

II : THE RE-ENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD

At the end of last week's talk I showed works by the French painter Claude Monet; they bridged the secular materialism of the nineteenth century and the embryonic reverence for nature of the twentieth. The first painting, The Terrace at Saint Adresse, dated 1867 was, I suggested, perfectly attuned to the rationalist, positivist attitudes of its time. The second, The Poplars, the Three Trees, Autumn, one of a series of poplars painted in the 1890's, conveyed intimations of the sense of re-enchantment being posited at this time by Yeats, the Theosophists and Rudolf Steiner (none of whom Monet almost certainly had heard). Finally, I showed paintings, of his Water Lilies series in the Orangerie in Paris, which Monet had painted towards the end of his life - he died in 1926. In these late works, I proposed, it was possible to see a new vision of reality, one wherein the observer was enfolded within the observed.

At the same time that Monet was painting his water lilies a group of physicists - they included Max Planck, Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, Erwin Schrödinger and Werner Heisenberg - were exploring a view wherein the universe, no longer seen as a machine made up of multiple objects (deck-chairs, flags, umbrellas and yachts), could best be understood in terms of one indivisible, dynamic, multi-faceted reality whose parts were essentially interrelated; patterns of a

cosmic process embracing the viewer him or herself. The major philosophical implication of this view was that there was no such thing as an isolated or independent observer - the central premise of perspective itself. By imagination alone - the "grandeur of inspiration" - Monet had divined that nothing could be defined by what it was in itself but only in terms of its relationship to other things. Like a musician who faintly hears a melody deep within the mind, Monet had discovered a new Age.

Every artist is to some extent a reflector or conduit of the values and ideas of his or her own period; likewise some, the prophetic ones, act more like the antennae of the race. In Monet, in a period of about fifty years, the antennae were feelers of the greatest sensitivity: he moved from being a camera, a recorder of externalities, a person dominated by the materialist climate of his time, to becoming a kind of nature mystic, deeply aware that all life was sacred, that the flesh of the body was the flesh of the earth, that man and nature were enfolded - an enfoldment experienced by the viewer as he gazes at canvasses, literally wrapped around him so extensive is their scale.

The paintings I have shown are details of ones to be seen in a specially built gallery, the Orangerie in Paris, overlooking the Place de la Concorde where in the Age of Reason hundreds of brains were severed from their hearts. Monet conceived of the Orangerie as a Temple to Nature wherein each visitor might

tells us that people of the Late Stone Age knew a great ambition to symbolise the divine in earth and rock "such as humanity has never again seen equalled", and they believed implicitly that the "solid earth from which they carved the symbol of the Goddess herself were one and the same".

Ohio
My third slide is of the famous Ohio earthwork depicting the **Serpent and the Egg**, the serpent being the immemorial symbol of re-birth; the egg, the cosmic egg, of the life principle itself. The Ohio earth work is the largest effigy mound in the United States, an embankment of rocks, earth and clay over 1,300 feet in length and 20 feet wide. It was built by the Adena people between 1,000 and 300 B.C.

I ask you, as I now trace the loss of man's connection with nature, the cosmic power of the earth and our capacity to cooperate with it, to keep these images in mind. The distance we have travelled from that union is a measure of our alienation from the natural world.

From Ohio I will now travel some three millenia, plus or minus a few hundred years. I jump past the classical age of the Parthenon (the Greeks were not interested in landscape but were among the first to initiate the divorce between nature and the self), jump past Egypt and Rome (where incidentally, from the 4th to 3rd century BC, landscape began to enter into the consciousness of poet and the artist in its own right) jump, too, through the long centuries of European Christendom

when the concept of nature, was little more than a distraction. In those Christian centuries the goal was not here and now, but always somewhere else.

Our journey recommences in the Eleventh Century, at the time of St Anselm, who died in 1109. As a theologian and philosopher St Anselm had a foremost place among the earlier scholastic thinkers, but for us his importance lies in his recorded views of the importance - or rather lack of importance - of nature to the spiritual life.

St Anselm maintained that things were harmful in proportion to the number of senses which they delighted: to sit in a garden where there were roses to satisfy the senses of sight and smell, and songs and stories to please the ear was dangerous from the spiritual point of view and therefore to be avoided. Such an attitude may have been expressive of only the strictest monastic view, but if the average layman might not have thought it wrong to enjoy nature, nature held no attraction for him. The fields meant nothing but work; the sea coast danger of storm and piracy; swamp and forest, wild and dangerous lay beyond the confines of his village world. Likewise in the early epics, the sagas and in Anglo Saxon poetry, references to nature are brief or hostile or dwell on its disturbing horrors. However another stream can be discriminated. It is recorded that as early as the second century, the first great Catholic theologian, Irenaeus, proclaimed that even the tiniest insect is holy, to be treated

Christ
Blessing
730 AD.

with reverence. The Celtic missionaries also founded monasteries where animals and birds were welcomed as members. St Clanan and the boar, the hermit Paul and his sea-otter, St Columba and the crane, are examples of a holy intimacy of natural and divine. It is a current of Christian feeling which resurfaces again in the Twelfth century with Hildegard de Bingen and in the Thirteenth with St Francis of Assisi.

Parallel with this mistrust of nature went the intensely symbolising faculty of the medieval mind only comprehensible if we recollect that, for the spiritual, the world is transparent to the supernatural. In this illumination from the Paris Psalter He that walketh uprightly, and walketh righteousness" of about 1200, the landscape is little more than a pictograph designed to convey a message. It surely shows that to the mediaeval Christian mind, history and nature were regarded as vast symbols. Indeed for centuries trees and fields, were represented without attention to observation, a faculty alien to the symbolic imagination. It is this, no doubt, which gives the earliest naturalism of the Middle Ages its unsurpassable tenderness and beauty. The leaves, flowers and tendrils carved on the capitals of the pillars in the chapter house at Southwell Minster near Newark (1293 and later) have the clarity of newly created things, things seen with delight and with amazing veracity.

The sculptors of these remarkable capitals (not necessarily English) rejecting the conventions of the Early English style

of leaf decoration, have gone for inspiration to nature, the nature, it seems, of the English countryside. Indeed at Southwell we find a degree of truth to life which never before had been attempted in the West. It was something entirely new.

This flowering ultimately stemmed from two developments. First, of course, there was the recovery from the Eleventh to the Thirteenth centuries of what Moris Berman has called interiority, of which heresy and romantic love, both rooted in a powerful somatic experience, constitute the most dramatic public expression. This awakening to inwardness by a civilisation that had been living without it for more than five hundred years, this overturning of a previous masculine mentalité, was correspondingly powerful. The cult of the Virgin Mary, for example, which in the twelfth century began to spread through Europe, became a guiding symbol and image that was to inspire the entire culture of Western Christendom.

The second factor, introducing a fresh spirit of awareness into everyday life was the founding of the new religious orders, the Franciscans in 1209, the Dominicans in 1215; both helped to make a closer personal and more direct contact with reality a possibility.

Both Dominicans and Franciscans preferred the growing animation of the towns to the rural solitude of the earlier Cluniac and Cistercian monasteries. Cloistered peace had favoured the meditations of their monks; Franciscans and

Dominicans chose to mix with burgers and tradesmen. As the monks of the Eleventh and Twelfth centuries had formed the clerical counterpoint of the self-contained manorial life on the secular side, so the friars, exponents of a worldlier age, corresponded in their choice of abode and activities to the life of the growing populations of the self-confident medieval towns with their commerce and guilds.

In the Thirteenth century we find proofs of this new worldliness appearing everywhere - in the sweet New Style of Italian poetry, in the praise of chivalrous virtues in the French and German romances, in the fullness of Marco Polo's accounts of his journey to the Far East, in the rediscovery of antique art in the sculptures of Niccolo Pisano and in a growing knowledge of Aristotle's systems, transmitted first through Arabic translations and later through the Greek originals. This movement was to lead not only to opposition against the accepted faith in received doctrine and authority but to new faith in experiment and personal experience.

To drive home the fundamental contrast between this spirit and the harsh dualism of a hundred years earlier two contrasting examples may be given. Of the great St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) his biographer reports that after a year as a novice in a monastery he did not know whether the hall in which he lived had a vaulted or a flat ceiling. "So much," the Vita continues, "was he absorbed in spiritual things, so completely was his hope directed towards God, so much his mind

occupied with meditation that he saw and yet did not see, that he heard and yet did not hear."

By contrast, there is the renowned sympathy of St Francis (1182-1226) - seen here in Giotto's famous fresco of about 1298 - whose tenderness to animals was an expression of his dedication to Christ. As a nature mystic living a simple, dedicated life in the Umbrian countryside, Francis's compassion alike for human sufferers, animals and flowers, greeting even the winds and fire as his brethren, expressed a reverence for nature not dissimilar to that of Hildegard de Bingen who died three years before his birth. Both shared an inner vision of the divine signature in all created things; shared, too, a soaring, aspiring, hungering desire for the Unity they had already conceived in their own souls.

If St. Francis was the first, to give expression to this oneness of the universe, St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-74) the greatest theologian of his age, was the first to channel it into the most comprehensive philosophic system of the Middle Ages. His theory of beauty encompassed the beauty of the things of the world; instead of denying it, as the centuries before him had done, he acknowledged their delight. His popular contemporary Vincent of Beauvais professed in a famous passage, "I am moved with spiritual sweetness towards the creator and ruler of this world when I behold the magnitude and beauty and permanence of his creation." Beauty for him - and his contemporaries - could exist only because God is in

St Francis
- Giotto
14th

13th
Aquinas

every man and beast, in every herb and stone, in every river and cloud. In this movement of feeling towards the idea of Creation as the language in which God expressed his thought, the thirteenth century experienced a new spirit, the spirit of religious respect for created nature seen, as it were, as the finger print of the Lord. The painting of landscape has its beginning here.

early 14th
Lorenzetti

The first surviving landscape as a distinct entity to have survived since Antiquity is usually attributed to the great Sienese, Ambrogio Lorenzetti. It is his **A Castle on the shores of a Lake** (painted around 1323), the first 'pure' landscape since Antiquity, extraordinary for two reasons. First, the fact that the all-pervading signs of human husbandry and habitation in this painting are accompanied by an absolute emptiness of animal or human life. And second - and much more importantly - the fact that this tiny landscape, (it is in the **Pinacoteca in Siena**), has absolutely no immediate progeny. Compare it, for example, with two images painted only a decade before: Giotto's **Joachim among the Shepherds** in the Arena Chapel in Padua of between 1304 and 1313 and Duccio's **Agony in the Garden** of 1308-1311 where the landscape backgrounds are rudimentary, symbolic and unobserved. In the space of a decade human beings had for the first time sufficiently separated themselves from the world that they could look upon it with delight, curiosity and objectivity.

Giotto
Duccio

No less remarkable are the extensive frescoes painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti where allegory and symbolism were not separated from descriptive realism. This is his **Good and Bad Government** in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena. Their date is 1338-39. Here, in an all-embracing panorama, the hilly Sienese countryside is depicted with remarkable naturalism and extends into distances not previously represented by any painter. A noble hunting party is leaving the city gates; peasants are driving their donkeys into the city. In the fields others are ploughing, sowing, vine-tending, stock-farming and shepherding. Game-hunting, bird-catching and angling are also represented in a painting which evokes the free and teeming multiplicity of the natural world that has no parallel in range or quality until the time of Bruegel more than two hundred years later.

Palazzo Pubblico

Lorenzetti

similar
no further
development
till 16th
century

(Black Death
in between)

If the reach of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's achievement was not to be repeated for a century - the Black Death intervened - from the 1340's onwards the development of the art of the landscape, registering the shift from the symbolic to the observed, from a contemplative metaphysic to a naturalistic philosophy developed in leaps and bounds. Western man had begun (if only very slowly) to lose the paradise of the age of faith; to gain in compensation the new earth of nature. Within a few centuries as nature became less and less a reflection of a celestial reality, only the earth-bound remained.

but observation
naturalism
landscape
painting
did develop
largely

faith → observation Need to retain some faith + some objectivity!

Symbols in a spiritually combined with Tried to nature, yet nature a symbol too.

If throughout the fourteenth century, landscape appears but rarely - in Psalters with scenes of hunting, in scenes of country life in the Palace of the Popes in Avignon, in the background of Andrea da Firenze's frescoes, **The Triumph of the Church**, in the cloister of Santa Maria Novella in Florence - by the following century, the Fifteenth, the Quattrocento, it has become ubiquitous, in both Italy and the Low Countries.

15th
landscape
ubiquitous

The Ghent Altar-Piece completed by Hubert and Jan Van Eyck in 1432, (a detail of it is now on the screen), reveals a fidelity to nature that is entirely new to Flemish art, without parallel even in Lorenzetti. Yet true to nature in every detail as this altarpiece there is also a desire to do justice to the whole of creation subordinated to a higher reality. The Van Eyck's study of nature was a study of the spiritual meaning of nature, a reflection of the celestial reality of the Christian cosmos.

Van Eyck

Van Eyck

This spirit is most fully revealed, perhaps, in Jan Van Eyck's **Madonna and the Chancellor Rolin** dated c.1434, in the Louvre. It, too, reveals the inter-mixture of delighted observation with the paradise of a symbolic world. Here, in parallel, we find the quickening spirit of the Renaissance informed or rather embedded within the deep-rooted attitudes of the Middle Ages in which everything, however small, was a vehicle for transcendental truth.

Chancellor
Rolin

Look, then, at one detail: the little roof garden planted high

Chancellor
Rolin

above the city, a form of the **Hortus conclusus**, itself an emblem of Mary's virginity. Here flourish flowers which were regarded as specially sacred to Our Lady - the inevitable Madonna Lily, emblem of her purity; the purple iris, symbol of her immaculate conception, and a low growing red shrub rose which from the mid-Thirteenth century had been absorbed into the iconography of the Virgin. Thus fact and symbol co-exist in harmony alongside a delight in the things of sense, a growing pleasure, a growing appreciation of the world as it is in itself. If the landscape is still a background, it is a landscape also celebrated for its own sake. From the distant snow-covered mountains a broad river winds towards the spectator. On the two banks linked by a bridge lies a populous town with a Gothic cathedral, other churches and towers. Numerous tiny figures throng the bridge and streets. In the far distance the shapes of the mountains begin to dissolve into a bluish white haze. Here, as never before, Jan Van Eyck has depicted not only something of the grandeur and beauty of the Creation but a grandeur and a beauty informed by the sacramental character of all that has been created by God.

About the middle of the Fifteenth century, as this picture shows, we are approaching a point of real change: a shift of paradigm from the older allegorical plane of meaning based on the belief that the Universe was sacred, that the greater was reflected in the lesser, that one thing could be understood through another, that God could be known through his works, to a whole new way of interpreting experience in which the world

is separated from us. The objective, dualistic mind of the West, already prevalent, had deeply strengthened its grip and in so doing had begun to conceive the idea that nature was not something of which we ourselves were a part but separate and manipulatable to our advantage. The figures in the Van Eyck seeing landscape beyond their town, looking at it from a distance, can be seen as a metaphor for this change.

Travelling southwards to Italy we find a similar interest in the externalities of the world - and its control. A little earlier than Van Eyck's painting the Florentine sculptor, Donatello, was making a relief, **Herod being presented with the Head of St. John the Baptist**, for the Baptistery of Siena Cathedral. The date is 1423-7. For the first time in history we can find evidence of a new world view: a radical new understanding and enthusiasm for calculated geometric space - a space which rationally projected would lead us out of the picture space towards the vanishing point - at once both intellectual, secular, and, in its stress on the importance of the fixed viewpoint, individualistic. The individual self, set apart from the world, had its origins at this time.

To the uninitiated, perspective (its discovery is attributed to the architect Brunelleschi working in Florence in the 1420's) has been seen as a sophisticated pictorial device for representing the third dimension on a two-dimensional surface. I would suggest it is something more. Perspective codified the split between 'heaven' and 'earth', the body and the soul,

Shift
to
dualism
- nature
separate
from us
or how
we may
control it

Donatello

rational +
geometric
calculation
discovery
of perspective
= the fixed
point of view
= individualism

Perspective

and prepared the Western mind for Descartes' clockwork universe, a world of observable, measurable, quantifiable and therefore controllable data; a universe subject to laws operating autonomously outside the human. Before its invention, western man had been enfolded within the cosmos, itself charged with a certain sacrality; after perspective human beings existed outside and apart from nature, stripped of all transcendental meanings. The experience of being part of a divine world, being part of a cosmology which judged the truth and falsehood of what men said, gave way to a feeling of estrangement and subjectivity.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the ramifications of changes which brought about the inexorable de-sacralisation of the natural world - for in order for the sciences to come into being, the substance of the cosmos had to be emptied of its sacred character and become profane - a profanity which has in our lifetime is producing dangerous results.

But before we address the destruction of a sacred tradition, I should like to return to the beautiful paintings of the Italian Quattrocento which have much in common with the Van Eycks I have shown. Look, for example, at this detail from Fra Angelico's **Deposition** in S. Marco in Florence, painted around 1443. Fra Angelico was a spiritual, a Dominican friar, who had yet absorbed many of the new ideas of space and the new perception of light - the new nexus of unity, with its sense of relation and comparison. In this detail the morning

Before
perspective
man inside
creation
After,
he's outside
& separate

o
Fra
Angelico

o
Fra
Angelico

(Bt) The delicate harmony between spirit + body
was lost after (Bt)

light pervades a Tuscan landscape with its finely observed hills and clouds and vivid trees. The whole painting, a work of great poetry and intellectual inventiveness, is situated at the very hinge of the mediaeval and the modern worlds. There is a delicate harmony between spirit and body soon to be lost.

In Siena, Florence's mercantile rival, there was an even deeper spirit of sacrality for the spirit was less masculine there; less 'scientific' and mathematical - more poetic, fed by the mythic imagination which is always feminine. Sienese Quattrocento painting makes no endeavour to instil in the spectator a sense of the material existence of the scenes it represents it is rather informed by symbols of the supernatural world; it looks backwards to the mystic world of Hildegard de Bingen rather than the prosaic world of Ghirlandaio. This sense of the immanence of the transcendent, informs all the images I should like to show. The first of these is Sassetta's miraculously beautiful **The Charity and Vision of St Francis** (1437-44), now on the screen, then the Master of the Osservanza's **St. Anthony Tempted by the Devil in the Guise of a Woman**, the same artist's **St. Anthony tempted by a Heap of Gold** (a detail from which I am also showing), and lastly Giovanini di Paolo's **Saint Clare of Assisi Saving a Child from a Wolf**, all painted in the second half of the fourteenth century and in every case revealing each painters' delight in a luminous reality expressed by an almost transparent simplicity of means. Living as we do in a

Sassetta

Osservanza

St Anthony

St Anthony

Giovanini
di Paolo

world in which naturalism, empiricism and rationalism are the commonplace, I sometimes wonder how different the evolution of Western history might have been if Sieneese devotion rather than Florentine science had been its guide.

To trace the history of landscape art and the growing divorce between the self and Nature from the Fourteenth century would involve study beyond both my time and scope. The turn from dispassionate observation, so characteristic of Quattrocentro Florence, would have to be explained, so too would the influence of Cartesian thought on the landscapes of Nicholas Poussin, Descartes' contemporary, where seventeenth century rationalism prevails. By the time of Poussin's **The Burial of Phocian**, - it is dated 1648 - man was well on the way to achieving his ambition to become the master and possessor of nature. The will to dominate, to control events, to eliminate chance and the irrational, is explicit in this painting. A century and more later, by the time of Voltaire, European culture with its positivist science, industry and **Reign of Quantity**, (the phrase is Guenon's) had reduced all truth to utility, the central concern. Inevitably, nature became sentimentalised as in this painting by Fragonard, **Blind Man's Bluff** of c.1775, where the landscape, beautiful as it is, belongs to the boudoir and the stage. To suggest this landscape reflects any kind of celestial reality would be absurd.

Poussin

Fragonard

But, as we know, this artifice was not to last. About the year 1780, the neat control by which the century had attempted to regulate all human endeavour began to show signs of collapse. Romanticism came into being as a reaction against the nationalism of industrialised society.

The understanding of the natural world now underwent a change. If in the preceding century it had meant little more than moderation and common sense, something to be pushed around for the sake of the view, by the end of the Eighteenth and the beginning of the Nineteenth, poets and painters sought to re-establish a more intimate bond with nature and the indwelling spirit within it. Some, bridging a centuries-old gap went so far back to the Celtic Christians' mystical act of worship before its divine glory, that they single handedly re-invented an enchanted universe. A magic steals across their work, a magic which had been denigrated and ignored for centuries.

One has only to think of those born between 1770 and 1795 - the painters Turner, Constable, Thomas Girtin, Caspar David Friedrich, Otto Runge, Cotman, de Wint, Delacroix; the writers, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Shelley, Clare, Keats, Holderlin, - to appreciate the breadth and depth of the continuity, especially in Northern Europe, of a spiritual conception of nature and the great shift in the spirit of the Western mind. However, a genius born a little earlier in 1757 is my choice as our guide.

18-19 the redrawing of ^{heaven + earth} nature + man linked

Blake

In William Blake's little woodcuts - cut around 1820 - we experience pictorially for the first time since the Middle Ages a feeling for the sacredness of tree and hill and corn - that "Everything that lives is Holy". Here is a mode of experience that returns us to landscape seen by the spiritual eye; a sacramental vision of nature such as Black Elk, the Sioux holyman, reported in the early 1930's to John G Neihardt. At the top of the mountain he said he was at the centre of the universe. "But", he added, "that centre is everywhere". According to Buddhism, too, there is a Buddha in every grain of sand, the grain of sand in which Blake perceived a world. In this woodcut, flowing like radium, Blake reconnects heaven with earth.

This sense of the interdependence of human and divine, this yearning to heal the division between man and nature, this conviction that landscape was a vessel, a symbol of God's imminence, was felt by one of Blake's young followers, Samuel Palmer, with particular intensity. At a time when the English countryside was under increasing threat, Palmer painted nature as a numinous revelation, one of divine fertility. Look, for example, at this detail from his **In a Shoreham Garden** of 1829, an icon painted with Palmer's spiritual, not his bodily eye - or maybe something of both.

Palmer

Look, too, at this other detail from an earlier drawing **Valley Thick with Corn**, (it is dated 1825) where the scrutiny of the microcosm as vehicle for the revelation of the macrocosm, so reminiscent of Jan Van Eyck has transformed the wheatfields of

Palmer

Palmer
the Darent Valley into a Holy Land. Likewise in his **A Shepherd and His Flock under the Moon and Stars** (1827), where the scientific world view has been spurned in favour of the ecstasy of the magic of imaginative wonder. In Palmer the landscape of symbols has been reanimated with a vision so intense it possesses the character of hallucination.

search for unity again
19-20
This search for a vision of wholeness, this search for the means to heal the split between 'heaven' and 'earth', resurfaced again at the end of the nineteenth century when artists like Van Gogh and Munch (as well as many others) gave expression to the subtle and pervasive changes which were then beginning to spread. I refer, of course, to what the poet, W.B. Yeats described as "the rise of soul against intellect now beginning in the world". Such artists were themselves, as Yeats was, both the prophets and agents of this change.

Monet
There are numerous ways in which I might try to demonstrate such a fundamental transformation of consciousness - it is, in fact, the subject of my next lecture - but tonight I will do so, quite simply, through the art of one painter. My choice may seem idiosyncratic but I believe it is appropriate. The painter is Claude Monet whose work spans the materialism of the Nineteenth century and the growing sense of soul of our own. As an immensely gifted artist, Monet was first dedicated to perceptual fidelity. Cezanne called him "only an eye"; a kind of camera, a recorder of purely visual sensations. A scientific artist, a man for whom the worlds

surface was in the first instance so fascinating, so beautiful, that he asked for no more.

An early painting, such as **Terrace at Sainte Adresse** of 1867

is attuned to the rational, positivist attitudes of the late nineteenth century. It is secular, dispassionate,

instantaneous, impersonal, completely on the surface. Two

decades later, in 1891, the idea that Monet was simply a

painter solely dedicated to direct experience and its

uncomplicated transmission has to be revised. **The Poplars,**

the Three Trees, Autumn has a sense of glory, a feeling of

harmony with the universe, that is something else. The world

now shimmers and dissolves, making and unmaking itself before

our eyes.

But by the time of the great, late water-lily decorations in

the Orangerie in Paris, - they date from 1916 to 1926 - Monet

has transcended his roots, his atheism, his rationalism, his

earlier dependence on perceptual fidelity : all have

disappeared. In their place we discover a vision of nature

resacralised and paintings as sacramental as those of Van

Gogh. There is, too, a new inter-penetration of things, an

erotic bond between and among things, a reverie that takes us

close to the heart of things, the deepest rhythms of the

natural world. There is an endless open communication

enabling us to say as we look at these pictures, 'I am not it,

yet it is all of me.' The observer no longer stands outside

nature; he has been enfolded within the clouds, and trees and

leaves, the shimmer of light on water, and the hidden depths of the water underneath.

Monet, like some of his contemporaries, had challenged the underlying assumptions of his time and ours. He had turned his back on perspective and an aesthetic confidently committed to the concerns of physicality. He had rejected the feeling of total reification which had dominated art in Europe for centuries. He had looked forward to an entirely new way of experiencing the breakdown of self and the world, the divorce of spirit from matter, the visible from the invisible, bringing them together in a fabric as poetic as it was mysterious. How all this was taken forward by other artists will be the subject of my next lecture, when I shall look at the work of artists - Munch, Van Gogh, Matisse, Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash, Henry Moore, Cecil Collins amongst others - whose work points towards a renaissance of that 'mystical, pagan imagination' which the poet Apollinaire saw in Chagall.

In Nature, Monet had experienced, as Van Gogh said in a letter of 1882, "a soul". How men and women began to sense that soul, to sense there was a greater reality which transcends this world but which is also imminent within it, sanctifying it and making it real; how artists revealed how we might haul ourselves back to the ever-precarious shores of life on earth, I shall be discussing in a week from now.