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EDITOR'S NOTE

Excerpts from the Inaugural Lecture 1st December 2011

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- 1 "Garden" refers to the environment only to establish felicitous rules of gardening and to *landscape* for the sole reason that it is constantly creating gardens. The garden, everywhere in the world, signifies both *enclosure* and *paradise*.
- 2 The enclosure protects. Within the enclosure we find the *best*: that which we consider to be the most valuable, the most beautiful, the most useful and the most conducive to balance. The idea of the best changes with historical periods. The architecture of the garden reflecting this idea therefore also changes. It is a matter not only of organizing

nature according to a scenographic representation of appeasement, but also to express therein an accomplished thought about the period in which we are living, a relationship with the world, a political vision. Irrespective of the stylistic figure and the architecture stemming from it, over time, the garden appears as the only territory where Humans and Nature meet each other, in which dreaming is allowed.

- 3 I won't say that beyond the enclosure lies the worst (as opposed to the best), but one does find there the wild unknown, hence disquiet, the city that is both oppressing and convenient, a land of unexpected encounters and necessary interactions, a mix of duties and prohibitions, the territory of rules, obligations and domestic relations, where basic issues of survival empty the public space of its obvious poetry to present it as a place of avoidance and confrontation. Outside the garden, human society is asked to suspend a dream to defend its social position or simply to exist. Within the garden, existential harassment disappears; it is no longer a matter of knowing where to head for and on what form of etiquette to base one's gestures and gaze; there is no question of the mode of adjustment to a so-called modernity; no point in impressing the birds by some or other performance in a managerial spirit of competitiveness. In the garden one just has to *be*, and that calls for silence.
- 4 The silence that I am talking about does not concern the space of the enclosure – by nature subjected to the discreet din of the animals – but that which one has to find deep within oneself by ridding oneself bit by bit of burdensome knowledge, just as one does with useless clothes. The presence of the garden implies a naked mind and an exposed body. Then it is possible to take the risk of dreaming.
- 5 The garden allows one to disarm. Whosoever enters the garden barded with certainties has taken the wrong door, for even if the garden is “botanical”, filled with scientific labels, it is not science that it asks us to appreciate with devotion, but the incredible project of being given the keys of life forms via a scientific approach immediately ward off by the brilliance of petals, the buzzing of a bumble bee, the pilgrimage of ants, the mournful cry of the black woodpecker, and suddenly that light on the rusty grass of summer that throws an unknown, and therefore new, undergrowth into the shadows.
- 6 Where exactly does the mystery lie, in this distorted perspective that transforms a familiar object into a vision, or in the inventive power of life – peculiar to the garden and its profusion – that compels the gardener to change his or her point of view daily? Before understanding, let us be sure of our amazement. In this fragile phase of surprise in the garden – the mind naked and the body exposed – we test the child's gaze while he or she is still free, before learning by heart or by force the litany of the rules of life. In this adventurous journey, the sign “Don't walk on the grass” would make us laugh or doubt that we had entered a real garden, unless it had been put there simply to surprise us.
- 7 We don't know what exactly “the best” consists of since it varies with time. What we formerly maintained outside the enclosure – the wild, the weeds – is now moving into the garden. It may even be its main subject. We may well wonder what has changed so suddenly in the History of Humanity, for a discredited value to become a valued treasure. What is this grass that dictates its law to us?
- 8 In the past few decades the garden, limited to the space of the gardener – *l'hortus conclusis* – suddenly changed status; it came out of the enclosure. A considerable societal contribution, from the first half of the twentieth century, modified not only the

idea of the best within the enclosure, but overturned the enclosure itself to the point of making it disappear. Ecology was born. Science intended to situate living beings in their habitat and to understand them through their relations with one another. But above all *cultural shock*, an observation through which all living beings find themselves bound in a complex system including humanity, air, water, rocks and invisible energy fields, each with an incidence on all the others in a finite space: the planet.

- Videos of lectures available online at www.college-de-france.fr

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