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Gary Shapiro

University of Richmond, gshapiro@richmond.edu

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Earth's Garden-Happiness: Nietzsche's Geoaesthetics of the Anthropocene

Abstract: This essay proposes a reading of the concept and metaphor of the garden in Nietzsche's philosophy as a contribution to exploring his aesthetics of the human earth and, accordingly, of his idea of the *Sinn der Erde*. Following Zarathustra's agreement with his animals' repeated declaration that „the world awaits you as a garden,“ after his ordeal in struggling with the thought of eternal recurrence, the essay draws on Z and other writings to explore the senses of cultivation, design, and perspective which the garden embodies. Nietzsche recognizes and endorses another dimension of the garden in his discussions of Epicurus' garden: it can be a site of refuge for the philosopher and a few friends when the right time for large scale cultivation is still to come. The relation between Z and BGE, as two different ways of expressing the same basic ideas, is clarified by delineating these contrasting aspects of the garden.

Keywords: Garden, earth, world, aesthetics, Epicurus.

Zusammenfassung: Der Artikel schlägt eine Interpretation des Begriffs und der Metapher des Gartens in Nietzsches Philosophie vor – als Beitrag zur Erschließung seiner Ästhetik der „Menschen-Erde“ und entsprechend seines Gedankens vom „Sinn der Erde“. Ausgehend von Zarathustras Zustimmung zur wiederholten Erklärung seiner Tiere „die Welt wartet dein wie ein Garten“ nach seinem schweren Ringen mit dem Gedanken der ewigen Wiederkunft, zieht der Artikel Za und andere Schriften heran, um dem Sinn der Kultivierung, des Designs und der Perspektive nachzugehen, die der Garten bei Nietzsche einschließt. Nietzsche erkennt in seinen Erörterungen von Epikurs Garten eine andere Dimension des Gartens und macht sie stark: Er kann für den Philosophen und einige seiner Freunde ein Rückzugsort sein, solange die rechte Zeit einer umfassenden Kultivierung erst noch zu erwarten ist. Indem diese kontrastierenden Aspekte des Gartens nachgezeichnet werden, wird auch die Beziehung zwischen Za und JGB geklärt als zweier verschiedener Weisen, denselben Grundbegriffen Ausdruck zu verschaffen.

Schlagwörter: Garten, Erde, Welt, Ästhetik, Epikur.

1 Nietzsche's human earth: less than nature, more than world¹

What might the earth become? What is the earth to which Nietzsche's Zarathustra enjoins us to be true? The very concept of earth requires some clarification. Earth and the earthly have several dimensions in Nietzsche's writings. I take Nietzsche's "earth" to be narrower than "nature" and distinct from what many of his contemporaries and predecessors mean by "world." Earth is not all of what there is but the immanent site of human existence. To speak of the earthly is to speak of embodied action and passion that we know and experience, as opposed to an imagined other world. Some writers emphasize the Greek model of Nietzsche's earth, frequently as mediated by Hölderlin's novel *Hyperion* and his poetry. Others have taken the concept in a more general phenomenological sense to designate the actual and immediate. Gaston Bachelard and Luce Irigaray have gone further in this direction, delineating the elemental dimensions of Nietzsche's earth, focusing on his frequent images of mountain heights, aerial flight and related themes.² For Irigaray, this aerial emphasis betrays Nietzsche's evasion of a feminine and maternal life of the sea. While all these readings of Nietzsche's earth are valuable and incisive in various ways, I want to explore another aspect of what Nietzsche calls the "human-earth" (*Menschen-Erde*), the aspect under which it presents itself as or becomes a garden. One of the more intense expressions of this dimension appears in Zarathustra's transvaluation of sensuality (*Wollust*) in "On the Three Evils": "Sensuality: for free hearts innocent and free, the garden-happiness of the earth, all futures' exuberance of thanks to the now." While garden-happiness (*Garten-Glück*) appears here specifically in connection with sensuality, the term and its variants occur in several other contexts as well.³ The human-earth in general is what the earth has become in the geological era now called the anthropocene, in which humans are altering the earth through (for example) rapid population increase, domestication of animals, industrial agriculture and fishing, mining, large scale mineralization of the surface, chemical change of the atmosphere and oceans, and of course (and to a large extent consequently) global warming and climate change.⁴ While Nietzsche was not aware of many of these dimensions of the

1 I will use the following translations of Nietzsche's works: *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Judith Norman, Cambridge 2002; *Daybreak*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge 1982; *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckoff, Cambridge 2001; *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge 1986; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Graham Parkes, Oxford 2005.

2 Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams, An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*, trans. Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell, Dallas 1988; Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill, New York 1991.

3 Cf. HH I 591; Nachlass 1875, 12[32], KSA 8.268; Nachlass 1878, 30[31], KSA 8.527.

4 For a preliminary discussion of the anthropocene, see the *New York Times* editorial, "The Anthropocene", Feb. 27, 2011: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/28/opinion/28mon4.html>.

anthropocene, I maintain that his talk of the human-earth assumes an earth that has been and continues to be transformed by human habitation and industry. From this perspective, his talk about earth as a garden (or gardens) is an attempt to sketch an aesthetics of the human earth or a geoaesthetics of the anthropocene. I will take my point of departure from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where Zarathustra emerges convalescent from his most abysmal thought to greet the world as a garden, using this *topos* to articulate related appearances of gardens and gardening in several additional Nietzschean texts.

First, I want to note a generally overlooked political dimension of the concept of earth. Earth is a political concept for Nietzsche, opposed to and contrasted with the Hegelian concept of world.⁵ In *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, Nietzsche speaks contemptuously of Hegel and the Hegelians (notably his immediate target Eduard von Hartmann) who talk incessantly of “world, world, world!” (HL 9). Nietzsche ridicules Hartmann for his vulgarized Hegelian conception of a *Weltprozess*, an irresistible teleological pattern of development which (in Hartmann’s case) leads ultimately to a nihilistic abandonment of what he takes to be the naïve human quest for happiness. Since Nietzsche will speak of “earth’s garden happiness” as a genuine possibility, he clearly puts himself in opposition to this end of history narrative that superimposes a Schopenhauerian pessimism on a Hegelian teleology. More generally, it should be noted that “world” has a very specific, indeed systematic, meaning in Hegel’s thought, notably in Hegel’s *Philosophy of World History*, which Nietzsche (at least partly) read and which served as a constant foil for his admired senior colleague at Basel, Jacob Burckhardt, whose lectures on world history he attended. For Hegel there is no history where there is no world and there is no world without a state. Traditional English translations of Hegel’s text and even some recent ones tend to omit the “world” in world history, perhaps from a desire to cleanse Hegel’s reputation for statist excesses.⁶ According to Hegel not all human beings truly inhabit a world. World history is the story of states, organized social structures that give meaning and struc-

5 I develop this point at greater length in Gary Shapiro, *States and Nomads: Hegel’s World and Nietzsche’s Earth*, in: Vanessa Lemm (ed.), *Nietzsche and the Becoming of Life*, New York, forthcoming.

6 Many scholars believe that Nietzsche’s direct knowledge of Hegel was very slight and that his responses to Hegel and Hegelianism were based on miscellaneous readings in the philosophical literature of the time. However, Nietzsche does quote Hegel’s *Philosophy of World History* extensively in notes from the time of his composition of *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*; see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard T. Gray, Stanford 1995, pp. 164–67, 225–7, and passim (= Nachlass 1873, 27[30–37], KSA 7.595–598, 29[72–75], KSA 7.660–663). I believe it can be shown that Nietzsche responded to many of the specific themes in this work, from Hegel’s marginalization of nomads and migrants to his account of the Protestant Reformation and the modern world; see Shapiro, *States and Nomads*. Note that Hegel’s titles for his lectures was *The Philosophy of World History*; almost all English translations and commentaries silently omit “world,” perhaps because of the troubling ethical and political issues raised by Hegel’s restrictive concept of the same.

ture to the life of a people. Migrants and nomads are explicitly excluded from world history. In his lectures on world history Hegel questions whether a migratory, mixed population like that he saw in the early United States could constitute a genuine state. He dismisses Islam as having any enduring role in world history because he understands it as a religion and way of life based on the wandering ways of a nomadic people of the desert. Nietzsche attempts to think earth as a more fundamental category than the world of Hegelian world-history when he denounces the state as a “cold monster” and enemy of life (Z, On the New Idol), or when he considers the eventuality that the state may simply dissolve under the influence of migration, nomadism, and cosmopolitanism (HH I 472).⁷ To be true or loyal to the earth, then, is quite different from pledging one’s allegiance to a state; the earth is distinct from the world of world-history, which is intrinsically a hierarchical system of states. The Hegelian state in its highest development is a monarchy with an established religion (preferably Protestant Christianity). This is not Nietzsche’s earth. While he never explicitly formulates a rigorous terminological distinction between “world” and “earth,” and observes such a distinction imperfectly in practice, attention to context will show, I believe, that “earth” typically has the sense described above; while many of Nietzsche’s uses of “world” are relatively neutral, his explicit references to “world-history” or “world-process” are consistently pejorative and critical. Nietzsche’s question is this: if earth is not to be subsumed into Hegelian world history as the ground for a system of states or to serve as the soil for traditional religion, what is its future and futurity?

2 Earth’s garden happiness

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche’s eponymous hero begins his teaching by calling on anyone who will listen – a miscellaneous audience in the market-place – to be loyal and faithful to the earth. He urges them to turn away from all fantasies of an extra-earthly world and to reject the all too limited and measured satisfactions of the last humans. Yet what shall the character of the earth be when freed from such distortions and cultivated with care and passion? Nietzsche’s most consistent name for this transformed earth is “garden,” and all of *Zarathustra* can be understood as an extended landscape or garden poem; it is surprising how little attention has been

⁷ In Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*, rightly cited by many as a major text in Nietzsche’s formation, there is a parallel contrast of the state and the garden. Alabanda declares (after Hyperion has playfully exclaimed “we are celebrating our betrothal”): “The state is the coarse husk around the seed of life and nothing more. It is the wall around the garden of human fruits and flowers.” (Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, trans. Willard R. Trask, New York 1965, p. 44) See also Hyperion and Diotima’s discussion of the earth as a living being: “we called the earth one of the flowers of heaven, and heaven the infinite garden of life” (p. 67).

given to this dimension of what the author considered the “greatest gift” ever given to humanity.⁸ The theme becomes explicit in the conversation of Zarathustra and his animals after he is aroused from a seven day coma following the struggle with his “most abysmal thought.” This chapter on “The Convalescent” is typically read as one of Nietzsche’s most articulate and comprehensive accounts of the thought of eternal recurrence. Here his proud eagle and cunning snake join in a series of speeches in

8 Despite the profusion of close readings of *Zarathustra* in recent decades, the reader will generally search in vain for “garden” in the index of any Anglophone book devoted to *Zarathustra*. Similarly scant attention has been given to the thought that the world awaits Zarathustra as a garden. Laurence Lampert writes of Zarathustra’s openness to the natural, as exemplified by his ability to understand the speech of his animals, and while he mentions the one point on which he explicitly agrees with the animals – the world awaits him as a garden – he downplays Zarathustra’s agreement with his animals by saying that his first words on recovering from his swoon “show that what exists as a garden for his animals covers a reality that is open and indeterminate for him” (Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, New Haven 1986, p. 214; cf. pp. 211–223). Like Lampert, Robert Gooding-Williams offers a careful, nuanced reading of the interchange between Zarathustra and the animals; he recognizes the latter’s invitation to the world as a garden, but describes this as Zarathustra appearing “in his animals’ eyes as a prelapsarian original man whose fall from an Orphic Eden into Christian-Platonic asceticism his act of willing has undone” (Robert Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra’s Dionysian Modernism*, Stanford 2001, p. 250; cf. pp. 250–253). This way of putting things leaves out of account the forward-looking aspect of Zarathustra’s world as garden, which involves new cultivation and growth. Such examples could be multiplied, and internet searches will yield only a few writers who have had something to say about Nietzsche and the *topos* of the garden; these almost all have to do with the analogy or metaphor of self-cultivation of the drives (as in passages from *Daybreak*, discussed in the following) or with Nietzsche’s sympathetic reading of Epicurus and his “garden philosophy” (also discussed in the following). Several readers also note the description of “the garden of marriage” (Z, On Children and Marriage). See also HH II 278, which treats the analogy in negative fashion, suggesting that proscribing the “discontented, atrabilious and sullen” from reproducing “could magically transform the earth into a garden of happiness. – This proposition belongs in a practical philosophy for the female sex.” Adrian Del Caro, *Grounding Nietzsche’s Rhetoric of Earth* (Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung, Bd. 48), Berlin / New York 2004, p. 84, observes that Nietzsche here seems less than completely sincere, since he apparently deviates from his more usual tendency to seek long term solutions for long term problems. Other than this reference, del Caro barely mentions the garden theme. This is also the case in Stephan Günzel, *Geophilosophie: Nietzsches philosophische Geographie*, Berlin 2001; however Günzel’s book is indispensable for exploring questions related to geophilosophy. A collection of essays, Alexandre Kostka / Irving Wohlfarth (ed.), *Nietzsche and “An Architecture of our Minds”*, Los Angeles 1999, contains a number of studies of Nietzsche’s thinking about architecture, marginally including landscape architecture, but offers no specific reading of this and related passages. The most comprehensive account of some of the relevant texts (including letters) is Tilmann Buddensieg, *Nietzsches Italien: Städte, Gärten, Paläste*, Berlin 2002; the focus, as the title suggests, is on Nietzsche’s Italian travels and residencies. Some related topics are discussed in Gary Shapiro, *Territories, Landscapes, Gardens: Toward Geoaesthetics in Angelaki*, in: *Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 9.2 (2004), pp. 103–115, and Gary Shapiro, *Nietzsche on Geophilosophy and Geoaesthetics*, in: Keith Ansell-Pearson (ed.), *A Companion to Nietzsche* (Blackwell companions to philosophy vol. 33), Oxford 2006, pp. 477–494.

which they describe the Great Year of Becoming that they understand to be Zarathustra's teaching. While many readers take the animals' words to be a definitive statement of that teaching, several note that Zarathustra calls them buffoons and barrel-organs, chiding them for turning his thought into a "hurdy-gurdy song" (*Leier-Lied*); he also compares the animals' "chattering" (*schwätzen*) to music which bridges the otherwise insurmountable distance between souls. These readers attempt to reconstruct the thought by freeing it from the animals' misunderstandings of concept and tone. Here I will refrain from this project of reconstruction which many (including myself) have pursued in other contexts. I will focus rather on the one thing that Zarathustra clearly accepts without reservation in what the animals say: "the world awaits you as a garden." Here Nietzsche apparently deviates from the distinction between world and earth that I have proposed. I acknowledge that his terminology is not completely consistent, but I think it is clear here, in the context of Zarathustra's mountain retreat, that he and the animals are not speaking of the metaphysical world of states (as in Hegel).

The declaration of the garden that awaits is made twice and gladly received. While "The Convalescent" is one of the chapters of *Zarathustra* most commented upon, because of its relevance for the thought of eternal recurrence, very few discussions and commentaries attempt to take stock of the garden theme announced and embodied here. This is puzzling, not only because Zarathustra affirms (what the animals say twice) that the world now awaits him as a garden, but also because the narrative *describes* a vivid garden-like scene. While Zarathustra lies silent, convalescing for seven days, his eagle has assembled a variety of plants and animals for him, creating a lush garden atmosphere:

The eagle flew off to fetch nourishment. And whatever he collected from his plundering he laid on Zarathustra's pallet, so that Zarathustra eventually lay under a heap of yellow and red berries, grapes, rose-apples, fragrant herbs, and pine-cones. And at his feet two lambs were spread out, which the eagle had with difficulty stolen from their shepherds.

The parodic relation to the Biblical story of Adam awaking in the garden (paradise) created by God should be evident; here it is Zarathustra and his animals who have made this garden happiness possible. Zarathustra's first act upon rising was to take a rose-apple in hand, smell it, and delight in its fragrance. This act frames his entire dialogue with the animals who tell him

Step out from your cave: the world awaits you like a garden. The wind is playing with heavy fragrances that would come to you; and all streams would like to follow you.

Now Zarathustra speaks for the first time since wrestling with his most abysmal thought, imploring the animals to chatter on, for "where there is chatter, there the world lies for me like a garden." He expresses gratitude for the animals' "words and tones" which act as "rainbows and seeming-bridges" between his world and

the outside. The animals reply in chattering chorus by articulating a version of the thought of recurrence, which provokes Zarathustra to accuse them of turning it into a “hurdy-gurdy song,” clearly a musical form inferior to that of their initial soothing “words and tones.” He then relates the great pain and nausea he experienced in thinking through the inevitable return of the small human, reminding him of the soothsayer’s nihilistic prophecy that he had received earlier. “The human earth (*Menschen-Erde*) became for me a cave,” he explains, vividly describing it as a place of graves, bones, and decay. This conversation emphasizes the contrast between the wasteland earth earlier prophesied by the soothsayer – which the latter had described in gruesome and graphic detail – and the earth as a garden announced by the animals and affirmatively welcomed by Zarathustra. Again the animals urge Zarathustra to “go out to where the world awaits you like a garden ... to the roses and bees and the flocks of doves! But especially to the songbirds” so that he may convalesce by learning to sing. Yet again the animals attempt to shift the topic to the thought of recurrence, expressed in “philosophical” terms, while Zarathustra remains focused on the textures of his earthly surroundings (their language tends to the metaphysical, his to the phenomenological). Now they produce an even longer account of what they claim to know that he teaches, a beautiful account of his supposed teaching of a great year of recurrence. This prosopoeia reaches a climax when they imagine Zarathustra proclaiming “the word of the great earth- and human-noon (*vom grossen Erden- und Menschen-Mittage*)” before he announces his own death as a herald. Two visions of the earth are juxtaposed in this chapter, an earth of death, decay, and silence as opposed to one rich in vegetation, animal life, birdsong, attractive fragrances, and tempting food. Zarathustra affirms the animals’ repeated announcement that earth awaits him as a garden, but pointedly declines any engagement with their repeated versions of the eternal recurrence and of what he must be thinking and their accounts of what he would say. While I do not discount the importance of the animals’ speech and chatter (yet what *does* it mean when an animal speaks or when a man understands the speech of animals?), and do not ignore the importance of this crucial chapter for understanding Nietzsche’s idea of recurrence, I do want to underline the fact, passed over by many readers, that the appearance of this thought is framed by and entangled in the confrontation between the soothsayer’s vision of a deathly, standstill earth and the bountiful and welcoming garden actually seen by Zarathustra and his animals. In the three following chapters, which conclude Part III of the work (and perhaps the work as a whole⁹), Zarathustra follows the imperative to sing, as he serenades his soul, dances with a personified Life, and finally in “The Seven Seals” pledges his

⁹ Does *Zarathustra* end with Part III or Part IV? I can only allude to this question which continues to worry Nietzsche scholars. The most intriguing recent answer to the question, which takes Part IV to be an interlude within Part III, is given by Paul Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*, Cambridge 2010, pp. 85–97.

troth to Eternity. Schematically, these songs move from the internality of the soul, to a dialogue with another, to the cosmic geoaesthetics of decentered land, sea, and sky that reveals itself to Zarathustra's "bird wisdom."¹⁰

It is surprising that there has been minimal recognition of the emergence of the garden theme at this crucial point in Nietzsche's story. If "The Convalescent" does have an exemplary significance for understanding both the book in which it occurs and so for Nietzsche's thought, as all commentators apparently agree, then two questions arise: What is the meaning of the garden? and, How does the concept (or metaphor, if you prefer) inflect our reading of this signature text and others?

3 The garden as art

The garden is often thought of as a powerful traditional symbol of the union or fusion of the natural and the cultural; yet we will see that Nietzsche is quite suspicious of what he calls "sentimental" attitudes toward this supposed fusion, which might be better understood not as unity but as assemblage or combination. As a deliberate shaping and arranging of earthly elements, it creates and establishes meaning on the *Menschen-Erde*. It is a form of thinking with the earth, a realization of its possibilities, and a mode of giving the earth a direction (*Sinn*). In the Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche refers to the monumental "great style of architecture in Asia and Egypt," suggesting that "all great things in order to inscribe eternal demands in the hearts of humanity, must first wander the earth under monstrous and terrifying masks." The demand dimly foreshadowed in archaic landscape architecture might be that of giving the earth a direction on the largest scale, while the astrological despotism that provided an ideological justification would be its monstrous mask. Marking and transforming the earth, the garden invites and calls for present joy while presenting a model for the future.

In this vein we should recognize that Nietzsche's concept of the garden can be articulated in terms like those Heidegger uses to analyze the originality of the work of art, that is the way in which it serves as an *origin*. Heidegger speaks of the Greek temple, for example, as opening up a world of meanings and directions on the ground of an earth which emerges through the work's act of rendering and framing, while retaining an irreducible dimension of resistance and closure.¹¹

¹⁰ On the cosmic dimension of landscape in "The Seven Seals" see Gary Shapiro, *Alcyone: Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise, and Women*, Albany 1991, pp. 134–36.

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, in: Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thinking*, New York 1971. Heidegger seems to have said little or nothing explicitly concerning the theme of the garden, despite his musings on Greek and Swabian landscapes and his obsession with Hölderlin's geographically oriented poetry.

What then is the earth so far as it is or can become a garden? For Nietzsche, gardens are metaphors or symbols of a variety of activities, dispositions, and tastes. The dominant themes are the shaping and tending of the natural, with a view to producing a rewarding result as well as the enjoyment of a site on the earth. In the following I consider some of the ways in which Nietzsche articulates these features, attending both to gardens in a literal sense and to certain metaphorical extensions of the garden concept as they help to articulate “earth’s garden happiness.” I will then return to the question of the garden’s meaning in *Zarathustra* by drawing on Nietzsche’s understanding of these garden features and by articulating this analysis with a related but alternative Nietzschean *topos*, the garden of Epicurus.

Sites of plantation and cultivation

Perhaps the most obvious of these associations of the garden is with marriage or sexual union. Speaking “On Children and Marriage” Zarathustra enjoins his listeners “To propagate yourselves not only onward, but *upward* – to that end, O my brothers, may the garden of marriage help you!” (cf. also Z, On Old and New Tablets 24) Zarathustra speaks of the “trees” or children which he has planted and cultivated in his garden. “My children are still becoming green for me in their first spring, standing close together and shaken in common by the winds, the trees of my garden and my finest soil.” He goes on to explain that as they mature the “trees” will be transplanted, so that each can stand alone, weathering the trials of mountain and sea, becoming “gnarled and crooked and with pliable hardness” until, having passed such tests, it will one day become his companion. Here Zarathustra says that for now he must evade his happiness in order to continue this work of cultivation (Z, On Blissfulness Against One’s Will). Zarathustra’s garden is a working garden.¹²

Perspectival power in landscape architecture

Nietzsche notes several times the desirability of fences and boundaries for one’s garden. In some instances this has the function of protecting a space for contemplation and solitude, as when Zarathustra says “I want to have fences around my thoughts and also even around my words, lest swine and swooners (*Schwärmer*) break into my gardens! —” (Z, On the Three Evils 2) While in this case the garden is a

¹² Perhaps the most well-known imperative that “we should cultivate our garden” is that given by Candide at the end of Voltaire’s story. Candide’s agricultural enthusiasm, roused by his visit to a Turkish farmhouse, does not have the goal, like Zarathustra’s talk of his plantations, of fostering new types of humans or *Übermenschen*.

garden of thoughts, Nietzsche makes the same point with respect to the specific form of British and Italian landscape gardens. This indicates that he did some significant reading, thinking, and observation regarding various styles of landscape architecture; he was also capable of using the metaphor in the other direction, taking the style of actual gardens as indicative of possibilities of thought. In GS 291 on Genoa, Nietzsche draws such consequences from the earthly site where he began to compose *Zarathustra*. Here gardens are seen as landscape architecture, inseparable from architecture in a more limited sense; the architectural combination of house and garden involves a complex dynamic of the bounded and the boundless. Nietzsche begins by describing the human landscape: “I have been looking at this city for a long time, at its villas and pleasure-gardens and the wide circumference of its inhabited heights and slopes, and in the end I must say: I see *faces* that belong to past generations; this region is dotted with images of bold and autocratic human beings.”¹³ Here then, is a region of the human-earth that has been inscribed with meaning. In reading the Genoa aphorism (and related passages) it is helpful to visualize the actual topography Nietzsche describes. The city of Genoa rises up steeply on several sides from its enormous bay; Nietzsche lived high on a hill from which he had magnificent panoramic views of much of the city. The “faces” of the human landscape that Nietzsche sees are those of the builders – the city’s maritime conquerors and explorers. Each of these “rests his gaze on everything built near and afar as well as on city, sea, and mountain contours ... with his gaze he is perpetrating acts of violence and conquest: he wants to fit all this into *his* plan and finally make it his *possession* by incorporating it into his plan.” The scene is one of vision and power. What each builder wants is a comprehensive, commanding perspective; Nietzsche is no doubt thinking of the great palaces and gardens of the city, like that of Andrea Doria.¹⁴ These builders “heeded no boundaries in distant lands”; the attitude was translated into the urban setting as each, ignoring his neighbor, “flared up against the other and found a way to express his superiority and place

¹³ On landscape as face, see Gilles Deleuze / Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis 1987, pp. 172–173.

¹⁴ For a very suggestive account of Nietzsche’s response to the architecture and gardens of Genoa, with reference to letters and other sources, see Buddensieg, *Nietzsches Italien*, pp. 27–57. I can testify that the Villetta di Negro, the small park just across the street from Nietzsche’s rooms in Salita delle Battistine 8, is an extraordinary work of landscape architecture. With steep declivities, a waterfall, and spectacular views of Genoa and the bay, it is understandable that Stendhal called it one of the most picturesque places in Italy. In letters Nietzsche calls it his garden, and offers this description: “Very near is a charming garden, open to the public, with a powerful, forest-like greenery (also in *winter*), waterfalls, wild animals and birds and magnificent distant vistas of the sea and mountains – all in a very small space” (Nietzsche to Franziska and Elisabeth Nietzsche, Genoa, December 21, 1881, Nr. 181, KSB 6.151). Earlier he had written to Köselitz that when he read a letter from his friend “I was in my garden, the Villetta Negro, I live next to it (Stendhal calls it once ‘one of the most picturesque [*malerischsten*] sites in Italy’) and thought of you with much love” (Nietzsche to Köselitz, Genoa, November 27, 1881, Nr. 170, KSB 6.143).

his personal infinity between himself and his neighbor.” Nietzsche explicitly contrasts this with the North’s urban style which embodies lawfulness, obedience, and regularity. Yet “here you find upon turning every corner, a separate human being who knows the sea, adventure, and the Orient.” Genoa’s builders reach out to the farthest horizons; their houses and gardens aspire to an unbounded, cosmic perspective.

In addition to this explicit contrast with the North, Nietzsche was also aware of another contrast with the English natural or picturesque style of gardening. He criticized the English taste in gardens as an exemplary *modern* taste, despite his love for the very painter, Claude Lorrain, whom the English took as one of their models. In notebooks of 1880–81, including stays in Genoa, Nietzsche makes several notes on the meaning of landscape and gardens. In the fall of 1880, he dips into Jacob Burckhardt’s *Cicerone*, companion to Italian art and architecture that accompanied him on his travels, leading to this notation:

the taste of the *English* art of gardening – “to imitate free nature with its accidents” J.B. – is the entire modern taste. Such men wish to be poets: while it is another aim which those men have who “make the laws of art productive (*dienstbar*).” NB I must wean myself away from elegiac sentimentality for nature. “The contrast of free nature, which shines into the Italian garden from outside” J.B. Fundamental condition of the impression. Such *men of style* work best within a *half wild* environment. (Nachlass 1880, 6[222], KSA 9.255–256)

The passage in Burckhardt that Nietzsche cites and comments on celebrates the Italian garden as developed in the seventeenth century; he claims that with its great mastery of space and control of the intricacies of planting, avenues, line and perspective, fountains, and grottoes, it is impossible to imagine anything of this sort that would be more complete. He contrasts the weak, modern, English taste for “crooked paths, hermitages, Chinoiserie, straw huts, ruined castles, gothic chapels, and so on” with “the great, synoptic, symmetrical division of spaces with determinate character” of the Italian garden.¹⁵ Burckhardt acknowledges, as reflected in Nietzsche’s citation, that the Italian garden’s effect is enhanced by the sight of free nature – mountains and sea coast, for example – beyond its bounds. The classic English picturesque garden of the eighteenth century, with many later imitators, was noted for its stylistic innovation of eliminating visible architectural walls and fences, in order that the park might seem to blend seamlessly into the surrounding territory. The device that made this possible was the submerged ditch or ha-ha; it played the role of limiting access to or from the garden’s territory while remaining invisible to the casual spectator. Supplemented by artful clumps of trees and other vegetation, the garden was artfully framed in such a way as to disguise its own framing activity (Derrida has acutely formulated the question of the frame or *parergon* which is both inside and outside the work¹⁶).

¹⁵ Jacob Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone*, Stuttgart 1964, pp. 379–380 (Translation G.S.).

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington, Chicago 1987, pp. 37–82.

Nietzsche adopts Burckhardt's critique of the English garden as an egregious instance of modern sentimentality, understanding sentimentality as the determined project of blurring the boundaries of nature and art. While the garden is a complex assemblage of the natural and the cultural, it ought not to deliberately confuse the two in the English manner. Both the Italian and English styles rely on what Japanese gardeners call "borrowed scenery," but do so in quite distinct ways. The English try to produce the illusion of continuity and blending; the Italians forthrightly acknowledge their formative, constructive activity while reaching out to distant horizons. Nietzsche's garden aesthetic is consistent with the major strand in his thinking about art that stresses formative power.

Styles of gardening and of science

Nietzsche constructs an extended comparison between changing tastes in styles of gardening and landscape on the one hand, and approaches to science on the other (D 427). Rococo *Gartenkunst* arose from a distaste for nature seen as "ugly, savage, boring" and attempted to beautify it; just so science aimed at its own beautification in order to be more entertaining, practicing a

deception of the eyes (with temples, distant prospects, grottos, mazes, waterfalls, to speak in metaphors), to present science in extract and with all kinds of strange and unexpected illuminations and to involve it in so much indefiniteness, irrationality and reverie that one can wander in it 'as in wild nature' and yet without effort or boredom ...

However, the beautifier of science should learn something from the change of taste with regard to the presentation of nature that dates from the time of Rousseau, when interest in the beauty of mountains and deserts (what Kant and others would call the sublime, although Nietzsche does not use the term here) replaced the prettified beauty of rococo taste. The corresponding shift in the scientific approach would find the highest intellectual beauty in its "wild, ugly" aspects.

Gardening as a model for the care of the self

The garden is a model for the cultivation of the self. The aphorism "One thing is needful" is much commented on for identifying that one thing as "To give style to one's character – a great and rare art!" (GS 290) But what kind of art? This section immediately precedes the aphorism "Genoa" and draws on the notes Nietzsche made on Burckhardt and garden style; it describes two forms of success or failure in the project of self-styling; both are understood through the analogy of gardening or landscaping. I suggest that the question of what kind of "art" of producing style Nietzsche

has in mind is quite relevant to understanding this passage. Although this aphorism is much discussed, commentators are not always specific on this point. For example, in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* Alexander Nehamas takes Nietzsche to be at least implicitly invoking the model of literary art.¹⁷ Moreover, Nehamas understands literary art as governed by the model of a totally unified “organic” work of art in which every identifiable aspect of a work is an indispensable constituent of a meaningful whole. Whether Nietzsche actually endorsed such a strong normative aesthetic standard of organic unity in literature is open to question. More to the point is that literature is never mentioned in “One thing is needful,” while architecture, landscape architecture, and interpretation of the natural environment (we could call it environmental aesthetics) are the only arts discussed in the aphorism.

A major difference between traditional literary art and the arts of building, gardening, and interpreting nature is that the successful literary work (as Nehamas assumes) attains a final completion and (organic) unity while gardens are always in process, changing with seasons, weather, long term climate change, local animal life, and countless other environmental factors. Nietzsche is clearly aware of this rather obvious dimension of gardens. Clearly, a garden will never be a completely stable and unified work. We can however distinguish types of gardens in terms of their most general stylistic features or lack of style (as Nietzsche does here and elsewhere). In “One thing is needful” Nietzsche first describes the person who “resists giving nature free reign,” when “they have palaces to build and gardens to design.” These artists of themselves take delight in dominating their materials and subjecting them to “a single taste” (here we should keep in mind what Nietzsche and Burckhardt say about the great Italian gardens). In contrast

it is the weak characters with no power over themselves who *hate* the constraint of style ... Such minds – and they may be of the first rank – are always out to shape or interpret their environment (*Umgebungen*) as *free* nature – wild, arbitrary, disorderly, and surprising – and they are well advised to do so, because only thus do they please themselves!

This judgment echoes not only Burckhardt’s remarks about the English garden but happens to agree (consciously or not) with Kant’s aversion to some of the excesses he saw in the picturesque style.¹⁸

¹⁷ Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 191–199; for a critique of Nehamas’s further assumption that the appropriate literary model is a totally integrated organic unity – with implications for what it is to give style to one’s life – see Gary Shapiro, *Nietzschean Narratives*, Bloomington 1989, pp. 24, 86–89.

¹⁸ Kant had reservations about the tendency of the picturesque English garden towards excessive complexity; like the baroque taste in furniture, he says: “it carries the imagination’s freedom very far, even to the verge of the grotesque” (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar, Indianapolis 1987, p. 93).

Nietzsche had elaborated similar themes in *Daybreak*. In the aphorism “*Gardener and garden*” Nietzsche suggests

Out of damp and gloomy days, out of loveless words directed at us, conclusions grow up in us like fungus: one morning they are there, we know not how, and they gaze upon us, morose and gray. Woe to the thinker who is not the gardener but only the soil of the plants that grow in him! (D 382; cf. D 435)

Similarly, “One can dispose of one’s drives like a gardener, and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity, as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis; one can do it with the good or bad taste of a gardener and, as it were, in the French or English or Dutch or Chinese fashion” or one can, with minor adjustments, “let the plants grow up and fight their fight out among themselves – indeed, one can take delight in such a wilderness” (D 560). In this aphorism and a few others, Nietzsche constructs correspondences and analogies between styles of landscape painting and ways of structuring and representing aspects of one’s own nature. The garden-like care of the self is not simply and narrowly selfish; it can be exemplary for others. We have a choice between suppressing the self in concern for others, which would lead to our becoming homogeneous grains of sand, or “creating something out of oneself that the other can behold with pleasure: a beautiful, restful, self-enclosed garden perhaps, with high walls against storms and the dust of the roadway but also a hospitable gate” (D 174).

The promise of happiness

When he relates his dream of weighing the world, Zarathustra transvalues the traditionally despised dispositions of sensuality, the lust to rule, and selfishness. There he redefines sensuality as, among other things, “the garden happiness (*Garten-Glück*) of the earth, all futures’ exuberance of thanks to the now” (Z, On the Three Evils 2). It is this garden happiness which Zarathustra apparently feels free to enjoy, as he convalesces, upon the invitation of his animals. When Nietzsche expresses admiration for Epicurus and his “garden philosophy,” he emphasizes the importance of the garden as a protected refuge (as well as a site for the care of the self, discussed earlier). So far as the garden is a work of art, it exemplifies Stendhal’s saying that art is a “*promesse de bonheur*,” a position that Nietzsche opposes to the Kantian-Sopenhauerian theory that art and the aesthetic are forms of disinterested selfless contemplation (GM III 6). Readers will recall that Nietzsche’s published texts, his letters, and his notes are strewn with descriptions of his heightened, enticing experiences of landscape and scenery; especially suggestive is “*Et in Arcadia ego*” (WS 295) which portrays an Alpine landscape as mediated by the paintings of “Poussin and his pupil” (probably Claude Lorraine). The title does double duty: it is both that of two of Pous-

sin's celebrated paintings and the epigraph of Goethe's *Italian Journey*. Nietzsche's description of the scene is painterly, emphasizing its composition. This makes it garden-like in several ways: as an agricultural landscape it has already been humanly organized and the painters Nietzsche cites were those who were most influential in stimulating later garden design.¹⁹ One wonders whether it was experiences and texts like this that Nietzsche had in mind a few years later, when he reminded himself to think of landscape in less sentimental fashion (Nachlass 1880, 6[222], KSA 9.255–256).

The great tree of humanity

An intriguing but necessarily sketchy outline of what the earth might be like as a garden appears in a sequence of two sections of WS 188–189. In the first, “*Spiritual and physical transplantation as remedy*,” Nietzsche outlines a “medicinal geography” or “pharmacology” which would “send each person to the climate favorable to him – for a period of time or forever.” Each human culture can be considered as a “spiritual climate” which provides what may be nurturing or harmful conditions for specific “organisms,” i.e. people. Nietzsche sometimes described his task as that of a cultural physician; here such a doctor would prescribe relocation to individuals who are likely to better flourish in an alternative physical and spiritual climate. This is only the outline of a new discipline, for much still has to be learned about the advantages and disadvantages of the various sections of the earth for people of different constitutions. As such knowledge accumulates

nations, families and individuals must be gradually transplanted for as long and continuously as is needed for our inherited physical infirmities to be conquered. In the end, the whole earth will be a collection of health resorts (WS 188).

In other words, the cultural physician or pharmacologist of the future will see the earth as a resource for promoting the “garden happiness” of groups and individuals.

In the following section, “*Reason and the tree of humanity*”, Nietzsche reveals that (like virtually all his contemporaries) he has no worries about exhausting the

¹⁹ The famous tombstone inscription “et in Arcadia ego” that appears in two of Poussin's paintings known by this name has been subject to a variety of readings; in Nietzsche's aphorism, as in the epigraph to Goethe's *Italian Journey*, it apparently indicates nostalgia for a fragile beauty. The classic study of the iconology of the two Poussin paintings is Erwin Panofsky, *Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition*, in: Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning and the Visual Arts*, New York 1955, pp. 295–320. For a useful account of the importance of landscape painting, especially that of Poussin and Claude Lorrain, on landscape gardening see Gina Crandell, *Nature Pictorialized*, Baltimore 1993.

finite resources of the earth.²⁰ While some in “senile shortsightedness” fear that the earth is becoming overpopulated, he says, it is this profusion which “proffers the more hopeful their greatest task,” namely to reshape the earth as the ground of a great tree of humanity. Following Nietzsche’s image of a tree that “overshadows the whole earth,” and perhaps literalizing it a bit, the suggestion seems to be that future humanity in its many billions can grow upward and outward, relying on the nurturing ground and resources of the earth (here understood specifically as the globe). He realizes that the task he is imagining is “unspeakably great and bold.” In a rather different tone than the preceding section, which imagines health resorts for all, here Nietzsche envisions the cultivation of the “great tree” as an experimental project destined to last centuries and involving the suffering of “individuals, nations and ages.” However, the goal is “the great collective fruit tree of humanity.” Certainly there is much to question in this call to centuries of widespread sacrifice in order to reach a distant, relatively general goal through admittedly risky and as yet unformulated means. At least it can be said that Nietzsche does not minimize the risks. Yet the extravagant image of the great tree clarifies several aspects of “garden happiness.” The great garden (or rather the multiplicity of gardens) must be experimentally constructed, it will be differentiated according to varying needs of individuals and groups, and will make maximal use of earth’s resources for the sake of human flourishing. A related image of upward growth in *Beyond Good and Evil* is explicitly aristocratic. There Nietzsche compares the situation of a “good and healthy aristocracy” to that of “the *Sipo Matador*”:

the sun-seeking, Javanese climbing plant called the *Sipo Matador* will wrap its arms around an oak tree so often and for such a long time that finally, high above the oak, although still supported by it, the plant will be able to unfold its highest crown of foliage and show its happiness in the full, clear light (BGE 258).

The earlier “great tree” image not only places more emphasis on the collective good of the many billions who will flourish on it; it also differs from this analogy of the vines because it involves cultivation and planned experiment rather than a wild or merely natural growth. While the analogy of the Javanese vines is *only* an analogy between vegetative growth and the emergence of a happy aristocracy, the discussion of the great tree explicitly speaks of transforming the earth.

Nietzsche’s implicit assumption that humans will not destroy or exhaust the earth’s resources is expressed poetically in the Z chapter “On Great Events.” There Zarathustra declares that despite humans constituting a disease on the skin (surface) of the earth, “the heart of the earth is of gold.” This suggests the need for transformation and healing of humanity as a growth on the earth – in rather sharper terms

²⁰ For an exception see Max Weber, who wrote of the industrial capitalist compulsion to expand the exploitation of the earth “until the last ton of fossil fuel has burnt to ashes” (Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, New York 1958, p. 181).

than WS 188–189 – while also offering an unsupported faith in earth's potential for self-renewal. At the end of the “great tree” passage, Nietzsche describes the enormous project of preparing the earth as “a task for reason on behalf of reason!” It is a task for reason, we might say, to cultivate the earth with a view to human flourishing; that is, (experimental) reason must be employed in the transformation from haphazard growth to giant garden. It is also a task on behalf of reason, especially when reason is taken in the larger sense which Nietzsche frequently gives it, of the “greater reason” of the (spiritualized) body, a body forming the basis of a new pride “no longer to bury one's head in the sand of heavenly things, but to carry it freely, an earthen head (*Erden-Kopf*) that creates a sense (*Sinn*) for the earth!” (Z, On Believers in a World Behind) It is especially important to emphasize that reason is understood here as an experimental enterprise, rather than in terms of unchangeable formulas; Nietzsche envisions that the good gardeners of humanity are capable of learning from their experience.

The garden of Epicurus

Nietzsche frequently invokes Epicurus and his garden where tradition tells us that he conducted his meditations and discussions. The garden is both a place of refuge and solitude, providing congenial conditions for the philosopher's work and also a model for the care of the self. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche invokes the garden when warning the philosophers of the future against the dangers of martyrdom. They may find it necessary to flee or withdraw in order to accomplish their work. If so, they are admonished: “do not forget the garden, the garden with golden trelliswork! And have people who are around you who are like a garden, – or like music over the waters when evening sets and the day is just a memory” (BGE 25). In *The Gay Science*, Stoicism and Epicureanism are contrasted as two forms of self-cultivation: the Stoic seeks out the most difficult terrain and conditions in order to harden himself, swallowing “stones and worms, glass shards and scorpions” in order to become insensitive to all external threats. The Stoic likes to “act out his insensitivity before an invited audience, which is precisely what the Epicurean gladly eschews – for he has his ‘garden’!” This chimes with Nietzsche's introduction of Epicurus in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he takes the “garden god” Epicurus to have been calling Plato an actor with the word *Dionysiokolkes* which he applied to Plato and his followers. The Stoic way may be suitable for those who “live in violent times and depend on impulsive and changeable people.” But one who can expect a relatively long life will do better by opting for the way of the Epicurean garden, providing a situation suitable for his “extremely sensitive intellectual constitution” (GS 306). While there is some considerable variation in what the figure of Epicurus means for Nietzsche throughout his writings, I suggest that we pay particular attention to Epicurus' role in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche several times paired *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil* as two expressions, sometimes described as contrasting affirmative and negative forms,

of saying the same thing. In this perspective we can compare the garden of Z with that of BGE. The garden of Epicurus in BGE embodies the situation confronted by its critical free spirited readers. The latter, living in the problematic modernity described there, should be cultivating at least an openness toward a “philosophy of the future.” The affirmative garden of Z is a site of active design and cultivation, as well as a congenial blending of nature and culture. In BGE gardens are strategic places of retreat for philosophers whose decisive moment of action on the earth has not yet come. Nietzsche declares that his time is “the century of the *multitude (Menge)!*” (BGE 256)²¹; those who are vigilantly preparing for a significant event, a *kairos*, must be careful not to be misled, as the multitude typically is, by the theatrical tyrants who successively hold its attention (cf. BGE 263, 269, 274). In this context, Nietzsche sees the Epicurean garden as a place for watchful thought in current circumstances, an apotropaic protection comparable to the masks he often recommends.²²

Earth’s garden-happiness

Nietzsche draws on a rich tradition of religion, literature, and philosophy in thinking about the garden, which takes many forms: he constructs analogies between horticulture and the care of the self; celebrates masterful design that yields new and far-ranging perspectives; anticipates an earth transformed as the plantation site of Zarathustra’s “children” whom he calls “the trees of my garden and my finest soil” (Z, On Blissfulness Against One’s Will); imagines the earth itself as a great tree, expressing itself in multiple health resorts fine-tuned to the needs and powers of specific groups; and treasures the garden as a contemplative retreat for the thinker whose time or circumstances may be more congenial to understanding the earth’s situation than to the immediate and active pursuit of its transformation. Following Nietzsche’s declaration that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is his most important book, I have suggested that it is the more dynamic and cultivating themes that are involved in the world (or earth) that its hero sees awaiting him after the homecoming in which he fully embraces his most important thought. Yet Nietzsche’s multi-perspectival thinking also includes the “negative” or critical voice of *Beyond Good and Evil*, for whom the garden can be a site for a few select friends or the solitary thinker to avoid the seductions of the public sphere and to produce the equivalent of Epicurus’ reported three hundred books.

²¹ In contrast to the English translations I have consulted, I translate *Menge* as “multitude” here, on the basis of Nietzsche’s distinction between “*Massen*” und “*Menge*” (GS 149). For further discussion see Gary Shapiro, *Beyond Peoples and Fatherlands: Nietzsche’s Geophilosophy and the Direction of the Earth*, in: *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 35/36 (2008), pp. 9–27, here pp. 21–22.

²² Of course Nietzsche recognizes the possibility of misusing or perverting the garden theme. In DS 9 he accuses David Friedrich Strauss of theatricality, posing unsuccessfully as a lightly clad “Epicurean garden god.”