that it might be more fruitful to employ models based on rhythm and intensity. Of course, this does not mean that the notions of rhythm and intensity cannot be used to qualify the visual arts. It simply means that we no longer compare everyday sensory experience to artistic experience in terms of visual representation. Instead, we compare everyday sensory experience to the kind of artistic sensitivity which resonates in poetic or musical practices.

As highlighted in the work of Katya Mandoki or Yuriko Saito<sup>3</sup>, in order for ideas about the aesthetics of the everyday to develop, this field of inquiry must acquire wider autonomy. It needs to become independent from the cultural models carried by every civilisation. Otherwise, as Alain Roger stresses<sup>4</sup>, our taste for 'natural' things, such as a landscape or a nude, appears to be nothing other than the result of the day-to-day influence of the different (visual or literary) representations that our social environment and education have given us. This theory has been summed up *via* the concept of «artialisation»<sup>5</sup>. Nobody can really escape from the «artialisation» process. It is a process which renders the separation of culture and nature almost impossible. However, using the language of poetical or musical experience as a point of reference might open up the possibility of a rethink. As a consequence, certain types of common experience could find their qualitative identity in a more subtle but not insignificant dimension of our lives.

#### I. RHYTHMS AND ORNAMENT

As an introduction to the question of rhythm and its implications, we will begin by considering the case of ornament. Most especially in the western world, despite its wider presence, ornament has been the subject of almost constant

3 SAITO, Y., *Everyday Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007; MANDOKI, K., *Everyday Aesthetics*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2007.

4 ROGER, A., *Nus et paysages*. Paris: Aubier, 2007.

5 Cf. Alain Roger for detailed discussion of this concept. Previously, the idea of an 'artialisation' process was also mentioned by Montaigne (*Essays*) and later by Charles Lalo (*Introduction à l'esthétique*, 1912).

denigration. Even though it is difficult to find a culture in the world where ornament does not have a place, and this since the beginning of socio-cultural organisation, within the hierarchy of artistic activity ornament is commonly viewed as a minor art. However, since the work of Owen Jones (1856) and Alois Riegl (1893) which led to the extension of our vision as regards the aesthetic production of other civilisations, we are now in a better position to admit the significance of ornament<sup>6</sup>. What is noteworthy for what we are dealing with is the fact that ornament can be thought of as an intermediary step, or even better as a bridge, between art and everyday life. That is to say, it demonstrates the persistence of the human desire to add a certain level of aesthetic density to everyday life. Alongside the permanence of this desire, we can note that typically, patterns of ornamentation owe more to the abstract register than to the figurative one. This means that it is easier to identify a correspondence between displays of ornamentation and rhythmic organisation, than between displays of ornamentation and narrative and/or mimetic works.

In the introduction to *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze talks about the nature of the rhythms involved in decorative motives and identifies a significant stylistic distinction between «cadence-repetition» and «rhythm-repetition»<sup>7</sup>. According to him, the first is negative, static, revolving, material and inanimate whereas the latter is affirmative, dynamic, evolving, spiritual and «carries the secret of our deaths and our lives»<sup>8</sup>. The point is that «rhythm-repetition» has a mobile, internal, differential deployment. In other words, it provides the time and space for creative «disparity». This differential deployment is not based on the «isochronic recurrence of identical elements»<sup>9</sup>—that is to say it is not based on a negative process of identification and representation. As a consequence, it provides a foundation for the possibility of an aesthetic experience based on variations and intensities as being a sufficient basis for a sensory experience: «Disparity—in other words, difference or intensity (difference of intensity)—is the sufficient reason of all phenomena, the condition of that which appears.»<sup>10</sup>

When summarising Deleuze's position, it is important to keep in mind that, as we have seen, variation in intensity is itself claimed to be sufficient reason for experience of the sensible. Consequently, it is possible to imagine a perceived phenomenon as having a certain level of autonomy. This autonomy is missing

6 See BUCI-GLUCKSMANN, C., *Philosophie de l'ornement*. Paris: Galilée, 2008.

7 DELEUZE, G., *Difference & Repetition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 21.

8 DELEUZE, G., *op. cit.*, p. 24.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

when we think about experience of the sensible in terms of a sub-dimension of knowledge —as is found in a Platonist perspective for instance. In fact, our regard must focus on the condition and not on the supposed substance of the phenomenon. Gilles Deleuze continuously stresses this crucial point which is equivalent to stressing the singularity (or haecceity) of what has been perceived. This mode of thought draws a line between the two kinds of difference we deal with on a daily basis. As Deleuze says: «*Opposition, resemblance, identity and even analogy are only effects produced by these presentations of difference, rather than being conditions which subordinate difference and make it something represented.*»<sup>11</sup> Finally, as we know, it is necessary to bear in mind that «rhythm-repetition» and «cadence-repetition» are not options between which we are in a position to choose. In a sense, «rhythm-repetition» lies beneath «cadence-repetition», and operates as a creative force of «deterritorialization».

To make things more concrete let's take some examples —and, since Japan was the place where the initial idea for this paper was born —we will deliberately limit our discussion to some well-known examples from this country.

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At the bottom of page 178 of Michele Marra's book, *Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, is the following small note:

«The Edo scholar Fujitani Mitsue used to teach his students how to write poetry by indicating the infinite combination of particles used to string together nouns, adverbs, and verbs. The nouns, adverbs, and verbs were indicated with circles to stress their subordination to the primacy of *ga*, *wa*, *no*, *ni*, *wo*, and all other exclamatory particles.»<sup>12</sup>

What is relevant in Fujitani Mitsue's attitude can be summarised as follows. Firstly, Mitsue insists on the combination of words rather than the elaboration of meaning. The poetry seems to emerge from the internal variation of the linguistic material rather than from a pre-conceived idea. The combination of particles, qualified as «infinite», corresponds to a logic of differentiation. In other words, the value of the poetry is a question of difference and repetition. Consequently, what counts is the internal variation which is constantly introduced and reintroduced within a general set of motives, themes and words. On a more general level, rather than being a question of contrasts or of dramatic oppositions exposed in a dialectical process, aesthetic difference

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 145. Underlined in the original.

<sup>12</sup> MARRA, M., *Modern Japanese Aesthetics*. Honolulu: Hawai'i Press, 1999, p. 178. In this chapter, Michele Marra introduces the work of Nishitani Keiji and the Kyoto School under the heading «The Space of Poetry».

can be viewed as a question of nuances and modulations of common material related to a singular experience. From this point of view, the material can be considered neutral; the experience itself is the only vector of individuation of both poet and poem.

Secondly, Mitsue's method stresses the importance of «exclamatory particles». In the following section we will explain the relationship between this notion and the aesthetics of everyday life. Finally, in the last section of this paper we will come back to discussion of the characteristics of an aesthetics of difference.

What Michele Marra's note brought to my mind was not only poetry. It also made me think about traditional houses and then about all kinds of different aspects of Japanese culture: cooking, traditional music, the art of *ikebana*, movies and so on and it occurred to me that perhaps they could all be qualified in terms of the notion that underlies the term 'exclamatory particles'. Was the latter not a common element of the Japanese aesthetic of everyday life? Was the «combination of particles»; that is to say the combination of articulation points, not the basis of a specific sense of 'life ornamentation'?

## II. THE PUNCTUATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Let's begin with the idea of houses. In a metaphorical way, the nouns, adverbs or verbs mentioned by Marra can be viewed in relation to poetry, as the roof, the framework or the walls can be viewed in relation to houses. Using Fujitani Mitsue's method, building a house can be done using the *intermediate* parts that allow us to move inside and to inhabit a specific space. This suggestion sounds reasonable when we consider the importance of movable walls and doors in traditional houses in Japan. In the case of housing, when it comes to making a space liveable, the 'in between' parts are somehow as essential as the walls and the roof. But the 'punctuation' is not so much in the way the house is built as in the way it is decorated which is equivalent to the finishing or the completion of the house. More precisely, the punctuation is in the very specific way in which one or two final elements are used as 'exclamatory particles'. Japanese houses (including modern ones) are often made of simple surfaces, plain surfaces we should say with subtle variations of material or ornamentation. Then, walking around, you can see in front of the door, in a corner or in a frame, apparently randomly laid down, a stone, a basin with water, an elegant branch of a tree or an arrangement of flowers. Here is probably what can be named an art of punctuation: the unexpected detail that forces you to exclaim in delight, forces your admiration to surface —probably because its force is that once you see it the house cannot be imagined without it.

The point is not the object itself, although most of the time it is also beautiful, rather what is important is where and how it has been placed. More precisely it is the contrast between the neutral whole —or perhaps it is better to say the ‘neutralised’ surfaces in the background —and this detail which adds a note of intensity that discretely gives the sense of an aesthetic density to life. This specific balance between the general background and this object; an object which is at the same time part of the whole scene and the part that completes it aesthetically speaking, is not that common. This trait does not correspond for instance to the traditional Chinese search for elegance and vitality of line, or to the Korean taste for strength. Neither is it a common element of European decoration —at least up until recently. If we think about the Manueline style in Portugal, Islamic mosaics in Spain or Rococo exuberance, in many cases either ornamentation covers walls, doors and sometimes even window frames, or else the structure and its different materials are considered to be sufficient to provide contrasts of volume and luminosity, as we can find in work produced by the modern school of architecture since Adolf Loos.

Staying on the subject of houses, let’s take the example of *ikebana* (flower arrangement). This art is deserving of extensive commentary. However, what I would like to stress here is how it provides a real aesthetic punctuation in the room where it is displayed; especially in Tea houses. As we know from descriptions found in art history, *ikebana* became widely employed especially from the 15<sup>th</sup> century when the *tokonoma* (small alcove in the wall) became more common even in the houses of the general Japanese population.

Once again we can see how the walls are left without any kind of decoration. Therefore, the *ikebana* naturally becomes a point of focus but —and this is the most important —a very slender one. It gives a chance for the eye to stop its wandering, it captures our attention for an instant before letting it go to embrace the void and, at the same time, it gives the eye an opportunity to take an intensive breath.

This is how, from our point of view, the Japanese ‘punctuation aesthetic’ shapes nature so thoroughly, pushes artificiality to the point where it becomes a natural part of everyday life thanks to the way it appears in the middle of a blank space, to the fact that the emptiness gives this pure artefact a chance to become part of our lives.

Visually speaking this sense of punctuation is both graphic and spatial as we can easily notice in practice in traditional Japanese stone gardens. Here, in the same way, one or a few dark stones are, at first sight, randomly arranged on a white gravel area. Regular lines drawn with a rake create subtle graphics, but once again the white area serves as a neutral base for the emergence of the stones’ dark and massive presences. Perhaps, the example of Japanese gardens

is too obvious to really illustrate the subtlety of the sense of emergence —the *know-how* of leaving intense rhythmic notes emerging because this ‘art of punctuation’ is maybe nothing other than an art of emergence, that is to say a specific feeling for surprising the senses.

In the same way it would maybe be appropriate to take the example of cooking which is a real dimension of everyday life. Japanese food is well known for its apparent simplicity —when compared for instance to the more complex spicy cuisine found in Thailand or Malaysia. It is not the sauce that makes the taste that gives the final dishes their identity —as is the case with traditional Chinese or French food. Japanese dishes play with combinations more than with mixtures of elements. To be precise, in several cases each element has its own taste preserved in order to find other counterparts on the palate. Always in an undertone, there is a kind of careful balance between rawness and acidity, between sweetness and bitterness and that mysterious fifth savour named *umami* that every real cook must reach. We find ourselves experiencing paradoxical emotions, encountering this raw simplicity elaborated under such sophisticated rules. As in poetry as described by Fujitani Mitsue, in the midst of these ‘quiet’ basic ingredients ready for combination, you can unexpectedly find subtle ‘exclamatory particles’. Finally, far from being a result of the cooking, it seems that these ‘particles’ are at the basis of the creation, representing the sliding melody on top of the general taste. Therefore we can wonder if the elaboration of a meal is not based on these tasteful ‘exclamatory particles’. On experiencing one of them on the tongue, you must stop eating for a moment in order to recognise the origin of the new taste and to identify the real nature of what you are eating, to appreciate the degree of intensity (enjoyable though unexpected) that this particular component gives you.

To conclude, a consideration of music should help us to refine our understanding of how ‘exclamatory particles’ ornament life. On top of the graphic and spatial characteristics mentioned above would it not be better to use a musical vocabulary? The main trait which characterises traditional Japanese music is the both fragile and radical balance between silence and intense *punctual* sounds. There is no profusion of notes but rather exclamatory particles vibrating in a prepared, neutralized field. In fact we could say that the void or silence is not there to reveal the particle, but that the particle is what makes the void or silence significant. As John Dewey points out: «A pause in music is not a blank, but is a rhythmic silence that punctuates what is done while at the same time it conveys an impulsion forward, instead of arresting at the point which it defines.»<sup>13</sup> At the end of the day the starting point seems to be the particle of intensity for

13 DEWEY, J., *Art as Experience*. New York: A Perigee Book, 1980, p. 172.

which a milieu (of space and time) must be arranged in order for the particle to be effectively deployed —exactly as we find in Fujitani Mitsue's method.

What is here labelled as the art of punctuation seems to be the present result of a long historical process of assimilation (if not to say infusion) during which, since the time of Rikyū (1522-91), a very particular characterisation of beauty has spread through Japanese life. What we call the art of punctuation is maybe none other than poetry when poetry is lived every day, that is to say when it becomes a way of living as much as a literary work.

### III. RHYTHMS AND PUNCTUATION

Of course it is possible to treat these questions using the well-known notions of Japanese aesthetics 'Wabi' and 'Aware' which for many have become key words in the understanding of the specificity of the Japanese sense of beauty. As we know, 'Wabi' is a conception of beauty as simple and austere, the beauty of simplicity. Coupling this with the notion 'Aware', which underlines both elegance and an ephemeral sense of beauty, we would indeed be able to further clarify the dimension of simplicity and elegance which we are pursuing. 'Sabi' is another well-known notion that may help us to pin down what we would like to name the specific ethos of fragility found in Japanese culture. 'Sabi' cannot be translated. However, it can be described as being «the spirit of Eternal Loneliness which is the spirit of the Zen [this spirit] expresses itself under the name of *sabi* in the various artistic departments of life such as landscape gardening, tea ceremony, tea-room, painting, flower arrangement, dressing, furniture, in the mode of living, in No-dancing, poetry, etc»<sup>14</sup>; the same notion of *sabi* about which Roland Barthes writes «[it is] a good definition of the principle of tact»<sup>15</sup>.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, alone, none of these concepts completely encapsulates the flavour of everyday life. On one hand, considering beauty in terms of concepts leads us to interpret reality via words or epithets. These words or epithets can never sum up the entire set of nuances or «bundle of qualities»<sup>16</sup> of that to which they refer. A concept may be a door to enter through or a window to see through but not *what* is being predicated as the object of experience. As Fujitani Mitsue teaches us, like poetry, the logic or methodology of aesthetics should be more inductive than deductive. In other words, rather than being based on nouns, verbs and adverbs, it should be based on the

14 SUZUKI, D.T., *Essays on Zen Buddhism*. London: Luzac, 1934, 3:320. Quotation in Barthes, R., *The Neutral*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 220, note 16.

15 BARTHES, R., *The Neutral. op. cit.*, p. 35.

16 RUSSELL, B., *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*. London: Routledge, 1992, p. 99.

singular experiences of exclamatory moments when the energies of life spring up. That is why John Dewey, like Gilles Deleuze<sup>17</sup>, insists on the haecceity [thisness] of perception: «What is called *the* object, *the* cloud, river, garment, has imputed to it an existence independent of an actual experience; (...). But the object of—or better *in*— perception is not one of a kind in general, a sample of a cloud or river, but is *this* individual thing existing here and now with all the unrepeatable particularities that accompany and mark such existences.»<sup>18</sup> This view may be more meaningful if we recall that according to Empiricism and even more clearly according to Pragmatism, the subject does not pre-exist perception, rather it composes itself through perceptions and interpretations. This means that on top of the ultimate qualitative identity (haecceity) experienced, we can assume that the relations of which things are made, are external to their ends, subjects or objects. The reality of a thing, being or event is as much in its quality as in the relations that design it. Or, it would perhaps be better to say: it is the specific combination of relations that design a thing, a being or an event, that make and precede its real and ultimate quality.

On the other hand, the Japanese notions mentioned above cannot be called concepts because they do not have a universal dimension<sup>19</sup>. Instead we are inclined to think that they have a relationship to aesthetic perceptions which can be better understood in terms of distance and proximity. The use of this conception seems more accurate when describing micro-events in our lives. Rather than dealing with ideas or substantiated identities, this perspective of distance and proximity refers to our common perceptual ability, to the capacity of different subjects to seize energies as sets of rhythms and intensities. Both an act and a process, this seizure individualises itself differently according to the specific configuration of relations—which can be more or less close or distant. The variation of intensity of this seizure is modal; it is a difference of degree rather than a difference in nature. These «exclamatory particles» or knots of energies, these complex realities of rhythms and intensities interrupt habituation, permit the decompartmentalisation of everyday repetitions and thus

17 DELEUZE, G., GUATTARI, F., *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 260.

18 DEWEY, J., *Art as Experience*. *op. cit.*, p. 177.

19 Perhaps universality exists as a mathematical reality, however in the human sphere it is not a concrete reality. In the human sphere, universality suggests equality between individuals—equal rights for instance—and this notion is in fact an abstraction or perhaps at best a political ideal or objective. This equality does not exist in reality notably because the individuality of a person is the result of a multiplicity of factors, and this complexity makes perfect equality between individuals an impossibility. Perfect equality between individuals is a purely intellectual reality and could even be considered to be a dangerous trait, in so far as it is synonymous with sameness (A=A).

cause punctual intensity. As a consequence, when considering «exclamatory particles» it is necessary to adopt the perspective of an aesthetics of difference based on modal distribution.

John Dewey is the author of a remarkable and extensive commentary on rhythm and intensity in relation to art<sup>20</sup>. However, if art —as Dewey claims— should be thought of as experience, what interests us is whether or not and under what conditions it is possible to think about sensory experience as an aesthetic way of life. More precisely, if for Dewey art «is definable as organization of energies»<sup>21</sup>, should the aesthetics of the everyday be characterised not as an ‘organization’ but as a harnessing of, or active listening to, variations in intensities within the environment in which we are involved? It is not a question of trying to delimit this environment or of trying to master it, but rather a question of having a specific attitude towards it.

From the perspective of the producer, music, like poetry, has no real limits. Its existence depends on a set of means and marks, a system of codification comparable to punctuation itself. This set of signs renders the meaning of a written or musical sentence both more comprehensible and more rhythmically expressive. In these contexts, the art of punctuation (art used with its original Greek meaning, *techne*) is mastery of rhythm and intensity, the two necessary components of style. The specific interplay between meaning and intensity is called expression. A writer, conscious of his writing style, spends a lot of time managing his punctuation in order to reach a satisfactory sequence of words that will be labelled a *good* sentence. But what does ‘good’ mean here? «Good» has no particular moral meaning unless it perhaps expresses a feeling of completeness, a feeling of a right balance between intention and means. And this specific tension is probably where aesthetics can become relevant to ethics and vice-versa.

As in art, for a sensory experience of the everyday to become aesthetic, both medium and awareness are required. However, the individuation of an aesthetic experience of the everyday does not have the same result as the individuation of an artistic experience, since the former is without any concrete realisation. Such a concrete realisation serves to make visible, and possibly also to perpetuate, the artistic experience. Without this end result, an aesthetic experience of the everyday can be seen as a positive or enjoyable actualisation of a potentiality which could be found in any one of us. This kind of actualisation may have a transient identity but nonetheless it momentarily places a unique bundle of rhythms and intensities under the spotlight. At a specific

20 See the chapter «The organization of energies», *Art as Experience*, *op. Cit.* Here we can find the following definition: «Rhythm is rationality among qualities», p. 169.

21 DEWEY, J., *op. Cit.*, p. 184.

point in time, this qualitative identity, although very fragile, is nevertheless a real object of consciousness and memory for a subject.

Is it possible to say that giving some kind of aesthetic density to our life—even aesthetic density of a very simple kind—is at some level a necessity?

This would mean that more or less intentionally we give time and space to a combination of articulation points which provide the basis of a specific sense of life ornamentation, allowing «exclamatory particles» to emerge. The setting of a vase of flowers on the table, the choice of colour for a wall, planting a tree outdoors where we can see it from our favourite window—all these can be viewed as examples of a possible aesthetic completion of everyday life. The completion of a house mentioned earlier in relation to Japan could be seen as an analogy for the completion of a life if we understand that both a house and a life can be viewed as *oecumene*—understood with its original meaning of «inhabited world».

Therefore, as for Fujitani Mitsue and as in our other examples concerning exclamatory particles, we must talk about differential repetitions instead of dialectical differentiation. In both cases there is an association of repetitions and differences during the course of everyday life. However, whilst in the first case the difference is refined, internal and mobile, in the second case, the difference is contrastive and formal. As we saw with Gilles Deleuze's distinction between «cadence-repetition» and «rhythm-repetition», differential repetition is deeply linked to modulations in intensity—both of which we encountered when discussing the economy of ornamentation.

Thus, we understand how an aesthetics of difference never ceases to argue against the classical view of individuation (*hylemorphism*). The modal distribution in Deleuze's written works, which has its origins in the philosophy of John Duns Scotus and Spinoza, offers an alternative. It is pluralistic as a consequence of variations in the degree of intensity: «Intensity is the form of difference in so far as this is the reason of the sensible. Every intensity is differential, by itself a difference.»<sup>22</sup> Whereas according to the classical modern view individuation is post-individual identity, here we are stressing an individuation in which the individual is a process not a fulfilled entity. The former view bases the distribution of qualities on a perspective according to which differences in nature precede differences in intensity. However, within a modal distribution, differences in intensity are synonymous with differences in nature itself.

To sum up, any experience is a singularity which can be lived as an event that possesses a qualitative density. This is the case as long as we conceive of intensities as being pre-individual, of having a neutral common nature which is

22 DELEUZE, G., *Difference & Repetition*., *op. cit.*, p. 222.

nothing other than our common ability to recognise the energies of life which run through each of us and through our environment.

If we accept the idea that qualities are not substantial properties that are fixed to one entity or being, but rather see that they can belong to different realities at the same time, any everyday experience can be viewed as the seizure of a unique set of relations and energies that possesses a qualitative identity. In fact, although everyday experiences can be lived as moments of intensity, the experiences themselves are not intense as a consequence of their own nature; rather intensity is felt because habitual patterns of repetition are disrupted. Aesthetic experience of everyday life corresponds to a singular recognition of intensities. This experience of beauty, difficult to define with language, individualises an original moment in time which cannot be confused with any other moment. It corresponds to a tension for—or an (at-)tention towards—a thing, being or event. This tension as we have argued can be viewed as an ethos without object, an ethos of nuance, which turns out to be one of the most precious parts of our day-to-day existence.

