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Garden Thoughts (On Filming the Garden):
Memorial reflections after my film, *What Troubles the Peace at Brandenburg?*
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A garden is a place of silence. Silence effaces the world erected by everyday prattle and creates an opening into which things can emerge. But a garden's quiet is not devoid of power—its calm gathers and concentrates the energy by which things emerge into being and (what is the same on the side of the listener) the energy of attentiveness and expectation. The activity of speaking, like that of many musical phrases, ordinarily rushes us headlong into the future. The destitution that characterizes our age arises within our orientation toward the future: our being has become almost entirely being-toward-the-future. That orientation now all but defines what we have become. In the garden we learn about another kind of time: the silence we experience in the garden makes us aware of our duration, of the fact that our being is future-becoming-past. It makes us aware of our potential, calling us back from the forgetting caused by our involvement in actuality. The garden's silence can also make us know that time can stop.

The garden thus teaches us that the self and the world emerge together in an originary experience in which we encounter the world that lies around us as “ever already there.” And even though in this silent realm I encounter the heavens, the sun, earth and water as though they were “ever already given,” that my being and that of the world are ontologically bound together makes me know the world is my world, for here the ontological interdependence of the self and the world intimates itself to me. In this complex of self and world, I become a human being. The garden's silence affords the recognition that the call and its hearing-reception mutually belong together, that they are the selfsame. We learn, by participating in the energy of the garden's silence, that whatever is present is given to humans, that it, in its essence (*essence*), addresses itself to humans in their essence (*essence*). We learn here that the world never lost its unity, that the marvellous never departed. We become acquainted with originating experience, for whenever we adequately quiet ourselves and open ourselves in the garden, we can experience the Holy, for the first time. To experience, for the first time, our familiar reality as the Holy is to accept—and to accept every time anew, as though for the first time—the holy self. The silence of the garden calls us back to beginnings—to our own beginnings and to the beginning of the cosmos. For in the silence of the garden we can hear the reverberations that echo from the primordial Word. Attuning ourselves to these reverberations allows us to speak the word anew, for then our words are born of the Word. Silence creates a clearing that allows us to sense the potency of the word-made-new. With every uttering of the word-made-new, a wave of renewal passes across the surface of be-ing.

When perception is attentive, it responds not merely to the actual objects of experiences, but also to that which sustains their be-ing (i.e., that which makes them what they are). For this, perception must rise above what is given and experience the sacrifice of potentiality through which beings (objects) become actualized. But it does not learn to cherish this sacrifice by accepting the seamless appearance of things— things enframed in a seemingly continuous and unconflicted material reality. Rather, it learns this by opening itself to the ruptures and discontinuities from which experience arises (discontinuities that constitute the grain of a truer experience), and by attuning oneself to the convulsions and distortions from which beings arise. In doing so, silence revives the anxiety from which speaking delivers us time and again. It also discloses the meaning of that anxiety, for it harbours, as a potential gift, the threat of turning us back on ourselves, and so, of making us aware of nothingness.

A garden solicits us to become aware of the act of perceiving itself. A garden issues a call that, if

attended to, can lift one out of the naive standpoint where consciousness is absorbed by its object. The opening towards disclosure that characterizes the “be-ing there” (the *Dasein*) of human be-ing, opens itself towards that emptiness, that nothingness, that is the scene of beings’ coming-to-be. For through this alignment of human be-ing—human be-ing as an opening—with nothingness, we sense the being-together of human be-ing and what there was even before all creation. That is to say, we discover the primordiality of human be-ing’s being-with Be-ing—the co-primordiality of human be-ing and Be-ing—that makes human be-ing the image of the Divine. This essential unity also allows us to sense—however vaguely—the being-together of human be-ing and what there was even before all creation. Before the “beginning was the word,” be-ing belonged to silence; consequently, beings are still poised at the edge of silence. The garden can help us understand that be-ing consorts with the generative power of silence. Now more than ever we urgently need this space and emptiness, to experience the mystery of Be-ing.

A garden is a site pregnant with the possibilities of transformation: its dynamic stillness encourages us to open ourselves to the revelation that the past lingers within the present and the present bears the germ of the future. Opening oneself towards that revelation requires patience, for only patience can disclose the Mystery by which Be-ing becomes time. Patience teaches us to linger in the gift of the abiding present and to allow things to emerge into the lighted clearing of radiant appearing. It teaches us to cease manipulating things and to turn from willing to waiting. In giving oneself over to the mild patience to which the garden summons us, one becomes attuned to the still, silent, other side of the world, which is a realm of clamour. But this mild patience must be tempered by a resolute rigor, for it is certainly very hard to hear this still voice.

A renowned literary theorist known to all Canadians pointed out how common is the tale of the expulsion from the garden, which was continuous with our being—the tale of the fall into a sundered world, a world of fragments, a world where law was necessary for order, and of humans’ effort to recover a unified, integral cosmos. In expounding the epochal significance of that tale, he dwelt on the story of descent into a nether world, the *katabasis* that, in the end, grants vatic knowledge. Viewed in this context of that theory, the anguish that thoughtful people of our time feel is essentially an acute form of the feeling that Homer narrativized in *The Odyssey*—viz., nostalgia, which, according to the meaning of the original Greek, is the pain of returning home (*nostos*: return home; *algos*: pain). The anguish of our time is a call to go back, to return to some more primal, more immediate, and, perhaps less articulate, but certainly more genuine state—a vocation issued by the Ground of Be-ing summoning us to return to the destiny the Ground sets forth for us. But this call comes from afar, and calls us to an Afar, from the Beyond—be-ing which is also the Unmanifest. For this call is issued from anguish, and is conveyed through anguish to anguish—the Unmanifest discloses itself though anguish because it speaks from, and of, a form of absence replete with potential (all creation is *ex nihilo*).

Absence, after all, is not sheer nothingness—it is a hidden plenitude that gathers that which was and that which will be, and so constitutes a “no-longer” that is also a “not-yet.” Thus, the garden makes us aware that time, absence, and human be-ing are essentially related, for all three have the same character.

The silence of the garden intimates to us that beyond the Light there is Darkness; beyond the Known, there is the Obscure; beyond the totality of everything that is, there is Nothing. And every coming-into-appearance is concealing of this Other—the mysterious, the awful Always-More and Always-Hidden, which appears only by dissimulation, that is, by hiding or concealing Itself in disclosing things. Still, whatever is, is a revelatory note from the Unknown gleaned from the appearance of what is known. The Bright of the seen and the heard manifests itself in unison with the Dark of the Unseen and the Unheard. The Gods surprise us in their proximity to what surrounds us. The Dark, in all its Vastness, is very near to what is right at hand. We learn how closely linked together are beings and Nothingness, freedom and Necessity, simulacra and

the Real. Nor are the practical and the mysterious two separate things.

Silence harbours not only the binding powers of love, but also the power of a repellent terror—it is a *mysterium tremendum* as much as it is a *mysterium fascinans*. There is, then, an underworld to the garden's silence, an underworld of terror and death. The word that comes from silence is menaced by the matrix from which it issues, for that matrix is invested with a destructive and demonic power as much as with a generosity that grants be-ing. This dark side of silence invests the word that is still in touch with silence with a formidable, ungainly strength—the dark side of silence nourishes the word. The creating word delivers the life hidden in the Ground from non-Be-ing and converts it from potentiality into actuality; in doing so, it unifies the world of darkness (non-Be-ing) with that of light (be-ing and beings). But the abyssal demonic reacts against this unification, and wants to maintain the separation of truth and be-ing from actuality. When the demonic prevails, we founder.

But it is only in foundering that the call of the Absent One can be heard. Hence this anguish, too, can be understood as an opening, for it serves to make us ready to hear the call from the Ground and to prepare us for the only form of presencing the Unpresented can endure, that presencing that is registered in marks that the Unpresented leaves on beings as it withdraws so they can come forth into be-ing. Our anguished foundering can disclose what reason cannot—the Divine's anguished love for beings. The idea that the Omnipotent should be required to undergo anguish is repugnant to reason, but it can be disclosed by our anguish because our anguish resembles its own.

The secret language of things is vouchsafed only to those who can abide in that form of contemplation that allows the be-ing (the first actuality) of beings to enter into human be-ing, who can endure the violence of that form of charity that Keats called "negative capability." We who are slow and long deliberating are gradually learning to persevere in the face of the continuing failure of the gods to appear. We live in the hope of instilling into every glance that Light of Heaven through which things are disclosed and into every sound the echo of words that are joined to Word in their call to the Hidden. True thinking dwells within an originative unveiling that for the first time brings to light those beings that come to pass. Such thinking involves a sacrifice, for it rises above the things that are in order to allow what is Wholly Other than what is to be revealed. In thinking the Thought, the thinker sacrifices him/herself to and for originative and essential thinking itself: for we do not think this thought—it thinks in us. The sacrifice that the true thinker makes is also an implicit thanking, for it expresses the grace that accrues to human beings in being allowed to be, in their relations with things, the trustee of the power through which that which come to pass is made present. The original and essential thinking of human being is an echo within a human being of the Word of Be-ing, through which occurs any advential presencing.

But the sacrifice itself is wordless, as it is a form of devotion that unveils the illuminating Word that hides itself in the light shines within the be-ing of whatever is. In acknowledging this sacrifice, human being gives thanks that the presencing power of the Word is reflected into human words, that the Word finds a home in our common languages, the languages of men and women. Within the splendid and effulgent poverty of the sacrifice, the treasure of the incarnation of Be-ing appears, inasmuch as it is through the sacrifice of beings-that-are that the favour (grace) of Be-ing is bestowed on human beings. In essential thinking, we give thanks for the grace whereby the light of Word illuminates words and brings things out of obscurity into the presence of disclosure.

The garden issues a call that emanates from the Unthinkable. In art, the Unthinkable is evoked by that rupture whose sign is the cut, but it is never actually represented within the rupture. Yet despite being unrepresentable, the unthinkable lies within the domain of thinking, just as the unsayable lies within the domain of language. The reason for this correspondence is evident: it arises from the fact that no thinking is possible in the absence of the material signifier. So it is,

too, with perception: the transcendent is paradoxically immanent within that which it transcends. Attentive perception opens itself to the inconspicuous ways that the absolute creates ripples (or leaves traces of itself) in experience, without allowing itself to be thematized. Of course, the manifestation of what transcends attentive perception never takes the form of beings; rather, these manifestations have the character of ruptures, gaps, and distortions that the absolute introduces into what the inattentive mind takes to be the unruffled web of experience. Because it is always on the point of returning to nothingness, the abyss is a structuring factor for the cinematic image. A cinematic image, therefore, cannot be a form carved into matter. Rather, it is fundamentally a matrix of temporal relations (temporal relations, too, hover between being and nothingness) and that are not visible in the photographed object itself. By blocking together past, present and future, the image makes these temporal relations felt. Time is intimate with the Open, out of which beings emerge. Thus, the image helps make the Open palpable, even though it does not present it. The cinematic image turns us towards the earth—the world is composed of definite things and resists change, while earth (the whole, duration) undergoes constant change. Its capacity to convey change and transformation gives the cinema a relation to the primordial—though many try to deny it—by imposing “good form” on cinema’s fluxing character to arrest change. Change—transformation—is the most fundamental effect of the cinema. This change should be liberated, by being released from the controls of narrative and good form, for doing so will enable the screened cinema to more closely approximate the cinema of things.

Cinematography likewise (and perhaps even more truly) extends the work of creation: the pictures that cinematography presents allow the pure language of things to re-address themselves to human being. Cinematography is a pure extension of the creation—its reiteration, so to speak: cinematography is an act of cherishing, of recommending something to our attention, and so to our love. André Bazin noted that photography, and especially cinematography, offers “the natural image of the world” we can neither know or see. The pictures that cinematography presents allow the pure language of things to re-address themselves to human being, and to their love. Bergson stated, “Wherever anything lives, there is, open somewhere, a register in which time is being inscribed.” This register is a cinema in nature, which the cinema we see on the screen duplicates. The discourse that things address to human being resonates when they are translated to the screen, and by that resonance, the cinema can provoke a sensation of the inner being of things. It puts on display the life hidden in non-being becoming actual, and it does so by unifying the world of darkness with that of the light. Thereby is God’s creation completed.

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But what of those gardens where I filmed *What Troubles the Peace at Brandenburg?*, these gardens close to the sites of *Abendland's* great historical calamity, the gardens of Maunthausen, Dachau, and Brandenburg-an-der-Havel, where the idea of *Lebensunwertes Leben* was first put in practice? Yes, the calamity has imperilled memory itself—not even willingly exposing oneself to suffering allows one to recall the disaster, since memory and disaster are incompatible. Memory is connected to place, for memory demands an originary place, a home to return to, a place that offers a refuge for the winged. Memory cannot endure in a place of sheer destruction. But the charity of the garden's be-ing grants the garden a resilience, so even these gardens help return us to the Ground, and in this way, summon what has departed to the realm of the demonic gods back to the human realm. In the particular silence of these fraught places, we can experience still history's remains: what has departed intimates itself in the ripples that flutter across this surface stillness to trouble the peace here—those perturbations intimate the pure appearance of nothing. The memorials nearby—sites of technologically planned, technologically managed and technologically effected mass death—are less effective as mnemotectic devices than these places that calm and silence cannot completely take back to itself.

The silence of these troubled places reminds us that the silence that is the matrix of $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ belongs to an order that is remote from that of ordinary human life. "Make no mistake," these garden say, "the demonic is powerful." Silence harbours an inhumane, demonic element that continually threatens to invade the human world. The divine $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ corals the demonic into submission: when speaking arises from Love, the word is defended against the incursion of the demonic. But when the word falls away from Love, an absence perforates it and exposes it to the demonic. Consequently, when the word falls away from Love, the demonic power can drive out $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ ' creative power. Human languages easily become perverse: a dark and elemental force invades speaking, which becomes clamorous. Then noise spreads war, anti-semitism, the folly of hysteria, political diatribes, the ignorance embodied in the mass-media's anti-government prejudice, empty and cynical beliefs, and pseudo-learning. Then speaking is no longer a decision of Love—so speaking becomes unthinking babbling. Thought becomes automatic; an evil that is not even decided for becomes part of the verbal noise that spreads everywhere. Humans no longer notice what is conveyed to them in $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$: noise makes all our decisions for us. Every saying is uttered without any human decision, and events take place as though by black magic that levels all things and co-ops everyone to become an agent of its menace.

If the history to which these gardens testify reminds us that clamour that perverts thinking, their uncanny, elemental silence also issues a call that summons us to return to the place where Love decides what is spoken. Then the $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ once again becomes creative. The matrix out of which beings emerge is remote, hidden, inscrutable to humans—but human be-ing is nonetheless related to the Inscrutable, for the $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, in which humans have their be-ing, is the first determination of the Absconditum, the universal principle of Love at the centre of the cosmic cosmos. Human be-ing, as the namer, participates in this ordering love, by allowing pure language to speak within the human languages.

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History teaches us that those who wait in despair are very close to salvation and that anguish itself is very close to insight. When we open ourselves to the abyss of nothingness that harbours the potential of becoming-be-ing, we learn that reason (as moderns conceive it) is the adversary of thought. The fate of the modern technological era involves the degradation of the external world by reducing it to the empty and unsubstantial nothingness of mathematical abstractions. But even this degradation creates an opening for a new creation. If we hold ourselves attentive, the silence of the garden can vouchsafe to us another form of the future (the knowledge vouchsafed to the hero by the *katabasis*, remember, is often knowledge of the future)—a future that lies ahead of us as an opening, or as an emptiness that harbors possibilities and is pregnant with the promise of new world-founding acts.

The exultation of human be-ing is the discovery that human be-ing completes the work of creation by enabling what is mute, or what became mute through the Fall, to speak. As Benjamin stated, muteness is "the deep sadness of nature." "It is a metaphysical truth," Benjamin told us, "that all nature would begin to lament if it were endowed with language . . . Speechlessness: that is the great sorrow of nature (and for the sake of her redemption the life and language of *man*—not only, as is supposed, of the poet—are in nature). . . . Lament, however, is the most undifferentiated, impotent expression of language; it contains scarcely more than the sensuous breath; and even where there is only a rustling of plants, in it there is always a lament. Because she is mute, she mourns" (Benjamin, "On Language" 329)

While it is certainly true that because nature is mute, she mourns; but the converse is even truer: because nature mourns, she is mute. The sadness of nature, brought on by her harbouring the burden of history, makes her mute. But nature finds consolation for that lamentation in cinematography, and by reason of this consolation, it exalts. Cinematography discloses the beauty of the λόγος's inscription, and so releases nature's glorification of Him. To glorify the Creator is the reason—the cause and the purpose, the *A* and the Ω —of all exaltation. Hearing the mute language of things demands an openness, in order to allow the gifts of be-ing to come to presence—the receiving of which is the mission of photography. Photography perhaps is not creative, but is something higher, for it is a practice which enables the fugitive discourse of things to be preserved. This miracle of such a memorial device should not be shunned, but rather should to be taken up as the wonder it is.

But even as the image, the "seen" form, enters into human be-ing in this wondering abiding with things, and even as, at the same time, the "unseen" but visible gestalt form enters into human be-ing, so too does an unseen and, indeed, invisible principle. It is an activity, a power, a potentiality, an *energeia* that actualizes all that becomes present. (Gardens offer instruction in this primordial *mysterium*.) It operates according to what I call an apophantic logic, whereby a generative element registers itself in the be-ing of beings only by being eclipsed by what it brings forth—or by obscuring itself in the shadow cast by the light through which beings show themselves. (How like the shadows in these lighted clearings in these pictures this *mysterium* is!) This *mysterium* operates behind the constraints of repression, and is known only through the phantasmic constructions which it produces—constructions which reveal the unseen only by concealing it. So it is with images, or what Stan Brakhage calls "pictures." Perhaps they are, as Brakhage claims, regulated by the economy of language; but that regulation is inevitable

anyway, for the world as it comes forth in consciousness, and indeed thought itself, is always already articulated in—already structured by—distinctions and oppositions. That is inevitable; and it is what explains the “correspondence” between thought and the world. It also explains why it is, as Adorno pointed, that every unified work of art is a “pseudomorphosis” of verbal language.

To quote Benjamin again:

Hölderlin’s translations from Sophocles were his last work; in them meaning plunges from abyss to abyss until it threatens to become lost in the bottomless depths of language. There is, however, a stop. It is vouchsafed to Holy Writ alone, in which meaning has ceased to be the watershed for the flow of language and the flow of revelation [that is, language and revelation flow in the same direction in the Holy Writ]. Where a text is identical with truth or dogma, where it is supposed to be “the true language” in all its literalness and without the mediation of meaning, this text is unconditionally translatable . . . Just as, in the original, language and revelation are one without any tension, so the translation must be one with the original in the form of the interlinear version, in which literalness and freedom are unity. For to some degree all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines; this is true to the highest degree of sacred writings (Benjamin, “The Task” 81–82).

But the λόγος also wrote all things into the Book of Creation. The discourse of things constitute a Holy Writ. The cinema was born to make the sins of the originary language visible again, and to do this simply by repeating the originary ενεργεια—cinema’s images are a manifestation of nature’s power to make an image of itself, and so, by repeating it, make manifest nature’s ενεργεια. Or, as Benjamin might have had it, the cinema image makes manifest natures ενεργεια by translating it—indeed, by providing it with an interlineal translation, with the text being translated and the text that is the translation belong seamlessly to a single work that fuses literalness (the cinematographic image is mimetic) and freedom (the cinematic image is brought forth by an ενεργεια that endows it with its own destiny, independent what it represents). Because it is without the mediation of meaning, the text of the world is unconditionally translatable. “Cinematography” is the name for the process of translating the discourse of things, of filling in the translation between the lines in the sacred text that the λόγος composed—an activity that results in a sort of interleaving of the translated images of things with things themselves. In the course of making that translation, I, too (yet an unpatched fool), am translated.

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