

Nietzsche's Places – To Love the Earth

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The project “Nietzsche’s Places – To Love the Earth” shall explore how Friedrich Nietzsche, in both his philosophy and life, examined the relationship between the human subject and nature. The main thesis is that Nietzsche’s philosophy represents a shift in how subjectivity is conceived—redefining not only what human subjectivity entails, but also attributing a form of subjectivity to nature itself. A sub-thesis is that Nietzsche developed this transformed understanding of humanity and nature through his own impressions, emotions, and concrete, sensory encounters with the natural world. Nietzsche blurred the boundary between organic and inorganic life and envisioned a “posthumanity” of human existence.

The methodological approach in this project involves reading Nietzsche’s philosophy from below, giving voice to the Earth in the places where Nietzsche lived. This approach is inspired by actor-network theory, particularly Bruno Latour’s work, where the line between humans and nonhumans is blurred. Both, in their manifold forms, are actants. The most important aspect is not to define what the actants are but to study the network of their relationships. Actor-network theory in Bruno Latour’s works is inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s description of evolution as rhizomic, an understanding based on Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche. For a theoretical framework to find the philosophy of nature in Nietzsche’s work, post-actor-network theories that focus on relationships not only as “power relations” but also on how they affect the actants of the networks, like in the works of Karen Barad and Vinciane Despret, are useful as well as the works on “ecological empathy.” By doing so, I will trace how Nietzsche’s emotions in his encounters with specific places on Earth shaped his thinking.

The empirical material for the project is my own study of the places where Nietzsche lived and his own writing, including his published works and notebooks. His notebooks are of special importance as they often show the direct impressions nature had on Nietzsche. Through them, I aim to find traces of these impressions in his philosophy of nature, thereby showing Nietzsche’s philosophy as more closely connected to nature, not as an abstract phenomenon but as something concrete with its faces and history.