

MIND THE GAP: AN ESSAY ON GARDENING POLITICS

by

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Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Keenan Alexander Hilton has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Politics-Environmental Studies.

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Introduction : Not gardening the garden

Nestled on the side of a hill just west of the Willamette River, the Portland Japanese Garden is both hidden from and overlooking the urban expanse of the Portland metro area. Depending on which of the five distinct gardens you are in, you might be noting the symmetry between stones and skyscrapers, or forgetting for minutes that you are remotely near such a thing as “development.” I visited the garden as autumn was folding into winter. It was cold. Not so cold that you would see your breath, but very damp. I sat under a carefully crafted bush beside the pond in the Strolling Pond Garden.

Leaves littered the ground and the taut surface of the water. When a faded maple leaf rested on the surface of the water, my body quieted. The leaf showed the surface as a boundary between air and liquid, a plane where two earthly sources of life touch. Then, without any effort, my focus adjusted and I noticed a reflection in the water. After a moment I could discern the edge of the roof of the teahouse glimmering dully on the water’s face. Slightly distorted but absolutely recognizable, the water reflected the undulating image. But then, with another passing moment, the movement of a fish beyond the reflected teahouse drew my eye. It slid through the clear water easily, obviously in no rush. This pond: boundary, mirror, place of life.

Then a woman walked over to me softly saying, “You found my favorite spot!” I offered to let her have the space, but she politely declined. When I turned back to the pond I found that my moment of lucidity had passed, replaced by the sound of chattering children. Reluctantly, my eyes travelled to the somewhat comical scene of two or three groups of people all having their picture taken with i-phones in front of the boardwalk over the pond. I could not help but wonder why they were not appreciating the garden as

I was. Beautiful places are not *for* photographs. A garden is not a space for collecting souvenirs, for a vacation.

Then I was hit, as with a sledgehammer right on my solar plexus, down deep. I laughed to release the pressure of the extreme irony of my judgment. Was not my time in the Portland Japanese Garden on one level merely a vacation? After all, I spent a total of maybe six hours in the space over two visits; I paid to get in; and, last, I had not done the gardening. I sat heavily.

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Approaching politics as gardening is distinctly subversive to neoliberal capitalism. Perhaps the most important insight that the Portland Japanese Garden had to offer me was the realization that to live in the era of neoliberal capitalism is to be systematically prevented from gardening as such. It is not that I could not have bought some seeds and fertilizer and tended to plants—this I surely could have done. Rather, the Portland Japanese Garden disclosed to me my own passivity. Robert Pogue Harrison calls gardening “the vocation of care” (2008, 1). Something about being human calls us to care for other things, to be burdened, to practice husbandry. I argue that gardening—taking care to reveal meaning of which humans are not the architects—is, quite simply, antithetical to neoliberal capitalism. Thus, to garden, to answer the vocation of care, is directly at odds with capitalistic relationships. To apply this care to the practice of politics is to subvert the logic of capitalism, revealing new, non-capitalistic modes of relating to other people in the public sphere.

In the first section of this thesis I discuss both the structural and cultural dimensions of neoliberal capitalism that work to prevent politics. Building upon the work of Adrian Parr, David Harvey, Jack Turner, and Hannah Arendt, I explore how capitalism has changed the nature of human action and togetherness. In particular I critique the development and ubiquity of the myth of *Homo economicus*. Through this analysis I argue that the transplantation of shared human experience into the market preempts and appropriates subversive possibilities, but that the shallowness of the myth of *Homo economicus* actually invites the revelation of another myth: that of the human gardener.

In the second section of this thesis I address the unique possibilities of approaching politics as gardening. I begin with an analysis of David Cooper's *Philosophy of Gardens* and then employ his ideas to illuminate the garden writing of Marc Peter Keane, establishing the garden as a site of revelation. I discuss how the two lineages of the Western tradition—the Hebraic and the Greek—both prominently feature gardening, establishing the credibility of the myth in relation to that of *Homo economicus*. Both cases affirm the cultural embeddedness and human prescience of gardening. I argue that gardening presents a unique opportunity for cultivating politics. Gardening politics enables and encourages the disclosure of new possibilities that could radically diverge from contemporary, seemingly impenetrable neoliberal capitalism. I conclude by comparing my notion of political gardening—public action and speech emphasizing yielding to other people—to the only marginally successful Back to the Land Movement, providing definition by contrast.

I. Neoliberalism and careless Homo economicus

John Stuart Mill coined the term *Homo economicus* in 1844. For purposes of political economy he found it expedient to conceive of human existence with a simple formula: "the greatest amount of necessities, conveniences, and luxuries, with the smallest quantity of labour and physical self denial" (Mill as referenced in Patel, 2008, 26). We know this as the somewhat more succinct adage "cost and benefit." This simple ratio has everything to do with the daily enactment of capitalism: human beings compete to have the best cost/benefit ratio year after year, and consequently the world sees the promise of unending innovation. *Homo economicus* captures and produces the ethos of our age. This rational, self-interested utility-maximizer has seen the colonization of everything from conservationist impulses via the Toyota Prius to Marxian revolution via Che Guevara t-shirts. The scope of *Homo economicus*' influence is truly arresting. In the current era of neoliberalism, this agent is devastatingly good at producing and selling resistance. Except all of these ways of purchasing rebelliousness and good conscience all inconspicuously replace actual politics. Author Erik Swyngedouw goes so far as to describe our era as "post-political." He defines the post-political as the "perceived inevitability of capitalism and a market economy as the basic organizational structure of the social and economic order, for which there is no alternative" (2010, 215). To attempt to subvert neoliberalism is to attempt to resist that which seems materially and culturally inevitable.

The de-politicization is both structural and re-created on a daily basis through human enactment.¹ It is in this enactment of the stories and myths of capitalism that I identify an engine of the system's blights that is simultaneously a vulnerability of the economic organization. I argue that the discernment of and consequent destabilization of the myth of *Homo economicus* creates a subversive opportunity. The reduction of public relationships from interaction to transaction is deeply engrained, and completely genius, but ultimately unfulfilling. The terms of the market leave no place for meaning. In spite of capitalism's astounding material impenetrability and the apolitical, consumer culture that it produces, the myth of *Homo economicus* creates just enough space to begin imagining how one might act away from neoliberal capitalist relations. I suggest that the myth of the human gardener and what Harrison terms "the vocation of care," have the potential to radically re-politicize human interactions.

However, before elaborating on my theory of the political gardener, it is necessary to more carefully examine the enormous puzzle that is neoliberal capitalism. The arrangement of capitalists meeting, appropriating, and fabricating consumer needs and wants is genius. Capitalism has consistently confounded resistance since its emergence.

Author Adrian Parr provides a succinct definition and assessment of the material dimensions of the system:

[capitalism] ruthlessly absorbs sociohistorical limits and the challenges these limits pose to capital, placing them in the service of further capital accumulation. Neoliberalism is an exclusive system premised upon the logic of property rights and the expansion of these rights, all the while maintaining that the free market is self-regulating, sufficiently and efficiently working to establish individual and collective well-being. (5)

Capitalism's knack for absorbing limits can be a paralyzing conundrum. Indeed, the story of capitalism is one marked by continuous upheaval and redirection. As limits have

¹ See Karen Ho, *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street* (Duke University Press: 2009)

arisen, capital has responded without fail. Labor unions, hybrid cars, city parks, recycling, solar panels and carbon markets are just a few examples of the capitalist system doubling back on itself, successfully incorporating resistance. Each is a consumable response to a form of capitalist excess and exploitation. Parr contends that these “solutions” merely shuffle public attention and energy while ruthlessly bolstering the destructive domination of capital.

Student of capitalism David Harvey argues that this relentless march of capitalism is an internal structural demand of the system. Capitalism is not a thing, but a process: the process of money perpetually being sent in search of new money (Harvey, 2010, 40). Observable through all of capitalism’s reconfigurations over the last two hundred years—of which neoliberalism is the latest—is a remarkably consistent trend of three percent accumulated interest on capital signifying the “health” of the economic organization (Harvey, 2010, 27). Therefore, any and all new markets must be explored to maintain the “health” of the system. What this means for those who would resist capitalism is that not only is the “adversary” incredibly flexible and adaptable, but there is in fact a systemic imperative for their resistance efforts to be appropriated. The commodification of resistance is only part of the story, however. For in addition to exacerbating inequalities, evacuating sacredness, and encouraging unchecked exploitation, the commodification of everything essentially replaces politics with consumer goods and experiences. Neoliberal capitalism creates subjects who, when they act together in public, naturally act in apolitical ways.

For the purpose of this discussion, politics exists in the public interactions between people. It is distinct from other modes of relating in that there is no intermediary

of things or matter in politics (Arendt, 1998, 7). Unlike labor, which ensures physical existence, and work, which is the creation of and tending to intergeneration artifice—that is, cities, infrastructures, laws and other durable creations—politics exists in the more ephemeral sphere of action and speech. Hannah Arendt posits that like a performance art—for example, dance or theater—the “product” of politics is identical to the act itself (1998, 207). Politics occurs between citizens acting together in public, deliberating meaning, disclosing who they are. Power emerges and exists between individuals.² It is in this space of togetherness that new possibilities come to life.³ In politics rests the potential to overcome even the most daunting material conditions. In politics is the potential to diverge from the troublingly elastic confines of capitalism. Unfortunately, it is exactly the profound importance of political interactions that neoliberal capitalism systematically disrupts and obscures.

Perhaps the clearest way of understanding the distinctly apolitical character of neoliberalism is through an examination of its agent: *Homo economicus*. *Homo economicus* is the reduction of a human that is axiomatic to neoliberal capitalism. She is the individual utility maximizer, the rational decision maker, and the member of society who, crudely speaking, is a “responsible citizen” via selfishness. *Homo economicus* dwells at the beginning of every economics textbook, and at the heart of our political economy. Each of us participating in the dominant economy enacts *Homo economicus* on a daily basis. It is the sense of you that feels perfectly at home making market

² Prominent examples can be found in the resistance and non-cooperation of Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi.

³ Hannah Arendt posits that the two conditions of politics are plurality—togetherness of multiple distinct individuals—and natality—the sense of acting that is taking initiative, or new beginnings. Both of these conditions are necessary for politics.

transactions. By merit of being raised in a Western culture during this modern, neoliberal era, *Homo economicus* is a mythic dimension of our existence; it is a story and tradition that we all share that explains and justifies the status quo. Consequently, it is all but inevitable that the modern, Western mind thinks in terms of cost and benefit; in terms of uncertainty rather than frailty; in short, in the terms of the market.

The vigorous relocation of all human relationships into the market typical of neoliberalism is anathema to politics. Consider the prefix of political action versus that of *Homo economicus* in the market: “interaction” versus “transaction.” The “inter” in interaction means that the action is between, among, amid people. This is politics. It is essentially between people. The “trans” in transaction, by contrast, suggests that the action of the market is across, beyond, over an intermediary. In the market, people must act across and over money. Jack Turner claims that in our post-enlightenment world rather than sharing experiences, interests, and place, we only reliably share the value of money (1996, 57). We consistently co-exist in the capacity of *Homo economicus*. The sacredness of a forest or a mountain cannot hold up against the devastating value of the cash dollar—the universal value. To a considerable extent, the domination of capitalism is a result of its enormous success at reducing people to *Homo economicus* in their own imaginations. These days we are big time transactors and unrealized interactors—unrealized to an extent that would pose a serious divergence from the domination of capital, in any case. Nearly all of us, to one degree or another, are *Homo economicus*.

Our tendency to act as the utility maximizer of the market is not a new phenomenon. It did not become our cultural myth with the dawn of neoliberalism; it has its roots somewhat farther back in the saga of capitalism. Ideals of maximization,

innovation, and progress have been salient since the time of Adam Smith. And while he and Herbert Spencer—two intellectual fathers of capitalism—did not necessarily employ the term *Homo economicus*, their progressive narratives vividly illustrate the fateful ascendance and transformations of the myth of *Homo economicus*. It is illuminating to note how these heritages of the myth both anticipate, and cast an unflattering light on the ubiquity of transaction in the current era of neoliberal capitalism.

Although widely lauded as the father of capitalism, Adam Smith did not actually address capitalism per se. In his seminal work, *Wealth of Nations*, he wrote about a relatively undefined commercial society supplanting mercantilism in the seventeenth century. His project was less advocacy of a utopian vision than it was an observational and reflective work, taking a careful look at how the division of labor had the potential to raise the standard of living of an entire nation. Of particular interest to Smith was the economic security of the poor (Smith, 2008, 17). Far from fixating on the contemporary fetishes of Gross Domestic Product—which did not exist at the time—Smith's conception of wealth rested squarely in the quality of life of the poorest members of society (*ibid.*, 68). In Smith's appraisal, commercial society was the best arrangement to assure livable wages to the greatest number of people. And yet, also in his work was the germ of neoliberal *Homo economicus*. Smith writes, “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages” (*ibid.*, 22). In Smith’s regard, people are always trying to achieve relative success. For him, human beings are

fundamentally individualistic.⁴ He is adamant that interactions, “address[ing] ourselves... to their humanity,” are not how we get our dinner. Public transactions are how we meet our economic needs (in the original sense of the word). However, in Smith’s configuration, the public sphere exists solely to serve the private sphere of the household where the physical necessities of life are met. The only vocation—or calling—for human beings is competition, and the only important action is transaction. Smith’s claim on human nature is *Homo economicus*, even if he does not employ the term. His goal of raising the standard of living for the poor, while strikingly humanitarian, has a blaring problem: when human beings are atomized, acting out of self-interest and over an intermediary (be it trade goods, or money) there is no place for politics.

Needless to say, Smith's driving purpose of livable wages for the poor has been sidelined somewhat as capitalism has radically and repeatedly re-created itself since the time he was writing. *Homo economicus* has also developed in interesting ways. Herbert Spencer, who wrote during the late nineteenth century, recapitulated the basic premises of *Homo economicus* but on the scale of society at large, further naturalizing the depoliticization of the market. In essence, he writes of society as a utility maximizer in its own right. This construction compounds the depoliticizing effects of *Homo economicus* and is an observable, dark current of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. In his "Man Versus the State," Spencer writes of the political economy as an analog to natural selection of species—as a matter of fact, he coined the term "survival of the fittest." For Spencer, however, evolution is not the meandering set of divergences and convergences that preferences marsupials in some places and ungulates in others; rather, he envisions

⁴ See Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Either by virtuousness or material wealth, Smith argues that individuals are always trying to get ahead of their peers.

the progression of an evolutionary society as rectilinear, heading toward a state of perfection. His markedly utopian vision departs from the radically inclusive narrative of commercial society constructed by Smith, but retains an updated version of the utility maximizer. In his "Man Versus the State," Spencer writes,

It seems hard that an unskillfulness which with all his efforts he cannot overcome, should entail hunger upon the artizan. It seems hard that a labourer incapacitated by sickness from competing with his stronger fellows should have to bear the resulting privations. It seems hard that the widows and orphans should be left to struggle for life or death. Nevertheless, when regarded not separately but in connexion with the interests of universal humanity, these harsh fatalities are seen to be full of beneficence... (150)

In this configuration, Spencer complicates matters significantly by turning economic man into economic conglomeration-of-people, into utility maximizing society. In Spencer's view, the political economy is a mere arbiter, a passive moral, physical, and material meritocracy. The object of the political economy is a bright future for an imagined, select, utopian nation—one without poverty, one populated by people perfectly adapted to the economy.

It should be noted that Spencer's purpose in writing these remarkably distasteful prescriptions was to stop the government programs (known as the "Poor Laws") that kept the maladapted from their just and beneficent deaths. Spencer writes of the economy as the ultimate judge of an individual's worth. This narrative resonates uncomfortably easily with discourses today. Consider the thrust of neoliberalism. It is a formulation of capitalism based on the foundational tenet of deregulation, that is, the belief that freedom in the market—freedom in the capacity of *Homo economicus*—is the ultimate good.⁵ The capitalist class is thus treated as the most important in society (creating jobs, spurring innovation). In his 2012 book *Unintended Consequences: Why Everything You've Been*

⁵ See Milton Friedman *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago University Press: 2002)

Told About the Economy is Wrong, venture capitalist Edward Conard claims, “We will not be as prosperous in the long run if we pour taxes on lucky risk takers to provide the same benefits to all Americans regardless of their economic contribution” (2012, 266). His tactful insertion of the word “lucky” does little to obscure his utopic vision of a deregulated world in which the risk-taking job-creators can just peacefully go about their work of sending money in hot pursuit of more money. Conard may not explicitly state that poor people are a scourge on our civilization, but the heroes of his story—the economically fit—and his prescriptions—less government support—are suspiciously similar to those of Spencer.

Conard illustrates that the Spencerian view of the economy as arbiter of merit is quite alive. When viewing society as one giant *Homo economicus* climbing towards an apex condition, there is remarkably little time for the people and spaces of today. This narrative of rectilinear progress typifies a post-enlightenment framing of human life and the world, one that does not have patience for politics.⁶ Since the enlightenment in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, compulsive movement forward has defined Western culture. Reason and science freed human understanding from traditional authority. Rather than looking backwards in time to make sense of existence, we reoriented ourselves towards a new inheritance: the imminent progress of the future.

Robert Pogue Harrison explains, “Whatever the way leads *through*—our landscapes, our heritage, our legacies, our institutions, all that humankind has carefully cultivated over time, and that means first and foremost the earth itself—risks destruction as we rush headlong into a future of which we are not the architects but for which we

⁶ See Harrison, Robert Pogue. *Forests: shadow of civilization* (Chicago University Press, 1993) p.114

bear full responsibility" (Harrison, 2008, 158). The colonization of human culture and human energy as well as the destruction of forests, prairies and the very notion of the sacred bears the unmistakable signature of modernity. The ethos of progress has justified constant building and rebuilding of the artificial world, the creation of new markets where none before existed, and the violent displacement of human and non-human life alike. The present has been transformed into an instrument of the future. The conditions of plurality (life among other human beings) and natality (the new, unpredictable possibilities set in motion by ephemeral action between people) lose their meaning to the promise of an ever-more-enlightened future. This is part and parcel of the enlightenment. This is part and parcel of neoliberalism.

Harrison keenly assesses capitalism to be a profane consequence or socioeconomic correlative of Western spiritual restlessness. He writes, "at the very least one could say that capitalism opened a whole new stage on which that restlessness could 'act out,' rather than 'work through' its neurosis" (2008, 150). Indeed, the narratives of capitalism mapped out by prominent thinkers Karl Marx, David Harvey, Herbert Spencer, Milton Friedman, Karl Polanyi, and many more all prominently feature the imperative of constant motion. Harrison suggests that the restlessness of neoliberalism can be understood as a systematization of a spiritual or cultural condition. Through both colonialism and economic imperialism the West has blazed the trail into an unknown, but predictably violent future for the life of planet Earth. Today we have loads of data and statistics showing just how gloomy the outlook is. Yet, neoliberalism continues. Certainly the material dimension—the mechanisms of enclosure, rent-seeking, etc.—plays no small part. I propose, however, that materialism does not fully explain why the subjects of

capitalism who have the capacity for political interaction do not interact. I argue that what is missing from such a view is the role of the enacted myth of *Homo economicus*. Capitalism has colonized the Western mind. We validate and enact neoliberalism through the very language that we use—words of abstraction, commensurability, and financial value (Turner, 1996, 65).

This most pervasive lexicon of economics is both a trademarked product and busy producer of *Homo economicus*. The result is the painful and ironic appropriation of efforts to resist the effects of neoliberal capitalism. Turner phrases it well: “They defend endangered species and rain forests on economic grounds. Instead of seeing modern economics as the problem, they see it as the solution” (1996, 58). The only way to communicate convincingly on the merit of a conservation plan, on the idea of your college divesting from fossil fuels, and on the value of politics, is by expressing it quantitatively. The resistance efforts themselves function in terms of utility, staying strictly within the confines of an Enlightened, progressive perspective; the material discrepancies and rampant injustices persist; the disappearance of politics is naturalized.

When citizen access to news went from the street to the radio and then to television, the implications of the shift must not have been readily apparent. Yet these technological innovations effectively transplanted the site of news from between people to remote transmittance, appreciated in the comfort and solitude of a living room. *Exeunt politics*. The mechanism of replacing action and speech with consumable good and experiences has not stopped with television and news. Not too long ago roads were commons. Now they are for isolated individuals in cars (Harvey, 2012, 74). The great expanse of the Internet, with the potential to connect extremely diverse opinions

becoming the stage of global politics, more often serves as an “echo-chamber,” guaranteeing that users will never come into contact with their prejudices. The list goes on. It is staggering the extent to which the modern human being lives the isolated life calculating costs and benefits in the capacity of *Homo economicus*. To even begin to think about viable resistance to neoliberalism is to be left sitting dazed and overwhelmed, perhaps ready to retreat to a commune, more likely to continue participating in the dominant, “post-political” economy, but rather uneasily.

Yet, to use the term “post-political” is to ignore the fact that the necessary conditions for politics, namely a plurality of people and their ability to speak and act together, still exist. Even though material inequalities are at unprecedented levels and the spatial exclusion of the poor people of the world—through long days of labor, unequal demands on women, mass incarceration, and de facto privatization of the commons—constructs a considerable barrier to people gathering together, the potential for politics still exists. The remainder of this essay explores how we might think about fostering politics. In addition to illustrating the devastating and insidious reach of capitalism, *Homo economicus* also represents an opportunity. If we take seriously the position that undergirding the violence embedded within this economic structure is the enactment and reenactment of the myth of *Homo economicus*, then it makes sense to turn to see if there is another myth that might restore the vocabulary and actions of politics. I argue that the myth of the human gardener could do just that.

II. Gardening gaps

For the purposes of this thesis, gardening is best understood as the disclosure of meaning of which human agents are not the architects. It is recognition of and collaboration with chaos, or wildness. I illustrate these attributes in the literal garden then apply them to the sphere of action and speech. Gardening politics is the cultivation of and yielding to direct human interactions. I argue that among the myriad dimensions of gardening is the revelation of new political possibilities through the activities of action and speech. Gardening has the potential to radically unsettle the insidious idea of isolated, passive consumerism and technology as the *de facto* response *ad infinitum* because it is, what Robert Pogue Harrison calls, "the vocation of care" (Harrison, 2008, 1). Gardening is deeply embedded in Western cultural memory, and it is uniquely resistant to the appropriation of capital. It is fulfilling because it requires human care (and often human frustration and disappointment), quite opposite the thrust of *Homo economicus* that promises, among other things, freedom from care.

To a great extent my thesis is an elaboration on Harrison's book *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*. Harrison coalesces Eden, Epicurus, Versailles, and homeless gardens into a story full of contradictions, hardship, and suffering, but one attended to with care. Building and exploring his argument primarily through literature, Harrison's book is one of immense scholarship. Spanning an impressive breadth of the Western tradition of thinking on the garden, Harrison concludes his book embroidering on the very puzzle at the heart of this thesis. He writes that in spite of the undeniable genius of capitalism, "[t]o liberate people from care is to deny them self-realization" (*ibid*, 168). That is, the condition of *Homo economicus* is one devoid of care. It is *exactly*

not the self-realization of a human utopia imagined by Spencer; in fact, Harrison suggests that the effort to make paradise is a doomed endeavor. His point is to reveal the human experience as one of active gardening rather than passive being-in-a-garden. He is part of a sparse group of contemporary writers publishing on the historical, philosophic, and political significance of garden.

David E. Cooper begins his aptly titled book, *A Philosophy of Gardens*, by puzzling over contemporary academia's neglect of the garden. Gardens invite many of the types of questions posed by contemporary philosophers, but there is a noticeable lack of scholarship on the topic. Rather than conducting a conceptual, ontological, or normative investigation into gardens, Cooper's book gravitates around the deceptively simple question, "Why garden?" (*ibid.*, 2). Cooper tries this question by considering exactly how it is that gardens transcend most categories that we are wont to force them into. He does not consider gardens art. Neither does he consider them nature, *per se*. Nor are gardens merely a hybrid of the two (*ibid.*, 60). Cooper makes the case that gardens are best understood as epiphany itself. They exemplify something beyond the control and invention of human beings, made clear only through collaboration with human beings. Gardens are sites of co-dependence. It is in this space, in distinction from others, that humans not only see co-dependence between humans and nature, but through this recognition reveal something further: the garden as a space of revelation. Cooper writes, "By embodying something that itself embodies something further, The Garden ... embodies this 'something further'. The Garden, to put it portentously, is an epiphany of man's relationship to mystery" (*ibid.*, 145). His central insight is one that landscape

architect and essayist Marc Peter Keane illustrates beautifully in his reflections on Japanese gardens.

The premise of Keane's book *The Art of Setting Stones* could not be farther from that of Cooper's formal philosophical argument. Yet Keane unquestionably teases out the distinct multidimensionality of the garden that is so important to Cooper. A prominent landscape architect and garden writer, Keane reveals his brushes with mystery through a compilation of essays. Keane composes his essays at, about, and of gardens of the Kyoto area. Each essay springs equally from Keane's rich knowledge of the Japanese garden tradition and his experiences in the physical spaces. When reading Keane's writing it is difficult to maintain a slow enough pace to appreciate the gravity of what he suggests.

Consider this passage from his essay titled "Trees":

The gate was inset in a long earthen wall, about as tall as I am, which had weathered and been repaired so many times it had become a mosaic, barklike, a quilt of clay and time. Trees from the garden hung over the wall in places, neatly pruned yet grown beyond containment: the pine by the gate and further down along the wall a maple, a cherry, and a large osmanthus, the petalless orange flowers of which would scent the air in autumn. The cherry was old and leaned out over the lane. Its gnarled black trunk was bent in such a way that it cut through the wall, or rather, the wall had been constructed so as to avoid the trunk, gracefully circumventing it, allowing room in which the cherry could grow. The curved gap between wall and tree, half filled with dappled shadows seemed to hold a message, like an oracle bone glinting from deep within a cave. (65)

Folded into these lines are numerous insights into the nature of a garden. Through a gentle illustration of the physical space, Keane intimates the multidimensionality of the garden space. He notes that the gate is about as tall as himself, inset in an earthen wall. The wall is a boundary, a deliberate creation of space via the separation of what is inside from what is outside. The garden is a place separate from nature per se. Keane shows his readers that the earthen wall has been actively maintained, presumably for generations, calling it "a quilt of clay and time." Generations of gardeners have tended to the wall, the

mere structure of which suggests the meaning of what lies inside. The wall thus joins in the chorus of whispered voices in the garden conversation of permanence and impermanence, one omnipresent in Japanese gardens (Davis, 5/2/13). The time remembered by generations of care in the wall is quite short compared to the largest stone of a rock garden. In a way, the wall hints at its own futility. No matter how many people rebuild the wall, it will not last as long as that stone. But simultaneously, it is also the wall that creates a space for the stone to express that meaning.

Even though the relationship between stones, trees, the scent of flowers, the sound of water, and the play of light on the scales of a carp are constitutive of a garden, to Keane the garden is a distinctly human place. The continual maintenance of the boundary is a necessary condition of its existence. The entrance to the space is perfectly sized for a human being. The walls, the pathways, and the deliberate construction of images⁷ are all physical cues that garden spaces are *for* human beings. And yet, Keane concludes the quoted passage above with a curious detail. He writes of a maple, a cherry, and a large osmanthus billowing over the wall. These plants cross the boundary that lends the garden its definition. I suggest that the most important detail in the passage is how the old, black, gnarled cherry hangs over the wall and nearby lane. Or rather, how the wall circumvents the trunk of the tree, yielding to it. He writes, "The curved gap between wall and tree, half filled with dappled shadows seemed to hold a message, like an oracle bone glinting from deep within a cave." The gap is pregnant with meaning. I propose that this meaning is, on one level, the revelation of the garden as the space of revelation.

⁷ For instance, from a seated position on a bench in the Sand and Stone Garden in the Portland Japanese Garden, a large stone crosses the visual line created by the top of the wall behind it. This subtly calls for the eye to travel up and out of the designated garden space. Beyond the wall you see trees and a glimpse of the Portland cityscape. This garden does not have a plant. It is meant to be regarded from a bench. It typifies the extent to which a garden is *for* humans.

Although the garden is *for* human beings, the gap for the cherry tree illustrates that humans are not its sole agents. The gardener does not create the tree, or control its growth.⁸ We can build a skyscraper and an i-phone. We cannot craft a leaf, or make a root. The gap in the earthen wall acknowledges this fact. It expresses a profound humility. The wall yields to the path of the tree's growth, not to the gardener's design. In the gap is the tacit but crucial recognition of another agent in the garden. Cooper calls this the epiphany of mystery. The gap makes the meaning of the tree visible to those in the garden; it is the revelation that we are not the authors of the garden, but rather the ones who tend to it and are responsible to keep the meaning visible. In an age measured most vividly by human accomplishments, this is a sobering message.

It is crucial to note that this insight rests in a gap, a lack of something, a yielding. Interestingly, the Greek origin of the word gap is intimately tied to the notion of chaos. Previous to the Olympians and to Gaia, Chaos (or Khaos), a Greek god, resided in the space between Heaven and Earth. Chaos was the original gap. It is from this gap that the earth, life and everything emerged. In this sense, the gap in the earthen wall seems to suggest that chaos is an agent in the garden. It means that humans do not in fact have complete control over nature. Such an insight re-illuminates Thoreau's famous adage "in wildness is the preservation of the world." We may live in a world with diminishing gaps; we may not often yield in this way; we are not trained to see where gaps ought to be. But this does not mean that their *raison d'être* has vanished from the world. Wildness and chaos—that which becomes visible via the gap—remain conditions of the earth, and, as a matter of fact, are its preservation. What Keane illustrates so gently through the gap in

⁸ Of course, a gardener may deliberately place and shape a tree, but this is fundamentally different from claiming agency of the life of the tree.

the wall is that the opportunities for gaps are in fact as numerous as the walls themselves. It is a condition of the world.

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Keane's thinking of the Japanese garden resonates with, but in a number of ways stands in contradistinction to, gardening in the Western tradition. The clearest contrast is that the Japanese were never exiled from their garden (Davis, 5/7/13). Their gardens are not a paradise lost, but rather a space and a time for human reflection and recollection. However, it is not the Japanese tradition that produced the economic organization and set of associated myths that have wreaked such havoc on the life of the earth. Capitalism is a wayward descendent of the two distinct lineages of Western culture: the Hebraic and the Greek (Davis, 4/30/13). Each has its own particular take on the meaning of gardening. It is from the prominence of gardens and gardening in both traditions that I make the case for gardening's cultural resonance and subversive potential. With regard to the Hebrews, the obvious iconic garden is the Garden of Eden—the birthplace of the Western man and woman. I posit that the story of humanity's fall bolsters the case for the intuitiveness of gardening and simultaneously showcases the hollowness of *Homo economicus*. On the side of the Greeks—specifically the ancient Athenians—I argue that the *polis* was itself a garden. I build upon Hannah Arendt's analysis of politics and the public realm in ancient Athens to make the case that viewing the *polis* in this way makes it more easily understandable to the modern reader and creates a space for imagining a gardening politics today. But first, Eden.

In his magnum opus *Paradise Lost*, John Milton creates what is perhaps the most accessible interpretation and embellishment of the story of Creation. By portraying the

fall as the divorce of human beings from their native paradise, Milton's narrative is an exemplar of a denial of the human condition, rejecting the earth. In Milton's rendition the catalyst for the fall is Satan in the form of the serpent. Cast as a deceptive orator, the serpent easily convinces Eve to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Milton, 2008, 396). Despite her recollection of God's commandment not to eat the fruit, Eve ultimately proves very susceptible to the arguments of the serpent. She rationalizes her trust, saying, "what fear I then, rather what know to feare/Under this ignorance of Good and Evil/Of God or Death, of Law or Penaltie" (*ibid.*, 400). Eve has never known a suspicious change in Eden before; she literally does not have a conception of fear. Thus, with very limited prodding she breaks the single rule of paradise. Then she proceeds by bringing the fruit to Adam and ultimately tempting him to make the same critical error.⁹

In Milton's account of Eden, the transgression is a loss of virginal purity. Indeed, the act of eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil has the familiar smell of adolescence. Eve is unaware of the stakes. As she herself points out with childish honesty, she is unfamiliar with the very notion of stakes. Then, following Adam's indulgence, the pair is caught up in a wave of ecstasy. Milton writes, "There they thir fill of Love and Loves disport/Took largely, of thir mutual guilt the Seale./The solace of thir sin, till dewie sleep/Oppress'd them, wearied with their amorous play" (*ibid.*, 414). The lovemaking confirms and briefly shields them from the weight of their sin. It is only when they awaken, hung-over from the day before, that they realize what they have done. Before the transgression, Adam and Eve had been obedient children of God. They were

⁹ Milton writes, "With liberal hand: he scrupl'd not to eat/Against his better knowledge, not deceav'd./But fondly overcome with Femal charm" (*ibid.*, 412).

free to spend their time in the garden, easily following their creator's rule. Yet, they rebelled, indulging in transgression. Consequently, God sentenced them to toil and labor, mortality, and expulsion from their garden home. Milton's telling of Eden as the space of righteous virginity captures an ideal of paradise very much at odds with human life as we know it. Without labor, without suffering, without care, paradise is for humans qua angelic children. It simply looks nothing like human life on earth.

Robert Pogue Harrison's interpretation of the Garden of Eden is nothing if not a study in contrast. He points out that the expulsion from Eden was humanity's fall into the *vita activa*—the human activities of labor, work, and action that are definitive of our condition. The story still defines what it means to be human, only Harrison contends that this is only true after the fall. Eve is the primary actor—and he means actor in the Arendtian sense—who effectively transforms Adam from a man into a husband and a father; she creates the possibility of, and in some ways was the first person to follow, the vocation of care. Harrison thinks of the fall into mortality in terms of the coeval production of natality—of new beginnings in the human story. Indeed, in Eden there was never an instance of natality. God created Adam from the dirt and Eve from Adam's rib. Likewise, all of the plants and animals were created into a world without birth and without death. In a world without death there is no reason to beget new life. A precondition, a provision, of birth is the imminence of death. Death is perhaps best understood as the ultimate force that sets things in motion; it is solely responsible for the ceaseless change in nature. Poet Eleanor Wilner highlights this point beautifully in the final line of her poem "A Moralized Nature Is like a Garden without Flowers." She simply writes, "no flowers in Eden, not even one" (Wilner as cited in *ibid.*, 16). While

Eden was bursting at the seams with fruit, there must have been no flowers, for there was no need for reproduction. Eve's act, her taking of initiative, disrupted a staggeringly sterile paradise, literally begetting natality.

For even though Adam and Eve had no cause for fear, they also had no reason to hope. There was no promise of the future, because the future was utterly indistinguishable from the past. Eden did not change. Along with pain, toil and suffering, the phenomena of beauty, birth, and human action were completely absent. The only limit was God's rule about the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. But even though God spoke the commandment, it was apparently meaningless to its subjects. Harrison picks up on Milton's implication as to Adam and Eve's childishness. Except, instead of viewing the transgression as the ultimate loss of purity, he sees it more as a coming of age, an emergence. Eve's eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was the act that prompted the human fall into the *vita activa*.

Eve's action was for want of care in the Garden of Eden. It was an act of utter carelessness (*ibid*, 8). She had a reason to leave the fruit alone, but it was simply not compelling to her. Adam and Eve had freedom in the garden, but not responsibility. There was nothing to cultivate. Gardening understood as the vocation of care did not occur in this garden. God created the garden; Adam and Eve were merely consumers and receivers (*ibid*, 10). Eve's action as such can be seen as the first human construction of a gap. She tampered with the single boundary of the garden, and thus revealed the meaning of the tree to the freshly human inhabitants. She did not produce the meaning of the tree, just as the gardeners in Kyoto who constructed the gap in the earthen wall did not produce the meaning of the cherry tree. However, it was her act that co-articulated (with

God) the meaning of the tree: the possibility of chaos. It was only then that Adam and Eve came to understand what ceaseless change and meaning itself even were. What is more, they became aware of human agency in creating the gap. In a profound sense, the first human act in the Hebraic tradition can be read as an act of gardening.

Harrison's analysis of the Fall of Man completely recasts the Garden of Eden. In *Paradise Lost*, Eden is humanity's native paradise, but one that is paradoxically unrecoverable.¹⁰ In Milton's eyes, we are an unfortunate and fundamentally alienated group. In *Gardens*, by contrast, Eden, along with being a sterile, inhuman place, is the first site of human gardening; it is where, through human action, meaning is born. If we are to take Harrison seriously, Eden is the exemplar of a garden as the site of human collaboration in epiphany. It was humanity's fall into the *vita activa*, bringing death, pain, and misery—Arendt contends that humans have an unlimited capacity for suffering—but also setting the stage for the most fulfilling and oldest of human qualities: care.

The organization of life of ancient Athenians, the other side of the Western Civilization family, is another exemplar of care and an exemplar of politics as a garden. The lives of the male Athenians captured action and speech in the Arendtian sense better than any others in history. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt writes of the Athenian organization of the *polis* as fundamentally oriented around these activities. Although necessarily undergirded by the activities of labor (the means to physical life) and work (the production of the intergenerational world), action took center stage for the Athenians. Their lives were about conversing and doing things together. Arendt stresses the distinction between acting and making—the central thrust of our era. The

¹⁰ It is the Hebraic version of a recurring theme across cultures: denial of the human condition is a seemingly irrevocable aspect of the human condition (Davis, 4/2/14)

fundamental difference between acting and making has to do with authorship. Arendt argues that who you are, that is, your story, is never accessible to you. You only come into contact with *who* you are by interacting with other people.¹¹ Through action and speech you disclose your identity to those you act and speak with, but you are not the author of who you are. You do not *make* yourself, just as a gardener does not *make* a garden. These interactions have the potential for wildness, chaos, mystery, and contingency just like the path of the cherry tree in the Japanese garden.

The *polis* was a garden for just this type of political revelation. In the Japanese garden, this type of revealed humility was illustrated by the gardeners' yielding to the tree. It would seem that Athenians conceived of politics as the cultivation of this sort of revelatory action. They cultivated the *polis*, which was the Athenians themselves (Arendt, 1998, 195). Even the world of Athenians—the lasting physical and structural aspects—had a very clear connection to the *polis* qua garden. Arendt explains that the creation of the public space for interchange necessitated the construction of a wall. This wall created the space of the public realm, and therefore the space of politics. Like the boundary differentiating the inside and outside of the Kyoto garden, the inside of the wall was the space for deliberate revelation through action. The structural component of the world in the form of laws functioned in much the same way. Unique to ancient Athens, the creation of legislation of the city-state was viewed as quite similar to the creation of the wall; it was merely a structural requirement. Arendt writes, "the lawmaker was like the builder of the city wall, someone who had to do and finish his work before political

¹¹ The Athenians illustrated this phenomenon with their conception of the *daimon*, which is an individual's unique sense of possibility that dwells behind their shoulder, out of sight of the individual. The stakes of politics for Arendt are nothing short of realizing versus not realizing your unique potential as a human being (Davis, 4/21/14)

activity could begin" (*ibid*, 194). In most political organizations to follow, legislature has been seen as the crowning political achievement. For the ancient Athenians, this simply was not the case. The wall and the laws functioned as a deliberate framework inside which meaning could be revealed and memory could be preserved; they assured that the action of the *polis* would last longer than the lives of the actors. Inside this space and under these laws, natality occurred as it has in few other times in history. The wildness of human possibilities flourished; within these political garden walls, people yielded to initiative and to beauty. Consequently, this tradition resulted in some of the longest lasting ideas, stories, and artworks on earth.

Arendt writes that "mens' lives together in the form of the *polis* seemed to assure that the most futile of human activities, actions and speech, and the least tangible and most ephemeral of man-made 'products,' the deeds and stories which are their outcome, would become imperishable" (*ibid.*, 198). Affirming this ancient insight, the fruits, and stories of the fruits of this particular garden are still paradigmatic of Western civilization. Indeed, the first thing I read as a first-year student of Whitman College in 2010 was *The Odyssey*. The resilience of such a story epitomizes what it means to be a human being grappling with mortality. As we move along our rectilinear lives in this circular universe, *The Odyssey* assures us that meaning exists. It is a touchstone of self-disclosure through speech and action. Both in its origin and its content it is a record of the power of human care.

The truly remarkable aspect of the Athenian *polis* was that its central purpose was this type of self-disclosure, revelation through speech and action, the birth of new possibilities. This is not something that is easy for a modern mind to comprehend. The

utmost concern of the citizens had nothing to do with freedom in the market, but rather the deceptively straightforward activities of speech and action with other humans. It was a political garden. So in the case of the *polis* qua garden, politics might be best understood as the creation of gaps for the life of the *polis*. The vocation of care brought the Greeks to tend the garden of action. The politics was a yielding, an allowance of chaos, begetting both new possibilities and consequences. The *polis* as such can be understood as both the gardener and the garden. This is where the connection between gardening and capitalism becomes visible. Conceiving of politics as gardening in this manner is to bring to the fore the ways in which capitalist modes of action in the capacity of *Homo economicus* are, in fact, anti-political.

The systemic production of *Homo economicus* is, in a sense, anti-gardening. In the Athenian understanding, the political realm "rises directly out of acting together, the 'sharing of words and deeds'" (*ibid*, 198). Conversely, the "political" realm dwelled in by *Homo economicus* appears as a sort of consumerist solipsism. This is the confounding structural aspect of capitalism highlighted by David Harvey. Restless capital ensures that individual consumption à la *Homo economicus* will almost certainly be the most convenient and culturally salient way of engaging in "politics." If we conceive of Athenian politics as the creation of gaps for and by the *polis*, we might envision capitalism as an ever growing and extremely busy backhoe that, caught in its own internal logic, compulsively fills in gaps and obscures walls. It encourages a passivity which is anathema to the gardener. Harrison concludes his book by suggesting that capitalism is a perverted re-Edenizing of the earth, "to turn it into a consumerist paradise where everything is given spontaneously, without labor, suffering, or husbandry" (2008,

164). It is an attempted return to the childlike receptivity of Adam and Eve. The problem, of course, is that humans have no home in Eden. He argues, "...human happiness is a cultivated rather than a consumer good ... it is [more] a question of fulfillment than of gratification. Neither consumption nor productivity fulfills. Only caretaking does" (*ibid.*, 166).

The idea of gardening is embedded deep within our cultural genome. Gardening may come closest to a holistic somatic, spiritual, and political prescience of humans. The constitution of this mythic dimension of human existence is quite sturdy. In the case of the Western tradition, we have humans disclosing themselves as cultivators on both sides of the house. In relation to the political crisis of capitalism, the myth of the human gardener is quite heartening on one count and distinctly subversive on another. It is heartening in the sense that it confounds the notion of the inevitability of capitalism. Indeed, if we take seriously that "[t]he fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable," the issue at hand is framed somewhat differently (Arendt, 1998, 178). Rather than puzzling out how to resist the irresistible organization of capitalism, the project becomes cultivating speech and action, facilitating the re-birth of citizenship. The utility maximizer appears relatively lusterless beside the political gardener. It is not so impossible to imagine that *Homo economicus* might be supplanted by *homo cultivans*.

Homo cultivans can emerge at any time in the public sphere, cultivating and yielding to interactions among a plurality of people. Speech and action are inherently unpredictable and, when properly tended, beget further speech and action with no foreseeable end (*ibid.*, 191). *Homo cultivans* would populate public spaces; the political

gardener might re-appropriate private spaces as commons. It may result in revolution. There is something to our expressing current inequalities in terms of an “income gap.” The gap is pregnant with chaos waiting to be acted upon. But then again, political gardening could also be milder. And to take Arendt’s claim seriously, that action is boundless and that we are not the authors of our story, is to necessarily reject wholesale efforts to *make* a new world as some revolution architects would tempt us to try. The gardener does not assert control. This is not to say that people must not have plans and goals—that would be an impossible request. Rather, it is to say that political gardening is about what is between people, not what is in the head of any atomized individual in the crowd. It counters hubristic neoliberalism with humility.

Perhaps it was the attempt at constructing a garden-model that has spelled sterility for the most long-lived effort at gardening resistance to capitalism: the Back to the Land movement. It has grown and withered, transformed, and persisted as a living response to the deleterious effects of capitalism. Except for the interesting case of the Southern Agrarians, who were arguably advocating something quite different, the Back to the Land movement has been exceptionally blueprint-oriented.¹² From the movement’s first inception in the 1890’s through perhaps its most prominent iteration during the 1960s and 70s, the Back to the Land Movement has been advocating subsistence agriculture (Brown, 2011, 21). They had a vision of a re-ruralized population; they just had to talk people into it. To be clear, the failure of the movement to destabilize capitalist relations does not reflect a total lack of credibility. The first Back to the Landers were concerned

¹² The project of the Southern Agrarians was arguably not going *back* to the land, but *staying* on the land. If they can be considered part of the Back to the Land movement, they are exceptional in their true conservatism.

with high prices of food, job insecurity, and dreams of independence; going back to the land was viewed primarily as a sound economic choice.

By contrast, Helen and Scott Nearing present a very compelling portrait of what life ought to have been like mid-twentieth century. They recall, “We were in the country. We had land. We had all the wood we could use, for the cutting. We had adequate supply of food from the gardens. We had time, a purpose, energy, enough ingenuity and imagination, a tiny cash income from maple and a little cash money on hand” (Nearing, 2008, 318). The spirit that they capture is refreshingly opposite that of urban consumerism. It clearly conveys the optimism of the gardening endeavor. However, at its core, their project was one of *labor* and *making* rather than *acting*. It was not between people. It had definite authors (except perhaps in the case of the Southern Agrarians). Therefore, it was effectively sidelined and appropriated by capital. The Back to the Land movement may be actualized as a marketable feeling, relatively impotent isolation, or a sort of vacation. While it was and still is an attempt at resistance, its attachment to the physical garden ironically excludes it from being gardening politics in the sense that I mean it.

III. Conclusion: Power in frailty

I can point a finger at the prefix and show the hollowness of this type of “sharing,” but the material mechanics of the economic organization are monumental. One need only look at the recent history of urbanization to appreciate the ways in which capitalism reshapes the world in its own image. Cities reflect the tumult of capitalism more vividly than anywhere else. They are the sites of the heaviest reinvestment,

absorbing surplus capital, constantly growing and being recreated (Harvey, 2012, 42).

Consider that just in the last twenty years, the populations of over one hundred cities have topped one million (*ibid.*, 11). The mechanics of growth and creative destruction are relentless.

However, neoliberal capitalism also relies completely on the daily recapitulation of a certain way of relating to each other and to the earth at large. The language of economics and our relationships in the capacity of *Homo economicus* directly cause the destructive signature of neoliberalism. For the structure to continue its aggressive aimlessness, it relies on the continued enactment of transaction rather than interaction. Yet, the reduction of nature and humans into resources ironically sets the stage for the subversion of the myth of *Homo economicus*. It is exactly the symptomatic depoliticization that runs capitalism into barriers that reveal its contradictions. Acting as if people and the earth are commensurable is an inherently troubled endeavor. Yet, each time that a barrier is reached, it is an opportunity for a gap, for the chaos of new possibilities. In particular, it is an opportunity to restore exactly what capitalism structurally prevents: politics.

To approach politics as gardening is both helpful for imagining new possibilities and resonant as a deeply embedded cultural myth. As the origin story of the Hebraic tradition and the political organization of ancient Athens both reflect, the vocation of care is momentous as well as definitive of gardening. I came to see that, as subjects of capitalism, we are all like Eve—dormant gardeners. Indeed, my experience in the Portland Japanese Garden was my hearing the vocation, my seeing the garden as a site of revelation, my recognizing the emptiness of modern apathy. This is no surprise. Gardens

have been sites of revelation across time and cultures. Among their myriad functions is the disclosure of the frailty of the human condition—something neoliberalism can never admit. Indeed, the uniquely subversive aspect of gardening political gaps is how the act of letting, of yielding is not so easily instrumentalized. Gardening revelatory interactions between people occurs for its own sake. It is a humble act of care. Gardens may be consumable, but the gardening of gaps is not. When people converse and act together, they reveal the limits of *Homo economicus* and the limits of the market as a dwelling place for humans.

This thesis perhaps offers a clue as to how to act politically in the neoliberal era. The scope of my analysis certainly has its limits. Indeed, as Harvey points out: capitalism is not a thing, but a process. To communicate about it in terms of its attributes and demands necessarily leaves out the experiences of many of the people who comprise the system. The myth of *Homo economicus* is merely a point of vulnerability, especially when pitted against an existence as meaningful as that of *homo cultivans*. Subverting neoliberalism is anything but easy. It is, in fact, remarkably not-easy. Gardeners face the impossibly frustrating task of “cultivating the weather.”¹³ Caring goes hand in hand with suffering. But in gardening rests the potential to radically invite meaning back into politics. Harrison puts it best:

Perhaps these gardens are exactly what we need to turn to in order to relearn the art of seeing and reaccess the deep time folded within their forms. The visible world, after all, has not vanished. It has merely become temporarily invisible. There is every reason to believe that gardens can help us rescue its visibility, provided we give them ample space and time to show themselves. It would not be the first time that gardens have come to our aid in a time of need. (2008, 124)

¹³ See Čapek, Karel. *The Gardener's Year*. (Random House, 2002)

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