IX
Gestaltung der Umwelt

Landscape and Environment

In his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, landscape architect Gilles Clément introduces the garden as a sort of *imago*, in a similar way to how Corbin described it: the garden is what appears in the double reflection of two images, the ones of "landscape" (*paysage*) and of "environment." *Landscape*, according to Clément, is "what lies under the expanse of our gaze" and thus "appears to be essentially *subjective*."[1] *Environment*, on the other hand, "is the exact opposite of landscape in as much as it attempts to give an *objective* interpretation of

1 Gilles Clément, *Gardens, Landscape and Nature's Genius*, trans. Elzélina Van Melle (Aarhus: IKAROS Press, 2020), §7.

our surroundings."[2] Clément's articulation of a vision of nature through landscape and environment surprisingly echoes the double speculation of Corbin's two "mirrors": two poles that, whenever not "bridged" on the level of the imaginal, fall into a dualistic logic of an *objective* versus a *subjective* vision of nature.

Nevertheless, this is not the only opposition they stand for: in Clément's account, the landscape is, on the one hand, not only subjective but also *sensible*; on the other hand, the environment is not only objective but also *intelligible*. Landscape is a sort of quintessence of the sensible; it is, in Clément's words, "whatever remains after we have stopped looking; whatever stays in the mind once we have stopped using our senses within a space occupied by the body."[3] Environment is instead "the shareable side of the landscape." As such, it is an intelligible image: "a scientific interpretation provided by

2 "It is also the shareable side of landscape: a scientific interpretation provided by tools that anyone—regardless of culture—can understand and consider in the same way. The acidity or alkalinity of the soil (pH) is measured in the same way in Europe, Asia or Africa, with the same tools, and communicated in the same words. The sounds of a site, the radioactive emissions of a rock, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the pollution rate of a river etc, are all quantified in the same precise ways all over the planet, leading to a kind of 'technical Esperanto' that allows a scientific reading of our environment." Clément, §9.
3 "For the blind, it may be what is within the reach of all the other senses." Clément, §6.

instruments of analysis that anyone—regardless of culture—can understand and consider in a comparable way."[4] Sensible and subjective, intelligible and objective, these two images find their transcendental mediation in the "third" image of the garden:

> The garden escapes cultural divides. *Garden* refers to the *environment* only to establish in it the good rules of gardening and to *landscape* only as it never stops engendering it.[5]

Not only the garden transcends the duality of environment and landscape: similarly to the image, it disentangles them from a rigid opposition and articulates them in a double articulation—it enacts the double duplication proper of the speculative image. In it, the sensible nature of landscape is not just subjective but also objective, as it is "engendered" by the garden; at the same time, the intelligible character of environment opens its unquestionable objectivity—the one of a "stern,

4 Clément, 24. Translation altered: "instruments of analysis" instead of "tools" and "comparable" instead of "same," in accordance with the original French version: "une lecture scientifique fournie par les instruments d'analyse que chacun, quelle que soit sa culture, peut entendre et apprécier de façon comparable." See: Gilles Clément, *Jardins, paysage et génie naturel: Leçon inaugurale prononcée le jeudi 1er décembre 2011* (s.l.: Collège de France, 2012) §9.
5 Here directly translated from French: "Le jardin échappe aux divisions culturelles. *Jardin* ne se réfère à l'*environnement* que pour y établir les règles heureuses du jardinage, et au *paysage* pour les seules raisons qu'il ne cesse d'en créer." Clément, §14.

smooth account"[6]—to an establishment of rules that, as such, implies what could be understood as a subjective involvement. Like the image, the garden has a *dispositional* character: it is the locus in which reception and transformation, syntropy and entropy are placed in relation to each other, where they "touch."

The "meridian" of the garden casts a horizon—a *Gesichtkreis*—that separates and joins together environment and landscape: for the first, such a horizon is, similarly to the one of crisis, one of accountability, of possible renderings. Something unintelligible and "elusive" can be presented within this circle "as a stern, smooth account in which the active elements, stripped of all sensitivity, are interpreted as debits and credits."[7] The horizon of the environment delimits a space within which the living (*le vivant*) is "commodified."[8] The one of environment is a domain of *translation*; its "language" of debits and credits is what Clément calls a "technical Esperanto." Landscape instead is the

6 Clément, *Gardens, Landscape and Nature's Genius*, §11.
7 "[...] enabling us to calculate, invest and speculate. The environment is reduced to the apparently controllable accountancy of biology, which is complex and hard to understand and master." Clément, §11.
8 "While life keeps inventing, moving from the unpredictable to the predictable, calibrated and estimated environmental data can give way to something that nature's own data never has: the commercialisation of living matter [*la marchandisation du vivant*]." Clément, §11.

image of what is *beyond* this horizon, what is not (yet) translated and can hence only be *transcribed*: as a "feeling," landscape can be transcribed, for example, in a painting.[9] Landscape and environment seem to share a similar difference to the one between Name and language.[10]

Primacy of the Garden

In the "optics" of the garden, environment and landscape are not opposed but "perpendicular" to each other—their difference is thus categorical. They belong to domains of determination that are principally *alternative* to each other, and, from an analytical point of view, they seem to be subjected to a sort of indeterminacy principle. One is a matter of *resolution*: landscape has no scale and cannot be universally defined, according to Clément. "In theory, there are as many landscapes about a site as there are people to interpret it."[11] The other is a matter of *position*: Clément exploits the ambiguity

9   "Landscape appears to be essentially subjective because it is a transcription of a feeling, as for example in a painting (the first landscapers were painters, not planners)." Clément, §7.
10   See Book III of the present work, "Troping Line."
11   "There is no scale to landscape; it may be vast or tiny, made of all kinds of material—alive or inert—and located anywhere, without limits or horizons. [...] These facts make landscape impossible to define universally. Thus, theoretically, for one given site there are as many landscapes as there are individuals to interpret it." Clément, *Gardens, Landscape and Nature's Genius*, §6-8.

between *environment*, "that which is at a distance from us," and *milieu ambiant*, a term that "suggests a state of immersion rather than distance" in order to show how the horizon of accountability of environment could be looked at from two antinomic positions, two different world-views: one of "supremacy" with the world—the point of view of an observer that looks at it while pretending to leave it unaffected by the observation—and one of "equality" with it, in which object and subject, world and human find themselves in a *common* picture.[12] Like the image, the garden mediates between an organic and realistic perspective; it establishes what Jacques Lacan would have called a relation between an *Innenwelt* and an *Umwelt*.[13] This absolute alterity

12 "These two terms are intended to give us the most scientific and objective interpretation of nature, and obviously lead to two distinct attitudes, two outlooks on life, two ways of understanding ecology. We will have an opportunity to return to this, but all the same, we can note that terms supposed to imply notions that are shared worldwide in fact express different ways of apprehending the world. Taking this as our starting point, it would be interesting to ask the question metaphorically: which language do we want to speak? The language of supremacy, or of equality with nature?" Clément, §13. Michel Foucault described the *milieu* as a notion "needed to account for action at a distance of one body on another." The milieu is, at the same time, "the medium of an action and the element in which it circulates." Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-78* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 35–36.
13 "The function of the mirror stage thus turns out, in my view, to be a particular case of the function of imagos, which is to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality—or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*." Lacan is here speaking of the "*imago* of one's own body," an image that the garden would extend

between the "positional" nature of environment and the "resolutional" one of landscape is articulated within the garden. It is the imaginal locus in which these different worlds "touch," and as such, it is pre-specific to them: there is, to paraphrase Coccia, a "primacy of the garden."

The environment's ambiguity between "supremacy" and "equality," between a position that is uninvolved in the affairs of the milieu and one in the midst of it, is what the garden addresses by making room for it. Therefore, it is not surprising that the garden stands between the private and the public, between a domestic realm that articulates itself in supremacy and enslavement and a public one here understood as a realm of commonality. In their *Concise History of Gardens*, Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shéhérazade Giudici write that the garden "is a far more complex artifact," one able to "confuse" (and perhaps even to reorient) "the existing juridical categories."[14] The garden is thus what they call a "common ground," something not really public but not even fully private. Gardening constitutes the first act of domestication and, consequently, a way to mark private property within a non-pri-

beyond mere psychoanalytical concerns. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1996), 77–78. See also: Coccia, *Sensible Life*, 58.

14 Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shéhérazade Giudici, "A Concise History of Gardens," *Accattone*, October 2019, 222.

vate realm.[15] At the same time—Aureli and Giudici stress—the garden can establish an open, public dimension within a non-public realm. "The garden could be a way to *profane* the idea of private property,"[16] they conclude. If profanation could be understood as a way to pierce a "sacred" boundary in order to subtract what could have potentially turned into public matter and to "privatize" it, the same process appears here inverted: it still pierces that boundary but in the other direction. The garden turns some part of the environment into a "property"; it establishes a boundary and, simultaneously, a communication between what is "improper," *ouk oikeia*, and what is "proper," *oikeia*.[17]

15   "The history of gardens thus coincides with one of the most controversial processes of human history: the domestication of society. Early sedentary communities did not just build homes, but started to define their own territory by domesticating forests, building boundaries and enclosing spaces. Gardens therefore embody the original ambivalence of the domestic space as both a way to give stability and orientation to life and as instruments to mark land property." Aureli and Giudici, "A Concise History of Gardens," 216.

16   Aureli and Giudici, 222. Emphasis added. Quite paradigmatic is the case of the Roman domus, in which the garden—the *peristylium*—constituted the most 'private' and, at the same time, the most public space of the house: "Hidden at the most private end of the domus, the peristylium was meant to celebrate the pastoral ideal of the house as a space of retreat; yet its monumentality also addressed an ostensible public dimension as it was the place where the homeowner entertained guests." Aureli and Giudici, "A Concise History of Gardens," 218.

17   Gardening can be understood "as the way in which humans domesticate the environment by giving it a form," it "can be considered a way to make a 'world' endowed with a sense of familiarity and ori-

The "Natural" Project

Therefore, the garden's properness is not limited to a matter of land: it is nature itself—as an "elusive whole"—to be "housed" in its perimeter. Even the weather, perhaps the most unpredictable of all natural things, is given place and form in the garden: the *impluvium*, a monumental pool collecting rainwater at the center of the Roman house, being perhaps the most paradigmatic example. Both weather and time—both chronological and meteorological *tempora*—are suspended and rearranged in the garden. In what architect and urbanist Ludwig Hilberseimer would have called a *Gestaltung der Umwelt*,[18] environment is here turned into landscape, and this "engendering," as Clément calls it, cannot happen but by establishing some "good rules" within the environment, hence by continuously crossing and thus redefining the border between supremacy and equality. If, on the one hand, the garden "incorporates" the unpredictability of the weather,

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entation." Aureli and Giudici, "A Concise History of Gardens," 216. In this sense, the garden is never *generic*: its space "can cater to a large number of people and be very inclusive, generous, open places, but not generic spaces that should fit 'anyone.'" Aureli and Giudici, "A Concise History of Gardens," 222.

18 Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Metropolisarchitecture and Selected Essays*, ed. Richard Anderson (New York: GSAPP Books, 2012). I developed this specific topic more in-depth in "The Umwelt as a Project. Designs of the Urban Milieu in the Age of Bio-Power," *OASE Journal for Architecture*, No. 104 (2019): 103–12.

on the other, the very making of the garden is an act that cannot happen but *in time* since, as Aureli and Giudici stress, "it does not happen all at once but is constantly performed as the garden evolves across years and seasons."[19] The garden cannot be considered in a logic of mere production since it does not develop into a process with an outcome. In this sense, "gardening is more about maintenance than execution."[20] The garden is a space made of time; it "contains" time and is "contained" by it.

In *The Life of Plants*, Emanuele Coccia describes the environment of the vegetable kingdom precisely in terms of a relation between these two categories: "In all climates, the relation between the container and the contained is constantly reversible: what is place becomes content, what is content becomes place."[21] Such a relation is what is actively articulated within the garden, in terms of interiority and exteriority, an articulation that has a *cosmic* significance: if, as Coccia writes, "the world is the space of a universal mixture in which each thing contains and is contained by all other things," interiority as the fact of being contained

19   Aureli and Giudici, "A Concise History of Gardens," 223.
20   Aureli and Giudici, 223. "[T]he making of a garden blurs the traditional distinction between design and construction that since the Renaissance has ruled the discipline." 216.
21   Emanuele Coccia, *The Life of Plants: A Metaphysics of Mixture* (Medford, Massachusetts: Polity, 2018), 27.

by something, "is the relation that ties each thing to all other things, the relation that defines the being of worldly things."[22] The definition of this interiority allows for a distinction between animate and inanimate that is not a priori but somewhat always relative to the architectonic articulation—the orientation—of that transcendental perimeter. Plants, Coccia writes:

> demonstrate that life is a rupture in the asymmetry between container and contained. When there is life, the container is located in the contained (and is thus contained by it), and vice versa. The paradigm of this mutual overlap is what the ancients called "breath" (*pneuma*). To blow, to breathe—means to have this experience: what contains us, the air becomes contained in us; and, conversely, what was contained in us becomes what contains us.[23]

The garden embodies at an architectural scale such rupture of asymmetry between container and contained, articulating a "breath," a *pneuma*, whose "body" is not just an individual one. This breath "percolates" through the garden and is articulated by it: this implies that, within the garden, time

22 Coccia, 67. The garden articulates the cosmic significance as an act of *cosmesis*, and the relation between the *cosmos* and *cosmesis* is not just etymological but architectonic. On this topic, see Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Ornament," *The Art Bulletin* 21, No. 4 (December 1939): 375–82.
23 Coccia, *The Life of Plants*, 10.

"passes massively,"[24] as the garden establishes a sort of filter through which an absolute otherness—one that is not tied to any particular subject—is there accommodated and reified. "Throughout its history," Aureli and Giudici write, "the garden has always been a laboratory for forms of otherness."[25] The garden would not only welcome and accommodate otherness but also invent its form, objectifying the apparent immateriality of the *pneuma*. As Coccia stressed in the *Sensible Life*:

> It is a mistake to define man and life *tout court* on the basis of their capacity to spiritualize the object. Life is also the ability to reify the spirit, to objectify it, to alienate it. And the first form of alienation and realization of the spirit is the image.[26]

24   The concepts of "percolation" and of a time that "passes massively" are borrowed from: "Chronopedia I: Counting Time" in Vera Bühlmann, *Mathematics and Information in the Philosophy of Michel Serres* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

25   Aureli and Giudici, "A Concise History of Gardens," 223.

26   "The sensible is not only the place of abstraction of forms from their matter (consciousness in its first stage), but it is also and above all the process of reification (*Verdinglichung*), of alienation, of *transforming* the spirit and the Subjective *into sensation*. [...] What lives [*vivente*], in this sense, is not only those who know how to carry the things of the world within itself, transforming the forms of objects into intentions, images of the mind, immanent and 'personal' objects, but they are—above all—those capable of giving sensible existence to what lives within them." Coccia, *Sensible Life*, 50–51. On a similar note, Michel Serres writes: "No human collectivity exists without things; human relations go through things, our relations to things go through men: this is the slightly more stable space described by laws." Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 45

The image "reifies and objectifies" the spirit, like plants are the "demonstration" of the *pneuma*. It is not just a matter of demonstration as much as of ideation: rather than phenomenology, it is a matter of what Coccia calls a "phenomenotechnique." In the garden, like in the image, the world is not sensible but *made* sensible.[27] In revealing while shaping a particular spirit, garden and image could perhaps come close to the notion of artwork, except that, differently from the latter, both garden and image do not just *take* but also *make* room.[28] Such an architectural translation of spirit resonates with the work of many vital figures of the Modern Movement in architecture, from Le Corbusier's *Esprit Nouveau* to Hilberseimer's conception of metropo-

27 "Strictly speaking, there is no phenomenology: there is only a 'phenomenotechnique.' The things of the world, in fact, *must* be made sensible: the must be transformed into images." Coccia, *Sensible Life*, 35. Lars Spuybroeck later developed a similar notion under "phenotechnology." See Lars Spuybroek, *Grace and Gravity: Architectures of the Figure* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

28 Heidegger's reflections on the "origin of the work of art" meet here Schmitt's reflections on *nomos* and *Raum*. See Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–56; Martin Heidegger, "The Provenance of Art and the Destination of Thought (1967)," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 44, No. 2 (2 May 2013): 119–28. Carl Schmitt, 'Nomos – Nähme –Name', in *Staat, Großraum, Nomos: Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1916–1969*, ed. Günther Maschke (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995), 573–91; Carl Schmitt, "Raum und Rom – Zur Phonetik des Wortes Raum," in *Staat, Großraum, Nomos: Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1916–1969*, ed. Günther Maschke (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995), 491–95.

lises as "intersections of human activity, economics and spirit."[29] At the same time, Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright articulated in their buildings the breaking of asymmetry between container and contained—an operation described by the latter as "the destruction of the box."[30]

As a border between properness (and property) and improperness, of Aristotelian *oikeia* and *ouk oikeia*, the garden is indeed a matter of domestication as much as of inhabitation: it establishes a "habit," and it does so not just arbitrarily, but by confronting itself with a substantial otherness. "Natural genius" is the name that Clément gives to such otherness: as a *genius*, nature acquires an intellectual potency—it becomes both object and subject. The garden is, therefore, not just a place for the rearrangement *of* nature, but *with* nature—it is the place of what Michel Serres called a "natural contract," in the sense of a contract with nature. The garden is the locus of a peace treaty with nature, of a *foedus naturae*. Such a formulation might

29   Hilberseimer, *Metropolisarchitecture*, 84. This specific aspect of the Modern Movement was also developed in "The Umwelt as a Project. Designs of the Urban Milieu in the Age of Bio-Power," 103–12.
30   "You have established a natural use of glass according to this new freedom of space. Space may now go out or come in where life is being lived, space as a component of it. So organic architecture is architecture in which you may feel and see all this happen as a third dimension." Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Destruction of the Box," in *An American Architecture*, ed. Kaufmann Edgar (New York, NY: Horizon Press, 1955).

nevertheless lead to the misunderstanding that this "contract" or this "pact" is what always comes after and upon a prior and underlying state of war. However, this is not so: it is up to the contract to establish the terms both of peace and war—to *name* them. No war (nor peace) is there "before" the contract. Like in Averroes the image would articulate itself in prime and ultimate perfection, so the natural contract establishes a balance in maxima and minima: *au minimum, la guerre; à l'optimum, la paix.*[31] Likewise, the garden is not a place of order upon a prior disorder; it is instead what *profiles* one against the other. Its tidiness is not opposed to the wildness of the forest; it is instead an "instance" of it: it is only by embracing the wildness, collecting, cultivating, and carefully selecting its species that the garden can happen—but this means that many other orders can be "hidden" and "encrypted" in the wildness, like incomprehensible tongues waiting to be heard.

In its "contractual" character, the garden here rises as the image of a *natural project*: as an image that is not entirely alienated from the "reality" of nature and therefore "un-determined," just like a caprice or a phantasy, but rather as the opening up

31 Michel Serres, *Le contrat naturel* (Paris: Éditions François Bourin, 1990), 41. "This is the state, the balanced account, of our relations with the world [...] At the very least, war; ideally, peace." *The Natural Contract*, 20.

of a room of "free" determination in the context of a pre-determined space. As Clément states, the garden "appears as the sole and unique meeting ground of humankind and nature, where dreaming is allowed":[32] actuality and potency, "real" time and "dream" time, light and matter are here weaved in together.

32   Clément, *Gardens, Landscape and Nature's Genius*, §15. "[T]he garden is also a space of experimentation where nature was reinvented and manipulated—in turn, a blueprint for the organization of the world outside its walls, or a deliberately idiosyncratic alternative that radically opposed the surrounding reality. Even if the garden can host production, it is not necessarily a productive space: it is a projection of a life ambition that, in history, has gone well beyond mere work to aim at pleasure, meditation, agonism, debate, hedonism, love, spiritual retreat, play, art, friendship and many more aspects of human experience that are often devalued today, when the economy is the ruling paradigm of our existences. From this point of view, gardens are idle, almost useless in the contemporary city—and can therefore represent a challenge to the status quo. To reimagine a garden also means to rethink what we believe makes life worth living." Aureli and Giudici, "A Concise History of Gardens," 216. "The garden symbolizes, allegorizes and often sublimates power conditions that define the territory at large within the microcosm of a finite form. It is, at the same time, a blueprint of things to come and an alternative to the reality of the surrounding reality; while it can have a pragmatic purpose, such as the provision of foodstuffs, it is never purely pragmatic device but, rather, an attempt to construct a model, a form of life that is not (yet) possible outside its walls." Aureli and Giudici, "A Concise History of Gardens," 217.